

ST MARY'S WOOLHAMPTON PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

Minutes

Thursday 13th June 2011 – 7.55pm Douai Abbey

1. Present: Father Dermot (FDT), Deacon John Foley (DJF), Paul Barras (PB – Chair), Joanna Harrison (JH), Sean Murphy (SM), Lisa Bewick (LB), Kate Burke (KB), and Peter Collins (PC)

Guests: Rev Stephen Morgan (RSM – Living Our Faith); Midge Robinson (MR – Youth)

2. Apologies: Maureen Howard (MH), Marc Servais (MS)

3. Main Topic for discussion – Living Our Faith: (RSM)

PB introduced RSM; Living Our Faith (LoF) to be moved up the agenda so RSM can get home! PB set the context of LoF in the Parish, and the initial reticence for involvement, which stemmed mainly from reservations regarding the method of fundraising. Our Parish also has the issue of St Finian's; it is felt that we do have a duty to support them.

RSM: On the whole, the Diocese's experience of LoF has been very largely positive, because it has recognised the right of parishioners across the diocese to:

- Know the plan for the diocese;
- Contribute to the plan for the diocese;
- Raise questions about why these areas for funding have been identified.

In parishes where most funds have been raised, they have had something local to raise money for – e.g. in Winchester, a new Parish Centre.

RSM then summarised the priorities for LoF funding for us (these are readily available on the Diocesan website:

<http://www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/livingourfaith/> and highlighted that, with areas such as the formation of the laity, Parishes and Pastoral areas will be given flexibility by the diocese to meet areas of need – e.g. in Reading, a youth worker.

Each Parish will get 25% of the amount they raise, up to the target. If a parish exceeds their target, then they get 80% of the total raised.

The initial £9m target was based on the diocese receiving 75% of the total raised, which would give the diocese what they thought they would need, particularly to support vocations. £13.4m has been raised so far, but due to parishes exceeding their targets, the Diocese has an amount very close to its target of £7m. It was anticipated that parishes would get c.£2.5m in total, but due to Parishes exceeding their targets, the actual figure is closer to £6m.

PC: Raised the question of how the funding was split between the different priorities.

RSM: Clergy and formation of the laity have been allocated £2.5m each, with renewal of facilities having been allocated £1.75m.

FDT: Asked RSM if he had suggestions as to how we could go about fundraising for LoF, especially given the discomfort felt by some parishioners regarding the method of fundraising.

RSM: Without exception, parishes which used the “methodology” performed best. There have been parishes who have used, e.g. persistent public appeals, but the individual, face-to-face approach has been much more productive.

DJF: In our Larger Pastoral Area, some parishes have been successful with LoF, and some haven't started. Those parishes who have participated so far have had to identify their own projects, and so have been less able to commit to St Finian's. Would it be possible for the Parishes left to join LoF, and ask for a greater percentage of the total raised to be allocated to St Finian's? Of the £500,000 that needed to be raised, there is £124,000 left to go.

RSM: It is possible that the parishes who have not yet participated could be allowed to retain more than 25% in order to support St Finian's. Cannot say what the decision would be, as the case would have to be forwarded for consideration by LoF committee, but believes that the argument would be listened to.

KB: How does sharing parishioners' personal details, even at Church level, affect Data Protection?

RSM: Not 100% sure on this, but recommends looking at the content of the Gift Aid Declaration, because this will state what personal information supplied can be used for.

In terms of how to go about fundraising, suggests the formation of a small (new, not existing) group, as a campaign team. They would need to do 4-6 weeks of preparation – how to approach people regarding LoF, etc. Then, they should start off by approaching a small number of people who are financially / temperamentally geared towards this kind of fundraising. Suggests using this kind of 'personal' approach for c. another 6 weeks, and 60-70% of funds would probably be raised at this stage. At the end of this 6 weeks period, “go public£ and ask the whole Parish for support; the following week, a talk / presentation on LoF should be given; the next week, pledge cards should be handed out, and the final week, a “Commitment Sunday”.

FDT: What sort of involvement should the Parish Priest have?

RSM: This has varied; some priests have been central to the parish campaign, whereas some have just facilitated. Sometimes, the Parish Priest approaching people to ask for support has had a very positive effect (sometimes it hasn't).

JH: Our parish is a different context to most, as we have 5 churches, and our Priest also leads a monastic life: asking him to be deeply involved in this, puts a lot of pressure on. Also, some priests have found being involved in LoF extremely stressful.

There was a “difference of opinion” here, as RSM completely refutes that some priests have found it that stressful, and claims that many have found being involved an extremely positive experience.

FDT: Suggested that we start our involvement in early 2012.

JH: The Larger Pastoral Area has made a commitment to St Finian's. We must ensure that we can support them, if we are to be involved with LoF.

RSM: It is fine to support St Finan's, but varying Parish share has to be put to LoF Committee. Suggests putting together a written argument, explaining why a varied Parish share would be the way forward. So far, only the Waterlooville Parish has been allowed to vary its share.

PC: Surely if one wanted to contribute to a local project, e.g. St Finain's, you would donate directly to them, not the diocese!

RSM: Pointed out that St Finian's is a Diocesan school, but also explained the reasoning for setting up LoF in this manner. There are two areas of the budget which are always demand-driven: vocations, and care for the clergy. The Diocese looked at what was needed (£2.5 - £3m) and sought professional advice, which was as follows:

- A big fundraising campaign over 10-15 years;
- Ask parishioners what they want;
- Meet local needs.

The Diocese then conducted some market research, which showed that people wanted the areas identified in LoF, and because there were several priorities, the structure of LoF was felt to be appropriate, as the different priorities all had to be tackled simultaneously. Out of the 6,600 pledges and gifts for LoF, only 3 have been restricted, by the donors, purely to the training of priests.

PC: Why not stop the campaign when the target of £9m was reached?

RSM: Partly because of the Diocese / parish split of funds – parishes exceeded their targets, meaning that the Diocese got less. Also, initial targets were tight, and so the extra funds make meeting the needs identified, easier. Also, the Bishop and trustees felt that parishioners were not the people who said “no” to LoF – it has been Priests / Finance Committees, or both. The Bishop's view is that all parishes should be able to participate. RSM has received 300-400 letters from parishes regarding the Parish Priest stopping participation.

MR: Why does it cost £150,000-£200,000pa to train a priest?

RSM: The government does not make any contribution to fees, as they do for other students.

DJF: Last year, parishioners were asked whether they would consider increasing their giving – 40% said no, and many of these were the biggest givers; 40% said yes, and 20% maybe.

RSM: The target for each parish is 150% of their annual offertory contributions over a five year period. The weekly contribution per parishoner in this area is £2.78; in Oxford and Winchester, it is c.3 times that, and in Methodist and Baptist congregations in the area, it is about 4 or 5 times as much. The top 25% of Parishes in LoF (with just one exception) increased their offertory collections, and so Parishes may not suffer as a result of participation. In Parishes that have participated, c. 1 in 3 households have contributed.

FDT: Feels that LoF could be educational in catechising parishioners about Diocesan needs.

KB: In a Parish such as this one, how would you construct a fundraising team?

RSM: There will be people in each Church who would favour speaking to someone from their own Church, and others who would prefer someone from outside their Church, and so you have to “make it up as you go along”! The reason for saying that it should be a new group is that it means that the “usual suspects” aren't put on, you can draw people in, and use new skills. Sometimes, it has also encouraged younger people to become involved.

PB: Thanked RSM for his attendance, his explanation of LoF, reassurance regarding our participation, and his clarity.

4. Further Issues for Follow up:

A: Minutes of Last Meeting:

Received.

B: Parish Picnic:

PB: Although there is no issue with us being invited to Englefield, there is a lack of facilities there, and so we may need to look elsewhere; also, with the Black Barn Mass, maybe we should either postpone to September, or find a different venue for next year.

KB: Note from MS – a smaller event would be fine at Englefield, but we could hold a larger event next year at somewhere like Ufton Court.

(There would be no issue with Lady Benyon if we were to do this, as she suggested Ufton Court, and her daughter runs it!)

It was agreed that it would be best to hold this next year, at Ufton Court (or a similar venue).

Action:

KB to get back to MS.

PB to get back to Greg Vickers.

C: Black Barn Mass:

Preparations are progressing well.

Music: Trefor Edwards at Pangbourne and Midge are co-ordinating, and all is going well. There will be a joint practice of singers and musicians on July 7th, and music packs will be sent out on Thursday 16th of June. People from all churches have been invited and included in this.

Committee thanked Midge for taking the lead on this, and for having prepared so well.

D: Introduction of Roman Missal:

PB: FDT is doing a good job of preparing the Parish for the introduction of this.

FDT: Has permission from the Bishop to use the New Eucharistic Prayer 3 at the Black Barn Mass. The Bishop is very keen for this to happen. Also the Church Missals (£1,100) have been ordered, along with 300 Missal inserts.

E: Review of PPC work:

JH's list was attached to last meeting's minutes.

PB: Invited FDT to comment on our work.

FDT: It is important that we try to maintain focus on our five objectives. We have come a long way.

PB: Elderly – we have done work through SVP and Eucharistic Ministry. Sandra is to be invited to our September meeting.

Justice and Peace – things are happening, but this will be revisited in the Autumn. Each Church also has its own priority, and this is also to be revisited in the autumn.

Issue of communication between PPC and Church Committees, and vice-versa raised.

Action:

PPC and Church Committee minutes to be published on website as soon as they are available, in draft form. Also, there is to be a note in the bulletin to that effect.

F: Youth: (MR)

PB: Thanked MR for her attendance. Youth leadership group currently comprises of PB, MR and LB, but we need a couple of other people on it, maybe Jess, or another youngster who was confirmed a couple of years ago. We do need young people of leadership team. At St Joseph's, Tilehurst, and in Reading, they are looking at the funding of a youth worker, and maybe we should tie in some of our work with that.

MR: We had hoped to do Lazer Quest this term, but families have a lot on. MR is meeting with / phoning / getting Peter to Facebook youngsters, and all have been asked to the Black Barn Mass. Maybe it would be a good idea to do an audit of youth, as with the elderly.

MR does have a list of those recently confirmed, but there are youngsters not on that list.

MR has spoken to Brother Christopher regarding cottage bookings, and meeting rooms are also available for use for a day, if we could not do a residential.

FDT: Parish would fund a meeting room.

MR: Is there going to be a Confirmation class this year?

FDT: Did offer to centralise it at Douai, but has not had any confirmation of this, and also, it can be difficult to ensure a room is available for use at Douai.

DJF: Suggested Theale as an alternative location. There should be one that our youngsters can access easily.

FDT: If push comes to shove, we could have our own Parish Confirmation class.

DJF: We could do some aspects of it within the Parish, but also participate in some more centralised events.

Actions:

DJF and youth leadership team to put a plan of logistics for Confirmation class together. MR and DJF to work on dates etc.

FDT to contact Fr Pat.

FDT to email Yvonne regarding booking the Bishop for Confirmation.

5. Date of next meeting: 20th July (after the meeting of all of the West Berks Finance Committees, tbc; also JH's last meeting)

Signed: (Parish Priest)

Date: