

Minutes of the meeting of St Bartholomew's Pastoral Parish Council held on
Wednesday 13th April 2016

Those present:

Fr Deodat Msahala, Ged Perkins, Richard Bush, Gerard Cowie, Lucy Nwagwu,
John Ambler, Theresa Furtado, Tony Price, Sr Ann Ugo, Melvin Carty,
Claire Rhodes, Tony McGing, Savio Fernandes, Eddy Sanders.

Apologies received from Gordon Clark and Richard Harries.

1. The meeting commenced with Pope Francis' Jubilee Year of Mercy Prayer.

Fr Deo expressed his hope that parishioners had taken an interest in this prayer, copies of which have recently been made available in the porch.

The minutes were approved: Tony Price proposed and Tony McGing seconded.

2. Matters arising:

Gordon Clark sent in a list as follows:

Item 4 – The PPC Members' photographs have now been put up in the porch.

The provision of new notice boards for the porch is still in "on hold";

Item 5 – The stone tablet of Parish Priests has now been put up in the porch, as the construction of the wall of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel was found to be inadequate for the purpose. The list of assistant priests has been placed opposite the stone tablet.

Item 6 – Tasks for 2016 include the following:

a/ Church guttering – Quoted so far, £11,295.12 + VAT+ painting costs.

A survey will be carried out once scaffolding has been erected.

b/ Church lighting is still “on hold”.

c/ Sound system – Quoted so far, £14,836.77 + VAT

d/ Carpets were professionally cleaned prior to both Christmas 2015 and Easter 2016.

e/ New hall furniture is “on hold”.

f/ Redecoration of the hall is planned for August 2016. The carpeting in the hall will not be cleaned until redecoration has taken place.

g/ The boilers need to be replaced. One of the two has failed and repairs cannot be done. This would need to be done in time for the winter, possibly in September 2016. Quoted so far, £29,166.00 + VAT

h/ A porch is to be placed at the Presbytery door, in line with the extra security arrangements instructed by Bishop Pat during his visitation last year. Quoted so far, £6,100.00 + VAT

Tony Price suggested that we try to combine related maintenance, such as the lighting and the sound system at the same time. Tony McGing referred to the importance of getting more than one quote per job.

Gerard Cowie pointed out that the sound system has been deteriorating for some time, and we have had to call engineers out several times. We are currently using a well renowned company which supplies systems to, for example, Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Club.

The Finance Committee will consider all that is required, taking into account the current state of parish finances.

3. Report by Father Deo

Father Deo advised that he has recently received his VISA to remain indefinitely in the UK. Waiting for this had resulted in much having to be put on hold, and he would now be in a position to put his mind to various issues including the following:

a/ Jubilee Year of Mercy - 24 Hours for the Lord.

A programme of events, to cover this special time requested by the Pope, originally scheduled for 4th/5th March 2016, now needs to be put together. Examples were given as to what was done in both Westminster Cathedral, St George's Cathedral and West Croydon parish. Times of starting and finishing the event were discussed, given that it would be taking place across a Friday and Saturday. It was suggested that 12 Noon on Friday to 12 Noon on a Saturday might be most effective in gathering as many participants as possible. Also we could perhaps involve the schools within our parish. The preferred date would be 20th/21st May 2016, though of course it could be at a later time.

b/ Jubilee Year of Mercy – Holy Door at St George's Cathedral.

A Parish visit is to be arranged, in consultation with the Cathedral, to include all necessary requirements for the granting of a Plenary Indulgence.

Possible dates would be Saturdays 10th September or 8th October.

Transport would need to be arranged.

c/ Legion of Mary – Father has been in discussion with parishioners about the re-establishment of a Praesidium of the Legion of Mary in this parish. Councils outside of the parish will be invited to help, with a view to a launch in October 2016.

d/ Clergy Support Fund – This is up and running, being driven by the diocese. This fund will be to support retired and sick clergy. The target to be raised is £4.5 Million by 2018. So far the sum of £1.5 Million has been raised by 40 parishes, but there is still a long way to go in these times of so much demand on our money, and with investments giving a very low yield. Father Deo pointed out that this is a separate fundraising initiative, which sits outside the remit of the Southwark Brethren Charity which exists for the same purpose. We need to enlist the support of parishioners, though it has been advised that we do not set any targets. A discussion followed as to how many parishioners we actually have and how the count of those people might be most accurately arrived. This would help us in deciding how we are going to make our own contribution as a parish.

4. Corpus Christi Procession. Father Deo said that given the time restrictions imposed by the local council, we shall be unable to hold a public procession. There simply is not sufficient time to organise it fully. A procession either from the hall to the Church, or simply inside the Church only, would be easier to arrange. It was agreed that we should therefore postpone our event until next year. There is definitely an appetite for such events on the part of the Streatham Common Co-operative, and one of our local councillors recently showed some enthusiasm for the idea. We were reminded that Easter will be later next year.

Teresa Furtado said that the “Going Forth” event for this year’s First Holy Communicants had been moved to Saturday due to parental concerns about having the procession on the same day. Although the procession is now not going ahead, the Catechists decided still to hold the “Going Forth” day on the Saturday.

5. Parish Website & Broadband issues.

Tony Price pointed out that our present website is “wallpaper” in that it is not fully functional as one would expect from such sites. It is not fully representative of the parish as a whole, such as in terms of the various groups we have here. Tony cited the Polyphony Choir website as one which is more functional and interactive.

Whilst there are people in the parish who know things about computers, who have given freely of their time (in particular Michael Cowie), we need somebody to run the website. We also need to look at various web hosting companies, compare websites for other churches, such as Westminster Cathedral.

Tony Price accepted the challenge of taking on the website, which he stated would be an ongoing project over the next year or so. This will be done in consultation with Fr Deo.

Gerard Cowie reported on the various issues we have had with the Web site, which began prior to his time in the office. At one point we had no internet or phones. The broadband is currently in somebody else’s name.

Tony Price acknowledged the issues faced by the parish secretary in respect of the internet and broadband, and put forward Virgin Media as a provider of choice. Whether or not we have a contract with our existing broadband provider, Plusnet, we need to get moving on a change at the earliest opportunity. Gerard Cowie would look into this. We already use Virgin Media for the presbytery, so it makes sense to consider their offering. Whatever we do, we may face a short period without internet or phones when we go ahead. Gerard Cowie advised that we have recently taken on a phone system, provided by Lion House (UK) Ltd (who also run systems for St Mary's Croydon, among others) which uses broadband in order to function.

6. Financial Report.

Tony McGing reported that we are fully up to date, and that he has the accounts, which will shortly be ready for signing off. Father Deo has advised the Chancery of his impending time away, during which time the accounts will have to be presented, and so he will not be able to sign them off himself. Tony McGing also advised that Linda Harries prepared the accounts and now does so on a monthly basis, so that we continue to be up to date at all times.

7. The Family Choir.

Tony Price reported that so far nobody has come forward offering to run the Family choir. He plans to hold a Parish Music Workshop on Saturday 25th June 2016, to close with the 6:15 Mass that evening. He will make an appeal at Masses at the beginning of June. The event will encourage people to come forward and show their musical talents, with input to the evening Mass that Saturday. He will also be seeking a possible leader for the Family Choir. At the end of the day, if there is no interest shown in leading the Family Choir, then there is unlikely to be any scope to resurrect it.

Father Deo asked Sr Ann whether perhaps the Daughters of Divine Mercy might consider taking on this task. She agreed to take this back to the convent for discussion.

Gerard Cowie and Tony Price referred to this history of the Family Choir, which began in Fr Carolin's time as the Folk Choir. It has provided an important element in the various liturgies of the parish, in particular appealing to the parish youth. Attracting that youth and encouraging them to remain once they leave school is a major issue. As Tony Price also reminded us, "Every Mass is a separate community".

8. Stations of the Cross.

Theresa Furtado said that she has had approaches from various groups who would like to hold a Stations of the Cross on a weekly basis, apart from on Sundays. Fr Deo's experience in the last couple of years has been that only one group ever came forward.

As Gerard Cowie pointed out, in years gone by, Stations used be held on Wednesday evenings. Then in later years there would be Stations on Friday evenings at 7.30pm, followed by the then regular 8pm Mass. Perhaps we could look at reinstating this practice, if it is what parishioners want.

This subject is certainly one which the PPC may consider in more detail at future meetings.

Theresa expressed her thanks to Tony Price for providing the Music at the Good Friday Children's Stations of the Cross, which was a popular and well attended event.

9. Recruitment of catechists.

Ged Perkins raised this issue, pointing out that we really are in need of more catechists to help with First Holy Communion and Confirmation preparation. A large burden falls on few people.

Ged brought to our attention a training day for prospective and recently appointed catechists, to be held at the Centre for Catholic Formation in June. This will be publicised in the newsletter, supported by posters in the porch.

Fr Deo pointed out the value of the CCF sending people here also, and he will look into arranging this both to support existing catechists and to recruit and train new ones.

10. Diaconal Ordination.

Ged Perkins has been given a provisional date for his ordination, namely Friday 17th June 2016 at 6.30pm. Two others are being ordained at the same time, and the decision was taken that all three should be ordained at the Cathedral.

It would be necessary to organise transport both ways, especially considering that there are many who may like to be there, but who would not be able to use public transport.

Ged would like this to be a parish event, particularly given that he will be serving the parishioners of St Bartholomew's. He said that a secondary event here would not be necessary.

11. Parish Welcoming Rota

The Confirmation group and the First Holy Communion group have been doing this. Theresa Furtado proposed that the PPC also take a turn. She said she would take the names of anybody who might be in a position to help.

Tony Price pointed out that some PPC members already exercise ministries such as singing, reading and acting as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, so it might not be practical for them to act as welcomers too. Ideally a more long term, strategic and structured approach should be taken in respect of such rotas.

Gerard Cowie pointed out the difficulties involved in putting the various rotas together, and said that somebody had come forward with a view to taking control of the readers' and extraordinary ministers' rotas, also aiming for greater responsibility and cooperation from those exercising these ministries. There have been times when people have not turned up and failed to arrange swaps.

12. Arranging future meetings of the PPC

All present agreed upon and diarised the following dates as proposed by Richard Bush:

- a/ Wednesday July 6th 2016 – Annual General Meeting
- b/ Wednesday October 19th 2016 – usual meeting
- c/ Wednesday January 11th 2017 – usual meeting
- d/ Wednesday April 26th 2017 – usual meeting.

13. Any other business

a/ John Ambler reminded us of the SVP idea of involving the young in the Junior SVP, which could easily be launched in, say BTG school, with the cooperation of the incoming new Head Teacher.

Ged Perkins proffered the idea that future Confirmation Groups could become involved as part of their formation, and might be encouraged to continue this apostolate as they get older.

b/ Gerard Cowie reported that the Confirmation Group's money had reached Ghana and that we recently received letters of thanks together with photographs of the installation of the water pump, something which is already changing the lives of the local people. In due course, a display will be put together and placed in the porch, so that everybody who contributed in any way can see what enormous value that has been translated into out in Ghana.

c/ Richard Bush praised all involved for their part in arranging and taking part in all the services throughout the Easter Triduum, with particular thanks to those who trained the Altar Servers, namely Jed Murphy and Ged Perkins. He expressed reservations about the length of the Easter Vigil, though this is governed by the number of the Elect and so on. Father Deo would like to see more occasions when the Elect take part in this most important day of the Liturgical year. Little can actually be done to shorten the Easter Vigil. Only the readings can be reduced in number.

It was also suggested that perhaps we have the Vigil earlier in the evening with the proviso, as Tony Price pointed out, that it should occur after dusk. Some churches, such as St Mary's West Croydon, hold their vigil at 7pm.

d/ The Divine Mercy

Father Deo said that we are still looking at procuring a large Divine Mercy picture, which would ultimately be displayed on the rear of the Retro Chapel, as a striking image which would catch the eye of anybody entering the church. The Holy Spirit picture would be removed perhaps to the Blessed Sacrament chapel area.

Lucy Nwagwu suggested that we perhaps obtain some smaller images and temporarily place them around the church, perhaps where the posters currently hang, which ask for silence in the church. Father Deo will consider further what he will do about the Divine Mercy Image in due course.

e/ Melvin Carty mentioned the forthcoming Year of Mercy KSC Mass on St George's Day, 23rd April, which all parishioners are welcome to attend. Also on 22nd May there is the anniversary of the foundation of the Southwark Province of the KSC.

f/ Parish census

Gerard Cowie announced that as yet no progress had been made with regard to this. Other parishes had not replied to emails asking for their own ideas. Tony Price said that he had already devised one and would email it to Gerard again. Whatever happens, the PPC needs to agree on what should be asked in such a census, also bearing in mind Data Protection legislation. Whilst the parish secretary will be able to collate and update census information, it will need PPC input to select the appropriate information required, and a robust piece of software to make that possible.

The meeting closed at 10.10pm with a blessing from Father Deo.