

Parishioners' Open Meeting

24 November 2022 at 7.30pm

Hybrid meeting with 12 people present in person and 10 online.

And Fr Simon, Deacon Geoff, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes (Minutes)

Apologies: Karen Rodgers, Edward Acton, Leonie Isaacson

Fr Simon opened the meeting with a prayer and the Chair marked the passing of Paul Simmons, long-time parishioner and supporter of the Parish Council, Parish Forum and the current iteration, the Parishioners' Open Meeting.

1. Matters arising

Stephen W reported that quotes have been received for recarpeting the Sanctuary. Chesterton Carpets will do the job using carpet tiles and can do so at 2-4 weeks' notice. Samples will be in the Parish Room for the next few weeks. Any opinions can be passed to Fr Simon or Stephen.

Fr Simon reported that the Parish census had taken place over the 4 weekends in October. The average total Sunday Mass attendance is 538 which is about 100 less than pre-pandemic levels. The Meeting was pleasantly surprised that numbers had recovered so well.

This figure only represents those physically present in the church and the question was asked whether online viewing figures were available for October. Ron Haynes, of the Tech Team, will make enquiries to see if the data is still available, although Fr Simon pointed out that not all those who join us online are necessarily members of the parish.

Offertory Collections – Steven W announced that basket collections will restart from the 1st Sunday of Advent and that we have a new cohort of counters, who will be responsible for counting and banking the money.

2. Parish and Diocesan news

Ordination of Bishop Elect, Peter Collins, will take place on 14th December at 11.30am at the Cathedral in Norwich. Attendance is by ticket only and we have been allocated 10 tickets for our Parish. Allocation of tickets will be done on a first-come-first-served basis by application directly to Fr Simon. Fr Simon said it is likely that although we officially have 10 tickets, more may become available through other parishes not using their full allocation.

Some people from the School, Sawston parish and Philip Howard parish will join us on the pre-booked coach for which we will charge a small fee towards the cost of coach hire (£650).

The ordination will also be livestreamed from the Cathedral for anyone unable to travel.

Other news: Fr Simon pointed out that as part of the road renewal project on Milton Road, the water main is being replaced at least along the length which runs in front of the church. Those works will hopefully not reach as far as the church until the New Year.

Mark Dunning continues to live at the presbytery and work for Co-op Funeral Services. He is waiting for permission from the Diocese to train as a priest.

Blackfriars have elected a new Prior: Fr Nicholas Crow (already known to some through the Ablaze Mass)

Once the new Bishop is ordained, he will make a visitation plan for the diocese where he will visit each parish in the diocese, so we can expect a weekend visit sometime within the next 3yrs.

3. Advent and Christmas

The CWL are hosting Advent lunches every Friday after the 12:30pm Mass

On 9th December at 6.30-8.30pm: the Family Fridays session will be making Christmas cards, putting lights in the garden and having a 'bring and share' from your family's Christmas tradition. All welcome – including grandparents!

SVP have put up the Giving Tree in the Narthex, gifts to be returned by 11th December.

Fr Simon announced that Masses will take place as follows:

Advent penitential service: Friday 16th December at 7.30pm

Carols by Candlelight: Sunday 18th December at 4pm followed by mince pies and mulled wine.

Christmas Eve: 5pm and Midnight Mass

Christmas day: 9am and 11am

Epiphany: Friday 6th January at 7.30pm, followed by an Epiphany Party

4. Sunday Masses and Ablaze Mass

Picking up from discussions which took place at the POM in May, the Chair invited Gail Osman to speak about the Ablaze Mass:

Pre-COVID, attendance at the Ablaze Mass was around 80-100 people and numbers are beginning to climb back towards this as we start back from the summer break with a new cohort of Confirmation candidates. At November's Mass there were over 60 in attendance made up of a mix of the candidates and their families, plus members of the Parish (and beyond) who enjoy a charismatic-style Mass, which is also known as the Pizza Mass among the kids. It's a great time for all to mix and socialise.

However, the Ablaze team recognise that having an additional Mass, once a month, on a Sunday means that one priest has a lot of Masses to cover over the weekend. The team have approached Blackfriars for help and they have confirmed that they are happy to do so with notice. Fr Greg and Fr Nick (new Prior) have volunteered, and of course, Fr Simon will help as and when he can. Thanks was given for the set-up he provided for the Eucharistic part of the Mass.

One of the questions posed at May's meeting was whether the Ablaze Mass took away resources from other Masses. Gail pointed out that the people who attend go to other Masses through the rest of the month. There is a good mix of ages including older people who like an evening Mass. It's very communal and social and supports the Confirmation children. People come from across Cambridge/shire including Cambourne, Philip Howard and OLEM, and the Ablaze Mass and their team leaders are known at the Ignite Festival and within the Diocesan Youth Ministry.

The Meeting felt that there is a strong case for Ablaze continuing as it is. Fr Simon said he will also speak to Fr Nicholas about supporting other parish Masses. He also commented about the state of priesthood in the Diocese and the fact that despite the Alive in Faith initiative, there will still be more priests retiring than being ordained in the near future.

Questions arose about whether having 3 Masses on a Sunday is still sustainable. It was pointed out that at the 8am Mass the rotas for readers (only 4) and eucharistic ministers (only 1) are being kept going by very few people. The current congregation is around 50 people.

Fr Simon felt that it is unlikely that the 9.30am Mass returning to school will be feasible with the larger numbers now attending this Mass, particularly if we come to the point where the 8am and 9.30am Mass become the 9am Mass. It was pointed out that if 9.30am moves to 9am, then it would be possible to have tea and coffee after Mass. In addition, if 11am Mass became 11.15am Mass this would help alleviate car parking difficulties. It was asked that if 8/9.30 became 9am would it be possible to have a Sunday evening Mass. Fr Simon said officially he should only say 3 Sunday Masses, so if we had a Sunday evening Mass, Sunday Vigil (on Saturday eve) that would leave a slot for only one Sunday morning Mass. However, there is a Sunday evening Mass at Blackfriars for those who need one. We can only justify 4 Masses on a Sunday if there is a large enough congregation to invite a Blackfriars priest to say Mass.

ACTION:

- Take these ideas away and chat to people in the parish, particularly to those who attend 8am, as there was no one present at the meeting from this Mass

5. Parish action areas and volunteering

Roberta Canning reported that the Bible study group had started to meet on Wednesdays at 1pm. She also suggested that parishioners wanting to learn more about their faith might be interested in looking at a series of courses devised by Fr Stephen Wang under the umbrella title of Sycamore (<https://www.sycamore.fm>). Roberta suggested that we can choose a topic from Sycamore, watch the short film on it online and then meet for an hour's Zoom meeting to discuss the topic. She is happy to pilot this idea in the new year. There is also a book available and the whole set up is very accessible.

The Meeting felt that it would be a good idea to give it a go and was particularly supported by Mary who already attends the bible study sessions, and Kay who has used this resource when running RCIA courses and people had found it really helpful.

Ron Haynes reported that the Communication group would bring an update to the next meeting. More people are needed to help get ideas up and running.

6. Safeguarding

Mary-Jane O'Sullivan reported that she, Jim O'Sullivan and Petra Tucker are the new Safeguarding team for the parish. They have been trained as parish reps and have had initial training from the Diocesan Safeguarding administrator. The Diocese arranges annual update training for us and sends up updates as they come through.

Their three main responsibilities are:

- Ensuring good and safe practice for children and vulnerable adults attending parish activities
- Acting as a link between the parish and the diocese
- Arranging DBS checks for those who volunteer in roles that require these.

People identified as needing DBS checks are volunteering in the follow areas:

- Children's Liturgy
- SVP
- First Communion & Confirmation catechists
- Other youth work eg Ablaze Mass helpers, altar server training
- Eucharist Ministers who take Communion out to people in their homes.

If you think that anyone who may need a parish DBS check has been missed, please let them know. There is currently a backlog of DBS checks which they are working through; currently SVP and children's liturgy volunteers are being prioritised.

She went on to say that we all have a shared responsibility to look out for each other. If we have any concerns, we should say something to an appropriate person. There are also people in the diocese that parishioners can report concerns to. Do check with the team for advice rather than feel uncomfortable. Any investigations needed are done by someone else in the diocese.

Information leaflets and posters in the Narthex and also information is available on our parish website. The safeguarding email is published in the newsletter and Pilgrim magazine and on the website.

The Chair thanked the group for stepping up and filling this volunteer role.

There was one question regarding people who appeared to be in authority or a safe person, because of a prominent or visible volunteer role such as a reader or eucharistic minister, who might be approached but wouldn't have been DBS checked. It was suggested that people in such roles could be asked to sign a form that says that they have not be debarred.

ACTION:

- Think about putting in place such a form for non-DBS checked people volunteering.

7. Parish groups

SVP

Ciarán reported that the Giving Tree is now up in the Narthex with plenty of gift tags for people to take and buy a gift. There is also a list of gifts on a spreadsheet on the SVP page of the website for those who aren't able to pick up a tag. Please return gifts by 11 December.

He thanked parishioners for supporting the sale of Christmas cards and for donations of shoes and clothing which have been passed on to refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine. He also acknowledged a recently received large cash donation which will be used to support the work of SVP.

He has also recently met with the new school head and plans to send out letters and appeals to school families.

Finally, he said that the 'Crib Donations' will be split 50/50 between the SVP homeless house project and South Sudan.

CAFOD

Serga Collett thanked everyone for their generosity during the Harvest Appeal which raised just over £2000. She also thanked parishioners for their support of the Christmas card sale which raised £125 for CAFOD.

She mentioned that CAFOD are very involved in being represented at the COP27, and encouraged people to look at the 'reverse' advent calendar in the Pilgrim magazine which has ideas of what you can do each day of Advent to help the world. She encouraged us to donate to food banks, particularly before the hampers are made up for distribution on 4th and 6th December.

There will be an Unwanted Xmas Present Sale on the second and third weekends in January.

CAFOD's area coordinator, Jane Crone, would like to hold a pre-Lent presentation in preparation for the Lent appeal at St Laurence's. She will be inviting other churches from across the diocese to attend. It will take place on 11 February after the coffee hub. She is keen to involve the youth in this initiative. The Lent appeal will take place in early March.

Volunteers to help with CAFOD events and fundraising throughout the year are very much needed.

Serga also suggested that we could hold a 'Prayers and Pancakes' social event on Shrove Tuesday.

Justice and Peace group

will run a series of Advent reflections. Next Tuesday will be a reflection on prophets and peace. They will also hold prayers for peace in Ukraine and elsewhere on 2nd December. They will also be remembering Lyn and Arn Dekker at the meetings, as Lyn recently passed away after a long illness. Both of these events will take place on Zoom.

Tech group

Ron Haynes reported that a new large TV screen has been purchased. It is planned to be contained in a portable frame, but it will still be possible to mount it on the wall. It is hoped that it will also be possible to use it on the Sanctuary.

The decision on with what to replace our current music CD player is very imminent.

Saturday Coffee Hub – the original objective of the Hub was to act as outreach to the wider community. It hasn't been very successful in drawing in local people, but from January the team plan to offer bacon rolls (or a vegan alternative) with coffee for a charge of £1.50-£2. They would like more people to join the rota, particularly for clearing up and putting things away at the end of the session.

Warm hub? An advert asking for volunteer help for setting up a warm hub in the parish room was put in the newsletter, but no one came forward to help. There are nearby hubs in the community and our parish room is often busy with outside bookings, so it was agreed that this idea would not be taken further.

8. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 7 February

The Chair asked the Meeting whether the POM should go back to quarterly meetings. It is currently taking place every 2 months. It was felt that every 2 months was a more useful time period as there is lots going on and a gap of longer than 2 months can cause a hiatus in plans.