

Our Lady of Peace Building Committee Meeting

Saturday 25 January 2025

Present: Fr Oliver, Chris D, Simon C, Mike D, Helen D, Maureen T, Brian B, Mandy B, Teresa F, Cecilia D, Caroline W, Andreas W, Terry P, Damian O'B, Peter F, Teresa F, Marina S.

Apologies: Con McH

All agreed to a 1pm finish time.

Opening Prayer: Jubilee Year 2025 prayer

Fr Oliver introduced the meeting emphasising that we are ONE parish – not even two congregations – ONE congregation that has two places of meeting. ONE Parish with three weekend Masses.

The story so far: *(including items 4 and 5 on the agenda)*

Fr Oliver shared what he has received (*documents already distributed to committee members via email*). Copies of architect's proposed plans for Our Lady of Peace (OLP) were also made available to the meeting. It was clarified that the parish belongs to the Abbey Trust. **ACTION:** Fr Oliver will seek further clarification as to how much the diocese need to be informed of any actions taken on the property at OLP.

Proposed building scheme at OLP was costed at £700,000. However, this did not include all of the proposed elements and with inflation this is now estimated to be more like £1.1 million. This is the size of parish's reserves. It was noted that £38,000 in architect's fees have already been spent. Unfortunately, this money has to be a written off. It was pointed out that the parish rely upon the interest it receives from its reserves (*in the order of £30,000 – 40,000 a year*) to keep it financially viable.

Therefore, all concurred that the building scheme for OLP as proposed and partially agreed is not viable. OLP is a Mass centre that is used by the parish for one Mass on Sunday morning. The building plans has to be put into this perspective.

Fr Oliver asked if there was any research into the use of the church buildings during the week and what was driving the perceived need to make the social area a third bigger. No formal research was reported. Reference was made to how the church was better used in the past (*over 15 years ago*) with Station of the Cross, Friday Mass and times of prayer.

Discussion took place about the needs of OLP and it was proposed that everyone keeps in mind the Mission of the Church and remembers that it is the people who form the community who are the Church, not the building.

Item 6 on the agenda

Discussion around: If we can't have the proposed plans for the above reasoning. What can we have and what is worth paying for? What is essential and what would be nice to have?

- It was noted that the building at OLP has not been properly maintained since the last quintennial report in 2020. This was following the reasoning that there was a proposed building programme in place, with the expectation that it would start imminently therefore there was no point in spending money on repairs.
- The need for another quintennial report (due anyway in Nov 2025) was recognised as a necessary starting point. It was also proposed that a group be formed who are responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the fabric of the building, as the annual maintenance as had been neglected.
- To help with understanding the possible lay out of the church furniture, Fr Oliver proposed to make a model of the Church. This will help with planning the internal arrangements of the church.
- Priorities for the new building project were suggested as warmth / aesthetically pleasing and sound structure. It was proposed that the ceiling be lowered and the cavity behind be insulated to help with both the heating and aesthetics of the building.
- The current tenders are not set out in a useful way as it is not possible to extract estimated costs for each element. New detailed costings will have to be made once a new proposal has been agreed.
- It was reported that the boiler is regularly serviced and functional if not terribly effective. Better insulation will help this.
- Other priorities were suggested as: Ensuring the main doors are insulated and that the current gap in the alignment of the door isn't related to the crack in the inner wall in the church. It was thought that the church would need to be completely redecorated internally, recarpeted and that thought should be given to inspiring spiritual images on the walls.
- Lighting – Fr Oliver asked if are there any problems that need to be addressed – particularly in the light of a company quoting £30-40,000 for lighting. Fr Oliver said there were no issues on the altar, musicians also said they were fine with the lighting. All agree that lighting will not be a focus for the new proposals
- A point of concern was raised wanting to be reassured that OLP is well regarded within the parish. Fr Oliver again reiterated that there is one parish. Suggestion was made that a weekday Mass might be regularly celebrated at OLP in order to help with our understanding that we are one parish. This may be difficult for some daily Mass attenders who live in the town and who do not have transport, equally it may give some parishioners who live nearer Shottery access to a weekday Mass. The possibility of a weekday evening Mass to allow workers to attend was raised.

- Historically there were two committees one for St G's and one for OLP. Under Fr Austin over 20 years ago these committees became one. Fr Oliver asked how the OLP building committee had formed. It was agreed that it emerged in an unstructured informal way and had an evolving membership. Members were not really involved in the formation of the plans.
- Discussion took place about the need for the parish to have a place to meet socially in order to build community. Fr Oliver thought that important as this is, it is not really the remit of this meeting.
- One of the main reasons given for the proposed building programme at OLP was that the huge expansion of the town particularly in the Shottery area, However, there is no evidence of increased Mass attendance over the last 10 years, quite the opposite. The question was asked which comes first the mission outreach or the building to outreach from?
- It was noted that decline in Mass attendance from the 80's onwards coincides with great cultural change and the way the Catholic education system in England was in apologetic/ survival mode. Catholic Education is now emerging into a period where its curriculum is proud of its values and constantly connects faith, prayer and action. It will take time, yet we can be hopeful that the seeds of a future Church, confident to proclaim the centrality of Christ, are being sewn. However, all the evidence is that there will continue to be decline before future generations of practising Catholics flourish again. It is important that current elders in the church leave the next generations in the best possible position to keep going. This may well mean one church building and a suitable space to for formation, outreach and meeting socially to build community.
- Fr Oliver asked if there had been any research asking if there is any market in the area for hiring out the church facilities? It was noted that St Andrews hires out its hall
- A point was raised about how young people need a place to gather to help them develop their identity as belonging to the parish. Some discussion took place about the lack of facilities at St Gregory's and this was directed to another meeting – this was about OLP building
- Parking was discussed. Fr Oliver reported that the contract with the parking firm at OLP has been ended as it was yielding something like £2 a month. It was suggested that demarcation of parking bays would help with parking. Possibly a job the parishioners could undertake.
- Discussion on numbers attending Mass last weekend as all three Masses were held at OLP

Meeting drawing towards 1pm deadline

AOB - none

Proposed actions all agreed upon:

- Authorise a new quinquennial meeting at a cost of £1,374 – Fr Oliver
- Formation of a new building committee for the proposed slimmed down project – all members to consider if they have something to contribute and to email Fr Oliver if

they would like to serve on this committee> This group will meet again once the quinquennial report is available

- Fr Oliver to create a scale model to help with understanding internal furnishing arrangements
- Thought given to a fabric committee