

Parishioners' Open Meeting
14th July 2022 at 7.30pm
Hybrid meeting via Zoom and in person

Present: Fr Simon, Stephen Warde (Chair), Deacon Geoff Cook, Sarah Sykes (Minutes) plus about 9

Apologies: Helena Judd, Leonie Isaacson, Jim and Mary-Jane O'Sullivan

Minutes and Matters Arising

The Minutes for May's meeting were accepted as a true record.

A number of points raised in May's meeting are being followed up for discussion in this meeting, but the discussion relating to the Ablaze Mass will be deferred to the September meeting at the request of the Ablaze team in order for them to meet and discuss the situation before the meeting. Please feel free to share any points with Gail Osman, Helena Judd or Fr Simon in the meantime.

1. Parish news and Mass arrangements.

Fr Simon reported that Fr Andrew Arakal, a Latin rite Catholic priest from Kerula is making plans to visit the Diocese for 3 years. There is some delay as he awaits visa permission. When granted he will be staying at St Laurence's, at the request of the bishop, for at least the first 3 weeks of his visit.

Fr Simon reminded us that he will be going to Lourdes from 15th-26th August. Blackfriars will cover the weekend Sunday Masses. He hopes there will be cover for the weekday Masses, but if during the week there is no priest available then a Eucharistic Service can be held. He is happy to brief anyone who would like to lead this type of service.

The Offertory, Collections and the Sign of Peace

Fr Simon says he would like to leave the current arrangements in place while there are a high number of people infected with COVID19 virus. There is a basket in the porch for the collection. Some Masses have someone holding the basket, other times the basket is on the side the porch, however there is not proper process in place for securing the cash once it has been donated.

It was asked whether having a permanent card machine installed in the porch would help with donations, particularly as most people no longer carry cash. James Dore said that it would cost £100pcm to rent such a machine and would prefer to continue using the handheld device already purchased by the parish.

ACTION:

- Put in place arrangements for Mass collections to be deposited in the safe at the end of each Mass.
- Remind people via a note in the newsletter to err on the side of caution and not attend Mass if they have symptoms of Covid.

2. First Communion

Diocesan policy is that all sacramental preparations should take place in the parish rather than in schools. This has been put into practice at OLEM, but not at St Laurence's. The OLEM parents complained about this and now we have to fall in line with Diocesan policy. Therefore from the next school year, preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion will take place at church. The parish catechists are Paula Hawkins, Elsie Chi, Jim Infield and Sr Rose Rollins. In practice this will be a monthly 11am Saturday morning preparation class. It was asked whether the parents at school were happy with this new arrangement and whether it will affect whether families will choose to send their children to the school in the future. Fr Simon said that some parents had complained about it, but it remains to be seen what the long-term affect will be, if any. The sacramental preparation is only a part of the religious teaching which takes place at the school, for which the school recently received an excellent OFSTED-type report. The school will still support and reinforce the preparations being done in the Parish. It would be a good idea to look at the situation in a year or so to see whether this change has affected the number of Catholics going to the school and how the uptake of first communion classes is working.

3. Church buildings

James Dore reported that there are plans in hand for repairs to be done to the church buildings and attempts have been made to find volunteers to project manage these, but as yet no one has been forthcoming. It may be that we will have to hire a project manager. The question from the last POM of getting some basic decorating and replacing the Sanctuary carpet was raised, but Fr Simon pointed out that, to work at height safely for the painting, scaffolding would be needed which may lead to a period of time when the church would not be available for Mass. The Chair asked whether repainting the Sanctuary was included in the list of work to be done as per the spreadsheet below. James confirmed that it was but not for this year as it was not felt to be a priority at this stage. However, the Chair wondered if the flooring could be considered at the next Finance Meeting as well as the heating. Again, James pointed out that it would need a volunteer to take the project forward.

Screenshot of the spreadsheet shared by James showing the list of building work that needs to be managed:

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE BUDGET	2022	
	£	£
External		
Roofing works (based on quote)	8,000	
Front wall	1,500	
Fencing	3,000	
Re-decoration	1,500	14,000
Presbytery		
Flooring	1,500	
Re-decoration	2,000	3,500
Church		
Sacristy redecoration	1,500	
Flooring around sanctuary	2,500	
Replace 7 windows (as per quote)	12,000	16,000
		33,500
Church heating - costs to develop project		5,000

With reference to re-decoration: under the heading External the redecoration category refers to redecoration of the presbytery. Under the headings Presbytery and church there redecoration refers to internal redecoration of both buildings.

ACTION

- Appoint a member of the parish, or employ an outside manager to project manager the completion of these works. And/or find a volunteer to organise new carpet for the Sanctuary area (nb: the was a note in the meeting chat from Jeanette Milbourne: If you need a project manager I can do that but I don't have the skills to make a specification for the roof but I have done all the rest on my own home).
- Discuss the replacement of the church heating system at the next Finance Meeting

4. Parish action areas, volunteering, registration

A second appeal for parishioners to register for the Parish database and for volunteers was carried out in June. There were only a further 35 registration forms completed and on 15-20 action forms. There are now about 250 entries on the database totally about 300+ people. There were a couple of volunteers for faith sharing with adults. Ron Haynes spoke for the group who had run the Synodal Pathway process, and he reported that they are trying to have regular meetings to move forward the Parish action points which arose from the Synodal discussions. Ron Haynes invited everyone to join the planning meeting on Saturday 23rd July taking place after the Coffee Morning Hub. Roberta suggested that the aim of the group could be to bring some concrete proposals of what we might do, for example in the area of Faith Sharing and Education of Adults. And then bring some fairly firm proposals to the next Open Meeting. The Chair suggested that a contact person be appointed to each of the action areas so that details of volunteers could be forwarded to them. Ron said that this point would be part of the discussions on 23rd along with the creation of point of contact email addresses and lists.

ACTION

- Prepare a report for September's Open Meeting

5. Social activities

Coming up: St Laurence's Feast Day – Wednesday 10th. There was a discussion as to whether we should celebrate on the Feast Day itself or a nearby Sunday. In the end it was agreed that 10th would be best to encourage a mix of parishioners rather than just people who were staying on after 11am Mass. There will be Mass at 6pm followed by food and drink. The CWL have been asked to help with the food, and Helena has offered her help. It was suggested that pizza and salad, followed by strawberries and cream would be a combination that would be straightforward to prepare and appealing, and easier to organise for indeterminate numbers than a BBQ. Fr Simon said that he would provide the wine and that he would still celebrate the usual Mass at 12.30pm to avoid confusion for the regular weekday attendees.

ACTION

- Pull together a group to organise this social evening. (**Nora Darby**)
- Report back to the next Open Meeting about the attendance of a weekday social with a view to considering holding socials during the week rather than on a weekend.

CAFOD weekend: party – 24th September and Laudato Si Masses on 25th: Serga explained that the plan is, starting at about 11am, to mark CAFOD's 60th anniversary with some speakers from CAFOD HQ, followed by a short presentation of the 7-station Fix the Food System journey (their latest campaign), followed by a shared lunch. On 25th, all Masses will be a Laudato Si-themed Mass, including 6pm Vigil Mass. The Diocesan Eco group will be joining us for these celebrations.

She has been in touch with Helena about involving a number of young people in this presentation which will look at: why is food a problem? Why is the food system broken what does that look like and why is it so bad for some? How are farmers and their communities impacted? And what is the Pope's vision on this topic in connection with environment?

Also on the evening of 24th September after 6pm Vigil Mass there will be a wine and cheese reception for Fr Bob to thank him for his work in the Parish since stepping down as Assistant Priest last year, and to mark the 60th anniversary of his Solemn Profession as a Dominican monk. It was proposed that a memory book be created to present to Fr Bob on the evening full of photos, messages and stories of his time in the Parish.

ACTION

- Organise the collection of material for a memory book to present to Fr Bob (**Sarah Sykes**)

Thanks were offered by the Chair to those who had kicked off the start of the parish social life being reignited with an International bring and share meal which took place on the evening of 3rd July.

6. Parish Groups

SVP – Catharine Warren reported that the pilgrimage to Walsingham went ahead with 33 people travelling from Cambridge (including people from OLEM and Fr Bob). She also reported that as part of the work of the SVP, that the team have been attending funerals of those in the Parish who have died to represent the Parish family in particular for those who may not have people to remember them, and to offer support and comfort to those who are grieving. Finally, she asked to know whether there are any further volunteers from the Building up Parish life appeal.

ACTION

- Send any volunteer details collected through the most recent Parish life survey to Catharine (**Stephen Warde**)

Justice & Peace – Ron Haynes reported that the group will be holding a hybrid (online and in the Parish Room) presentation on 2nd August focussing on Fratelli Tutti, in particular on the parable of the Good Samaritan, in response to the plea which came out of the Synodal Pathway to provide more adult education in the Faith. The Season of Creation is coming up and the group plan to place a series of reflections in the newsletter between 1 Sept – 4 Oct. He hopes that pre-recorded prayers may be broadcast on Radio Maria again this year too.

He expressed the concern that many people do not understand what the J&P group do and hopes to rectify this by raising its profile.

Tech Group – have not met for a while, but plan to meet next Thursday. Access to the parish database and researching a parish management system will be topics for discussion. Also setting up permanent equipment for hybrid meetings in the Parish Room, and furthermore in the Church itself for various presentation, without the need for a member of the Tech Group to be present will be explored.

7. Date of Next Meetings

Tuesday 20th September

Thursday 24th November

Starting at 7.30pm in the Parish Room and via Zoom