

St Mary's Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of meeting Thursday 20th October 2016

Present:

- Fr William Wright (Acting Chair)

Appointed

- Martin Mayhew
- Stephen Walker (Finance)

Elected

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

Secretary: Chris Senior (Note Taker)

Apologies: Joanne Brennan, Chris Clissitt, Paul Jackson (School),

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

2. **The minutes of the PPC meeting on 21st July 2016**

CORRECTION: 10) Reservation of Seats at First Holy Communion

The following text was suggested to remove any ambiguity:

“PPC members were divided in their opinions over the suggestion of a dedicated single and separate Mass for all First Communion celebrants”.

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

3. **Matters Arising from the PPC July 2016 meeting (not itemised in the Agenda)**

3) Matters Arising from PPC February 2016 meeting....

11) Parish Endorsed Charitable Causes

Jeff McGillan and Stephen Walker reported that all the financial arrangements had been completed to bring the J&P accounts within the general Parish accounts.

Other matters on this issue were discussed later in the meeting SEE Item 8.

4) Matters Arising from AGM 8th May 2016 meeting....

Attendance

Fr William reported that after consideration he would not be organising a special ‘Open Forum’ to discuss parish affairs as had been proposed. It was however agreed that the 15 minute break between 10:00 am Mass and the AGM was too lengthy and had discouraged attendance and that the break would be shorter in the future.

6) Letter of Valerie Walker to PPC

Fr William was still considering the suitability of a monthly or occasional 'quiet' Mass (it was assumed this was to be intended to be Mass celebrated without music). It was suggested the wider Parish could be approached for its views as part of the planned 2017 Parish Appraisal.

11) Questionnaire to Parishioners no longer attending Mass at St Mary's

Fr William had approached several lapsed-attenders and was willing to provide feedback over their reasons at the end of the meeting. *Unfortunately the considerable amount of other PPC business and lack of time prevented a return to this matter.*

4. Welcome

Following several anecdotes which illustrated the issue Fr William invited a discussion over ways St Mary could improve its welcome to individuals, and especially to new or reserved/shy attendees at Mass.

Among the comments:

- Without wishing to be complacent, and remaining open to opportunities to improve, most PPC members still felt that the Parish was already very welcoming and inviting.
- It was believed to be very important that the message to all parishioners to be actively welcoming and inclusive should be constantly refreshed (e.g. repeat the 'greet your neighbour' initiative shown some time ago by Fr William).
- It was accepted that PPC members could help lead 'welcoming' by setting a good personal example.
- It might be productive to create a new role for volunteers who would actively seek out and engage with new attendees.
- Members believed any attempt to formalise or encourage silence before Mass (in order to avoid newcomers feeling socially excluded) would probably be opposed by parishioners.

5. Celebration of 1st Holy Communion

Fr William provided a brief outline of recent meetings held with Catechists over revisions to the practice of preparing children for 1st Holy Communion.

In practical terms 1st Holy Communion would be taken as part of a normal parish mass, but (from 2019) the number of children making their 1st HC would be limited. Parents would approach the parish priest and in consultation with him choose the date for their child's 1st HC. A special 'Plenary Mass' for all children would be held at a later date, with some form of shared social celebration. The instruction for and celebration of 1st Reconciliation was to be separate from preparation for 1st Holy Communion and celebration would be on the same personal basis of parental choice of date, though this may also be followed by a Plenary Reconciliation Service.

The above measures had been adopted by Catechists, albeit not unanimously approved, and were intended to; empower parents to defer their children if they were not yet mature, to refocus the children on the sacrament (not the social initiation) and to help encourage attendance at Mass of children and their families after 1st Communion.

In the following discussion, key comments of the PPC included:

- Charlotte Burrell had been made aware of past parental concerns over the exclusion of some children from parties with 1st Holy Communion spread over several weeks. The practice also removed the social reinforcement of a full group celebration.
- Mick Britton noted that re-emphasising the importance of the Sacrament was the paramount reason for these changes. In response others believed that the social interaction, which was an important 'cultural expectation', should not be lost.
- Fr William confirmed that no guidance had been taken from the Diocese over the changes, but did report that parents would be briefed at a meeting on 11th December.
- Fr William clarified his misgivings over the old special Saturday Mass as a 'one off' event which did not appear to encourage continued attendance. Sheila Lund and Amanda Kelly did however record the value of this past practice, including the traditional involvement of the previous year's parents assisting with the social event.
- Martin Mayhew asked what level of involvement the School had. MB noted that there was support e.g. training materials and photocopies were being provided, but that the main instruction was done by Church Catechists and off School premises.

6. **Home-School Parish Links**

In the absence of Paul Jackson (School Representative), Fr William was reluctant to fully discuss all the issues as raised in the pre-circulated paper. However he did give a brief progress report to the 16 initiative points of that paper.

Initiatives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14 and 16 had already started, would do so shortly, or were in early discussion.

Initiative 4 and 11 (Volunteers working in the School garden/Parents assisting in prayers or liturgy on school premises) would be subject to DBS checks if pursued.

Initiative 7 (School newsletter circulated to the Church) Fr William noted that he would prefer direct addresses from School representatives in Mass.

Initiative 9 (presumably a prayer space for children, not adults) needed to clarify.

Initiative 10 (Joint celebrations of 'special moments') needed to clarify.

Initiative 15 (School Development Plan) was being pursued by PJ.

PPC members suggested that the (Termly) attendance of children at Family Mass should be improved, and warm support was given to the suggestion of a cycle of Class (not School) attendance at successive Sunday 10:00 am Masses. It was felt the smaller groups would encourage attendance, parental involvement and give more opportunity for children's individual active role in the mass e.g. bidding prayers, readings, offertory etc.

ACTION: The issue of Home-School-Parish links to be reconsidered at the next meeting.

7. Reserving Seats

Fr William revisited July 2016 meeting's discussion on the practice and problems of seat reservations, outlining his misgivings over allowing any form of reserved seating, at any service, in what was an open and inclusive church.

PPC members responded that:

- Reservation of seats was definitely required for the Christmas Eve 'Children's' Mass, especially for those children engaged in activities e.g. Bidding Prayers etc.
- It was also felt that reservation for family's attending baptisms was helpful.
- The 'tradition' of close family members occupying the front seats for funerals would not change; even if all seats were made available to all.
- Most PPC members did not perceive seat reservations was a problem in the Church.
- It was suggested that Fr William could ask families or groups about their own preferences on a case-by-case basis.
- Stephen Walker suggested that, with the exception of the Christmas Eve Children's Mass, we try not reserving seats and see if it leads to any problems

8. Zimbabwe Student Support

Fr William presented a short slide-show from 2008 and 2010 visits to the Ampleforth community of Christ the Word in Macheke, Zimbabwe. He suggested that individual 'sponsored' children supported by the community could be funded through their Primary and Secondary School education by J&P donations raised at St Mary's.

Stephen Walker also gave an *ad hoc* briefing of a charity 'Open Arms Malawi' which he was involved with, which supported and funded the upbringing and education of orphan children. A similar suggestion was made that J&P donations would be gratefully received by the charity and would be fully accountable.

Jeff McGillan had reported earlier that no reply had yet been received to a follow-up letter asking for more information from the parish of Ouahigouya Titao in Burkina Faso; though the political situation and communications were known to difficult. Advice had been sought from Fr Terry re. possible alternatives but it was hoped St Mary's J&P could support this parish.

The PPC agreed that it was now both urgent and important to relaunch the Africa envelope scheme, and to provide parishioners with information on prospective recipients. It was agreed in principle that all the above 3 causes could all be supported by the Parish, and that a joint involvement with St Mary's School could also be a very positive avenue to explore.

For clarity, it was suggested that the above 3 causes be separately introduced to the Parish, using the Bulletin and direct addresses at the end of Mass. Fr William would be imminently revisiting Zimbabwe and would prepare material for a presentation.

ACTION: Fr William, Stephen Walker and Jeff McGillan would prepare (respective) addresses and information on the good causes of Zimbabwe, Malawi and Burkina Faso; and also prepare for the earliest practical relaunch of the J&P envelope scheme at St Mary's.

9. Risen Christ Figure (Bond End) Sculpture

Fr William reported as an update that artist Tommy Craggs had quoted approx. £5,000 for a wooden sculpture of the Risen Christ to replace the war memorial cross on Bond End.

In discussion it was felt that:

- The above reduced sculpture costs was generally welcomed compared to earlier quotes of (£24-40K) for a stone figure.
- Stephen Walker noted that the Parish Finance Committee could not (yet) approve any further activity given the still unknown costs for the planned Church renovation and redecoration. A more informed financial decision would be possible in 6 months.
- SW also questioned, contrary to previous reports, whether the war memorial could actually be removed from the Church?
- Fr William believed that it was still possible and desirable to meet the Armistice centenary (2018) for the installation of a new sculpture.

Further discussion was curtailed by other business and lack of time.

ACTION: Continue the discussion of the Sculpture as an Agenda item at the next meeting.

10. Parish Appraisal (2017)

Fr William sought PPC feedback over the planned repeat of the Parish Appraisal questionnaire in Easter 2017.

Jeff McGillan noted that in order to gather any statistically valid data and measure the impact of changes since the 2015 Appraisal would require most of the questions to remain unaltered.

It was agreed the 2015 projector query could be dropped, but suggested that a new question on the 'welcoming' nature of St Mary's might be introduced. The number of questions would need to remain small, to encourage best responses and a 'comments' box should be kept.

Mick Britton noted that extending the submission dates would help those parishioners who just happened to miss the survey, although it was also noted that the previous practice of requesting an almost immediate return (i.e. the surveys were collected directly after Mass) had helped secure a very good response rate and Parish involvement.

Further discussion was curtailed by other business and lack of time.

ACTION: Continue the discussion of Parish Appraisal as an Agenda item at the next meeting.

11. Parishioner Submissions to PPC

a) Hymn Boards Reinstalled

To assist attendees in their preparation for the Mass, a parishioner had suggested that the hymn numbers board (which had been removed since the introduction of the projectors) should be reinstalled.

No member voiced strong support to this proposal and it was unknown how many people had actually been affected by the changes. However PPC members did suggest as an alternative that the hymn numbers could be printed in the weekly Bulletin, or that the hymn numbers be projected on the screens before the start of Mass. It was also noted that the numbers could be put on a temporary poster displayed near the hymn books. The question of re-installation of the board, or questions might also be included in the 2017 Parish Appraisal.

ACTION: Fr William to further consider the issue of publicising hymn numbers.

b) Children's Liturgy Restrictions

It was noted that the desirability of excluding children who had received First Holy Communion from Children's Liturgy had been well discussed in several previous meetings, and that subsequently PPC members had few additional comments.

Fr William did note that the age-range changes to Y4 for First Holy Communion which were now being introduced in the Diocese would probably eliminate the concerns related to children's maturity and attendance at the Children's Liturgy.

12. Review of the PPC and its Constitution [11.1]

Due to lack of time this issue was deferred to the next meeting.

ACTION: Review of PPC Constitution -11.1- as an Agenda item at the next meeting.

13. Reports Circulated: [PPC 5.1]

A number of written reports were circulated in advance. The Reports received (and any comments from the PPC meeting not noted elsewhere) were as follows:

a) Fundraising Report (Sheila Lund).

The PPC expressed its thanks and congratulations to the Fundraising-Social Team for the exceptional activity and the very impressive results it had achieved.

b) Financial Report (Stephen Walker)

No comments to this previously circulated paper

c) School Report (Paul Jackson)

No comments to the previously circulated paper.

14. Future Meetings

19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 23rd February 2017

19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 4th May 2017

19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 20th July 2017

19:00 – 20:30 Thursday 19th October 2017 **NEW**

15. Final Prayer

The meeting closed with a prayer.