

St Mary's Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of meeting Monday 1st November 2021

Present:

- Fr William Wright (Chair)

Appointed

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

Elected

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

Paul Coman (Secretary to PPC)

- **Apologies:** Jules Finn (Mission), Frances Watson (Formation)

1. Opening Reading and Prayer

Led by Fr. William

2. Apologies

As recorded above

3. Parish Priest introduction

Fr William made the following points:

- Three important pillars of our Parish life are celebration of the liturgy, welcome and outreach. We do well in these aspects and continue to 'grow' in each.
- The two key issues for consideration at this PPC are climate change and our participation in the Synod called by Pope Francis. Regarding climate change, we should consider how we may reduce our Parish carbon footprint. Regarding the Synod, we need to consider how best to play our part.
- There is a need also for us to consider how to re-boot processes to ensure a democratic election to the PPC in the current context where only 50% of Parish celebrate Mass in church compared to pre-pandemic levels.

4. Approval of PPC 31st August 2021 minutes

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

5. Actions / matters arising from the minutes of the PPC 31st August 2021 (not itemised in the agenda)

Item 5

Fr William referred to the Parish 'children's church' provision and how to build on this. He explained that one possibility would be to see if the team could offer a third class, targeted at older children. A second possibility would be for him to adopt a different approach towards celebration of the 'liturgy of the word', which prioritised accessibility for the younger element of the congregation in the delivery of his homily. This may enhance children's engagement while also continuing to communicate effectively with adults. A third possibility would be to move to omit the second reading, so that the demand on children's attention span was reduced. Fr William invited observations from PPC members. These are recorded below.

- Possible inclusion of pictures, images, illustrations or photographs to illustrate the reading/s.
- One PPC member appreciated the importance of enhancing engagement of children in years 4-7, but expressed concern that older members of the congregation may not favour the omission of the second reading from the Mass.
- One PPC member pointed out the importance of a smooth and effective transition from 'children's church' to Mass, to prevent this being the point where children's engagement waned.
- One PPC member saw merit in Fr William's suggestion that he adjust his style of homily delivery to appeal to Years 6/7 in the family Mass, but pointed out that he'd need to revise his delivery in other Sunday Masses that were not specifically directed towards family attendance, so that older congregation did not feel patronised.
- One PPC member suggested that Fr William may generate greater engagement of children by explaining the purpose of different elements of the Mass. This approach had worked well in a school context.
- Several PPC members expressed concern that First Holy Communion appeared to be interpreted by some as a form of graduation or 'passing out' ceremony, with a subsequent falling away of engagement with the Parish. One PPC member suggested that continuation of 'children's church' for one year after First Holy Communion may help prevent the latter being misinterpreted as a conclusion.

Item 6, bullet point 4

Fr William referred to the Building Loan Fund and asked PPC members whether they felt there may still be some hesitation regarding making donations via mobile phone texts in church. Several PPC members indicated that they felt more comfortable to donate outside of Mass and so were not always responding to donation information projected on the screen during Mass.

One PPC member commented that text donations were problematic for some people as the parishioner may not be the person responsible for that household's phone bill.

One PPC member suggested that donation details could be projected after the final hymn, so attention could be paid to donating at the end of Mass. One PPC member suggested that provision of a monthly summary of 'second collection' information could be made available on the website to facilitate those wanting to donate from home. It was accepted that this information was already available on the website, albeit not located in one place as an accessible monthly 'summary'.

Item 7

One PPC member raised a concern regarding our processes for capturing and maintaining up to date new parishioner data. Fr William agreed this was important and expressed his gratitude that this had been brought to the forefront of his mind.

Item 8

Fr William reported on attendance figures for the Wednesday Masses, where, in recent weeks, 'in church' participants had numbered 1 or zero and livestream participants consistently numbered 4. For the Wednesday Mass, use of the church, rather than the chapel, had been an option. Fr William put the view that, with the onset of the colder months, the most practicable arrangement may be to heat the Chapel and to accept that livestreaming would not continue to be offered.

6. Finance Report

The issue of the leaking church roof was raised as a concern. Fr William reported that the cause of the leak had not yet been identified. Chris Clissitt confirmed that this item had been taken into account within the quinquennial review and so progress towards resolution could be expected within the next twelve -month period.

7. School Report

Paul Jackson relayed concern expressed at the most recent Academy Council meeting that only approximately one third of the reception class cohort comprised Catholic children. The Academy Council wondered whether some Catholic children, having been baptised in our parish, were then being enrolled at other schools and, if so, why that was happening. The Academy Council does not have access to data which would reveal whether this was happening. Paul asked whether Fr William, who had access to the baptismal records, could liaise with St Mary's School to enable the school to establish whether there were children who had been baptised in our parish, yet were not enrolling at St Mary's School. Fr William agreed to undertake liaison with St Mary's School to help them establish whether there appeared to be a pattern on enrolment elsewhere, but he explained that he did not think it appropriate for him to seek to talk with parents who may have decided to enrol children elsewhere to find out why they had done so. Fr William commented that St Mary's School's Catholic and Christian ethos continued to have great value to all pupils, Catholic or otherwise.

8. Reviewing our Parish carbon footprint and impact on the environment

Fr William explained that he felt it important that the Parish play its part to combat climate change. One possible step to consider was the replacement of the gas boiler with a heat pump, a decision that may be informed by engaging insulation consultants to offer advice. Regarding this or other major green initiatives, we would need to consider whether it would be most appropriate to use the existing 'building loan fund' or to launch a specific appeal to raise funds. Fr William invited PPC members' views.

- One view was that, as the heat pump industry is in its infancy currently, it is likely to become steadily both more cost effective and more streamlined in terms of the installation process. Therefore, it may be wise to delay action and to regard our gas boiler as a useful 'bridge' towards greener heating in the future. A second PPC member voiced support for regarding heat pump installation as something to consider in the future, suggesting too that obtaining advice on insulation in advance of any heat pump decision would enable the Parish to develop a plan based on costs and benefits.
- Praise for Parish actions to date was offered by one PPC member, who reflected on the successful efforts to reduce the amount of paper used, as illustrated by the phasing out of hymn book use.
- The adverse environmental impact of many short car journeys to attend church was raised. It was suggested that promotion of walking and cycling and support for car sharing initiatives may be undertaken.
- It was suggested that a display in the Atrium could highlight the initiatives being undertaken by the Parish and underline the importance of combatting climate change for parishioners as individuals and across households.
- The inclusion of environmental issues within the bidding prayers was suggested as a means of highlighting the issue's importance. Fr William explained the need to ensure bidding prayers be understood as directed solely towards God and, therefore, thought advice and encouragement directed towards parishioners regarding environmental issues be best kept separate from bidding prayers.
- It was suggested that the Parish could explore the value and costs of 'offsetting' part of its carbon footprint.

9. Synod 2021-23; helping prepare for our participation

Fr William informed the PPC that the Parish now has a date and time for the consultation meeting – Wed 8th Dec at 7.00pm. At the event, three facilitators would support Parish consideration of the ten questions posed by Pope Francis, using flip charts to note points expressed and then take notes away to prepare draft Parish responses. The Parish would have opportunity to confirm the draft as an accurate record, prior to the final version being forwarded to the Diocese. Fr William explained that the ten questions had not yet been forwarded to the Parish. He understood this was to enable us to first prepare ourselves to be open minded listeners, without being diverted from this by consideration of the content of the questions themselves. This approach may help us avoid temptation to retreat to fixed and preferred views on particular questions.

Fr William explained that his two most pressing concerns were how to generate as much interest as possible in the process, including the 8th December meeting, and to ensure that as wide a range of views as possible were represented. He stressed that, of course, the views of those most involved with the church are extremely important, as they are instruments of the Holy Spirit. However, Fr William also stated that it was important too to hear the views of those less deeply connected with the Parish, perhaps attending Mass infrequently or not at all. He informed the PPC that the Parish database provided contact details of parishioners, including those who did not attend Mass. He accepted that persuading these (and other) parishioners to attend the 8th December consultation meeting presented a challenge. He wondered whether advertisement, perhaps in the Knaresborough Post newspaper and the St Mary' School Bulletin, would prove effective and whether offering incentives, such as free refreshments, would be worthwhile.

PPC members supported Fr William's desire to reach out to those less deeply engaged with the church. There was, however, recognition of the difficulty of securing their engagement in the process. There were several suggestions.

- focus upon parishioners who had not returned to church after 'lockdown'.
- investigate the possibility of electronic response to the ten questions, because attending a meeting in church is unlikely to appeal to non-churchgoers and those on the margins.
- invite all St Mary's School parents to express their views.
- livestream the 8th December consultation meeting.

Fr William wondered whether the Parish website could be developed to accept electronic response returns to the ten questions. However, one PPC member expressed concern as to whether the ten questions would lend themselves to electronic response, because indications were that the questions may be lengthy, thematic and complex, therefore perhaps not suited to short or 'closed' responses. It was suggested that the facilitators be contacted so that they could be made aware of the Parish's desire to also reach those who are non-practising and perhaps suggest how we may do this most effectively. One PPC member suggested that consultation on the ten questions may prove to be merely the first stage of an extended process which would subsequently reach out to those either not practising or on the margins. The facilitators may be able to advise on this. There was support from some PPC members for Fr William's suggestion to advertise the 8th December consultation meeting in the Knaresborough Post and the St Mary's School Bulletin, though one member suggested the idea be put to the facilitators first so that a tone is struck that is accurately communicates the character of the consultation meeting.

10. PPC elections

Fr William explained that PPC elections were due to be held in February 2022. He explained that previous PPC elections had offered parishioners the opportunity to vote following specific Masses. However, in-church Mass participation was currently at approximately 50% of pre-pandemic level. Livestream Mass participation was now at a lower level, with a total of 52 devices connecting to the previous week's three Sunday Masses. Fr William posed the question as to how we ensure parishioners participating in Mass via livestream have opportunity to vote. Could voting be carried out electronically via the website?

One PPC member suggested that 'Formwise' software offers options from which respondents select, which would suit a voting process. However, this PPC member also explained that this electronic process did require options from which voters may choose and it was possible that one or more of the PPC roles would be uncontested and so not offer voting options.

In discussion, other concerns were raised. Firstly, would older parishioners be less likely to access an electronic voting opportunity? Secondly, would security against voter fraud be compromised by an electronic system, especially where we had introduced several means of registering votes?

Fr William stated that the discussion has been helpful and that he would reflect upon it.

11. Any pressing concerns?

None were raised.

12. Reminder of dates

Monday 21 Feb 2022

Monday 9 May 2022

Monday 5 Sept 2022

Proposed dates

Monday 7th November 2022

13. Final Prayer

The meeting closed with a prayer.