

ST EDMUND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 18/9/18

Intro and brief overview

- **Phil Cartin (Chair)** welcomed everyone and introduced the focus of the meeting as an opportunity to look back at what the Parish has done and what the future could look like for us
- Grateful for all the work done by so many volunteers who give their time and talent to St Edmund's. Too many to name specifically but would like to pay tribute to Michael Parker who is here tonight and Roy Brocklehurst who died recently - for all their work for the Parish, much of it unseen by many people. There is plenty of work to be done so please think about getting involved
- Asked people to let us go through the topics we want to cover and then ask their questions

1 Opening Prayer and Welcome

- **Fr Steve** led us in a prayer inviting us to view tonight's proceedings with open ears, eyes, hearts and minds

2 Our Spiritual Journey

- **Fr Steve** apologised for not having had a meeting last year. Hoped we could always have an annual meeting, maybe we should look at the meeting title too if people think it smacks too much of elections?
- Paid tribute to some of the people who had been on the Finance Committee in 2016 and thanked them for their service – Fr Mark (moved to St Mary's Croydon) , Margaret Brocklehurst (the previous Finance Chair - unwell tonight), and Trevor Binley (who died just over a year ago).
- Pleased to record we now have 2 Deacons in formation and training – Sandy Misquitta and Ray Williamson
- The Core Group, advisory to Canon Jack, had been dormant since 2016 as members had moved on to other things.. There might be a need for some sort of Group in future to support some ideas Fr Steve has had which he will share a little later on
- This is a very challenging time for us and the Catholic Church worldwide. Abuse now and in the past and not dealt with. Pope Francis' visit to Ireland and the World Congress of Families meeting there showed that there is still strong support and love of God. Both events were successful but you would never think so from the general media coverage. Best response is to be the best we can and to utilise our strengths, talents and riches of our faith together – to create a new story
- My priority – the people of this Parish, your faith, spirituality and welfare. Hope we can grow and develop together as a community
- Things we need to do better – pastoral care of the sick and housebound so they are included fully and don't fall through cracks in our processes and also ensuring our youth stay with us on their spiritual journeys because they hear the call of Jesus. We definitely need to be more outward looking and take actions that work for these two important groups of Parishioners
- Reading *Divine Renovation* by Father James Mallon – From maintenance to mission. Fr Mallon turned his Canadian Parish around from one of reducing numbers and a Parish which had forgotten who they were, to being vibrant, missionary and a place of real spiritual growth. Mistakes were made but there was a lot of learning. Real challenge for me/us. All reading it in Clergy Team
- Think we need to undergo a cultural transformation – see words of Saint JP II *Evangelii Gaudium*. And ask what is our purpose, why this programme, how can we make effective use of our Priests, laity, other resources, funds, etc? We have a Business Consultant working with Clergy Team to build our cohesiveness. Went to Holy Trinity Brompton to see Fr Mallon speak and to view elements

of the Alpha Course there. Holy Innocents Orpington beginning Alpha Course shortly and St Joseph's Bromley are thinking about it for next year. So am I. Small Team helping us to prepare. Details and date to come

- **Tim Dunsford** spoke further about Alpha – we are learning from other Alpha Courses we've viewed. It's about opening doors for others to enter and have a relationship with God. Feel this could be a very good thing for us as a Parish. Will need lots of people to run it and make it work – cooks, advertisers, administrators, preparers of content, facilitators, etc. More information to come. Perhaps set up an email address for people to pose questions?
- **Ruth McConkey** spoke about the recent national Adoremus Congress in Liverpool. General media coverage did not give an accurate reflection of the joy and excitement felt by the thousands of people participating in workshops, talks and services focused on the centrality of the Eucharist in our faith. Material produced including action plans is being collated and will be shared with all Dioceses as soon as possible.

3 Brief Report by Chair of Finance Committee

- **Frank Beechinor** paid tribute to three previous members of the Committee he could see present tonight – Mike Parker, Don Dunning and Colin Dowling and thanked them for their service.
- He spoke about Parish finances in broad terms. Echoing the spiritual direction of travel we may be taking it is important we move with the times in the financial area. We have to be viable as a Parish, raising all the income we need. No donations from Diocese. In fact we are a net giver to Diocese
- So lots of work done to bring our technology, Presbytery building infrastructure, communications up to a reasonable standard. First phase really. Specifics - Church Suite, Webcam, sound system reviewed, wider number of ways to donate e.g. electronic giving, standing orders, pledges, gift aid etc. Many thanks for increasing donations. Aim to make it more efficient for the Parish Office too

4 Report of the Treasurer

- **Simon Hayday** said our accounts are still largely presented in accordance with how the Diocese presents theirs – cash accounting, so some items like Staff and Clergy costs took place in previous years but did not reach St Edmund's until the following year. Planning to move to different accounting, planning and budgeting system and software so he and other Finance Committee members can work on these virtually through cloud based system i.e. wherever they are doing day jobs. Also, will always be up to date
- Thank you for engaging on Church Suite - response massively positive. We can now do better forecasting
- Some fall in receipts i.e. no Parish Fair and the Diocese had given us an unexpected bill to address shortfalls in the Clergy Support Fund
- Much more expenditure needed on whole Parish estate assets which Nick will talk about

5 Report on Church Buildings

- **Nick Wigner** (who is on the Finance Committee) also sits on Building Sub-Committee reporting to Finance Committee which has been looking at future needs. (There is also a Fundraising and Social Committee)
- Following a tender process, we obtained technical advice from building consultant, Synergy Ltd, who have ecclesiastical expertise. It has produced a Quinquennial (undertaken every 5 years) survey report reviewing the entire schedule of maintenance and repairs needed (both responsive

and preventative and urgent versus important), and future needs – so we can comply with raft of legal, safety, security etc obligations. Decisions need to be taken shortly on prioritisation of works.

- We are also working with a local firm of ecclesiastical architects Thomas Ford to understand the space we have in the Church, Hall, Presbytery and Number 11 and how we might be able to use it better. So in line with envisaged spiritual and pastoral changes, we are thinking about re-purposing our space so could mean more flexible work layouts in Presbytery and Hall, more and varied layout hall meeting rooms, multi-level Hall, accessibility compliant rooms and entrances, more places for catering/hospitality, modern technical/communications support etc. The Committee has been visiting other Parishes to learn what worked well for them and what didn't.

6 Q&A open forum

The following questions were tabled:

- A parishioner asked about whether **hymns and music** could better support contemplation and prayer in Mass. The Clergy Team said there were different approaches to music throughout the week and also on Sundays, dependent on the feast day and the celebrant and other factors. Fr Ashley said he chose settings based on the Saints days and/or the readings of the day. The Sunday 09.30 Mass Choir chose music to fit with the liturgy and also congregational hymns to reflect the fact that it is a family mass. Every effort is made to support all attendees at Mass and to show them to seats and spare space.
- He considered too that sometimes there was a lot of **noise** emanating from families e.g. in the porch and elsewhere which did not aid concentration particularly with inconsistencies in the sound system. Others agreed that sound often travelled which not everyone is aware of. The Team said some diplomacy and tact is needed by us all to gently remind others who might be talking that our Church is a place of prayer. Regular sound system checks are carried out at different times.
- He asked if there could be more **notice about 2nd collections** please to ensure people brought sufficient funds to Church? The Team said they recognised the need and had endeavoured to put advance notice in the Newsletter and also announce them from the Pulpit
- Another parishioner suggested that the **loss of the Core Group be reconsidered**. Fr Steve said we needed to see what kind of Group we needed going forward. There would be plenty of opportunity for people to give views and offer help in different ways.
- One parishioner commented on the very positive benefits from the Webcam for housebound family members and friends. However, he was saddened at the **loss of the old Library**. Could we at least set it up as a reading room with the current Catholic papers and magazines in? The Team said they recognise the need, and are planning for that in the new space.
- Another parishioner asked **what St Edmund's would look like in 2/3 years** if we do the proposed re-purposing of buildings and space and take Alpha? The Team said they envisaged - subject to funding - a bigger more multifaceted Church centre at the heart of the high street which might have a library, café, family space, event hospitality, much more meeting room space and perhaps some smaller community/local groups would also have been established to support immediate neighbours.
- A parishioner asked why her **direct debit offertory collections had been cancelled by the Bank** in July. The Team will look into this.
- A parishioner asked about **our hall lettings income**, which seemed on the low side even if it had increased between 2016 and 2017. The nursery seemed to be giving us a low rent for a large chunk of hall time and use. Do we need to revisit this and any other arrangements to bring in more income? The Team said if we had more hall space it would not be an issue. It provided a service to families and children. A future arrangement might mean we had more than one space available for example for funeral receptions to take place at the same time as a nursery.

- Another parishioner asked why **special collections and appeals** appeared in both payments and receipts? There were also some issues with people having their **300 Club standing orders** cancelled in favour of something else. Finally, what is the **rationale for the Diocesan Development Fund?** The Team said on the first point that the income comes in and then has to be shown as going out. Noted on the cancelled standing orders. They would try to get to the bottom of that along with the direct debit issues notified above. On the last point the payment made was requested by the Diocese to support unexpected Clergy Support Fund shortfalls. The Team are anxious to develop a better dialogue with the Diocese to understand and plan better for future diocesan calls on funds
- One parishioner wondered if some of the comments made above about the sound system were really about the need for some of us to **use microphones better by positioning the equipment and by adopting better standing posture.** Perhaps some refresher training could be organised for those people who would like it? Yes, noted.
- Another parishioner asked about **accessibility for wheelchairs in our Church spaces.** Currently it is not possible to get a non-motorised wheelchair in without help. The Team agreed. This is a very important area under DDA legislation and also because we want to be welcoming to and inclusive for everyone. Architects may help us here, including having dedicated spaces designed for wheelchairs and their users.
- A member of the parish asked about how **Church repairs** were treated and graded? The Team said they were using a Quinquennial survey process to determine repairs which were essential, of secondary importance and of lesser priority so there was a clear plan for determining work.
- Another question asked why with Offertory income up and more gift aid pledges made, **gift aid income** had not increased in the accounts? The Team said it had actually increased but there is a lag in time in the funds appearing due to claims needing to be made, processed and then appearing later, often in the next year (and the cash accounting method preferred by the diocese).
- A parishioner said there is a problem with the **Repository income accounting**, which might be down to the fact that the new lead for this area has not been added to the account for bill paying so everything was still coming through her. She said there is a lot more funds in the line than the account suggests. Can this issue be resolved swiftly please? Yes.
- Another person asked if we could we return to having an **annual spring Parish Fair** to raise funds for the Parish and to be social together? Noted. There is a Fund raising Committee who would welcome new members with fund raising skills.

7 Summary/close

- Fr Steve asked Fr Simplicio to give us a blessing.
- He also thanked everyone for coming – nearly 100 people here. Most encouraging. Thanks to Clergy Team, Finance Committee, Parish Office and our other helpers on the night for this event organising.