

# St Dunstan's Parish Team Meeting

October 6th 2021

Present

Adrian Sharman, Fr Peter, Joe Dunne, Mark Potter, Deacon Russell, Michele Harrison, Mary Smith, Julianne Birch and Elizabeth Lucek (to record minutes)

## 1. Welcome and opening prayer.

Fr Peter opened the meeting with a prayer.

## 2. Apologies

John Sexton, Karin Harvey.

Adrian will meet with Karin in a few weeks. He hopes that she will feel able to join us again soon. Adrian also asked the team to keep John Sexton in their prayers.

## 3. Minutes of the last meeting.

At the last parish team meeting, following the news from Bishop Richard that Fr Simon would be moving to Dorking but that there would not be another priest coming to Woking, a letter was composed by the team and sent to Bishop Richard expressing their concerns about the high workload for Fr Peter. Bishop Richard has since responded to say that he regrets that these are challenging times, but that there is some help from Deacon Nick Harden for a couple of days each week. He also hoped that Fr Richard Madders would have been able to help sometimes. Bishop Richard also mentioned the importance of the parish in helping Fr Peter and hoped that this would bring some positive developments.

Fr Peter said that he had also spoken to Bishop Richard and reiterated that the Bishop has said that there wasn't a priest who could come to Woking. Fr Peter commented that although Deacon Nick is enthusiastic and willing to help where he can, Fr Peter is contributing to Nick's training for the priesthood, which also takes time. Deacon Nick is likely to be ordained in July 2022 and Fr Peter is waiting to hear from Allen Hall who will explain what training they expect Nick to receive from the parish. In the meantime, as a Deacon, Nick cannot celebrate Mass, and it is proving very difficult to find priests as supply. Fr Peter is going away with family on holiday to see his son in Canada, and it has been very hard to find cover for Masses for the two weeks. However, weekday Masses will be said by one of the Kiltegan Fathers, and Fr Richard Madders will stay in the parish for the weekends and celebrate the Sunday Masses. Nick will be able to help at the weekends. Unfortunately, currently, Fr Richard Madders isn't able to cover Masses regularly.

Last weekend Fr Thomas took leave of absence for a year to consider whether he continues as a priest, so Guildford now has two priests, not three. Guildford parish has four churches, a large hospital, and a prison, which is a high workload for two priests. Fr Peter commented that there is a significant problem with priest personnel. The Kiltegan Fathers would normally have expected 10 or 12 additional Kiltegan fathers to join them in the late summer/early autumn, staying with them on their way to the missions. This year there will be only one. Many of the priests are Irish and are now choosing to travel straight from Ireland to the missions, rather than stopping to spend time in the UK.

Comment: When Bishop Richard came to the parish, he said that there was no issue with priests, and the lack of priests has not been addressed.

Fr Peter commented that Bishop Richard no longer has plans to close Knaphill. Bishop Richard has also discouraged holding Liturgies of the Word with Communion. It would be helpful to take a more realistic view. If Fr Peter were to be unwell, it would be difficult to find cover, and that cover would most likely only be for weekend Masses.

Comment: The next step would be to write to Archbishop John Wilson.

Fr Peter suggested that nothing be done immediately, and that the parish team should wait for a week or so to find out what actions might be taken in reaction to Fr Thomas leaving Guildford parish.

Comment: Bishop Richard is visiting St Dunstan's School next week. It was suggested that the bishop might be reminded about the shortage of vocations. One seminarian at Arundel has also asked for time to consider his position, and he might not return to the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, but might instead enter a religious order, so another person who was hoped to join the diocese as a priest now looks unlikely to do so.

Question: What is the procedure for Fr Peter to take holiday and go away?

Fr Peter replied that he has notified Bishop Richard that he is going away and given him the details of the cover that he has arranged. He aimed to present Bishop Richard with a solution, not a problem, but it doesn't mean that the problem doesn't exist.

Mary reminded the team of the ethos of Diving Renovation, which concentrates on encouraging parishioners to do what they can, leaving the priest to do those things that only they can do – e.g. celebrate Mass, Sacrament of Reconciliation, Anointing of the sick and so on. It would be helpful if these ideas could become better appreciated by parishioners, to encourage them to help within the parish and to make their expectations more realistic about those things that Fr Peter is able to do in addition to his priestly activities. The workload over the last few weeks has been particularly high, with many funerals, including three on consecutive days in the last week. Although a Requiem Mass will normally replace the daily Mass, there is still a lot of preparation ahead of each service. The parish office is also extremely busy.

Fr Peter expressed his gratitude for the support from the parish office. He expressed his thanks to Deacon Russell, and to Deacon Nick who will help more within the parish as he gains experience. Fr Peter intends to ask Bishop Richard if he could release Nick from 4 days a week at Allen Hall, to allow him more time in the parish. Fr Peter commented that Bishop Richard does have the authority to give Nick more time in the parish, he could even ordain Nick at any time if it was felt to be appropriate. He also said that Bishop Richard could consider whether every parish is necessary, given that closing a parish would release much needed manpower. Fr Peter concluded by suggesting it would be useful to wait and see what changes Bishop Richard makes in response to the changes in the clergy at Guildford.

Adrian wished Fr Peter a good holiday, which was seconded by other members of the parish team.

#### 4. Parish Update

##### Quinquennial Report

Fr Peter: The Quinquennial Report has now been completed. It is required every 5 years and is largely concerned with health and safety. It did not raise any unexpected issues, and there are no major problems. Fr Peter has spoken to Pepe and Lynda Crosby about any issues raised which covers a list of actions which would be desirable but not essential (categories 3 and 4).

##### Water Pump Failure

Fr Peter reported on the failure of the water pumps on Monday night followed by torrential rain on Tuesday night which led to flooding of the car park. Fr Peter commented that there were no sandbags available should the church have been at risk, although on this occasion the church was not in immediate danger of being flooded. The tanks were pumped out on Tuesday night and an order has been put in for replacement capacitors to repair the pump. The total cost is nearly £2000, an unexpected cost, but thankfully the parish has funds to cover it.

## Return of groups/Covid

Church facilities are starting to be used again. Lynda Crosby, an unpaid volunteer who has dealt with Health and Safety over many years has volunteered to look after the practical aspects of groups meeting at the church. She organises Health and Safety and Covid risk assessments for organisations including the Catenians, Street Angels, the Octavians, and the Grandparents group. She meets with representatives of the groups to draw up Risk Assessments so that everyone coming to the church can be protected as well as possible.

Fr Peter reported that he has discussed the prospect of having a Christmas Fair this year with Jackie and Lynda. However, they concluded that it is not possible this year.

Jane Potter has decided that she will retire from running the Parent and Toddler group after 36 years. It is hoped that the group will reform soon with new volunteers.

Senior Lunches will not restart this year and other larger groups, for example Lent Lunches, will not restart until 2022.

Smaller groups, such as Needles and Craft and Film Club might start up again soon, although there are not yet many queries about this. Icon Painting is planned to restart following a Covid risk assessment. Parish life is returning, but at a small scale and low key, trying to make sure it is safe.

Mary Smith commented that following the long break because of Covid, many people are reconsidering whether they want to continue with the roles they had volunteered for before the pandemic – for example Toddlers' Prayers, Children's Liturgy, transport, church cleaning and parking. Although advice and support are still available, new personnel are needed. It can be quite a lot of work to think of people to approach to find new volunteers. Fr Peter asked how the parish office could be supported with this and asked whether more administration support should be planned.

Deacon Russell commented that the Baptism team that is currently running the baptism programme has almost no members of the original team, both Catechists and Welcomers to the baptism service. Lynda Crosby and Jackie Clements are currently doing the latter role.

Adrian Sharman suggested that Jane Potter is thanked for running the Parent and Toddler group. A note has been composed for the newsletter.

Adrian suggested that an appeal for volunteers be made, and Mary commented that she would like to put out a note at Mass for parishioners listing areas where help is needed, with the hope that people would volunteer. This would not be the Parish Census that has been discussed before, because not enough parishioners have yet returned to church as the Covid restrictions have been relaxed. Fr Peter is keen for this to happen soon. Mary will prepare a draft while Fr Peter is away and send it around to the parish team.

## Synod Path

Pope Francis recently formally launched the two-year consultation process leading to the 2023 synod. Plans on how to respond to the synod path were discussed. Bishop Richard had mentioned that preparation might take place within Advent Groups. Mark Potter said that he could help to organise these groups. Fr Peter thanked Mark for this.

Fr Peter commented that the Deans had a meeting with Bishop Richard last Thursday, but although it is an important topic, there is not much information available yet.

## Father Frank's memorial

Fr Peter gave an update on Fr Frank's memorial. There have been delays arising from Covid, lack of supplies and problems with personnel at the foundry, which have led to a 6-week delay in completion from mid to late January to sometime around Easter. A group from the parish went to see the finished statue, which is looking

good and is now ready to be forged. There is nothing to be done about the delay – it is necessary to wait for the foundry to open and for the works to take place.

### CTIW/Refugees

Mark Potter: Mark attended a recently CTIW meeting which was particularly well attended. Mark spoke to Adrian Beavis, the new vicar of Christ Church in Woking, who has also found that many people who were previously involved in parish ministry have decided not to carry on – a similar situation to that at St Dunstan's. Mark commented that he had a meeting soon with Woking Borough Council for an update on refugees. Being able to settle Afghan refugees in Woking is dependent on them being found housing. Most refugees are already in the country but are staying in temporary accommodation. Two properties have been found in Woking and it is hoped that Afghan families will move in soon.

### Street Angels

Mark Potter thanked Fr Peter for celebrating the Street Angels 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service, which was arranged before Fr Simon left, and Mary Smith for support from the parish office. Fr Peter thanked Mark for thinking of St Dunstan's as the venue. Mark commented that the service was very well attended and there many VIPs, including the Mayor of Woking, the chief executive of Woking Borough Council and the member of parliament for Woking.

Mark Potter said that he has accepted the role of Modern Slavery Awareness Ambassador. Many people around the deanery are unaware that modern slavery is a significant issue. The ambassador role is educational, helping people understand the issue and appreciate the problem.

Fr Peter congratulated Mark, thanked him for accepting the role, and offered the support of the parish.

### 5. Finance – Joe Dunne

Joe Dunne circulated a spreadsheet of parish income and expenditure up to July 31<sup>st</sup> 2021. There is some catching up to be done with the accounts, partly because Valerie Hamilton has sent some queries to the diocese and is waiting for a reply. The accounts for August 2021 are not quite closed. However, Joe commented that, from the accounts so far, he is expecting a surplus of around £23K (following a surplus of £17K last year). The parish is therefore again this year covering costs from current income, and not drawing from reserves (as was necessary in 2017/2018/2019). The situation might change as we move through the end of this year as parish life continues to recover and more activities take place, with their associated cost.

The parish is in a good position financially and can cover the initial cost of Fr Frank's memorial, with the aim of repaying the cost following a parish appeal. The parish is also, if necessary, able to hire additional clergy.

Building maintenance costs remain relatively low as the church was only completed in 2008

Ian White submitted a report on GiftAid income during the 9 months up to September 2021. The parish was fortunate to have made the last financial appeal in October/November 2019. The appeal reminded people to review their level of giving to the church – a few parishioners revised their standing orders down, but many increased them. It also encouraged people who were not giving by standing order to set one up, including GiftAid if possible, which significantly reduced the church's dependence on donations through the offertory plate on a Sunday. Parishes within the diocese who are heavily dependent on cash donations have struggled during the pandemic.

It is now two years since the last financial appeal, and Joe suggested considering whether it was time for another? It would be an opportunity for a gentle reminder to parishioners to review and modernise their gifts, as well as a chance to engage with new parishioners.

Mary Smith commented that since the start of the first lock down we have had 134 new families register with the parish. Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to hold a 'new parishioners' evening.

Joe suggested that sometime early next year would be a good time for a new appeal.

Question: When will the Diocesan Levy be known for next year?

Joe replied that the diocesan levy is likely to increase, and the diocesan plan is for it to increase substantially. The levy this year is likely to be around £100K rather than £80K as over the last two years. The levy used to be dependent on the offertory collection over the last 3 years. However, as most parishes accounts now have their own system, it is possible to base the levy on the offertory for the previous year. A levy on property sales will also modify the total. Joe commented that the diocese is short of money, and Woking (along with Weybridge) is one of the larger, and financially successful parishes in the diocese.

## 6. Safeguarding

Adrian Sharman: Alan Blanchard is now responsible for Safeguarding within the parish. He is receiving notifications and he thanked the parish office for support over queries and information about DBS.

Fr Peter told the parish team that Lynda Crosby is involved in DBS and safeguarding for the parish. We received from Hove a list of around 300 names of people who had, at one time, needed a DBS check. Lynda met with Mary Smith and together they have been through this list to identify those people who are still active and who require a DBS check under the updated guidelines. They have identified only 30 or 40 people who need a DBS check, and it is proposed that these all be renewed in the new year over a few months. The records will be updated with a list of which parishioners are fulfilling which roles, why they need a DBS check, and when it was approved. As the rules have changed over the last two or three years this will mean that all checks will have been done according to the same rules. Lynda will liaise with Alan Blanchard on this. Care also needs to be taken if people move into different roles, that if it is a regulated activity that they have the necessary clearance.

## 7. AOB

Adrian asked each member of the team if they had anything they wanted to raise or discuss.

Julianne Birch commented that if there is anything the school can do to support Fr Peter or the parish office, that they are happy to help.

Michele Harrison said that at SJB things were starting up again after the pandemic. Four Reflection Days at St Dunstan's Church will be held for year 7 children before Christmas. She thanked the parish office for helping arrange these. Michele also told the parish team that Mark Potter had helped arrange for a group of Street Angels to visit the school who are trained as school listeners, which will start this week. Michele thanked Mark for his help with this initiative.

It was commented that the number of adults volunteering at the church reflects the issue that young people are not yet returning to Mass. This is a problem nationwide. Michele thanked the parish for enabling the school to meet in church. Also Mary Packham, the St Dunstan's School Chaplain, will come over to meet the children who have moved from St Dunstan's to SJB this year.

Fr Peter commented how delighted he is that stronger links are being forged between the two schools, and that is good for parents to see cohesiveness between primary and secondary education.

Michele commented that Fr Peter comes to SJB to celebrate Mass before school on Friday mornings. The invitation has recently been extended to other priests in the Deanery, two priests have accepted the invitation and so Friday morning Mass will now be shared between the three priests.

## Date of the next meeting

It was proposed that in the light of the preparation needed for the Synod, the next meeting should be before Christmas, in early December. Meeting on a Thursday was discussed, but RCIA meetings should be avoided. Either December 9<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> was suggested. December 16<sup>th</sup> is normally the SJB Carol Service, but as it involves

non-parishioners coming to the church, a Covid risk assessment needs to be completed with Lynda before it can go ahead.

Appendix

**ST DUNSTAN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**INCOME & EXPENDITURE**

	<b><u>7 Months to</u></b> <b><u>31 JULY 2021</u></b>	<b><u>2020</u></b>	<b>2019</b>
<b><u>INCOME</u></b>			
Offertory	<b>140,538</b>	190,620	185,625
Donations	<b>7,953</b>	5,988	10,902
Tax Rebates	<b>20,162</b>	51,026	38,255
Fund Raising	<b>1,578</b>	3,104	7,647
Repository	<b>-378</b>	625	1,683
	<hr/> <b>169,854</b>	<hr/> 251,363	<hr/> 244,112
<b><u>EXPENDITURE</u></b>			
Personnel	<b>41,433</b>	77,208	103,894
Travel		878	4,719
Office Costs	<b>8,410</b>	16,319	13,265
Establishment	<b>13,961</b>	30,155	23,786
Property expenditure	<b>11,499</b>	11,859	21,069
Equipment		-	7,045
Domestic	<b>5,634</b>	7,101	8,077
Liturgical, Pastoral	<b>5,711</b>	9,157	25,387
Diocesan Levy	<b>59,086</b>	80,240	80,119
School	<b>319</b>	1,479	
Donations			2,601
	<hr/> <b>146,054</b>	<hr/> 234,396	<hr/> 289,962
	<hr/> <b>23,800</b>	<hr/> 16,967	<hr/> -45,850
<b><u>EXTRAORDINARY ITEMS</u></b>			
Write back of provisions			3,872
Legacies received			
 <b>SURPLUS FOR THE PERIOD</b>	 <b><u>23,800</u></b>	 <b><u>16,967</u></b>	 <b><u>-41,978</u></b>