

Parish Gathering – Sunday 5th February 2023
Chaired by Nigel Anstead, notes by Barbara Kay
30 people present

1. Fr Nicholas opened in prayer.

2. Social Committee Report

39 people had attended the Vintage Tea on 27th January. The next one will be on 24th February.

10 - 12 people had come to the Drop-In Centre on 2nd February, some of them referred by their doctor. Rachel will be away for next month's Drop-In and Rosemarie will stand in for her.

It had been decided to hold the celebration to mark the Coronation of King Charles III on Sunday 7th May. This would take the form of a bring and share lunch. A marquee is needed and Sue asked anyone who had access to one to let her know. Helpers are also needed on the day. There will be a children's entertainer, a craft session for children in the Patrick Donegan Room led by Teresa Williams, music and a raffle on the day.

Barbara asked if the car parking would be impacted by this event. This is unlikely to be a problem, as most of the events will be indoors and additional parking is available at the Bunyan Centre.

Myriam will still hold her Easter raffle with tickets sold in advance, the proceeds to fund the Coronation celebration.

3. Quiz Night report

Rachel thanked the many people who had helped in any way with this event, particularly Sue, Nigel, Celia, Val and the Golden Friendship Club who folded raffle tickets. Fewer people had come than before the pandemic, but nonetheless a profit of £810 had been made which will support the parish. Rachel expressed a wish to use this sum towards the installation of improved lighting in the grounds of the church, as she had had a recent 'near miss' with a car in the darkness. Chris will speak to Michael about this, but advised that this project will take some time to complete.

Rachel felt the evening had been very successful and announced that a similar event will take place on 27th January 2024. Sue commented that younger volunteers are needed to help on these occasions, particularly with the clearing up at the end. Sue noted that the main 5 helpers/organisers ranged from 69 to 80.

4. First Holy Communion Report

There was no report, but Trish asked if Catriona as organist could be told in advance what the music was for the 2nd Sunday in the month, when the children lead the Mass, so that she could practise it. Liz said that this was organised by Hilary separately from the First Holy Communion class.

5. Confirmation Report

No report.

6. Cadets of Our Lady Report

No report.

7. Do Something Special for Lent

Sr Dympha drew attention to the suggestions box for activities during Lent and asked for ideas to be put in there. There will be Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings and a Rosary before the 7 pm Mass on Tuesday evenings. There will also be a leaflet which includes ecological ideas. Chris reported that there were CAFÉ DVDs available to link in with this.

The possibility of holding a Frugal Lunch will be discussed and Rosemarie also advertised the Churches Together study course based on C S Lewis's 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'. Details of all these events will be published in the newsletter.

8. CAFOD Family Fast Day

See below.

9. Church Calendar for the month ahead

CAFOD Family Fast Day this year is on 3rd March with donation envelopes available the week before – Hilary to organise as Rachel will be away.

The other upcoming mandatory collection is on Good Friday, 7th April, and is for Holy Places of Palestine.

10. Altar Servers and Altar Curtain

Trisha reported that all was running smoothly with the servers' vestments.

The purple curtain for Lent will be hung for the 7 pm Mass on Tuesday 21st February.

11. Safeguarding

There was no report, but Fr Nicholas on Dale's behalf stressed the importance of ensuring that all relevant volunteers are DBS checked.

12. Church flowers and extra storage space

Work on converting part of the confessional is now complete. Sometimes access is needed to switches in the cupboard and there is currently a trolley which will need to be moved to allow this. Teresa will be asked to speak to Katherine about this.

13. Church cleaning

Nigel reported that the aim is to get a rota of people together to do a monthly clean. With the church so often in use, a suitable time would need to be identified. Liz suggested checking the church diary where all events are entered.

14. Church Grounds and Gardening

No report as it is too cold to work. Trish asked if she still needed to prune the roses as Jomex has done a lot of pruning. Nigel will put her in touch with Jomex to discuss this going forward.
It was noted that bonfires had been lit near the hall and were still smouldering. Request made not to light fires in future.

15. Church grounds safety and security

The car park changes are now complete. Permanent posts have been installed along the hedge side of the road opposite the presbytery. The flagstones leading from the car park are waiting to be laid when the weather improves, but meantime a carpet has been put down. Handrails have been fitted by the parish room door and the outside door to the right of the altar. Nigel asked if the rail on the parish room door had been fitted on the correct side and he was assured that it had been. A handrail will be fitted by the ramp at the front of the church shortly. The rails outside the Patrick Donegan room will be made "childproof". Rachel reported that one panel of chicken wire on the periphery fence is missing.

It was reported that once again the side door leading to the toilet had been found open. Nigel has produced a Lock Up Checklist to be posted in the sacristy and the last users on a Sunday will be asked to check that the church is left secure.

16. Parish Finances

Chris reported that he, Fr Nicholas and Christine had completed the church's budget for the financial year commencing April 2023 and that it was being submitted to the Diocese on Monday 6th February. The forecast for the year end was that there would be an overspend of about £3000, but that this would be funded from reserves. It was predicted that the end of the financial year on 31st March 2024 would see a surplus of £3000. Chris commented on the generosity of both the English Mass and Latin Mass congregations. In addition, the Kerala community contribute £70 per week for the use of the church on two Saturdays per month, which they will increase as they are able. The hall rentals were also making a profit. On the expenditure side, two items in particular were flagged up: the increased cost of gas and electricity, and the increased Diocesan levy, which has gone up from 20% to 37% this year. The finances of different dioceses had been compared and Northampton had been found to be among the most efficient.

Parishes had been asked to consider the Parish Strategic Plan. This is priest-led and Fr Nicholas felt our priority was to reach out to lapsed Catholics. A sheet was circulated to parishioners with thoughts for reflection on the current parish situation and how it could be improved. This will be discussed at the parish meeting in March.

17. SVP report

Ursula reported that the SVP was carrying on as usual, responding to requests for help. Mention was made of the members' sadness at the recent death of Angela McMullan, who had been a regular member over many years.

18. Come and See

Two adults will be confirmed at the Easter Vigil and the husband of one has been sitting in on the sessions and learning more about the Faith.

19. Liturgy Committee.

Sr Dymrna followed up on the suggestion made at the last meeting that a Liturgy Committee was needed to plan ahead for various church events in the course of the year. This will be led by Fr Nicholas, on whose behalf Chris will draft and send out letters to key people involved with readers, music, serving, flower arranging etc, inviting them to join the committee. Easter Masses were discussed and Fr Nicholas proposes that these be at 5 pm, 7 pm and 10 pm on Holy Saturday, and at 11 am as usual on Easter Sunday.

20. Future monthly meetings

The suggestion of publishing the agenda at least a week in advance was revisited and this will be done on the back of the newsletter the weekend before the next parish meeting.

21. Any Other Business

There is a large cheese plant in the choir loft taking up space. Trisha asked if this could be moved.
Nigel reported that he will be umpiring cricket on Sunday mornings in the summer all over the county and that he would be unable to attend the 11 am Mass on those days. He was wondering if anyone else could read the notices or carry out any other of his duties in his absence. Or, is this not really necessary?

22. Date of next meeting

Sunday 5th March 2023 after the 11 am Mass.

Fr Nicholas ended the meeting with a prayer.