

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL (JPPC)

Held at Our Lady Help of Christians Presbytery, Rickmansworth
11th March 2024 @ 7.30pm

In Attendance:

Father Andrew Gallagher
Elaine Price
Sue Noble
Beatrix Li
Lizzie Quinn
David Kendrick
Jane Irwin
Father Matteo Di Giuseppe

Apologies:

John Donohoe
Margaret Simon
Paul Matarewicz
Fainche McDonagh

1. Welcome and Prayer

Father Andrew welcomed everyone to the 27th meeting of the JPPC. The meeting began with a time of prayer.

2. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting – 15th January 2024

Heating at Our Lady Help of Christians has now been successfully replaced.

The planned giving campaign is now completed in all parishes.

The Annual Joint Parishes Meeting took place on 21 February, with 40 people joining.

The Formation Course for Readers was held on 24 February and the Formation Course for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion was held on 7 March.

3. Discipleship

Alpha

Discussions continue about the re-scheduled start dates for Alpha; Father Andrew will share more details at the next meeting.

GIFT

GIFT sessions are continuing; 50 families are now signed up and ~35 families are participating regularly. The most recent parents' session had 14 parents (up from ~5-9 in previous months).

A questions box has been introduced for both parents and children, and these are both being used during sessions.

DBS checks are still pending for at least one catechist.

Jane has shared content directly with St John's School for newsletter and social media to further increase awareness.

Faith and Friendship group

David confirmed the attendance continues to be ~20 people per fortnight (sometimes more), and sessions are still very valuable and impactful.

Kairos

The group re-started in February and are meeting on the last Tuesday of each month, led by Paul Forrest and Anne Lorrimer-Roberts.

Prayer & Life workshops

The Thanksgiving Mass took place at the conclusion of the workshops, with leaders from Prayer & Life joining from all over the country. This Mass also included the "sending forth" of Maria and Tracey, who will now be able to lead future workshops in the parish and surrounding areas. Discussions are taking place to confirm the next workshops, and Father Andrew will share further details in coming meetings.

RCIA

John completed his Rite of Election, accompanied by his family. He shared that the experience in Westminster Cathedral was a very special one.

Baptisms

Jane advised the next preparation sessions will take place in April, pending confirmation of families to participate. Jane asked if there were any GIFT families who were possibly in scope for Baptism; Father Andrew confirmed this was the case.

Confirmation

Preparations are underway for 17 young people to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Several are already involved in parish activities, including altar serving and children's liturgy. Given the number of candidates, all candidates will be confirmed at one Confirmation Mass, which will take place at St John the Evangelist (Mill End) on 11 May.

Warm Spaces

David advised attendance continues to be ~6 people each week, and social contact is the biggest benefit that people experience. The plan is to conclude Warm Spaces in mid-April, and recommence in winter. Dedicated handouts for Warm Spaces were created and are available in the entrance to each church.

Week of Guided Prayer

The week of guided prayer will take place 21-26 April. Margaret Burke is co-ordinating, and more information will be shared from this week onwards, with newsletter inserts across the parishes.

Parish Cell Groups

Beatrix has three expressions of interest. She has contacted Tamara, who has run a similar concept in Barnet, to share learnings. Tamara is travelling overseas, but will be in contact when she returns to the UK. Father Andrew suggested a resource that could be used to guide discussions, and Beatrix will review these in the coming weeks.

Understanding the Mass

Father Andrew confirmed that “Understanding the Mass” handouts will be shared as newsletter inserts, with commencement at a date (to be confirmed) after Easter. Lizzie explained that these handouts have been designed for late primary school / early secondary school children, but may be of interest to all parishioners. The handouts will cover a different aspect (parts of the church, items used in the Mass, roles of people etc.) each week. At present there are 72 “chapters” confirmed, but this may increase as the handouts themselves are finalised. Father Andrew agreed it would be beneficial to also publish the handouts in virtual format on the parish website; more details on this to follow at the next JPPC meeting.

Young Families Welcome at Mass

Father Andrew advised that the new messaging discussed at the January JPPC meeting about welcoming families with young children has now been introduced as part of the “welcome” at all Masses – several families have proactively thanked him for its inclusion.

4. Youth ministry

Margaret provided an update, as she was unable to attend the meeting in person.

Currently 5-7 young people are regularly attending (still all girls).

Another Youth Mass will be held at St John the Evangelist (Mill End) on 18 May. The plan is for this to be a Thanksgiving Mass following Confirmation, which takes place the week before.

A young person (Katie) joined the Annual Joint Parishes Meeting to increase the use of Fair Trade across the three parishes. Our Lady’s historically was a fair-trade parish (with associated certifications), and discussions are underway to reintroduce this and extend to all three parishes.

Discussions continue about whether the young people can help fundraise to support the Joan of Arc Red Caps going to Lourdes on the diocesan pilgrimage.

Invitations for Year 6 students to join the Youth Group will start following Easter, and will be shared in the parish newsletters, through the schools, and on social media.

6. Communications - Social media Strategy / website

Jane has been sharing a weekly “What’s On” summary on both Facebook and Instagram.

The GIFT template is being shared on the parishes social media and also through the schools.

Photos of the preparations for Ash Wednesday were one of the most popular posts – photographs are definitely the best-received posts on the parish Facebook page.

Jane is revisiting the “parishioner profile” concept to showcase different volunteers across the parish, and has created an option for these to be shared anonymously (for those who would prefer not to be named).

With further integration of Facebook and Instagram under META, there is also the opportunity to consolidate some of the efforts for publication – so there will be both re-sharing of the parish newsletters, and also reflections.

The social media team are meeting on Friday 15 March to review activities for the past year and develop ongoing plans for the coming months.

7. Parish Development Plan – MINISTRY

Father Andrew opened with a recap of the Divine Renovation definition of Ministry (found on page 270) – *“service to others; includes essential ministry within the life of the parish [and also] to go out and serve those who do not belong”*.

Reaching out to those who cannot come to Mass

Beatrix asked if we think there are people who would be interested in coming to Mass, praying the Holy Rosary, Warm Spaces etc. but are not confident enough to ask for support / assistance. Father Andrew advised these are topics that are raised, particularly when the priests are visiting the sick at home or in hospital.

Jane asked if we could add a message “If you’re joining via livestream because you can’t get to Mass” on the livestream. A banner isn’t practical, but there is a default message that Father Andrew can modify, and will update.

Father Andrew highlighted that because of GDPR, care homes are no longer able proactively advise that people are Catholic – now the process is that people have to actively request contact. Lizzie asked if we could create a flyer that could be given to people. Father Andrew will look into this.

Other outreach opportunities

The SVP Community Lunch is coming up this Sunday (17 March), which is an incredible way to minister. There has been strong interest in this, including from the Warm Spaces group and the Food Bank cafe. Elaine asked if it was typically Catholics who attend. Sue confirmed it’s very much a community event, and is communicated by other community groups including the local Baptist Church.

Father Andrew was talking with Vicar Simon (from St. Mary’s), who said the Rickmansworth Facebook Group (RCCG) are open to sharing community events on their notices if community based.

Mill End has an anniversary next year (first built in 1975), and Our Lady’s celebrates 115 years this year (8 April 1909). As discussed at previous JPPC meetings, Ricky Week was used as an opportunity to showcase and explain Our Lady’s, but is not being held this year.

Jane mentioned the possibility of using stalls, either at regular markets or special moments. Chorleywood have Village Days in July; lots of different stalls from different groups. Rickmansworth has monthly markets, which are shortly due to re-start and run from March to December on the last Saturday of the month (10am – 2pm).

The group had a discussion about possible ways to engage using these stalls. Jane referenced Sustainable Three Rivers, which has used a scavenger hunt to share information, create curiosity etc. Other options discussed included local and parish trivia, small items for sale etc. Any efforts will need a dedicated group to run them, which requires volunteers and further discussion. To start with Jane will take an action to find out the details of getting a stall allocated.

The group also discussed ways to increase awareness of volunteering / ministry across the parishes. Beatrix asked if we have insight into the number of volunteering hours, planned giving etc. Father Andrew advised that annual reports are produced to share with the Diocese, but not shared with the parish – this is something that is worth discussing in more detail at future JPPC meetings.

8. Any other business

JPPC – Fainche and John will be stepping out on the completion of their terms of service; Eddie O’Sullivan will be joining from Chorleywood for the next meeting, and Father Andrew is working to confirm other joiners.

Synodal update – a request was made by the Diocese for parishes to have meetings to answer some questions regarding the Synod and then to send from the deanery representatives to join a meeting regarding the Synodal process. This request was made very late and it was sadly impractical to organise the meetings. Fr Andrew therefore used information from the JPPC meetings for our parishes input to our Deanery Report and Fr Matteo and Anne Lorrimer-Roberts attended the meeting on behalf of the deanery. Each Deanery provided a report (2 minutes each). Anne shared that it was very interesting to participate and observe common themes (more formation, ministry, welcoming, efforts for young families and young people). The intention is to share additional information in a second summary for the Catholic Bishops Conference, which will then be taken to Rome.

Upcoming parish events – outlined as follows:

21 – 26 April	Week of guided prayer
11 May	Confirmation
12 May	Marian procession & parish party (Our Lady Help of Christians)
18 May	New parishioners lunch
18 May	Youth Mass (St John the Evangelist)
2 June	Corpus Christi procession & parish party (St John the Evangelist)
23 June	St John Fisher procession & parish party (St John Fisher)
7 July	Summer joint parishes event
TBC (October)	Marian novena

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 13th May 2024 @ 7.30pm. Venue: St John Fisher, Chorleywood