

Parish Gathering – Sunday 6th February 2022

Chaired by Nigel Anstead – Also present Fr Pius Duke - Notes by Barbara Kay - 32 parishioners present

Fr Pius opened in prayer.

Lifting of Restrictions in church

Jon Foster had drawn up some proposals, based on Diocesan guidelines, and these had been published in the church newsletter this week. These were agreed by the majority of those present, although Rachel Kirkham and Hilary Wrack urged more caution at present. Nigel pointed out that those who wish to remain cautious had the option to attend the socially distanced 6 pm Mass, where it was agreed that Jon Foster would arrange to put up and take down the ribbons at this Mass. The ribbons will not be used at any other Mass from now on, unless requested. There are laminated cards available for all Masses that are not socially distanced which can be placed around a person to give them more social distance should they wish.

Nigel and Jon will remove the chairs from the back of church and spread the benches further apart.

It was confirmed that we are asking parishioners to continue to wear face coverings at all Masses.

Liz Duggan enquired about the duration of these measures; it was felt that it was not possible to say at this stage how long they would need to continue. (The parish risk assessment states to be reviewed within 3 months).

Parking

Valerie expressed concern that the Latin Mass congregation were still using the car park at 10 am when the 10.30 English Massgoers were starting to arrive. She thought the agreement had been that they would have left by 10 am. Nigel explained this was the arrangement during lockdown when there was no coffee in the hall after Mass. Barbara explained that the Mass had been longer than usual this morning as it had been sung, and Katherine Smith pointed out that some of the cars were those of parents picking up First Holy Communion children. Various solutions were discussed: starting the Latin Mass 15 minutes earlier when it is sung, Latin Massgoers wishing to stay for coffee parking in the Bunyan Centre or in the layby opposite the church. In view of the many young families involved, this was not felt to be practical.

Social Committee

- a) Golden Friendship Club numbers are increasing as people gradually venture out after lockdown.
- b) Afternoon Vintage Tea – about 30 attended last week, again reflecting the need to venture out.
- c) St Patrick's Day – it was felt it was still too soon to have the usual St Patrick's Dance as attendance might be poor.
- d) There will be a St Patrick's Day Lunch on 11th March run by the Golden Friendship Club and open to all.
- e) It was decided to concentrate efforts on a Platinum Jubilee celebration on the Bank Holiday weekend in June, which could be held out of doors.

First Holy Communion – Barbara reported all going well with the two parallel classes who are working towards their First Confession on 5th/12th March and having a look round the confessional on 12th/26th February.

Confirmation

Katherine reported that 10 candidates had started preparing on Tuesday evenings this academic year for Confirmation in July. In addition, there were some older candidates whose Confirmation had been postponed from last year due to the pandemic. Sessions for them were being held on some Saturday mornings and they are going on a retreat organised by NYMO at Milton Keynes on the weekend of 14th May.

Pope Francis – Synodal Church – Sr Dympna reported that small groups are meeting at various times in the week. Sheets are available at the back of church for individuals and families to express their thoughts. There will be a Zoom meeting shortly for those collating the findings.

Second Collections and CAFOD

The second collection for the CAFOD Afghanistan appeal had taken place this weekend. It is the only second collection in February. There will also be the usual CAFOD Family Fast Day appeal in Lent, Family Fast Day being Friday 11th March and it was agreed to hold a Soup Lunch on the 4th Friday in Lent (25th March) at 1 pm. Rachel stated that she would be standing down from her role as CAFOD Rep after six or seven years, but remained willing to make appeals. She was thanked for her services.

Altar Servers/Curtain Behind Altar

No report.

Suzy's Vegetables

No report.

Collection

The new collection bags on poles, which have now been in use for several weeks, were discussed. Rosemarie reported that they take a long time to 'unload' and bring up at the offertory. It had been noticed that a lot of loose change, mainly from children, was going in.

Christine Allen will report next month if collections have increased since the use of the bags.

SVP

Ursula told us of a collection of donated second hand toys in good condition which were available today. They were free to take, but a donation to SVP funds would be appreciated.

Finance

Chris Brookes reported that the financial position was currently "OK" but that it had been necessary to dip into reserves. The Diocese will shortly be having a 'push' to encourage us to increase our regular giving by 20% and an announcement to this effect will be read out at all the Masses. Although people face increased energy charges this year, it was pointed out that church expenses have increased and will continue to do so.

Minibus

Nigel reported that two or three bookings had been made and that the minibus was available to all groups at a reasonable cost.

Processional Candles

Valerie asked if the electric procession candles would be used again, as she felt that naked flames were a health and safety hazard. This will be referred to Fr Nicholas on his return.

Lent Course

Rosemarie drew attention to the Ecumenical Lent Course which is being held every Tuesday evening during Lent at London Road Methodist Church. The discussions will be based around the film "Chocolat".

Tables in Patrick Donegan Room

Katherine pointed out that one of the heavy wooden tables in the Patrick Donegan Room had a broken leg which could not be repaired and was dangerous. Nigel suggesting disposing of this table and offering the other intact one to a good home via the Parish newsletter. He and Jon will deal with this during the coming week and bring over two lightweight 6' tables from the hall to replace the wooden ones.

Bookshelves

Katherine reported that a large collection of religious books had been donated to the Legion of Mary. She is arranging for shelves to be put up in the Patrick Donegan Room to house them and form a parish library.

Fr Pius

It was thought that Fr Nicholas would be returning to the UK this week. Fr Pius was thanked for covering for him over the past few weeks.

Our Lady's Statue

Fr Pius asked if it was possible that the white statue of Our Lady could be raised further off the ground as it was getting muddy. It was thought this would not be possible as it is cemented in.

Memorial Rose Garden

The roses were thought to be a lovely memorial to a deceased relation or friend and this will be promoted later in the year, as there is still room for further planting.

Microphone and Amplifier

Myriam had kindly put together a hamper of chocolate to raise funds for a new amplification system in the hall. Nigel suggested having an Easter raffle along the lines of the Christmas draw with other prizes being added.

Fr Pius closed in prayer.

Date of next meeting

6th March 2022.