

St Mary's Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of meeting Thursday 19th October 2017

Present:

- Fr William Wright (Chair)

Appointed

- Paul Jackson (School)
- Simon Stockdale
- Stephen Walker (Finance)

Elected

- Teresa Britton (Liturgy)
- Charlotte Burrell (Formation)
- Amanda Kelly (Support)
- Jeff McGillan (Mission) *late*
- Sheila Lund (Interaction)

- Chris Senior (Secretary)

Apologies: Joanne Brennan, Chris Clissitt.

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

2. **Parish Priest introduction**

Following discussions at a recent Deanery meeting Fr William reported a wider acknowledgement of the significant financial difficulty of some parishioners in supporting second collections. He intended to make clearer to the Parish the voluntary nature of these appeals and how they differed from the main collection.

Fr William also hoped that the main focus of discussions in this PPC meeting, as of the recent Parish Appraisal, would be on the celebration of the liturgy.

3. **Apologies**

As Recorded Above

4. **The minutes of the PPC meeting on 20th July 2017**

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record.

5. **Actions and matters arising from the PPC May 2017 meeting (not itemised in the Agenda)**

3) Matters Arising from PPC May 2017 meeting....

9) Donations for sacramental preparation

Following the previous PPC meeting's rejection of a second collection at the Plenary Mass for First Holy Communion, in the interim Fr William had discussed the matter with the Deanery and had decided he would not now adopt the personal donation letter initiative.

Simon Stockdale commented that payments could not be requested for training or courses which would be compulsory before receipt of a Sacrament. This prompted a discussion about how donations could be best encouraged. Observations and suggestions included:

- Need to retain the balance of encouraging incoming without alienation of donors (either parents or children).
- The anonymity of a donation compared to the more public nature of a second collection was likely to affect the success or impact.
- Stephen Walker reported that the use of a donation approach for First Holy Communion had been approved by the Finance Committee.

In light of the discussion, Fr William decided that a second collection approach should now be adopted for First Holy Communion contributions, but that Fr William would carefully stress the voluntary aspect to Plenary Mass attendees.

3) Matters Arising from PPC **October 2016** meeting....

8) Africa envelope scheme

J&P Funds had now been transferred to the Parish accounts and Jeff McGillan had transferred c £1,160 to Open Arms Malawi. JM was also still awaiting details from the Burkina Faso Parish before arranging the transfer of c £1,160

ACTION: Jeff McGillan to approach Burkina Faso Parish for more details and (subject to findings) then arrange the transfer of c £1,160 from the J&P balance.

15) Website presentation

Fr William has postponed a September presentation to the Parish about the website at all 3 Masses. This was now scheduled for the new date of 14th January 2018.

All other outstanding Actions were completed, or otherwise raised as Agenda items.

6. Renaming of the Africa Envelope Scheme

As raised at the previous PPC Fr William requested a focussed discussion and suggestions for the renaming of the Africa Envelope Scheme in order to eliminate stereotypical labelling.

Name suggestions included variants of 'outreach', 'mission' or 'overseas.' The very specific (e.g. Malawi) was thought to be too inflexible for future changes in the parish but it was also felt a very general 'mission' title risked confusion with UK based initiatives e.g. SVP. It was also agreed a degree of specificity would help keep the parish more engaged. It was suggested the decision be left until the results of JM's investigations into Burkina Faso were completed, although most members felt it was now time that a final selection be made.

It was unanimously agreed the new scheme name 'International Outreach (Country Name)' should now be used, this format satisfactorily answered all concerns.

In further discussions it was also agreed to be highly desirable to establish a mechanism for allocating extraordinary one-off payments to other causes from 'International Outreach' funds. This process should be clear to the Parish, preferably by clear fiscal governance and formal rules. Such regulation could, for example, allow for the automatic donation of a pre-set amount of funds to all DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee) appeals.

ACTION: Stephen Walker to investigate accountable mechanisms and governance for one-off donations from the 'International Outreach' account.

7. Finance Report

Stephen Walker gave a verbal report of Parish accounts. This included:

- Church Refurbishment Project: Building works had been completed on schedule, and with costs at approx. £89K (saving of c £9K assisted by better than expected tax reclaim). Damp in the Church had been largely addressed, although given the age and structure of the building a long term drying out and re-assessment would be required over the next 18-24 months. Special thanks were particularly noted to Philip Burnett for his design works and professional expertise in this very successful project.

The Ampleforth loan for the Church refurbishment works now had 8 years to run, with annual repayments of £25K (including 3% interest).

- Parish Budget: With the closure of the pre-school and the subsequent reduced parish income from Hall hire, the 2017-18 budget was now being reappraised. Although finances were still balanced there was now relatively little operating contingency which reflected the loss of the c. £12k annual playgroup income.

Miscellaneous other annual income sources included £1.5K for resident car parking (it was suggested users of the scheme be encouraged to set up standing orders) and £1.5K from *200 Club* (which could be helpfully expanded to new members).

Fundraising annual targets had been reduced from £10K to £8K to help relieve the intensive burden on the group. It was hoped to supplement this shortfall from specific repeated second collections and new Standing Orders to the building fund.

- The Old School: It was stressed that increasing hiring of the Parish Hall offered the best single avenue for fund raising and addressing the budget, and all efforts would be made to maximise Hall use and income. As such a new Parish Hall working group had been recently formed to drive this initiative, lead by Simon Knowles.

8. School Report

In a supplement to the written report, Paul Jackson stressed the financial challenge facing the School, and the urgent need to increase recruitment. This was, in part, to be addressed by the planned development of a new Pre-School feeder facility at St Mary's as discussed previously. School Open Evenings and Open Days were to be introduced and advertised in the local press.

PJ requested permission for the display on the Church (Bond End) railings of a School recruitment banner to take advantage of the high pedestrian and traffic flow; this request was unanimously approved. It was also clarified that although Catholic applications to the school would have some priority, pupil recruitment would be encouraged and extended to all.

9. Other Reports Circulated

Liturgy Report (Teresa Britton).

No comments to this previously circulated paper

10. Parish Appraisal 2017

Fr William gave a slide presentation of the graphed survey results and invited comments against specific issues. PPC observations and suggestions included:

- The age profile of parishioners was of continued concern (only 15 of 173 respondents were under 24 years of age) although this did mirror the national picture.
- Welcoming nature of St Mary's ('Always made welcome' 82%) should be commended.
- Fr William considered the dialogue elements of Mass referred to *The Sign of Peace*, but members thought survey responses would have been for all elements of dialogue.
- It was noted that the 2011 English translation of the Mass was still seen as awkward and unhelpful in engagement, the dialogue used was not 'natural' English.
- It was commented re. 'heartfelt' and 'automatic' response survey options, that being undemonstrative did not mean that more reticent parishioners lacked engagement.
- The use of a more personal informal welcome at the very start of Mass (to children on particular occasions e.g. school visits and the wider parish as standard) would be helpful. The stiff translation of the formal liturgical Greeting from the Introductory Rites was not regarded by parishioners as a welcoming call in the same way.
- The experiment of standing for the Offertory and Eucharistic Prayer had received (at best) decidedly mixed results.
- The experimental use of hand gestures at Lent seemed less divisive to parishioners.
- It was stressed that introducing any changes would take time, repeated practice and above all frequent and repeated explanations by the Parish Priest to all parishioners.
- The Atrium noticeboard was little used by parishioners, suggested due to limited access at the end of Mass among the exiting congregation. The Bulletin referencing to notices on the boards (with no other details) was regarded as particularly unhelpful.

ACTION: ALL to continue the discussion of how to engage the Parish with the Mass – *To be raised as an Agenda item at the next meeting.*

11. Mass Attendance Recording

Fr William questioned the continued use of recording (in the weekly bulletin) attendance figures at Mass, especially as these attendance statistics are not a requirement excepting for the October annual Diocesan survey.

After some discussion it was decided to continue the practice of recording Mass attendances. In the bulletin throughout the year.

12. Children's Christmas Eve Mass

Fr William reported that Anna Diamond had agreed to take up the role as the new co-ordinator for the Christmas Eve Mass.

Fr William also stated that, due to the 2017 (infrequent) occurrence of 4th Sunday of Advent on 24th December, this year there would not actually be a 4:30pm Children's Mass. He intended as an alternative that attempts should be made to highlight and promote the 10:00am Christmas Day Mass for attendance by children and families.

PPC members strongly recommended a reconsideration of the decision to omit the Children's service in 2017. It was regarded as important for St Mary's to support the expectations and high numbers of parishioners for this very popular annual Children's service. It was also known that this service was the only annual church attendance that some Catholic families observed which should not be overlooked.

It was also felt that very few families were likely to rearrange their traditional Christmas Day routines in order to attend Sunday 10:00 mass. Of minor, though additional, concern would be the reduction in plate income if the Children's Christmas Eve Mass was not held.

The main options suggested by members to reinstate a Christmas Eve service were:

- To directly replace the 4th Advent 5:00pm Mass with the 'traditional' Christmas Eve service at 4:30pm; although Fr William noted his reluctance to alter the 5:00pm Mass.
- To hold as scheduled the 4th Advent 5:00pm Mass on the 24th but to make it far more children/family friendly and festive (increased carols etc.).

ACTION: Fr William agreed to consider the PPC suggestions re. the Christmas Eve Mass.

13. Parish Submissions: External Notice Boards

Fr William reported that a Parishioner had urged the urgent replacement of the external blue Notice Boards (Garden & Bond End) which were now in a very poor physical condition.

This important work was already in-hand, and Stephen Walker and Philip Burnett were overseeing the replacement of both sets of external boards.

14. Future Meetings

19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 22nd February 2018
18.00 AGM, Sunday 6th May 2018
19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 3rd May 2018
19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 19th July 2018
NEW 19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 18th October 2018

15. Thank You's

Fr William confirmed that the terms of office of several PPC members had now reached their end, and that he wished to formally record his thanks to the outgoing members for their contribution to parish affairs. This gratitude was unanimously echoed by all PPC members.

The outgoing Parish Pastoral Council members are:

Elected
Amanda Kelly (Support)
Jeff McGillan (Mission)

Appointed
Stephen Walker (Finance)
Joanne Brennan

PPC Elections for the above vacated posts would be held in February 2018.

16. Final Prayer

The meeting closed with a prayer.