

PROPOSALS IN LIGHT OF FEEDBACK ON VISION STATEMENT

I am very grateful to Hilary Topp for summarising the feedback offered in response to the vision statement I set out in preparation for the Parish Assembly 2021. I have read through the responses as they came through, but it is extremely helpful to have this summarised and fed back by an independent voice. Here I set out a series of 'headline' proposals outlining our priorities for the new Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) and the years ahead. The detail of how to take these forward is something which the various interest groups and working parties will need to flesh out, but in doing so my hope is that they will take Hilary's summary as a starting point.

WELCOME

Safeguarding In terms of delivering a welcoming environment the implementation of all the necessary safeguarding checks and procedures remains an absolute priority.

Establish a Communications Group Mindful that the church porch is not the only place of welcome, and that knowing what is going on is part and parcel of feeling welcome, we will establish a communications group whose principal aim is to communicate what we are doing, what we hope to do, and to celebrate what has been achieved. The latter is an important aspect of highlighting the part which we as individuals and as a parish contribute to the life of the local community. The communications group would be represented on the new PPC.

Establish a Volunteer Co-ordinator As part of our being a welcoming community we will establish a volunteer co-ordinator to help parishioners, especially new parishioners, make their way into parish life. The primary purpose of this voluntary role is to develop the culture of volunteering and to encourage and facilitate volunteering. An initial project would be to compile a directory of volunteer roles which parishioners, especially new parishioners and those looking to get more involved, might wish to explore. The volunteer co-ordinator would work very closely with the parish safeguarding reps to ensure that before commencing any role volunteers complete the necessary safeguarding requirements.

Establish a Social Committee The need for more social events and activities to build up a sense of belonging and connectedness is highlighted at several points in the feedback. The role of the 'Social Committee would be to organise three social parish socials. The Social Committee would be represented on the new PPC.

Church Porch & Frontage Concerns were expressed about spending money on buildings, however the extension and refurbishment of the porch area, including the introduction of glass doors, and the creation of a more welcoming, less austere frontage, gained considerable traction. A working group to take forward the planning for and fundraising related to this project will be established.

WORSHIP

Co-ordinating Groups The proposal is to establish a co-ordinating group for each of the Sunday Masses, thus replicating the structure found at Marshalswick. The co-ordinating group would ensure that all is in place for each Mass e.g. welcomers, readers, eucharistic ministers, collectors, offertory, tea & coffee Where there is music, this will remain the responsibility of the relevant music group. Initially we will look to establish co-ordinating groups for the 9.30 am, the 11.30 am and the Sunday 7 pm. The hope is that a co-ordinating group will take responsibility for their particular Mass, that this

will promote a sense of welcome and community. The individual co-ordinating groups would each be represented on the new PPC.

Parish Liturgy Group In addition to a 'musical' representative from each of the Masses, the Liturgy Group will be comprised of a representative from each of the 'co-ordinating groups.' The Liturgy Group will take responsibility for whole parish liturgies e.g. Christmas and Holy Week. It will have an eye to the formation and training of those involved in liturgical ministries. For this purpose, a co-ordinating reader and co-ordinating eucharistic minister will also be appointed to the Liturgy Group. This Parish Liturgy group, and in particular the co-ordinating eucharistic minister and co-ordinating reader will have a particular concern for whole parish liturgies. The Parish Liturgy Group would report to the Parish Priest. It would also have an eye to the devotions and liturgies e.g. penitential services, associated with the various times in the liturgical year.

Church Building Working Party Reflecting on the responses it is clear that there is a concern about spending on the sanctuary at this time and that the refurbishment of the porch, and the creation of a more welcoming environment, is a higher priority. It is likely however, with the extension of the porch that some seating will be lost at the back of the church. This will need to be compensated for. It is proposed at this stage to establish a working party to look at the refurbishment of the sanctuary but not to initiate any works until the work on the porch and front of the church is completed.

WITNESS

Adult Faith Formation Accepting that the aim of the parish as a whole is to evangelise, the 'Mission' group will be refocused as an 'Adult Faith Formation' whose primary purpose is to promote and facilitate faith formation outside of sacramental preparation. The group will be represented on the new PPC with Small Communities, parish retreats and pilgrimages, 'spirituality', Lent and Advent courses coming under its remit. Going forward a key area of faith formation would be peoples understanding of the Mass and what is meant by full, conscious and active participation.

Action: Parish Friends & Justice & Peace On the road to Emmaus Christ accompanied his disciples by walking with them. This 'walking' with them, his concern and outreach, found a practical expression. There is a clear desire on the part of our parishioners to be involved in some form of outreach; that we should be seen and also known to live out the gospel we proclaim, walking with others as Christ did. Initiatives such as You Can Be Santa, the Christmas Dinner, Knit & Natter and Turkey & Tinsel, when combined with the ongoing support for the work of agencies such as CAFOD, are indicative of this outreach or social conscience, as is the work of our Justice and Peace group, our SVP, and our support for projects such as Open Door, Centre 33, The Catholic Worker Farm and the Living Room.

It is proposed to continue our support for such initiatives, and in terms of our communications, to highlight and celebrate what we as a parish and as individual parishioners do in this area. An annual autumn appeal to support a local cause one year and an international project (perhaps one aligned to the MSCs) the next will be established. Representatives of the Justice and Peace group and Parish Friends will sit on the new PPC. The PPC will nominate the beneficiaries of the autumn appeal.

Going forward a renewed emphasis will be placed on our 'walking with' or 'accompaniment' of young people, young families and the elderly. It is clear in the feedback that our outreach to these groups is a key concern as is the sense of welcome and connectedness that people experience.

‘New Parishioner’ working party It is hoped that the establishment of a communications group will do much in terms of a sense of connectedness and welcome. In addition, I would like to establish a working party to look at the welcome afforded new parishioners and how they are included in the life of the parish. In particular I would like the working party to consider what role a rejuvenated Neighbourhood Links scheme might play in improving the sense of welcome and connectedness.

Youth It is proposed to appoint a Youth Worker whose primary role will be to develop our ministry to young people, our support of young families and the role and involvement of young people in the life and ministry of the parish. A representative of a Youth and Young Families group will sit on the PPC. To ensure that the youth worker’s focus remains on youth work a clear plan for the delivery of the sacramental programmes (especially First Communion & Confirmation) will need to be established. This could entail the employment of a part time catechist. In terms of our ongoing support for and connectedness to our parish schools there will be a particular emphasis a) on the recruitment of Foundation Governors and b) how we as a parish community might support the formation of parents and our schools’ Catholic ethos.

The Elderly Much, in terms of our outreach to the elderly, is already accomplished under the umbrella of Parish Friends, while the recent development in streaming and newsletter deliveries has done much to incorporate the housebound into parish life. To augment our outreach to the elderly in residential care I would like to extend our ‘visitor’ programme and establish a link person with each of the residential care homes situated within the parish. Their primary aim will be to ensure that those transferring into residential care do not lose contact with the church and to ensure that that catholic residents (and their families) are aware of what is going on in the parish and the possibility of receiving Holy Communion on a regular basis.

ADDITIONAL PROPOSALS

In many respects the emphasis which the feedback received and these proposals place on our being a welcoming community with a social conscience has everything to do with our being an outward looking rather than insular community. We cannot forget our brothers and sisters in Christ and we cannot forget the community at large. An ecumenical representative, drawn from among the many parishioners involved in ecumenical activities, will sit on the PPC, while the PPC will have an eye to our involvement with / standing in the community at large.

Parish Council - Going forward it is proposed that one of the first acts of the new Parish Pastoral Council will be to review the existing constitution and that the Parish Pastoral Council be comprised ex-officio of the Parish Clergy and the following members:

- Communications Rep
- Social Rep
- Adult Faith Formation Rep
- Youth & Young Families Rep
- Parish Friends Rep
- Justice & Peace Rep
- Ecumenical Rep
- Representative of Marshalswick Mass
- Representative of Saturday 6pm Mass
- Representative of Sunday 8.00am Mass
- Representative of Sunday 9.30am Mass
- Representative of Sunday 11.30am Mas
- Representative of Sunday 7pm Mass

Sunday evening Mass To bring this forward by an hour to 6.00 pm.

Friday Morning Mass Currently there are at least three Masses offered in the parish on a Friday. Two in the Church and one at the Abbey. In term time there are often further additional Masses on a Friday. Going forward I propose to cancel the regular Friday morning Mass. Friday mornings would then offer an opportunity for devotions. We would however continue to hold Funeral Masses on a Friday morning when needs be.

Property Working Group - The presbytery is a large building which used to house several priests, but now houses two. The plant or property on which the Church, Presbytery and Parish Centre sit is one of our most valuable assets. It is proposed to establish a working group to consider the ongoing use of the plant on which the Presbytery sits. In particular I would like the group to explore how the presbytery, aside from housing the parish clergy, might be used a) to further our pastoral priorities and b) generate an income so as to help consolidate our long term financial position.

Fr Michael O'Boy
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