

St Mary's Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of meeting Thursday 22nd February 2018

Present:

- Fr William Wright (Chair)

Appointed

- Carmel Bridson
- Chris Clissitt
- Paul Jackson (School)
- Vince McGurk
- Simon Stockdale

Elected

- Charlotte Burrell (Formation)
- Julie Finn (Mission)
- Amanda Kelly (Support)
- Sheila Lund (Interaction)
- Chris Senior (Secretary)

Apologies: Teresa Britton (Liturgy).

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

2. **Apologies**

As recorded above.

Fr William welcomed three new members to the PPC; Carmel Bridson, Julie Finn (Mission) and Vince McGurk.

Amanda Kelly was also confirmed in her continuing role as representative for Support.

3. **Parish Priest introduction**

Fr William gave a short address to the PPC outlining his intention to grow the Parish of St Mary's. This aim was to be pursued *via* three specific initiatives; Liturgy, Welcome and Missionary outreach.

4. **The minutes of the PPC meeting on 19th October 2017**

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved as an accurate record. The motion was forwarded by Simon Stockdale and seconded by Sheila Lund.

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

4) Matters Arising from PPC Oct 2017 meeting....

15) Website presentation

Fr William reported that unfortunately Graham Yare had been unable to attend St Mary's for the proposed 14th January address at Mass on the Parish website so the talk(s) were postponed.

ACTION: Fr William would consider a new date for the website demonstration, ideally in the near future, and if necessary make the address to the Parish (with the assistance of the Mass 'AV Operators').

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

9) Donations for sacramental preparation

Simon Stockdale suggested that the second collection approach should *also* be adopted for Confirmation (as well as First Holy Communion contributions as discussed previously).

This proposal was accepted and Fr William would again carefully stress the voluntary aspect of this to all Mass attendees for Confirmation.

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

8) Africa envelope scheme

No progress known re. Jeff McGillan's attempts to make contact with the Burkina Faso parish and to verify the local situation before the potential transfer of c £1,160.

ACTION: Fr William would check with Jeff McGillan to determine progress re. his approach to Burkina Faso Parish for more details. Subject to positive findings JM would then arrange the transfer of c £1,160 from the J&P balance.

6) Renaming of the Africa Envelope Scheme

Stephen Walker had circulated draft documentation to PPC members re. the mechanisms and amounts that could be donated from the 'International outreach' account by a small advisory group to the DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee) and similar appeals.

Simon Stockdale raised queries re. the method of communicating this change to the Parish, for informing Parishioners of any specific decisions made, and the default £ amounts.

ACTION: Simon Stockdale agreed to provide (and coordinate) direct feedback to Stephen Walker re. the draft document for special 'International outreach' payments.

Sheila Lund also noted the urgent need to publicise the new '*International Outreach*' (formerly *Africa Envelope*) scheme and to relaunch fundraising, including, but not restricted, to a new envelope donation campaign.

ACTION: Fr William agreed to discuss the urgent formal (re-)launch of the 'International Outreach' scheme to the Parish with Jeff McGillan.

It was also suggested that creating a new PPC post, acting as a direct representative for 'International Outreach' could be very beneficial.

ACTION: Fr William to consider the matter of appointing a PPC representative for 'International Outreach' at least one of whom should be a PPC member.

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

6. **Missionary Outreach**

Julie Finn noted that funds received from red-box donations were down on previous years, and urged the need to recruit new, younger parishioners to join the scheme.

JF also requested clarity on which particular causes should be supported and how best to launch a campaign and provide further information to all the Parish. In response it was noted funds had already been provided to 'Open Arms Malawi' while (See Item 5) outreach to Burkina Faso was still being explored. It was noted that the Ampleforth community of Christ the Word in Macheke, Zimbabwe or the local Macheke Primary school or school fees for its students might still be considered which also benefited from requiring no intermediary fees for fund transfers. In response to a suggestion to provide stationery or equipment Fr William noted financial aid better served, this partly due to the very considerable logistical issues and limitations in delivering 'goods' in Africa.

ACTION: Fr William to explore how support fees for poor families in Zimbabwe may be supported by the Parish.

It was suggested that technology e.g. app-based donations should be explored for improved fund raising e.g. 'Just giving' or (the fee-free) 'My donate' apps or similar. Expanded use of the Parish Twitter account could also assist greatly in this area. It was also suggested the weekly Parish Bulletin could be better used to publicise fund raising campaigns.

Sheila Lund noted that Parishioners currently found it difficult to understand how various Parish schemes interconnected or the wider picture of all activities. Greater clarity and explanation of all the good causes was required to improve knowledge and engagement.

The involvement of the School in Parish causes would be potentially helpful, though Paul Jackson noted the School already adopted its own established charities and good causes.

ACTION: Paul Jackson to explore how Parish and School could work together on missionary outreach activity (including greater involvement of children).

7. Solicitude for Newcomers

Fr William noted the mixed reaction he received after an address given at Mass (14th January) re the need to improve the 'welcome' at St Mary's. Some parishioners had questioned the criticism insisting St Mary's was already welcoming, but emails and other comments received by Fr William (including some by new attendees) showed there was a requirement for improvement in 'welcoming' new attendees.

The PPC's comments and suggestions were sought on this matter, in response:

- There was the potential to ask for volunteers to act as 'new people' monitors. To identify, welcome, conduct self-introduction, invite for coffee etc. to all newcomers.
- It was noted that despite his best efforts Fr William was not always able to greet all newcomers personally, especially if he was engaged in discussions with other parishioners in the busy, but very short period directly after each Mass.
- Outreach for parents with young children was seen as a potentially useful area. Charlotte Burrell noted that interaction between parents attending Children's Liturgy already provided some aspects of this welcome and a breakdown of barriers.
- Occupation of the traditionally empty front of church (i.e. front rows) by existing parishioners could help reduce the anxiety of newcomers otherwise forced to occupy these vacant and 'exposed' seats.
- Short 'Speed-talking' self-introduction sessions for new and old parishioners. These could be introduced either in, before or after Mass (or all three).
- Need to acknowledge that some newcomers would prefer to be gently integrated into the Church, an overbearing welcome could actually be off-putting.
- Parishioners could invite i.e. 'take along' newcomers to refreshments after Mass.
- A regular 'welcome' speech by the Parish Priest before Mass would be very helpful.
- It was believed important for Fr William to repeatedly remind (and insist to) the parish the need to be more welcoming to newcomers *or* 'people you don't know'.

8. Parish Experience of the Liturgy

Fr William requested (Oct 2017 minutes) a further discussion, and feedback on suggestions of providing a 'better experience and liturgical engagement' in the Mass. He gave several examples e.g. improving eye-contact between the priest and parishioners, extending the 'natural' feel of the Mass, the hand-gestures/ standing experiment tried in Lent 2017.

PPC comments (and Fr William further responses) included:

- Councillors acknowledged that challenging and even undoing traditionally taught (and outmoded or mechanical) practices was sometimes appropriate.
- Some recent changes (e.g. bidding prayers from within the congregation, not the Ambo) were seen as an improvement, and parishioners understood the reasons. Fr William also noted that from his perspective this change had improved the Mass.
- The projection of hymn texts and responses onto the Church walls also helped all to raise their heads and improve engagement and interaction.
- Councillors thought it important to remember that parishioners are individuals and that they should still be allowed the choice to respond in Mass as they wish and not be pressured into uniformity (eg lack of eye-contact does not necessarily mean lack of engagement and may simply reflect individual preference or expectations).

- It was noted that Fr William needed to continue working hard to make clear this initiative (and all its forms) to all parishioners.
- Taking away constraints or restraints of behaviour in Mass (as with School Children's Mass) had been deliberately introduced by Fr William.
- Fr William commented that he was not intending to reintroduce the use of overt hand-gestures as had been trialled in Lent 2017.

Fr William thanked the council for their comments

9. Finance Report

Report had been circulated.

10. School Report – Previously Circulated

Peter Jackson noted the School was awaiting a decision from the Bishop Wheeler Trust in the coming week re. (£150K) capital funding for classroom development to support the proposed nursery provision at St Mary's school.

11. Parish Appraisal 2017

No separate discussion. Fr William noted substantive issues had been covered in Items 7 & 8.

12. Future Meetings

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| 18.00 | AGM, Sunday 6 th May 2018 |
| 19:00 – 20:30 | Thursday 3 rd May 2018 |
| 19:00 – 20:30 | Thursday 19 th July 2018 |
| 19:00 – 20:30 | Thursday 18 th October 2018 |
| NEW 19:00 – 20:30 | Thursday 28 th February 2019 |

13. Final Prayer

The meeting closed with a prayer.