

**3THE PARISH COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, GREAT BARDFIELD AND  
THE ENGLISH MARTYRS THAXTED**

**Minutes of the Meeting held 24 November 2018 at Church of the Holy Spirit Great Bardfield**

Present: Fr. Richard (Presiding), Philip Slater (Chair), Alfred Wheeler (Vice Chair), Mick Hughes (Treasurer), Pam Gale, Robina Debnam, John Yates, Fiona Walsh, Phoebe Walsh, Kate Fox (Secretary)

In attendance: Catherine Doswell-Wellingbrook, Janet Yates, Paddy Marsh

**The Meeting opened with prayers.**

**1. Apologies for absence:**

Apologies were received from Damian Walsh, Simon Latham, Roger Pettett, Mary McGee and David Jarvis

**2. Minutes of the Meeting held 22 September 2018**

- (a) These were proposed, Alfred Wheeler, seconded Pam Gale and approved and signed as a true record of the meeting.
- (b) Matters arising would be covered under the relevant agenda item.

**3. Thaxted Church**

The building remains closed following the surveyors report and most of the keys have been returned to Mick Hughes, although are still outstanding. The surveyors report was submitted to the loss adjuster who did not agree with his suggestion that the problem was heave and some of the work would be insured. There has been no feedback from the insurers. Mick explained that the Diocese is overwhelmed with work and he has not heard back from them. Philip said we need to work with the diocese and push them for a decision. Father Richard reported on the meeting held at Simon Latham's house and outlined the situation. The surveyors report had indeed been devastating but he feels we should look at what the costs might be and not throw good money after bad and mentioned the floods that caused the building to be closed in the past. Simon felt that the building has reached the end of its life. Paddy asked if we could have a figure regarding costs so we could look at fund raising. Alfred suggested we ought to wait until we have a figure from the existing surveyor and Mick agreed as we need to know the insurance position. In reply to a question Philip confirmed that regarding insurance this is all run through the diocese which means delay. We have explained the importance of the situation and the Bishop and Vicar General are aware but we need to wait until the insurance position has been clarified. Catherine said the diocese is notoriously good at putting off decisions that may cost money and wondered how many churches are closed waiting for such decisions. Philip said that at the meeting in Thaxted (Simon's?) the feeling of the majority was that, as a temporary measure we should use the Lady Chapel at Thaxted Church and this could be up to 18 months. Amanda Balicki [Diocesan Property Consultant and Chartered Surveyor] has up to 8 cases awaiting a decision. John said that were over 20 attendees at the meeting and the feeling was that it could be a long wait especially in the light of restructuring. The little church was meant to last 30 years and has been going for 60. Philip said we can't ignore the diocese' plans for restructuring but we have been trying to put forward proposals which open a bigger topic:

We don't yet have the report that is coming next weekend which will tell us what things will look like in the future. We do need to be mindful that the report will tell us what is happening. How the whole issue will impact on any decision we make in relation to our restructuring mass in our parish. Philip has received numerous email providing comments and views and there is a school of thought that everyone will have to embrace a difference in the way we worship. We are lucky to have Fr Richard and need to be conscious of his work load. The diocese will ask what Gt Bardfield and Thaxted have done to try to address some of the issues in the short to medium term to bring our communities together and he would like to debate the issues raised.

Alfred agreed with have to be mindful (in relation to documents that have been published) that we are heading for some dramatic change and it is a mistake to think of as one community. It is an opportunity to take a back step and wait to look at the Vision document and work with it to the best of our abilities. The changes that are coming are long term and in the meantime we continue working for the benefit of the parish.

Mick said at the moment he feels the parish is in a unique position and there is no point in reducing to one mass centre. In due course this is another matter because we are possibly able to have mass in the main church in Thaxted and our little church is finished. We are in danger of losing the Catholic community in Thaxted.

Fr Richard said he is very aware of the situation - we have one parish and two communities. His responsibility is to look after both parishes and his intention is to have mass in both communities. As a temporary situation he has been negotiating with the Anglican Church and they were unanimously supportive and wish to help their Catholic brothers and sisters. He plans for Christmas Eve mass to be at 8pm in Thaxted church and Christmas day 10am in Great Bardfield. He wishes to start using the big church as soon as possible but needs to look at timing and ecumenical arrangements – Holy Week and Easter need special arrangements. Father has spoken to the Vicar General about sharing on a temporary basis but a permanent situation would be a decision for the Bishop.

There was a general conversation from those present regarding the sharing of facilities, the importance of both communities and the need to chase the diocese regarding the position of our Thaxted church.

#### **4. Ginger Group / Diocesan Restructuring**

Robina said it was disappointing that not many people had attended the GG meeting on 17 November. This was the main forum to discuss the issues facing the parish and it was important that as many parishioners as possible took part. There had been a meeting of the Stewards of the Gospel on 3 November at Brentwood and it had been hoped that a meeting of the NEED, made of the six parishes, would take place on 13 November thus enabling a report at this PC meeting, however it had been postponed until 4 December. From January to April 2019 plans would be put for consideration to Bishop Alan on Restructuring and Renewal and how it would evolve in the parishes and networking in the Deanery. Advent 2019 would see a draft plan from the SofG. By Easter 2020 the final plan for Parish Partnership for the long term would be decided.

Philip spoke about the wish to communicate as speedily as possible once the diocese have released details of its proposals on restructuring but at the moment we do not know in what form it will be made available.

## **5. Deanery Report**

Since the AGM there had not been a meeting there was nothing new to report.

## **6. Treasurer's Report**

The treasurer reported on the two months to 5th November. In September offertories were low at £1893.37 but this was compensated by receipt of Gift Aid on 2017/18 cash collections of £1824.09. October was a better month for offertories being a five week month with some quarterly sums received. There was nothing in expenses needing comment. The overall cash surplus over the two months was £3,197.60 which left total funds of £86,267.17 at 5th November.

## **7. Gift Aid Report**

Kate advised the diocese was in the process of upgrading their current Gift Aid software to an online iCloud based version. Training sessions had been offered at Brentwood but she was unable to attend on the date given however there was a test site she can use to familiarise herself with the process. Robina had mentioned an initiative to encourage increased contributions although it was recognised that parishioners in Great Bardfield and Thaxted were generous and 'outperformed' some larger parishes.

## **8. Liturgical Items**

Janet wished to thank Robina for all her hard work in addressing the recent reports on abuse that have had devastating effects throughout the world. She has created a website page [[www.groundswellprayer.uk](http://www.groundswellprayer.uk)] and written to Cardinal Nichols requesting a Sunday mass for the expiation of the sins of the church and also several Bishops and had some positive response.

Alfred mentioned (i) The book that had been purchased to use for the Intentions of parishioners from the first Sunday in Advent. (ii) Talks on Prayer by Sister Frances Moor shared with Braintree Parish. There will be four meetings and dates will be published in the newsletter.

Robina said (i) the Alpha course had been postponed so will focus on the conservation CaFE. (ii) Walk With Me booklets have been ordered for Advent.

## **9. Youth Matters**

Fiona said the Christ the King Mass will be on 25 November and is always a happy occasion for the children and usually very well attended – all children are welcome to join in and there will be coffee and cakes after the Mass. Phoebe is our nominated spokesperson for BCYS and she will read out the annual appeal on their behalf; there will be flyers about BCYS and the appeal, which will be handed out by the children before the Mass. The new CYMFed Faith in Action Award scheme will be launched on National Youth Sunday during the Christ the King Mass and has been in the planning stages for over a year. Fiona, Phoebe and Megan invited Sarah Barber (former BCYS Director and now Cafod Youth Team Leader) to Church of the Holy Spirit for a 'working supper' to learn more about the award, which has been undergoing a pilot scheme in various locations around the country for the last 12 months. Our parish is the first to sign up for the scheme in the Brentwood diocese. The award scheme is for 10-18 year olds, has four award levels (Pin, Bronze, Silver and Gold) and has the aim of growing their faith and challenging them to put their faith into action in their schools, parishes and their wider community. We are hoping that this award will 'plug the gap' between First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Six young people attended last Friday which very good – and more want to join. The serving of

pizzas was a bit problematic as the oven did not work, however Anne Smith saved the day by allowing us to use her oven, for which we were very grateful.

**It was agreed that a new oven could be purchased and Alfred would look into this for best value**

Other items: (i) CYmFed Flame is on 2nd March 2019 Wembley Arena, promoted in our parish by Phoebe and Fiona (ii) Catechist Training and Resources Day took place on 10<sup>th</sup> November at Sacred Heart School, Upminster, attended by Fiona and Phoebe, (iii) Children's Liturgy numbers are still very good although there has been some confusion for our new families, who were confused with when and where Children's Liturgy was being held, following a message in the newsletter about a 'new' Mass in Thaxted (iv) Communications – Roger has sorted out the website and Facebook.

Fiona wished to record her thanks to Megan and Clementine for their help and support.

## **10. Health & Safety**

John drew attention to the Fire Risk Assessment dated 16 October 2018 which highlighted a number of areas. (i) The requirement for any additional lighting to be checked after dark; (ii) Consider the fitting of PIR controlled lighting; (iii) The need for the walls and ceilings of the boiler room provided fire protection and to fit the missing door seal to the boiler room door; (iv) Appropriate lighting for the new fire escape. An extra Co2 fire extinguisher was also required. It was also mentioned that two emergency exit signs needed re fitting.

## **11. Buildings**

Alfred said there was not much to report but said the lighting on the fire escape was being attended to and the outside light was not fitted. Phoebe asked if the fire escape could be used as an entrance for those less able as these stairs may be less challenging than the existing. This was not thought to be a problem. It was agreed that a new salt bin should on site.

Reference was made yet again to the use of the building for renting of the priests house and Ursula's property and Alfred reiterated the difficulties. Fr Richard said he wanted the priest's house to remain as it was for community use and the cost refurbishing Ursula's house was prohibitive. Mick reminded those present that before Fr Richard took up his post the parish was 'on the breadline' and thanks to Father who does take a stipend of any sought that we have built up funds.

## **12. Other notable business**

- (i) It was agreed that a new oven could be purchased and Alfred would look into this for best value.
- (ii) Microwave to be PAT tested.

## **14. Council Meeting Dates**

19th January 2019  
30<sup>th</sup> March 2019

## **Closing Prayer**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 11.55 am.