

MINUTES OF ST BARTHOLOMEW'S PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 8TH MARCH 2017 at 8pm

Those Present:

Fr Deo (FD); Fr Innocent (FI); Richard Bush (RB); Gerard Cowie (GCO); Clair Rhodes (CR); Deacon Ged Perkins (GP); Tony Price (TP); John Ambler (JA); Teresa Furtado (TF); Tony McGing (TM); Gordon Clark (GCL); Melvin Carty (MC); Richard Harries (RH); Lucy Nwagwu (LN); Eddie Sanders (ES).

1. Opening Prayer

The meeting began with Father Deo reading the Gospel reading for the Transfiguration, which was to be read on the weekend following this meeting, along with a short homily on the same.

2. Apologies for absence

An apology was received from Savio Fernandes (SF).

Father Innocent introduced himself to the PPC members present, who then introduced themselves.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were short, as most of the meeting was given over to a presentation by Father John Mulligan concerning the role of the PPC and related issues. There were no matters arising, and said minutes were proposed by TP and seconded by GCL.

4. Matter arising not covered in the Agenda

At this point the slides which Father Mulligan was to send us, relating to his talk and PPC seminar, had not arrived. FD/GCO to chase these up.

5. President's Report

a) Presentation to Fr Paul

It has been established that Fr Paul will remain in the UK until July 2017. We can now choose a date on which to hold this event. However, his sister is currently ill, so FD will consult with Father Paul first. A note will be placed in the newsletter in due course.

b) Father Innocent

Fr Innocent gave a short account of his eight year history in the UK, which culminated in his post as Principal Chaplain to the Nigerian Catholic Community in the UK, under the auspices of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. This was followed by a brief spell at Tolworth parish before being sent to be our Assistant Priest here at St Bartholomew's.

6. Chairman's Report

RB reminded us that the use of the hall is restricted to those using it at any particular time, whether for a paid booking or any meeting or gathering of uniformed groups. Nobody should be entering the hall without the knowledge or permission of Father Deo or the parish office, nor should they be turning up unannounced on any other day save that on which they are scheduled to use the hall.

GCL is working on the logistics of changing the lock, and the provision and distribution of new keys.

a) RB suggested that we publish the dates of forthcoming PPC meetings in the newsletter, inviting parishioners to submit agenda items for those meetings, in addition to the AGM. The

agenda could then go on the web site, say two weeks prior to each meeting. Also, are meetings frequent enough?

b) Should we add the future regime for meetings to the PPC Constitution?

c) Outstanding issues – Sub committees could be formed to concentrate on various issues which come up, such as has been the case with the forthcoming census. How many people might be required?

i) Parish Census – the proposed form has been put forward by the sub committee. It now remains for Father Deo to advise on the length of the document.

GP pointed out Fr Mulligan's advice that we seek the thoughts of parishioners.

GCO said that a suitable database has yet to be found, and somebody with suitable experience of such databases should ideally be engaged to find the appropriate one, get it set up and instruct on its operation.

GCL mentioned the subject of numbers in the pews, with the recent head count in October 2017 revealing a drop. The turnout at the AGM last year was also very low, but may have also been due to the late announcement of it, not to mention falling congregation numbers. GCO stated that figures go back to 1988, with a gradual decline evident.

ii) GCO said that the response to the Clergy Support Fund Campaign was very encouraging. Out of 120 who filled out cards and attended seminars, 40 signed up, and more are expected. Fr Deo said that we now had to wait for follow-up meetings.

iii) GP stated that the Welcomers' Rota is currently being run by the First Holy Communion candidates.

iv) JA reported that the Legion of Mary link with BTG students is under development, and that the SVP is in communication with the Pastoral Office team, including the Chaplain.

v) A Corpus Christi procession is still in the planning stage. Last year, we had too short a time to get it off the ground, and it is known to be a most lengthy process. We do know that we have the support of the co-operative which runs Streatham Common. TP recommended that we start small in an effort to re-establish this great tradition here. GCO recounted the experience of Westerham Parish, which took a full six months to arrange their first procession, and had to overcome some local opposition.

Fr Deo expressed his desire that we should take Our Blessed Lord to the public at large. LN suggested this would be a project which would lend itself to a special sub-committee. Perhaps we can look towards a public event in 2018 or 2019. Maybe we could start off with a procession around the block, which would avoid having to cross any roads.

GCO will liaise with the local Hindu temple, who have regular processions, though in their case this involves using the road and shutting off traffic. But perhaps they can give us the benefit of their experience in the planning of their event. The Police tend not to become involved in all events, and the cost of their involvement would have a negative impact on funds. As GCL pointed out, the Catholic Police Guild as an organisation take part in the stewarding of large events such as Catholic processions in London. So there is no actual police presence as such.

vi) The Bazaar is something which Fr Deo would like to resurrect. This too would require the formation of a sub-committee. As GCL pointed out, it will also require a huge amount of planning and commitment.

vii) Silence, reverence and respect in church. We must all lead by example, said Fr Deo. There are posters up which remind people to be silent. Fr Innocent said that some kind of balance need to be struck, and the message needs to be put across effectively, such as perhaps building the idea into sermons to embed the point in people's minds.

GCO referred to the silence required after the Good Friday service, which is often completely ignored elsewhere. He referred to the fact that TP always ensures that the Polyphony Choir leave the gallery in silence, setting an example to the rest of the congregation. The idea that the church is somehow the only place people get to meet, and hence chat, needs to be addressed. It is an issue for every day of the week.

It is also worth putting up notices to remind people to switch off their mobile phones in church.

CR reminded us that the re-institution of regular coffee mornings (not necessarily fundraisers) would enable those who wish to talk to have the chance to do so in a social setting, outside of Mass. RH suggested an approach to all parish groups to help out in this respect. Perhaps a newsletter item.

viii) GCL mentioned a booklet produced by Fr Philip Glandfield, about how to go to Holy Communion. It makes good sense, and helps to remind people of the importance of reverence in receiving Jesus.

ix) Fr Deo spoke of the great success of our 24 Hours for the Lord. The whole day was well supported, and we had people right throughout the night, praying before the Blessed Sacrament. Our parish coach was full for the visit to the Holy Door, with numbers far outstripping those sent by all other parishes.

x) RB referred to "The Beauty of Holiness", an article in the Catholic Herald, in reference to the Stations of the Cross and the UCM. TF reported that parish groups had been slow in coming forward to lead the Friday evening Stations of the Cross. It was hoped that more would become involved.

7. Finance Report

The parish books are in good shape, and the Finance Committee meets on a regular basis. The books are reconciled on a monthly basis and accounts have been prepared. We received a good audit report from the diocesan finance office.

Figures were distorted last year by the late payments which arose due to staffing issues in the parish office, which meant that the diocese went on paying wages, without us reimbursing them, and our various diocesan contributions were not made on time. However, budgeting should now be back on an even keel. The amount we receive in Gift Aid has fallen.

8. Maintenance Report

The sound system has been updated by Sound4Churches and will be further updated and serviced in time for Easter. The upgrade has not been made public, and we want to see what feedback we receive.

The boilers simply must be replaced, preferably before the winter.

Ongoing maintenance continues in earnest. Various plumbing issues have arisen both inside and outside of the presbytery.

The diocese has entered into a “global” energy contract which is to cover all parishes. Economies of scale and consequent reduction in costs should be achieved in the long run by everything being done centrally. The whole process will be managed on our behalf by the new supplier.

The process of changing the locks and keys for the hall continues. The alarm code will also be changed, which is indeed a requirement of our insurance. A comprehensive key list will be established and the issuing of keys will be strictly limited and controlled. Any issues involving the hall should initially be addressed to the parish office.

The garden is in excellent condition, and from now on, the gardeners will be visiting on a monthly basis in order to keep it in trim. Many positive comments have been received, and some have even asked for the gardeners’ contact details.

9. Parish Web site

TP said that this went live in Advent 2016. Some groups have still to come forward with details to go on the site. “Thoughts” from the newsletter will soon be added, as will the rota for Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. Perhaps Deanery issues could also feature. The site continues to develop into a “living” picture of our parish. The Daughters of Divine Love, another important part of our parish might also be represented. As ever, suggestions from parishioners are welcome in achieving this goal. Commenting on the statistics of visits made to the web site, TP said that the figures given do not really serve to provide an accurate reflection of such visits, given the various ways in, and reasons for, which the site may be accessed.

10. Any other business

The possibility of the PPC acting as welcomers at Mass was raised. Perhaps a rota might be established in this respect.

The Parish AGM date was discussed, with Wednesday 11th October at 8pm decided upon. There will be further PPC meetings before that date.

11. Date and Time of next meeting

Wednesday 10th May 2017 at 8pm

The meeting closed at 9.40pm with a prayer and blessing from Father Deo