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

**THE ENGLISH MARTYRS THAXTED**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Saturday 29 February 2020 at the**

**Church of the Holy Spirit Great Bardfield**

Present: Alfred Wheater (Chairman), Robina Debnam, Mick Hughes, Siobhan Evers, John Yates, Damian Walsh, Phoebe Walsh, Kate Fox (Secretary). Linda Wheater joined the meeting at Agenda item 10

**The Meeting opened with prayers.**

**1. Apologies for absence:** Received fromRoger Pettett and David Jarvis

**2. Minutes of the Meeting held 23 November 2019:**

**(a)** These were approved and signed as a true record of the meeting, Proposed Robina Debnam, seconded John Yates.

**(b)** Matters Arising: (i) Dunmow parish are no longer interested in purchasing the organ currently at Thaxted, however the offer from Fr Richard’s godson will be followed up.

(ii) In response to a reference from Damian regarding the NEPP draft proposal (see p.2 of Minutes) submitted to the Bishop, Alfred provided further clarification referring to the consultation and decision making process involved. The SofG did have the remit, following the consultation outlined, to submit the document.

(iii) By Easter, Brentwood has indicated they will let the parish know of their decision.

**3. The Parish Council: Voting, Membership & Constitution:** In the light of Fr. Richard’s absence this matter is deferred.

**4. Building & Property:** For the sake of clarity and to bring everyone up to date, Alfred outlined his various conversations with Fr. Kevin and Peter Johnson (surveyor). There has been conflicting advice and a lack of considered communication from Brentwood. In October 2018 following the quinquennial report the advice was to push forward with various works and new double glazing was ordered but its installation has now been halted. Mr Johnson insisted on a second survey at the expense of the Parish (£2700). There was a lengthy discussion regarding (i) who has authority and the ‘ear’ of the Bishop; (ii) the future of the Deanery – a lot of people liked the idea of a new church; (iii) the condition of the garage attached to Our Lady’s House – signage would be organised.

**Service of de-consecration – Thaxted church:** Siobhan said she felt it essential that we mark this occasion with a service and a paper exercise at Brentwood was not sufficient. It was agreed by all present that the occasion be marked – if necessary in the grounds of the church for safety reasons.

**5. Restructuring and Renewal**:   
(i) Damian asked, thinking about Renewal, how one might hypothetically ‘measure’ the ‘spiritual health’ of a parish.  One indicator might presumably be the willingness of parishioners to receive frequently the sacrament of the Eucharist/ Holy Communion whenever possible/ convenient? At the moment we have just one Mass on a Sunday and a ‘Celebration of the Word & Communion’ in the absence of a priest one day a week (Fridays). The latter is sparsely attended, even when

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parishioners happen already to be in the church on other matters *at the same time* the ‘Celebration of the Word & Communion’ is taking place. Trying to understand this, make sense of it, and be constructive, a couple of questions arose:

* Why do parishioners in general not support this unique opportunity to receive the Eucharist?
* If attending the currently scheduled ‘Celebration of the Word & Communion’ one day a week is *not* of interest to enough people, *what else different* of equivalent sacramental importance and value might be proposed that we should better be doing? eg Change of time? Change of day? Change of some other aspect?

(ii) There was discussion about collection plate, which developed into a related conversation about where parishioners who formerly typically attended Mass at Thaxted now go to Mass, now that the Saturday Mass at Thaxted is not being celebrated? This question was linked to recent observations that several/ many such parishioners are tending not to attend Sunday Mass at Great Bardfield. Why is this, we wondered? One Parish Council officer even gave themselves as an example, sharing that they now go to Mass outside the parish rather than in Great Bardfield. We were at pains to *not* make any judgements about this - merely to observe, to understand, and to learn. This begs the question, which the meeting briefly considered: going forward, how does a parishioner decide (a) to which parish they ‘belong’, and (b) therefore to which collection plate they might contribute to?   
  
(iii) Alfred outlined the possibilities regarding priest cover and that Fr Kevin has said that summer cover can be arranged.    
  
(iv)  Regarding work on the flat, nothing can be done until we have ‘green light’ from Brentwood.

**6. Deanery Report**:    
Although not a Deanery topic, Damian updated the meeting about the Diocesan Strategic Planning Group (DSPG). He reminded members that towards the end of 2018/ start of 2019, there had been discussions about the future modus operandi of the DSPG. Steve Webb (the Diocesan Director of Development) had been keen for the work of the DSPG to continue, with a shift of emphasis away from ‘Planning’ towards ‘Implementation’. However, since then:

1. no DSPG meetings have been convened since Damian’s last involvement as presenter to the diocesan meeting of the Stewards of the Gospel in Brentwood on 3rd Nov 2018
2. the entry for DSPG under Operational Bodies on page 40 of the Diocesan Directory 2019 has been removed from the same page of the 2020 edition of the Diocesan Directory
3. The PC should therefore assume the DSPG has ceased operation

**To conclude the discussions it was agreed that if a decision was not forthcoming after Easter a delegation approach the Bishop and insist on a meeting.**

**7. Treasurer’s Report:** Mick circulated the 2019/20 accounts to 5 February and explained various items of income and expenditure. He pointed out that the offertory income was still down but because of the one off benefit of an on account 2019/20 tax refund the income this year to date is slightly higher than last year. In regard to expenses, heating and lighting were a significant figure – Mick has been taking monthly readings since April 2019 and there is no evidence that there is anything wrong - it could just be that we do use that much supply. Fiona asked about other providers; unfortunately this is not something we can do as, in order to get a better price, the

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diocese negotiate on behalf of all the parishes. It was suggested that a letter from the ‘youth group’ asking for a review of providers, looking at eco-friendly initiatives in particular, be sent to the Bishop. This would fit in with the work the young people have been doing and view of Pope Francis. Other expenses were the office lap top at £472 and the additional building survey at a cost of £2700. Mick advised that the diocesan accounts have now moved from his lap top to being on line which is preferable. It is disappointing to note that HSBC in Saffron Walden is closing at the end of July this year. The closing balance at the bank as at 5 February was £72,133.40.

**8. Gift Aid Report:** Similar to the cash donation in the plate, the envelopes are also down some weeks as low as 4! This is combination of – mainly - reduced footfall because of attendance at other churches and people who have moved away from the area.

**9. Liturgical Items**: **(i) Eucharistic Ministers** We have an additional six new Ministers, five of whom are parents of young children and one a former Minister in her last parish. All have received training from Linda over two consecutive evenings. In addition each Minister is provided with a portfolio of guidance notice etc. Their names and the names of the exiting Ministers have been submitted to the Bishop’s office and all have been approved. Fr Richard wants to officiate at a service of Commissioning when commissioning certificates will be distributed. The date for the commissioning and re-commissioning is planned for 15 March – John added that Maundy Thursday would be a suitable day for this. Damian asked if any of the new Ministers would be trained to enable the Service of the Word as we rely on David and Ann at the moment. The matter of insufficient hosts was raised and if running low need to be replaced.

**(ii) Sycamore Courses:** This is a four week Advent course and very well attended and enjoyed and we are now offering a six week Lent course beginning on 29 February with Sr. Frances Moore.

**(iii) St France Moore’s Christian Prayer Meeting:** Sr. Frances has agreed to give us four more meetings entitled ‘The God who Speaks’ centred on the Gospel of St Matthew from which the 2020 Gospel readings are taken. We are joined by our PP church in Braintree, but the meetings are open to all Christians – at present we have three Quakers and one Anglican and someone from Dunmow.

**(iv) Liturgical Group**: Fr Richard had asked Robina, Siobhan, John and Damian to form this group but until a meeting could be held with Father it was on hold.

**(v) Service of Rededication - 29 March 2020, Walsingham**: There will be a triduum of prayer on the 26, 27 & 28 March followed by the rededication of England as the Dowry of Mary. The statue of Mary presented by Richard II in 1381 is ‘touring’ the diocese.

**(vi) Key Items**: Holy Hour 7pm on 26th March; 10.00 am Service of the Word and Service of Reconciliation 7pm with Fr Joseph on 27th March; Sycamore Group 10am Great Bardfield and Deanery Day of Reconciliation at Stansted on 28th March.

**(vii) Chickney:** Robina reported that Fr Richard seemed to think this event would die out but a request would be made to a Stansted priest to take the annual service.

**10. Youth Matters**: Fiona said that the Holy Communion classes were going with the celebration to be held on Corpus Christie – 13 April. Regarding the Children’s Liturgy, numbers were steady with the addition of children from other parishes. It was noted that the children enjoyed having different priests.

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PP Youth Team (Core Group): This was conceived following the Catechist training day last year. Liaison has been with the people at Braintree and a What’s App group is active. The outcome of the meeting with Braintree and Saffron Walden is that there will be a youth mass in July held at Braintree. Fiona pointed out that youth masses are difficult as we don’t have a priest. Also in Great Bardfield we do a lot involved our young people and hold masses four times a year. Apparently they were talking about getting more finance and inviting others to join the Core Group but this was at an embryonic stage.

Confirmation: These classes continue with a date of 8th May to be celebrated at Great Bardfield.

Projector Screen: Fiona advised that at the moment we had to rely on borrowed equipment and asked if the PC would purchase a screen for parish use. **It was unanimously agreed that this could be done – Fiona would make the purchase and submit the invoice to Mick.**

Teenage Area**:** A request to have a dedicated ‘area’ was discussed to include the purchase of bean bags. Before a decision was made Fiona would obtain costings.

Stations of the Cross: This was a successful occasion when trialled last year led by the young people with positive feedback and the intention was to repeat this in 2020.

Next Youth Mass: 22nd March 2020 – Mother’s Day.

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**11. Health & Safety:** John had nothing to report apart from the blocked sink in the sacristy. There was a brief discussion about the Coronarvirus and any action we could take – e.g. not shaking hands/emptying the holy water stoop; there was no directive from Brentwood at the moment. The vacuum cleaner needed replacing.

**12. Safeguarding:** Linda was contacted by Anne Fox, Safeguarding Officer for Thaxted Parish Church who was under the impression, incorrectly, that Fr Richard was not DBS checked. Linda also assured her that all Catholic clergy working with a parish are DBC checked. They had a general discussion re checks and training given to those people working with the young and elderly in order to recognise abuse, and have agreed to keep each other appraised of concerns. Nevertheless, the work undertaken by Safeguarding representatives is by its nature very confidential and this will always be respected.

**13. Items of Report**:

(i) Charities There has been a generous response to the Warm Hearts for Cold Hands appeal, with 11 large sacks of clothing donated to help rough sleepers and the homeless.

(ii) Bibles for Refugees: Linda and Robina have begun to promote the Lenten charity by ‘selling’ these bibles after every mass. The idea is that a front plate can be purchased dedicated to whoever you wish at a cost of £5. This dedication is affixed to each bible that is distributed. This initiative is collaboration with Halstead and Braintree.

(iii) Secretarial Support: Kate has offered to undertake additional secretarial duties on an ad hoc basis to support the work of the PC.

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(iv) Parish Diary: A copy had been sent to Roger to publish on the website however the paper diary in the hall would continue to be a source of information.

(v) Social Committee: Thank you to Jenni & Hilda for organising the following events:- 12 April - Easter Egg Hunt (PC happy for church garden to be used); 30th August – Parish picnic – venue to be confirmed; 24 October – Pot Luck Night; 29th November – Pudding Night. Volunteers are welcome to join the small team and lend their support and idea.

**14. Dates of Next Meetings**:

It was agreed that the next PCC Meeting be held on 2nd May and the AGM on 27 June. Both at Great Bardfield at 10.00am

**Closing Prayer**

**The meeting concluded at 12.20 pm**

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