**St Hugh of Lincoln, Letchworth Garden City**

**Parish Pastoral Council – Annual Parish Meeting**

**25 February 2015, 8pm, Fortescue Hall**

**Present:** Fr Jimmy, Phil Clarke, Ann-Marie Palmer, Peter Spreckley, Angela Spreckley, Angela Scouller, Alan Scouller, David Legg, Ian Hunt, Ursula White, Clare Adam, Hedy Fletcher, Frank Nuttall, Alan Ryan, Cliff Marshall, Sue Card, Jacquie Maddison, Jackie Quinn, Pauline Doran plus a number of parishioners

**Apologies:** Julie Cranston, Mary Elvin, Sr Joan, Terry Benson, Alex Rebello, Patsy Marshall

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|  | **ACTION** |
| Phil welcomed everyone to the meeting and Fr Jimmy opened with a prayer.**Approval of Minutes of meeting held 12 November / matters arising**:* Minutes of the 12 November were approved.
* Under matters arising, Alan Scouller confirmed that the Children’s Liturgy Group are satisfied with the proposed space of the new annexe building.

**Parish Priest’s Report –** below is a cut and paste of Fr Jimmy’s notes used for the meeting:***“Introduction:*** *Our AGM gives us as a Parish community an opportunity to look back at the past year to highlight some important areas of parish life, to look forward, even if only briefly, and to ask questions or make comments about our parish life and community. When we do this I think it’s important for us to remember we are talking about the life of God, the life of the Church in Letchworth, in our parish and in each of us as individuals and when we engage in this we are talking too about our individual and collective response to God’s Holy Spirit. I was always aware on being appointed to Letchworth I wasn’t starting from scratch, but building on the work of eight previous Parish Priests and countless numbers of people in developing the life of our parish.* ***Mass Count:*** *It continues to be very encouraging to see so many people of all ages at our four Sunday Masses, especially the number of families with children. It’s also important to highlight that rarely has a week gone by without new parishioners introducing themselves after Mass, or they being recognised as new. Remember the figures given in the Westminster Diocesan Year Book for Mass attendance are always two years behind the actual figures because the count is taken in October each year, the same time as the year book for the coming year goes to print. Our Mass attendance is an average over four weeks:* *Mass count in 2011 - 545; 2012 - 623: 2013 – 844; 2014 – 770 which as I’ve said, is the figure which will appear in next year’s Year Book. The highest figure was 815 and the lowest 701, which was a half-term weekend.**You will remember we now count and include in our figures the Polish Community and they ranged over the period of the count from 94 – 133. We also include those who are sick and housebound who would normally be attending Church each week, if they could.* ***Catechetics:*** *The Church regards this area of Parish life as a priority and so should the priest and the Catholic community. Catechesis is qualitatively different to religious education or instruction in a Catholic school, which is partly why preparation for the sacraments doesn’t normally take place in a catholic school. Catechesis comes from word meaning echo; what the children, young people or adults ideally should experience from what they see and hear and experience, finds an echo in their heart and elicits a response in faith from the person.**One of the titles of the Bishop in any Diocese, as part of his role as Teacher of the faithful entrusted to his care, is Chief Catechist. Bishops’ delegate that authority to their parish priests and, more commonly these days, priests delegate or call forth from the community, people, catechists to fulfil their ministry as baptised lay people.* *I continue to believe catechetics is carried out to a very high standard in our parish.* ***Catechists:*** *The total numbers of catechists in our Parish including RCIA, Baptism Preparation for parents, Reconciliation and Eucharist, Confirmation, Children’s’ Liturgy of the Word, Youth Ministry, in 2014 was 40.* ***First Communions:*** *In 2014, 47 children made their First Holy Communion (FHC), the highest number the parish has ever had, including about 15 children from schools other than St Thomas More. Really good participation from the children themselves, from their parents and lots of hard work by Julie Cranston & the team of catechists meant the celebrations of FHC themselves were really uplifting.****Confirmation:*** *In 2014 26 young people in year 10 (aged 16) & above were Confirmed. While they were a lovely young people & their behaviour wasn’t a problem, each cohort is different and I know the catechists struggled at times with eliciting a response from a number of them.* *Partly because of that and for other reasons after meeting with me the catechists and I decided, after looking at various options, to move to a new Confirmation programme based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church called YouCat, which is short for Youth Catechism.* |  |

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Page 2

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| ***Baptisms:*** *40 children from our parish were baptised in 2014, meaning up to 80 parents were well prepared in small groups by Sr Eileen & Mary Elvin for the baptism of their child, for which we thank them. I’m not averse to having baptisms at 9.30 or 11.30 Mass and I actively encourage it on Easter Sunday & the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, but in practice parents don’t choose that offer so most baptisms are on Saturday morning at 11 or 12.15.* ***RCIA:*** *Three adults were Received into Full Communion with the Catholic Church; one just before his expected death and another died just before Christmas. Interestingly, no adults have come forward seeking baptism or Reception into the Church this year.****Liturgical Ministries:*** *Flower arrangers; Church Cleaners; Welcome Ministry - ; Sacristans - 2; Altar Servers - 30; Liturgical Music Ministry – Choir & 9.30 Music Group - 30; Children’s Liturgy of the Word - 8; Readers - 29; Eucharistic Ministers - 34;****Funerals:*** *35 conducted in 2014. These varied from a Funeral Mass or Service and Committal, to Cemetery, Chapel or Crematorium Services. Raises the question of our support, as a parish community, to people who have been bereaved.* ***St Thomas More School (STM):*** *Our Parish School continues to be very popular and therefore well supported by* *parents and our Parish Community. I attempt and sometimes fail to visit the school at least on a weekly basis. Around seven parishioners serve as either Foundation or Parent Governors of the school and are closely involved in the life of the school, by making regular visits, especially when one of us is Governor of the Month. That’s not a reward it’s a responsibility for the particular Governor to commit making regular visits to the school in a given month and to provide the Governing Body with a written report. As a body we are actively seeking two or three more Governors, who don’t have a direct connection with the school in order to get the parental and independent balance of the Governing Body right. Foundation Governors, as you know, are appointed in the name of the Bishop.* *There are a variety of events or celebrations/ stories to tell connected with the school, but just to pick out one from among many; last Lent three priests from our Deanery and myself celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation with Years 3, 4, 5 & 6 after the children had been prepared in their classes with age appropriate material and under the guidance of the school’s RE Co-ordinator and myself. As it was such a positive experience for the children, the school and the priests (I know because the priests told me), we will be repeating Lenten Reconciliation in a few weeks. It was an opportunity too for the Year 3 children to make their second Confession in preparation for their FHC.****Youth Group:*** *There are seven adults on the Central Team & 55 children officially signed & paid up, into two groups; the first, children in Years 4 & 5, so they are aged 8 – 10 years old, of whom 37 attend weekly; the second group is Year 6, aged 10 – 11 years & about 18 attend in any week. They are fairly financially secure but have fundraising plans.****GIF: Letchworth Caritas:*** *Bringing together**people who are interested in the social outreach of our parish, as an expression of our faith & in our care and concern for people who are isolated, lonely, poor or in need, or vulnerable in any way. I’m thinking of members of the**SVP; Eucharistic Ministers & others who visit the sick & housebound; perhaps KSC to respond to need in Letchworth and beyond. We thank those groups for all they do**to serve those in need. 5% of our GIF monies have been set aside for Letchworth Caritas.***Looking to Future:** Adult Education; reorganisation / streamlining of PPC enabling it to work and parish to function more effectively; Youth Ministry as well as a Youth Group for our young people to reflect on their faith outside family and school. I know some parents are very keen on looking at this and it’s not something I’ve got round to enabling it to happen. *Jimmy Garvey (Fr) 25th February 2015* |  |
| **Youth Ministry**In response to Fr Jimmy’s comments the question was raised re youth ministry and including young people (once confirmed) on the reader’s rota for example. This was felt to be a good point.Question was also raised re support from the Diocese with regard to youth ministry. Fr Jimmy advised that in the late 90s the Diocese looked to build a team of volunteers from over 200 parishes but there wasn’t much support. It was felt young people are busier these days but liaising with the Chaplain at John Henry Newman was thought to be a good idea.There was an initiative in the Deanery to employ a youth worker. This was supported by Knebworth but other parishes felt it was covered through schools so was not taken forward.It was also mentioned the possibility of an initiative through Westminster Caritas (as part of the Growing in Faith Campaign) to set up a team of youth ministers who could go out to the parishes and help set up Youth Ministry. |  |

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Page 3

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| **Finance Report*** Ian handed out figures – 3 year projection.
* Bottom line heading in the right direction.
* Heating in the hall needs to be sorted.
* Substantial capital expenditure of approx. £38,000 comprising the car-park, heating and health & safety.
* Need to build up reserves for unplanned expenditure. Aim is to have £50,000 in the bank.
* Need to build reserves for premises projects highlighted at the last meeting.
* GIF monies will provide £140,000 over 5 years towards the parish project.
* Gift Aid will be credited to the parish account in September / October.
* Contract with the Bridge Club for use of the Hall / 200 club providing much needed income.
* Well done re success of Christmas fayre.

**Lenten Appeal**Peter updated the meeting on the proposed Lenten Planned Giving Campaign.* Booklets outlining the current situation will be handed out at all masses this weekend and Tania Dalton will speak. This is the first real campaign held in the last 10 years and income has not increased.
* Week 1 – launch the appeal
* Week 2 – Fr Jimmy to follow up and cards to be completed by all parishioners and collected as part of the offertory.
* Week 3 – some stats to be provided.
* After week 2 there will be a good idea of the level of support. Also details provided will help to update the parish database.
* Peter advised that a lot of thought had gone into the production of the booklet and the campaign and feedback sought from a cross section of parishioners. He will be disappointed if the campaign doesn’t result in an increase of £10K per annum to parish income in the longer term.
* Fr Jimmy had initially been reluctant to hold a campaign so soon after the Growing in Faith campaign but the Diocese did not feel timing was inappropriate.
* The campaign is not just about increasing offerings but also thinking about the way offerings are made and possibly changing to planned giving / standing order or for some just Gift Aiding.
* Alan Scouller thanked all those involved in the campaign / production of the booklet.

**Fundraising Committee**Ursula updated the meeting on successes / plans of the Fundraising committee:* The first major event of the Christmas Fayre was held. This was a great success and was supported by a cross section of the parish.
* The committee has reviewed what worked and what can be done better next time. Proposed date for 2015 is the last weekend of November (subject to confirmation with Mrs Perry).
* Looking to hold a concert in Church end of April / early May and also a free social in the summer to say thank you to everyone for their support and to give something back.
* Looking to involve the children of the parish in collecting a mile of coins (or something similar).
* Easyfundraising – this is something supported by a number of high street outlets who give a percentage of spend to a chosen charity from online purchases. There will be a demonstration arranged at a Sunday coffee morning and a reminder in the newsletter. No effort and “free money”!

**Parish Administrator*** Fr Jimmy advised that as most were probably aware, Patricia had resigned from the position of Parish Administrator after 2 years in the role. We had the consultation at the parish council last July and people had the opportunity to give their thoughts. It has been decided by the finance committee and Fr Jimmy to reduce the role to 15 hours (allowing a budget for 20 hours if needed). The question was raised if there would be cover in the parish office on Friday and it was confirmed that hopefully this would be the case at 3 hours per day.
* It was stressed how important sufficient administrative back up is for Fr Jimmy to allow him to concentrate on the pastoral side of his ministry.
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Page 4

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| **Any Other Business****Heating in the Hall**The meeting were given an update on the heating in the hall by Cliff Marshall* The heating in the hall has been unsatisfactory for some time and an engineer has been to look at why it is not working and will produce a report with their findings.
* It has been found that the boiler is actually intended for domestic use and may not have been installed properly.
* We have recourse to the contractor “Chantry” and we are in fact under legal obligation to let them put right the issues at their cost.

**Parish Council Elections*** The question was raised as to whether we were to hold elections for the parish council. The meeting were advised that following changes to the Constitution last year, elections were no longer required.

**Meeting dates for the rest of the year**Dates were confirmed as per the previous minutes circulated – **8 July and 11 November, 8pm, Fortescue Hall**.Fr Jimmy closed the meeting with a prayer. |  |

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Certified a true record by the Chairman Date