

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

Held at St John the Evangelist, Mill End

15<sup>th</sup> January 2024 @ 7.30pm

## **In Attendance:**

Fr Andrew Gallagher

Paul Matarewicz

Fainche McDonagh

David Kendrick

Jane Irwin

Lizzie Quinn

Elaine Price

Sue Noble

Beatrix Li

Margaret Simon

## **Apologies:**

John Donohoe

Fr Matteo Di Giuseppe

## **1. Welcome and Prayer**

Fr Andrew welcomed everyone to the 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the JPPC. The meeting began with a time of prayer.

## **2. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting – 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

No dedicated matters.

## **3. Discipleship**

### Alpha

A decision has been made to postpone the Alpha sessions originally planned to commence in January (likely until after Easter) because of low numbers and due to illness in Deirdre's family. Only ~5 people had officially signed up, most of those from the banners that have been placed outside Our Lady's and St John the Evangelist. Once the new dates have been confirmed, Jane has offered to share on Facebook via the Rickmansworth social groups (in addition to all parish social media).

### GIFT

Sessions are continuing; up to ~32 families now participating regularly, with more parents participating on the monthly Zoom calls than in previous months. In addition, approximately 18 children are undertaking formal preparations to receive the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. One of two pending catechists has now received a positive DBS check outcome and can commence mentoring families.

### Faith and Friendship group

David shared the group is continuing to meet, led by Ann Gibson, and uses videos as the basis of positive discussions. Average attendance is ~20 people per week (sometimes more). Fr Andrew added a group from Harrow (People Connect, who specialise in supporting adults with learning

disabilities) was hosted on 6<sup>th</sup> December. They were very positive about their experience and would like to join several times per year. They have also expressed interest in joining the Warm Spaces group.

### Kairos

This group will re-start in February; notices will be shared in the parish notices and on the parish website once dates are confirmed.

### Prayer & Life workshops

David updated that ~8 people ultimately participated in the workshops (an increase from the first session). A Thanksgiving Mass will take place in a few weeks' time. Additionally, potential leaders have been identified who may be able to support future workshops.

### RCIA

Beatrix confirmed sessions continue with the person currently following the program.

### Baptisms

There are 1-2 baptisms taking place in the coming weeks. Fr Andrew also shared that several families who are regularly attending Mass have shared that they are expecting babies in the coming months.

### Confirmation

Preparations start next Monday (22 January) for ~17 young people. Jane suggested social media posts to encourage prayers for the candidates. Lizzie asked whether we use prayer sponsors (i.e. people who volunteer to pray for those preparing to receive the Sacraments). This isn't currently done for Confirmation, but could be considered – Margaret pointed out it could be a great way to connect with the housebound. Lizzie agreed and added it could also help re-engage young people who made their Confirmation in previous years. Fainche added another opportunity to connect with this group could be the retreat day, which is being planned for this year's Confirmation candidates.

### Children's Liturgy

Fr Andrew shared that the Children's Liturgy (taking place at St John the Evangelist) has increased in numbers, and also has several teenagers who are assisting.

Jane asked about Children's Liturgy at Our Lady's. Father Andrew confirmed there were 3 volunteers when the concept was originally proposed over a year ago, but DBS check turnaround time has been a major issue (with 1 volunteer still pending a response). Fainche suggested we should mention the Children's Liturgy at St John's so that people are aware they can come to those Masses if they wish to. Elaine also mentioned the handouts; Fr Andrew confirmed these are definitely still being used. Jane raised how parents are still very nervous about their children making noise; Elaine suggested adding to the welcome messaging, or asking the welcomers to specifically welcome families with small children.

### Warm Spaces

David shared this averages 4-5 people each week; people come as much for the social contact as for the warm space provided. Jane had a conversation with the lady who runs Pilates in the hall, and suggested connecting the different activities. Several people advised there is a consolidated list that

references all the different activities, where they are, and the co-ordination point for each activity. Dedicated handouts for warm spaces (raised by Beatrix in November) are not yet available; Fr Andrew will follow-up on this.

#### **4. Youth ministry**

Margaret represented the Youth Group during this JPPC meeting. There has been some additional interest following the Youth Mass in November; currently 5-7 regularly attending (still all girls).

During the Brass on the Grass event last summer (while passing out fliers), one father mentioned that rugby practice takes place on Tuesday evenings, which is definitely having an impact on boys participating in Youth Group.

Margaret has also shared the Youth Group flyer with St Joan of Arc and St John's, but only to the default contacts. There was a suggestion from the group to share via Deacon Liam, the Chaplain of the school. Jane offered to help with this. Fainche also suggested Jill Dunlop (Fr Andrew will share her email address).

The Youth Mass was successful, with great attendance at both the Mass and the follow-on dinner. Young people were involved in altar serving, choir, bidding prayers and readings. There was an expression of interest from St Luke's in Pinner to learn more about the Youth Mass.

A discussion followed about how we can develop / continue the Youth Mass in the future, and also how we define the concept of "Youth Mass". One suggestion that was raised by a young person in the parish was the opportunity for young people to ask questions. Fr Andrew advised this would not take within the Mass itself, but could be adopted for GIFT sessions. The use of a "question box" to facilitate young people asking questions was also raised.

There was a question about how young people could help fundraise to support the St Joan of Arc pilgrimage Red Caps. Fr Andrew will organise a dedicated discussion on this.

The conversation then moved to reflect on how to continue engaging young people after they have received the Sacrament of Confirmation (2 are currently in preparation). Fainche asked if there is any restriction for Youth Group; Margaret confirmed there are no limitations, but would like to offer them something active to participate in. Fr Andrew advised Caritas is working to develop something (course, activity etc.) that can follow Confirmation, but is waiting on details of this.

A question was raised about Youth Alpha, and whether this could be explored; Fr Andrew said there's no further update on when Youth Alpha will be available next. Based on their previous experience, both Margaret and Fainche believe that Youth Alpha is more suited to 17 / 18 year olds and above. Fr Andrew reminded everyone that we would have to find new helpers for this.

Beatrix mentioned the concept of a Teaching Mass, where the priest explains each step of the Mass. Lizzie shared a version of this was run in her previous parish, and mentioned the weekly "Parts of the Mass" series that was also being. Fr Andrew asked for a copy of this to review. David shared that the Faith & Friendship Group watched a DVD that explained some of the symbolism in the different parts of the Mass. The JPPC team asked for a link to the video so that they could watch it and reflect in the following meeting.

#### **6. Communications - Social media Strategy / website**

Jane shared an update on the activities across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter / X.

The Facebook group has the strongest following with ~300 people.

Paul confirmed he's part of the Facebook group; he believes the messaging would be particularly valuable to people who may not be receiving the parish newsletter on a weekly basis. He highlighted that the challenge is always how you reach new people.

Jane advised ultimately the way the parish profiles will be raised is when people like or re-post content. There is a challenge in how to do this in a way that is respectful of privacy.

No additional parishioner profiles have been shared since the last meeting in November. Jane suggested engaging with the catechists; Fr Andrew suggested sharing the wording with Kerry, who can contact the catechist co-ordinators for passing along to catechists.

Fainche also suggested making it a chain where people "pass the baton" to the next person to complete their profile, and Beatrix & Lizzie suggested offering to write up profiles for people who may not be computer literate and so that the level of effort is reduced.

## **7. Parish Development Plan – FELLOWSHIP**

Father Andrew opened with a recap of the Divine Renovation definition of fellowship (found on page 270) – "meaningful community where people are known and loved, called by their name, and called to holiness".

*Note: While the discussion on the parish development plan is normally structured into 6 months, 1 year and 5 years, this meeting's conversation was more holistic in approach.*

### House Meetings

Margaret mentioned House Meetings (which had run before COVID), which involved organising small groups of people to meet at someone's home and connect together.

In Divine Renovation, core groups (a similar concept to House Meetings) involve up to 25 people and include a shared meal, prayer and discussion.

Paul asked if anyone had participated in the previous session; he himself hosted 6-8 people in his home. Beatrix went to two different sessions in 2019, which each ran for 6-8.

Paul also shared that this was an opportunity to connect with several different people he would not have otherwise met. By being in a house, which is much more intimate and informal, it allowed him to connect with people. When he now meets those people, he feels a sense of shared responsibility and connection. It can be very powerful.

Jane asked how the concept was co-ordinated; Beatrix and Paul explained that Sharon developed a large rota, and then split people into groups based on general geographical area, with people who led / hosted (sometimes the same person). Margaret added that the original sign-up sheets offered people specification of days of the week and morning / afternoon / evening sessions to choose from.

Fr Andrew asked the JPPC to reflect whether they knew anyone who could co-ordinate, host, or lead sessions. Paul estimated the hardest work is identifying the hosts and developing the rota. Beatrix pointed out that additional (follow-on) sessions would require further co-ordination. Jane suggested this could potentially be started in the summertime, when people can use garden space.

Beatrix queried the timing of summer with holidays; Jane and Fr Andrew both agreed and thought maybe prior to holidays starting (i.e. June).

Beatrix potentially has time to co-ordinate; Fr Andrew will discuss this with Beatrix in more detail, and will also get in touch with Sharon to see if she can share any of her previous work.

#### Other concepts

There was a series that started in 1999 (“At Your Word, Lord”); this was discussed at the SLT, and originally raised in November at the Day of Reflection. Running this series again will require a co-ordinator.

The Diocese have a resource every Lent and Advent; this is potentially something we can tap into. Fr Andrew did suggest this to the Faith & Friendship group, but Ann is not sure how well this would work.

Fr Andrew mentioned Barnet, which has been running an “Acorns” session that has built into other programs. Lizzie asked if this could be incorporated into the Year of Prayer; Fr Andrew confirmed this was something he was already planning.

David shared how the Prayer & Life workshops have developed into open faith-sharing experiences.

Paul shared Community lunch (or similar) shows spirit, love, fellowship by welcoming them in a way that warm spaces don’t on their own.

Beatrix added that bringing something at Easter bringing community to others e.g. renting a table at the market on the High Street. Lizzie highlighted a previous JPPC idea to host talks on the “History of the Church”; advertising for this could be something that is included in any market presence.

Fainche shared an experience from her previous parish where people volunteered to make meals for families who have just had new babies. Long-term this could be connected to the toddler group (although Fr Andrew confirmed there is still no traction / update on this group).

Jane asked if prayer partners could be taken to another level; ongoing prayer partnering over an extended period of time. Fr Andrew is going to have prayer family sponsors as part of GIFT, building on activities that the GIFT groups had last year for World Day of the Sick, where made cards for the sick and housebound.

Margaret mentioned a practice at a former parish of welcoming families who were new.

Beatrix added that she has found having a mentor very helpful; ability to ask questions, feel connected etc. Fr Andrew asked if Beatrix thought this could naturally evolve from small groups.

Fr Andrew will take all of the ideas that were raised and discuss with the SLT at their next meeting, which is taking place on 24/01/24.

#### **8. Any other business**

Heating at Our Lady Help of Christians - The boilers are broken in both the church and the hall at Our Lady’s have been declared unfit, and require replacement.

Upcoming parish events – outlined as follows:

**February:**

18 February (Mill End & Chorleywood) - planned giving campaign commences. This will take place over 3 weekends; the expectation is for this to be run every 3 years, but it has been 5-6 years since a campaign has taken place in the parishes.

21 February - the Annual Joint Parishes Meeting will be held at 7.30pm via Zoom.

24 February – Formation Course for Readers will take place at Our Lady Help of Christians, Rickmansworth (10am – 2.30pm).

25 February (Rickmansworth) – planned giving campaign commences

**March:**

9 March – Formation Course for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion will take place at St John the Evangelist, Mill End (10am – 2.30pm, preceded by 9.30am Mass).

**April:**

21-26 April - Week of guided prayer; this will involve daily 1:1 sessions with people and small group activities about prayer, connecting with the Year of Prayer. Margaret Burke is co-ordinating, and working with a number of guides who are trained in Ignatian spirituality. Beatrix asked if young people are included; Fr Andrew advised this is still under discussion.

**May:**

11 May – Confirmations

12 May - Marian procession at Our Lady Help of Christians (followed by parish party)

18 May - New parishioners lunch

**June:**

2 June - Corpus Christi procession at St John the Evangelist (followed by parish party)

23 June - St John Fisher procession at St John Fisher (followed by parish party)

**TBC:**

Summer joint parishes event

Marian Novena (likely to be October; being re-scheduled from original proposed date of May).

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 @ 7.30pm. Venue: Rickmansworth Presbytery