

Parish Open Meeting

20<sup>th</sup> May 2020 conducted via Zoom

34-41 participants over the course of the meeting

Including, Fr Simon, Deacon Geoff, Stephen Warde (chair), Sarah Sykes (Minutes)

The Chair opened the Meeting with a brief explanation of some of the Zoom functions that participants could use and the protocol of how the meeting would run over Zoom. He thanked Martin Avery for hosting the meeting.

## 1. Online Liturgy

Fr Simon summarised the ongoing Liturgies taking place online. Overall the timetable of Masses continues as it did before we were unable to attend in person, except for the merging of the Sunday 8am and 9.30am Masses into a 9am Mass. This has proved a popular Mass time with attendance overtaking the normally busier 11am Mass.

He also summarised the extra liturgy in addition to the usual Masses taking place over the livestream:

9am Morning Prayer

12 noon Angelus, plus news items

6pm Evening Prayer

7pm Rosary for the month of May

Fr Simon then thanked Ginny Russell for typing up his weekday and Sunday sermons which he hoped to make available on the website at a future date as a resource for the Parish.

**ACTION:** Ron Haynes continues to work on making sermons accessible to those without internet.

Open discussion: thanks were given by Janet Scally, Charlotte Woodford, Chair, Fr Simon, Mary Watkins, Nora Darby, Ronald Haynes to Fr Simon for all his offering in terms of online worship and liturgy; to others involved with providing and producing music and readings; to the Tech Group for their hard work in making livestreaming possible and for keeping the system running smoothly with good quality audio and visual. Parishioners have appreciated the variety of readers, others from other parishes without online Mass have also appreciated being able to come to St Laurence's.

Ron Haynes suggested that we organise some Parish post-Mass social Zoom gatherings.

**ACTION:** Facilitation group organise set up and circulating details of Zoom socials via the Parish email list

## 2. Parish Finance and Admin

James Dore, Co-Treasurer, gave a finance presentation covering the current state of the Parish finances and the effect our current inability to attend Mass and come to church will have on the forthcoming years finances.

## 2019 summary

Parish reserves: £216,000

Overall income/expenditure = Surplus: £14,000

Cost of roof repairs: £55,000 from reserves

## Budget for 2020

Anticipated income £127,000

Anticipated expenditure £131,000

Deficit £4,000

We were planning some structural changes, especially those linked to the Sanctuary project which had an anticipated spend of £60,000 over 2 years.

In addition, our secretary, Pat Cook, has retired, and the Parish is now looking to engage someone to work 18-20 hours a week. This represents an increase in office hours and will there for be an increased cost to the Parish.

However, since circumstances have changed this budget has been revised.

Anticipated income £101,000

Anticipated expenditure £111,000

Deficit £10,000

Despite an increase in donations by direct debit, for which thanks was expressed, there is still a decrease in our usual income. Although our expenditure has also decreased in certain areas, there are still any fixed costs to pay which means that we are currently spending £2,000 more than we are receiving. A plea for those who can and who haven't already done so to consider setting up a regular standing order, and if you are a UK taxpayer, please also complete a gift aid declaration.

**ACTION:** parishioners to set up standing orders and contact Jim Scally to complete a gift aid declaration if in a position to do so.

The above revised budget assumes that we are able to return to near normality in September and also allows for necessary repair work on the fabric of the building to proceed. Our level of reserves gives us a cushion in these unusual times which means our financial situation is sustainable short-to mid-term, but nevertheless a significant level of reserve needs to be maintained.

## Open discussion:

James responded to concerns that future high unemployment later in the year could affect our income by confirming that revised budget had erred on the side of caution. It was also hoped that a mixture of science and tech businesses, and an increase in building work in the area could mean that the area isn't as exposed to an economic slump as other areas of the country. And in response to a suggestion that we move to card donation, he confirmed that he was already looking into options. Rupert Russell offered his help and advice.

Fr Simon, followed up James' mention of changes in the Parish Office, by explaining that Pat had retired just before lockdown, but it was planned to have a farewell social gathering and Mass with the Bishop at some point in the future in recognition and thanks for many years of hard work. The Chair also added thanks on behalf of the Parish.

### 3. Sanctuary Plans – brief update

Fr Simon confirmed that the plans for the changes to the Sanctuary had been sent to the Diocese, and that there were a number of concerns from the Bishop, Fr Bob and the Parish. He explained that the Diocese has appointed a Cambridge-based consultant architect, who is also currently the retained architect for St Paul's Cathedral, London. Fr Simon expressed his apologies for not doing enough preparatory and teaching work about his ideas on the Sanctuary, and hoped to be able to provide more teaching and catechesis on how a Sanctuary should be from a liturgical point of view, and to explain the difference between a Sanctuary and a stage, which he feels is what St Laurence's has now.

However, plans are on hold for the moment until we have a clearer idea of the financial situation. The Chair reported that the feedback on the plans via a survey form had begun shortly before lockdown. The form is now available online through the Parish website. We still welcome comments through this medium and all responses will be collated and go forward to the meeting (originally planned for this month) to discuss the Sanctuary plans, when we are able to hold this.

The general feel from the chat comments was that more explanation would be appreciated.

**ACTION:** Fr Simon to arrange to share how his thoughts and ideas about the Sanctuary have been developed and the Liturgical doctrine behind them.

### 4. Re-opening the church – discussion

The Chair shared an open document which had been made available ahead of the Meeting with starting points for discussion. He asked for people's thoughts on these suggestions, and encouraged people to continue to add to the discussion after the meeting (via website?)

The document was split into sections with the following headings: i) Opening the Church to private prayer; ii) Changing our use of spaces; iii) Dealing with restricted numbers at Mass; iv) Reduce risk of spread via surfaces. Various points under each heading were discussed. It was emphasised that this is merely a starting point for discussion, not a time for final decisions.

- i) Opening the church to private prayer is likely to be the first step in re-opening the church. When we consider this, we will act in line with what other churches in Cambridge are doing as a whole, not just the Catholic churches.
- ii) Mass outside, using the garden or car park? Perhaps other public spaces such as parks could be used for Parish social gatherings? Alternate use of pews and social distance seating – don't forget that people within family groups won't need to social distance from each other. A suggestion of using the school playing fields for Mass while the weather is good.
- iii) Restricting numbers at any one Mass could be achieved by asking parishioners to fulfil their Sunday obligation by attending Mass on any day of the week. How would the idea of allocating individuals to Masses through the week? Attendance by alphabetical surname – some letters of the alphabet naturally have few surnames – XYZ. Perhaps particular Masses could be allocated to particular

groups of people eg: certain age groups, or vulnerable people at Masses with fewer attendees. We may find that numbers are somewhat naturally reduced if people continue to prefer to attend online if they are afraid of infection. Be aware that some parishioners rely on family members bringing them and may not necessarily have the same surname. People who work including shift workers may not be able to access their slot. Difficult to police and organise. Could extra Masses be celebrated during week? Could this include an evening Mass for people working during the day? Fr Simon happy to do an evening Mass and early morning Mass at 8am. Also liaise with other Cambridge Catholic churches so maximum alternative Mass times can be offered.

- iv) Could welcomers duties be extended to help guide people on how to move around the church, or encourage people to attend another Mass if a particular Mass is full? Reverence must not be lost – self-service Communion and wearing gloves were not popular suggestions. Fr Simon felt that it was enough for the minister to wash his hands well before giving out Communion should be adequate. Self-service and or gloves do not reduce the risk of infection by a significant degree. One parishioner shared that churches opening on Sunday in Italy will be using alternate pews, there will be no queueing for Communion. People will remain in place and the priest will circulate.

**ACTION:** Facilitation group to continue to gather and evaluate ideas and suggestions from the Parishioners for ongoing discussion at the next meeting.

#### 5. Parish communication and support – discussion

Current ways of communications are: Mass announcements, online newsletter updated every week (send notices to [office@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:office@saintlaurence.org.uk), Facebook page, 'keep-in-touch' email list newly set up and available to sign up on the website (keeping in touch tab) to receive a weekly email highlighting what's happening in the Parish and any additional news needing to be circulated between newsletters.

Open discussion: SVP are keeping in contact with people with phone calls. They have received no extra requests for help but have had people volunteering to give help if needed. We should be reaching as much of our Parish community as possible whether they are online or not. Thanks to a large donation of laptops received before lockdown the Tech Group have been able to distribute these to those who need them. However, more laptop or tablet donations are welcomed and can be given to families who are home schooling multiple children. It seems that some people, including children, are enjoying accessing Mass online, appreciating the lack of distraction and direct focus with the priest on the altar. Suggestions: Parish chat/befriending group-phone a coordinators number and leave a message and someone calls back for a chat. Set up a Parish WhatsApp group. Pen friends/letter writing, circulating the newsletter and keep in touch email and sermon by post. Put a recording of Mass on to a laptop and circulate the laptop for people to watch the recording bypassing the need for internet access. Ronald Haynes also suggested that it is possible to share at least the audio of Mass over a phone call and said the Tech Group would be happy to help groups who want to trial phone meet-ups. We could also consider a bulk texting service to send out updates and notes which would catch people who have a phone but no computer. Social and group meeting online which can be joined via phone

too. The Parish is diverse and spread out could local groups be formed to support each other?

If anyone (2-3 people) has the time and ability to move forward any of these ideas, please get in contact either through Christine on [crig1uk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:crig1uk@yahoo.co.uk) or Parish office email address.

**ACTION:** find people who would be prepared to help people keep in touch during this period of time by developing some of the above suggestions.

## 6. Updates on Parish Groups & Activities

**School** – Veronica Harvey, co-head: the school closed 9 weeks ago on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. It is semi-open for keyworkers' children. Teachers are working on a rota basis of going into school 3 days in every 4 week and Heads are going on alternate weeks. They are enjoying having this time with children to work on more creative activities. They made a VE day video, been writing letters to old peoples' homes in the community, keeping in contact with parents, risk assessment plan being worked on in anticipation of re-opening for Reception, Yr 1 and Yr 6 children. Teachers have been thoughtful and flexible and given lots of support across the board. She will take the possibility of Mass being celebrated on the school field back to the Academy Trust. She would also enquire whether the school could donate any laptops to the Tech Group for distribution in the Parish.

Head of Governors, Mary-Jane O'Sullivan also added thanks on behalf of all the Governors for the hard work and positivity of the staff.

**Communion:** Fr Simon said we are looking at the possibility of allowing children to make their First Holy Communion through the autumn in small groups of up to 4 families at a Saturday or Sunday. Bearing in mind we have 60 children waiting to do this, there would be roughly 15 celebrations taking place over several months.

**Confirmation & Youth:** Helena reported that Confirmation candidates received invites to all Ablaze Masses which have continued as usual through lockdown using Zoom. They have also been helping with the production of children's plays on Radio Maria England. CAFOD children's liturgy is being used by many and the Ignite team produced Ignite@Home which although not highly attended was very well done. There is currently no new date for the Confirmation celebration. The Youth team are providing support where needed and reports that the 'domestic church' has strengthened and grown through bringing Mass into the home.

**CAFOD update** – as well as children's liturgy, CAFOD have also been streaming Mass from Walsingham and running all sorts of webinars through the week on their website. However, the Headquarters is closed and many staff furloughed, though staff on the ground in the poorest countries are still working hard. Donations are needed to support this work. Our Parish project Hands on Columbia which launched in January this year, has had to come for a halt for now. We had planned to support the project for a year, but already 6 months have passed without the opportunity to collect donations and organise more fundraising

activities. Serga proposed that once the church re-opens that we extend the project and the Meeting agreed.

Our LiveSimply award is due for renewal. Ideas which we as a Parish could follow through either at a Parish level or an individual level at home are welcomed. Serga gave a few examples such as add a LiveSimply prayer at Mass every week and asked for more suggestions.

CAFOD Lent appeal – our usual collection amount was lower than the previous year, despite the success of the contactless unit, due to the Cambridge Half Marathon being run and the church being difficult to access and the COVID crisis beginning. If you are able to contribute to the Corona virus appeal on the CAFOD website, the appeal details will be in this weekend's newsletter.

**SVP update** – Catharine reported to the meeting that the SVP group continues to meet fortnightly via Zoom. They are keeping in contact with people mainly by phone and still open to requests for help. They are issuing foodbank vouchers via the computer and phone. They have had more offers to help than requests for help. If anyone you know would benefit for help please find our contact details on the Parish website. They plan to compile a list of people not online who would like a paper copy of the Parish magazine, The Pilgrim and include a greeting from the Parish with information about other ongoing support for example.

**Pilgrim magazine** – Nora Darby, co-editor, thanked the people who had contributed articles for the forthcoming June edition. In the main it will be published as an electronic edition. There is a Pilgrim mailing list, so if you would like to receive a pdf version by email, please put in a request at [pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:pilgrim@saintlaurence.org.uk). The magazine will also be available to be read and downloaded from the Parish website under The Pilgrim menu tab. If you are unable to access the internet, a few paper copies will be produced and posted on request via the same email address or via the SVP.

**Justice & Peace update** - Ronald Haynes mentioned that the Justice & Peace group are marking Laudato Si week this week which is 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical. See this weekend's newsletter for more details.

#### 7. AOB

Fr Simon announced that he will be celebrating his 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination. If possible, he hopes to organise a socially distanced party in the Parish garden on 2<sup>nd</sup> June. If you would like to attend, please email him so numbers can be managed.

#### 8. Date of next meeting

We normally meet 4 times a year but, because of the unusual circumstances at this time, we will hold 1 hour meetings monthly for the next few months. We are likely to meet again w/c 15 June and w/c 13 July. Once definite dates have been agreed, details will be circulated. Please let the Chair know if you want something added to the agenda or if there are any potential date clashes during the above proposed weeks by emailing [openmeetings@saintlaurence.org.uk](mailto:openmeetings@saintlaurence.org.uk). Feedback about the experience of the Open Meeting on Zoom would also be welcome to the same address.