

St Mary's Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of meeting Monday 20th July 2020

Present:

- Fr William Wright (Chair)

Appointed

- Paul Jackson (School)
- Chris Clissitt
- Simon Stockdale
- Barbara Watson
- Vince McGurk

Elected

- Teresa Britton (Liturgy)
- Amanda Kelly (Support)
- Sheila Lund (Interaction)
- Jules Finn (Mission)

Paul Coman (Secretary to PPC)

- **Apologies:** Frances Watson (Formation)

1. Opening Reading and Prayer

Led by Fr. William

2. Apologies

As recorded above

3. Parish Priest introduction

Fr William noted the following points:

- Mutual support Fr William was aware of many examples of mutual support being provided by the Parish community since the start of 'lockdown';
- Parish website There had been increased use of the Parish website;
- Website company There had been an enforced change of company used to support the Parish website;
- Livestreaming Fr William stated that livestreaming of Mass had been maintained since the start of 'lockdown' and was continuing;
- Livestreaming rather than recording Fr William's explained his preference for livestreaming rather than recording of Mass. Livestreaming enabled the parish to 'come together', albeit virtually rather than physically, and so replicated, as far as possible, physical presence at

Mass. This rationale for preferring livestreaming over recording had been supported by those parishioners with whom he had had opportunity to discuss the issue;

- Implications of potential re-opening There was now an option re-open St Mary's. Fr William wanted to consider the implications of potential 're-opening' fully and carefully, with the benefit of advice offered by the Parish Health & Safety Officer and other PPC members.

4. The minutes of PPC meeting of 4th May 2020

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

5. Actions and matters arising from the PPC 4th May 2020 meeting (not in the Agenda)

Item 9, Action point 1 (draft Parish Appraisal questionnaire)

ACTION: Fr William to consider replacing closed question with an open comment space for the question pertaining to views on the trial period without printed texts for the Liturgy of the Word.

Fr William stated that, on reflection, he wished to provide an 'open comment' option for all questions, with a 'multi-choice' element sitting alongside, where appropriate.

Item 9, Action Point 3 (timing of Parish Appraisal)

ACTION: Implementation of Parish Appraisal to be delayed until after the end of 'lockdown'.

Fr William stated that implementation of the Parish Appraisal continued to be delayed.

Item 10 (online 'text giving' option)

Fr William stated that the take-up of the 'text giving' option had been low. Information was displayed during the Offertory hymn. Fr William wondered whether the two-line explanation was too lengthy and/or difficult for some parishioners to read.

PPC members made the following points:

- It is possible, though not easy, to read the projected explanation;
- Parishioners may find focus on both the hymn and the 'text giving' explanation difficult to do simultaneously. It was suggested that the 'text giving' explanation could be projected separately at another point in the Mass, possibly as a separate slide following the final verse of the recessional hymn.

6. School Report

Paul Jackson referred PPC members to his written report, circulated prior to this meeting. The following points were made in discussion:

- Fr William thanked Paul Jackson for the Report and stated that he had not realised that St Mary's School had been operational through the Easter holidays in order to continue to support children of key workers. Paul Jackson explained that senior staff had operated a rota system to staff the Easter holiday period. He pointed out that, during 'lockdown', the school had provided online lessons and made telephone contact with each child and their parents;
- Paul Jackson explained that planning for September involved re-configuration of classrooms to position the teacher at the front of a classroom, with pupils' desks in rows facing the teacher. The teacher was to be at least 2 metres away from the first row of desks used by pupils. Each class group was to form a 'bubble'. Staggered timing was planned regarding use of both gates to enter and exit the school building;
- PPC members asked whether St Mary's School would be able to meet 'social distancing' guidance from September, especially regarding children and staff in the reception class. Paul Jackson responded that every effort was being made in planning to ensure 'social distancing' guidance was met as fully as possible, but that would be inevitably more challenging regarding the school's youngest children;
- PPC members expressed admiration for the engaging and enjoyable activities at school during 'lockdown', as presented on the school website.

7. Re-opening of St Mary's

Presentation by Parish Health & Safety Officer (Vince McGurk)

The Health & Safety Officer explained that the Diocese of Leeds has provided a 36 pages risk assessment template, supported by 50 (approx.) pages of guidance. The Diocese of Leeds requires submission of the Parish plan for 'sign off' prior to re-opening for private prayer, weekday or Sunday Mass.

The Parish plan is required to:

- Incorporate social distancing of 2 metres and indicate the church's maximum capacity;
- Offer online / telephone booking system for attending Mass and/or visiting church;
- Arrange for 2 stewards to be in place for private prayer visits and Masses;
- Organise a one-way system for movement to, from and within church;
- Make provision for sanitising stations for all attendees to use on entering and leaving church;

- Arrange for a 'full clean' after each service / visit;
- Arrange for Covid-19 sufferers and the clinically vulnerable to be informed that they should not attend Mass or visit church for private prayer;
- Arrange for safety related changes to Mass - no singing, no sign of peace, priest to not say 'Body of Christ' and communicant to not say 'Amen' at Holy Communion because priest and communicant less than 2 metres apart;
- Arrange for refreshments not to be offered;
- Arrange for toilets to remain closed.

Key re-opening implications of Diocese of Leeds guidance for St Mary's:

- Maximum capacity of church would be congregation of 40;
- Use of St Mary's church garden for celebration of Mass could be considered – maximum capacity expected to be congregation of 50 approx. (would require confirmation);
- All meeting rooms to remain closed;
- Recruitment and presence of 2 stewards for private visits and Masses;
- 'Full clean' to be undertaken after private prayer visits and Masses.

PPC members' discussion of Diocese of Leeds guidance and the re-opening implications for St Mary's

The following points were made:

- Cautious approach by Diocese of Leeds Requirements / guidance appear to reflect a very cautious approach by the Diocese of Leeds, especially in view of the current, relatively low risk, context within which St Mary's would be re-opening. The observation was made that this may be the case partly because a high proportion of parishioners and priests were over 70 years old. Additionally, the point was made that the relatively low risk of incidence of Covid-19 was balanced by the potentially very serious consequences for persons affected;
- Need for clarity of definition It was important to obtain detail and clarity regarding the definition of 'clinically vulnerable' that the Diocese of Leeds would require St Mary's to apply;

ACTION: Health & Safety Officer to follow up.

- Were all requirements practicable? Concern was expressed about whether some requirements were practicable e.g. communicants may say 'Amen' inadvertently, despite Diocese of Leeds and Parish policy. The suggestion was made that attendees at Mass could collect their individual host on entry to Mass. Fr William responded that this was not a

decision that could be made at parish level. It would require authorisation from the universal Church;

- Face coverings It was confirmed that face coverings may be worn on visits and/or during Mass, but that wearing a face covering was not required by the Diocese of Leeds;
- 'Full clean' implications There was consideration of what the Diocese of Leeds requirement for a 'full clean' after private prayer visits and Masses would mean in practice. The Health & Safety Officer quoted the Diocese guidance detailing the cleaning of 'any surface'. There was concern that effective cleaning the fabric parts of chairs currently used in church could prove problematic and a suggestion that wooden chairs from the Parish Hall could be transferred to church as they facilitate effective cleaning. Fr William pointed out that the transfer of chairs would require help of volunteers. The need for appropriate protective equipment to be provided to cleaners was noted;
- Volunteers PPC members noted the very significant part that would have to be played by volunteers (cleaning, stewarding, possible transfer of chairs between church and Parish Hall). The Health & Safety Officer pointed out that volunteers must be above the age of 18 years old and below the age of 70 years old;
- Potential for unintended 'fragmentation' of the Parish The potential relationship between the livestreaming of Masses and a re-opening for physical attendance at Mass was explored. Suggestions included offering only one livestreamed Sunday Mass with singing, to create space for other Sunday Masses offering physical attendance without signing. PPC members expressed concern that a hybrid model (livestreamed / physical attendance) could unintentionally 'fragment' the parish. PPC members acknowledged that the limitations placed on Mass where parishioners were physically present e.g. no singing, may create such a sub-optimal experience that some parishioners may prefer to 'attend' a livestream Mass where there was singing;
- Potential measures to facilitate re-opening for private prayer PPC members voiced their awareness that some parishioners had expressed a desire to visit the church for private prayer. The suggestion was made that use of the Chapel for this purpose was worth considering as its smaller space may offer a more straightforward route to meeting Diocese of Leeds requirements, were Chapel doors to remain open and a limited number of chairs arranged to meet social distancing requirements. The Health & Safety Officer was happy to explore this suggestion;
- Approaches adopted by local churches PPC members drew upon their knowledge of the ways in which other churches had approached 're-opening'. Initial indications were that the number of parishioners attending Mass physically was lower than pre-lockdown. The lower numbers of physical attendees appeared to have been accommodated within the churches' reduced capacity that had been necessitated by social distancing requirements. Specific features such as nature and portability of seating played a significant part in determining what was feasible. The practice of one church arranging for parishioners exit the church immediately following receipt of Holy Communion was noted. The Health & Safety Office confirmed that this was one of three options for receiving Holy Communion that were approved by the Diocese.

Fr William's reflections upon points raised in discussion:

Fr William stated that he recognised livestreaming was 'second best' and that a return to physical receipt of Holy communion would be ideal;

He expressed concern regarding the feasibility of implementing some of the current Diocese of Leeds requirements; in particular, the requirement for recruiting, training and co-ordinating additional volunteers;

Fr William echoed the concern expressed by some PPC members that a hybrid livestream / physical attendance at Mass model may unintentionally 'fragment' the parish;

Fr William acknowledged that the restrictions currently placed on Mass with a physically present congregation e.g. no singing, created a situation where continuation of livestreaming, though sub-optimal, offered positive dimensions;

Fr William explained that God was not limited by normal vehicles of grace and that the sacramental grace of the eucharist continued to be conferred within the livestream context. Additionally, St Mary's Mass does not meet an essential physical need in the way a pharmacy or a supermarket does. Therefore, the question arose as to whether there were grounds to regard physical re-opening of St Mary's, though obviously 'always desirable', as 'necessary';

Fr William invited feedback from PPC members.

PPC members' feedback to Fr William:

A return towards 'normality' as soon as safe and feasible would be good;

Though private prayer may be undertaken anywhere, for some parishioners praying within church has very strong appeal. Re-opening for private prayer, rather than Mass, could be a first step and would be appreciated by parishioners;

Livestreaming of Masses should continue;

Given that St Mary's offers livestreaming of Masses where many other parishes do not, it may be wise for St Mary's to remain physically closed for the next couple of months to a) learn from experiences of churches which have re-opened and b) await potential easing of national and Diocese of Leeds requirements;

It was important to continue to identify parishioners without access to internet and television so that support could be offered to enable them to join the livestreamed Mass.

8. Finance Report and implications for the parish

Chris Clissitt made the following points, as additional commentary to the slides comprising the video presentation to the Parish in July 2020, circulated before this meeting:

- A predicted £2,500 deficit for the first quarter had not materialised. In fact, a surplus of £1,600 was recorded. This had been because expenditure in the first quarter had been abnormally low and significantly lower than in the first quarter of the previous financial year;
- Absence of offertory plate donations during 'lockdown' had been only partially offset by other forms of donation;
- The Finance Committee had made projections based on an end of 'lockdown' in June 2020. However, important features of 'lockdown' (church closure, absence of fundraising) remained in place;
- Review of the financial position at the end of the second quarter would be important;
- The Finance Committee felt that the recent showing, during livestreamed Masses, of a video presentation of the financial situation provided parishioners with appropriate and sufficient communication at this point.

Fr William echoed concern regarding the financial picture that would be revealed at the end of the second quarter, given the loss of offertory income that appeared to be being less than fully offset by the limited take up of 'text giving' and current standing orders.

9. Remaining period of church closure - considerations

Fr William asked whether PPC members could think of any unexplored issues to which consideration should be given.

PPC members stressed the need to continue to offer support to those parishioners without access to television or internet. One PPC member raised the possibility of visiting parishioners in this situation with IT equipment and appropriate physical protective equipment.

Fr William stated that he was now placing a copy of the Parish weekly bulletin on the window of the Atrium, as it had become apparent that the website was not being accessed by all parishioners.

10. Parish Appraisal 2020

Fr William explained that he had added 3 questions to the draft Parish Appraisal questionnaire, to address 2 issues; livestreaming and physical attendance at Mass.

11. Reminder of dates

PPC (all Monday 1900)
19 Oct 2020, 22 Feb 2021

Proposed dates

10 May 2021 – (to avoid clash with May bank holiday)

03 May 2020 AGM after 10am Mass – reschedule to be decided

ACTION: Fr William to reschedule proposed 3rd May 2020 AGM

12. Final Prayer

The meeting closed with a prayer.