

**Parish Gathering – Sunday 5th November 2023**  
**Present: Fr Richard Aladics (Parish Priest), Nigel Anstead (Chair), Barbara Kay (Minutes)**  
**40 parishioners present**

1. Fr Richard opened in prayer.
2. **Apologies for absence**  
None received.
3. **Welcome and opening remarks**  
Fr Richard welcomed all present to the meeting. A presentation was made to Nigel on the occasion of his 70th birthday this week.
4. **Social Committee report**  
**Community Hub** Sue reported that 47 people had come on Thursday 5th October and 18 organisations were present including police and fire service. Our MP had attended and seemed really engaged. Rachel, Rosemarie and Valerie were thanked for their assistance. The next Hub will take place on Thursday 7th December.  
**Shoebox appeal** Sue reported on the excellent response nationally last year. The deadline for this year is 20th November.  
**Christmas Fayre** Saturday 25th November from 1pm to 3pm. Posters are available. The Grand Christmas Draw has been launched. This along with the bottle tombola are the major fundraisers. There is a box at the back of church for donations of bottles and other raffle prizes.
5. **Church calendar for the month ahead**  
**Sick and Retired Priests** 12th November on which there will be a second collection.  
**Giving Tree** Teresa Lovell outlined this scheme which supports needy families at St Joseph's and St Gregory's Schools. Labels will be available on the tree from the 1st Sunday in Advent.
6. **Christmas Mass times**  
This year Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday and Christmas Day on a Monday. There will be 8.30 Latin Mass and 11.00 English Mass as usual on the Sunday. As a general point, Fr Richard emphasized that as he is the sole priest, we need to be realistic about the number of Masses celebrated over Christmas. He explained that there are three communities to accommodate later on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day: English Mass, Latin Mass and Kerala Community. Liz said that the Kerala Community had requested 5 pm – 7 pm on Christmas Eve but this had been declined due to there being the Children's Mass at that time, for which a Nativity play is planned. Chris Brookes stated that he thought the Latin Mass should have the Midnight Mass slot as it was important to them. However, the consensus of the meeting by a show of hands was that the Midnight Mass should alternate between Latin and English. A ballot has been organised for people to indicate if they would attend a Midnight Mass (English or Latin). After this, the timing of Christmas Masses will be discussed with Fr Armand de Malleray of the FSSP chaplaincy and the Keralan priest and decisions made and notified to the parish. Rosemarie drew attention to the leaflets from the Bedford Pastoral Area and the Churches in South Bedford, both of which advertise Masses and other services over Christmas in the various churches.
7. **Altar servers and linens**  
Trisha reported that she was monitoring the servers' vestments and she was getting ready for Christmas. The purple backdrop will be put up for Advent at 5pm on Saturday 2nd December.
8. **Safeguarding**  
No report.
9. **Church flowers**  
Teresa Lovell asked Fr Aladics if there could be a collection for Christmas flowers. This was agreed. Teresa outlined the expenditure on flowers over the past year. Expenditure had been offset by donations from individuals and the parish, resulting in a current balance of £45.19. Liz wondered whether it was possible to restart the scheme where people donated £20 to the flower fund to mark a special occasion. Teresa responded that sometimes people were unrealistic about what could be provided with this donation, as costs of flowers had risen steeply of late. An alternative would be for people to provide the flowers and Teresa would be happy to arrange them. She also told the meeting that the arch of flowers used by the Kerala community for their bishop's visit belongs to the parish and can be hired.
10. **Church cleaning**  
Nigel reported that the Latin Mass team and the Kerala community team are cleaning once a month each. Of the 2 English Mass cleaning teams, team 1 was highly successful but he had difficulty in organising team 2. It was therefore proposed to reduce the teams to three from now on. Latin, Eng Mass 1 and Kerala. Nigel will produce a new rota reflecting this.
11. **Church grounds and gardening**  
Martin will be standing down from grounds maintenance on his move away from the area shortly. Barbara was asked to pass on the thanks of the parish for his work over the years.  
Trisha reported that she has pruned the roses and Teresa and Geoff Lovell are planting tulip bulbs.

## **12. Church grounds works and safety**

The work on the lighting is ongoing and will extend to the car park in due course. There is no light near the parish room door and this needs to be addressed urgently. There is still a dark area at the exit of the car park on the path leading to the church. Nigel reported that the canopy over the parish room door had blown down and a panel needed replacing. Michael Mangan agreed to make a replacement canopy.

Nigel is now looking after the Papal flag and reported that due to strong winds, it had become detached at one corner. As previously reported, this might be a fire hazard if it comes into contact with the lights, and for this reason Nigel had removed it for the time being. Chris and Michael agreed to address this and took the flag.

Rita reported that notices in the hall pertaining to safety were being removed. Sue reported the same for notices around the church. Anyone with issues relating to notices display is asked to speak to Rita as Hall Manager or Sue for church related notices.

## **13. Parish finances**

Chris reported that the parish finances, although tight due to an increased Diocesan levy and utility costs, had been declared sound by the auditors in July. A budget has been drawn up for next year and we are on track for this. Chris was thanked for his work in this area.

Lena asked if a contactless system could be considered to encourage donations to the parish, especially for one-off donations at occasions such as funerals. Fr Richard is agreeable to this, but it would need to be a medium-term plan with consideration being given to location, security and installation of broadband. A device provided by 'Square' might be suitable. Fr Richard described other means of donation he had used before such as a link on the parish website, which would need to be discussed with the Diocesan Finance Committee.

## **14. Liturgy Committee report**

Rosemarie asked if there was going to be the usual Annual Bereavement Mass this year. Fr Richard will liaise with Sr Dympna about this. Rosemarie also asked if the patronal Feast of Christ the King was going to be marked in any way. Fr Richard will discuss this with Sr Dympna. Some form of social might be arranged after the 11 am Mass. In previous years there has also been a service of Ecumenical Evening Prayer on that day.

Fr Richard reported that he is planning to give a series of three talks during Advent on Thursday evenings.

## **15. The Parish Summit 2024**

Fr Richard outlined the nature of this; it is to be held in June in Harrogate over 3 days and 2 nights and will focus on a 'Missionary Approach' in our churches. It is a national event which our Bishop will be attending and he is encouraging representation from our Diocese. More details can be found on the Northampton Diocese website. Hilary suggested it would be good if younger delegates attended.

## **16. Any Other Business**

### **a) Cadets of Mary**

Suzy reported that the Cadets had had a celebration in the Marian month of Mary, sponsored largely by ACCM. They had already started to plan a similar event for October 2024.

### **b) Change of Mass time**

Fr Richard reported that the Bishop was happy for the Mass to remain at 11 am or revert to 10.30 am. The timing will need to be discussed at Deanery level in conjunction with the other priests in Bedford. There is a Deanery meeting in two weeks' time. By a show of hands, the majority of the meeting favored reverting to 10.30. However, Rita felt that 11.00 gave more time for the Latin Mass to clear the car park after coffee and since the cessation of the 12.30 Latin Mass, there is no pressure on parking after the 11.00 parish Mass. A decision will be made either way by the beginning of Advent.

### **c) Distribution of Holy Communion**

Teresa reported that she was upset to have missed someone when distributing Holy Communion last night. It was suggested that the family of any person unable to reach the front mentions this to the welcomers, who in turn would convey the message to the EMHC or Fr Richard. A notice will be put in the bulletin to this effect.

### **d) SVP/RCIA**

Ursula reported that the SVP continues to meet fortnightly on Zoom. They are carrying on with the practical and financial support to the needy, by phone calls and home visits including taking Holy Communion. The 5 members carry out about 200 hours of work per month. Sister Dympna visits Southways and The Wixams. A Mass is celebrated at the latter from time to time.

St Thomas More School and possibly a local firm will provide Christmas hampers for needy families.

There are three candidates for RCIA, who will be received into the church/confirmed at the Easter Vigil next year.

Fr Richard had four other matters to mention:

- a) The possibility of English Mass at 10.45 am as a compromise between 10.30 am and 11.00 am.
- b) The possibility of keeping the church open for prayer for longer hours during the day.
- c) Catering for young children at Mass.
- d) As the 11.00 Mass is very full, the possibility of having a further Mass on a Sunday.

## **17. Date of next meeting (no meeting planned at present)**

This item was missed and not discussed. However, Fr Richard asks if a Sunday is the best day for this forum?