

**Parishioners' Open Meeting (online via Zoom)
23 February 2021**

Present: Fr Simon, Fr Bob, Deacon Geoff, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes (Minutes). 21 present at the start of the meeting rising to 24

Apologies: Nora Darby, Catharine Warren, Leonie Isaacson, Christine Knight, Jo Wager, Barbara Quail, Rupert and Ginny Russell, Helen and Michael Allen

Fr Simon opened the meeting with a prayer and the Chair gave brief instructions in relation to Zoom for those who hadn't attended before.

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a true record.

1. An update on arrangement for opening the church and private prayer
 - a. Summary of current position
 - b. Next steps
 - c. Arrangements for Easter

1a: Fr Simon summarised the current position. The church has signage up indicating that the church is closed, although the Bishop has requested that at least 2 Masses should remain open to the general congregation. The doors however are generally left unlocked and those who have attended Mass have been asked to clean the areas they have occupied. Attendance has mainly been at the 11am Sunday Mass, which is open in line with the Bishop's request. Attendees at this Mass are around the 20-30 level

COMMENT:

Fr Simon confirmed that the self-cleaning was working and people have been cleaning the benches they have used.

Parents should be reminded to keep their children with them in the benches, limit how much they touch things and prevent them from sucking the benches.

Several parishioners at the meeting who have acted as stewards over the last year expressed that they would be happy to return to stewarding.

Jim O'Sullivan cautioned that all the infection rates have gone down the rate is still twice what it was last March.

It was felt that numbers at Mass are likely to increase in the coming weeks and we should be prepared to provide stewards.

Although the church is closed on the whole, seeing people in church does give rise to a certain amount of ambiguity for which we must take responsibility, which means organising stewarding.

It was suggested that families with children could be allocated a particular area eg the balcony or narthex but it was pointed out that households cannot mix at the moment and children would be likely to mingle, so this is not currently a practical solution.

When stewarding restarts they should be aware of issues re children and remind people using humour and good grace that people must not move around the church.

1b: next steps – Fr Simon suggested that we should open all Masses, including 5pm with stewards from Palm Sunday presuming that it is safe to do so.

Palm Sunday: There will not be the usual processing into the church due to managing social distancing safely. However palms will be available in baskets for people to help themselves to but must also take home with them.

To keep the Palm Sunday Mass as near to 45 minutes as possible, a shortened version of the Passion will be read and homilies kept brief.

Fr Bob requested that the altar servers return to serving at Mass.

ACTION

- Contact servers and organise a rota for serving, if possible in family groups.
- Contact all who have acted as stewards in the past asked whether they would be happy to recommence this service from Palm Sunday. **(Nora D)**

1c: Arrangements for Holy Week and Easter Sunday

Maundy Thursday: Fr Simon proposed ticketing for this Mass and washing of the feet for 12 parishioners suitably socially distanced.

COMMENT

A discussion on whether washing of feet was feasible. It was thought that there would not be space to socially distance 12 people along the front of the altar, but there could be room to socially distance 6 family pairs. Non-contact of feet washing could be achieved through participants providing their own towels.

The Meeting leaned towards Eventbrite ticketing for this day.

ACTION

- Decide whether this Mass should be ticketed or online only with ministers and feet to be washed present. **(Fr Simon)**
- Invite 6 family pairs to have their feet washed **(Fr Simon)**

Good Friday: Fr Simon proposed that the Solemn Liturgy of the Passion be celebrated at midday but live streamed only. Then from 1pm, every half hour a short meditation, an extract from the Passion, some music, veneration – in the form of bowing or genuflecting – and prayer before the Cross for groups of up to 20–30 people, receive Communion and then immediately leave the church.

15–20 minutes of prayer and 10 minutes to clean down the benches and let in the next group of people. Places to be booked through Eventbrite.

COMMENT

Will be dependent on getting enough stewards. Stewards would need to run several consecutive sessions

It was suggested that 6 sessions be offered to begin with and if they became full further sessions could be released.

Some people not on the regular stewards' rotas might be prepared to steward this as a one-off

The Meeting thought the idea was a good way of celebrating Good Friday.

ACTION

- Decide on the finer points of detail eg how many people in each session, whether 15 minutes in length, 10 minutes to clean and 5 minutes to get the next group of people seated is enough time (**Facilitation Group**)
- Ask Reece to plan to set up Eventbrite booking (**Fr Simon**)

Vigil Mass and Easter Day

Fr Simon suggested a 9pm start, that there be a procession of ministers with the Paschal candle but the congregation will be seated. The Liturgy should again be kept as short as possible.

COMMENT

The start time and length of service was discussed. would aim to fit the liturgy into one hour.

It was suggested that for those watching on livestreaming that some safe form of the fire could be placed in the church. This may also save some time by cutting the need to process in.

It was suggested that the Readings not interspersed with music, but music is kept to within the Mass part of the Vigil.

Any overflow for seating outside the body of the church needs to be flagged up in good time for the tech group to put the audio/visual support in place

The Chair expressed thanks for the work that the Tech Group did for the Christmas Masses It was felt that all the main Holy Week and Easter Day Masses should be ticketed but that we should do all possible to let those without internet access know how to access this – posters in and around church, maybe in prominent places in the community, using a phone tree like SVP's, announcing on Radio Maria were all suggestions.

Jeanette Milbourn volunteered to organise flowers in the church for Easter Sunday, as several of the usual flower team are shielding or similar. She will contact Frances Stafford directly offer this.

ACTION

- Decide whether the Vigil should start at 8pm or 9pm (**Fr Simon**)
- Decide whether there should be a 5pm Mass on Easter Sunday (**Fr Simon**)
- Investigate whether some form of the fire can safely be placed in the church (**Fr Simon**)
- Organise for the nails to be put in the Paschal candle inside the church (**Fr Simon**)
- Plan how many Readings will be used, and how to keep the Mass to a shortened length so people are in the church for no more than an hour. (**Fr Simon & Fr Bob**)
- Additional advertising of the Holy Week and Easter Masses, and how to book with or without access to the internet, using posters on the outside of the church and leaflets in the porch to take away. (**Facilitation Group**)

- Connection of Office phones to Parish Secretary working at home to be discussed separately by Fr Simon and Tech Group

2. Parish Group Updates

Confirmation: Fr Simon announced that he has booked the Bishop to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation for last years candidates (2020). The Mass will take place on Monday 17th May.

This year's cohort currently preparing will then be confirmed either later this year or early next year (2022).

CAFOD: Serga thanked everyone, and in particular the Tech Group, who have contributed to setting up the Walk for Water Lenten challenge for the Parish and reported that our combined steps have got us nearly to the Swiss border so far. She thanked everyone who is walking and giving through the JustGiving page which has raised £485 so far. She encouraged people to join in the challenge of walking to Ethiopia in solidarity with those who have to walk daily to get water.

Family Fast Day is this Friday, 26th February. Envelopes will not be provided but donations can be made through the Walk for Water JustGiving page, by cheque or bank transfer. Fr Simon mentioned that when paying online please enter St Laurences without an apostrophe or the account name is not recognised.

There is also a local Stations of the Cross trail designed by parishioner, Gail Osman, as well as a CAFOD version (online Fridays at 11am with recordings made available each week if you miss the live event) both of which will be linked online. There will also be a copy of the local trail in the Pilgrim Magazine which comes out on the first weekend of March. Don't forget to count your steps and add them to the Walk for Water Challenge.

3. Any Other Business

Ron Haynes promoted the Justice & Peace Stations of the Cross which will take place online every Wednesday through Lent. Details on how to join are in the newsletter.

4. Date of next meeting

25th March online via Zoom at 7.30pm