**Parish Council Meeting.** **Monday 24th August 2020**

**Present:**

Fr. Peter Mansfield, Gerry O’Donnell, Roque Fernandes, Penne Hutton, Brenda Eydman,

Pauline D’Mello-Maplesden, Bernadette Hallett, Bridget Hanlon, Peter McFall, Elsie Ofili, Erica Thurbon, Colin Wilding,

**Minutes:**

Bernadette Hallett

**Agenda:**

1. **Welcome** - given by Gerry. Members all checked in by 7.30pm. Well done all!

**Opening Prayer** - by Penne

2. **Apologies for Absence** - Sue Carr

3. **Minutes and Matters Arising** - Minutes accepted and passed. No matters arising.

4. **Review of Arrangements for Mass**

Fr. Peter gave an update on mass arrangements and all is going well. Numbers are increasing steadily as more parishioners are beginning to return to mass. This past weekend was the busiest yet. Stewards are being constantly updated by email and they revise and adapt their practice. The 11.00 mass needed to use spaces in the balcony area for the first time this last weekend, and there were a few people that had to be turned away. The current seating plan is the optimum use of the church space. It would be better if we had more stewards but despite publicity and appeals no more volunteers have come forward. In theory stewards should only be needed fortnightly, but in practice this is more often as people are away, or are unable to serve that weekend. Fr. Peter reminded people that they need to open and read the weekly rota that he sends out as they may not be needed every weekend.

Booking system; Gerry had sent out a trial prototype booking system for the PPC to look at and test prior to this meeting. We currently use a ‘first come first seated’ system, and the track and trace system is generally working well. As numbers of attendees increase stewards will need to turn people away. The proposal is that we set up a booking system; pre booking would guarantee a place in the church and when full no further seats would be available. A booking system would also address track and trace details. However this is not as simple as it sounds!

The first problem is that some people use the internet and some don’t. We would need a system that is as simple as possible for ease of administration. It needs to be as automated as possible and must allow for cancellations etc. The prototype that Gerry circulated has been customised to our own specific circumstances but does not allow alterations. An on-line system would need to run in parallel to a voicemail service for those people not on-line. Someone would need to amend the on-line system to ensure that a booking is made, or cancelled. It was suggested that we could possibly adapt our current track and trace system

If a phone booking is requested, how would people know whether they had secured a seat? This would depend on the administrator. What are other churches in the area doing? We are already offering a lot of mass choices, more than many places, whereas some churches are offering quite a lot less. One local church is only offering 3 masses, a weekday morning, a weekday evening, and a weekend mass. People are only allowed to select and attend one of those masses, and are asked to keep to their chosen mass.

* Bridget will research what other parishes are doing.

Might it be possible for parishioners to ‘buddy’ with the elderly or vulnerable to assist them in making reservations? Some Special Ministers have been keeping in contact with the people they had been taking Communion to so Brenda could possibly contact them to see how this is working.

Many elderly people seem happy to attend a weekday mass.

The suggestion was made that we do not introduce a booking system yet and it was questioned as to whether we actually need to introduce a new system as this could cause further confusion. People seem happy with the current system and understand that they may need to be turned away.

A suggestion was made that we set up a screen in the hall in order to extend the opportunity for the congregation to see the mass. What would be the logistics of that?

Questions;

Why have a booking system if the current system works well, and people know and accept that they might be turned away if the places are all used?

What will happen at Christmas?? We will need to consider what will happen in the future. The Diocese will certainly send out further instructions.

Could we book for a specific number of places and leave a balance for ‘first come first served’? Who would administrate this? Is it practical?

Gerry summarised all points discussed;

* The prototype booking system could be used, but cannot be modified easily.
* Fr. Peter put out a request for admin support and there was one volunteer. However, they would be working within a specific time frame with a cutoff point of Saturday 12.00 noon. Would they be able to take this on? This would influence any decision.
* The proposed booking system still needs a lot of work doing to it if it is to be developed for parish use. This would take weeks or months.

Fr. Peter was asked for his thoughts. His view was that most elderly people would not initially be comfortable with an online / voicemail booking system. We would need consultation with that age group. Suggested we consult after a 10.00 mass on Thursday morning as that attracts a bigger congregation. We need to let this group of parishioners voice their own response.

Fr Peter said that having listened to the PPC members a clear majority expressed a view that on balance favoured keeping the current ‘first come first served’ system. That being the case he did not feel that he could authorise changing to the pre-booking system at this stage.

In response to the suggestion of having the hall open for people to go in during Mass and have the service streamed on a big TV, Fr Peter said that currently the diocese was only focussed on facilitating people to participate fully at Mass. That means in church only as Mass in the hall would a streamed experience and therefore no different in terms of the level of participation from what people can do at home. He did acknowledge that being able to receive Communion would of course be different from home but currently we don’t have near enough ministers of Communion or stewards / cleaners to extend to the hall even if it was desirable.

With regard to Christmas we need to wait for Diocese to advise parishes. There will be disappointment one way or another.

The general consensus is that the booking system that has been designed is not for rolling out at the moment, in part due to the off-line community, plus administration issues. The ‘first come first served’ system is understood and accepted at the moment.

We are grateful to the parishioner who has invested a lot of time and energy developing this prototype. Whilst it is on hold for the moment it may be used for special occasions or other parish functions.

Fr. Peter suggested that he could put a simple summary and questionnaire on the benches at mass one week to see what people want, and whether they come up with any suggestions.

All were in agreement with this suggestion.

The role of stewards was discussed again, with the suggestion that stewards should accompany people to their places in the benches in order to make best use of the spaces. However, there are a lot of other implications, eg. some people like to sit in their traditional place (and are permitted to do so on weekdays provided it is a designated green place), many people come as singles or in pairs, so a 3 space seat would not always be filled by 3 people and there are not enough single spaces, so where do you start? People do not always follow instructions, not everyone still is aware that they need to fill in track and trace details for each mass attended, they want to fill in details on the card using the porch table, it is not possible to accompany each person to their seats as there could be a waiting crowd in the porch or outside the doors, autumn/winter weather would not allow for this, etc. It is not as simple as it sounds!

The use of the hall for masses may lead to people wanting it to be used for social functions which are not yet possible. The practicalities of this are just not feasible, let alone trying to organise toilets, cleaning, tables, chairs, Special Ministers, and stewards, etc. Not an option at this stage.

A suggestion was made that we could provide anti bacterial wipes for people to clean their own seats. How would we know this had been done efficiently by everyone? Current cleaning practice is very thorough.

5. **Financial Update**

Peter McFall had sent out a financial statement prior to the meeting for inspection. He reported that the income shortfall is less now than had been predicted, in part due to people returning to church and putting offerings in a basket provided. Just Giving needs further reminders, he will prepare an item for the newsletter. We received a number of donations towards the Camera Fund, and raised £1 which enabled us to buy the camera, laptop to work with the camera, license and cabeling, etc.

**Updates**

As the meeting had overrun time through discussion of the possible new booking system, the rest of the agenda was held over.

**Priest’s Notices**

First Communion masses will go ahead in September, 13th, and 27th. No one else will be able to attend those masses as numbers are capped at 30 and places are for the immediate families.

A notice will be put weekly into the newsletter to explain this to people.

**Communication to the Parish**

Need to remind people to use the parish Facebook site.

\* Erica will post a message about the First Communions.

**AOB**

The 200 club draw took place live from Peter McFall’s living room. The lucky number was

number 29 - Liz Moore, to everyone’s delight as we couldn’t think of a more deserving winner!

Fr. Peter informed us that the Diocese are re-introducing second collections. The logistics of this have yet to be worked out.

**Volunteer to prepare Opening Prayer -** Peter McFall

**Closing Prayer**

This was said by Fr. Peter. He also thanked Gerry for chairing another successful PPC Zoom meeting, and for all his hard work both at the meeting and behind the scenes.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Date: Thursday 8th October Time: 7.30pm Place: Zoom