

THE SACRED HEART & ST MARGARET MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH, DEREHAM

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish held on Wednesday, 5th October 2022

28 parishioners were present.

The meeting commenced at 4.30 p.m. with an opening prayer by Rachel Pugh.
Rex Baker (Chairperson of the Parish Finance Committee) in the Chair.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the last Parish Meeting held on 4th May 2022 were received.

2. Parish Priest's Reflections/Reports

- a) **Monstrance** – Fr. Jay expressed the parish's grateful thanks and appreciation for the donations which had enabled the purchase of the new Monstrance. It was in weekly use at the Thursday Adoration and that Service was being very well supported.
- b) **Signage** – The new parish sign was due to be installed the following week.
- c) **Website** – Fr. Jay reported that work on upgrading the parish website was being undertaken by Andrew Bell and Richard May. It was hoped to include an online donations facility ('DONA') like that used in other parishes, which it was felt would be a useful tool, especially for visitors. A demonstration of the new look website would be given later in the meeting. *(See paragraph # below.)*
- d) **Parish Magazine** – The new parish magazine had now been published. It was titled 'The Shack' as a reference to the humble origins of the first church building, which was a small, simple wooden building built in 1925. The magazine would be published four times a year (Autumn, Winter, Spring & Summer) and parishioners were invited to submit articles for inclusion by email to Fr. Jay in the first instance. The deadline for the next edition was 7th November.
- e) **Finance Committee** – Two or three new members were sought to join the parish Finance Committee to replace some members who wished to retire, having served on the Committee for many years. Interested persons with relevant experience were invited to contact Fr. Jay.

3. Parish Life

A. Financial Matters

- (i) **Parish Accounts** – The Parish Treasurer (Stephen Smith) presented the updated budget statement for the six months to 30th June 2022. Since the parish meeting in May, although it was expected that there would still be a budget deficit at the end of the year, the Diocese had in fact covered the costs of Fr. Brendan following his being taken ill, thereby relieving the parish of additional costs.

It was pleasing to note that monthly parish income through Offertory giving by Standing Order had increased, with August's Standing Order receipts amounting to £1556, the highest yet. Notwithstanding this, there was still a need for more donations to be Gift Aided to boost income further. However, it was explained that Gift Aid could only be applied to monetary donations (such as those made for the Monstrance and the new parish signage). It was not possible to apply Gift Aid to anything other than a financial gift. (To qualify for Gift Aid, donors needed to be UK tax payers.)

Problems with the parish's bank regarding updating the parish's account signatories had proved to be an ongoing issue. Despite the submission of various sets of forms, the Treasurer was still trying to resolve the issue with the bank.

The Treasurer explained that, from the budget statement, it could be seen that after the Alive in Faith monies were taken out, the parish 'reserve' account stood at just approximately £20,000, which was sufficient only for another couple of years at current levels of expenditure & income. The need to keep a close eye on the finances, therefore, was ever more important.

- (ii) **Alive in Faith (AIF) Projects** – The Chairman of the parish's Fabric Committee (Tony Whitehouse) reported that of the four original projects, two had now been completed: the upgrade to the church kitchen and toilet facilities.

Of the AIF funding, the return to the parish amounted to some £50,000, of which £15,000 had been spent to date.

Outstanding projects remaining to be completed were the improvement to the car park entrance and the replacement of the three windows at the back of the church (i.e., in the entrance lobby, the kitchen and the sacristy). The status of each of these outstanding projects was outlined as follows:

So far as the problems with the car park entrance were concerned, the cause had now been established as rainwater flowing into the car park from the adjoining public footpath, instead of draining into the public highway sewer. Although this was really a matter to be resolved with the Highway Authority, it was felt that could take years. A more practical solution was to engage a contractor to install heavy-duty linear drainage to a soakaway in the car park to take the run-off from the roadway and then to upgrade the entrance to the car park. The cost for such work was estimated to be approximately £5,000. Attempts were being made to find a suitable contractor for the work but there were difficulties as many were not interested in such a small contract.

Regarding the replacement of the church windows, it was explained that while the original project made general reference to the replacement of all the church windows, the focus of the project currently was on the three rear windows of the church lobby, kitchen and sacristy. Having considered several options over recent years, it was now felt that the simplest and best option was to replace the three windows with matching hardwood frames, with the larger lobby and sacristy windows having a central bar with the lower part having opaque glazing, and the replacement kitchen window being aligned with the counter-top to remove the existing unhygienic gap between them. Four specialist firms had been identified but the works also entailed Building Regulations approval. Currently, the windows did not meet statutory requirements.

- (iii) **General Maintenance** – Mr. Whitehouse explained that the main responsibility of the Fabric Committee was to follow up on the Quinquennial Report made by the Diocese's appointed Surveyors. The report provided a schedule of required maintenance works over a five-year term, covering essential works to be carried out in year 1 and progressing through a descending order of priorities through to year five. The Fabric Committee accordingly dealt with such requirements on a year-by-year basis, reporting to and consulting with the parish Finance Committee.

In addition to the Alive in Faith projects outlined above, the Fabric Committee had this year dealt with the upgrading of all the church electrics, the repointing of brickwork, roof coping etc.

In concluding his report, Mr. Whitehouse said that following the retirement and departure of some members, the Fabric Committee needed new members. Volunteers with some relevant skills to offer were therefore sought to join the Committee. Anyone interested was asked to contact him or Fr. Jay.

B. Spiritual Life Matters

- (i) **Music** – Judy Reid reported on current music liturgy arrangements in the parish. As agreed at the last parish meeting in May, there was no singing at the Sunday 9.00 a.m. Mass. Judy explained that she was now the organist at the 6.00 p.m. Saturday Mass and Kathleen Edmunds played at the Sunday 11.00 a.m. Mass. The Lourdes Gloria and the Plainsong Sanctus XVI had been introduced and both organists were responsible for the selection of hymns. It was also proposed to reintroduce the Murray Mass on an occasional basis to provide some musical variety in the liturgy, including the Kyrie XVI to accompany the Sanctus.

A new initiative was the visit of the Philippino Choir at the 11.00 a.m. Mass every second Sunday of the month.

There was a proposal from the floor that there should be time allowed for reflection during Communion, rather than going straight into a hymn. After some discussion and being put to a vote, it was agreed that the Communion hymn would be delayed until after Communion had been given.

- (ii) **Lectors / Eucharistic Ministers** – New readers were always to be welcomed. It was noted that Judy Reid was retiring as a Lector to concentrate on the music liturgy.
- (iii) **Flowers Rota** – More volunteers would be welcomed.
- (iv) **Church cleaning** – Another volunteer was needed. The rota operated on a seven-week basis.
- (v) **Welcomers** – A volunteer to welcome people at the Sunday 9.00 a.m. was sought.

C. Spiritual Life Matters

- (i) **St. Vincent de Paul Society** – Terri Sanderson reported on the continuing work of the SVP Conference in the parish. Members continued to provide lifts for people for medical, shopping trips etc. and to visit the sick and housebound. The visiting list was presently being updated. In addition, the Society offered practical help to those in need wherever possible. However, it was made clear that the Society did not give cash aid. The members met together once a month and provided a coffee morning after Mass on every first Wednesday of the month, to which all were welcomed. Terri expressed their very grateful thanks for all the prayer and other support offered to them by the parish.

- (ii) **Communion & Confirmation** – There were two candidates only for first Holy Communion classes this year and there were ten candidates for Confirmation. Robbie Meehan and Sr. Catherine were leading the Confirmation course and would be supported by members of the Diocesan Ignite Team on one or two sessions.
- (iii) **Monthly Afternoon Tea** – This open social event took place on every second Monday of the month between 2.00pm and 4.00pm, with some dozen or so people regularly attending. It was a very pleasant afternoon offering friendship and chat over a cup of tea or coffee. For anyone so minded, there was also the opportunity to play the odd card game, or dominoes or scrabble. For the physically active person, there was also the option for a game of table tennis!
- (iv) **Other Social Activities** – Suggestions from the floor were for a Whist Drive, quiz night or Auction, the latter having been very successful in the past. A lead volunteer was needed to oversee such parish activities. Help was also needed with the planned Christmas party to be held on 11th December.
- (v) **Altar Servers/Youth Group** – Activities being provided for this group were Tuesday chess, Saturday tennis Sunday table tennis.

4. Other Matters

- **Boundary Wall** - A question was raised about the repairs needed to the damaged brick and flint boundary wall. It was explained that this was under investigation and a special meeting had been arranged to decide the next course of action.
- **Parish Website** – Andrew Bell demonstrated and explained progress to date on the upgrade to the parish website. The possible provision of an electronic and/or online donations facility ('DONA') was also being explored. It was noted that an electronic payments system in the church was likely to cost about £15 per month to administer, with a set up fee of around £300. Other parishes had found such systems to be of benefit but the level of usage and cost would be a determinant factor.
- **Parish Calendar** – Fr Jay reported that he was hoping to establish a parish calendar to synchronise with that of the diocese to cover significant liturgical events, such as the Walsingham Pilgrimage, to facilitate greater parish attendance at events.
- **Church Doors** – It was noted that a new lock had been installed on the church doors.

5. Conclusion

In concluding the meeting, Fr. Jay reported that he had that morning been formally appointed as Parish Priest by Bishop Alan. A date for his Installation had yet to be agreed. The meeting congratulated Fr. Jay on his appointment.

The meeting closed at 5.45 p.m.