

THE SACRED HEART & ST MARGARET MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH, DEREHAM

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish held on Wednesday, 12th April 2023

20 parishioners were present.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 p.m. with an opening prayer by Fr. Jay. Rex Baker (Chair of the Parish Finance Committee) in the Chair.

1. **Apologies**

Apologies due to ill health were received from Stephen Smith (Parish Treasurer) and Tony Whitehouse (Chairperson of Fabric Committee).

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the last Parish Meeting held on 5th October 2022 were received and in answer to a question, it was noted that the online donor system was operational, albeit little used to date.

3. **Election of Chairperson to Parish Pastoral Council**

Fr. Jay reported that six nominations had been received and all nominees were invited to become members of the new Parish Pastoral Council. The six nominees were: Rex Baker, Andrew Bell, Philip Borthwick, Ian Campbell, Donal Hannon and Kevin Pugh. Of the nominations received, the three with the most votes would now go forward to a final parish ballot for the election of the Chairperson. These nominees were Philip Borthwick, Donal Hannon and Kevin Pugh. The final ballot would conclude at the end of April, with the result announced in the first week of May. A notice to this effect would be included in the parish newsletter.

4. **Parish Priest's Reflections**

Fr. Jay expressed his gratitude to the parish for their support in the running of the parish, particularly in regard to parish finances over the last months and latterly with the change of Bishop. It was unclear at present what the new Bishop's focus would be for the Diocese in the future.

An important project for the parish this year would be the forthcoming Diocesan Stewardship Programme – Time, Talents and Treasures. This was a timely matter given the current economic circumstances affecting the parish's financial projections, which continued to be very constrained. The Stewardship Programme should greatly help in setting out the options open to the parish, not only in terms of finances but, perhaps more importantly, in terms of how people could share more widely in the life of the parish through the gifts of their time and talents that they could offer. The Programme was scheduled to begin on the weekend of 23rd-24th September.

The new Parish Pastoral Committee (PPC) would be instrumental in taking forward not only the Stewardship Programme but also to lead on and oversee the various projects (both Alive in Faith, as well as general property maintenance) previously undertaken by the Fabric Committee, whose functions would be absorbed by the new PPC.

However, it was also intended that the PPC's role should equally have a focus on the wider parish pastoral concerns and help to facilitate both the spiritual as well as the communal and social needs of the parish.

5. **Parish Life**

A. Financial Matters

- (i) **Parish Accounts** – The Treasurer’s report was circulated at the meeting and presented by the Chairman. It was noted that the parish accounts were running at a deficit, where expenditure was greater than income. (This did not affect Alive in Faith monies, which was ring-fenced and held in a separate account.) At the moment, the parish reserve account held by the Diocese, stood at some £20,000, which at the current rate of annual deficit (about £6,000 a year) would last only for about two years. This was despite an increase in the Offertory Collections, including those made by Standing Orders.

A point was raised from the floor that many organisations were faced with similar financial problems and it was asked whether the Diocese should be asked to reconsider the use of Alive in Faith funds. The point was noted.

- (ii) **Alive in Faith Projects** – There were two outstanding projects under the Alive in Faith programme to be completed. The first was the repair to the car park entrance. A viable solution had now been identified and agreed and quotations for the work were to be sought. The second project was the replacement of the windows to the rear of the church. Discussions on this matter were ongoing.

- (iii) **Other Maintenance Projects** – Two other projects currently ongoing were the repair of the boundary wall and church guttering. In both cases, solutions had been identified and were to be progressed.

B. Spiritual Life Matters

- (i) **Music** – Judy Reid advised that the Easter music for next year was being reviewed in the light of this years’ experience.

Following a point raised from the floor that the quiet period for reflection at Communion was ending too soon, it was agreed that the music would not recommence until the Priest had returned to the altar after the distribution of communion.

Fr. Jay stated that the idea of having a youth choir was to be considered in liaison with the Youth Group team and the Catechists.

- (ii) **Tabernacle** – Fr. Jay highlighted that he had decided to leave the Tabernacle uncovered at present. He felt that it allowed its beautiful design to be seen by all and act as a point of meditation. The meeting concurred with this view.

- (iii) **Flowers** – It was noted that there were only two regular members of the church flowers team and that more volunteers were needed.

- (iv) **Cleaners & Counters Rotas** – These were operating well at present.

C. Communal / Social Matters

- (i) **St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP)** – Terri Sanderson reported that the SVP’s members continued to offer service to those in need, through befriending, visiting the sick and housebound, shopping, cooking, providing lifts to hospital/doctors etc. A new member had been recruited but more volunteers were always welcome. The SVP also supported the Foodbank and had was

twinned with two international SVP branches. Deacon Martin was thanked for his spiritual support to the SVP and thanks were extended to the whole parish for their continued support.

- (ii) **Communion & Confirmation Groups** – There were three candidates for first Holy Communion this year, who would be receiving the Sacrament on 11th June. There was also a good number of candidates for Confirmation, including two from Downham Market Parish. The Bishop would be conducting the Confirmation Service on 26th June.
- (iii) **Social Group** – It was hoped the new PPC would take up the lead on social activities for the future.

This concluded the meeting and the Chair and Fr. Jay thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 5.00 p.m.