

St Simon Stock Parish, Walderslade

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council

held in the Church Hall Wednesday 14th July 2021 at 19:00

Members Present: Fr Pawel Sobol (FrP), Deacon Martin Smith (DcM), Tanya Wilkins (TW), Christine Flood (CF), Teresa Daly (TD (for Helen Appleby)), Anthony Seidu (AS), Lydia Burchell (LB), James Carmichael (JC), April Redding (AR), Les Boulton (Les (representing St Benedicts Mass community))

1. The meeting started with prayer led by DcM.
2. Apologies were received from Connie Cousins and Bernadette Long.
3. It was agreed that FrP would chair this meeting and DcM would take notes. A chairperson and note taker will be elected at the next meeting. FrP welcomed all members to the meeting, especially those who were new to the group, following the elections held in 2020.
4. The Terms of Reference (ToR) were reviewed, and some minor corrections were highlighted by FrP. The updated ToR will be amended ready for approval at the next meeting.
5. **Retrospective review of the last 10 months of parish life**
 - a. Finance (TW)
 - i. The parish has remained in a good financial position throughout lockdown. An audit of the accounts was carried out by the diocese in May. We are currently waiting for feedback.
 - b. Parishioner views (LB, AR, JC)
 - i. The Rosary and Evening Prayer Zoom sessions have been well received by those who participate. It is hoped they will continue.
 - ii. Online Masses have been key for enabling some parishioners to participate and continue to feel connected to our parish family. Numbers physically attending Mass have been steadily increasing and the live streams will be discontinued from Sunday 25th July.
 - iii. A question arose about whether we need to contact parishioners who have not returned to Mass. This will be revisited in October.
 - iv. There was agreement amongst the group that the parish has continued to grow together through lockdown. One of the keys to this was the very smooth transition between Fr Bart and Fr Pawel.
 - v. The praying of occasional litanies to mark special events over the last year has been a very positive move. DcM agreed to raise this at the next liturgy team meeting and see whether we can continue this going forwards.
 - c. Union of Catholic Mothers (UCM) (TD)
 - i. The UCM have continued with Zoom meetings over the last year or so. They did have an opportunity to meet in person last year, in the garden of one of their members. The UCM last met in June. They are also organising another family quiz.
 - d. Bereavement support (TD)
 - i. TD co-ordinates the bereavement support team for the parish. Due to the restrictions resulting from COVID, it has not been possible to meet in groups in the usual way. Hopefully this will be able to restart in September. It is

important to remind people that the team are available to offer support to anybody who might need it. TD will prepare something to go into the newsletter over the summer.

- ii. It would be good if we could have a Mass to remember and support all the bereaved of our parish. DcM agreed to raise this at the next liturgy team meeting.
- e. Fundraising (CF, TW)
 - i. It has not been possible to run any of our usual fundraising activities since lockdown began. It was agreed that fundraising would remain suspended for the rest of this year, with Summer and Christmas Fayres hopefully returning in 2022.
- f. Knights of St Columba (KSC)(AS)
 - i. KSC are currently holding their meetings virtually, although things are now starting to open. There will continue to be anxieties, with many people concerned about the changes, and not ready for normality to return just yet.
- g. Liturgy Team (DcM)
 - i. The Liturgy Team has been meeting via Zoom since lockdown began and has continued to support FrP with planning services for Christmas and Easter. Given the number of Masses over these two important times, a booking system was introduced for the main Masses. This was very successful and can be used in the future if necessary.
 - ii. Many of the extra celebrations that we usually have (Mass for sick and housebound, Carol services etc.) were either cancelled or significantly changed last year. We are hoping to resume these as things return to normal.
- h. DcM Personal reflection
 - i. It has been a difficult year for all involved in the parish. DcM is extremely thankful to have so much personal support from the parish community.
 - ii. We have been able to operate a very safe church throughout the lockdown period. This has only been possible thanks to the amazing efforts of our stewards and cleaners, who have responded to every call for help. We are planning to hold a special Mass, just for the stewards and cleaners, to say thank you properly.
- i. FrP Personal reflection
 - i. FrP said he was grateful for the support from the parish since he arrived in September last year. He is continuing to learn about how parishes operate and is still settling into his role as Parish Priest. FrP also said that one of the first things he noticed in our parish was the strong sense of community among the parishioners.

6. Future plans

- a. The 50th Anniversary of church opening is on 12th September and falls on a Sunday this year, which will give us an opportunity for a triple celebration. Monsignor John O'Toole will join us as the principal celebrant for the 11:00 Mass, which will also be used as Fr Pawel's induction Mass. This date will also be used to mark 10 years since the church was consecrated.
- b. As a result of the COVID restrictions, we have not been able to celebrate Mass at St Benedict's since the middle of March 2020. There was a discussion regarding whether Mass should be restarted in the school. Ideally, we should be united as a community in the Parish church. FrP has discussed this with Fr Neil Vincent (Dean) and Monsignor John O'Toole. They advised that he raised the matter with the Pastoral Council.

There are several difficulties with celebrating Mass in St Benedict's

- i. The school needs to be unlocked by one of the parishioners. This does create some security concerns and there have been occasions in the past where problems have been experienced setting the intruder alarm when locking up after Mass.
- ii. The chairs used for Mass are cloth and cannot be easily sanitized after use.
- iii. All materials required for Mass need to be transported to St Benedict's.
- iv. Celebrating Mass at St Benedict's adds a layer of complexity when a supply priest is required (to cover holiday etc.). This has caused problems in the past and it may be more difficult to arrange for cover in the future if the priest needs to travel to multiple locations.

The main concern in the past has been that there are people attending Mass at St Benedict's who do not have transport and are, therefore, unable to get to St Simon's on a Sunday morning. It appears that this only affects one family now. It may be possible to arrange transport to help this family attend Mass.

Les was asked for his opinion on the proposals to move the 09:00 Mass to St Simon's Church. He said that, in the past, he would have been reluctant to agree because of the community at St Benedict's. However, in recent months, he has noticed that many of those who attended St Benedict's regularly are now coming to St Simon's and he feels that we are now a more united parish, with everybody coming to one place. Prior to the meeting, FrP consulted several parishioners who were originally attending Mass at St Benedict's. All those he spoke to were happy for the Mass to move permanently to St Simon's.

FrP has also discussed this with Mrs. Burford (Headteacher of St Benedict's School). Joanne said she would be sad to see the 09:00 Mass at St Benedict's stop but she understood the reasoning and agreed it made sense. During the discussion, FrP and Mrs. Burford agreed that, on Holydays of Obligation, the 14:00 Mass would continue to be celebrated at St Benedict's, and parishioners would always be welcome to attend (assuming no other restrictions are in place).

Following discussion of all the points highlighted above, a vote was held, by a simple show of hands. The Pastoral Council voted unanimously to permanently transfer the celebration of 09:00 Mass from St Benedict's School to St Simon's Church.

- c. Gardening on the church field. CF has some plants which were intended to be planted on the church field, following weed clearance work. This topic needs further discussion and will be considered again at the next meeting.

7. AOB

a. Church Heating

- i. We have received agreement from the diocese for the installation of the new air conditioning system. We found out recently that we need planning permission and have submitted our application to Medway Council. A decision should be reached within 8 weeks.

The meeting closed prayer and blessings from FrP.

Next meeting 19:00 Wednesday 25th August