

ST BEDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH – CROXLEY GREEN

NOTES

Parish in Council Meeting Tuesday 21st January 2020 at 7.30pm

PRESENT

Fr John Wiley, Louise McKenna (Chair), Ursula Bartlett (Minutes), John Charnley, Phil Hendrick, Fabian Hiscock, Michelle Hussey, June Jones, David Marston, Robert Phipps.

1 OPENING PRAYER

Fr John opened the meeting with a prayer.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Paul Bartlett, David Reilly.

3 NOTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING – Tues 10th September 2019

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)

Children's Liturgy

We were advised that Children's Liturgy has now be re-organised, and we have 4 regular Catechists on the rota. The children now enter Church with their families for 10am Sunday Mass, and are ceremoniously invited to proceed to the Hall at the beginning of Mass. Packs of the children's weekly resource leaflet entitled 'Look', from Redemptorist Publications, are now being delivered directly to St Bede's, and are readily available to the Catechists.

5 FINANCIAL REPORT

Ursula read a report from David Reilly, in his absence.

We have provisional figures for the year to 31st December 2019 (subject to review by the Diocese):

Income: £79,126 (2018: £92,849)

Expenditure: £77,292 (2018: £103,989)

Surplus: £1,834 (2018: £11,140 deficit)

Bank/petty cash balance: £23,768 (2018: £21,934)

The total offertory income of £43,264 is less than the amount of £44,915 received in 2018.

On the plus side, standing orders of £22,382 totalled more than the sum of £21,549 received in 2018.

However, envelopes and loose plate of £20,882 was less than the amount of £23,366 received in 2018.

Although overall attendance at Masses was less in 2019 than in 2018, the fall in giving by way of envelopes

and loose plate declined relatively more. Standing orders, by their nature, tend to fluctuate less than envelopes and loose plate, but the fall in the latter is not fully explainable by reference to Mass attendance.

Our income in 2019 includes two Gift Aid tax refunds totalling £12,198.

Due to a change in the person responsible for Gift Aid, the 2017/18 Gift Aid tax refund of £6,860 was received in 2019 rather than 2018. This clearly is an anomalous boost to our funds in 2019.

We received an electricity rebate of £3,802 at the start of 2019. This covers overpayments over several years that were discovered in 2018. This again boosted our funds in 2019.

The largest expense was non-clergy salaries of £17,289, compared to £15,816 in 2018; a 9.3% increase. This is due to salary increases and a full year of a paid cleaner for the hall (four months in 2018).

The total of property-related costs was £16,286 in 2019. This is less than the amount of £42,732 in 2018, although £29,934 of 2018's expenditure related to our new central heating system.

The sum of £1,063 is payable to third party charities from special collections made in 2019. The Diocese may collect £637 of this amount before our figures for 2019 are finalised. The remaining £426 will be paid to the charities by St Bede's in 2020.

Overall, our finances remain challenging, with property-related costs likely to be a significant factor again in 2020, due to the age of the property, and will be kept under review by the Finance Committee.

Thanks were expressed to the members of the Finance Committee and our Bookkeepers for all their valuable contributions in 2019. Ursula added that we were particularly grateful to Kathy Keating and Christine Gunalan, who have carried out the task of Bank Reconciliation for the past 5 years. They are now standing down due to other commitments. Our thanks also go to Paulus Kam, a member of the Finance Committee, who has kindly offered to take on this post.

Ursula also advised us that a new drop-safe was recently installed in the Sacristy, and a new procedure for storing the Mass collections securely must now be followed. We have sufficient collection pouches to cover all collections at the weekend Masses, including Special Collections. Collectors must take the pouches into the Sacristy and place these in the drop-safe, immediately after ceremoniously presenting the collection at the Offertory. They must also sign the record sheet (located on top of the drop-safe). It was agreed that those of us present at the meeting would speak to the Collectors at the respective Masses we attend, to ensure this procedure is strictly followed, in accordance with Diocesan requirements.

FINANCIAL REPORT continued

There was some discussion about the reasons for the fall in planned giving envelope and loose plate offerings, and collections at Mass. It was suggested that we should launch an appeal for parishioners to switch from planned giving to Bank Standing Orders. This was well received, and Ursula agreed to present this idea at the next Finance Committee Meeting in February. Another idea put forward, was that we could try taking up the collection from the back of the Church to the front, rather than the traditional method of front of Church to the back, which would reduce the 'journey' of the pouches.

6 PROPERTY & GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Church Lighting

Robert Phipps advised us of the improvements he has already made to the lighting in the Church, and explained his plans for 'phase 2', which will involve the advice and services of a professional electrician. One quote has already been received, but is not favourable for a number of reasons. Robert will now obtain a further 2 estimates. Significant financial savings have already been made, and more will follow once we have completely modified the lighting system. He will report back at our next meeting.

Ursula provided a brief account of work that had been carried out since the last meeting:

Gutters and soffits around the Church building

Refurbishment was completed shortly before Christmas. All gutters on site have been checked and cleared of debris by the same contractor, and we are currently awaiting evidence of this for insurance purposes.

Garden Tidy Up day in November

A small group of parishioners attended to prune, clear and tidy the Church grounds. A skip was hired and a great deal of rubbish and unwanted items were cleared from the patio area behind the Hall, inside the brick shed and from the Church loft.

Erection of Fence at Rear of Hall

Our neighbours, at 3 Malvern Way, recently erected a new sturdy fence along the boundary at the back of the Hall. It will not now be necessary for us to factor the replacement of this fence into our plans, which will save the parish considerable expense.

There was some discussion about the possibility of enhancing the patio by extending the paved area and planting some shrubs. We agreed this would be a good idea when funds permit.

Re-surfacing of Car Park & Driveway

Three quotes for the re-surfacing have been received from contractors recommended by Chris Fanning (Senior Diocesan Surveyor). These will be presented to the Finance Committee at their next meeting in February.

7 PDC (Parish Development Committee) – feedback from meeting on Tues 14th January

Ursula began by reminding us of the purpose of the PDC; a small group of committed parishioners, recruited as volunteers at Parish in Council Meetings, who meet regularly to expand and develop ideas brought up at Parish in Council Meetings. The PDC has already proved successful in reducing the time spent in discussion at Parish in Council Meetings, and taking forward projects to energise the parish. This is not a restricted group, and anyone who feels they could contribute to the group is welcome to become involved.

Ursula went on to give a brief account of topics discussed:

First Holy Communion

Following concerns that we would be unable to offer a FHC Programme for 2020, Louise, June and Ursula set about sourcing a suitable training programme, planning dates for preparation classes, parents' meetings, etc., and were prepared to run a course between them. A final appeal for a Lead Catechist was made in the Newsletter, and thankfully Bernadette O'Malley responded. In November 2019 a meeting was arranged, inviting interested parents to register their children for FHC. Strict guidelines and expectations were laid down, and application packs handed out. As a result, 18 FHC candidates applied, and the course is now underway. Louise, June, Ursula and Bernadette have formed a Catechetics Team, which is proving to be successful in that they are able to take on different roles in order to deliver the course and deal with any issues that may arise. This arrangement also provides adequate support for all involved.

Confirmation 2020

Unfortunately, in spite of our efforts, we have been unable to find a suitable Catechist to lead a Confirmation course this year. However, we have been made aware of several Year 10 students who are keen to receive the Sacrament this year, as deferring to next year will interfere with their GCSE studies. At our last PDC Meeting, Fr John agreed to contact Holy Rood Church in Watford, and Our Lady's Church in Rickmansworth, to enquire whether they would be able to accept St Bede's parishioners on to their course. A positive response was received from Rickmansworth, so it has been possible to refer several prospective candidates. It is important that we, as a parish, recognise these young people and encourage them to actively participate in activities such as the Global Healing initiative, even though they will be receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation in another parish. Traditionally, we have offered Confirmation to the Year 10 age group and above. However, in future we plan to invite Year 9 students (and above), in line with many other parishes in the Diocese.

Global Healing – CAFOD

Fabian to expand on this during Item 10.

Recruitment of Volunteers in the Parish

Ongoing discussions and ideas to achieve this.

PDC (Parish Development Committee) continued

Email Mailing List

David updated us on his efforts to utilise the E-Alert facility on the parish website and set up a dedicated email address to enable us to communicate more effectively with parishioners. He is currently in dialogue with the Diocese, and will continue to pursue this idea.

WhatsApp

June advised us that the First Holy Communion parents have set up a WhatsApp group. This helps them to keep in touch and effectively pass on information.

8 FATHER JOHN'S REPORT

Fr John advised us that the numbers attending Mass has fluctuated over the past few months, although there had been an increase around the time of secondary school applications in September. More recently, the First Holy Communion candidates and their families have boosted the numbers, and attendance over Christmas was excellent. He added that he and other members of the clergy he meets with frequently have noted that church attendance in general has been declining.

Fr John informed us that the refurbishment of the guttering around the church building has now been completed, and estimates for the proposed re-surfacing of the carpark/driveway and refurbishment of the church kneelers had been received.

Some discussion followed regarding the church kneelers. Louise reminded us that we had obtained an estimate, about 2 years previously, that seemed promising; but this had been put to one side at that time due to financial restraints. Ursula agreed to look through the records to relocate this estimate, and approach the company once again.

9 SAFEGUARDING

Ursula reported that she is due to attend another Diocesan training course in March 2020, and that she was in the process of updating various DBS certificates.

She also informed us of a Churches Together led meeting, due to take place in March, relating to Domestic Abuse Awareness. Key members of each church in Croxley are being invited to attend. June and Louise expressed an interest, and Ursula will advise them of the exact date, once this is known.

10 LAUDATO Si – OUR COMMON HOME

Fabian provided us with feedback on the Global Healing event held in December. Attendance at this service was disappointingly low, but there have many positive outcomes. The discussion over the simple meal, served in the Hall afterwards, was particularly valuable. Thanks to Fabian and Rob, we now have the technology to stage a Power Point presentation, and we plan to repeat this event in March; implementing some modifications and taking on board the lessons learnt from December's event. We all agreed that sufficient publicity is essential; posters, flyers, etc. will be produced for distribution both in the parish, as well as to our neighbouring parishes and the other churches in Croxley Green. We also hope to involve the young people of the parish; particularly the Confirmation candidates. It was also suggested we might run a short preview during Masses preceding this event. PDC to take this matter further.

11 PAST EVENTS

Quiz Evening

This event, held last October, was very successful. Approximately £600 was raised. Grateful thanks were expressed to Chris Jones for preparing and delivering the quiz questions, and to Louise, June and their helpers for the delicious supper that was served.

Garden & Church Grounds Clear Up

Thanks were expressed to the small group of parishioners who came along on Saturday 9th November to tidy the garden and church grounds. A skip was hired, and many unwanted / broken items that has accumulated were disposed of.

Coffee & Cake Morning

Thanks were also extended to the parents of the First Holy Communion candidates, who organised the Coffee & Cake Morning, following the recent First Holy Communion Mass of Enrolment. This was well attended, and the sum of £80 was raised for the Catholic Children's Society. It was felt that this was a valuable social event for the parish, and we were delighted to hear that some of the parents have expressed a willingness to hold future coffee mornings; possibly on a monthly basis after 10am Sunday Mass.

12 FORTHCOMING EVENTS

There was some discussion regarding future events.

Lenten Lunch – Proposed date for this event is Friday 28th February 2020.

CAFOD Appeal – An appeal is scheduled for March 2020.

Women's World Day of Prayer – This service will take place at St Oswald's Church on Friday 6th March 2020.

Laudato Si – Proposed date for next event is Wednesday 11th March 2020.

Croxley Revels – Saturday 20th June 2020.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Proposed appeal for parishioners to switch from Planned Giving Envelopes to Bank Standing Order

Rob requested that this item be put forward at the next Finance Committee Meeting. Ursula agreed to attend to this.

Heating in Church

Rob enquired about the thermostat control for the church heating, and offered to check the temperature in strategic areas and check the thermostatic control to make sure it is set to appropriate times. We should also carry out a gas comparison check.

Sound System in Church

David mentioned that the sound system sometimes seems muffled with interference. Rob pointed out that the system can be affected by mobile phones near to the microphone. However, he will check to make sure the system is working correctly.

Purchase of New Ciborium

June suggested that we might purchase an additional Ciborium for use when there are larger congregations, such as at Christmas and Easter. Fr John responded that he had already taken this matter in hand.

Free Parish Diaries

Ursula advised us that she was making enquiries regarding the free parish diaries. We did not receive any for 2020. She has recently discovered that the company who were producing them has closed down, but has made contact with another company who may be able to supply these with effect from next year.

Fire Warden Training

Ursula has been appealing in the weekly Newsletter for a volunteer to attend a Fire Warden Training Meeting on Saturday 1st February 2020. Rob offered to attend, and she will provide him with the details.

The Rosary

Ursula enquired whether we felt the recital of The Rosary, before Masses during the first weekend of the month, is still an effective form of devotion. Participation before both evening Masses continues to thrive, but attendance before the 10am Sunday Mass is very limited. The general consensus was that we should continue.

Tote Bags for Charity

David had recently presented the idea of making tote bags, suitable as re-usable shopping bags, from surplus material. Anyone who enjoys sewing could be invited to participate, and any money raised from the sale of these bags would be donated to charity. Utilising unwanted material for this purpose would tie in with our Laudato Si theme of environmental stewardship. David has produced an easy-to-follow pattern that could be circulated to willing volunteers.

Dowry of Mary – Re-dedication of England 2020

Louise drew our attention to this event that will take place in March. She handed out information sheets giving details, and this will be publicised in the parish in due course.

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was scheduled for Tuesday 12th May 2020 at 7.30pm.

15 CLOSING PRAYER

Father John closed the meeting with a prayer at 9.30pm.

***Ursula Bartlett
January 2020***