

St Dunstan's Parish Team Meeting

December 15th 2021

Present

Adrian Sharman, Fr Peter, Joe Dunne, Mark Potter, Deacon Russell, Mary Smith, Deacon Nick, Michele Harrison 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

John Sexton, Karin Harvey and Julianne Birch.

3. Minutes of the last meeting.

No comments were made on the minutes but some points arose in later discussion.

4. Parish Update

Mary Smith: Activity within the parish and sacramental programmes

It is a busy time preparing for Christmas. The guidelines issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference for England and Wales (CBCEW) are being followed. There has been little change recently but if changes are introduced parish practice will be amended according to those changes.

Singing has now been reintroduced to all Masses which previously had singing. It is not the same as before the pandemic: many people have not yet returned and there is no singing in harmony at the 10.30 Mass on Sunday.

First Holy Communion: Applications from 147 candidates have been received so far. The Parents' course has been completed and the children came to church for the Church Search Quiz on Saturday December 4th. The sessions for the children will start in the new year. The parents will have meetings with the Catechists before running the children's sessions at home. It has been found that this is a good way to prepare the children.

Baptism: There have been 112 baptisms this calendar year.

Marriage preparation: A new course will be run soon. Many enquiries have been received, but 85-90% of them are for marriages which will take place abroad.

Confirmation: Registrations for Confirmation this year have been invited, with 30 booked so far and more are expected. We are awaiting the dates for Confirmation from the bishop.

Time and Talent Survey: This is continuing with a fair number of responses so far and we are confident that we will have new volunteers over many areas. The most popular offer received is to help in library. Fr Peter will promote the survey again one weekend in the new year, and then the data will be analysed.

Mark Potter: Synod Groups

There are currently 5 synod groups: 3 new groups and 2 existing new groups who will be discussing the material in January. Mark commented that this is a small number considering size of parish.

Fr Peter commented that the small numbers are replicated elsewhere in Deanery.

Adrian asked about New Parishioners, and whether a New Parishioners' evening had been held?

Mary said that many new parishioners have registered, over 500 during the pandemic. A New Parishioners' meeting has not yet been arranged.

Adrian commented that he was sorry that the SJB Carol Service had needed to be cancelled at short notice. It was disappointing to those who had prepared to lead it, especially those who were leaving the school. At SJB there are about 40 teachers absent with Covid and the school is closed to year 12.

At this point Mary Smith left the meeting.

Fr Peter: Parish Office IT

The local IT support that Nick Harvey gave us has not been replaced since he died. When a UPS failed and needed replacing it was realised that further professional help was needed. A company has been contacted and we are waiting for a quote for support. Two quotes have been requested: basic support which is largely remote and a higher level where someone would come in and regularly maintain the system. A survey of the existing system has been completed with help from Kevin Wallace. The new company will have access to our system, provide some IT support in the future and verify that the current system is backed up. Fr Peter commented that Nick installed a resilient system.

Query – how does this interact with support from the Diocese?

Answer: Ian O’Sullivan, the Diocesan IT Manager has set up software and licenses which are provided by the Diocese. This includes Office365 and Anti-Virus software. Software is also installed through which we can allow him to manage the system remotely.

Query – is there a cloud-based file system?

Answer: Yes – Office365 has within it a cloud-based drive, OneDrive, which has ample space. This is being used but is not currently the primary file system.

Deacon Russell suggested that the diocese should have guidelines which parishes follow. He will look into cloud-based storage, which could then be shared with the deanery. Fr Peter commented that he supports sharing knowledge and practice within the deanery.

Fr Peter: Preparations for Christmas

Fr Peter commented that there is a busy time coming up. That evening there had been a choir practice and there is some uncertainty over whether the Carol Service should go ahead next weekend. Choir members will be asked for their views.

Comment: there is currently a fast-moving situation and people’s concerns need to be addressed. The SJB Carol Service was cancelled at short notice and the St Dunstan’s Advent Service is planned to be streamed to parents, with no parents present in the church.

There will be a Reconciliation Service this Friday. There will be 9 visiting priests but it is not known how many parishioners will come. There were a small number of parishioners at the reconciliation service at Knaphill, and there is an upcoming service at West Byfleet which might give us a better idea. The service will not be cancelled, but it would be better not to invite more priests than will be needed. In the current circumstances the service will be shorter than usual, people will be able to leave immediately after visiting a confessor, and the church will be arranged so that priest and penitent can be separated appropriately.

Christmas weekend Masses. There will be the normal Masses for Christmas Eve: 7.00 pm, a service of readings and carols from 9.30 pm followed by Mass at 10.00 pm. Christmas Day Masses will be at 7.45 am, 9.00 am (with a nativity tableau) and 10.30 am. There will be no evening Mass on Christmas day. There will be two Masses on Sunday – 9.00 am and 10.30 am, but again no evening Mass. Monsignor Richard Madders will celebrate the Masses on Sunday. Fr Peter will be in the parish on Monday. Tuesday and Wednesday of Christmas week, but there will be no Mass on Thursday or Friday. Mary has arranged welcomers, readers and ministers for the Christmas Masses, and all is in hand apart from being short of readers for 10.30 am Mass on Christmas day.

Fr Peter commented that as hymn books are currently not being used, all the words for carols must be prepared for the screens, so it is quite a lot of work.

Deacon Nick – There has been a case of Covid at Allen Hall so he is currently back in the parish. He will be in the parish next week and will be away for a week or so after the last Mass of Christmas day.

Fr Peter - grateful to Nick and Russell for their support.

Fr Peter: Other updates

Returns to the Time and Talents Survey have been coming in slowly, but this will be pushed again in the new year.

The statue for Fr Frank's memorial is being prepared to be cast in bronze, which might be complete at the end of January, and the lettering has been reviewed. Fr Peter will circulate pictures. The project is progressing slowly, partly due to Covid, and the completion date is not yet known. Parish finances will cover the remaining costs.

Replacement water pumps have now been installed to prevent the church car park flooding.

5. Finances – Joe Dunne

There is no official report for this meeting, but the parish finances are still in good shape. The accounts are complete to end of September, and the accounts for October are being monitored. For both months income has exceeded expenditure and a surplus is expected for 2021, probably of the order of £15K - £20K. The totals are yet to be calculated for the Christmas gifts for Fr Peter and for the Giving Weekend (for which, in the absence of the proceeds from a Christmas Fair, the total will be divided between 3 local charities).

Mark Potter shared an email from CTIW about a Credit Union: Boom. Joe has looked into them, and they are regulated as claimed. Any deposits up to a value of £85K are covered by the FSCS guarantee and over the previous few years they have paid out interest of 1-2% while bank rates are less than 1%, if any. Joe has been in touch with Diocese, who do not support placing a deposit with Boom. Joe noted that although the parish is an independent entity, over which Fr Peter has control, in UK Charity law the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton is listed as a single charity, over which trustees have control. The Diocese banks with HBSC and have an arrangement whereby parishes whose accounts are in credit are offset against those whose accounts are in debit, for the purpose of calculating interest payable. Therefore the diocese has an interest in parishes not banking elsewhere and the Bishop does have authority to request parishes to use a particular bank. Sarah Kilmartin, the Diocesan Chief Operating Officer has said that St Dunstan's should not place a deposit with Boom.

Fr Peter commented that he had also been in touch with Sarah Kilmartin, and received the same response. He suggested that the matter should be reconsidered in the new year, to see whether it would be possible to invest some money as a way of helping people locally, but also in a way that is acceptable to the diocese.

Christmas Giving: Plans are in place for Christmas donations to our priest. Fr Peter, Joe, Adrian and Mary have been meeting on a Monday morning to keep on top of parish affairs.

6. Safeguarding

Fr Peter attended a meeting at Worth Abbey about safeguarding. He also met with Alan Blanchard, Safeguarding lead, and Lynda Crosby who manages DBS applications, and had a phone call with Philip (Wright) the diocesan Assistant Safeguarding Coordinator. Fr Peter commented that it would be useful to take the information provided by the diocese on how we deal with people and keep people safe, and put it into a format that is accessible by everyone in the parish, regardless of the role they play: Welcomers, Toddler group coordinators and so on, everyone should have access.

7. other updates

Fr Peter

Fr Peter reported that the Toddlers' group has restarted. He also hopes that early in 2022 it would be possible to consider having social events again, such as coffee after Mass. The timing is still uncertain, but he has observed that there is increasingly a desire among parishioners to socialise. Therefore, as soon as possible, socialising will be reintroduced, including meetings to welcome new parishioners.

A third digital collection plate has been bought. It was used by the Catenians but will now be used for the repository.

EL to check whether the machine is in the Repository. *The new machine is installed in the Repository and is being used.*

The Dona machines will have a tab added for the Christmas collection for Fr Peter.

Mark Potter

Mark reported that there was a lot of activity in churches in Woking. All churches are busy preparing for Christmas, but Woking United Reformed Church is also being used as Covid vaccination centre. There are long queues all day, and about 800 vaccines were being administered daily before the recent announcement about the expansion of the programme, and the number has now increased. The minister, Lucy Brierly, is pleased to be able to offer this service to the community.

Woking Borough Council has made a commitment to house 5 Afghan families in the borough. They hope to have the families settled by January and are looking at 3 or 4 potential properties. Mark reported that there was a good response to a recent request in the newsletter for help in building furniture. Several parishioners offered to help and there were some volunteers from the Street Angels, so that the work was completed in time, ready for a family.

Modern Slavery: Mark will be a parish ambassador for Modern Slavery and hopes to give a talk in the new year to raise awareness about Modern Slavery within the parish and possibly the deanery.

8. AOB

Michele Harrison

Michele reported that there had been a very successful afternoon of Reconciliation at SJB, compared with the previous time when there had been very few students. This time there were many more students than they could accommodate. Some things have started again within the school including Faith in Action awards and Parents Prayer. There have been many bereavements within the school. This year the Christmas Liturgy is online, and although it has been tried to make it creative, years 12 and 13 are at home and so might not see it, and year 11 is on study leave. So, it is disappointing.

Michele also reported to the team about the Alpha course running at SJB. As well as that, Fr Peter has already received one staff member into the church and two more staff are waiting for a date.

Fr Peter

Fr Peter said that he very much appreciated Deacon Nick being in the parish and thanked both him and Deacon Russell for their support.

Fr Peter wished everyone a happy Christmas, and a covid free Christmas and new year.

Date for the next meeting?

It was suggested that the date for the next meeting be fixed in the new year as it is dependent on what happens with Covid. Fr Peter suggested working with Adrian and Joe to prepare the finances to be presented to team. The meeting closed with a prayer.