

Parishioners' Open Meeting
15 September 2020 conducted via Zoom
20 participants at start of meeting

Including Fr Simon, Deacon Geoff, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes (Minutes)
Apologies: Charlotte Woodford, Christine Knight, Teresa Brett

The chair welcomed all to the meeting with a brief explanation of how to make contributions in a Zoom meeting. He also notified the Meeting that, Parish secretary, Reece King has taken over the administration of setting up and notifying people about the meetings. In future, joining details will automatically be sent out on the keep-in-touch email. If you are not on the list, please join or request an invite separately via the Open Meeting webpage or Parish Office.

The minutes of August's meeting were agreed to be a true record and accepted with no corrections.

1. Children's Liturgy – Leonie Isaacson

Leonie gave a short presentation on the discussion amongst those who are involved in this ministry about how we can encourage more families back to Mass and engage the children in the Mass. The aim is to make the children feel a part of the Mass and to be able to explore the Gospel reading at their level.

It is proposed that a shortened version of Children's Liturgy be held at the start of the 9.30am Mass each Sunday. This session would take place in the church, starting at 9.30am and last about 10-15 minutes with the teaching centred around the Gospel of the day. The session will follow the usual children's liturgy format of a song, lighting a candle, the reading of the Gospel followed by an interactive discussion with the children which would lead directing into the priest's homily. There would, therefore, be no first or second readings or psalm etc. at this Mass.

Activity sheets on a clipboard will also be provided for the children which they can fill in at church or take home. However, families must bring their own pens/pencils.

There is also an article in the September edition of Pilgrim listing resources for all ages of children if you are unable to get to the 9.30am Mass.

During the Children's Liturgy section of the Mass, other congregants are free to quietly read the day's readings from their own missals.

Thus, the Children's Liturgy becomes the main Liturgy of the Word for this Mass. It is planned to begin this Mass format on 27th September with it being announced in the newsletter the week before.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

The Chair read out a written comment from Teresa Brett who was unable to be present. She was concerned about the possible change of focus for this Mass entailing that the

congregation became solely families, particularly as it was the only Mass she was able to get to. She asked, would it be possible to have a children's service at a different time which might not always need to be Mass and not always need a priest?

Leonie responded that this Mass which used to be held at the school was usually children focussed.

Catharine Warren: it would be good to encourage people to be generous and open to a different way of celebrating Mass. Encourage people to experience it and if they are unable to pray at this Mass then to choose an alternative.

Leonie: There is likely to be some fine tuning as we try this way of including the children.

Helena Judd: encourage everyone to be encouraging and if people object highlight that they should value the young people who may be our future priests, religious and parish volunteers.

Jim Infield asked if, as well as the newsletter announcement, please could there be a verbal announcement at the end of each Mass next week.

ACTION:

Reece to put announcement in Parish newsletter.

Fr Simon to announce these changes at all Masses.

Leonie and Jim to put together a team of catechists to prepare these sessions.

2. Youth – Confirmation and Youth Groups – Helena Judd

Helena gave an update about the changes and developments coming up.

Two leaders will be stepping down: Gianluca to focus on his studies to become a Deacon and Robert Judd for family reasons. And Delia is joining the remaining leaders, Helena and Gail.

Helena has been in contact with the Bishop with regard to the group of candidates who had prepared to be confirmed in the summer of the year 2019. He has said that this group of candidates should now wait to be confirmed until after Easter next year. She is double checking that this is definitely case after hearing that some parishes are having their Confirmation Masses this October. However, the feeling of the families involved is that they would rather wait til next year with the hope that there can be a bigger celebration without so many limits on gatherings and social distancing.

There will be a meeting on 4th October for those who would like to start to prepare for Confirmation next year. It will take place after the Ablaze Mass. The plan is to have meetings like this on a monthly basis. Meeting in the church will enable social distancing and there will be small breakout teaching groups of 4 candidates plus a leader and a sponsor. They will then share the fruits of their learning as they gather back to one large group.

Anyone who needs to self-isolate/quarantine can continue to attend online listening to the main presentations via livestream, and if there are several who prefer to attend via livestream they can have their breakout group online too using Zoom or similar.

There will be fewer social activities due to the wider public health problems and there will also be fewer opportunities for voluntary work in the Parish. It may be possible to do more gardening work next May. Candidates will also help with stewarding and lecturing at the Ablaze Mass and other Masses as opportunities arise.

There will not be any Youth Group meetings until earliest February/March time when the situation will be reviewed.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

Stephen Warde asked how the rule of six might affect these arrangements and Fr Simon explained that currently this rule does not apply to religious teaching groups. This has encouraged Fr Bob to consider rekindling the Scripture Group.

Helena mentioned a question received via email from Ginny Russell about how the candidates are exposed to vocations within the church. Helena explained that every year she invites a selection of people who work or volunteer in the Parish to talk to the group about their vocations and how they share their faith with the Parish showing that there are different ways of expressing a vocation in the church without becoming a priest or other religious.

The Chair thanked Helena for her work preparing the children for Confirmation and said we will keep them in our prayers.

3. Building and redecorating – James Dore

James shared the results of discussions in the Finance Committee which has been looking at the recommendations brought up by the Diocesan 5 year survey and deciding what repairs and maintenance needs to be carried out to the fabric of the church buildings and presbytery most urgently.

The Finance Committee met and walked around the buildings inspecting the areas identified by the survey, including the loft and the garden.

List of works that need to be done as a priority:

External work

The roofs of the Parish Room, office and presbytery. There are lots of gaps where daylight is showing through. There is a water leak around the Velux windows of the office and water damage in the Sacristy. Maintenance is also needed on the guttering system, repointing work and making the roof generally waterproof: estimated cost 7-9k; some external work on the front wall, ie capping stones loose, external repainting and tidying up plasterwork. In total it will cost about 12-15k (inclusive of the 7-9k mentioned above).

Internal work

Presbytery: plumbing and heating are in need of repair; especially need to ensure functioning radiators in all rooms. Some of the electric systems need attention. Some fittings have been condemned and are not useable. The flooring in the hallway and study also need work: estimated cost 8-10k.

Church: replacement of sanctuary flooring; some window are already double glazed, but it is necessary to double glaze the windows the remainder due to poor thermal performance of the church.

Total cost for the whole of the works (internal and external): 25-30k to be paid for from our accumulated reserves (£170k). We are spending now to avoid future larger costs because if this work is left more extensive damage could occur.

These are the jobs that need doing as soon as possible but there is further work suggested in the report which need to be addressed after these more urgent priorities. Therefore, other projects such as the suggested idea to put in a patio, and other recommendations from the 5 year report, are to be considered after this maintenance work has been completed.

Stephen Warde asked whether we are beginning to eat into our reserves for our regular running costs due to not being able to take the usual offertory collections during Mass. James said we will go into our reserves by around 5-6k, rather than 1-2k as originally estimated for this financial year. There is nevertheless more than enough money to accommodate these necessary works.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

Fr Simon said that for a parish of our size with an annual turnover of about £150k, then 75k is a large enough reserve. There is no virtue in sitting on reserves if work needs to be done. For example, the state of the insulation in the loft was reported in the last 5 year report, there is tree work and fencing that needs attention on the Dalegarth flats side of the carpark. Completing these types of works is a matter of good housekeeping. In addition, with interest rates very low there is no point in sitting on the cash. He also added that the gas heaters in the church should be considered for replacement as the gas bill for 6 weeks during the really cold winter weather was over £1,000, perhaps by installing electric storage heaters which look like double radiators and installing some more solar panels.

There was some discussion about the option of replacement and renewal, rather than repair, of areas such as plumbing and rewiring. Helen Allen asked whether the presbytery work proposed should go further to full replacement rather than repair and James confirmed that if we can't find someone to do the repair work as is, it may be necessary to do a full re-wire for example, which is why he has provided ballpark figures.

Jim Scally said that the person who repaired the wiring in the kitchen last year refused to certify the work because of the old wiring in there. Surge protection and the wiring is currently safe but it still needs a serious amount of work to bring it up to modern standards.

Fr Simon shared that Linda McIntyre recently left a legacy to St Laurence's of £27k. Helen Allan said that she believed that if the legacy is spent on repairs to the presbytery that Lynda would be really happy with that.

James explained that his report is for information rather than POM approval, and Fr Simon added that the Diocese has to approve any project over 5k.

It was felt that none of the planned works sounded frivolous and that it all sounded very practical and essential, that the proposed plans for expenditure were strategically necessary to keep our buildings in good repair and avoid future costs.

The Chair thanked James for his report and said we that the meeting supports these plans he also asked if full redecoration had been mentioned in the report and James confirmed that it had and would fall into the next phase of improvements and expenditure.

The Chair said that the responses received from the Parish survey on the proposed sanctuary plans had also been looked out again and the majority were in favour of the reflooring and redecorating being done but other aspects of the proposed plans still needed more discussion.

4. Mass arrangements -update on the current arrangements.

The rule of 6 does not affect our ability to gather for Mass. In general, more people are coming back to Mass. At 11am Mass this week 20 people were turned away and 9.30am Mass was at full capacity. There is still capacity at 6pm vigil, 8am and 5pm Masses. It was noted that no one who had been turned away at 11am had then returned for the 5pm Mass.

Whether we should reduce our distancing from 1m to 2m so that we could increase capacity by an extra 10-15 people, fitting 3 individuals or 2 couples per bench was discussed. To do this would mean that all congregants would have to wear a face mask.

The following points were made:

- The situation is rapidly changing, the 'r' number is increasing and any changes could have to be wound back in order to remain open;
- Those who are unable to wear face masks would still need extra distancing;
- Perhaps there could be a front/back split so those who weren't wearing masks could sit apart at 2m separate from those who were wearing masks, although it is often difficult for the stewards to manage the flow of people especially at busier Masses; could a Mass be designated a mask-only Mass where people would sit closer together; mask can be provided if someone has forgotten to bring one;
- The non-compulsory track and trace forms are likely to become compulsory;
- More stewards are needed; please would Fr Simon encourage more volunteers; wiping down the surfaces takes time especially if the church has been full.
- circulation of air will continue to be essential and is a concern as the weather starts to turn colder;
- we should consult the wider congregation ie through a show of hands over the next few weeks at the start of Mass especially the more heavily attended Masses
- could we increase space by using the Parish Room – this would be partly contingent on being able to increase stewarding levels;
- for those who remain in the carpark streaming the Mass on their phones, could we provide wifi for Parish guests?

And on stewarding:

- could stewards ask other parishioners to help and volunteer;
- as more people return there may be some among them who will volunteer
- if we don't have enough stewards we should consider not opening for Mass. It would be a wake-up call if Mass didn't go ahead and people would realise that stewards are essential and volunteers needed;
- at 11am it is possible to manage with 3 stewards rather than 4 but it is imperative that all 3 stewards turn up. Would it be possible for the Parish office to send a reminder email to be sent to all stewards on duty on a Friday ahead of each weekend?

ACTIONS:

Fr Simon: to appeal for more help with stewarding;

Fr Simon: to organise a show of hands consultation at the beginning or end of Mass about whether people would be happy to move from 2m to 1m distancing;

Tech group: consider offering guest wifi for those streaming Mass in the car park

Parish Office: consider sending out a reminder on Fridays to stewards about who is on duty for the coming weekend.

5. Vocations – Dick Wilson

Dick explained that there is a national shortage of Catholic priests, which may be less obvious to us in Cambridge due the academic nature of the area. He would like to get a group together to discuss this problem and suggest things that could be done about it. He would like the group to produce something to share with a future Open Meeting and also present their suggestions to the Bishop and find a way of bringing them to fruition. Ron Haynes said that it is helpful to talk about how vocations matter to everyone at all stages of life and offered to help Dick get the group up and running starting with an announcement in the newsletter.

ACTION:

Ron Haynes/Dick Wilson: Plan a meeting and put notice in newsletter to get group of interested parties to meet and discuss the shortage of priests and what can be done about it.

6. CAFOD update – Serga Collett

Serga reminded the Meeting that the Church walk for CAFOD would be taking place on Sunday starting at 12.30pm at St Laurence's and finishing at 4pm at Phillip Howard to raise awareness of people in developing countries.

Harvest Day appeal is next month. Talks will be given on 4th October, Harvest Fast day is 9th October and the collection would take place on the weekend of 10th/11th October. We will also be able to make donations on the handheld card machine. Donation envelopes will also be provided and cash quarantined for the appropriate period of time before being counted and processed. It is also possible to donate online and Fr Simon will publish the St

Laurence's supporter number in the newsletter which can be quoted as a reference number in order for the donation to be counted under St Laurence's Church.

ACTION:

Fr Simon: arrange for the CAFOD supporter's number for St Laurence's to appear in the newsletter with information about how to donate online.

7. AOB

Online coffee and chat: Serga has been hosting this but would like help particularly over the next month. Sarah Sykes and Helen Allan volunteered to do a couple of sessions each.

ACTION:

Sarah and Helen to set up Zoom meeting for the next month and share the details with the Parish Office for inclusion in the newsletter and keep-in-touch emails.

Meeting arrangements for next month: there was a brief discussion on whether to move the meeting to every two months, but it was decided to remain on a monthly basis at least for the next meeting.

Stephen Warde asked for a change of Chair for this meeting to be considered next month as according to the constitution the position has a term of 3yrs which he completes this year. He asked that parishioners consider volunteering for this role and also to join the Facilitation group which follows up the actions proposed by the Open Meetings.

ACTION:

Stephen Warde to put notice in newsletter announcing a new Chair for the Open Meeting is being sought as his term is coming to an end and also requesting volunteers for the Facilitation group.

8. Date of next meeting – Tuesday 20th October at 7.30pm