

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

Held at St John the Evangelist, Chorleywood

13th November 2023 @ 7.30pm

In Attendance:

Fr Andrew Gallagher
Fr Matteo Di Giuseppe
Fainche McDonagh
David Kendrick
Toni D'Urso (YMLT representative)
Jane Irwin
Lizzie Quinn
Beatrix Li
Paul Matarewicz
Sue Noble

Apologies:

Mary Mackie (stepping down)
John Donohoe

1. Welcome and Prayer

Fr Andrew welcomed everyone to the 25th meeting of the JPPC. The meeting began with a time of prayer.

2. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting – 11th September 2023

Churchsuite: The challenges raised in the September JPPC meeting have been resolved; Devon is still providing some support remotely.

Alpha: Continuing to think ahead about options for Youth Alpha. A banner will be placed at the front of the church for the Alpha sessions that will commence in January.

Parishioner profiles: A few have been received and shared on social media. It would be great to have more volunteers.

Photographs at parish events: Finding a solution that takes GDPR and individual permissions into account is still ongoing. One option is sourcing pre-approval via Churchsuite, though this would require further technical work.

Diocesan support for catechesis: Sessions are taking place on 20 November and 4 December.

Week of guided prayer: This will take place w/c 15 April (aligning with Easter), and 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 this, 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.

Parent & toddler group: There is still only one volunteer to support this group. A meeting with St. Peter's Church of England is being organised to discuss options.

Grievance support: 7 people have volunteered to provide grievance support. Father Andrew is still working to organise appropriate training, and will further updates at the January meeting.

3. Discipleship

GIFT

GIFT sessions continue with approximately 25 families actively participating. The parents sessions have been less popular, although those who are participating have proactively mentioned how helpful they have found the sessions. There will be two First Holy Communions taking place on 3rd December in Rickmansworth. Expressions of interest to learn more about GIFT are also continuing from other parishes.

Faith and Friendship group

David noted the group is still going strong, averaging ~20 people per meeting and a good level of discussion. There will be a group from Harrow being hosted (People Connect, who specialise in supporting adults with learning disabilities) on 6th December.

Kairos

Fr Andrew confirmed the Kairos group is pausing until January 2024 to enable participation in the Prayer & Life workshops (see below). They will be utilising new video content from Dr Edward Sri on prayer to coincide with the Year of Prayer.

Prayer & Life workshops

The Prayer & Life workshops are continuing, with 4-10 people participating regularly. Some people are interested in being involved, but are challenged to participate every week given other commitments. The current series will complete in December. The overall experience is challenging and demanding, and each session is quite intensive, but it is also being enjoyed by those who are participating.

RCIA

Beatrix confirmed that RCIA has recommenced with one person and very good discussions.

Baptisms

Jane advised there was a good session on Saturday 11th November with four families. Father Matteo commented it becomes crucial for parents to regularly come to Mass as part of their baptismal preparations.

Confirmation

Registrations are currently open for Confirmation; so far 9-10 young people have registered, and most are actively engaged in the parish. Fr Andrew and Fr Matteo are already discussing how to continue engagement beyond Confirmation, and will need a team of volunteers to be involved in supporting this.

Fainche suggested getting last year's Confirmation group to join the Youth Mass. Fr Andrew mentioned all were invited to the Youth Summit, but none of them came. Fr Matteo added most of the ones from previous years aren't that interested in doing anything in the Church. Beatrix

suggested matching young people to activities based on interest, strengths noticed by catechists etc. (as sometimes young people don't know what they're good at, and a confidence boost can be very powerful). Fr Andrew agreed that giving options is a good idea. Fr Andrew asked for thoughts about who could support leading this.

Alpha

Father Andrew advised Deirdre and Claire are putting together a team for the Alpha intake that will be commencing in January; this will be the 9th intake for the parish. Advertising will be using the banner, and the Christmas leaflet, and through encouraging parishioners inviting others via homilies and notices.

Children's Liturgy

Mill End continues Children's Liturgy 3 weeks a month at the 10.30am Mass; 3 teenagers participated at last week's Mass in supporting catechists.

4. Youth ministry

Toni represented the Youth Group during this JPPC meeting.

The Youth Group meets monthly on Tuesdays (6.30-8pm).

The current group is still relatively small (7 girls, all year 7) and faith discussions are at the earlier stages. The monthly meeting cadence definitely impacts this, though there is limited ability to increase the connections given there are currently only 3 volunteers supporting the Youth Group.

Concentrating on Youth Mass (3rd December, 1st Sunday of Advent) as would like young people to more involved in the Mass. Discussing options (welcoming, bidding prayers etc.) in the next meeting. Also aligning youth servers and choir, and hoping to get Scouts involved.

Really need support of parents to help get the Youth Group thriving. Ongoing challenge of many competing commitments for young people.

Jane commented it was positive that the ones who have joined are returning on a regular basis. Toni agreed, and commented that it's the initial participation that is the key challenge.

There was some discussion about the fact that participation is all girls at present; Toni commented Scouts seems to take a lot of the boys.

Father Andrew also commented that the Confirmation numbers (which are lower than usual), are also mainly girls, which Father Matteo confirmed. Jane noted that a lot of the "local" school population (Joan of Arc) is no longer local, which may also be having an impact on parish participation.

Toni mentioned there had been some discussion about approaching St. John's to anticipate participation. Sue asked if there was any publication at other local schools (e.g. St. Clement Dane), and mentioned that there had been a lunchtime Catholic club at some schools.

Jane asked if anyone had connection to Parents Networks at the local schools that could potentially be leveraged. Father Andrew suggested contacting students at the end of Year 6.

There was also a question of whether starting sessions earlier could work, so students go straight to Youth Group after school. Beatrix suggested holding an “open time” with a formal start a little later; this is a challenge because there are currently only 3 volunteers. Toni mentioned the Baptist church has a paid Youth Minister, which has assisted them in providing more options to young people.

Jane also commented on the long-term potential of GIFT, which several people agreed could be significant.

6. Communications - Social media Strategy / website

Jane provided an update on social media activity, which is continuing.

The social media team have been sharing “saints of the day” on both Facebook and X in the lead-up to the Feast of All Saints.

There is also a plan to share “Family Activities” for Advent and a Christmas playlist of traditional and modern Christmas carols.

Parishioner profiles have had the strongest response from people on FB.

Building on what is shared in the parish newsletter. Recent examples have included:

- Blessing of graves
- All Souls
- Parents and toddlers’ group
- Youth Mass
- Christmas Fayre

Continuing discussion on benefit of photographs (Youth Mass, Advent Fayre etc.) to “bring to life” parish events. (Process = take photo, check permissions, share with Fr Andrew).

Beatrix mentioned TikTok as an option to explore to engage more young people; this will need to go via Youth Ministry team, as registration would need to be supported by parents.

7. Parish Development Plan – DISCIPLESHIP

Father Andrew opened with a recap of the Divine Renovation definition of discipleship (found on page 270) – “growing in faith, knowledge, prayer”.

Fr Andrew mentioned he is currently doing “Kick Start” with Divine Renovation, and there was a powerful session on evangelisation recently that was very thought-provoking. He also mentioned some of the activities already underway within the parish that are supporting discipleship.

Beatrix commented on the importance of quality, and the need to think about what we’re already doing, and consider “this is the opportunity to grow”. The more people think about that at each step, the more the mindset change can start a more collective, bigger change.

Paul shared a personal perspective that even though some things are repetitive (e.g. he has personally participated in 4-5 Alpha courses), they still increase and deepen faith. David mentioned the Prayer & Life workshops are similar – people get different things out of each experience.

Jane asked if we have any indication of what percentage of the parish have participated in the various parish offerings. Fr Andrew commented that with new parishioners joining the parish, the numbers are changing constantly.

6 months

Week of guided prayer

Welcomers training (initial conversations)

Update skills audit with reference to using talents

12 months

Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help – time of prayer and guest speakers (different priests) that were very well-received. Fr Andrew will discuss with SLT; if agreed, we would host at Our Lady's and use the livestream.

Explore "Who is Mary?" during the month of May and connect this with the Marian procession.

Developing a "talent mapping" list.

5 years

Extend GIFT approach to include Confirmation (as well as First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion).

Hold sessions to help people "Understand what your talents are", and how you can use these for others. Create a mindset within the youth to understand what their talent is, and how they can use it for God.

Offer ongoing formation for adults beyond Alpha that involves some kind of journey of faith – Stations of the Cross, Rosary, talks etc. Leverage connect group from Alpha

Provide a way for people to more deeply connect with each other (Lizzie has an action to share research and contact points on Family Groups at next JPPC meeting).

Re-read about communities from Divine Renovation (page 173-176)

Achieve the team vision to be one of the most vibrant parishes in Hertfordshire.

Beatrix asked about Fr Andrew and Fr Matteo's vision; there is an upcoming SLT meeting to discuss leadership.

8. Any Other Business

Mill End car park: Fainche and Fr Andrew both believe people do not understand the cones are associated with the building works and the car park and therefore are not always being appropriately followed. Fr Andrew looking at marking pedestrian access more clearly with the Finance Committee.

Warm Spaces: Beatrix asked if there are any physical flyers to advertise; there is a banner in Mill End, and online messaging, but currently no handouts for when she visits people. Fr Andrew will ask SVP.

Sue also seconded this request, as she can take it when dropping donated items to the Food Bank. David explained there is an A5 leaflet currently under development; this will be available shortly.

SVP lunches: Fr Andrew mentioned the kitchen in Mill End is being finished; once this is completed, the SVP lunches will recommence.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 15th January 2024 @ 7.30pm Venue: St John the Evangelist, Mill End (in the church)