

CHURCHES OF FOREST OF DEAN

Our Lady of Victories Cinderford
St. Margaret Mary Coleford
St. Joseph Lydney
Sacred Heart Sedbury

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL DATED 20th APRIL 2022

1. **Present:** Pip Deave; Brian & Dot Lord; Richard Coward; Barnabas Page; Fiona Mills; Helen Molyneux; Eddie & Pam Barnaville; Noel Riossi

Apologies: Peter Chisholm; Paul Dekkers; Sarah Perkins; Dorota Rapacz.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed Eddie and Pam Barnaville as new members of the Council representing Coleford parish.

2. **Minutes of last meeting**

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and accepted.

Matters Arising

The problem at Lydney church with cluster flies continues. Volunteers have been assembled to clear the loft area of surplus material and a skip will be organised to facilitate removal of this material. A second quote for fumigation services is awaited.

A progress report will be provided to the next Council meeting.

3. **Current Situation**

Wearing of Face Masks in Forest Churches

The continuing requirement to wear face masks when attending church services was queried. This seemed now to be at odds with both government guidelines and general public behaviour in communal settings. Father Barnabas confirmed that to his knowledge the Diocese had not issued any recent guidance on the subject.

The Council resolved to dispense with the requirement for parishioners to wear face coverings when attending church services. Moving forwards it would be a matter of individual choice as to whether or not to wear a face covering when attending services. A notice to that effect would be published in the next edition of the Parish Newsletter.

4. Spiritual Updates

Pastoral Assistant

The question of whether or not to appoint a Pastoral Assistant remained unanswered. It was common ground that such an individual would be of value in helping to address a number of core spiritual issues but there was less agreement surrounding the status of such an individual.

One argument held that a Pastoral Assistant ought to be a volunteer role rather than a paid situation. Whilst accepting that the successful candidate would need to be focused and keenly motivated this did not mandate the use of a financial incentive. It ought not to be beyond the ability of the parishes in communion to find an individual who was prepared to take on this role.

The counter argument put was that the recent 'Inspired' exercise had amongst other functions, sought new volunteers to assist with parish functions. All new volunteers bar one had now been allocated roles. It was thus unlikely that a suitable volunteer existed. Further, this role would be unlike any other currently active within the parish laity. It would be a key role expected to take a broad view of a number of fundamental outstanding issues within parishes and to address these. The Council would be looking to such an individual to offer it leadership and guidance in its quest to provide answers to questions raised by 'Inspired' and by Synod.

A volunteer would not be appropriate; such individuals of necessity had to fit in such a role around their other day to day activities whereas the Pastoral Assistant role needed to be an activity focused across a dedicated and regular allocation of time.

The Council resolved to defer any decision until its next meeting. In the interim the Chair and would look to discuss relevant issues with the Parish Administrator, and all Council Members would put further thought into the matter and be prepared to debate the matter fully. In particular Members should consider what if any issues raised by parishioners through 'Inspired' and earlier surveys remained outstanding.

Parish pre-School Children

The Minutes of the March Council meeting had made reference to Jane Penny, a salaried individual involved with 'Lydney Churches Together' to work with young children and their parents, her intention being to provide young children with an introduction to the concept of Jesus. Subsequently it transpired that the Forest parishes made a contribution towards her salary and accordingly the Council mandated the Safeguarding Officer to open discussions with the lady in order to discern what assistance she might be able to offer.

5. Financial Update

There were no financial updates to report. There had however been a clerical error in the March Minutes; the current surplus funds figure was £15,000 and not £1500 as had been minuted.

6. Buildings Update

Sale of Sedbury Church

The Diocese was still awaiting word from HM Land Registry. The Diocese appeared to believe that the Land Registry delay was purely administrative and resulted from a lack of available staff due to Coronavirus absences.

'One Church'

The sub-committee tasked with making recommendations had not yet met although there had been electronic exchanges. Efforts would be made to set up a meeting so that a progress report might be delivered to the next Council meeting.

Father Barnabas reported that the Anglican Ministry in Coleford now had a definite intention to re-develop its church and was approaching several other denominations with the view to creating an ecumenical community church.

7. 'Inspired' Update

There were no Inspired updates to report

8. Volunteer Update

The Secretary confirmed that all new potential Volunteers bar one that had been identified through the 'Inspired' exercise had now been contacted and assigned roles. The one exception was an individual whose offered skill did not meet a current established need.

In view of the lessening of restrictions in the light of the improving Coronavirus pandemic position the Council thought it appropriate to consider whether the time was now right to re-visit the idea of seeking volunteers both to act as 'Welcomers' throughout parish churches and also to open churches at certain times for private worship. It was pointed out that there had in fact been 'welcomers' at work throughout the past 2 years – they had been in effect stewards tasked with controlling the behaviours of parishioners during the Coronavirus pandemic. In the main these volunteers had been 'Welcomers' pre-pandemic.

The Council resolved that issues surrounding rota-based systems for both welcoming people to church services and of opening churches for private prayer were best dealt with by individual churches at a local level.

9. Social Update

Friday Lunch Club

The Friday Lunch Club was being resurrected. It had been very popular prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, and it was noteworthy that a large number of parishioners had volunteered to assist. Preparations were now underway to ensure that crockery, cutlery and similar were all clean and in working order.

The first lunch was due to take place on Friday 29th April 2022 and Lunch Clubs would subsequently be held on the last Friday of every month. Approximately 30 people had expressed an intention to attend the first lunch.

Sadly due to a number of factors the price of the lunch had risen to £8.00 per head. This would be kept under review in an effort to ensure that it remained affordable to all.

10. Safeguarding Update

The Safeguarding Officer was working through the list of volunteers who required accreditation renewal and would keep the Council advised of progress in that regard.

11. Any Other Business

OLV Cinderford

The old boiler room at Cinderford had been sealed for many years due to the presence of asbestos. A request had now been received from the Diocese that the Finance & Fabric committee gave its assurance that no-one has entered the boiler room in the last two decades and that all keys to the boiler room not already in their possession be surrendered and handed over to the Diocese.

The Council resolved that this was a matter to be addressed locally by Cinderford parish. Such matters were outside the knowledge and purview of the Finance & Fabric committee. It was highly unlikely that anyone would know the whereabouts of any keys to the boiler room after such passage of time.

Ukrainian Refugees

The Chair reported that, having recently refurbished an apartment at her property, she had offered to take in a Ukrainian family (a young mother plus her child and a 12-year old nephew) and was currently working her way through the visa process. The apartment was currently unfurnished and so offers to donate suitable furniture would be welcome.

The Council noted the possibility that a significant number of Ukrainian refugees might find their way to our parishes in coming months. The Council expressed the hope that parishioners would be mindful of this and be ready to offer assistance wherever practicable.

Singing in Church

A query was raised as to whether in the light of the improving Coronavirus situation it was now acceptable to encourage parishioners to engage once again in the communal singing of hymns. The Council resolved that this was acceptable.

Holy Week Services

Father Barnabas wished to place on record his thanks to all parishioners who had helped to facilitate services during Holy Week.

Deanery Fund

Father Barnabas reported that there was currently a pot of money available at Gloucester Deanery to which parishes could have access to assist with appropriate training courses. The money was distributed on a 'first come' basis and so all Council members should reflect on the position in individual churches and come to the next meeting with suitable ideas e.g. training for Readers, for Communion Ministers and similar.

There being no other business the meeting concluded at 1820hours.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

1700 hours on Monday 23rd May 2022 at Coleford Church Hall High Nash Coleford. (Possible Zoom connection for Helen Molyneux)