

Parishioners' Open Meeting
7 February 2023 at 7.30pm

Hybrid meeting via Zoom with 10 present online and 11 in the Parish Room, including Fr Simon, Stephen Warde (Chair) and Sarah Sykes (Minutes)

Apologies: Fiona Rutter, Ursula Lowe and Geoff Cook

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be an accurate record.

We had discussed the Xmas and Advent arrangements at the previous meeting in November. The Chair asked the Meeting if there were any additional comments anyone wished to make. He offered thanks to Fr Simon and all who were involved in preparing the Liturgies which had all gone well. Fr Simon suggested that handing out the parish registration forms at Christmas Masses and Good Friday/Easter would help build up our Parish database with those who are members of the Parish but attend Mass less often.

A note was made that the hoped-for Epiphany party didn't take place. Unfortunately there were not enough volunteers to run it this year.

The replacement of the Sanctuary carpet is a step nearer completion. Stephen Warde showed a selection of carpet tiles to the meeting which will be on display along the edge of the bottom step of the Sanctuary for the next few weeks. Please give any feedback on preferred colour to Fr Simon, the Parish Office or Stephen Warde. Ron Haynes expressed his opinion that it would be nice to keep a contrasting colour and put in a vote for the green tile.

2. Parish and Diocesan news

We have a new Bishop, Bishop Peter Collins who has come to us from Cardiff. He was ordained Bishop on 14th December last year. He will be making Parish visitations across the whole Diocese over the next 3 years, starting with Religious houses and parishes run by Religious. Amongst other things he will be assessing how the Diocese will minister to our communities going forward as Fr Simon's generation of parish priests retire and fewer priests are available. Sarah Sykes mentioned that the Bishop had recently visited the Radio Maria Studios in Cambridge, said Mass there, taken part in praying the Rosary and been the guest on the programme Songs in the Wilderness (a podcast is available if you missed the live broadcast). Christine Knight also mentioned that the Bishop will open and bless the SVP house in Norfolk.

Fr Simon reported that the church's keyboard was stolen last Friday (3rd) afternoon when a man walked into the church, picked up the keyboard and left. CCTV of this has been sent to the police and a new keyboard has been purchased and is due to arrive on Thursday. It is lightweight enough to put it away in the Confessional after Mass. Other security options such as chains and trackers are also being considered for this and the new screen in the Parish Room.

A note from Fiona Rutter was read by the Chair about the tea and coffee used for coffee after Mass and the Coffee Hub. For many years we have been using the Fairtrade brand Traidcraft. However, Traidcraft has gone into administration and we will need to find another supplier. Fiona suggested a couple of options including The Daily Bread Co-operative based off Kings Hedges Road. Sarah Sykes put in a vote for Daily bread as it is local and is a Christian organisation run with Christian values.

3. Lent and Easter

Chrism Mass, Norwich Cathedral: Fr Simon said that the Chrism Mass will take place on the Tuesday of Holy Week. We have yet to decide whether we will hire a coach or share one with one of the other parishes in Cambridge. There is often a low take up for places on the coach for this Mass as it is in the middle of the day during the working week. Sarah Sykes suggested hiring a minibus may be another option for transporting smaller numbers, but Fr Simon said that the difference in cost would be negligible as the main cost is the cost of the driver.

Maundy Thursday: Mass at 7.30pm followed by watching until 10pm ending with Night Prayer.

Good Friday: Fr Simon suggested that we again have two services on this day with the first taking place at 1pm for those who would prefer to avoid a crowded church and 3pm (the usual time for this service) for those who are fine with a busier church.

Easter Vigil Mass: will take place at 9pm as usual.

Easter Sunday: Masses will be the normal Sunday Mass times of 8am, 9.30am and 11am.

Stations of the Cross through Lent: will take place take place on Friday evenings at 7.30pm. It is hoped that the Stations will be presented in a hybrid-manner with people participating both in the church and through Zoom. There will need to be a short trial to see the best method of doing this using either a mobile device or the new screen.

Fr Simon will lead the Stations each Friday, except for the first Friday of Lent which will be led by the Justice and Peace group.

Also, on 10th March, the Stations will start at the earlier time of 7pm when those attending the Family Fridays social group will join Fr Simon.

Helena Judd introduced the following proposal for a Lent event:

[Rise Theatre](#) is a Catholic group which tours around the country putting on original shows, sketches and workshops around faith-based stories, visiting churches, schools and retreats. They are currently touring with the play [Faithful Companions](#), about the life of Marie Madeleine d'Houët, foundress of an international society of Catholic sisters called the Faithful Companions of Jesus.

She would like to invite the Theatre to bring this show to Cambridge to perform at St Laurence's Church on Palm Sunday at 1pm. All the confirmation candidates in the Cambridge area would be invited. There is a £700 charge so we would need to ticket the event. The play would be performed in the church.

Discussion:

People thought it was a good idea, but there were a couple of comments. Firstly, one parishioner asked whether the church was the best place to hold such an event, particularly as the Sanctuary is not a stage but a holy place where the Real Presence of Jesus is in the tabernacle. Fr Simon suggested that the consecrated hosts could be temporarily relocated. Other comments agreed that any performance should be sensitive to this issue but felt that, particularly given the subject matter, use of the church was appropriate. It was also suggested that, more generally, we might consider putting a sign by the Sanctuary Lamp explaining what the Real Presence means for us.

Alternatively, the play could be held in either St Laurence's, or St Alban's (which has a stage), school hall.

Also, it was asked whether we could avoid ticketing by splitting the bill between the Cambridge parishes and asking for donations on the day.

We should also bear in mind that if the play is held at 1pm in our church, that this would follow a longer than usual Sunday Mass because it is Palm Sunday. If held in our church there were the following logistical concerns: would there be time to set up? Would people wait around after 11am Mass? Would there be time to return home have lunch and come back out again? How about a bring and share lunch followed by the play?

ACTION:

- Helena will take away these concerns, explore the various possibilities suggested and consider the logistics of how best to run the event.

4. Children's Liturgy

Leonie Isaacson reported that the Children's Liturgy at 9.30am Mass was being very well attended with numbers regularly over 35. It has been noted that the number of families returning to Mass has increased over the last 2-3 months. Encouraged by this, the Children's Liturgy Team would like to restart Children's Liturgy at the 11am Mass. Several the volunteers at 9.30am Mass are happy to support the 11am Mass but more volunteers are needed to make it sustainable. The Team plan to do some promotion of the idea, asking for help with expanding this ministry. Another 6-8 people on the rota for each Mass are needed. Training will be given and shadowing will be offered while DBS checks are completed. Each session is run by two volunteers.

ACTION:

- Notice in the newsletter explaining what is needed – Leonie Isaacson
- Spoken appeal at the end of Mass – Jim Infield and Leonie Isaacson

5. Synodal Pathway Action Group

Adult Education and Faith Sharing:

The Gospel study group started in November led by Kay Dodsworth and with Roberta Canning and Edward Acton supporting. It takes place after Mass on Wednesday afternoons. Numbers range between 3 and 8 people a week. The sessions give people an opportunity to talk about their faith and study the Scriptures. Roberta reported that no one had asked for an online group or for the sessions to be held at an alternative time. The sessions will continue up to Easter, excluding Ash Wednesday.

Roberta reported that there are also plans to run a faith-sharing course using resources from the Sycamore website. The plan is that the first session will be held on Friday 24th February, which is the first Friday in Lent, before the 12.30pm Mass. Anyone interested in taking part will be asked to look at the online material beforehand and then come together on 24th to share thoughts. This way of running the course is slightly different to the original way it was designed to run, but means the sessions can be held in an hour rather than 2 hours. [Sycamore](#) is a very engaging and accessible programme originally started by Fr Stephen Wang for students at Newman House University Chaplaincy in central London and grew from there into a programme for parishes, chaplaincies, retreat centres etc. The goal of the programme was to provide an introduction to the Christian faith for those who knew little or nothing about it and make Christianity more accessible to their fellow students. There are several 'pathways' available on the website and the Family Fridays group plans to use the Sacramental Pathway in its session next year.

Accompanied Prayer programme is planned to run through Lent. It was originally started several years ago by Sr Anna from the Brookside convent through the ecumenical spiritual advisory group run by the Diocese of Ely. It takes place over 4 weeks, meeting once a week with people trained in spiritual accompaniment introducing different types and ways of praying.

Social Activities:

Ad hoc things are happening organically for example during the faith sharing sessions, but we do have more established social times such as coffee after 11am Mass and the Saturday Coffee Hub, and CWL Friday lunch gatherings. Would it be helpful to bring these under a broad umbrella? Such as a group who could be called on to help with any Parish social activity. Most of these events happen around the weekend. Do we want to expand on this?

We need to encourage people to tithe time. There are a small group of people in the parish doing a lot of work, but we need to encourage a culture of volunteering our time for the parish.

It was suggested that a social occasion for people interested in helping with social events could be organised.

ACTION

- Set a date for a gathering and invite people to attend. Maybe after a Stations of the Cross session. Use this occasion to discuss setting up a social activities committee – SPAG group
- Think about having some social parties around Feast and Saint Days

Communications and outreach:

Karen Rodgers said that outreach to the wider community is desperately needed. She would like to run a community games group on Thursday lunchtimes, however she has not been able to recruit volunteers to help with such a group as yet.

6. School governor vacancy

St Laurence's School is looking to appoint a Foundation governor. Please email the School Office or contact Charlotte Woodford, the Chair of Governors, or speak to Fr Simon.

Fr Simon explained that being a Foundation Governor is a broader role than being a governor of the local school. A larger vision of Catholic education, and of supporting the Bishop in this, is needed. Part of the role of such a governor is to make sure Catholic education is woven into everything that the school does. The governor is there to represent the Bishop and support the purpose of having a Catholic school. Former Chair of Governors, Mary-Jane O'Sullivan, said it was a very rewarding thing to do. People with backgrounds in HR, medical, legal would be very useful.

7. Parish Groups

CAFOD – Serga Collet reported that the unwanted Xmas Gifts sale had raised a total of £389.24 which is shared with SVP who co-ran the sales. She said that having the contactless payment unit had been very useful.

CAFOD'S 60TH: on Saturday 11th February, CAFOD are holding it's 60th birthday celebration in the Parish Room. Regional co-ordinator, Jane Crone, and guest speaker, Anne Street, would be talking at the event with coffee, tea and cakes organised by Roberta C and Jeanette Milbourn.

Lent Family Fast Day: appeal talks at the end of Masses will take place on 25th and 26th February and collections on 4th and 5th March. CAFOD's money-raising event for Lent is the 'Big Walk'. Our local aim is to walk to Bangladesh. A couple of group walks are being planned – a Stations of the Cross Walk through Cambridge based on Gail Osman's route used over the last 2-3 years and a Cemetery Walk led by Ron Haynes. Serga also plans to organise a cycle ride.

Laudato si' weekend: is planned for 15th and 16th July with a gardening afternoon on 16th and activities at the Family Fridays session on 14th.

Justice & Peace – Ron H thanked the Parish for its generous donations to the Pax Christi collection which totalled nearly £500. As mentioned above they are making arrangements to lead a Stations of the Cross in Lent. And also organising a non-violent peace-making event.

Tech Group – Ron H reported that the group, along with the Finance Group, are exploring having a contactless payment unit that could be used generically across multiple parish groups. The question of how many donations the parish might be missing by not have a contactless donation point in the church was touched on. Ron agreed that the costs of these donation points are coming down as more people take up this tech and it may be something that the parish could reconsider investing in.

8. AOB

Ron H asked that plans to recruit a Pastoral Assistant be advanced and brought to the next meeting.

Fr Simon highlighted that one weekend Mass is currently being supplied by Blackfriars for which we pay a supply fee. And we also pay a supply fee for Ablaze Mass. It was suggested that we could move to merge two of the Sunday Masses and then a supply fee would not be needed. However, Fr Simon said this decision would now wait until after the Bishop's visitation.

9. Dates of the next meetings

Thursday, 20 April

Tuesday, 4 July

Thursday, 14 September

Tuesday, 21 November