

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

Held at Our Lady's Church Hall, Rickmansworth

11<sup>th</sup> September 2023 @ 7.30pm

## In Attendance:

Fr Andrew Gallagher  
Fr Matteo Di Giuseppe  
Paul Matarewicz  
Fainche McDonagh  
David Kendrick  
Belinda Calen  
Jane Irwin  
Lizzie Quinn

## Apologies:

Beatrix Li  
Mary Mackie  
Sue Noble  
John Donohoe

### 1. Welcome and Prayer

Fr Andrew welcomed everyone to the 24<sup>th</sup> meeting of the JPPC. The meeting began with a time of prayer.

### 2. Appointment of a new Secretary

Lizzie Quinn agreed to take on the role as Secretary, commencing with this meeting.

### 3. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting – 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023

#### Parish websites

Father Andrew confirmed that the plan to merge all 3 parish websites has now been completed. The new joint parish website – for the **Roman Catholic Parishes of Rickmansworth, Mill End & Chorleywood** – is now live (<https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/rickmansworth/>).

Paul highlighted that some of the headers on the new website don't appear to be working any more; Father Andrew explained that the headers are related to the web program run by the Diocese of Westminster and cannot be changed.

#### Parishioner registration via Churchsuite

A newsletter insert has been included in all printed newsletters for the last 2 weekends (3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September) with an explanation on the new combined website and guidance for parishioners on how they can register with the parish using the new Churchsuite system.

Father Andrew shared an update that so far 125 adults and 40 children (~50% of the parish population) have completed initial registration.

Additional Churchsuite prompts invite parishioners to share areas of expertise that they would be willing to share with the parishes in a volunteering capacity – this may identify additional support for various activities.

Lizzie highlighted that the follow-up emails from Churchsuite are signed from Father Andrew, but the email address name reads as "Devon Petrie" – Father Andrew will follow up to get this resolved.

He also explained that Devon has been of great assistance implementing the new program, and will continue to support for the next few weeks before he goes to the seminary.

#### WORSHIP

Confirmed that WORSHIP action plan (6 month) is now underway, with the use of incense at Masses commencing on 10<sup>th</sup> September.

#### **4. Discipleship**

##### GIFT

GIFT is recommencing this weekend (16 September) with the theme for the first session being “The Church”. There are now approximately 45 families involved, with approx. 25 families actively participating. Father Andrew has shared that the program is enabling flexibility for some specific family situations. There are also two new people (Lizzie and Michelle) who will be assisting this year. Father Andrew noted the variety of the schools involved – there are 16 different schools for the 25 families.

##### Faith and Friendship group

David noted that the group is going from strength to strength. The video resources continue to be very well received, and provide different points of view on the topics. The group are also experiencing a positive level of comfort in discussing the different topics, which is wonderful to see.

##### Kairos

Fr Andrew advised that the Kairos group is pausing until the beginning of 2024 to enable participation in the Prayer & Life workshops (see below).

##### Prayer & Life workshops

The Prayer & Life workshops commenced on 5<sup>th</sup> September; so far there has been a very good response, with 15 people participating. This is a wonderful lead into the Year of Prayer that Pope Francis has announced.

##### RCIA

RCIA will recommence in October, with the one person who has already started preparations.

##### Baptisms

Jane advised that the new process of 2 discussions in one session is working well. Father Matteo shared that we have also introduced baptisms taking place during Sunday Mass, with one baptism at the 11am Mass taking place recently in Rickmansworth, and another at the 10.30am in Mill End taking place in October. This definitely increased the number of people within the church in Rickmansworth, but was noted as a wonderful thing by several people, including the parents of the baptised baby.

##### Confirmation

Father Matteo advised that there are two new catechists; Natalie (Mill End) and Tom (Chorleywood). It was again noted that not many of last year’s Confirmation students are regularly attending Mass,

and there was some discussion about what could be done to support these young people to change this (see EVANGELISATION below).

### Alpha

Father Andrew confirmed Deirdre and Claire will be leading Alpha in January; this will be the 9<sup>th</sup> intake for the parish.

Lizzie asked if there was a “Youth Alpha” that could be potentially be leveraged to encourage Confirmation candidates to continue their journey of faith after receiving the Sacrament.

Fainche said there was, and has been used once in the parish historically. Belinda agreed and noted it was lovely, but there was some pushback from youth on participation – weekly involvement was sometimes challenging when young people were also busy studying, particularly for GCSE and A-levels.

Father Andrew asked if it might be possible to spread out the Youth Alpha experience over a longer period, to reduce the negative impact on those participating.

## **5. Youth ministry**

Belinda represented the Youth Group during this JPPC meeting.

The group meets monthly on Tuesdays 6.30-8pm. Belinda shared the draft calendar (October 2023 – June 2024).

The current group is relatively small (5-8 girls, all year 7) and faith discussions are still 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.

There had been hopes that the group could participate in World Youth Day Reunion Picnic, but the date (3<sup>rd</sup> September) were only confirmed on the last day of the previous school year, which was insufficient notice to properly organise.

Belinda discussed having some kind of drive to raise awareness across the wider parish community. Jane and Lizzie both confirmed that the existing poster has been shared in several WhatsApp groups, as well as on the parish Facebook and X accounts.

As a group, there was discussion on possible Youth Group involvement in the Advent Fair. Lizzie also asked if CAFOD had a strong presence in the parish (as CAFOD produces materials for young people to support Family Fast Days and the CAFOD Advent calendar); Father Andrew said there is opportunity to increase the CAFOD presence in the future.

Belinda and Father Andrew also confirmed that a Youth Mass will be held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, which is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent. There was further discussion about how to involve the Youth Group participants building on the topics discussed in the July JPPC meeting (readers, choir, offertory, setting up of the altar, welcoming, flowers etc.).

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

Jane provided an update on social media activity, which is being supported by herself and Lizzie, along with Claire Pride. David Scott has left the parish, and so has now stepped away from supporting social media.

There is reasonable impact from the different platforms. Jane shared that monthly impressions (views) are as follows:

- Facebook – 352 on the public page; 117 on the private group
- X / Twitter – 295
- Instagram – 69

There are some challenges making the content transferrable across the different platforms due to varying restrictions (e.g. X character limitations, Instagram lack of flexibility on link vs image etc.).

The social media team are working to add content that is relevant, building on what is shared in the parish newsletter. Recent examples have included following the Lourdes pilgrimage, showcasing Brass on the Grass, sharing the Youth Group poster and asking for volunteers to support the new Parents & Toddlers group.

In addition, details for all Holy Days of Obligation are being posted across all three platforms, and “saints of the day” are being featured on the X platform, with the long-term plan to also share this content on Facebook and Instagram (WIP).

The long-term plan is also to make the content more interactive, particularly the private group on Facebook. There was some discussion about sharing the Faith & Friendship video content, although some of this (the Café videos) are subject to copyright.

The group discussed the concept ‘parishioner profiles’, which everyone agreed could work well to increase connection within the parish. Jane will share the questions with the JPPC team so that each person will complete as our first group of profiles to be posted on Facebook.

There was also discussion about using photos taken at parish events; these require approval from a GDPR perspective, though Father Andrew anticipates that this may be something we can use Churchsuite to facilitate (i.e. obtaining parental approval) in the future.

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

Father Andrew opened with a recap of the Divine Renovation definition of evangelisation (found on page 265).

Newsletter summarisation – there were several positive comments on how the parish newsletter has commenced the Vatican 2 series looking at the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and how this constitutes a form of evangelisation to the existing parish community.

Brass on the Grass – Father Andrew noted that the summer event was a great way for parishioners to bring family and friends.

### 6 months

Diocesan support – Father Andrew shared that the Agency for Evangelisation wrote in June to offer catechists who could share teachings on evangelisation; he has written requesting support and is currently waiting on a response.

Alpha – discussion about re-using the banner to increase awareness beyond the parish, and potentially posting on RCCG and WD3 Facebook groups.

Wider sharing of parish events – there was a discussion regarding general / council / village newsletters; Jane is going to investigate what publications may be in circulation.

Christmas – there will be a Christmas Carol Service at 3pm on 10 December at St John’s Church, Mill End. Lizzie suggested this could be a good opportunity to evangelise through social media, including the possibility of holding a competition for children and adults to nominate their favourite Christmas carols, and also to create a Christmas playlist that could be shared.

### 12 months

Father Andrew confirmed that the parish will once again organise activities during Lent, including a Lenten retreat. There will also be another social event in summer 2024.

There was also a discussion around holding talks to explore specific topics relating to the Catholic faith. David suggested Lent and Easter and all agreed this is a good topic, but there are many other activities organised during that time. An alternative could be using the month of May to explore “Who is Mary?”, and connect this with the Marian procession.

### 5 years

We need to consider how we can inspire the ~350 people within the parish to spread our message with others, and how we can use sacramental moments as opportunities for evangelisation.

David mentioned that some years ago Our Lady’s was included in "Ricky week", and Father Andrew noted that Our Lady’s is visited by different people as part of the Chess Valley Walk – this could be an opportunity to connect with others.

A discussion started around creating different pamphlets explaining different aspects of the Catholic faith, that could be made available in the church foyers, with possible topics including:

- What is Catholicism
- What is the church (guide to different parts of the church e.g. nave, tabernacle, statues etc.)
- What is the Mass
- The true meaning of Easter
- The true meaning of Christmas

David mentioned the Rickmansworth Historical Society, which meets once a month in St. Mary’s church hall. The group discuss different historical topics with a very local focus and could be worth leveraging.

Father Andrew also expressed a wish to make more of the garden crucifix at Our Lady’s, including the possibility of having a Nativity play held there long-term.

## **8. Any Other Business**

Confirmed all JPPC meetings will commence at 7.30pm ongoing.

Father Andrew advised there is only one volunteer so far to support the creation of the Parent and Toddler group; this has also been shared on social media and on the St. John’s WhatsApp group for parents.

Six people have volunteered to provide post bereavement support to families following funerals – not counselling but to ‘journey’ with spouses and family members, so this will now be explored in more detail.

Fainche raised a concern regarding the car park in Mill End, due to the ongoing building works. Father Andrew confirmed that these challenges will continue, particularly since the school car park is now completely blocked off. He also advised that he is working on confirmation of the “safe route” (currently marked out with cones), as it is essential this throughway remains clear and unobstructed.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023 @ 7.30pm Venue: St John Fisher, Chorleywood