

Parishioners' Open Meeting

17th March at 7:30pm

Our first hybrid meeting with 16 parishioners online and 12 in the Parish Room
Including Fr Simon, Deacon Geoff, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes (Minutes)

Apologies: Catharine Warren, Chris Avery, Jo Wager, Jo Kerrigun, Jeanette Milbourn

The Minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record.

1. Arrangements for Easter Triduum

Good Friday

Fr Simon proposed that due to high COVID levels in the community and an increase in hospital admissions, combined with hopefully more people attending the Easter services this year, that he would conduct two Liturgies of the Passion, preferably at 2pm and 4pm.

The Meeting discussed how we would manage numbers particularly if one Mass was busier than the other, and whether the two liturgies would be better to take place at 1pm and 3pm. There were pros and cons around both sets of times and it will be left to Fr Simon to make the final decision on times. Whichever is chosen, there will need to be thorough and widespread advertising of the times immediately through post Mass announcements, newsletter and keep-in-touch email and our website and FB page. Be prepared that there is likely to be a small number who may arrive for the traditional start time of 3pm.

As to managing numbers it was felt that without ticketing, which we are not doing, it must be left to individuals as to which Mass they attend.

Veneration of the Cross – we discussed the option of kissing the cross, touching the cross or lighting candles again. Kissing the cross was disregarded, and it was felt that larger numbers attending would make candle lighting not as practical as touching the cross.

Fr Simon also suggested that there could be a single procession to venerate the cross and then take Holy Communion, which was warmly welcomed.

Fr Simon will talk with the music group about the best way of providing music across either both or one of the two liturgies.

Easter Vigil

This will start at 9pm.

Fr Simon proposed that we cut the readings down from 9 to 5 in the interest of keeping the Mass a little shorter. The Meeting agreed that this was a good idea in this instance but were keen for it not to become the rule in future years.

There will be a lighting of the Easter fire and a procession into the church.

Easter Sunday

The Mass times will be as they are usually on Sundays. No 6pm Vigil Mass.

ACTION

- Decide on the Good Friday Mass times (Fr Simon)
- Speak with the music group about how best to provide music across the 2 Good Friday liturgies in particular, and across the Triduum in general. (Fr Simon)

2. Parish News

Seating and social distancing:

The Chair announced that the seating signage at the end of the church pews have been removed now there were more people in church and we were often no longer sitting every other bench. It was confusing, especially for visitors, to do one thing while indicating another. However, we are still encouraging everyone to wear masks and keeping the windows open. The Chair also suggested that we could reserve 2 benches at the front on the Narthex side of the church for people to use who want to socially distance ie sitting in the first and third bench and closing the second and fourth.

This suggestion was felt to be impractical by the Meeting due to the 11am Mass already using all the benches and being full doing so. The number of people who could socially distance in this manner would be minimal. A couple of alternatives were suggested: a Mass designated socially distanced, or the Parish Room to be used for those who would prefer to social distance, or on one side of the church the pews would be used alternately and on the other all benches could be used.

After some discussion it was felt that, having social distanced for a couple of years now, people are used to leaving some space between in each other and so are in fact social distancing naturally. It was decided that we should not try to micro-manage the situation but to ask people to be aware of social distancing and keep some distance as best they can.

It was requested that the Parish Homepage should be updated with the current advice and information.

Offertory Procession and Collection:

Fr Simon said he would be happy of the Offertory procession to restart but we must be sure to avoid possible contamination of the hosts through droplet spread. The Ciborium would need to be covered either with clingfilm or a lid – the lid being the preferred option.

Alternatively, the procession could be symbolic without the hosts in the Ciborium.

Collection – Fr Simon was keen that as few people as possible handle the collection baskets and that the cash would continue to be quarantined. It was felt that the collection as we used to know it was still not a good idea as it is impossible for the basket to not be handled.

A better idea would be either to place baskets near the priest when he dispenses the communion or to have the baskets held for donations at the back of the church as people were leaving. The Meeting felt that the baskets at the exits is the preferred option.

3. Synodal Pathway summary

Ron Haynes, Roberta and Michanne were present at the meeting representing the group who had organised the Synodal process for the Parish.

Ron shared some links with the meeting where people could access documents containing a compilation of the comments and discussions made over the several weeks of meetings as

well as the report which was sent to the Diocese. These documents will also go on our website in due course, and will also be circulated in the Keeping-in-Touch email.

Roberta gave a short summary of how the conversations had gone, reporting that it was felt that although it would have been good if more people had been involved in the discussions statistically the numbers attending over the weeks had been good. In addition to the weekly meetings, the SVP group had held two conversations and Helena had talked with the Confirmation group and Sue Price had done the same with the Yr6 pupils at the school. The children's responses have been compiled separately so that they don't get lost among the adult voices.

The points that came up most frequently were:

- The need to restart social activities
- Better supporting families, in particular with the education and formation of the children
- The need for ongoing education and support of our young people that continues past preparing them for the Sacraments
- Adult faith education to learn more about our faith and learn more about each other
- Improve outreach (especially in new communities like Northstowe).
- Concern about the new translation of the Liturgy being an impediment to praying the Mass

It was interesting to hear that other dioceses have had similar hot topics.

The group organising the synodal process have started to identify the challenges and actions which need to be taken forward within the Parish and Roberta mentioned the following:

- How can we make the exterior impress of our church more welcoming [As an aside to this Fr Simon mentioned that the car park monitoring company were amenable to switching off the car park checks with notice, and this would be the case for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, and also going forward for funerals and on occasions such as First Holy Communion Mass, when we are more likely to have visitors to the Parish].
- Find ways of welcoming families, helping them to pass on the faith, support them in the faith development of the children.
- That we should move away from the '4 communities within 1 parish' syndrome which naturally form around the Masses we attend by doing more things as a whole parish.
- To support adults in developing their faith through opportunities similar to the Alpha course. Sycamore by Fr Stephen Wang was suggested.
- More, and varied in style, prayer groups, bible study and craft groups.
- We are a parish of many teams – how can we encourage new team members to join these teams? And how can we act as one team more often?

Jeannette Milbourn has agreed to compile the list of priority action areas for review by the Synodal planning group and any other parishioners interested to help. It will then be circulated with the aim to start getting some teams together to work on each of the main action areas (with the idea that people can commit to these on a time-limited basis). The

aim should be to have the list together before Easter and to try to get some of these groups functioning before our next Open Meeting, when we can review progress

The Chair thanked all who had come together and taken on a lot of work to organise and run the process for the Parish. He asked whether it was the intention of the group to keep going and follow through with some of the suggestions and ideas that had come out of this process. The members of the group present felt that this would be something they would be prepared to do in conjunction with others within the parish, dividing up what needs to be done and sharing the burden of work.

DISCUSSION

In addition to the above points, Fr Simon mentioned that we as a Parish should also work out how to foster and support a Catholic Community in Northstowe, which when it is completely built, will be the largest town in the area after Cambridge. Deacon Geoff is also concerned about this and is working to make the Catholic voice heard as plans are made for accommodating faith groups and building places of worship in the town.

The suggestion was made that a pastoral worker could be employed by us, perhaps jointly with another parish, who could help coordinate any priority projects for the parish such as working with Catholics in outlying communities and villages which fall within our parish boundaries.

Teresa Campbell put in a plea for the development of prayer groups in the Parish.

It was felt that putting these requests into action should be started by producing a list of the main points to be tackled, putting together groups of parishioners to develop a plan with targeted actions and a set time frame to work on achieving these.

The idea of running a variety of workshops was suggested ie for music and liturgy, for Children's Liturgy, for communications, for refreshing ministries.

ACTION

- Compile the list of priority action areas for review by the Synodal planning group and any other parishioners interested in helping before Easter (Jeanette Milbourn)
- Circulate the priority action list and aim to get some teams together to work on each main action area before the next POM. (Synodal planning group)

4. Finance

Parish Treasurer, James Dore, gave an end of year report on the Parish's finances. Income was down a little but has held up well thanks to those who were donating via Standing Order, despite the fact that Mass attendance numbers were lower due to the pandemic. Expenses have also been lower than predicted for the year, having only spent £15k of an expected £35k expenditure, and our reserves are very healthy at just over £200,000.

DISCUSSION

Fr Simon mentioned that Sandra Portas is visiting Parishes and running a husbandry programme for skills, talents, as well as money, picking up after the end of the Alive in Faith

project. She'll be visiting our Parish at some point as she makes her way around all the parishes in the Diocese.

We talked about, with collections being difficult to reinstate, whether we could install a donor point on the wall of the church. Although initial set-up costs could be expensive, it is something that will be considered by the Finance Group. Fr Simon reported that OLEM are positive about theirs. He also mentioned that Cardinal Hume had suggested that people should aim to donate the equivalent of 1 hours earning per week. He felt this was a good way to approach considering how much to give as the calculation adapts to each person's earnings.

He also mentioned that the Diocese Finance Director has recently resigned and the job is being managed temporarily by one of the Deacon's at Newmarket until a replacement can be found. The Diocesan income is currently lower than pre-pandemic levels due to the general drop in income that all parishes have experienced. We send 37% of our income to the diocese, but when that income drops the 37% we send to the diocese is also consequently a lower amount.

James confirmed that if we wanted to move forward with the idea of hiring a pastoral worker as mentioned above in these minutes then this would be something the Parish could afford at present.

Collection envelopes have also been restarted by Jim Scally.

5. Parish Groups

SVP Update

from Catharine Warren, read by The Chair:

The Maundy Thursday collection will be for the work of the SVP. We have decided to send the money to SVP groups in Romania who are supporting Ukrainian refugees. And as we are not forgetting South Sudan, SVP will match any amount (up to £500) collected for Romania/Ukraine with funds from its existing reserves and donate those to Sudan (to make sure Sudan does not lose out from the current focus on Ukraine)

We want to arrange some activities this year, including trip to a Garden Centre in May, and a Mass of Anointing possibly in late July.

It is hoped the Annual SVP Pilgrimage of the Sick to Walsingham will go ahead this year. The date planned for this is Sunday 3rd July.

CAFOD update

Serga Collett

Unwanted Christmas Gifts sale - After having made a total of £300 through this sale, the CAFOD and SVP groups are reviewing whether this will take place after Christmas 2022.

Walk Against Hunger – we have reached Italy walking over 1,000 miles in the last 2 weeks, and our JustGiving page has received £630 in donations so far.

Family Fast Day – there was an 100% increase in donations through the contactless unit this year with £700 being received. We await the counting of the cash received.

Justice and Peace
Ron Haynes

Peace Sunday - £400 was raised for Pax Christi at collections across 2 Masses Station of the Cross – please join us online on Wednesday evenings from 7.30 -8.10pm. The Zoom link is publicised in Keeping-in-touch email or via J&P email events@justice-and-peace-cambridge.org

Tech Group
Ron Haynes, Richard Birkett

Ron reported that the group are working to make the hybrid meeting set-up which has been used for this meeting and the Saturday morning synodal discussion meetings a more permanent feature in the parish room which other groups will be able to use and given training to do so. The parishioners who attended this meeting via Zoom gave the system a thumbs up. However, a strong wi-fi connection is needed and the Parish wi-fi was not stable enough on the evening to hold the connection and was run using Ron's mobile wi-fi on this occasion.

Richard reported that the group is still waiting to hear whether the camera, previously used for the live-streaming and which had recently failed, could yet be repaired and then possibly used as a back-up camera or used with the new hybrid set-up.

Confirmation group
Helena Judd

We have a group of 23 candidates which includes candidates from St Vincent's in Fen Ditton. Our Confirmation team has been enriched by Debbie, who was running the confirmation classes at St V's prior to joining the two groups together.

At their next meeting the candidates will pray the Stations of the Cross and have the opportunity to go to Confession.

The date for Confirmation Mass has been set as Monday 4th July at 6pm.

First Holy Communion dates – Saturday 11th and 18th June at 10:30am & 3pm and Sunday 12th and 19th at 11am .

6. Date of next meeting at 7.30pm
Tues 17 May
Thurs 14 July