

CHURCHES OF THE FOREST OF DEAN

Our Lady of The Victories Cinderford
St. Margaret Mary Coleford and Sedbury
St. Joseph Lydney

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL DATED 6th MARCH 2024

1. Attendance

Present: Pip Deave, Peter Chisholm, Paul Dekkers, Phillip King, Brian & Dot Lord;
Fiona Mills, Sarah Perkins, Dorota Rapacz, Ruth Wood, Noel Riossi

2. Apologies:

None

3. Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and accepted.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Services.

Attendance at most services remains satisfactory although such is dependent upon a number of factors not least prevailing weather conditions.

Easter Services

Arrangements are in hand to cater for Easter Services although it is not yet settled as to which priests will cover which Service. As previously the Paschal Triduum will be split across the Parish churches.

Taking due account of the Vigil Mass offering parishioners will rest assured that every parish church will have an Easter Sunday Mass.

Parish Priest

No update had been received from either the Deanery or the Bishop's Palace as to when a replacement parish priest might be appointed. The possibility remains that

some progress may be forthcoming after Easter but there is no guarantee in this regard.

The Council resolved that in due course the Vicar General and the Dean should receive its expression of gratitude (copied to the Bishop) for the support that they have both offered to the Parish during this difficult period...

5. Spiritual Update

Pastoral Visits

There are currently seven parishioners on the Pastoral Visit list which is manageable.

Lenten Reflections

These are currently being held at 12 noon each Saturday in Lent at the Parish Hall in Coleford. Attendance is not high although one or two new individuals have attended one or more meetings. The quality of discussion is high and that is heartening.

Reconciliation

There will be a Reconciliation Service at OLV Cinderford on 20th March next with two priests available to hear confessions.

First Holy Communion

Preparations are ongoing with five children scheduled to make their First Holy Communion. It is anticipated that these will take place at St. Joseph's on Sunday 2nd June next that being the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Children's Area in St. Joseph's Lydney

The children's area is proving to be very popular to the point where further space needs to be made available to accommodate those families wishing to avail themselves of the facility. Discussion took place as to how best to re-configure the seating plan in order to allow sufficient space for both parents and children to be accommodated in the area (thus allowing parents to be directly responsible for child supervision) whilst also facilitating the continuation of the coffee area. A re-configuration plan was agreed and will be trialled in coming weeks.

The comment was made that it would greatly assist with space planning if parishioners attending Mass at St. Joseph's would endeavour to fill the church from the front (i.e. take the seats closest to the altar before seeking to take seats in the middle or at the back of the church).

Retreats and Training Events

Mindful of the difficulty that the Spiritual and Pastoral Group had in arranging a Lenten Retreat (as set out at Item 5 of the Minutes of 24th January 2024) a request was made for the Council to approve a formal budget or similar for the Group. The existence of such would eliminate the delay necessitated by the present need to bring funding requests to the Pastoral Council.

There was extended discussion as to whether such an approach was appropriate and as to whether the expenditure of parish monies to fund such offsite activities could be justified. There were arguments to be had on both sides; for example there was evidence suggestive of the fact that training for Readers and Eucharistic Ministers worked best when provided locally. Retreats might be a different matter. It was true that part of the function of a Parish was to facilitate the spiritual wellbeing of its parishioners. For some that meant going on Retreat, and for some Retreat worked best when they had the ability to divorce themselves from familiar surroundings.

Ultimately the Council resolved not to provide a budget specifically directed towards the organisation of Retreats and similar events. It resolved instead to grant authority to the Group co-ordinator to make reasonable financial commitments on the part of the Council in order to allow for venues, transport and similar facilities to be reserved quickly. Such commitments would still (i) need to be ratified by the Council in due course and (ii) adhere to the Parish Purchase Order procedures.

The Council reiterated its view as to the desirability wherever possible of the costs of Retreats and similar being covered by donations from those parishioners wishing to attend the same. It was however adamant that genuine inability to make such contribution must not be allowed to operate as a bar to attendance. The Parish was a Christian organisation and charity was fundamental to the Christian ethos.

6. Financial Update

In the absence of a Parish Priest the Fabric and Finance Committee was unable to meet formally. Purely for audit purposes an informal meeting had been held comprising members appointed by Fr. Frank Wainwright prior to his departure.

A draft budget had been produced to cover the current financial year. It had also been agreed that the financial contribution provided by Newent parish should for now be reduced to the sum of £625 per month. This revised figure took account of both the fact that at present no priestly stipend was being incurred and that Newent had an outstanding debt from financial year 2023 of some £3000.00p

7. Buildings Update

Coleford

Minor damage to the railings at SMM premises had now been funded by Insurers and a contractor would be engaged to undertake repairs. Work to the front door canopy was still required but again this was in hand as was the issue of wall staining due to hot air from the central heating system.

8. Volunteers Updates

There were no Volunteer updates to report.

9. Social Update

It has now been agreed that the 2024 Parish Picnic will be held on 15th June next (or 22nd June should the weather on the first date be inclement). The venue has yet to be decided. As always volunteers are required to help both with preliminary organisation and with practical assistance on the day itself.

The Diocesan Day will take place on 6th July 2024 at St. Bernadette's School Bristol. Further details will appear in the Parish Newsletter in due course.

10. Safeguarding Update

It was reported with disappointment that the Diocesan proposal to provide face to face training for volunteers would not be progressing. The Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency had produced a leaflet which for now would be a substitute for such training. Copies were distributed to Council members and it was resolved that Council Members be required to certify that they had read this leaflet.

Copies of the leaflet would in due course be distributed to all Volunteers who would be required to confirm that they had read it.

11. AOB

Live Streaming

Live Streaming of Sunday Mass continued to be popular. Latest figures suggested that on Sunday mornings between six and seven people regularly logged on and that up to fifty people logged on to view the Mass at various times during the week.

Sunday Mass Live Streaming migrated some time ago from the Vimeo platform to the You Tube platform. The subscription to the latter covers payment for royalties due in respect of any sung or recorded music included in the broadcast. In consequence the

Performing Rights Society licence previously required to permit this to take place has not been renewed

There being no other business the meeting concluded at 1520 hours.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

22nd April 2024 at 1730 hours in Coleford Church Hall High Nash Coleford

(Zoom connection available)