

Parish of The Most Holy Trinity

Parish-in-Council Meeting

Saturday 5 November 2022

09:30

St Mary's Catholic Church, Axminster

MEETING MINUTES

1. Opening Prayer

Father Anthony opened the meeting with a prayer.

2. Welcome

Father Anthony welcome everyone to the meeting, especially Father Jacek Kostuch.

3. Introductory remarks & General Overview

Fr Anthony delivered his final report as Parish Priest, commenting much has happened during this time. We've said "Goodbye" to many old friends, and the registers show Father had conducted 60 funerals over that period. But we've also welcomed many new friends, both through movement into the area and through conversions from other traditions. It's also been a great joy over the last few months to greet the arrival of so many Christians from India and we extend a huge welcome to them. Although our three former congregations were formally united by Decree on 1 April 2020, immersion in the Pandemic meant that we were unable to celebrate the formal expression of the reality which had been developing for some time. But we have moved on and I think it's now quite obvious that although we share and hold in common so much, we still manage to maintain the importance of each particular place of worship.

Father reported no congregation or building had suffered from our sharing of financial resources and it was a relief to know that we had the flexibility to cope. We have seen some difficult administrative adjustments especially over the last 18 months, but we have been rescued from them by the work of our new Parish Secretary and the sharply focussed attention of our new Treasurer. We have seen a huge amount of restoration work over the period, particularly Lyme Regis which consumed countless hours of time given freely by many parishioners.

Fr Anthony thanked Richard Salt and his meticulous attention to grant applications and work oversight, Philip Mostyn for his work on historical aspects of Lyme Catholicism in support of the Lyme restoration and also Jim Griffith for his enthusiasm and support from consultancy through to manual labour in repairing drains.

Fr Anthony commented that we've been given an opportunity through the pandemic to really rethink how we might re engage with the task of taking God's Kingdom forward. Now is the right time for a new priest to build from the base which has been laid.

Joe Harrison has been appointed as an Evangelisation Field Worker and is also developing his role as a Parish Catechist. Joe has taken on board almost all catechetical work with the young and has been responsible for the selection and training of our two new twin servers at Ss Michael & George. He is also keen to continue the work started at St Mary's school before the pandemic took hold. Work which is beginning to flourish through Jane Godfrey's Community Garden project. We have strong links with the school and under our new Headteacher we have a very fertile area. Most of our school families are not within the catholic tradition and a real opportunity exists here.

Fr Anthony added all of these reflections helped him to come to terms with what he knows will be a real loss. Fr commented that he loved his time at the parish, and there were so many to thank. Susan has been a constant support always there to cheer him when times sometimes seemed tough.

Fr Anthony concluded that the Parish of the Most Holy Trinity was set for an exciting future under Fr Jacek, and although he was retiring from parish ministry, we would continue to live in Seaton and hoped to worship in the churches.

Fr Anthony thanked parishioners for their affection and care shown to both him and Susan during his time as Parish Priest.

4. Finance Overview

Liz Tompkins (Parish Treasurer) reported the parish was currently in a reasonably healthy state, thanks to a combination of continued regular giving by parishioners, the annual investment fund dividends, and receipt of grants in to allow major works to be carried out at little cost to the parish.

The decision was made at the beginning of the year that we would draw down £50k from one of our Seaton specific funds to complete outstanding works; the car park, repointing of the presbytery and installation of a new heating system.

Liz confirmed all work had been completed and thanked Jim Griffith and Monica Watts-Hunt for overseeing the works from inception to completion.

In Axminster the main expenditure in this period was the Presbytery and the accommodation for our incoming Priest. Work needed to be done to restore the presbytery to one open building earlier on this year. As it was a completely new unfurnished flat upstairs considerable expenses was needed to make this a comfortable home for Father to live in.

Liz advised that Lyme Regis has a separate Restoration Fund bank account for clear accountability when applying for major grants. This will continue to operate in order to access outside funding. As Ss Michael & George is a listed building work tends to be bespoke and very high value.

Work intended to be completed this financial year includes:

1. The replacing the belltower window & restoring the front door
2. Restoring the bell to a ringing state
3. Restoring the damaged stain glass windows

Liz confirmed all work was accounted for and the appropriate faculties were in place.

Going forward our challenges are:

To ensure funds drawn down are paid back to the CIF to protect our annual income, as our parish could not survive on giving alone.

Increase giving where possible by making it easier for visitors and friends who live away to donate if the wish.

To encourage all parishioners who give regularly to Gift Aid donations, which increases money given by 25%.

To continue with the 60 Club, perhaps even make it a 100 club, which has a potential to be a very strong and fun way of raising funds.

The return of parish fundraising events which had to cease due to Covid.

Liz sincerely thanked everyone for their continued support, adding that while our churches are bricks and mortar, they are our sacred places of worship, and we pray that all we are doing is the right thing to preserve them for generations to come.

5. Evangelisation, Catechesis and Youth

Joe Harrison delivered his report, commenting that we have just come through a very difficult two years with the church only partially open and with extra restrictions, parishioners had been fearful of mixing. However the parish had fared well and that we had survived as a vibrant parish.

Mass attendance is now increasing, and we are at approximately 80% of our average pre-Covid level, with new families and newly retired couples moving to the area and joining in with enthusiasm. Our liturgy is richer throughout all three churches and the choirs provide such joy.

In our darkest days, we adapted and went online, with a Sycamore course, online Stations of the Cross and a Diocesan course 'Mission Made Possible'. Many attended private virtual Mass in a variety of places. From our Synodal gatherings last December, many felt their understanding of the faith was enriched by online sessions.

Joe hoped, as the new liturgical year unfolds, we can all continue to grow in our relationship with Jesus to make our Parish more inclusive and Synodal and that the Holy Spirit will guide us in our Mission as disciples of Christ in the first fully open liturgical year in three years.

6. Safeguarding

Julie Gray (Safeguarding rep for Axminster) reported that there had been no safeguarding incidents to report. Julie advised the safeguarding reps for each church. Kate Baker and Kathy Thurgood (Seaton), Liz Tompkins (Lyme Regis) and Julie Gray (Axminster). The parishioners were reminded that they can report anything of

concern to any parish safeguarding rep or contact the Diocese direct.

7. Health & Safety

Julie Gray reported that all three churches had undergone their health and safety audits carried out by Trevor Sillifant, Health and Safety Advisor at Diocese. All churches passed with very high scores. There were some remedial actions to complete but overall Trevor was very impressed with the record keeping and high levels of safety in each church. Julie Gray thanked Monica Watts-Hunt for her diligence in keeping the health and safety records and checks at Seaton and also to Julie and Tom Dunnon who had until recently been the health and safety reps for Lyme Regis.

Help was requested for Lyme Regis in carrying out monthly checks on the premises which would take no more than one hour per month. Anyone interested in this role should contact the parish office.

8. Lyme Regis Support Group

Liz Tompkins reported a huge amount of work had been completed in the ongoing restoration of Ss Michael and George. Liz Tompkins thanked the Committee for their time and commitment. The church had a new boiler installed this past year and works to repair the door and restore the bell tower and bell are scheduled. Thanks were conveyed to Jim Griffith for dealing with the School Room flooding problem which now looks like it may be resolved.

There are damp issues in the downstairs presbytery flat which may have been alleviated by Jim's intervention in clearing vegetation in the drains. Structural damage will need to be repaired in the future and regular maintenance of downpipes and drains.

Liz confirmed that work from volunteers has impacted in reduced costs for the restoration.

Fundraising: A number of car park spaces have been rented out, producing an income. Grant funding has been significant but to fulfil the grant criteria, the church needs to be open to visits. Liz conveyed thanks to Hilary Underwood for undertaking the daily opening and locking of the church. Positive comments have come from the church remaining open. Philip Mostyn had offered 'History of Lyme' evenings which have resulted in a further income for the restoration fund.

Pugin decoration: Restoration of the Pugin decoration of the interior of the church has been led by Philip Mostyn and Jane Godfrey. It is planned to involve A-Level students from The Woodroffe School. Richard Godfrey is teaching organists, developing for the next generation.

The food bank has provided a good community support. The Save the Children Group regularly use the School Room.

Liz concluded that the church was blessed with support from a strong community and was a joy to preserve.

9. Buildings Report

Joe Harrison delivered the buildings report on behalf of Jim Griffith.

Seaton

The new car park and re-pointing of the presbytery has now been completed, additional installed lights in the car park, gas leak repaired in the sacristy and the replacement of heaters in the church.

Outstanding items are the internal redecoration of damp damaged walls in the presbytery and relocation of other suspended crucifix in the church to mitigate further expenditure for regular chain stress tests.

Axminster

Blocked and broken drain outside sacristy repaired and replaced, which may have remedied damp to presbytery, roadside gutter of church cleared to prevent water damage to walls.

Outstanding items for Axminster are to clear out the fall pipe on the road side of the presbytery, fix loose roof slate on the church gable end and pressure wash the footpath to remove slime.

Lyme Regis

Gas boiler installed in January 2022, work progressing on the front door and bell tower window, outside security lights and sacristy light replaced, gutter and downpipe cleared, ongoing work on water leaks in School Room, lightning conductors carried out and conductor repaired.

Outstanding works include drain holes for the retaining wall of the School Room, dig out and restore drain at front of presbytery, pressure wash access ramp and steps, repair rotten toilet window frame, repair rotten gas meter door, repair to nave leaded windows, restoration of the bell, clean seagull debris from flat roof, restoration of the downstairs flat and painting of presbytery.

10. Music Matters

Jane Godfrey delivered the report on behalf of Richard Godfrey who was unable to attend.

All three churches are fortunate to have pipe organs and all are in working order.

Organists

Apart from Richard Godfrey, his two students Maja Palka and Oriel Chapman cover the Masses in Axminster and Lyme Regis, which should continue for a further three years until University. Another upcoming student

of Richard's is Jadie Riviere-Prince who should be ready in 2 to three years time.

Choirs

Each church has a choral director. They are Kathy Chaplin (Axminster), Kate Baker (Seaton) and Philip Mostyn (Lyme Regis).

Hymn books

Lyme and Seaton use Laudate, but Axminster has an outdated hymnal. Full music copies are scarce and a discussion about starting afresh might be a priority when funds allow.

Congregational signing

There is generally good congregational singing but singing of the Ordinary of the Mass is sometime disappointing. There is perhaps a danger that the choirs dominate and sing too many different settings for the congregation to get to know confidently. Richard's personal view is that the Mass should be limited to the English Chant.

11. Social Committee Report

Monica Watts-Hunt reported that events had not been possible due to Covid, but we plan to return to more face-to-face social events going forward. There will be a Christmas Draw this year which parishioners are asked to support and take tickets for to sell to friends and family. It is hoped to have a quiz evening in the new year, which could be held in the school hall to save on hire costs. Although Bishop Christopher's and Canon George's events were well attended, Monica commented that the Seaton car park 'wine and nibbles' fundraising event had not been supported by our other two churches and Monica reminded parishioners that we are one parish and we should support our social events as much as possible. Anyone interested in supporting the social committee should speak to Monica or get in touch with the parish office.

12. St Mary's School

Liz Tompkins reported there had been a change in leadership this year. Elaine Mannix left the school at the end of August to return to her family in the North. During her five years of leadership, Elaine worked hard to return it to the calm learning environment with high expectations that it had previously been. Liz commented we are forever grateful to her for that work.

Debbie Gill, who had been Year 6 teacher for a number of years and SENCO Lead is now Headteacher, with Mr Rob Meach as Executive Head, Rob is already an established executive head in 2 other schools within Plymouth CAST Trust. Debbie is proving herself to be a very effective head of school and is extremely keen to develop and maintain strong community links.

The school is supported by a strong staff with good training and development over the last couple of years to strengthen their ability to provide the best possible education for our children. This has been reflected in our most recent assessment reporting whereby we compared very favourably against national statistics despite the unsettled period through the pandemic.

The school has 135 students currently attending just under 10% of which are Catholic. It is hoped to have up to 6 children making their first holy communion in the coming year.

Liz confirmed the school follows the Catholic values which were set down by the Bishop, with daily acts of worship and following the 'Come and See' religious studies curriculum which takes them through the liturgical year.

Liz concluded that every child in our school knows they are loved, respected and safe and that their gifts and talents matter. It is an expectation that children know they should always use their gifts to their fullest potential and for the greater good of their community.

The school is hoping to re-establish links with the parish, that were lost over the last couple of years.

Community Garden Project

Jane Godfrey reported that for over two years a small steering group had been engaged in planning for a community garden, to utilise the small plot of land at the end of Field Lane, accessible via St Mary's school grounds. The aim of the project is to provide a space where we can explore and demonstrate environmentally sustainable methods of food production whilst promoting respect and protection of our natural environment. This has come into focus more as we face the challenges of climate change, which has been highlighted by the Holy Father in his encyclical letter 'Laudato Si', on care for our common home.

Further benefits of the scheme would be to involve the school children in hands on learning to experiment and share low-cost sustainable ways in which local residents could grow food ('no dig', containers, etc.), and including the whole parish, Axminster Churches Together, The Waffle House Community and others to ensure a continued programme of maintenance. Any excess food produce would benefit local charities for people in need.

Jane reported the National Garden Trust have provided financial support for a polytunnel, shed and possibly garden equipment. The Parish have also indicated further support for the project with a limit of £2000.

The question of planning permission for the polytunnel is currently being addressed however plans are hoped to commence with the planting of trees and plotting areas over the winter months. It is planned to involve the children of St Mary's

13. Fr Jacek Kostuch

Fr Jacek introduced himself and gave a history of his background and how he had come to his calling to priesthood. He comes from a polish family and is one of five children. Father's professional background is engineering. His parents relocated from Poland after the War. Since he was a boy Fr Jacek had felt the calling to be a priest and finally took the step fifteen years ago when he entered seminary. Fr Jacek is now in his seventh year of priesthood. Father commented he was encouraged to see the churches so well supported which would allow him to focus on sacramental life and catechesis. Fr Jacek added he looked forward to getting to know everyone. He commented that priests may come and go but the focus should always be Christ.

14. Parishioners' matters

There were no further matters.

15. Closing Prayer

Fr Anthony closed the meeting with the Angelus.