

Parishioners' Open Meeting

21 November, 7.30pm

Present: Fr Simon Blakesley, Deacon Geoff Cook, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes (Mins) plus 12 others in the Parish Room and 10 online rising to 15.

Apologies: Cairán Ward, Ursula Lowe

1. The Minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record.
2. Parish & Diocesan News: Bishop's visit, Caritas Festival, Diocesan Council of Laity

Fr Simon reported on the Bishop's visit to the Parish for the Caritas Festival. He stayed overnight and met with some of the members of the Finance Committee (Riq Willetts, James Dore, Christine Knight) on Friday afternoon and, in the evening, with members of the SPAG and Facilitation group. The Bishop enjoyed his visit and getting to know the parish a bit better. He hoped to be Bishop for the next 10 years until his retirement. He has spent the last year observing Diocesan life and formulating his plans for the future for all aspects of this. He had explained that part of his plan for the future will be the restructuring of the Diocese part of which will be the sharing of parish resources.

The Caritas Festival at St Laurence's was the first of several that will take place across the Diocese. The event was quite well attended with a good number of organisations represented in displays and stalls around the parish room. However, there was a comment that it was disappointing that there were not very many priests from elsewhere in the Deanery present. The Chair thanked all who had helped to organise the day and thanked the Coffee Hub tea for providing refreshments.

Diocesan Council of Laity – took place in Norwich this month and was attended on our behalf by Ronald Haynes. Ron said that the Bishop is putting together an 8-point plan of action for the development of the Diocese and preparation for the future when fewer priests are available. The plan will be discussed in February next year by the clergy and afterwards will be circulated to the people. It was interesting to discover that St Luke's, Peterborough are also planning to create a Parish Pastoral Council and they have shared their draft constitution with us. Like us, their parish is one of the parishes in the diocese that is growing.

3. Advent and Christmas

Events taking place in Advent:

2nd December – Family Advent Activities afternoon from 1.30pm-3.30pm. There will be crafts, singing and drama. This is being organised by the Children's Liturgy team.

15th Dec – Advent social evening from 6-9pm with mince pieces and mulled wine or juice. Free to attend but donations towards costs welcome. This is being organised by Jeanette Milbourn.

17th December – Carol service at 4pm with readings and carols. Fr Simon is in contact with the school and hopes that some of the children may come and sing a carol or two, along with other parish children who may like to do this too.

House Masses – one has been booked in Girton. If anyone else would like to book a Mass, please contact Fr Simon.

Commissioning of lay ministers – Fr Simon plans to commission new Eucharistic Ministers and Readers this season.

Masses over the 4th Sunday of Advent/Christmas period:

23/24 Dec – all normal weekend Masses will take place as usual over this weekend including Saturday morning Mass of the Day at 9.30am, Vigil Mass at 6pm, and all 3 Sunday morning Masses.

The Christmas Masses begin with the Family Mass at 5pm. There will be a Midnight Mass starting from 11.30pm. On Christmas morning there will be a 9am and 11am Mass. On Boxing Day, Mass will be at 11am.

Helena asked whether the Parish music groups will provide music for the 5pm Family Mass. This had not been discussed at the music planning session the evening before, and was not something that the groups had covered in the past. Helena asked that it be considered for future years. Jeanette M volunteered to cantor.

4. Buildings update

Heating – Jim O’Sullivan reported that the boiler, which controls the heating of the area between the Presbytery and the church, has been fixed. We were able to enjoy our meeting in a warm Parish Room. The planned work for the replacement of the heaters in the church has hit a delay due to sickness at the firm who are going to carry out the work. We will have to wait until sometime in the new year for the work to be done, but the timeline for this is currently unclear.

Roof repairs – while visiting the Parish earlier this month, the Bishop clearly saw the need for work to be done on the roof areas of the church buildings. The cost of this needs to be approved at Diocesan level.

Action: Jim O’S / Finance Committee – finalise details of heating project.

5. Parish Pastoral Council

The Chair summarised the discussions taken place so far during the last couple of Open Meetings, and presented progress made so far as a result of following up on those discussions. The aim of forming the PPC is to get more lay involvement in managing the

Parish, making sure things get done and developing parish life, and providing more support to the Parish Priest.

The Chair asked the Meeting if we approved of the formation of a Parish Pastoral Council and Core Teams, with the initial suggestion that there would be 3 PPC meetings and 3 Open Meetings per year. The meeting agreed.

The broad categories for Core Teams (3-5 people in each, with specific professional experience if possible) suggested are:

- Liturgy, education and faith sharing
- Communications and Outreach
- Parish Office and staff support
- Social activities
- Buildings, grounds and facilities

It was noted that not everyone on a core team needs to be on the PPC. Also, there should be a limit to the number of teams that a person can be part of (no more than 2 or 3 per person).

Suggested process for identifying people who would be either part of the core teams and/or PPC members:

We will aim to produce research and publish a proposed constitution by 21st December. In early January there will be a general invitation for volunteers and nominations. People will be asked to express an interest in a specific team or in general involvement and indicate a willingness to commit for 1 or 2 years. From the members of the PPC a chair and secretary will need to be drawn.

Nominations/suggestions will go to Fr Simon and we should aim to ensure that there is representation from the various Mass communities and the diversity within the Parish.

At the next Open Meeting (25th Jan), we hope to be able to approve the initial membership of the PPC and core teams, and the constitution of the PPC so that the PPC can hold its first meeting in February. The PPC will not be doing the work of current parish groups such as the Finance Committee, Tech Group, SVP etc. but complementing and supporting their work.

There was some general discussion about the core teams and Geoff Cook asked if there could be some focus on ecumenism included under one of the categories. This, along with interfaith work, would most likely fall under the Communications and Outreach team. It was noted that after the announcement that the formation of a PPC was being considered was made at the Sunday Masses several people expressed that it was a good idea. Also, that this Open Meeting to discuss the matter, was the best attended for quite a while both online and in person. The one/two year commitment was set so that people don't get stuck on the PPC or core teams with no formal mechanism for turnover and change. By staggering membership at one and two years, we would avoid being in a position where the membership of the whole PPC needs to be renewed at the same time. In order to create a

PPC with a diverse membership it was suggested that we could contact the communities attending Masses offered in other languages in the church.

No one at the Meeting made any objections to moving forward with the plan to create a PPC of about 10-14 members, and it was noted that the ideas discussed at the Meeting were open for further discussion and adjustment.

Action: Draft constitution for PPC (Ronald Haynes taking the lead)

Action: Organise process for announcing PPC/core teams and inviting volunteers / nominations early in the New Year (Steve Warde taking the lead)

6. Pastoral Assistant

The proposal for a PA for our parish has been looked at by the Diocesan finance team. The figure for hiring a PA if we went for the full time option and including all associated costs was estimated at a maximum of £25,000 per year. We are still awaiting a response in writing, but initial comments from the Diocesan team to Fr Simon are that this would require the permission of the full Diocesan Finance Board and the Bishop. Also, since the most recent Parish finance figures submitted to the Diocese do not show a surplus anywhere close to this amount, the likely conclusion is that we would need to find a lower-cost option, probably part-time to start with. It was noted at the meeting, however, that the most recent returns come from a time during Covid lockdowns and do not reflect the current financial position of the Parish. We will need to review the feedback from the Diocese when it comes and discuss the proposal further.

Action: Review the feedback from the Diocese and discuss the proposal further to secure Diocesan approval (Fr Simon, Steve W, Finance Committee)

7. Adult Education and faith sharing update

Roberta reported that she hopes to run another Sycamore course via Zoom between January and Easter. Also, she is currently working with 2 people preparing for adult baptism.

Kay Dodsworth reported on the session run by Sr Gemma Simmonds on the Synodal process of reflective listening. She has hosted a couple of follow-up sessions online which used a short piece of scripture and prayer as a starting point.

The first session reflected on how we understand and live our baptism. The second session considered how we could be more welcoming to cultural minorities and those who feel excluded by the church. She will hold a third session at the end of this month. She said that the Bishop is keen on us using reflective listening in other things we do in the parish.

A bible study on Mark is planned for the new year.

8. Social Activities

Advent social and Family Advent afternoon (See section: 3)

Epiphany social – Kay D suggested that we could hold an international-themed food fair with prayers in one's 'native' language eg: a grace. If we held the social on the evening of Sunday 7th January, this would coincide with the Ablaze Mass taking place 5pm-6pm. We could amalgamate the two events with some joint organisation.

Action: Put together a plan for the social evening of Epiphany and advertise the event (Helena agreed that the Ablaze team could lead on this).

9. Parish group updates

SVP – the Chair read a short note from Ciarán W – the Giving Tree will be in place from the first week of Advent (2nd/3rd Dec). Please help yourself to gift tags and return any gifts by 17th December. The gift categories are 'children and families known to the SVP', 'Elderly through Cams Meals on Wheels', and 'Homeless via Wintercomfort'.

Some of the SVP members will be carol singing at the Manor Care Home on 18th December.

Children's Liturgy – Leonie reported that the numbers continue to grow and volunteers are needed to help run the sessions. Sessions are held during 9.30am and 11am Sunday Mass and two people run each session. Although there are currently enough volunteers to do a monthly rota, there needs to be more capacity to cope with the changes that holidays or sickness etc put on the rota.

CAFOD – Roberta reported that Diocesan rep, Jane Crone, had met with parishioners to make plans to get the CAFOD parish group up and running again. On 20th January there will be a small CAFOD event which will take place at the end of the Coffee Hub session. We will be joined by the Project Officer for Cambodia who will talk about the work CAFOD does in this area of the world.

Justice and Peace – Ron H reported that they have gained a couple of new members to the group through the Caritas Festival. The group will be holding a talk/discussion on 5th December via Zoom on the *Laudate Deum* document which is the follow up to the *Laudato Si* Encyclical. Coming up in January will be the Pope's traditional message on Peace. 14th January is Peace Sunday.

Altar Servers – Sam Judd and Stephen Warde reported that there are some young people currently receiving training to take on this role at Mass.

Tech group – the CCTV which had been found to not be working shortly before the previous Open Meeting has been repaired by members of the Tech Group, who have installed a new hard drive.

10. Any Other Business

Nora Darby asked if the monthly food collection for the Food Bank could be reinstated. She has been in touch with Chris Avery who volunteers there and who is willing to help organise this. James Dore is able to collect the donations. Nora will arrange for someone to make sure that a regular announcement will go in the newsletter. The Meeting was happy to support this proposal.

Action: set up a regular monthly collection and advertise this in the newsletter (Nora).

Biscuits? – Rowan and Sam Judd, representing the youth of the parish, suggested that biscuits are made available at the Open Meetings, particularly as it is hoped that more young people from the Confirmation group will be attending the Opening Meetings as part of their preparations. No objections were made and the attendees tucked into the biscuits kindly brought in by the Judd family.

ACTION: Provide biscuits on 25th Jan – and may be even a hot drink??

11. Date of next Meeting

Thursday 25th January at 7.30pm