

St. Marie's Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of meeting held Wednesday 13th January 2021
Via 'Zoom' at 7:00pm

Present:

Leandro Martins (chair)
Niall Corroon (secretary)
Fr. Christopher Posluszny
Candida Calvert
Josip Korbar
Eileen Maher
Charlie Currier
Mark Linfitt
Joshua Glicklich
Onesmus Nyale

Guest:

Gerard Jenkinson

Opening Prayer: The opening (and closing) prayers was kindly led by Eileen Maher

Prior to formally starting the meeting, Gerard Jenkinson introduced himself as a guest. He has recently been appointed the Cathedral's Health and Safety representative, and has overall input and responsibility for many of the safety measures put in place to deal with the COVID pandemic. Gerard plans to contact and work with the new diocesan Health and Safety lead to assist in these duties.

1. Advent and Christmas Review

This year, Christmas masses took place under Tier 3 COVID restrictions, and were subject to a booking system, social distancing, and safety measures. Overall things went well, with 8 Christmas masses taking place on the 24th and 25th December. The availability of stewards and cleaners enabled swift turnaround between masses. This year, the crib was blessed at the first 'night mass' taking place at 10:30pm on 24th December.

Niall Corroon pointed out that some attendees for the midnight mass started to arrive from approx. 11:15pm, as they believed the mass started at 11:30pm. This created some difficulties as the 10:30pm mass was still going on, with additional need for a deep clean afterwards. There was a buildup of parishioners in the narthex and outside, who had to maintain social distancing. When the deep cleaning was finished there was a turnaround of just a few minutes before the next mass started. Although the Cathedral will hopefully not be under the same restrictions in December 2021, it was felt that making advertising as clear as possible (with the midnight mass starting at midnight and not the usual 11:30pm start time) would help to avoid this problem in the future.

Huge thanks were expressed from the PPC to the decorations team, especially those who put up the tree, wreaths, and the crib. These were also very well-received by parishioners. Since Christmas, views of the crib have had 860 'hits' and 246 for the completed Advent wreath.

The additional midnight mass on New Year's Eve was also well-attended and received, particularly music provided by Charlie Currier.

2. Masses and Stewarding

In the few days prior to the meeting, the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales has decided on new guidance for public worship in its churches and Cathedrals. This means some changes to practices at St. Marie's, which were subsequently announced via email, social media and the bulletin.

Routine Baptisms are no longer permitted, and all masses should not be extended beyond what is strictly necessary. Longer masses, which incorporate music from a choir and an opening/closing hymn, should no longer be available to the public. Therefore, while the 11am Sunday mass will still be livestreamed, parishioners will no longer be able to attend this.

During weekdays, there are revised opening hours, with the Cathedral being open from 11:30am-2:00pm, and then opening again from 5:00pm-6:00pm. Stewards are available to fill these slots, and relief stewards are also available.

We discussed the nature of stewarding, and the PPC once again expressed their gratitude to the stewarding team. The parish gifted each steward a small box of chocolates for Christmas in gratitude for their efforts. Gerard Jenkinson pointed out that stewarding can be challenging sometimes, but should foremost be approached with an attitude of love and understanding.

ACTION: Mark Linfitt agreed to post on Facebook, details of the new mass times and opening hours. The booking system will continue as before (with the 11am Sunday option no longer available) – there should be scope between the masses for other masses not to become overfilled beyond the socially-distanced capacity.

3. PPC Constitution

The PPC reviewed the latest draft of the PPC constitution, with updated changes following the feedback provided at the last meeting. A couple of further minor suggestions were made, and there was an additional suggestion that anyone applying for PPC membership could use a designated sponsorship form.

ACTION: Niall Corroon agreed to make the suggested changes, and write a sponsorship form to be included as an appendix. Once this is completed, it will need formal approval by Fr. Chris and will be published for parishioners to view.

4. Year of St. Joseph

Since the last meeting, Eileen Maher has got in touch with Bill Burleigh and Bob Rae, with ideas on how the parish may mark this festival lasting throughout 2021. Bob has kindly produced an excellent informative booklet on St. Joseph, with reference to his representation in St. Marie's Cathedral. Plans are for this booklet to be posted onto the website in an interactive, or video presentation. Huge thanks were expressed to Bob and Bill for their efforts on this.

Otherwise, there are upcoming feasts of St. Joseph in March and May. The PPC discussed what might be possible to mark this, and considered a Novena of masses to celebrate. Other thoughts were the inclusion of a talk (or a Lenten talk) on St. Joseph, or a focus on vocations (St. Joseph being the patron saint of vocations).

ACTION: There is a statue of St. Joseph present in the undercroft which could be restored, but due to other priorities and financial considerations it was felt this is unlikely to happen in 2021. Charlie Currier offered to spearhead plans for having parishioners write or present their account of personal vocations from a spiritual perspective.

5. Coping with COVID

At the last meeting, with Sheffield having been under strict lockdown restrictions (local and national) for some time, it was felt that a form of outreach would be helpful to help parishioners understand, reflect and contemplate the spiritual side of being in the midst of a significant change to their lifestyle and livelihood.

Since the last meeting, Charlie Currier and Joshua Glicklich have discussed and planned ways in which this could happen. They have discovered some excellent videos on YouTube by †Robert Barron, on the topic of spirituality during the COVID pandemic. This will be broadcast via Zoom and there will be a discussion afterwards, with a dial-in option. The team involved in the Alpha Course can help to lead these discussions, and notifications will be in this week's electronic and paper bulletin.

6. Lent and Easter 2021

This season is relatively early in 2021, with Ash Wednesday on 17th February, and Easter Sunday on 4th April. One feature of previous years has been a series of Holy Week talks – addresses around a single topic delivered on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings of Holy Week. During the National Lockdown of Spring 2020, these were issued as video presentations.

The PPC discussed various topics to unite the addresses and discussions around Holy Week. We decided that further reflection and exploration of spirituality during the COVID pandemic would be a good topic. Candida Calvert felt that sharing experiences, perhaps of a positive feature of the COVID pandemic, could be an overriding theme of 2021. Overall, we settled on the broad theme of 'God and COVID' as a basis for the Lenten talks and discussions.

ACTION: Further details are to be ironed out in further meetings. For now, Charlie Currier offered to focus on finding speakers.

7. Fr. Chris Update

There are no major updates from Fr. Chris. Fr. Patrick Harrigan, a former parishioner at St. Marie's and a priest in the archdiocese of Edinburgh, is currently in residence at St. Marie's and is taking some of the masses.

NEXT MEETING: To be decided via email in due course