

# St Dunstan's Parish Team Meeting

April 27<sup>th</sup> 2022

## Present

Adrian Sharman, Fr Peter, Michele Harrison, John Sexton, Karin Harvey, Joe Dunne, Mark Potter, Mary Smith and Elizabeth Lucek (to record minutes).

### 1. Welcome and opening prayer.

Adrian welcomed the team and Fr Peter opened the meeting with a prayer.

### 2 Apologies.

Deacon Russell and Julianne Birch.

### 3. Minutes of the last meeting.

Comment: There have been many more baptisms in the last year than previously.

Answer: Still some catching up after the long break.

### 4. Parish Update

#### *Easter Services*

Easter services were generally well attended and well supported by Altar servers. There were some comments from parishioners that the Easter Vigil and the Good Friday Service were too long.

Comment: There were 18 receptions and baptisms at the Easter Vigil, which does increase the length of the service.

Fr Peter: Fr Peter commented that he felt that the Easter Vigil went well and thanked everyone who made it so successful.

Comment: The car park was particularly busy at the changeover between the Sunday 9am and 10.30am Masses. If people park at the entrance, reducing it to one way, this adds to the congestion. Parking was available at the school.

#### *Relaxation of Covid restrictions*

There was a discussion of the pace and way Covid restrictions have been eased. Some parishioners think the pace is too fast, while others would like restrictions removed more quickly. Most parishioners are still wearing masks during Mass. There is not a consistent approach across the diocese and the only instruction from the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales is that Holy Communion must be given under one kind only.

Comment: There is a sense of welcome at Sunday Masses.

Question: Has there been a count of Mass attendance recently?

Answer: No. Mass attendance appears to have increased but has not returned to a pre-pandemic level.

Comment: The Sunday 5.30 pm Mass is particularly well attended, especially as the Confirmandi are attending this Mass, and the Liturgy rooms are well used, especially by families with young children.

Comment: The Liturgy rooms will be divided this weekend, and one part closed off from the church so that it can be used by Children's Liturgy. The Liturgy rooms will close entirely eventually.

Fr Peter commented that it is planned to bring back offering coffee and tea after the Sunday 9.00 am and 10.30 am Masses.

The Function room will continue to be used for Toddlers' Prayers. So far Children's Liturgy and Toddler's Prayers are only held during the Sunday 9.00 am Mass. To expand them to the Sunday 10.30 am Mass, a bigger team is needed. All the volunteers from the Time and Talents survey have been approached but it is hoped that other volunteers can be found soon.

### *Liturgy*

*Mass Coordinators:* The role of Mass Coordinators has evolved during the pandemic, in particular their relationship with Welcomers and Stewards, and with those helping in the Sacristy. The different roles will be looked at again to see the best way forward.

*Reconciliation Service:* The Reconciliation Service was well received and relatively well attended. There was a short liturgy and people weren't asked to stay until the end, but were able to leave after visiting a confessor. We were grateful that other priests were able to come, as it is difficult to find priests who are free to help, and having more confessors helps reduce the time that people have to wait.

*Prayer Ministry:* We would like to start a Prayer Ministry, but it will involve some work. The first step might be to set up an Intercessory Prayer Group in the parish.

*Catechesis:* Catechesis teams are in good shape as more volunteers were found as a result of the Time and Talents survey.

- There a good team helping couples prepare for Marriage. There are a lot of couples, although many of them are planning to be married abroad.
- There are already people taking part in the next RCIA programme.
- Preparation of children and parents for the First Holy Communion programme is taking place on Zoom. There new, and younger, catechists helping them this year.
- There are new catechists and a new lead on the Confirmation team.
- A new Baptism team has also just formed, and although they have not yet met, face to face preparation meetings will start in May.
- An Alpha course has just finished and received very positive feedback from the people who took part. Some comments will appear in the newsletter ahead of a new course starting in September, which will be held both in person and online.

Flocknote continues to be useful in facilitating communications with all the different groups within the parish.

### *Synod Groups*

It was felt that there was a very short consultation time before feedback needed to be sent to diocese, especially as activities in the parish were only just restarting and considering how important the Synod will be for the life of the church. Feedback was gathered from a parish plenary meeting, 3 or 4 small groups that discussed the material online, and one small group that met in person. Bishop Richard later gave a Webinar summarising parish submissions, and a summary is expected soon. The Bishops of England and Wales have now also met to discuss their submission. It was hoped that there would be a later opportunity to engage with the process when information filters back to the diocese.

### *Invited*

Season 2 of the Diocesan Mission Invited has just started. The material involves a film to watch, which can be viewed on the Diocesan website, with questions to consider afterwards. It is not clear how many parishioners are participating, but the first invitation to watch the film at the church as part of a group and to discuss it afterwards over coffee did not draw many people.

Comment: The Diocese is sending out a lot of information about setting up different programmes. However, different groups do impact one another, and the timing of diocesan information doesn't always fit with what is already happening in the parish. This might be less of a problem in parishes which are smaller. However, as people

seem in general busier than before the pandemic, perhaps partly as a result of the contraction of companies and organisations, leading to a greater workload among the remaining staff, it would be helpful if there were a cohesive and coordinated strategy, both at a diocesan and national level.

#### *New Parishioners*

180 new families have registered with the parish since the start of lockdown. New Parishioners evenings haven't yet resumed in their previous form. In order to invite everyone, the current idea is to nominate four Friday evenings for New Parishioner Meetings, and to invite families to come to one of them.

#### *Music*

Music has resumed at all Masses that had music before Covid. Roger is currently unwell, but volunteers are playing at the 10.30 Sunday Mass on most weeks and Claire Dane is organising the music. The music at the Sunday 9.00 am and 5.30 pm Masses are now close to normal. It would be good to invite new singers to take part.

#### *First Holy Communion*

140 children are registered with the current programme. Two Saturday morning Masses are planned for 3 weekends to allow them all to celebrate their First Communion and there will be 7 First Holy Communion Masses in total.

#### *Finance (Joe Dunne)*

Joe presented figures from 2021, 2020 and 2019. Two years of lockdown reduced parish expenditure, and the appeal that was held in 2019 encouraged many parishioners to switch from donations using weekly envelopes to a standing order, so income continued at a good level.

Figures from the first quarter of 2022 are not yet finalised, but are looking promising.

The first digital collection plate was installed in June 2020, there are currently two in the Narthex and a third has recently been installed in the Repository. In 2021 the total income received through the digital plates was just under £21K, and in 2022 to date the total is £8.5K. The machines have been very successful. In addition to Offertory and Donations, the ease with which additional categories can be set up means that they have been used to collect for the Ukraine Appeal, Christmas and Easter offerings, and donations made to Christian Aid at the two Lent lunches.

Cash income is currently around £500 per week, which is predominantly for the Offertory as we have not yet held many second collections.

One weekend in December was designated a 'Giving Weekend' where all donations were divided between 3 local charities. A total of nearly £5000 was given by generous St Dunstan's parishioners.

Until 2019 parish expenditure exceeded our income, but in more recent years the parish is breaking even. Our contributions to the Diocese are large: 43.5% of the Offertory total last year, but, as Fr Peter commented, there are smaller parishes who need support from the larger ones. One open question is at what time regular second collections should be reintroduced. It was noted that parish expenditure reduced when Nanda was made redundant, and then again more recently when Elizabeth Puttock was made redundant.

There are uncertainties about the future that are difficult to plan for. In particular, in the Pastoral Plan, the Bishop suggested that some parishes might be merged. If Woking parish were to merge with another, some work to expand facilities would need to be completed before the merge went ahead. Also, a larger parish might require more paid staff rather than relying so heavily on volunteers.

It is planned in September to remind parishioners to review their giving. Although some donations will decrease, hopefully some will increase, and new families might be encouraged to sign up for regular giving.

Comment: It would be useful to present a summary of the accounts to the parish.

Answer: A Parish AGM is planned to discuss restarting of parish life, but also to present the finances.

AOB

*Fr Peter*

Parishioners' Meeting/AGM

The Finance Committee had to approve the finances before they were presented to the Parish. The finances have now been approved and so it is hoped to have an AGM one evening in May.

Fr Peter would like to present a vision for the future of the parish, which also includes the financial situation. However, the Diocesan context isn't yet clear.

Question: Is it known yet where Deacon Nick will be after his ordination?

Answer: No, he won't find out until his ordination.

*Fr Frank's Memorial*

The statue is now complete and is back with Marcus Cornish. The stone plinth will arrive in 3-4 weeks. The foundations are complete. The writing on the column has been finalised and will be highlighted in gold. A supplier for the stainless-steel rod, which will anchor the plinth to the foundations, has yet to be found, and the column cannot be finalised until the diameter of the rod is known. The sealant to protect the stone plinth from verdigris from the statue has been bought. The benches to be placed around the memorial are ready, but lighting needs to be installed. The foundry will deliver the plinth and the statue, hopefully by the end of May. There is no date yet for Bishop Richard to visit and bless the memorial. The final cost will be higher than anticipated.

*Platinum Jubilee*

Four apple trees, given to the parish by Woking Council to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, have been planted near around the site of the memorial.

Fr Peter concluded by thanking the members of the parish team for their support since Fr Simon left, allowing him to concentrate on the sacraments.

*Michele Harrison*

Michele reported that very sadly the Deputy Head of SJB had died, having a great impact on both staff and students at the school. There will be a memorial service at the school after his funeral, which will be celebrated by Fr Peter.

Michele also reported that nearly all activities at school had returned to being in person. Assemblies have half the students present, with the other half on Zoom, but other groups such as Faith in Action and Parent Prayer are now running face to face. It was disappointing that the Carol Service was cancelled, but since then the following have been run: an Alpha Away Day at the end of the Alpha course, an Ash Wednesday Reconciliation Service, Lent fundraising, Stations of the Cross, and two more staff members have been received in the church by Fr Peter.

The Polish School, which meet at SJB, ran a very successful collection for Ukraine. The response from parents was overwhelming. Michelle thanked the members of the Polish School for managing all the donations.

A Section 48 visit was scheduled for April 27<sup>th</sup> (the day of the Parish team meeting) but had been postponed.

*Mark Potter*

*Refugees*

Refugees from Afghanistan are continuing to arrive. They are housed in hotels when they first arrive, and sometime move to a different part of the country for more permanent accommodation. The quality of accommodation provided in Woking is very good.

Question: how long are they expected to stay in the accommodation?

Answer: There are sometimes restrictions, for example dependent on the landlord or on benefits. The aim is to help the refugees become as independent as possible, and for example, some have of the refugees from Syria have successfully become independent.

There will be a meeting about Ukrainian refugees on April 28<sup>th</sup>. There is an emphasis on organisations trying to coordinate schemes with those provided by the government.

Question: How is extra support or infrastructure such as GP, dentist etc arranged?

Answer: Much of this extra organisation falls to the family hosting the refugees from Ukraine. It would be easier if there were some overall coordination.

#### Act of Witness

The Act of Witness was quieter this year, and it seemed as though many people took the chance to go on holiday over Easter. However, over 400 people attended. There was a procession through Woking, starting in Old Woking, passing the United Reformed Church, Maybury and continuing into the town centre. Nearly 100 leaflets were distributed along the route. It was a very successful team effort, covered in the Woking News, and 3 people came into the church as a result.

Fr Peter commented that St Dunstan's contributed by providing space for rehearsals. Mark said that the Narthex proved a good space to rehearse in, and some people visited St Dunstan's for the first time.

#### Date of the next meeting

Fr Peter will decide on some possible dates for a Sunday evening meeting for parishioners for the AGM. The parish team will meet in advance if necessary.

Fr Peter, on behalf of the Parish team, offered to Mark their condolences on Jane's death.

Fr Peter concluded the meeting with a prayer.