

Present:

Fr. Peter Mansfield, Gerry O'Donnell, Sue Carr, Roque Fernandes, Penne Hutton, Brenda Eydman, Pauline D'Mello-Maplesden, Bernadette Hallett, Bridget Hanlon, Peter McFall, Erica Thurbon, Colin Wilding,

Minutes:

Bernadette Hallett

Agenda:

1. **Welcome** by Gerry to our 5th Zoom meeting. **Opening Prayer** by Peter McFall.
2. **Apologies for Absence** - Elsie Ofili
3. **Minutes and Matters Arising**

A request was made that the first draft of the minutes be shared for comment before distribution. The current process as previously agreed with the PPC invites any feedback on the distributed minutes to be given at this point and this seems to be working well.

4. **Review of Arrangements for Mass**

Fr. Peter reported that there have been no changes in any procedures for mass. Parishioners generally understand and comply with the arrangements. Problems have occasionally occurred when a family is unable to sit together for mass. Government guidelines allow for up to 6 people to sit together but our current seating plan does not allow for this. Each church will be different depending on the size and layout of the church and benches, etc. A discussion followed about the seating arrangements. The question was asked whether small young children may sit between their parents, the answer is yes.

Generally, people are not being turned away from mass. The gallery is rarely used, but it could also be used for a family as the enhanced barrier consisting of a row of benches (which should not be sat on) would seem to allow accompanied children to be in the gallery.

The side altar seating could also be used for a family of up to 6 people, as could the front side back row as these seats would not impinge on the space needed for other seats nearby. Fr. Peter accepts that stewards may need to use their discretion at times, but it is not possible to have different rules for different masses as this would be too confusing for all concerned. There then followed further discussion about how the seating has been planned, use of benches, and single seats, etc.

* A request was made for a separate Stewards meeting purely to discuss stewarding issues and concerns. Fr. Peter agreed to this.

Bridget reported back her findings having made contact with some other local churches to research their current practice. We appear to be in a majority in using a 'first come first seated' system.

St. Mary's in Croydon have added an extra mass as number attendance has increased.

Many churches don't use seat markings but allow for people to make their own decisions around distance and numbers to sit together within 6. Our seating plan at St. Aidan's allows for various seating numbers within 3.

John the Baptist, Purley, use an email booking system with additional phone reservations which is handled by a secretary. They also use the QR code so that contact details don't need to be registered. People who are unable to use the QR code still provide their own contact details.

They do not use stewards during the week but display a set of instructions at the rear of the church.

* This needs to be discussed at the Stewards' meeting.

* Some churches have less masses and people just choose the mass they wish to attend and have to keep to that mass.

It is suggested we adopt the QR code system. It is easy to use but can cause congestion if the code is not situated in the right place. We would need more than one code on display in order to spread people out. There is no guarantee that people have scanned the code, but there is also no guarantee that people have registered on line, we have to take their word for it.

* This needs further discussion at the Stewards' meeting.

Stewards need to be sensitive to the needs of individuals and to use their discretion. We do not need to be bound rigidly by the rules but be directed and guided by them.

Mass numbers; stewards record the number of people attending each mass and Fr. Peter holds the records of these. 142 people attended three out of four masses over the past few weekends and the numbers are stable. The 6.00pm mass is sometimes almost full. On Sunday 22nd September the 11.00 Mass was full.

5. Arrangements for Christmas

How do we address the numbers of people who may wish to attend mass over Christmas? There may be people who have not been attending mass up until now but who may wish to attend at Christmas.

Suggestion - have a dedicated mass for the elderly (over 70) /vulnerable/self-isolating.

Could the hall be used for extra numbers attending mass at Christmas? Fr Peter replied that people would not actually be participating at Mass like they do in the church and so they would be better off at home joining in a Mass being live streamed in the comfort of their own place.

The only possible advantage could be that they might be able to receive Communion in the hall, but there are huge logistical problems including stewarding and cleaning that would need consideration. Not a viable option.

There is some concern that the 'first come first seated' system may not be appropriate for all the Christmas Masses. Many elderly people would have to come extra early in order to secure a seat and could then be left just sitting in the church for a long time. Might it be possible to reserve some seats for people who need priority? Or dedicate one of the masses especially for them, as suggested earlier? Should we use a booking system just for Christmas masses? There has been no advice, guidance or any directives from the Diocese as to how to handle this situation. There are particular concerns regarding single people who will be alone over Christmas.

Gerry pointed out that a booking system brings its own issues. There is an on line community, and an off line community and the two need to be combined. A suggestion was made to put a paper application form on the seating in church over a couple of weekends to enable people to apply for a seat. Brenda could contact people on her 'elderly/vulnerable' contacts list. Someone could be asked to fill in a form for a friend who is absent from those two masses. We could then have a list of names of people who would like to attend a Christmas mass. Criteria would be applied to allocate places at a mass. That way we could avoid having anything on line.

To summarise: we could have a form to fill in to apply for a seat at mass, and also use Brenda's contacts list.

One person still advocates a booking system with a 'buddy' system for those unable to book on line and who would need someone to ring or reserve a seat for them.

An online booking system is a good idea but comes with a whole set of administration issues, as discussed at a previous PPC meeting. Who would manage and co-ordinate all of this? It would be a significant amount of work. Live streaming only of Mass was considered but received only limited support.

Options

- i) Live streamed only
- ii) Priority Mass for /vulnerable/elderly/isolated
- iii) First come first seated
- iv) Booking system Online & Offline combined
- v) Booking System Offline only

We agreed to hold a separate meeting on this subject with some preparation from Gerry to reflect on.

6. Financial update

Peter McFall had circulated a copy of the latest financial update prior to this meeting for members to see. He talked through the update to clarify the figures. We currently have a projected income shortfall of around £12,000.

Gerry thanked Peter for all his hard work.

The meeting was drawn to a close by Gerry who thanked us for the compassion and sensitivity being shown towards the issues that had been discussed. He reminded us all that we need to reflect and pray about our way forward, and to be open to the Holy Spirit guiding us towards the best of outcomes.

Fr. Peter thanked Gerry for leading us through this very difficult time of decision making.

Volunteer to prepare Opening Prayer - Bernadette

Closing Prayer by Fr. Peter

Date of Next Extra-Ordinary Meeting:

Date: Thursday 15th October

Time: 7.30pm

Place: Zoom