

Parishioners' Open Meeting
17 May 2022 at 7.30pm

Present: Fr Simon, Stephen Warde (Chair), Sarah Sykes (Minutes) plus 9 in person and 8 online.

Apologies: Geoff Cook

1. Minutes and matters arising

The Minutes were agreed to be a true record apart from one requested amendment that the reference to Sudan in the SVP group update be changed to South Sudan.

The Chair thanked all who were involved in arranging and participating in all aspects of the Easter Liturgies. Fr Simon apologised for the oils not being in the church on Maundy Thursday. Due to an oversight in the business of the preparations, the oils weren't brought through from his office in the presbytery.

DISCUSSION

The Chair invited comments on how the Easter services had gone. It was felt that the 2 services for the Good Friday Passion had worked well. The church would have been overfull if we had just had the usual service at 3pm. The attendance at the 4pm service was slightly less than at the 2pm, but the spread of attendance was fairly evenly split.

The Chair commented that it was fabulous to have been able to celebrate Easter more or less normally for the first time in 2 years.

2. Synodal Pathway Action Plan

Ron Haynes presented a 4-point action plan devised from the comments and suggestions received during the Synodal Pathway exercise earlier this year. You can find a pdf of this document [here](#) .

Headline points:

Improved communication / Outreach

Faith sharing / catechetics

Social Activities

Improving lay/parish participation

Ron and Geoff Cook had been our Parish representatives presenting our Parish's response to the Diocesan meeting. It seems that the points we raised were repeated in other parishes' responses, apart from comments on the forthcoming new translation of the Liturgy, which came up a lot at St Laurence's, but not across the Diocese.

Points to follow up in the action plan:

- Supporting children and families better and not just at the sacramental high points but consistently in all we do.
- Make opportunities for bonding time through social activities which will help us come together as a Parish
- Emphasize that all parishioners can and should be involved as much as possible
- Pastoral Assistant (someone who is a facilitator working in close co-operation with the Parish Priest, who will build teams for various initiatives and projects in the Parish and provide ongoing support).

The Chair summed up that there are four areas of focus with a few specific ideas and opened the floor for question and comments.

- If we have a Pastoral Assistant we should be careful that others don't step back and say the PA will do it all
- How do we overcome the attitude that all we need to do is turn up to Mass and not contribute in any other way to the life of the Parish?
- It was suggested that the Margaret Beaufort Institute would be a source of advice as we move forward.

The Chair thanked the team who ran the Synodal Pathway consultation for the Parish and expressed appreciation for the work that had gone into the process and the compilation of all the comments received. We were reminded that when recruiting for help with parish projects that we should emphasise that help is welcome on a short or long term basis.

During the discussion about support for children in the Parish, Fr Simon reported that the Bishop has re-stressed that the Diocesan policy for preparing for the sacraments – in particular First Confession and Communion – is that these should be taught in the Parish rather than in schools. Fr Simon said therefore we should start to look at how the preparation for confession and communion will be done solely by the Parish catechists in the next school year. He said that preparation and training will be provided and we may also want to look at working with a new preparation programme.

It was felt that answers to the questions:

- Why is this being taken away from Catholic schools?
- And why should people send their children to a Catholic school if they won't get this teaching?

Should be provided to the whole parish so that the reasoning behind this decision is clear, and that we are reassured that children won't suffer a lack of Catholic education in Catholic school

Additional comments:

Karen Rodgers reminded us that parents are the primary educators of their children in all things including the Faith. There should be an emphasis that preparing for the sacraments and learning about our Faith is not something you do at primary school, but something that should continue on throughout childhood and into adulthood. She felt that Adoration and prayer before the Blessed Sacrament is core and starting each teaching session with this would yield extraordinary fruit.

Nora Darby asked whether the school staff could be involved in the teaching at church. Fr Simon and others thought we should not ask this of staff who already stretch well beyond their contracted work. Of course, anyone wishing to help on a voluntary basis would be very welcome.

Fr Simon made it clear that although this is Bishop Alan's decision for us as a Diocese it reflects what is currently considered to be best practice.

ACTION. It was decided that this item should go on the agenda for further discussion at the next Open Meeting in July.

3. Social Activities

Pentecost Party – international bring and share meal – planned and run with the help of the Confirmation candidates was suggested. However because the Feast day falls on the long bank holiday weekend when many are away, the date now proposed for this is 3rd July after the Ablaze Mass.

Jubilee weekend – Fr Simon proposed that we could have an extra special Saturday Coffee Hub with some cake and Cava and extended this for the coffeetime after the 11am Mass on Sunday too.

CAFOD party – focussing on the new CAFOD campaign ‘Fix the food system’. Serga would like a Laudato si Mass to be celebrated which would include the CAOFD 60th anniversary celebrations (postponed from earlier in the year). It was suggested that this could take place in September.

St Laurence Feast Day (10th Aug) – Parish BBQ following an evening Mass at 6pm on or a Sunday near this date.

Fr Bob’s 60th Anniversary of solemnly professing as a Religious and to thank him for his work in the Parish – Fr Simon proposed a wine and cheese evening and said he would ask Fr Bob for a suitable date in September.

An additional aside: Fr Simon proposed mixing the Ablaze Mass into one of the other current main Sunday Masses. He feels that the young/young at heart are the yeast of the Parish and keeping them separate is missing a huge opportunity of enlivening the Parish liturgical life. It is an area of consideration for what is the best strategy to involve young people in the life of the Parish.

Helena commented that it is not solely a youth Mass and every Mass should be child/youth friendly - but it is a Charismatic Mass. Can mainstream Catholics cope with a more Charismatic Mass as their main Mass? The Ablaze Mass is also a Mass where the Confirmation candidates are encouraged to take on many roles – reading, serving, music, operating the OHP. It’s a safe space where with their peers they can explore celebrating Mass in a more relaxed environment. Already some of the Confirmation preparation, sessions have been held after the 11am Mass with the hope that the families of the candidates would attend the Mass together and the socialise a bit at the coffee session after Mass.

Frances Stafford suggested that maybe the Ablaze team and candidates could lead 11am once a month. Fr Simon said whatever is decided it would be good to do something at least on a trial basis and if it didn’t work so well, a rethink or return to what we were doing before.

Richard Birkett pointed out that this is still keeping the youth somewhat separated rather than always a part of the liturgical life of the Parish.

ACTIONS

- It was decided that the Ablaze Mass should be discussed more fully at the next Open Meeting.
- Confirm date and arrangements for St Laurence’s Day celebration in August
- Confirm date/arrangements for CAFOD celebration in September – SERGA
- Get a date from Fr Bob to celebrate his anniversary – FR SIMON

4. Building up the Parish

Following the success of last October’s survey and volunteer appeal, that it would be worthwhile repeating the exercise again particularly as more people are starting to attend Mass and may have missed getting a form last time. The opportunity could also be used to communicate the key action areas from the Synodal Pathway discussions and to recruit for working groups on these topics.

Stephen Warde suggested that this could be done on the weekend of 11th June with a view to collecting the forms in over the following two weekends.

ACTION

Organise a fresh survey and volunteer appeal for weekend of 11th June – FACIL GROUP

5. Parish groups updates

CAFOD - Serga Collett reported that the Walk Against Hunger campaign for Lent had raised £2,550 through online donations, £697 through the contactless unit after Masses and £1,246 through cash and cheques totalling £4,493. Although half the amount raised last year, this is an excellent effort, considering that we were in lockdown last year when people had more time to walk and participate. Serga thanked all for their efforts for reaching this great total and reported that there is also a link on the parish website CAFOD page for direct online giving for this campaign.

SVP – Catharine Warren reported that the Garden Centre trip would be going ahead tomorrow. There will also be an SVP pilgrimage to Walsingham on 3rd July. A coach will be booked for this. Recently help has been provided with the following: the cost of new flooring, school activities, children's shoes, lifts to Mass, accompaniment to hospital.

Justice & Peace – Ron Haynes reported that the group had run a successful Stations of the Cross on Wednesdays through Lent via Zoom. The group continues to meet monthly and regularly liaises with CAFOD on various campaigns. They plan to hold an online Laudato si' study combined with the Ignatian Examen on Zoom on 21 June, 7.30pm.

Tech Group – have gained 2 new members. The group is planning to take the music CDs and digitise them to MP3 so that many different playlists can be compiled. They may also add some of the music generated during Lockdown. Thanks were expressed to Richard who, following a website crash due to a hardware failure, had been able to get the website up and running in time for the meeting this evening.

Fr Simon suggested that we could have a rebranding of the website and could include some additional information such as photos and videos of Parish activities and photos of people who were contact points for the Parish groups.

ACTION

Look at rebranding and updating the website

6. AOB

There will be May Crowning of the statue of Mary on 29th May at 12.30pm.

If anyone is interested in helping with a regular get together in the parish room to play board games and helping to run a monthly gardening club, please get in contact with Karen Rodgers through the Parish Office.

Catholic outreach at Strawberry Fayre – Divine Mercy stall – a pitch has been booked. If you would like to help man it, contact Karen Rodgers through the Parish Office.

Reordering the Sanctuary, delayed due to the pandemic, will not progress until after we get a new bishop. There will be a thorough period of consultation involving the diocese. Fr Simon hopes to be able to request a Bishop's visitation to discuss proposals as well as considering the whole church building environment encompassing general refurbishment, updating the heating, decoration and artwork. However, it was felt that at the next meeting we should discuss doing some basic work such as replacing the sanctuary flooring and giving the walls a lick of paint.

ACTION - discuss basic redecoration of the church – painting and flooring – at the next meeting.

Ron Haynes suggested that we need to talk in detail about Parish expansion – Darwin Green, Northstowe – and develop a plan of action to deal with this.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 14 July at 7.30pm

Topics for the July agenda taken from the minutes of this meeting:

Catechism of the sacraments to take place in church not school

Mainstreaming the Ablaze Mass

Basic redecoration of the church – painting and flooring

Talk about how the parish is going to expand in the near future and what that means for us