

Parishioners' Open Meeting
13th July 2021, 7.30pm via Zoom

Present: Fr Simon Blakesley, Deacon Geoff Cook, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes
(Minutes)
Plus 14 parishioners at the start of the meeting.

Apologies: Jim Infield, Ursula Lowe, Jo Wager, James Dore, Kate Brett

The Minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record.

1. Parish News

Fr Michael Smith ordained this month at Norwich will return from a break the week after next and will cover Parish Masses in August while Fr Simon is away on holiday. Fr Simon will organise for envelopes to be made available marked with Mike's Gift for people to make a donation towards a gift to Fr Mike to celebrate his recent ordination. Donation can also be made via the Parish bank account referenced 'Mike's Gift' or by cheque to the Parish. The Chair recorded on behalf of the Parish what a great joy it is to have an ordained priest from our Parish.

As school draws to a close for the year, there will be a final blessing of Year 6 and a farewell to Mrs Bennet (joint Head) who is moving on to take on a new headship.

Fr Peter Wagnanski, who was ordained last year at Norwich will be coming to the parish this coming weekend to celebrate the 11am Mass.

The electrical rewiring work in the presbytery has now been completed along with new TV points in the three bedrooms.

A new Bishop? – the date for the appointment of a new Bishop for our Diocese is still unknown. The process of appointment has slowed down considerably due in part to the pandemic, and in part to finding a suitable replacement who feels able to take on these duties. We hope for news later in the Autumn, particularly as his secretary is preparing to move to a new parish at that time.

ACTIONS:

- Ask James Dore to be available after a couple of Masses to collect donations using the contactless card payment machine
- Provide Donation envelopes - Fr Simon

2. Mass Arrangements

The Chair introduced this part of the meeting as a time of general discussion for people to voice their thoughts and ideas as we approach the national lifting of pandemic restrictions on 19th July. We await updates from the government concerning places of worship following which the Bishops' Conference will formulate plans going forward.

We considered the following:

Masks to be worn? Congregational singing to recommence? Changes to social distancing and seating arrangements?

A general consensus was reached

- that we should continue to wear facemasks out of respect for one another and that we would continue to keep this under review.
- that – if in line with Bishops' Conference – we would recommence congregational singing with masks in place.
- That we will also plan to relax the seating spacing at the 11am Mass to allow more people to sit in the benches and also use all benches at this Mass. In this event parishioners will be asked not to kneel in order to maintain as much distance from each other as possible.
- That we will continue to use alternate benches at other Masses.
- That a welcoming/stewarding role is still needed at Sunday Mass – but perhaps only one or two per Mass.
- That we would keep ventilation measures in place.
- That the queue for Communion could return to two queues down the centre aisle.

There will no longer be any enhanced cleaning of the benches after each use, however it would be sensible to continue to wipe down touchpoints such as door handles, bannisters, tops of bench-ends down the centre aisles on a regular basis.

Spacing for the clinically vulnerable at 11am was also considered but it was felt that the option to attend an alternative well-spaced Mass was preferable to trying to reserve an area in the frontbenches to be used with social distancing

There was a brief discussion about the relative low attendance at the 9.30am Mass which as yet has been unable to return to the school. It was felt that there are a number of reasons that this is the case, and they were: that the geographical position of the school is important for those attending with it being easier to access for those travelling from the villages with plenty of room to park, while also being easy to reach for those biking or on foot and plenty of room for those bringing prams or pushchairs. Also it was thought that the Children's Liturgy sessions were being missed by the families. Barbara Q asked whether the 9.30am Mass will return to the school premises in September. Fr Simon said that Veronica Harvey had reported that the education authority will not consider lettings of school premises before the end of September, when we will enquire again. If at that point we are able to return, we might need to consider putting in place a one-way system for entry and exit because the entrance corridor to the hall is quite narrow. Although the discussion

mainly focussed on the 9,30am experience it was also felt that apart from the 11am Mass, attendance was still on the low side at other masses too,

ACTIONS:

- Put a note in the newsletter explaining the changes agreed and emphasise the continued use of face mask.

3. Parish Group updates

SVP – Catharine Warren said that through the income received from Alive in Faith and Parish donations the SVP group have been supporting families who have needed help with practical needs including food vouchers and furniture, and given moral support including help in asylum seeking, visiting and taking Holy Communion to elderly parishioners or those with failing health, and keeping in touch with the traveller community through the drop-in at Cottenham. Also, as most volunteers have been fully vaccinated, they are now able to resume indoor visits. The group have also welcomed a new volunteer.

CAFOD – Serga Collett thanked all involved with the weekend of Laudato Si Masses (which had attracted more families to the church for that weekend) and those who helped with the gardening. The work done in the front garden is very much appreciated by Fr Simon and the whole day was very enjoyable. Serga hopes to be able to organise a session in the back garden at some point during August, followed by a further session in October to get the gardens ready for the winter. The CAFOD group hope that parishioners will consider making 3 pledges each of what they can do towards protecting the environment. Webmaster, Richard Birkett, will upload details to the CAFOD section of the Parish website. Details will also be pinned on the CAFOD noticeboards. Serga reported that Teresa Campbell got lots of petition signatures ahead of the COP26 summit later this year and plans to be available at the 6pm and 8am Masses this coming weekend to gather more. CAFOD representatives will also be meeting with local MP Daniel Zeichner.

On behalf of the Meeting, the Chair thanked Serga and the whole CAFOD team for their work on this important topic. He also congratulated Jo Wager and Jeanette Milbourn for getting the Saturday Coffee Hub off the ground, which people have been enjoying visiting, and thanked those who have helped restart coffee after the 11am Mass.

Finally, look out in the Grafton Centre for one of the town centre cow sculptures whose design was done by St Laurence's school pupils.

NEXT MEETING

14 September at 7.30pm – probably still via Zoom, but check newsletter for details nearer the time.