

Parishioner's Open Meeting

10 October 2019

Minutes of Meeting

Chair: Stephen Warde

Minutes: Serga Collett

In attendance: Fr Simon and 18 parishioners

Welcome by Stephen and Prayer by Father

1. **Apologies:** Mary Watkins

2. **Minutes of last meeting** were agreed as a true record. It was noted that Wintercomfort is speaking at masses on Nov 16/17. Fr Simon told the Forum to be wary of emails sent from his email account as it may have been hacked. There have been several emails professing to be from Fr Simon (to Mary and Catherine) but to his knowledge, these were not sent by him. If sending an email to Fr Simon please use simon.blakesley@rcdea.org.uk

3. **Buildings and grounds**

Sanctuary plans

Father Simon presented outline plans drawn by Brown and Ralph, based on his concept for re-ordering the sanctuary. As well as leaving the plans available for inspection after the meeting, he outlined the plans to the Forum. The proposal is to have 2 six-inch stone steps (rather than the current 3 steps) enabling ramp access on either side of the sanctuary. The altar and lectern would be raised on a further step so that these focal points would be just two inches lower than they are currently. The lectern and seats for the celebrants would swap sides, and the cantor would use the lectern, reducing the amount of furniture in the sanctuary. The stone could have differentiation of colour on the steps so that steps are visible to users. Father spoke about making the brickwork look more interesting and he suggested a brass cross to decorate the altar front (as at St L school) and the alpha and omega on the lectern. The crucifix could be suspended on wires above the altar.

The proposal also reconfigures access to the sacristy and confessional, with a glass door, which will be safer and also have safeguarding benefits. The votive candle-stands would be situated underneath the statues. To make the sanctuary less 'busy', the keyboard would be positioned in the front row of the pews (possibly with a wooden case constructed from the current lectern); this will enable the keyboard player and cantor to have direct eye contact. The audio equipment would be reduced in size and housed in a purpose-built cupboard underneath the figure of St Laurence. Father felt that the music group should be part of the assembly.

A key aim is less clutter and less distraction, which is more appropriate for a sacred space.

Catherine Warren asked whether the music group has been consulted and wondered whether the keyboard player will have enough vision of what is happening in church, e.g., when processing into/out of church. Father explained that he had spoken to Helen and will have further discussions with other members of the music group. One possibility to solve the problem that Catherine raised, Father said, was a mirror for the keyboard player.

Some discussion took place about the redecoration of the walls, which could be undertaken at the same time. Father felt that a change of colour that blended with the tone of the wood and the brick would be preferential. He pointed out that the Quinquennial survey in 2015 advised that the church would have to be redecorated within 5 years, this would therefore be due in 2020. Other possibilities discussed were whether changing the position of the cross and the paint on the back wall would mean we should reconsider the tapestries on that wall, and whether to render the wall and restore the brick up to the same height as in the rest of the church. The possibility of using Fr Michael's icon, which is currently stored in the small meeting room was also discussed. Father also spoke about a spare tabernacle that he has identified, which he feels has more presence.

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There was a side discussion about heating in the church. Father explained that there is significant heat loss through the roof and one option was to renovate and insulate this from the inside, although this would have to be done in stages, due to the space required for the scaffolding as the whole church could not be out of action at one time. The heaters which are quite old (with the exception of 2 or 3 which were replaced more recently) are becoming inefficient and also get very hot to the touch. Options would be to put cages around the current ones or to replace with new ones. However, he said the experts felt that the current ones are coming to the end of their life. Newer models are slimmer, have cool skins and blow warm air out. Theresa Campbell asked about solar panels on the house as a source for heating the church. James Dore explained that a wider review of energy and utilities was planned, and alternative sources of energy would be taken into account in that.

Sarah Sykes wanted to know whether the projector and the projector screen for the church were still being considered. Father said yes, that the cost would be around £5000 and if anyone was interested in seeing a similar installation – very discreet and folds away against the wall – it can be seen in Newmarket.

ACTION (Fr Simon): The Forum was happy that the outline plans produced so far are heading in the right direction. The next steps are to get more detailed plans drawn up, with costings. These more detailed plans will be made available for all parishioners to review and comment upon, and then discussed at future Open Meetings before progressing them, so that there is an opportunity to discuss and decide upon the detail and options outlined above.

The roof

The roof has several leaks and there are currently buckets in the church to catch rainwater. Repair is imminent although the go-ahead has not yet been received from the diocese. Scaffolding will arrive next week and the bike racks will be out of use while the roofing work takes place. Father offered to open his side gate so that cyclists could park their bikes safely. Father showed the Forum a selection of finishes for roof tiles, explaining that his preferred tile was the 'Tuscan Olympus double pantile'. The Forum unanimously agreed with his choice.

ACTION (Fr Simon): Proceed with roof works.

Parking

Parking was raised and discussed briefly, although (as discussed at the last Forum) we will review more formally at the next meeting, when the scheme will have been running for six months. Father explained that the new system keeps the car park remarkably clear. He pointed out that disabled badge holders still have to put their registration numbers into the system and that the company operating the system will treat Christmas eve and Christmas day like a Sunday. He did say that there have been various requests for parking and with the possibility of residential parking schemes in the area, these may become more.

ACTION (Stephen): Review parking scheme at the next Forum.

4. Cafod

The recent Harvest Fast Day 2019 – raised £1,379.72, this includes the contactless total from Cafod which amounted to £268 and £107 raised from the sale of Harvest produce.

Serga Collett reviewed the various events held over the last year, this included a Mulled wine and Stollen evening/showing of film Global Healing, which was also shown in March at 10.30 am before main 11 am Mass.

Pound for Peru was stopped and SVP's Sudan project adopted. The shared bring and buy after Xmas sale of unwanted Xmas gifts was very successful over £500 raised shared between SVP and Cafod.

Lent Fast Day 2019 - £1,382 was raised.

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Creation Celebration 17 July 2019 – this was extremely successful. We thanked God for our wonderful world by having a garden clean-up (front and back) under the careful guidance of Helena Judd on the Saturday and at the 11 am Mass we celebrated the gift of Creation finally finishing with Parish Picnic after Mass.

World Day of Prayer for Creation on 1 Sept. In answer to Pope Frances's call to pray for creation, we celebrated with a Mass to pray for sustainability and an ecological conversion.

On 21st Sept Cafod had a small AGM followed by Jane Crone, Area Co-ordinator, speaking on the upcoming Harvest Fast Day Appeal and Ruth Flores presenting 'Hands On Magdalena Medio'. Serga explained that she would like the parish to adopt the 'Hands On Magdalena Medio in Colombia' project for the next year, to replace the Sudan Project once this finishes. This project aims to stop violence and find alternative ways of life for young people by Cafod going into local schools. The Forum agreed to adopt this project for the next year (a three year project but to be reviewed annually); collections will be held four times a year. Serga also explained that she would like to get the school, confirmation, communion groups and possibly St Bede's involved.

ACTION (CAFOD team): Organise the Parish's involvement in this project.

5. Liturgy – Advent and Christmas

The Carol Service will be on the 4th Sunday of Advent in the afternoon, followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

A Friday evening penitential service was discussed with requests also for a penitential celebration in daylight. It was agreed to keep the evening service, but to consider an additional Saturday afternoon service was considered, if feasible.

ACTION (Fr Simon): Consider and publicise arrangements for penitential services.

The Children's Mass is to be held on 24th December at 5 pm.

Father wishes to continue house Masses during Advent, every Thursday at 7.30 pm. It was noted that these Masses often don't meet the aim of connecting parishioners to neighbours they may not know, as they are not usually publicised. It was suggested hosts are given the option to publicise these Masses in the newsletter (possibly requesting people to get in touch for exact time/venue, in order to help manage numbers).

ACTION (Office): Note idea for improving publicity around house Masses.

6. Catechesis and Youth Activities

Chioma told the forum that there are now 26 children from the parish inscribed for first holy communion, in addition to the children taking classes via the school. She explained that the cut-off date was November after which no more children would be taken and first communion would be held in May. Masses for smaller groups over two weekends and Saturday morning masses were popular last year.

Father felt we should address those children and families who don't return after their first holy communion and that this was a real challenge. One idea was to get a team together to make house visits. Chioma said that she had had good feedback from some parents from previous years and pointed out that many children are not from this parish. She said that young people will be encouraged to attend the youth groups.

Helena reported that the 7-11 year old youth group starts this Friday, although this is flexible and may become a Monday. Helena requested that the Ablaze in May should be on May 10th, be outdoors and would include crowning of Mary. To be discussed with Father. He felt that it is difficult to focus the young people's attention outdoors. Helena also asked whether the older group and confirmation may construct actual physical stations of

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the cross outside. There was some discussion of this and a request for more clarity on the nature of the stations and whether they would be temporary or permanent (temporary was felt to be better).

ACTION (Helena): Review plans for May Ablaze Mass and Stations of the Cross and present at next meeting.

Helena reminded everyone about the garden cleanup next weekend on 13th October from 3-5 pm to tackle the area in front of the church and to put in bulbs.

7. Finances and Parish Management

James Dore told the forum that broadly speaking although expenditure is a little up on last year, we are breaking even and that this is as planned. He said that with the help of Finance Committee they are reviewing and taking action to improve some of our processes, especially those around payment to staff and staff contracts.

Contactless giving to be discussed with Serga following successful trial of contactless unit for Cafod.

8. Updates from Parish Groups

Catherine Warren spoke about the SVP talks at end of mass and that this had resulted in 2-3 new members. Sudan collections during the year had raised around £3800 from collections, donations etc. Ian Mawdsley will speak at masses this weekend to inform the Parish of the work that the Society of St Vincent de Paul undertakes in Sudan and South Sudan and to thank the parishioners for their support.

There will be an SVP mass of anointing on 30 Nov jointly with OLEM at 3 pm; SVP will again organise the Giving tree this Christmas with gifts going to the elderly, CCHP, Wintercomfort and families in need via SVP.

9. Any other business

Council of Laity: Helena Judd will attend. Caritas meeting: Christine will attend.

Father Bob sent a message to the forum to suggest renaming the Forum to make the name more representative of its function and perhaps more inviting for parishioners to attend. Various names were discussed with a decision to call it the: **Parishioners Open Meeting**.

Mary Jane Sullivan told the Forum that there is a school governor vacancy at St Laurence's School in January.

Father Simon told the Forum about the accompanied prayer which will take place every Thursday in November. Application forms and information available in porch and newsletter.

10. Proposed dates of 2020 meetings:

Tuesday 28th January

Thursday 23rd April

Tuesday 7th July

Thursday 8th October

End of meeting: 21.37 pm