

Parishioners' Open Meeting

20th April 2023 at 7.30pm

Present: Fr Simon, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes (minutes), plus 9 and 6 online.

Apologies: Helena Judd, Leonie Isaacson, Geoff Cook, Kay Dodsworth

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as a true record.

The Chair updated the meeting about

- the carpet tiles for the Sanctuary, which have now been ordered and will be installed shortly.
- Parish database – continues to be updated and there are now 400 adults in the database. You can either sign up on the Building-up-the-Parish webpage of the Parish website or filling in a paper form

2. Parish and Diocesan news

Easter Liturgies

Thanks were given by the Chair to all who helped with the Easter liturgies, including those who decorated the church, Readers, Eucharistic ministers, music liturgies and many other unseen tasks. All the Liturgies over Easter had gone well and numbers were up on last year. Fr Simon reported that having two Passion Liturgies on Good Friday had worked well and both had been well attended. It also made it possible to separate the veneration of the Cross and Communion processions which is liturgically preferable.

Easter Vigil – thanks to the Tech team for providing audio, particularly from the outside part of the service, and video for those watching online.

Eucharist under both kinds

We will aim to return to receiving Communion under both kinds from the Feast of Corpus Christi. A notice will go in the newsletter asking for those who were Eucharistic Ministers pre-COVID and those who would like to become a Eucharistic Minister to make themselves known. Training and re-training will be organised.

Offertory

We have already restarted the basket Offertory Collection and the Offertory itself will also return.

Sign of Peace

It was also felt that it would be an appropriate time for the physical sign of peace to return, but it should be officially announced.

Children's Liturgy

This will be restarting at 11am Mass from this Sunday. There will be a trial run for 2 months during which it is hoped that a few more people will be recruited to make it feasible for it to continue beyond the initial 2 months. Thanks were given to Leonie Isaacson, Jim Infield and the Children's Liturgy Team for the work done get this ministry re-started at this Mass.

Confirmation

Bishop Peter will be celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation at the church on Wednesday 5th July.

The Bishops Council of Laity

Helena Judd attended the last meeting but is unable to go to the next meeting. Would anyone be able to attend on behalf of the Parish? Fr Simon suggested that someone from SPAG (Synodal Path Action Group) could go.

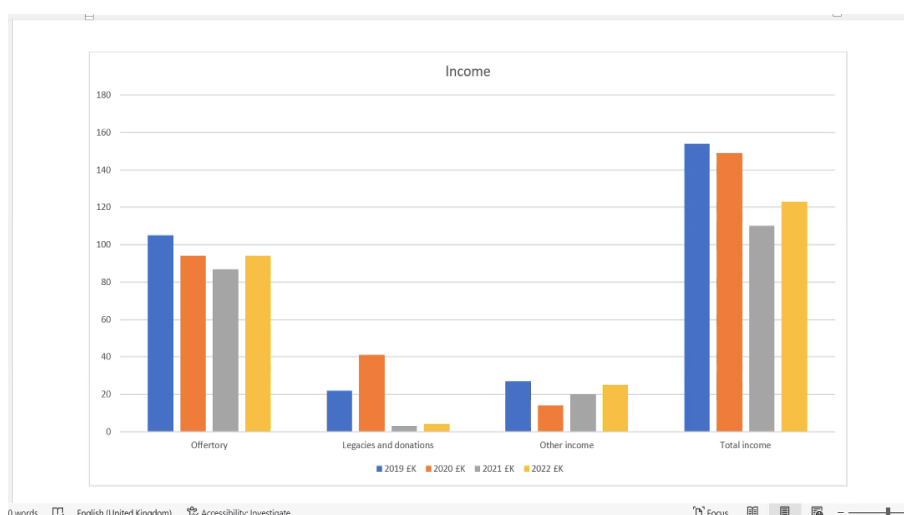
ACTION

- Council of Laity – find a parish rep to attend (Ron Haynes)
- Sign of Peace – announce return of the physical sign (Fr Simon)
- Eucharistic Ministers recruitment drive (Nora Darby)

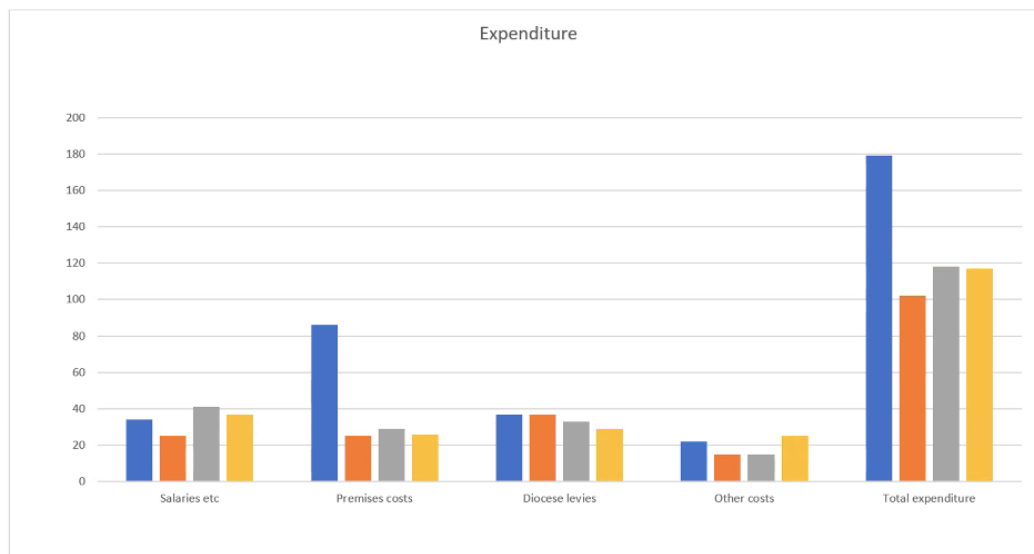
3. Finance Report

James Dore shared a summary of the Parish finances for the year 2022-2023

He shared spreadsheets which covered our last four years income and expenditure. He pointed out that our Offertory Collection is nearly back to pre-pandemic levels, particularly in the last few months.



Outgoings for the year are about £117,000, and so we have a small surplus of £6000 overall for this financial year. We also continue to maintain our long-term saving which stand at £250,000.



Some of these savings are ear-marked for building work, if we are able to find people to volunteer to project manage works which need to be done as highlighted in the 5yr survey report, in particular some roofing works to repair leaks, replacement of the church heating system (Jim O’Sullivan has started to look into this and will look to hire a consultant to do an energy audit. We will then use the audit to assess what sort of system to install), interior decoration of the church. Fr Simon said that painting the church will likely entail setting up of scaffold inside the church and we would perhaps have to relocate elsewhere for Mass. The O’Sullivans commented in the Zoom Chat that when the church was last decorated it had been possible to organise the work so that Sunday Mass could take place in church while weekday Mass was said in the Parish Room.

After his presentation, James mentioned that he has now held the position of Treasurer for 4.5yrs and it is now time to look for someone else to take on this role in 6 months’ time. A newsletter announcement will be made shortly asking for volunteers and James is willing to speak to interested people.

Fr Simon said that Paul Raines, based in Ely, is the new Director of Finance for the Diocese, and is interested in providing training for Parish treasurers.

The Chair offered thanks to James for his work as Treasurer (a position he holds jointly with Joanne Kerrigun) and he also thanked the Finance Committee for its part in supporting the Treasurer’s work. He then said that he was also in a similar position having served as Chair of the POM for several years, and that if anyone would like to take this on, to get in touch with him.

ACTION

- Ask for expressions of interest in the Treasurers role (James Dore)
- Ask for expressions of interest in the Chairs role (Stephen Warde)
- Prepare to replace the church heating system (Jim O’Sullivan)

6. Synodal Pathway Action Group (SPAG) update

Adult education and faith sharing

- Gospel study group - Roberta reported that the Gospel study group has a small group of attendees who get a lot out of the meeting, but they are open to holding it at another time, if there is demand for it.
- Sycamore group – was well attended online and people had felt free to share their thoughts and opinions. The course had been a good starting point for faith-sharing and learning. The final session was on Prayer, and it's planned to follow this up with a 4-5 week online meeting on Prayer to start in the week after Ascension. There would be a mix of input (introducing different ways of praying) and practice. Another thought was to have a morning of prayer tasters in person. We don't have the resources to run both options at the same time however. And we don't want to duplicate the month of accompanied prayer sessions. It's also planned that another Sycamore course will be held later in the year, but this time in person, when the evenings are lighter. The plan is to watch the course videos together as a group and then pause at the discussion points and talk through the questions and any thoughts.

Sandy Hobson wondered if we could offer the development of a prayer ministry who could pray with people for a few minutes after Sunday Mass. Although this is a good idea, this is not what the SPAG group would be offering in the introduction to prayer, but it's certainly something that could be supported if there are volunteers to put it into practice.

Pentecost Eve – proposal to have a Taizé session from about 9pm til 10pm

Karen Rodgers expressed that all this work going on was good but would like us to encourage more in person to build up the faith community. People are needed to give time to the church and to building up the parish and its community across all ages. We need to encourage people to tithe their social time to the church. However, it was also pointed out that online is with us and makes it possible for people to attend things who might not otherwise attend, especially as we are a geographically far-flung parish.

Social activities

- Fish and chips get together was held last month to bring together the different people connected with social side of hosting other parish groups.
- The Coffee Hub will show the King's Coronation in the Parish Room, with refreshments.
- Bring and Share and/or BBQ to replace the cancelled CAFOD Curry Night. Friday 23rd June at 6pm – a talk by Jim Infield about his trip to Bangladesh, followed by food.

Communications

Karen Rodgers has put together an initial draft of a Parish brochure, however, it needs to be more fully discussed within the Communications Group

ACTION

- Check that Jim Infield is available on 23rd June (Serga Collett)

7. Pastoral Assistant

Fr Simon sees the role as one which would have an overview of all the different outreaches taking place in the parish including knowing who is taking Communion to whom. It would need someone with professional qualifications and the salary would aim to be between that of a high-level teaching assistant and a first-year teacher. He noted that other parishes in the Deanery would also like a part-time Pastoral Assistant and would we therefore go halves on a whole assistant, but that would need careful consideration. He is keen that we ask the Diocese for help with putting a job description together and to consider how such a position would be managed. It feels that it would be a good idea that the Parish Secretary and Pastoral Assistant had a manager other than the Parish Priest, maybe someone else within the Deanery. Priests aren't always the best line managers of lay people.

Ron and Jeanette have offered to collect some role descriptions from other parishes. These descriptions cover a wide range of responsibilities. It is useful to use these role descriptions to get ideas of what might be possible for the role, but then we will need to narrow down, what we want the role to achieve. Parishes are very different from each other and we need to be very clear on our priorities. We as a parish will need to decide exactly what we would like a Pastoral Assistant to accomplish and what responsibilities would make up this role.

The Open Meeting supported moving forward with this this year.

ACTION

- Put together a full proposal of what we would like to see from the role of a Pastoral assistant for our parish for the next POM.

8. Parish Group updates

CAFOD – Serga thanked the parish for its support of the Lent Family Fast Day which raised £1119.00. The Walk to Bangladesh is closing this Sunday. This year we have made it to Pakistan. Not quite Bangladesh but, having passed last year's goal of walking to Afghanistan, we have done very well. The total raised for this so far is £1,023.00. Events to encourage steps were the Cemetery walk, a cycle ride to Audley End and Cambridge Churches Walk on Good Friday, when a CAFOD prayer was prayed at every stop. This was a very spiritual walk and it would be good to do again and would be a lovely contribution towards the Parish social life.

The meal to support CAFOD's work in Bangladesh has been cancelled but will be replaced by the event (mentioned above under point 6) on 23rd June.

There will be a Volunteers' Meeting on 16th September during the Coffee Hub.

Helena Judd has asked for us to do a CAFOD Family Fast Day on 14th July with a Laudato Si Mass on 16th July and perhaps some gardening in the afternoon.

Harvest Fast Day is on 6th October.

SVP – there will be a lunch for older parishioners on 8th May.
Saturday morning drop-ins in the Parish Room between 10am and 11am are planned to start soon. A rota is being put together of members of the SVP who will be available to chat with people who need help. This will run alongside the Coffee Hub.

Justice & Peace group – was part of a couple of trials of hybrid Stations of the Cross during Lent, this enabled those online to pray along with those walking the Stations in the church. A Caritas Fair is planned to take place on 4th November 2023.

Tech group – Ron reported that there is a new sound bar and microphone on the large screen which will help with clearer sound for those joining meetings online.
The opportunity provided by the change of carpet in the Sanctuary will give us an opportunity to give the cabling a thorough check and reroute parts for the new layout in this area.
The keyboard continues to remain secure with storage out of the main body of the church.
The music tablet interface is very fiddly to use, and perhaps the user interface could be made more user-friendly.

Jo Wager wondered whether the website could be modernised.
The idea of having a digital noticeboard to face the road which could have parish notices on and maybe some Catholic images (such as the Divine Mercy or Sacred Heart for example) was also mentioned. These things have been discussed in the SPAG. With regard to the implementation of these ideas, it is a matter of finding both the time and manpower.

9. AOB

We will mark our Patronal Feast Day on Thursday 10th August with a Mass and bring and share meal with BBQ as we did last year.

10. NEXT MEETING

4th July

16th September

2nd November

All take place in the Parish Room at 7.30pm with the option to join via Zoom.