

Parishioner's Open Meeting
25th November 2021 at 7.30pm (via Zoom)

Present: Fr Simon Blakesley, Fr Walter, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes (minutes). Total 14 present rising to 20.

The minutes for the last meeting in September were accepted as a true record.

Fr Simon opened the meeting with a prayer.

1. 'For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission.'

The Synodal Way October 2021 – October 2023

The Pope has asked the Church to discuss the involvement and participation of the whole People of God in the life and mission of the Church. He would like to hear the opinions from parish level upwards of the Church and to that end he has asked the Bishops to consult all Parishes across their Dioceses.

Fr Simon explained that we are about to enter into a process of reflection to understand where we are as a church, to look at what we feel we do well and where we might improve. To start the discussion we have been provided with 10 questions to consider, but we may also add questions of our own that we would like to include. The Chair showed the Meeting the questions, which will also shortly be available on our website. As well as in English there are versions in French, Italian, Spanish and the Filipino language. The questions can also be found on the Bishops of England and Wales website with more information on the process of this new initiative.

It is proposed that there will be a weekly discussion over 5 weeks taking 2 questions a session with the process launching at our next Open Meeting on 18th January and closing with the Open Meeting on 17th March. Our feedback is requested by 3rd Sunday of Lent (20th March 2022).

As well as a series of discussions, it was suggested that Parish groups take some time to discuss these questions.

It will also be possible to make comment on these questions as individuals using an online tool, or written answers.

A key element of the process will be listening and discerning. Once we've asked ourselves these questions the second part of the discussion is to look at how we might solve any issues that we discover.

To try to get as broad a response across our parish as possible, it was felt that a mix of small groups and bigger meetings both in person and online via Zoom, held at different times of the day would give people a range of opportunities to join the discussion. The aim is to be as consultative as possible at all levels. Next steps are that we need a co-ordinator (or ideally a small team of people) to organise the detail of the parish process, based on input such as that recorded above. We are requesting volunteers now. If you are interested, please contact the Parish office.

2. Mass during Advent and Christmas

There was a general feeling that arrangements for Mass, within the context of the ongoing pandemic, were working well. The question of whether this would continue with the obligation to return to church for Mass on Sunday believed to be coming back into force from the first Sunday of Advent was raised. However it turns out that, with rising levels of infection, this is going to be postponed for another season before recatechising the people about coming back together as a community. Numbers attending Mass have been slowly drifting up, but we are unlikely to see a big surge this weekend.

There was a plea to arrange for the windows to be opened slightly rather than wide open as we come into colder weather.

Christmas

We discussed the Carol Service usually held on the last Sunday of Advent. Fr Simon said that the school would like to send some of the children to sing at this service. We discussed whether it should be held in person or online. It was felt that we should plan for an in-person service while doing all we can to include those who cannot attend due to health concerns. To that end we will explore using the projector screen to show a Zoom gathering of those joining from home and arrange to include some of them in the Reading and music where possible. It was also suggested that we ask the school children to wear masks in church on this occasion. We are not planning to ticket the Masses this year.

Christmas Eve Mass times

4pm and 6pm family Masses

10pm and midnight

Christmas Day

9am and 11am

Note: there will be no 6pm vigil Mass on this day

ACTION

- Adjust hinges/clips on the windows to limit the windows from falling widely open. – FR SIMON
- Check size of group coming from school to ensure we have enough space for all – FR SIMON
- Ask Tech Group to arrange for the projector screen to include people watching from home

3. Building Parish Life

We have had a good return of the 'census' forms circulated over the last few weeks at the Masses and thanks were offered by the Chair on behalf of the Parish to Richard Birkett who has built, and is managing, the database for recording the information, and to Leonie Isaacson and Nora Darby for putting the idea forward and planning and producing the forms.

We have, so far, got 281 records of adults and children on the database. The form will remain available on the website so that we can continue to add to the database into the

future. There are also paper copies still available at the church. It was suggested that Parish groups who visit parishioners in their homes could also take copies of the form for those who would like to complete them.

Richard is currently working through contacting parish group leaders with details of people who have expressed interest in various aspects of parish life. There will be additional administration required as people start to volunteer for background checks, and in some cases, training.

Fr Simon mentioned that Petra Tucker will shortly be standing down from her role as Safeguarding Officer. He offered thanks to Petra on behalf of the Parish for all her hard work and said he would be looking for a new volunteer to take over this important role. He also suggested that each Mass should have its own safeguarding lead person (as well as the CRB needful groups such as SVP, Children's Liturgy), and that a Safeguarding Team should be formed, supported by Reece in an admin role.

ACTION

- Seek someone to take on Safeguarding for the parish and find lead persons for each Mass, and ask parish groups to appoint a contact person for their group to support the safeguarding officer – FR SIMON

4. Council of Laity report from Helena Judd

Helena had attended the council meeting as our parish representative and said how nice it had been to hear what other parishes have done during lockdown and that St Laurence's fell well within the average range to what other parishes had achieved. She gave a brief report: As well as discuss the Synodal Way, the Council discussed how our Diocese had been represented at COP26, and although we hadn't been represented specifically we had representation through groups such as CAFOD.

Fr Paul Maddison is taking on the role of overseeing how parishes are taking action on environmental issues. He would welcome the opportunity to attend any meetings to discuss this and present some ideas.

Sandra Portas has been recently appointed to be in charge of helping with and coordinating stewardship – not just of money but of talents, time and prayer – and fundraising. She has been visiting parishes across the diocese and those who had already hosted her have been very complimentary about her work and her approach. We will be visited by Sandra at some point over the next year. I

Refugees: New Roots, a group in Norwich is doing a good job supporting refugees in the diocese.

The Chair thanked Helena for going to the meeting on our behalf.

ACTION

- Invite Fr Paul to speak to the parish about the environment – CAFOD group

5. Parish group updates

CAFOD – Serga Collett reported that CAFOD Harvest fast day had raised £1200. She thanked the Parish for this offering, which she was very delighted to say was almost the same

averaged amount that we donate despite fewer people being present in the church for Mass. She also said that £330 of the amount raised was taken via the card machine. All the CAFOD World Gift catalogues have also been taken from which she hopes many people will order. And, the Christmas card sale has raised £82.75. There are also plans to put together a Christmas quiz on how to help the environment and being aware of your environmental footprint this Christmas.

Richard Birkett has been in touch with her and there are 14 people who have expressed an interest in hearing more about joining the CAFOD group and she will be in touch with them shortly.

The next fundraising opportunity will be the Sale of Unwanted Xmas Presents which will take place on 1st/2nd and 7th/8th January with which SVP also hopes to help. Check the newsletter for details of how to donate to this nearer the time.

CAFOD will be celebrating its 60th birthday on 5th February 2022 and our area rep, Jane Crone, has asked whether we would host a celebration at St Laurence's to which the Meeting agreed.

There are also plans to develop and produce an app in time for Lent which would aim to record when you've done something positive for the environment in your day-to-day life. They would like to get some ideas from the school children on what to include etc, and hope to also talk about it on the Catholic radio station: Radio Maria England.

SVP – Catharine Warren asked parishioners to visit on the online Giving Tree wish list on the parish website to choose a gift to be distributed by the SVP to those in need in the Parish. There will also be some gift tags available at church for those who are unable to access the online wish list. The deadline to return gifts is 12th Dec (2nd Sunday of Advent).

Richard Birkett has also been in touch with her with details of 21 people interested in finding out more about SVP's work and they will be holding a meeting for all in January.

Children's Liturgy – Jim Infield announced that it is hoped that children's liturgy will restart at the 9.30am Mass on 2nd Sunday of Advent. A rota is being planned for the beginning of the new year; new volunteers eagerly welcomed.

Next Meetings – at 7.30pm via Zoom

Tuesday 18th January

Thursday 17th March