

Parishioners' Open Meeting via Zoom, 14th September 2021

15 people present at start of meeting rising to 20, including Fr Simon Blakesley, Stephen Warde (Chair), Deacon Geoff Cook, Sarah Sykes (minutes)

Apologies – Catherine Warren, Richard Birkett

Ahead of the following the meeting's agenda, the Chair invited Sr Jenny Dines, CSA, to introduce herself. She is the last remaining member of the community of the Canonesses of St Augustine who used to be based on Grange Road. She now lives at St Matthews Gardens and has recently started attending St Laurence's, usually at the 6pm Vigil Mass. She is the equivalent of the Provincial of the community, so is often away, but looks forward to getting to know everybody.

The Chair also congratulated Charlotte Woodford who is in the process of taking over as the Chair of the School Governors.

1. Minutes of last meeting were accepted as a true record
2. Clergy update

Fr Walter will be arriving in the UK via Ethiopian Airways at 07:00 on 21 September. He will spend 10 days in quarantine and then, provided his COVID tests are negative, he will be free to travel to Cambridge on 2nd October. He will be able to dive straight into parish life with a Zimbabwe-community Mass taking place at 3pm in the church. He is staying at St Laurence's to acclimatise to parish life in the UK with a view to staying in our Diocese for the long-term. Fr Simon spoke to reassure parishioners that by inviting a priest to come and serve here in England we are not depriving his home country of a priest but rather recognising the grave difficulties that exist for a priest trying to minister in a country such as Zimbabwe at the moment.

Fr Bob will step back from his role as assistant priest but will continue to host the scripture group and is happy to provide cover if needed. He will continue to be part of the parish and next year we will celebrate his 60th anniversary as a Dominican priest and monk. Fr Simon did offer to arrange a party to mark his change of role within the parish, but Fr Bob said that he would prefer to hold a party next year to celebrate his anniversary. However, the Meeting thought that it would be fitting to organise a thank you card and present – perhaps some wine. Helena volunteered to provide a large card and organise to gather signatures from parishioners.

ACTION:

- Circulate card – HELENA JUDD
- Organise wine gift – FR SIMON

Clergy moves – the Bishop has started packing ready to move to Cambridge, however he has not yet heard when he will finally leave Poringland. The Diocesan Yearbook printing is currently on hold in the hope that the name of the new bishop will shortly be announced.

Fr Sam Randall, priest director of Radio Maria England, is moving back to his native Australia. He will be travelling to Melbourne to work at Radio Maria Australia. He will be replaced at Radio Maria by Fr Andreas Schätzle, who is coming from Austria. He will be accommodated temporarily at St Laurence's and will be looking after Mass at St Phillip Howard parish from October. He will not be working in our parish but staying in the presbytery as we have accommodation space for which Radio Maria will pay.

Fr Mike's celebration – the date for this celebration has had to be delayed for a week to 24th September as it clashed with another booking in the diary. Fr Simon confirmed that Mike is doing well and keeping bus but can make the new date and apologised for the short notice of the change of date. Fr Simon will provide drinks and snacks but would welcome shared food if people feel safe to accept it. Jeanette Milbourn volunteered to make a celebration cake. Mass will take place at 6pm followed by a social gathering and presentation.

3. Mass arrangements

The Chair summarised the current arrangements including spacing, masks and ventilation. He then opened up the meeting for discussion emphasising that there were no plans to change our current method of operating but that we will continue to keep all measures under review. He also later noted that, regarding the role of the stewards, we are moving back to the role being more of a welcomer role - ie welcoming people, answering questions, offering newsletter etc, rather than policing the social distancing rules.

DISCUSSION

Appreciation of the live music at 11am Mass was expressed.

Masses are starting to get fuller and the meeting considered whether we should move other Masses to the same seating pattern that we currently have at 11am using every bench. The weekend before the meeting, the 6pm Mass had been particularly busy and Helena Judd also asked if the forthcoming Ablaze Mass could use every pew as the Confirmation candidates for this year would be gathering for the first time to begin this year's preparation course, including candidates coming from Cambourne.

The Chair summarised that we would keep our current arrangements but move towards using all benches at the 6pm Mass.

It was felt that we could move forward with these changes, unless the pandemic situation worsens again, and then we would revert to the arrangements we had before.

ACTION:

- Arrange for the pre-Mass announcement to reflect any changes to spacing and use of benches, particularly at the 6pm Mass – FACIL GRP
- Issue a reminder that the steward role has changed from stewarding to welcoming and that volunteers are welcome to join the rotas for this key ministry – FACIL GRP

4. Build back better campaign

Nora Darby gave an overview of what is behind the idea of rebuilding parish life as more people are returning to church. The plan is to talk to parishioners after Mass next month

and hand out forms which invite parishioners to volunteer for the various parish ministries and activities, with a particular emphasis on Parish ministries and children's liturgy. Volunteers are needed on the weekends of 10th/11th and 16th/17th October to collect the forms at the end of each Mass. Perhaps some current members of active parish groups would like to be present to answer questions. It's also planned to use the completed forms as an unofficial census of people in the parish, so people would be encouraged to complete their details even if they don't plan to volunteer.

Various suggestions were made about making information about the parish groups available, such as A3 info sheets on the walls in the church which could remain in place for a couple of weeks. A mission-style weekend with speakers, events, special Mass, perhaps early next year. A Parish Groups Fair similar to the one organised to introduce Fr Simon to the Parish when he first joined us.

Alternative names for the campaign that were suggested in the meeting's chat: "Building a Better Future" or "Rebuilding Parish life" or "Towards a better 2022".

If anyone is interested in being involved in organising this initiative then contact the Parish Office, or Nora Darby or Leonie Isaacson.

A couple of additional pieces of information were shared here:

- DBS checks are being renewed this Autumn by the Parish Safeguarding Volunteer, Petra Tucker.
- St Laurence's school management are happy to have the Sunday 9.30am Mass return to school but use of the classrooms will not be possible due to the COVID deep cleaning protocols.

ACTION:

- Recruit volunteers to help with the form/census weekends – NORA D AND LEONIE I

5. Parish Groups' update

COFFEE HUB – organised by Denise Walters, Jeanette Milbourn, Kay and Jo Wager – is going well and a few passers-by have stopped for coffee as well as parishioners, particularly those attending Saturday morning Mass. The Hub hopes to be able to continue outside into the autumn if weather permits. There has only been one Hub session held inside so far.

On 25th September the session will be used to fund raise for the Macmillan Coffee Morning campaign. This may be held in the Parish garden on this occasion with gazebos in place in case of rain. There will also be a raffle and donations of small prizes such as a box of chocolates or bottle of wine are appreciated. Cake will also be served on this weekend too. The group appealed for help in setting up the tables on the day, but added that, long-term, they would love to have a set-up team and a clear-down team. The Chair thanked the group for their efforts and wished them success with this fundraiser.

SCHOOL – Head of School, Veronica Harvey, reported that the new term has started and that they were operating without 'bubbles' and had returned to whole school assemblies. There will be a welcome liturgy and a start of term Mass. The staff continue to take regular lateral flow tests, and parents are asked to wear masks on site. They are mindful of the

dangers of an increase in virus spread and have contingency plans should infection numbers rise. It has been a good start back and they have enjoyed singing and having live music back at school. They are planning to start the First Holy Communion programme next year with 25 baptised Catholics in Year 3. They had noted that Reception numbers and applications to the school have dipped a bit since Brexit, so they hope to promote the school within the church.

Veronica was congratulated on becoming the sole Head of school following the recent move by Elizabeth Bennett by Fr Simon and Charlotte Woodford.

IN-PARISH FIRST HOLY COMMUNION TEACHING will also soon commence and the group who organise this will be liaising with the school group.

Helena proposed that a new monthly Junior Youth Club for those children who had made their First Holy Communion in the summer could be started up this term and timed to take place at the same time as the Coffee Hub, so that the parents could socialise with a coffee while the children had their social time.

Jeanette suggested that it might be nice to have a toddler group with links to the school again.

CAFOD

Serga Collett reported that there had been a slow start to the LiveSimply Campaign for the Parish with only one pledge on living more simply having been received so far and asked the Meeting how we can encourage parishioners to get behind this.

CAFOD Family Fast day is approaching and the plan is for families to give the introduction talk the week before the collection. Donation envelopes will be distributed. The group is also planning to sell Christmas cards and organise the post-Christmas Unwanted Gifts sale along with SVP.

An October 'Garden Tidy Up' date is planned, and Helena asked if this could take place on 7th November before the Ablaze Mass with a view to the Confirmation candidates taking part.

Jeanette Milbourn volunteered to put together advent wreath kits. These do not include the greenery but will consist of the foam oasis and candles.

ACTION:

- Book the Garden Tidy Up in the Parish Diary and advertise the event in the newsletter – SERGA C

SVP

SVP are seeking more members, to enable them to respond to all the requests received. If you have a few hours a week to spare and are interested, please speak to any SVP member or contact Catharine Warren - contact details in newsletter and on parish website. Also if you are a Eucharistic Minister and would be happy to take Communion to housebound parishioners at home or in care Homes, please let Catharine know.

6. AOB

None

7. Next Meetings to take place every 2 months for the next 3 meetings on

Thurs 18 Nov

Tues 18 Jan

March date to be decided as Thurs 17 March is St Patrick's Day.

Following a quick check with those present it was decided to keep these meeting online for the next couple of meetings.