

**St Michael's Presbytery**  
18 Peppard Road Sonning Common  
Reading RG4 9SU  
*Parish Priest: Fr Michael Sharkey*

**PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL**  
**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023**  
**Minutes**

Present: MOD, FrM, BT, ML, SB, KS, TM

Opening Prayer FrM

Apologies for absence BW

**MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING (27.6.22) AND MATTERS ARISING**

The new church sign sited closer to the road has been installed.

The recommencement of teas and coffees after the 10.30am Sunday Mass are to be discussed again at the end of the meeting if time allows. KS reported that KL had offered to help with the teas and coffees as from the end January. KS said she is happy to set up the teas and coffees on a Friday afternoon if we can find enough volunteers to help serve and clear them away on the Sunday.

**THE PPC**

BT apologised for the length of time since the PPC was last convened. This was due to his involvement in editing the Diocesan Directory. Since the last meeting he had reflected on the role of the PPC and the New year provided an opportunity to discuss the role of PPC. This was last reviewed in 2014 and the minutes of that meeting had been circulated. Of particular importance is how should the PPC encourage and assist in the development of parish life following the disruption caused by Covid. The PPC should be at the heart of parish life, assisting the Parish Priest in his pastoral care of the parish.

There is a need to raise the profile of the PPC in parish community so that more parishioners will be encouraged to contribute and participate in its activities. This was discussed more fully later in the meeting.

**ST MICHAEL WEEKEND 2022**

The parish weekend in September 2022 had a good attendance at the talks and the lunch was a great success with the hall full to capacity. People seemed to enjoy it.

**ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS 2022**

KS commented that times of Masses were rather late being publicised this year. These should be arranged in October so that parishioners and the school know what is happening well in advance.

There was a discussion as to whether there should be two Masses on Christmas day as there was in 2022. In the past there was only one Mass but in 2022 Christmas fell on a Sunday. It was decided one Mass at 10am on Christmas morning in 2023 would suffice. 10am is the usual time for Masses that fall on a bank holiday.

It was suggested that the Parish Christmas Card should be reinstated and sent out to all St Michael's parishioners and the school families as something they can refer to during the Advent season and

give copies to family and friends. In addition, it was proposed that an advert might be put in the Henley standard advertising all our services and activities during this time.

Members of the PPC asked whether there could be a carol service separate to that preceding midnight Mass. There was a general feeling of positivity to this and we will revisit it at the next meeting. It was suggested that it might be combined with a social event where we could serve mince pies and mulled wine and also have a collection for CIRDIC

### **THE ROLE OF THE PPC**

The PPC members have been together and serving the parish since 2014 and were thanked for their commitment. Being the start of the New Year and emerging from the Covid pandemic it seemed an appropriate time to look again at the role of the PPC in the life of the parish and assess how is working now. A number of points were raised:

- How do people join the PPC and then stepdown when they feel they have served as much as they can? Should the parish AGM be a time when people can stepdown and others join? How do we find new members?
- How do we improve our communication with all parishioners and make our discussions even more transparent so more will engage with PPC activities?
- Should the PPC make more effort to encourage parishioners to suggest and organize events rather than that it being left mainly to PPC members? BT gave the example of the summer parish day out (Culham Court Chapel in 2022 and Farnborough Abbey in 2019). This has been organized by BT and is usually well supported. Should others suggest venues and organise the day? It was noted that usually the same members of the parish attend the outings. How can this be changed?
- The PPC should have a vision for what it is trying to achieve in the life of the parish and as a support to the parish priest.
- As we are emerging from the Covid pandemic and the disruption it caused to parish life, it seems necessary to encourage people to get involved. This would require appeals from the pulpit backed up by a personal approach to people. Experience shows notices in the newsletter alone have little impact.
- Of particular concern is how to connect with the parents from St Martin's school? Younger people and families with children may have different thoughts as to what the PPC should be doing.
- Why are people reluctant to come forward to volunteer or participate in parish activities? Are they uncertain about the commitment involved? Clear explanations should be given as to what is involved as this might encourage participation. Depending on circumstances this might best be done in person by FrM, BT or another PPC member.
- BT asked the question "What do we focus on?" MOD suggested that every month the council might concentrate on one thing – e.g. recruiting welcomers, recruiting people to do the teas and coffees and then recruiting new altar servers. We shouldn't try and do too many things at once.
- FrM asked "What ministries need encouragement and support" and what can we do as members of the PPC to facilitate this?
- If a person came forward to organise an event it is important they know that there are people and resources (a parishioner skill base) that they can call upon to help. KS reminded the PPC that we have a parish WhatsApp group and MOD suggested that we should increase the number of people using the WhatsApp group. There should be a recruitment drive after Masses one weekend, possibly on the last weekend in January. Should WhatsApp's groups be established for welcomers, readers etc. to make swapping easier?
- Having spent 8 years chairing the PPC, BT felt that a lay person should be encouraged to become chairperson. He is happy to stay in this position until someone else is found and would remain

part of the PPC and support the new chairperson. MOD said she would be interested in taking over from BT. FrM reminded the group that in the past a lot of the duties in parish life were done by lay people.

- In conclusion it was proposed that a conscious effort be made to put the role of the PPC back in the hands of the parish community. We should remember to include the wider local community when we can.

### **LENT AND EASTER 2023**

It was proposed that Stations of the Cross be held on Tuesday and Thursdays after the midday Mass and Holy Hour every Monday during Lent. The possibility of having Stations of the Cross for those working during the week was considered. Sunday afternoon at 4pm in Lent seemed an appropriate time. This could be combined with a short Benediction taking about 35mins in total.

Last year it was left to the last minute to find people to participate in the Washing of Feet on Maundy Thursday. This year a list will be put out well in advance. FrM would prefer a mix of people: retired, children, women, men.

### **SUSTAINABLE LIVING GROUP**

ML gave a comprehensive update on the progress the group has made. An action plan has been submitted to CAFOD for the Live Simply award on behalf of the parish and it has been approved.

The group would like to screen the Laudate Si film and invite parishioners and wider community to see it. It is 1hr 10mins long. ML talked about the film. This should be after Easter when there is less going on. It was noted that the capacity of the hall is 80-100

ML told the group that the new Recycling bins are in place and thanked JR for making the bin shelter and KM, RL and AVH for installing the shelter on a shingle base. The Thoughtful living group would like to launch the recycling initiative one weekend, ideally coinciding with a Family Mass. ML asked if she could say something after Masses to encourage participation in the initiative.

### **CHURCH ORGAN**

The church organ has been out of action for several years and no decision has yet been made as to how to proceed: do away with it, repair or buy new. TM fed back the views of the choir that think it is a good parish asset since it has a better sound than the piano. To get it repaired will cost about £5,000. Do we invest the money or do we not? KS said she is happy to help raise money. After discussion it was agreed that it should be repaired. BT will contact the company who gave the original quote for the repairs and see if the costs have changed.

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- **Parish Prayer Support.** MOD commented that sometimes something goes on in your life and you want to pray with other members of the parish for support. It was suggested that perhaps a WhatsApp group of willing people could be used to reach out to other members of the parish in such a situation.
- **Bereavement.** KS asked if at a future meeting the council could discuss how we support parishioners who are/have experienced a bereavement. It was agreed that this could be added to the agenda at a future meeting.
- **Games Afternoon.** MOD said that she and KOD would like to host another games afternoon for parishioners and their families. This will be followed up at a future meeting.
- **Young Wives Club.** Fr M expressed his desire to form a young wives club as he believes they might like to have the opportunity to reflect on their faith and bringing up a child in this world.

Mothers at St Martins should be canvassed for their opinion. BT shared his wife's experience when their family was young.

- **Vocations.** The diocese has allocated February as the month for our deanery to pray for vocations. LT has been asked to write something for the occasion and further details will be published.
- **First Holy Communion.** It is necessary find help for DW who runs the First Holy Communion program. DW has informed ML that whoever helps has to have DBS clearance and she is anxious that this might put people off. It was suggested that maybe we should try the face-to-face approach to ask for help. It was reiterated that anyone who volunteered will have to have a DBS security check. It was noted that we were still short of prayer sponsors to pray for children taking their First Holy Communion. FrM and BT said that they would ask for volunteers after each of the weekend Masses and BT would write something for the newsletter. A greater effort will be made after this First Holy Communion to recruit new altar servers.

#### **NEXT MEETINGS**

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> February and Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March both at 7pm in Presbytery

The meeting closed with a prayer lead by FrM