

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 22nd NOVEMBER 2021

1. **Present:** Pip Deave; Brian & Dot Lord; Peter Chisholm; Richard Coward; Dorota Rapacz; Barnabas Page; Helen Molyneux; Noel Riossi

Apologies: Paul Dekkers; Fiona Mills; Sarah Perkins;

2. **Minutes of last meeting**

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and accepted.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. **Current Situation**

Annual General Meeting

Notice having been given to parishioners in the Parish Newsletter, on the Parish website and by Father Barnabas at the conclusion of recent Masses the AGM was now set to take place on 27th November 2021 in the Church Hall at High Nash Coleford.

It was resolved that the main topics go before the AGM should be:

- (1) Annual Report from the Chair;
- (2) Report on Financial Standing as at 31st October 2021;
- (3) Report on progress with the 'Inspired' initiative;
- (4) Discussion of the way forward for our parish;
- (5) Election of Council members
- (6) AOB

Item (1) is still in the course of preparation but will contain a reference to Advent Synod meetings. Ideally an advance copy will be circulated to Council members for comment but this may not be possible. Any items thought worthy of/necessary for inclusion to be submitted to the Chair no later than 12 noon on Thursday 25th November 2021.

Item (2) is covered both later in this paragraph and also in paragraph 5.

Item (3) is covered in paragraph 7.

Item (4) reflects the view of the Council that in view of the positive feedback received through the 'Inspired' survey the time has come to put on record the intention of the Council to move the parish forward with regard to the coming together of our communities. The mechanism for achieving this was still to be designed but parishioners will play an important role in the ongoing dialogue.

Item (5) reflects the constitutional requirement of the Forest Parish. All Council members have agreed to allow their names to go forward for possible re-election to role. A small number of roles within the parish are subject to appointment as opposed to election. Appointment is within the purview of Father Barnabas who will confirm his decisions shortly.

Item (6) is reserved for minor housekeeping matters. Under the heading the Council proposes to inform parishioners of the need to maintain some Covid precautions in parish churches for the foreseeable future, outline in broad terms what those precautions will be and to allow for views to be expressed;

Christmas Arrangements

Planning is in hand to provide Christmas Mass services. Father Barnabas has yet to make his final decision but it is likely that Christmas Eve Vigil Masses will be held at both Lydney and Cinderford. Christmas Day Masses will take place at Coleford and at Newent. Masses for the Feast of the Holy Family (26th December) will take place at Cinderford and at Newent. Full details including timings will appear nearer the time both in the Parish Newsletter and on the Parish website.

Bishops Conference

The Bishops' Conference has recently provided guidance relating to the issue of Sunday Mass observance. There is clearly no intent to re-impose the absolute obligation to attend Sunday Mass at this juncture. Their Lordships have chosen instead to extol the virtues of Sunday Mass attendance and encourage the faithful to follow their conscience. Father Barnabas was of the view that the subject could be addressed as part of his Sermon at the next LiveStream Mass.

The Council resolved to adopt the view expressed by Father Barnabas.

4. Spiritual Updates

Pope Francis has called upon the Catholic Church to engage in a Synod to discuss whether the time has come to create a different Church based around the principles of Communion, Participation and Mission. The Forest Parish has arranged a series of meetings during the Advent Season to consult with parishioners upon their views regarding the questions his Holiness is asking about the future direction of the Church. Details of the meeting dates and times were published in the last Parish Newsletter.

The question now arose as to whether further publicity for these forthcoming meetings would be necessary in order to encourage as many parishioners as possible to take part.

The Council resolved that reference to these meetings should form part of the Report from the Chair to the AGM on 27th November.

5. Financial Update

AGM Financial Report

A draft Financial Report has been prepared for submission to the AGM. Council Members have received a copy of this Report and were now asked to approve its contents prior to distribution to parishioners. A brief discussion took place the general tenor of which was that the draft was entirely satisfactory and displayed a healthy financial position for the parish.

The Council resolved to adopt the Financial Report as drafted save for the omission of any mention of the 'Dona' project [see below]. A copy of the Report would be provided electronically to parishioners alongside the next distribution of the Parish Newsletter. There would also be a limited number of paper copies available at the AGM on 27th November.

It was proposed that a formal vote of thanks be proposed at the AGM in favour of both Brian Lord and Dot Lord to reflect the hard work and dedication that they had both put into the business of financial reporting for the Parish.

The general view was that it would be unfair upon all volunteers to single out any one individual for special mention at the AGM. That said, the Council wished to formally Minute its deep appreciation of all of the work that Brian and Dot had devoted (and continue to devote) to the monitoring of the Parish financial situation.

Dona

The Diocese has passed details to the Fabric & Finance committee of a contactless/Chip & PIN system that it is suggested might replace the traditional Church collection plate. The system is said to have the capability to boost revenues received by way of charitable giving although it does come at a cost in terms of capital expenditure to acquire the necessary equipment and also of monthly service fees.

The Council resolved to defer detailed discussion until the next meeting but the initial view was negative. It could be said that the system seems better suited to places having a high public footfall e.g. Cathedrals, Pilgrimage sites, rather than to everyday parish churches. The Council was of the initial view that the Forest parish might be better served by seeking to promote the Standing Order/Direct Debit route for charitable giving since these methodologies tend to provide a regular guaranteed income.

6. Buildings Update

Sale of Sedbury Church

There had been no progress on the matter since the last Council meeting and in particular nothing had been heard with regard to the potential issue regarding access rights.

7. 'Inspired' Update

Regrettably, as the result of ill health, Kate Gunn has not been able to follow through upon her draft for the second 'Inspired' leaflet although collation of parishioner responses to the first leaflet (together with associated work) has been completed. In the short-term Sam Buchanan has stepped in to assist and a summary of feedback received has been shared with parishioners via the 'Inspired' feedback leaflet that accompanied the latest Parish Newsletter.

Parishioners had been encouraged to read the full responses via a link contained within the Parish website. There should also have been a link in the abridged summary document but this does not appear to have been inserted. The omission would be rectified as soon as possible but in the meantime the Parish Office would make a full paper copy to be available to parishioners upon request.

The Parish Office would be asked to go through responses received from parishioners in order to collate a list of people who had indicated a willingness to volunteer (and any preferences indicated). That list would then be passed to the Volunteer Co-ordinator (Noel) for communication to lead personnel within each church.

8. Volunteer Update

Church Music

Assuming a continued gradual relaxation of Covid restrictions within parish churches there will in the foreseeable future be the possibility of a return to the congregational singing of hymns and the like. This is likely to pose a problem for those churches e.g. OLV Cinderford where the regular organist is no longer available. Even in those churches that enjoyed such a facility it was perhaps unreasonable to expect one individual to be available on a continual basis. There was accordingly a pressing need to address the issue.

A range of views were expressed. There was support for continuing with the current system where pre-recorded Hymns were played at various points during Mass. A volunteer was required to co-ordinate and control the playback but this was not a complicated task. There was also support for acquiring the companion compact discs to the Hymnals in use in several parish churches. These discs contained the background music for the Hymns themselves and would enable congregations to engage in communal singing. A volunteer would be necessary to co-ordinate the

operation but again this was not complicated. There was also support for the use of the traditional organist/pianist within each church but this was dependent upon a sufficient number of volunteers being available.

The Council resolved to defer further discussion to its next meeting.

9. Social Update

Joint Newsletter

The question was posed as to whether the production of a Newsletter jointly with Newent parish was to continue. Whilst Newent PC had previously agreed to this the initiative appeared to have stalled due to technical problems.

The Council resolved that contact should be made with the Chair of the Newent PC to establish whether it was in a position to continue to pursue the initiative.

10. Safeguarding Update

The Safeguarding Representative has reiterated her plea that all Council members consider signing up to the Diocesan online training function in order to receive some training. The point was made however that upon going online would be participants were faced with a large number of potential courses, many of which were directed to those working with children. It was thus unclear what if any courses were suitable for those volunteers performing more administrative (as opposed to ministerial) functions.

The Council resolved to ask the Safeguarding Representative to consider whether she was able to identify courses that she thought suitable for those individuals fulfilling administrative roles.

11. Any Other Business

Parish Newsletters

Prior to the Covid pandemic it had been the practice to hand out paper copies of the Parish Newsletter to parishioners attending Mass. For obvious reasons this practice had ceased and subsequently the Parish Newsletter had been amended to a format in which it could be distributed electronically. With the Covid situation gradually easing the question arose as to whether there was a case for re-introducing paper copies bearing in mind that some older parishioners might not have access to the equipment necessary to receive the electronic copy.

A short debate ensued. It was generally accepted that for the majority of parishioners the receipt of the Parish Newsletter in electronic format was not a problem so that there was no need to revert to a large scale paper distribution process. Accepting that there might be some parishioners unable to receive copy electronically it was desirable that a

small number of paper copies should be made available in each Church to cater for the need.

The Council resolved that a small stock of Parish Newsletters should be made available at each Church on an ongoing basis. The issue as to how these might be produced and distributed to individual churches was not easily resolved. Initially efforts would be made to produce copies at the individual parish level but it was accepted that this methodology might require revision in the light of experience.

There being no other business the meeting concluded at 1810 hours.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

1700 hours on Monday 17th January 2022 at Coleford Church Hall High Nash Coleford.