**A MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF THE**

**HOLY SPIRIT, GREAT BARDFIELD AND THE ENGLISH MARTYRS THAXTED**

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

**Held Saturday 5th February 2022**

Parish Council Members: Alfred Wheater (Chair), Simon Latham, Linda Wheater, Robina Debnam, David Jarvis,

Parishioners in attendance: Harriet Middelboe, Matt & Shirley Foster, Patrick O’Brien, Josef Edel, Joe & Pauline Butler, Marianna Marriott**,** Amanda Waples Catherine Wellingbrook-Doswell

**The Meeting opened with prayers.**

**1. Apologies for absence:** Sheelagh Chapman, Siobhan Evers, Jenny Wheater, Antoinette O’Brien, Celeste Slater, Mick Hughes, Gerard Walbank,

**2. Minutes of the Meeting held 18 September 2021:** These were approved and signed as a true record of the meeting, Proposed Simon Latham, seconded Linda Wheater.

## **3. “Our Synodal Journey”:** A Mass at St Peter’s last year opened the process that will lead up to the assembly of the world Synod of Bishops in 2023. Harriet kindly gave a short presentation and made the point that Catholic Church’s priority should be to listen to its young people of all ages, and the synodal process has so far failed to do so. In December last year Bishop Alan, in his letter to parishes, urged them to do something about this and we have until 3rd March to submit a parish document or – in view of the shortage of time – we can write as individuals. The question is how many people knew about this. There was an open discussion about what the Synod would listen to, such as the subject of women priests or deacons. Harriet felt that we should have a discussion group and she was willing to lead on this and if possible, involve Theresa Carvalho who was willing to speak to the group. An e mail can be sent via Linda who has access to group e mail addresses, to reach out to as many parishioners as possible.

**4. Parish Council Membership:** Alfred said it was important to see more active members who would take on responsibilities to share the different roles. One example is following the recent resignation due to ill health of John Yates, Robina and Kate are dealing with the Health & Safety issues. The AGM in June will be an opportunity to review this in more detail.

**5. Treasurer’s Report**: There was a brief report in the absence of the Treasurer. There is approximately £62K in the bank. Funds have been affected by the fact that envelopes have not been used for nearly two years and cash collections have fallen. In addition, we have to pay for supply priests in the region of £100 on each occasion including expenses.

**6. Buildings: (ii) Bardfield Buildings:** Alfred brought everyone up to date regarding the current position and the meeting held on 18th January with Fr Kevin Hale and Peter Johnson (Diocese Surveyor).

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**Thaxted Church** Despite many attempts to move on with the sale of the plot there had been a total lack of co-operation from the Diocese. At best there was some miscommunication, but it was felt that the Property Committee had continued to ignore the requests from the Parish and were unhelpful and negative in their approach. Mr Johnson continued to make negative comments throughout the meeting on 18 January – whether it be one of access or the need to involve the Charities Commission. Nevertheless, he agreed that things would be put in motion and a re-evaluation of the site would take place. Since that meeting this has been carried out with an increased valuation of up to £400K. It was agreed that planning permission would not be sought prior to sale due to the costs involved. There was to be a site meeting on 8 February that Simon and Alfred would attend.

**Bardfield Buildings:** Alfred reported on the disappointment and frustration that his letter to the bishop of 7 October had still not been acknowledged – let alone had a full response. Robina had also written to Bishop Alan referencing this matter and had received a reply – a section of which she read out. It clearly demonstrated that the Bishop had not grasped the urgency of the situation and it must be assumed the guidance he has received is inaccurate. It made a farce of the Pope’s insistence that we have a ‘listening church’ and concern was expressed that we were being ignored on purpose. Moving forward it may be necessary to write to Cardinal Nichols and then the Papal Nuncio.

Regarding the work on the building, it was considered important that at a minimum the bathrooms were refurbished in order to attract a live in priest, although the fabric of the building had to be made safe from the outside in. This could be accommodated by a rolling programme of work which would comply with the quinquennial report. The Diocese insist that a project manager be in place to oversee the work and who they had to approve. Robina asked if there had been a response to the request about heating dated July 2019 – the answer was no. Amanda wished to thank Alfred for his tenacity in the proceedings.

**7. COVID Restrictions:** Linda outlined the revised position and said that we would still be requesting that masks are worn and that spacing continues. There would be no more track or tracing; the offertory collections could resume; altar servers would take part in the service. Communion would continue to be of one sort and those wishing to receive the host on the tongue would be asked to do so at the end.

**8. Liturgical Items:** Linda had some positive news in that (**i) Holy Communion** is going ahead and Jenny is instructing 7/8 children. It is hoped to be held in May and once again the difficulty is finding a priest who will hold Confessions and undertake the duties of First Holy Communion; Linda is dealing with this. **(ii) Confirmation** will take place at Pentecost, and we have four Confirmandi and Linda will be undertaking the sessions. (iii) Linda will undertake **Baptismal** instruction for the two up coming baptisms and Fr Glasdon of Clare Priory has offered to conduct the service.

**Children’s Liturgy**: Robina has spoken to some parents who were keen for this to re-commence and she would start on the first Sunday of Lent in the Priest’s flat, and the intention is that she will be joined by a parent on a rota basis, so she did not work alone.

**CAFOD Live Simply**: She is trying to follow this up with Fiona Walsh so that it can be ‘reignited’.

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**Fr Richard:** Alfred gave the up-to-date position and at the time of this meeting it looked as if Fr Richard was seriously considering retiring. He could no longer commit to the duties of a priest which, apart from saying mass, there was also visiting the sick, carrying out baptisms or funeral services, general pastoral care, and so on. In the meantime, cover has come from Clare Priory, and more recently Fr Jackson, who confirmed he could cover Maundy Thursday and Good Friday although Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday mass was not confirmed.

**9. Health & Safety**

**H& S Representative**: As previously mentioned Robina would take on this role and deal with the Safety Toolbox reporting tool with support from Kate and both would undertake on line training. Various inspections are to be carried out to comply with what is required including a full building check with the diocese would pay for but any resulting work would be at the cost to the parish. In the meantime, Matt Foster will purchase a CO2 extinguisher for the kitchen.

**10. Any Other Business**

**Parish Register:** Robina raised this matter and the intention was to create an up-to-date document. It was thought that Roger Pettett may have created the existing copy which could be used as a starting point.

**Villager Magazine:** Details of church services needed to be changed which Robina was dealing with.

**Extension Lead**: Shirley Foster asked if an extension lead could be purchased to help with cleaning; this was agreed.

**Thaxted**: Simon raised the question of the safe, which is locked and Father says is empty – this needed to be checked along with the transfer of other items – as noted in the Minutes of 18th January 2022

**11. Date of Next Meetings**

**This is to be the AGM on Saturday 11 June at 10.00 am**

**Closing Prayer**

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