

# St Aidan's Parish Pastoral Council

## Minutes of meeting on 15 November 2023

Present: Simon Archer, Alexandra Collins, Craig Ditchfield, Penne Hutton, Lesley Leavey, Gerry O'Donnell, Martin Puckett (Parish Treasurer), Erica Thurbon (Chair), Colin Wilding (Secretary), Sarah Yusoof.

Apologies: Richard Thurbon, Fr Peter Mansfield.

Absent: Elsie Ofili

Alexandra led the **opening prayer**.

### 1 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last PPC meeting (28 September 2023) were approved. There were no matters arising.

### 2 Workstream updates

#### Young families (led by Erica)

'Young families' are those with children up to Confirmation age. The aim is to put together a questionnaire which can be used to find out what such families want from the parish; in order to do this we need to find ways to make contact with them. We can use the names from people who responded to Fr Peter's recent 'green card' initiative; another approach would be to contact people who take part in First Holy Communion preparation. Beyond that, we need to identify the ways in which families communicate with one another (eg WhatsApp groups).

It was noted that the Children's Liturgy of the Word at the 9am and 11am Masses are well attended, that there are also young families at the 6pm Mass and that more families have lately been coming to the Sunday Social (in the hall after 11am Mass).

We discussed a number of possible ways of meeting the needs of young families and getting them more involved in parish life:

- 'Family fun days' on occasional Sundays in the hall after 11am Mass.
- 'Messy church' on a weekday evening, perhaps once a month. These work well in other churches, but they require a lot of preparation and would need a dedicated team.
- 'Pram services' for adults with children below school age, on a weekday morning for about an hour, starting around 9am (ie after school drop-off time).
- Coffee mornings once a week aimed at those with young children; some years ago these were held in the parish (organised by the Welcome Group) and they proved popular with parents of toddlers.
- A support group for parents whose children are making the transition from primary to secondary school.

## **Youth (led by Penne)**

There are currently three people working in the Youth Ministry team. The aim is to provide for and involve young people from Year 8 onwards; in practice there are two different age groups to cater for. There are funds remaining from previous fundraising efforts but more fundraising will be needed in the coming year.

Confirmation preparation begins on Sunday 3 December at 6pm and on that day there will be a social event at 5pm; this will be an opportunity to ask the young people what they want.

It was suggested that the parish could pay for some of the young people to take part in the Big Church Festival (also known as the Big Church Day Out), a two-day Christian music festival held annually in Wiston, Sussex; next year's event takes place on 27 & 28 May.

## **3 Synodal process**

As Richard was unable to attend the meeting Erica reported on his behalf on the October General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

The members of the assembly have issued a 42-page Synthesis Report. The aim of the Synodal process is to lead the church towards a new way of working together and of making decisions. The assembly itself put the new way into practice. The assembly did not attempt to come to definitive conclusions on controversial issues; instead the report presents 'convergences', 'matters for consideration' and 'proposals' on 20 broad topics. The Synod will meet again in October 2024; between now and then the Episcopal Conferences are called to focus on the questions and proposals that are considered most urgent and to encourage a deepening of the issues both pastorally and theologically.

Erica has sent the full report to PPC members (it is also available [on the Vatican website](#)). At the next PPC meeting we will discuss the report and the implications of the Synodal Process for the parish.

## **4 Communication with the parish**

**Mailchimp:** The parish account, used to email a link to the newsletter each week, currently has 218 subscribers. Typically around two-thirds of these open the email each week. This means that the email is potentially an effective means of reaching people with information about what is going on in the parish. Messages need to be brief as recipients are unlikely to read longer messages.

**Social media:** The parish Instagram account is little used; the most recent post was in April. The (private) Facebook group has 233 members and is much more heavily used, in particular for posting information about social events. It was noted that there are free programs available that enable content to be posted on multiple social media sites at the same time.

**Website:** The information about parish groups and activities has been thoroughly updated. Information about Deacon Tony has been added and the 'Parish Priest' page expanded to 'Parish Clergy'. The PPC page has been updated to reflect the new membership but lacks an up-to-date photo. Colin is working on using all this information to compile a printed A5 booklet (Welcome Pack), which would be primarily intended for newcomers to the parish but would be available to anyone interested. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Discussion under this topic covers not just how we communicate but what we communicate. We need to make the PPC more visible in the parish. Some ways of doing this were discussed:

- 'Rogues' Gallery': regular entries in the newsletter featuring individual PPC members (with photos).
- Erica to speak at Sunday Masses: Fr Peter would like this to happen but would prefer that it wait until the new year, by which time he should be fully back in harness.  
**[Action: Erica]**
- PPC Open Meeting & Social: it was suggested that we hold a meeting on a Sunday after 11am Mass (as we did a number of times during the period when we were without a parish priest) to give parishioners an opportunity to meet the PPC members and take part in discussion about key concerns. This should happen in the new year – Erica would be able to promote it when she speaks at the Masses.

## **5 Any other business**

**Altar servers' albs:** These are in poor condition and possibly not fire-safe. Erica will speak to Claudine Day to see if they can be repaired. **[Action: Erica]** It was also noted that since there was currently no-one organising the servers it had been some time since any of the experienced servers had been enrolled in the Guild of St Stephen.

**Mobile display boards:** Lesley hopes that the cost of these can be at least partly covered by donations as the boards are likely to be expensive. She will liaise with the Premises Team.  
**[Action: Lesley]**

**Finances:** Income and expenditure are running broadly in line with budget. Major work is currently being done on the hall fire alarms. There are plans to get a card reader for the bar, using the company that supplied the reader at the back of the church; there will need to be one person designated as a contact for any queries on payments.

**Elderly:** Craig had discussed this with Brenda Eydman, who had led on this topic previously. The first action needed was to arrange the sending out of Christmas cards. **[Action: Craig]**

**200 Club:** Erica had taken over the running of this scheme and is hoping to promote it further in 2024 with the aim of expanding it to make it a 400 Club. **[Action: Erica]**

## **6 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place in early January. Gerry will find out when the hall is available and then Erica will liaise with PPC members to establish a suitable date. **[Action: Gerry, Erica]**

At this meeting the PPC will discuss progress on the following topics:

- Welcome **[Action: Colin]**
- Elderly **[Action: Craig]**
- The Synodal Process **[Action: Richard]**

We will also need to choose someone to lead the opening prayer. **[Action: Erica]**