

St. Marie's Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of meeting held Wednesday 6th February 2019
In Cathedral House at 7:45pm

Present:

Eileen Maher (acting chair)
Niall Corroon (secretary)
Fr. Christopher Posluszny
Josip Korbar
Mark Linfitt
Leandro Martins (via telephone link)
Charlie Currier

Apologies:

Candida Calvert
Ossie Uzoigwe

Guests:

Margaret Helliwell
Hugh Finnigan

Opening Prayer: The opening prayer was delivered by Fr. Chris.

Prior to starting agenda items, the PPC reviewed previous minutes, and went through ACTION points from our last meeting. Composing of new material for the website is nearly complete – Niall Corroon apologised for delays in this. Once accompanying photos are received the new material can be published online.

The PPC reviewed the amount of money coming into the Cathedral via Standing Orders on a monthly basis. During 2018 there had been significant pushes to encourage more parishioners to contribute via standing order. The amount received was largely unchanged – from £1142.00 in January to £1312.00 in December. It was judged that a fresh appeal, ideally in the first half of 2019, would be appropriate.

1. Deanery Meeting Review

Margaret Helliwell and Josip Korbar were present as representatives of St. Marie's parish who attended recent deanery meetings, including one on 22nd January where there was a discussion about managing masses in light of the relative shortage of priests. Currently, for the deanery there are 13 priests (not including the two Cathedral priests acting as assistant priest and priest in residence) covering 21 mass centres.

Other parishes in the deanery have recently had to make adjustments to mass times, and mass numbers, to enable a steady flow of priests covering all mass centres. There was some concern raised by representatives of other parishes, that the mass times/number of masses

have not changed; and this may represent unfairness, or the Cathedral having a privileged status.

Fr. Chris's response to this challenge was that at present, there are adequate priests to cover the mass centres, and an 'all at once' approach to change was unnecessary. Changes made to St. Marie's would not help the current situation.

In addition, changes to masses risks flux within parish communities. The attendance at St. Marie's is strong – with the highest weekend mass attendances in decades (an average of 675 with overall seating capacity of 318).

One suggestion made by the deanery meeting was to establish focus groups representing different areas/parishes within the deanery. These focus groups were suggested for Mission and Evangelisation, Social Action/Justice and Peace, Finance Committee members, Administrative and Secretarial assistants, Catechists (for Baptism, Communion, and Confirmation). Unfortunately, in another local deanery a similar attempt was not sustainable and there was scepticism about how effective it would be.

Overall, the PPC were unanimous in their support for maintaining the status quo at St. Marie's.

ACTION: It was agreed the Leandro Martins, as chair, is to draft a letter to the deanery and †Ralph, outlining the PPC's support for the current setup at St. Marie's. If focus groups are to be established, we can access representatives of various activities via the PPC's mailing list.

2. Christmas Review, and Lent Planning

Attendance at Christmas masses was slightly reduced this year, though by its very nature it is a very fluctuant process. Christmas masses naturally attract a lot of visitors, and many parishioners leave Sheffield.

During the Christmas Vigil mass, a procession of hay to the crib was carried out by children. This was very well-received and the parish hopes to make it an annual tradition. Both the Vigil and Midnight masses had 4 chalices in use.

In the lead-up to Christmas, a competition was run to write a Christmas carol. There were seven entries, and a unanimous winner chosen. Also, a Children's Art competition went well, and tied in well to the Christmas Fayre (which raised approx £300, with the Christmas raffle raising a similar amount). It was felt that more entries in the Children's Art competition would have helped it to be even better. Nevertheless, feedback was positive and the PPC expressed their thanks to Candida Calvert for her efforts in managing this.

One other aspect of the Advent/Christmas season which could have been improved, was the lack of cards for the sick and housebound sent out by the parish. This is often the role of Sile Burns; unfortunately she was incapacitated and no-one took her place.

Regarding Lent (which starts on Ash Wednesday - 6th March this year), the PPC are keen on continuing the tradition of hosting talks in the Cathedral, on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week (April 15th, 16th and 17th). The topic has varied every year, and this year it was proposed that Spiritual Healing would be a good topic to explore. PPC agreed to this.

One Lenten proposal by Josip Korbar was to have the Gregorian Choir (either the male or female choir) to sing on Saturdays during Lent (4-4:30pm). This was agreed; with the possible exception of 23rd March as the Cathedral may be in use by an organ recitalist. There were also suggestions to perform Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings.

ACTION: Regarding Advent and Christmas; this is to be visited at the October 2019 PPC meeting. The PPC can plan re-running the Art competition, and the carol-writing competition. They can also ensure there are provisions in place to continue the proud tradition of sending cards to the sick of the parish.

The PPC are to look into the possibility of running Stations of the Cross on Friday evenings in Lent, and revisit this at the next meeting. Charlie Currier has offered to find people to lead this activity (lay leaders, and a priest to provide the final blessing). Josip Korbar is to discuss the arrangements for a Gregorian Choir to sing on Saturdays with Lucy Hazell (who runs the female choir).

Charlier Currier has kindly offered to find speakers for the Lenten Talks in Holy Week.

3. The Big Thank-You Celebration 2019

This is to take place on 16th February. Most invitations have been sent out, though many have not responded.

Of the PPC, all members are able to attend with the exception of Charlie Currier and Candida Calvert. PPC members were invited to bring a food contribution, to ensure the smooth running of the event.

Hugh Finnigan is involved in planning the music and hymns for this event. St. Marie's choir will also be present, and members of the Gregorian Choir(s) are to sing at communion.

Leandro, as PPC chair, is scheduled to present the formal thanks to various volunteer groups at Holden Hall following the mass.

ACTION: Niall is to email Mathew Hazell, to ensure more blank invitations are to be printed out (the 'last push' for attendees is to happen on the weekend of 9th and 10th February). Niall is also to email various 'group leaders' within St. Marie's volunteers, to help assist with this push.

4. Cathedral Music

The PPC was formally informed at this meeting that Hugh Finnigan, who has served as Cathedral Organist for decades, is to retire from his duties after Easter 2019. The PPC expressed their immense thanks and gratitude towards Hugh for his service, and wished him the very best for a successful well-earned retirement.

An advert has been written for the role of Cathedral Organist. Ed Whittaker has agreed to post for an initial 2-year contract of organist and choirmaster, with the role for review following this. A job description has been prepared, which includes 280 hours/year of Parish work, and an additional 30 hours/year for work with the Diocesan Choir.

Aspects of Cathedral Music which are currently under consideration are in the Saturday Vigil mass, and also the Sunday 12:30pm mass.

ACTION: The PPC is to stay informed of developments in future meetings.

5. Evangelisation

Charlie Currier discussed progress with the Evangelisation programme, which was previously circulated to the PPC in past meetings. This previously had a 'Faith in Pictures' project operating during Lent, but it was noted that much was already planned (see above) and the Lenten season may become oversaturated.

It was agreed that it would be suitable to move the 'Faith in Pictures' idea to Pentecost. This allows more time for effective planning.

Charlie has brought the Mission Team together, the plan is now to mobilise them to be an effective presence in the parish community.

6. Website/Social Media

The parish currently has two Facebook pages, with different people following these. There is some engagement and replies on Facebook for many of the posts put out. As discussed previously, this is using a 'soft' social media strategy. Mathew Hazell is administrator of the Facebook accounts.

Mark Linfitt helpfully described techniques to have a steady release of Facebook posts over a designated time period. Regarding content for the Facebook posts, this can be taken from the parish bulletin. The PPC expressed thanks to Mark Linfitt for his efforts in all this.

Regarding other digital matters in the parish, it was noted that the PPC noticeboard does not contain any information about contacting the PPC. Details of the parish Facebook page can also be advertised in this way.

During the Advent season, Eileen Maher noticed that Sheffield Anglican Cathedral had an impressive programme relating to their own celebration of Advent, which was very nicely presented on their website. She felt it could be inspirational to the work we do at St. Marie's.

ACTION: Niall is to email Mathew Hazell and request adjustment of the PPC noticeboard – a simple note added to the board should be sufficient.

Regarding Advent content – we can revisit this in the October PPC meeting.

7. Annual Parish Update

It has been about a year since this was last published, and is replacing the parish AGMs. The PPC agreed that we should aim to publish this in the first quarter of the year.

ACTION: Niall Corroon is to present a draft copy of the Annual Parish Update at the next PPC meeting, for approval prior to being published alongside the bulletin.

8. Fr. Chris Update

Fr. Rafal has recently joined as a priest in residence. He will be based at St. Marie's until Summer 2020.

9. Additional Items – Mobile Phone Use and Cathedral Sanctuary

There was some discussion following email correspondence, over whether it would be suitable to have a sign to stop people going onto the sanctuary, and whether there should be clearer notification to turn mobile phones to 'silent'. Numerous persons in the Cathedral (both during mass and in general) were noted to be using mobile phones, and there were queries about whether this is acceptable in church.

It was noted that Leeds Cathedral have a sign asking people not to walk on the sanctuary. On occasion in St. Marie's people have been noted to wander on the sanctuary in a potentially disrespectful fashion. There was discussion about whether St. Marie's should adopt the strategy used in Leeds.

ACTION: It was deemed appropriate to have a notice at the entrance about phones. Niall is to email Mathew Hazell to get this published. It was noted that many Catholics use an app called 'Universalis' to track the liturgy on their phones, so use of a phone is not necessarily inappropriate. Fr. Chris felt it inappropriate to put up an additional sign – the Blessed Sacrament Chapel does have a sign ensuring no inappropriate usage.

NEXT MEETING: Monday 4th March 2019

Future meetings: Monday 1st April 2019
Wednesday 8th May 2019