

## AGM MINUTES OF ST BARTHOLOMEW'S PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 12 OCTOBER 2022 @ 7.30pm.

### CHURCH LOWER HALL

Fr Deo; Bob Eaglestone; Gordon Clark; Savio Fernandes; Irena Corbo; Gordon Clark; Rosemary Clark; Catherine Dunne; Melvin Carty; Linda Leggett; Elvira Menezes; Mary Meyern; Mark Leggett; Tony Price; Linda Harries; Teresa Furtado; Andrew McMillan; Brigid Griffin; Raneen Tambirasa; Sushila Vilvaraj; Maria Newey; Val Newey; Tim O'Donoghue; Kelly Bello; Richard Bush and Kathleen Netherwood.

#### 1. Opening Prayer

The AGM was opened by FRD opened with a prayer. Everyone present introduced themselves. It was confirmed that the next AGM will be held in the summer.

#### 2. Father Deo's Report

Father Deo stated it has been a long time since the last AGM and thanked everyone for attending. The last two years have been very difficult with everyone with the pandemic, illness, loss, and uncertainty but in spite of it all, it did not stop things from happening in Church. He updated as follows:

- He thanked the catechists for baptism, communion and confirmation groups which continued to run and thanked them for all their hard work. Programmes took part at local schools which has further enhanced the Church's relationship with them. All sacraments were given for 2021/22 and work has commenced on the plan for next year.
- Thanks were noted to all the parish groups that have continued running despite difficulties presented. Some clubs have not re-started yet.
- In 20/21, the Holy Father set in motion the worldwide Synod. Officially known as "Synod 2021-2023: For a Synodal Church," it is a process that allows Bishops to consult with Catholics — from parishioners all the way up to priests — in a spirit of collaboration and openness.
- Parishioners face new challenges with the cost-of-living crisis and a rise in energy bills. Father Deo is visiting parishioners at home and can see first hand how difficult life is for everyone at the moment. The Church continues to work and contribute to the food bank in Streatham.
- St Bart's will take part in the 'Soup Kitchen' scheme for the next two years and will use the Church Hall.
- A new card reader machine for mass collections is going ahead but help is required for setting it up and training for parishioners on how to use it. It will be installed in the back of the Church and should be up and running by Christmas.

#### 3. Finance Report

The new Finance Officer was unable to attend but copies of the Church's finances were issued to all. Linda Harries gave an update as follows:

- 2019 figures offertory collections were down by 22% pre covid and last year.
- The Church has a surplus due to the long-term hall letting of £40K, otherwise it would be facing a deficit now if the nursery were not renting it out.
- Father Deo has cut back on housekeeping staff, food and admin support in the office by 50%. It was noted that this is not sustainable and Father Deo needs more support.
- The Maintenance figure was also reduced to save costs, but this is not sustainable either. St Bart's is not doing too badly at the moment but hopefully things will improve further with the finances. There is a need to increase the spend on supporting Father Deo in the office and with maintenance.
- A booklet will be produced with the figures and left at the back of the Church for parishioners to take.

- After questioning, it was confirmed the Nursery hire of the hall contract was for 3 years, which will be renewable at 6 months after the 3 years are up.
- It was noted that once the Finance Chair is in place, they will further negotiate costings. At the beginning of the Nursery let, it was unsure how much should be charged, so this will be further reviewed. The Chair thanked Linda Harries for her report.

#### 4. Report on the Synod

Lee and Sonia were invited to report on the Synod but were unable to attend. Anything arising from the Synod will be passed on to the Parish Leads for formation

#### 5. Discussions of Parish Activities

A booklet was issued with an update from all the Parish Groups. The reports were wonderful and leaders were thanked for their contributions, time and energy devoted to their groups. It is a small core of people who make these groups work and, in every category, it was highlighted that more people are needed to help to keep the groups running.

- The committee are considering plans for the future and how to get more parishioners involved in volunteering. A parishioner stated that some churches do 'bring and buy' afternoons with food on every second Sunday which could help build community. The Church is currently running coffee mornings for the community and Julie McDonagh was thanked for running them. The coffee mornings have been a great success with 102 attending the last one. In the new year these will take place every two weeks. A query arose regarding charging for tea and coffee in order to raise funds for a specific project, which used to happen previously. It was decided if anyone wanted to raise funds at a coffee morning, they could have a table for advertising the charity and for collecting donations, but Father Deo does not want to charge for tea/coffee and cake; these will remain free.
- Father Deo requested ideas for involving younger people in the parish and one suggestion was to ask them what they want. Many teenagers stop attending church and groups after confirmation. Although the Youth club is still going it does not attract them anymore.
- A suggestion regarding the family choir be reinstated and it was noted a shame that only hymns are sung at Sunday 11.30a.m. mass. Father Deo stated he has been asking for volunteers for years and had even spoken with two music teachers who attend mass, but they already help the children's choir. A suggestion was made to offer the role as a job and pay someone. The Church has always paid the pianist and they have to have a practise evening during the week. A suggestion was made to have the practise session before the mass. It was noted the children's choir used to practise before mass but parking can sometimes be an issue between mass times as they are so close together on Sunday mornings.
- The committee was reminded that Scout's groups used to run coffee mornings once a month and do parades, which no longer happens. More help is required for them to be able to re-start this and requests made for volunteers never get answered. The Scouts group has been running for 58 years in the parish and they might arrange more events but they had to move premises once the hall was hired out to the Nursery, so there is a real need to make them feel welcome back into the church.
- A youth mass will be held in Spring and there are plans to have them three times a year. A 'Flame' conference will take place next year for confirmation students which will be held in Wembley and discusses youth. This year 55 candidates attended and next year World Youth Day will be held in August.
- Another idea was to hold a multi-cultural evening with food but someone would need to organise it. Many of the groups have reduced due to the pandemic including the PPC and parishioners are not returning to them. The social committee needs to work and thought needs to be given to attracting volunteers to help. The Church needs to ask parishioners why

they are not returning to groups or activities. Maybe many are still frightened as covid is not over and figures are rising again or maybe they feel it is too much of a commitment and they do not have the time or are under too much pressure. The PPC is a group of people who feed into the parish council in terms of what the parish needs and at the moment it seems to be volunteers and leaders. A suggestion was made that a booklet could be issued with all the required volunteer vacancies with how much time would be required and this was deemed a good idea. It could say that half an hour of time is required before mass and it was noted as a parish, we need to be friendlier to newcomers. This could be by group leaders introducing themselves at coffee mornings.

- After discussions, it was decided a Christmas Fayre would be too ambitious this year, so will be put off until next year. A Christmas raffle could take place at the coffee mornings.
- Many people attending the meeting remarked that the signs at the front of the Church are putting people off talking to each other before mass. Father Deo confirmed he put them up in response to a complaint about a family being too noisy in Church. He agreed that if a lot of people are complaining about the signs, he will take them down. It was noted that the 10am mass is a family mass and if parishioners do not want any noise, they should attend another mass.
- The Chair thanked everyone for their ideas and stated they will be considered for 2023 and noted the need to refresh the Parish Council and Social Committee.

#### 6. Any Other Business

- It was highlighted that the 'Churches together in Norbury' masses have gone by the board, which will be put to the PPC to re-instate.
- There seems to be a lot of confusion about the Synod. Across Europe Bishop's are advocating female or married priests, gay marriages and the Synod will update with feedback. It was noted that some parishioners do not understand the Synod prayer at the end of each mass and what it means. Father Deo commented that the Synod is a consultation period and has written to the Diocese for further information or updates with no acknowledgement.
- St Philip's Church have opened their doors to the St Bart's toddler group as it can no longer be held in the Church Hall. It is an outreach evangelical group and the Church Secretary was asked to advertise it in the newsletter but it never happened but there is a sign at the back of the Church. The group are planning to invite Seniors to attend at the same time as the toddlers at St Philip's, as this is known to help loneliness and mental health.

#### 7. Closing Prayer

Father Deo thanked everyone for attending, their support and ongoing commitment and ended the meeting with a prayer.

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.