

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council 6th February 2024

Present: Peter Finkel and Theresa Finkel (Ch), Mark O'Connell, Marina Smith, Chris Danes, Becky Bailey, Kevin Lees, Maureen Thompson, Damien O'Brien, Con McHugh, Simon Chappell

- 1. Opening Prayers.**
- 2. Apologies:** Fr Alex
- 3. Minutes:** the Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council on the 4th October were approved.
- 4. Matters Arising:** CD System. After discussion, it was noted that the system can be operated from the Sanctuary because Blue Tooth is available on the Sanctuary. Smart Phones can therefore be used to change tracks and alter volume without the need to leave the Sanctuary. The system has yet to be operated in this way.
- 5. Feedback from Sub-Committees:**

Faith in Action (FIA):

General feedback, recommendations;

- **Volunteers:** There is still a shortage.
- **The Calendar:** is now on the website. Those who are planning events and activities are encouraged to update the calendar through the Parish Secretary.
- **The World Day of Prayer:** is on the 1st March 2024 and Stratford's event is being held at the United Reform Church. St Gregory's will be hosting the event in 2025.
- **Sub-Committees and working groups;** Committee discussed the value of having these to perform particular tasks/projects when appropriate and make recommendations. Committee recommends that the Parish Pastoral Council ("the Council") and Committees be authorised to appoint such sub-committees or working groups accordingly and that a formal provision for this be included in the Constitution.
- **Safety:** Committee discussed in general terms the safety of people using the Churches and facilities and noted that issues of safety are often left for individuals who are planning events and activities to resolve. Committee agreed a Parish-wide approach to the whole range of safety matters such as food hygiene, fire safety and health and safety generally is required. Committee recommends it be authorised to investigate (i) safety requirements in general and (ii) the safety requirements in relation to specific events and/or activities and make recommendations to the Council.

- **St Patrick's Day** (17th March 2024) **Celebrations:** as Fr Alex will be recovering from his operation, Committee recommends the St Patrick's Day Celebrations be not held this year and a "Social Event" be held on Fr Alex's return to full health (perhaps in April), arrangements, venue and theme to be determined by the FIA.
- **Youth Group:** at the request of a young person who could not attend, the establishment of such a group was discussed. Committee recommends that as the likely venue for such activity would be Our Lady of Peace, this matter be deferred until after the proposed building works are completed (the decision on the Planning Application is expected shortly).

The Council noted the general feedback and agreed to the specific recommendations.

Liturgy and Faith Development (L&FD):

General feedback and recommendations;

- **RCIA:** Five candidates are to be received into the Church at the Easter Vigil. **Baptism:** the last course for parents was very well attended.
- **Confirmations:** The Course for 24 young people (meeting every Wednesday) continues. In preparation, all have received the Sacrament of Reconciliation, they will lead the Ash Wednesday Mass and are preparing to lead Confirmation with Fr Abbot Paul on 22nd February 2024 at 7pm. Fr Alex is hoping to attend. All parishioners are welcome.
- **Marriage Preparation:** Sharon Elliot and Lisa Dunkley have prepared all of the couples who will be married at St Gregory's up to September 2024 after which Sharon will be stepping down from the Course. Lisa will continue to lead the Course with all necessary support.
- **Service of Reconciliation:** this will be on Friday 22nd March 2024 at 7pm. Three priests will be in attendance.
- **Cover for Fr Alex:** this has been arranged for all of the weekends of Fr Alex's absence. **The Easter Triduum** will also be covered by Fr Denis Carter SSC who may also be joined by Fr David Rocks OP. It is intended to have an extra collection in the future to help recover the costs of the extra stipends for priests covering for Fr Alex. **Music for Easter Week:** After Confirmations a meeting will be held for those interested in helping to prepare the music for Easter Week
- **Music:** Elaine is continuing to develop music at Shottery and is supporting the Confirmation preparation along with Kathryn. Elaine intends to link with the First Holy Communion classes after Easter to begin to prepare them for the celebrations in June.
- **Further GCSE Course:** following the success of the Autumn GCSE Course (regularly attended by 30 people), a further course is proposed

for Tuesdays in Lent focusing on Judaism and the Jewish Passover in relation to the Eucharist (ending with a Passover Meal for which there will be a small charge).

- **Christmas Concert:** the Christmas concert at Shottery by the newly formed choir under the direction of Kathryn was a huge success and raised money for CAFOD. **Freddie Alberto's percussion workshop** was also greatly received. Philippe Seiler provided a wonderful meal with flavours of South America. Money raised went to Mary's Meals.

6. Sub-committees/Committees and working groups for specific purposes: this item has already been addressed in paragraph 5 above

7. **Deanery Meeting (Ch):** The meeting was well attended by both Clergy and lay people. Because of the shortage of priests and vocations there is recognition that lay people will have to take on much of the practical workload that priests have; that parish churches need investment which may not be available; that parish churches need to work together and perhaps share services.

Change is happening and needs to be embraced by the parish. The Warwickshire Deanery Website features presentations on these issues. Concern was expressed that many parishioners neither use websites nor read newsletters.

There is a need for a different approach to providing information, such as producing a parish report which will reach all age groups (and both those who use information technology and those who don't) and which can be reinforced from the pulpit.

There is a need to engage young people through social media and draw on their skills.

The Council agreed that there is a need for a Communications Strategy and asked Mark O'Connell to form and chair a working group to develop one and make recommendations.

8. Protocols for Mass (Ch)

The Chairman stated that precautions introduced for covid seem largely to be no longer necessary and requested that consideration should be given to returning to the pre-covid position and current Diocesan practice namely:

- Readers collect the Bible from the Sacristy and walk as part of the procession into Mass

- Collection baskets be passed along the pews as previously
- The congregation proceed to receiving Holy Communion without the need for ushers
- For Holy Communion for the Sick, Eucharistic Ministers be given their Pixts by the Priest from the Altar

The Council agreed to recommend that such pre-covid practices be restored and that Readers and Eucharistic Ministers receive appropriate instruction at their respective training days.

9. Feedback on the Eucharistic Ministers (EM) Register

The EM Register is complete and the Safeguarding Officer is helping to progress DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks. An EM Retreat has been organized for Saturday 23rd March 2024 (to be hosted by Fr David Rocks and further details will be included in the newsletter). EMs will be recommissioned at the Maundy Thursday evening Mass.

10. Safeguarding updates

The Safeguarding Officer has been focusing upon:

- The Children's Liturgy
- The Choir
- Eucharistic Ministers
- DBS requirements and the need for updating every 3 years.

The Safeguarding Weekend is on 17th November 2024 and will present an opportunity to recruit assistance.

11. Any Other Business

- Future Deanery meeting dates are shown in the Appendix to these Minutes.
- As the vocations programme has not been resumed post covid, Chris will raise this at the next Deanery meeting. Prayers for vocations are included in bidding prayers on the 4th Sunday of every month. In the meantime we await hearing which day is allocated to St Gregory's Parish to pray for vocations
- Con will contact Fr Abbot Paul Gunter for feedback on the November Visitation.
- Pilgrimages: consideration to be given to a Parish approach/strategy

12. Closing Prayers.

Appendix

Day, Date & Month	Location/Venue	Meeting
Tuesday, 20 th February	Warwick	Clergy & Laity Northern Group
Thursday, 22 nd February	Banbury	Clergy & Laity Southern Group
Monday, 4 th March	Bicester	Deanery Pastoral Council
Tuesday 18 th June	Bicester	Clergy & Laity Southern Group
Thursday 20 th June	Kenilworth	Clergy & Laity Northern Group
Thursday 19 th September	Leamington	Deanery Pastoral Council
Tuesday 15 th October	Warwick	Clergy & Laity Northern Group
Thursday 17 th October	Banbury	Clergy & Laity Southern Group
Tuesday, 12th November	Bicester	Annual Mass for the Deceased Clergy of our Deanery at 11 am. All welcome