

St Mary's Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of meeting Thursday 18th February 2016

Present:

- Fr William Wright (Acting Chair)

Appointed

- Joanne Brennan
- Chris Clissitt
- Stephen Walker (Finance)

Elected

- Charlotte Burrell (Formation)
- Amanda Kelly (Support)
- Jeff McGillan (Activities)

Secretary: Chris Senior (Note Taker)

Apologies: Mick Britton (Liturgy), Paul Jackson (School), Sheila Lund (Interaction),
Martin Mayhew

1. **Opening Reading** was led by Fr. William

2. **Approval of AGM 2015 Minutes**

The minutes of 22nd March 2015 AGM were formally approved.

3. **Matters Arising from the AGM 2015 (not itemised in the Agenda)**

No matters were raised.

4. **The minutes of the PPC meeting on 22nd October 2015**

CORRECTION: 8 a) Proclaim Year of Mercy

The Walsingham event cited as an illustration of a public practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation was incorrectly titled 'Year 2000' and should have read 'Youth 2000'.

Subject to the above correction the Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record.

5. Matters Arising from the PPC October 2015 meeting (not itemised in the Agenda)

4. 3. 11 Blue Plaque

Within the Financial Report (below Item 7) Stephen Walker circulated the proposed wording for a Blue Plaque which would help inform both residents and visitors of St Mary's history. The Finance Committee have approved, in principle, the costs of this work for its erection near the Bond End entrance to the Church; though further details and final authority are still required.

Stephen Walker confirmed that the installation of the plaque would not commit St Mary's to any further restrictions on future building or refurbishment works.

ACTION: Final discussion over the decision, wording and installation of the Blue Plaque to be raised as an agenda item at the next meeting.

4. 4. School Report

Paul Jackson circulated a written School Report which confirmed and detailed St Mary's Governors desire to retain very close ties with St John Fisher's Catholic High School, despite the Primary School joining the Bishop Wheeler Trust (to which the High School has no affiliation).

5. Parish Appraisal 2015 Action Plan

Fr William reported that he had decided to delay the launch of a new Parish Appraisal to Easter 2017, and not 2016 as originally intended. The PPC unanimously supported this, agreeing the deferral would allow time for recent changes to be fully assessed, and would help maintain engagement with the Parish by avoiding survey fatigue.

Stephen Walker recommended that the results (and any outcomes) of the future 2016 parish appraisal should be published rather faster than had occurred with the 2015 survey; a suggested target of 3 months for a final Feedback Report seemed realistic.

It was also suggested that in future surveys rather less feedback should be given in response to individual comments (which represented a single opinion) as such comments had received disproportionate attention in comparison to the collective opinions on any given topic in the statistical returns. Fr William noted that individual comments sometimes reflected a view requiring consideration although agreed a suitable balance was needed.

9. Parish Appraisal Questionnaire to those who have dropped away

Fr William reported that despite further investigation no results or conclusions were known to have been issued as a result of the survey on this topic by the Portsmouth Diocese.

6. 2015-16 Parish Appraisal: Remaining aspirations

a) Church Seating Layout

A discussion was held over the seating layout trial that had been recently introduced in the Church. Only one adverse comment had been received from a parishioner with a question over the Health & Safety impact of the new layout (i.e. the inability to lock chairs in the new layout which might affect emergency evacuation).

ACTION: Fr William to approach Vince McGurk (Parish H&S Officer) for professional advice on any H&S implications of permanently adopting the new layout and investigate (if required) any corrective actions that might be needed.

The majority of PPC members thought the new seating plan was a marked improvement on the old plan and better facilitated; kneeling, general access and leg space for attendees.

The only concerns raised were the potential difficulty of accurately re-arranging the seating after Mass (as chairs did move position). Amanda Kelly suggested a seating plan diagram/drawing would assist nominated individuals (e.g. Cleaners) to quickly rearrange the seating.

ACTION: Amanda Kelly to approach Ian Burrell and draft a seating plan drawing.

b) Website modifications

Fr William reported that, as previously actioned, Graham Yare had created a 'baptisms, marriages and funerals' section on the Parish website.

It was also noted that a 'test' page exploring different font sizes for legibility had been introduced. In discussion PPC members felt that (compared to many other parishes) St Mary's website was already extremely well designed, clear and very easy to navigate and that any visitors still having difficulties would actually gain better results by using their browser or device 'access' settings to improve site legibility.

c) Bulletin Redesign

Fr William stated that the Bulletin layout had been cleaned up, with less text and a marked increase of referrals to posters on the atrium noticeboard for detailed items. It was hoped that with recent changes in the atrium and a more active husbandry of the noticeboards this would improve use and awareness of the boards and information to the wider Parish.

Stephen Walker voiced concerns that the noticeboard would still remain difficult for parishioners (partly in access in the busy atrium area, but also for finding relevant new information) but accepted that the alternative of issuing a larger, multi-page bulletin was undesirable.

d) Offertory Gestures in Mass

To further improve the involvement and the experience of Mass, Fr William suggested all parishioners could join with the Children's Liturgy Group (as practiced at Sunday 10:00 am Mass) in the raised two-hand gestures during the Offertory. This suggestion had been

informed by recent discussions Fr William held with the 2 Liturgy Groups, which had effectively suggested slightly differing practices at the different weekend masses to preserve a sense of the unique natures of the Vigil, 10:00 am and 5:00 pm services.

In discussion PPC members were supportive of the general initiative as this would be especially helpful for the children, but were concerned that variable practices could actually lead to confusion among parishioners about why each Mass was celebrated differently. It was felt that the introduction of a standard practice at all services would be more palatable to all.

There were also strong misgivings that the proposal of a two hands 'arms high' gesture would not be a socially comfortable experience for many, and that instead introducing a choice of a two (or one) open hand gesture at waist height would be far more readily adopted.

ACTION: For a trial period at Easter, Fr William would explain to the Parish the new practice for all weekend Masses in introducing a gesture of two-or one-open hand(s) at waist height during the Offertory.

Update: Introduction likely to be slightly delayed due to recent introduction of projectors.

e) Standing during the Eucharistic Prayer

In a parallel initiative to Item 6d) Fr William requested feedback over a proposal to invite Mass attendees to stand rather than kneel during the Eucharistic prayer.

Fr William further explained that kneeling was a more passive, reflective form of worship while standing indicated an engaged devotional practice that was more in-line with the Eucharistic Prayer.

Members fully supported this suggestion and felt this could also be helpfully introduced as a trial to the parish during Easter.

ACTION: Fr William to introduce, explain and invite all weekend Mass attendees to stand during the Eucharistic Prayer for an initial trial period during Easter.

Update: Introduction likely to be slightly delayed due to recent introduction of projectors.

7. Report From Finance Committee

Stephen Walker talked to the previously circulated printout of a presentation to the Finance Committee. Key issues highlighted and discussed were:

- The difference in reporting periods (Calendar v Financial Years) accounted for the apparent reduction in balance in the Report; in reality Church funds are healthy and loan repayments are going well although complacency is to be avoided.
- The balance against the original £180K loan from Ampleforth currently stands at £127K (Dec 2015).
- 'The Old School' Hall refurbishment costs were in line (or less) than anticipated, with the exception of new lighting which required an extra allocation to meet desired standards. Most building works are now completed with only snagging remaining (e.g. floor finishing works).
- Bookings for the use of the 'Old School' are increasing, and it was hoped to continue this trend both for fund raising, and for improving the social and spiritual activities in

the Parish. It was hoped the installation of additional facilities e.g. projector in the meeting room, would facilitate greater activity.

- Following the recent (Nov 2015) *Quinquennial Building Survey* all urgent 'red flag' works will be packaged into a single tender for the repair and refurbishment of the Church and other buildings (including the Sacristy, toilets, and general damp treatment and Church redecoration).
- A cyclical approach to budgeting for building maintenance and decoration is being built into Church finance accounting.
- Some fabric and repair works will require prior approval of the Historic Churches Commission (which sits infrequently) though the intention is to instruct contractors to begin works later in 2016.
- Professional Fees for the Church repair works will be relatively high and are factored into the forthcoming works; major cost savings were made over fees in the Old School development due to the considerable efforts of Philip Burnett and colleagues.
- Conversion of the room behind the current Shop into an Administrative Office has been approved, to allow repurposing of the current Office as a Reception Room for the use of Fr William when meeting parishioners and visitors.

8. Old School Refurbishment

As highlighted above (Item 7) the major works of the Hall refurbishment are completed. The project was achieved under cost, on schedule and the results are widely agreed to have dramatically improved and upgraded the facilities available to the Parish.

The PPC expressed formal thanks to the Church Hall Working Party for its hard work and the vital and involved contribution of its members to this successful project. For the record the Working Group who oversaw the tendering and final operational activity were:

Philip Burnett, Sheila Lund, Steven Perry, Stephen Walker and Angela Wicken

9. Tuning into the Liturgical Seasons

Fr William requested that members consider how as a parish we could become increasingly attuned to the rhythms and seasons of the Liturgical Year.

ACTION: ALL to consider for the next meeting.

10. Relocating the Holy Water Stoop

Fr William was considering the relocation of the Stoop into the centre-rear of the Church; a more traditional location which invited parishioners to move into the heart of the church before taking their seats. Comments were invited from members but due to time constraints would be deferred until the next meeting.

ACTION: ALL to consider the new Stoop location as an Agenda item at the next meeting.

11. Parish Endorsed Charitable Causes

Jeff McGillan tabled a *Justice & Peace* report/presentation and outlined the results of his investigation into the Parish's involvement in charitable causes in Africa. JM's activity had included interviewing Fr Terry Madden who was a major influence in past African support activity at St Mary's. Key findings included:

- St Mary's funding to the Parish of Titao (Burkina Faso) since 1994 had been focussed on the Parish Priest, Fr Matthew Sawadogo.
- With the subsequent move of Fr Matthew to work in other very distant parishes (Tanzania) it appears that St Mary's funds followed Fr Matthew in his new duties and did not stay with the original parish of Titao.
- Given the break in communications, in 2015 St Mary's had suspended the sending of money to Africa in lieu of JM's investigations into the final use and recipients of St Mary's funds.
- JM learned from Fr Terry that tragically Fr Matthew had been killed in a road accident (May 2015) which accounts for a lack of response to recent enquiries.
- Fr Terry suggested that the impoverished Parish of Titao would greatly welcome a resumption of direct funding from St Mary's. Fr Terry had contacts with Fr Etienne the current parish priest of Titao and was prepared to help in liaison and translation.
- Fr Terry acknowledged that, if reinstated, St Mary's would intend its donations to assist the Parish, rather than an individual, and would require good and continuing communication over the use of monies. St Mary's would also expect that the Parish would continue to receive funds should the current Priest move elsewhere.

JM was satisfied that he had established an accurate picture of the situation, which had been complicated by the history, remoteness and communication difficulties. JM now sought guidance over the relaunch of the Africa Envelope scheme in the Parish, and a confirmation of whether Titao (or another African parish) should be selected as recipient for donated funds.

The PPC unanimously agreed the Africa Envelope scheme should be re-launched. Stephen Walker noted Gift Aid and separate accounting could be supported via the financial systems in the Parish. It was also thought the use of established Aid Agencies to minimise bank transfer fees could also be helpfully investigated.

It was unanimously felt by the PPC that, given the historical links of St Mary's, and the reassurances received by Fr Terry, that it would be entirely appropriate to re-adopt the Parish of Titao. It was felt this would be enthusiastically adopted by St Mary's in several other activities (e.g. Children's liturgy).

Given the healthy balance of funds in the J&P accounts it was suggested that the adoption of (or one-off donations to) other African recipients might also be considered at a later stage.

ACTION: Jeff McGillan and Stephen Walker to establish the financial mechanisms to relaunch the Africa Envelope scheme and to assist the Parish of Titao, Burkina Faso.

ACTION: Jeff McGillan to communicate with Fr Terry Madden, to establish contact with Fr Etienne, and to address St Mary's Parish at Mass as part of a full relaunch of the scheme.

12. Activities Ministries

Fr William suggested that some of the existing activities in the Parish were 'missionary' in ethos and that this should be reflected in the renaming of the seat on council.

ACTION: ALL to consider renaming of this seat on council at the next meeting.

13. Advertising of 24th December Mass

Fr William sought member feedback over the desirability of continuing to advertise the 4.30 children's mass within the parish.

This suggestion was to help manage (reduce) the extremely high attendances, which in past years had seen many parishioners unable to even get into the Church itself and to repopulate the three Christmas Masses (Midnight, Dawn and Day)

ACTION: ALL to consider the Publicity of Christmas Eve Mass for an Agenda item.

14. Minutes Anonymity

To encourage openness in the debate of PPC meetings Fr William asked members to consider if full anonymity in the PPC Minutes would assist discussions.

Chris Senior outlined his approach to minute taking (which in the PPC context was primarily intended to provide best public accountability of a democratically elected body). CS also noted that erroneous notes could be amended at the request of members as part of the circulation of the drafts before final publication.

PPC members felt that the tone and content of PPC minutes were fit for purpose and that attributing key comments to individual members did not inhibit debate.

15. PPC Elections Process

Fr William sought ideas to improve the involvement of the Parish (and ideally increase the field of candidates) in future PPC elections.

Members suggested the current methodology was still relatively new and should be given more time for assessment before any changes were made. The election procedure was however already viewed by many as a more democratic improvement on past practice.

Stephen Walker noted that regular attendees of the less well attended Masses would not necessarily be very well known to the majority of Parishioners. It was suggested PPC candidates could usefully prepare a short introductory paragraph (with photograph) which might be circulated to all before the ballot e.g. as a bulletin insert.

16. Committee Reports (PPC 5.1)

A number of written reports were circulated in advance. The Reports received (and any comments from the PPC meeting noted) were as follows:

a) Liturgy (Mick Britton)

PPC members considered the suggestion of a 'quiet' Mass. On reflection it was generally felt that the use of music provided an important enhancement to the celebration of Mass for the majority of parishioners.

b) Fundraising Report (Sheila Lund)

PPC members acknowledged and welcomed the impressive tally of over £3,500 raised to date during the current financial year.

c) Support Ministries: Cleaning and Shop (Amanda Kelly)

No comments

d) Churches Together in Knaresborough -CTIK (Mick Britton)

No comments

e) School Report (Paul Jackson)

See: Item 5 (4.4)

f) Justice & Peace (Jeff McGillan)

See: Item 11

g) Finance Report (Stephen Walker)

See: Item 7

17. Future Meetings

19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 21st April 2016

19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 21st July 2016

19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 20th October 2016

[AGM: Sunday 8th May 2016 after 10 am Mass]

18. Final Prayer

Fr. William closed the meeting with a prayer.