

St. Marie's Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of meeting held Monday 23rd July 2018
In Cathedral House at 7:45pm

Present:

Niall Corroon
Fr. Christopher Posluszny
Candida Calvert
Josip Korbar
Mark Linfitt
Charlie Currier
Leandro Martins (via link)

Apologies:

Eileen Maher

Opening Prayer: The opening prayer was delivered by Josip Korbar

Prior to the first item, minutes from the previous meeting were circulated amongst members. There were no issues raised with their contents, and thanks were expressed to Candida Calvert for filling in on secretarial duties. Action points arising from the minutes included the construction of a display board in the narthex, which includes (amongst other things) information for volunteering in the Cathedral parish, and volunteer vacancies. So far, uptake based on this has been slow, but there are hopes to enlist support following the Summer Holidays.

1. Ben's Centre

As detailed in previous minutes, the parish has started to provide support to Ben's Centre, a charitable organisation which provides support to the homeless community based in Sheffield City Centre. St. Marie's has established a locked collection box for bottles filled with water, for which parishioners can donate. Bottles are collected on an ad-hoc basis by volunteers from Ben's Centre.

Although in its early stages, feedback on the support has been positive, and Ben's Centre has found that administering bottled water is a good method of engaging with the homeless. Thanks were expressed to Josip Korbar for leading this new project within the Cathedral parish.

Initial plans were for a representative from Ben's Centre to attend this PPC meeting and to give some more information on the organisation; unfortunately they were unable to attend but expressed some willingness to attend a future meeting.

ACTION: Niall Corroon to invite a representative from Ben's Centre to attend the start of our next meeting; this will also provide an opportunity for some more substantial feedback on how the support of the Cathedral parish has impacted the work of the centre.

2. Heritage Open Days/Website

For several years now, the Cathedral has hosted Heritage Open Days in order to 'open the doors' of the building to the general public, and engage in activities related to the Cathedral. In September 2018, the Cathedral will be open for Heritage Open Days on the weekends of 8th/9th, and 15th/16th. Volunteers have been assembled for formal tours, flower-arranging workshops, organ demonstrations, schola demonstrations, bellringing workshops and a special family-friendly 'angel tour'. Fr. Chris emphasised that additional stewards should be present in the Cathedral for these days, as it would be useful to guests to have gentle access and guidance to the building without the structured formality of a formal tour, if preferred. Mark Linfitt has kindly volunteered to act as a meet-and-greet during the afternoon of Saturday 15th. Candida Calvert has written a piece for the website detailing activity over the two weekends in September.

On the subject of the Cathedral website, it was raised by PPC members that there are several areas in which it is not up-to-date. There was discussion about how we can assure that these corrections are installed, but also how the website can be regularly updated from that point onwards. It is currently not financially feasible for the Cathedral to take on another long-term employee, so ideally the best option would be to recruit a committed volunteer. However, the PPC did entertain the possibility of obtaining a single financial quote for a single refurbishment/update of the website.

ACTION: Preparing for the Heritage Open Days, Eileen Maher is to contact the team of available stewards to assist in being available for visitors to the cathedral. Eileen Maher and Candida Calvert are also to liaise regarding available material for stewards, to ensure they are adequately prepared for answering questions about the cathedral, and pointing out sites of interest. Charlie Currier is to provide an interactive sheet for children to use on the Heritage Open Days, which engages them in finding spaces of interest.

Once the schedule of events is confirmed, Candida Calvert and Hugo Teruzzi are to ensure this information is on both the Cathedral website and diocesan website. Eileen Maher and Mathew Hazel are to ensure that this information is also available on the Heritage Open Days' own website.

Regarding the website, PPC members are to collate suggestions for the website, particularly ways in which it needs updating. Candida Calvert is to discuss what is currently achievable with Mathew Hazel and Hugo Teruzzi, and obtain a quote for the work currently needed for consideration.

3. Evangelisation

The PPC discussed current methods of evangelisation within the parish, and how things could be brought forward with success, and with reference to past experiences. In recent years, the 'Faith Stories' initiative had some success, however this died out and had limited appeal as many people naturally felt uncomfortable with the idea of 'exposing' something personal on paper, even if anonymous. The PPC decided that Lent would be a good time to focus on evangelisation, and that any projects should be focused on action rather than ongoing discussions, with a focus on creating opportunities in which people can engage and find faith.

The PPC discussed the possibility of doing an Alpha Course to fill a gap in how the various Evangelisation projects operate. Between the casual interest inspired by Nightfever and the Heritage Open Days, there are no current projects to cater for evangelisation other than the commitment involved in the Journey In Faith programme, which is primarily aimed at those who have already decided to explore reception into the Catholic Church. An Alpha Course would work with people who expressed more than a passing interest but are unsure whether to commit to Christianity, as the course requires no formal commitment. However, running an Alpha Course is a huge commitment and needs keen volunteers with enthusiasm and the courage to talk openly about their own experiences of faith. Niall Corroon remarked that his home parish in Coventry operated a successful Alpha Course some years ago.

There was also some recognition that evangelisation can occur in an ecumenical setting as well as within the Cathedral parish itself, with the projects of City Churches Together a possible avenue for evangelisation opportunities.

ACTION: Charlie Currier is to liaise with the representative from City Centre Churches Together regarding the projects 'Stepping out into Evangelisation' and 'Faith in Pictures'. She is to put together a proposed action plan for the next 12 months, and present it at our September meeting.

Niall Corroon to liaise with his old parish regarding the practicalities of putting on an Alpha Course.

4. Fundraising

Since the last meeting, there was a large push after weekend masses for the Standing Order forms, and a large number of these were distributed out. Some forms have started to come back into the parish, although it was recognised that this may be a slow and steady process. The processing of these forms is dependent on the facilitator who works for the diocese.

There are various ways to donate, and one of the ways in which the website needs updating is to accurately reflect this.

One option of donating is via a PayPal account. However, this needs someone to 'own' the cathedral's account as each individual may only have one account. Candida Calvert offered to use her (currently empty) PayPal account to keep track of donations and (with security measures, traceability and checks in place) manage these donations to the Cathedral.

PayPal as a company currently take a 3.8% share of all donations. However, this is public knowledge and up to the conscience of the donator if they want to use this avenue.

Regarding fundraising activities within the Cathedral parish, Candida Calvert is due to meet with Ian Whitehead and Rafid Disha to plan an upcoming musical evening, hopefully in September. There are also plans for a tabletop sale at the end of September, and a Christmas Market in December.

ACTION: As above. Candida Calvert to discuss the PayPal proposal with members of the Finance Committee for approval prior to progressing. PPC members are to continue advertising the Standing Order forms amongst parishioners.

5. Additional Items – Support Groups

This item was raised by Josip Korbar via email correspondence shortly before the meeting. This has partly followed-on from the parish being host to other small charitable organisations, such as 'Hope and Dignity Hearth', and plans in place to operate a small network within the Cathedral for women's support following personal trauma.

Josip Korbar raised the issue that separate initiatives within the parish could cater for men's needs as well. These characteristically include loneliness, social isolation and a relative unwillingness to talk about Mental Health issues. Josip proposed an activity group starting at the Cathedral, which may include going walking, or discussing things over a quiet drink. Helping to strengthen community amongst the male population within the parish could act as a useful mirror to projects aimed at supporting the female population.

Regarding the above projects, Candida Calvert is currently working with two parishioners to hopefully start the women's trauma support network in September. This is planned to run from 11:30-12:30 on Thursdays, followed by mass and sessions related to the 'Hope and Dignity Hearth'.

ACTION: The groups detailed above to go ahead with planning and execution. Fr. Chris raised that men's groups have previously operated at the Cathedral without much success, and a new group would have to have a lot of thought and planning about how to make it a success.

6. Fr. Chris Update

Currently, the Cathedral is host to four guest priests, with plans for curates present until the end of October. Currently, the parishes in Sheffield are undergoing different grouping into various clusters, with St. Charles transferred to the Handsworth cluster. Despite this, it is possible that Fr. Chris may continue as the priest dedicated to the Roma-Slovak community, who are primarily based around St. Charles parish.

NEXT MEETING: Monday 10th September at 7:45pm

Provisional future meetings (all parishioners are welcome to attend):

- Monday 22nd October
- Wednesday 28th November