

ST BEDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH – CROXLEY GREEN

NOTES

Parish in Council Meeting Monday 11th February 2019 7.30pm

PRESENT

Fr John Wiley, Louise McKenna (Chair), John Charnley, Fabian Hiscock, June Jones, David Marston, Ursula Bartlett (Minutes).

1 OPENING PRAYER

Fr John opened the meeting with a prayer.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from David Reilly and Paul Bartlett.

3 NOTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING – Mon 22nd October 2018

Copies were made available for those present to read through. These were agreed as true record.

4 MATTERS ARISING (not listed on Agenda for this meeting)

Financial Report: Offertories

David Marston raised the matter of the May/June 2018 planned giving envelopes issue. Ursula advised us that David Reilly had spent a considerable amount of time checking the figures and preparing a comparison spreadsheet, which confirmed an inconsistency. As it has not been possible to provide clear evidence to account for this, plans to improve cash security from the point of collection at Mass to the counting procedure are now underway.

5 FINANCIAL REPORT

Ursula read out David Reilly's report in his absence.

Provisional Results for 2018

Subject to any adjustments that may be put through by the Diocese and/or external auditors, the key information is as follows.

Assessable income - primarily offertories and tax refunds - was £46,175 (£53,599 in 2017). The difference is (a) Offertories were £3,780 (9%) higher in 2018, due mainly to the Stewardship Campaign in early 2018 and (b) tax refunds were £10,762 lower in 2018, as the 2017/18 claim was not made by 31 December 2018 (due to a change of Gift Aid Co-ordinator) and there was an additional refund for 2014/15 in 2017. A claim for some £6,000 has now been made for 2017/18.

Non-assessable income was £46,673 (£25,853 in 2017). The difference primarily (a) a generous anonymous donation of £10,000 was received in 2018 towards the cost of our new central heating system and (b) a loan of £15,000 was received from the Diocese in 2018 in respect of the cost of our new central heating system.

Expenditure was £103,988 (£73,616 in 2017). The difference is primarily (a) expenditure of £29,934 in respect of our new central heating system, (b) a decrease of £4,535 in the 2018 Diocesan Assessment and (c) expenditure of £7,296 on repairs to the Presbytery and Church Hall to prevent potentially very costly further deterioration.

Overall, expenditure exceeded income by £11,139 for the reasons set out above.

Electricity Bills

We were concerned about the cost of electricity and, thanks to detective work by Ursula and Phil Hendrick, we found that we had been charged £3,802 for electricity used by Our Lady of All Creation, Hemel Hempstead.

Fr Kim, the Parish Priest, and his Treasurer agreed this and refunded the incorrect charges to us in January 2019.

Diocesan Audit

The Diocese carried out an audit in January 2019. We received an overall rating of 82%. Other than for cash security, where we scored 48%, we were rated 100%. The key recommendation was to reduce the movement of cash after Masses by adopting revised procedures, based on acquiring a drop safe, as recommended by the Diocese. We have sourced a suitable drop safe, which will cost £966, and are currently awaiting advice from the Diocese about whether a key lock or key pad is recommended. As soon as a decision has been reached, we will purchase a drop safe and additional collection bags to be compliant. There will be further visit from the Diocesan auditors in April 2019 and the rating from that visit will be sent to the external auditors. We hope that our score will improve.

Volunteers

I would like to record my thanks to the members of the Finance Committee, our wonderful bookkeepers and the teams who count and record Mass Offertories every week.

6 PROPERTY & GROUNDS MAINTENANCE (brief update)

Health & Safety Audit

Ursula reported that the annual Health & Safety inspection had been carried out by Precision on 29th January 2019. The Precision report showed that we are becoming much more compliant in all areas, but there are still some minor issues to address, which are in hand.

Garden Tidy Up

Grateful thanks were expressed to all who participated in the garden tidy up of the church grounds on 17th November. A great deal of pruning, weeding and clearing up was carried out; enhancing the appearance of the whole area.

7 STORAGE

For some time there have been concerns and discussions regarding storage facilities in the Hall. The walk-in cupboard and other areas in the Hall have become very cluttered, to the point of causing Health & Safety issues. More recently, the Diocesan Audit highlighted insurance issues regarding items stored by Hall hirers. The matter of cleaning equipment, currently stored openly in the Sacristy was also mentioned.

It was agreed that extra storage units are needed in the Hall, and also in the Presbytery lobby – to house items such as the floor polisher, vacuum cleaner and brooms, etc. Those present decided that a dedicated sub-committee could take this issue forward. Louise, June, John and Ursula expressed their willingness to be involved. Ursula will liaise with the Finance Committee regarding the cost.

8 FATHER JOHN'S REPORT

Fr John reported that the 60th Anniversary year was now completed, and Mass attendances seem to have stabilised. He continued that he had noticed an increase in Mass attendances over Christmas 2018, and that there seemed to be more young people attending the evening Masses recently. Fr John informed us that we have 15 candidates preparing for First Holy Communion this year, under the instruction of Catechists: Damien and Karen. He added that we have 20 applications for Confirmation this year, which is scheduled to take place on Friday 12th July 2019, and Danny Risdon has agreed to lead the preparation classes once again.

Fr John commented that the month of January had been rather busy due to the Diocesan audit and Precision Health & Safety inspection. He expressed his thanks to Ursula & Paul Bartlett, and to David Reilly for their time and assistance during this period.

During Fr John's Report there was some discussion regarding the matter of accepting First Holy Communion and Confirmation candidates from other parishes. It was acknowledged that all candidates must be prepared to make a genuine commitment to their faith and to the parish. The matter of the amount of preparation and number of instruction classes provided for First Confession and First Holy Communion was also raised. It was generally felt that we may need to consider extending the length of the course to ensure that all candidates have a clear understanding.

9 SAFEGUARDING

Ursula advised us that due to the number of Confirmation candidates this year, it would be necessary for Danny to be assisted by a second DBS-checked adult during the preparation classes. She added that it would be difficult to select a volunteer and complete a full DBS check in the short time available. A solution would be for Fr John to attend all classes to ensure we are fully compliant with Safeguarding regulations.

10 PAST EVENTS

Parish Breakfast – Sunday 16th December 2018

This was a very successful and enjoyable event, which raised £210 for the Catholic Children's Society.

11 FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Holy Rosary

At our last meeting we decided to introduce praying of The Rosary prior to all Masses during the first weekend of each month, commencing in December 2018. We are very grateful to David Marston, Fabian Hiscock, Marie Benham and Tom Keogh, who have taken the lead during the first 3 months. An appeal has regularly been made, in the weekly Newsletter, for additional volunteers to come forward. So far, the numbers arriving in time to participate have been rather small, but we agreed it may be just a matter of time before parishioners adjust to this new routine. Marie Benham has kindly offered to produce a document containing all the relevant prayers, which could be handed out to encourage parishioners to join in.

The matter of evangelising was raised; particularly with regard to ensuring that our less active parishioners are provided with the opportunity to feel that they are a part of our community. During the preparations for our Anniversary Year plans, we spoke of introducing other devotions and activities. It was suggested that we might form a steering group to take this forward. The matter of recruiting new volunteers to become Eucharistic Ministers, Readers, etc. could also be addressed. This was welcomed.

Farewell Gathering – Sunday 17th February 2019

There will be refreshments in the Hall after 10am Mass, when we will gather to bid farewell to Margaret & Graham Smith, who are moving to the West Country. They are very longstanding members of the parish, whose unassuming dedication has contributed greatly to the life of the parish. We will miss them very much. Grateful thanks were expressed for their support over the years.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

CAFOD / Fairtrade

Fabian advised us of some changes being made within the CAFOD organisation.

This led to the matter of St Bede's becoming a Fairtrade parish. We have taken the first steps towards achieving this, and Louise offered to source some suitable posters and publicity material to assist in promoting use of Fairtrade products.

Blue Badge for Fr Philip

Some months ago Fabian initiated the procedure of applying for a Blue Badge for Fr Philip. The application has now been approved and a Blue Badge has been issued. This will be of great help to anyone transporting Fr Philip.

Mothering Sunday / Easter

June raised the matter of flowers and Easter eggs, traditionally presented by the Children's Liturgy group on Mothering Sunday and at Easter. It was agreed that the cost would be covered by the parish, on presentation of receipts.

Flower Arrangers

Louise highlighted the need for more Flower Arrangers. At present there are too few flower team members to have a workable rota. Until such times as we can secure more volunteers, Louise is proposing a revised type of rota to commence after Easter – sample copies were distributed. The team will continue to ensure that flowers will be in place for Christmas, Easter and other special occasions. Members of the team might provide arrangements fortnightly. Louise suggested that we might invite parishioners to commit to providing their own flower arrangement(s) for specific weekends; maybe to mark a special occasion such as an anniversary, birth or baptism of a baby, etc. Assistance would be available. We agreed to try this approach.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING / CLOSING PRAYER

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 14th May 2019 at 7.30pm.

Fr John closed the meeting with a prayer at 9.25pm.

Ursula Bartlett (February 2019)