

WGC Catholic Parishes' Open Meeting 2018 Minutes

Date: Tuesday 18th September 2018 **Venue:** Our Lady's Parish Hall
Chaired by: Father Norbert
Present: Approx 55 parishioners, Maria Vargas (Minutes)

1. Welcome

Fr. Norbert opened the meeting at 7.50pm with the prayer and presented the agenda.

2. Presentation of the Parish Accounts

Copies of the Annual Financial Accounts for 2016-2017 for the three parishes had been distributed to attendees on arrival at the meeting, and will be available at the back of the churches for parishioners to peruse.

John Beckett from Holy Family mentioned the cost of replacement kneelers and tower repairs in particular and requested that parishioners consider setting up a standing order and gift aiding their contribution to the parish, to simplify counting and increase revenue to the parish.

Gordon Groves presented the accounts for St Bonaventure. The income was less last year than 2016 because of a drop in the number of legacies given.

Rob Brand presented the accounts for Our Lady's. This year money was spent on replacing benches and kneelers. He also suggested that people set up a standing order and gift aid it, to simplify budgeting.

3. Update on Parish Centre

Welwyn Hatfield Council have granted planning permission for the building to go ahead. The cost is expected to be approximately £800,000. The details were presented to the Finance Board of the diocese, but a decision cannot be made until their next meeting in November 2018. It is expected that subject to approval by the trustees of the diocese, work will commence about March 2019, and will be completed by 2020.

The fundraising department of the diocese will help with ideas for raising the money. £250,000 is available from the "Growing in Faith" scheme which stops next summer 2019. After that, some parishioners may wish to continue their contributions but to a specific fund for the rebuild, and others may decide to join such a scheme. In this case the money would go directly for this project and not through Westminster.

The new Parish Centre will be a community hall, zero VAT rated and will be available for local groups to use for a modest cost when it is not needed for church functions.

The current Family Centre will close on 30th September 2018. There will be a social gathering after Saturday Mass on 6th October for parishioners to gather and remember happy occasions spent at the centre and the significance it has had in their lives over the years

4. Report from Liverpool Eucharistic Congress, Adoremus 7th-9th September

Twelve parishioners together with Fr Norbert and Fr Tom travelled to Liverpool for the Congress. The weekend made a lasting impression and many of them gave us a brief account of their personal highlights.

There were two inspirational talks by Bishop Robert Barron of Los Angeles, several workshops on teaching children about the Eucharist, and about how extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion can enhance the spiritual experience of giving communion in the home.

There was a talk on the importance of music as part of worship and conversely how silence can also be acknowledged as a chance to listen to God, and to make space for him to touch our hearts.

Day three began with Mass at the Cathedral and then a procession of the Blessed Sacrament through Liverpool. The procession was 10,000 strong including 30 bishops who braved the torrential rain to return to the Cathedral for Benediction, when the sun shone.

Details of the weekend can be found on the Adoremus website <http://cbcew.org.uk>, including videos of the talks mentioned above.

5. Reports from Parish Groups

- Rite of Initiation of Christian Adults, RCIA (Eveline Guerin)

This is the 11th year of Fr Norbert leading a group of people who have expressed an interest in learning more about the Catholic Faith. There have been 130 people over that time who have been baptized and confirmed into the Church. There are four catechists working with Fr Norbert to support those who attend

- CAFOD (Bridie Nash)

The CAFOD group at Holy Family started in 1971 and over this time has raised approximately £116,000 for CAFOD projects. Last year the group was able to support a Rwanda community and this year they have raised funds to provide water stations to 61 farms in Ethiopia. The farms are run by women and children, as many men have left the area to seek work. Previously much time was spent looking for water, but now the people have an opportunity to irrigate their land, raise crops and improve the health and livelihood of the community. Main fundraising events are a summer BBQ and Strawberry tea and an Advent Fair and Raffle at Christmas.

- Tuesday Group (Kathryn Hubbard)

There are a number of groups for children: all three parishes have Children's Liturgy groups and there is a 'Mums and Toddlers Group' organised by the mums on Wednesday mornings at St. Bonaventure's, from 10am to 11.30am

The Tuesday Group is a Children's group which meets on a Tuesday afternoon at 3.45pm – 4.45pm. The children are generally from Reception to Year 6. Activities include story-telling, crafts and there are also visits to McDonalds, a fireworks party and a Nativity play at Christmas.

- Transport to Mass group (Frances Wall)

This group was started as a result of reflection on the themes of the Year of Mercy. It matches volunteer drivers with those parishioners who need a lift to Mass on Saturday evening, or on Sunday. Training is provided for the drivers and all are DBS checked. Please consider whether there is anyone you know who might benefit from the service, as some people may not know about it.

- Focolare (Rumold)

The Focolare are an international movement with the aim of working cooperatively to build a more united world following the inspiration of Jesus, the motto being 'may they all be one'. The Focolare Centre for Unity is on Parkway beside St. Bonaventure's and hosts the Movement's ecumenical and interfaith activities, as well as being used for educational purposes by the NHS and local authority groups. The next meeting will be on 5th October 8pm to 9.30pm, a presentation by Sylwia about her recent trip to Syria.

- Bereavement Support Group (Anna Grogan)

The group were formed 18 months ago with the intention of helping recently bereaved families and friends. There have been 2 Remembrance services so far to which 60 people came. After a short prayer service there was an opportunity during refreshments to share memories and to help the process of healing. A personal sympathy card is sent to the family or friend offering our availability to help or listen. The next Remembrance Service will be at 12 o'clock on Saturday 3rd November at St Bonaventure's. The following three Sundays will be Blessing of the Graves at the three cemeteries, details are in the newsletter.

- St. Vincent de Paul Society, SVP (Janet Lewis)

The SVP meet fortnightly on Thursday evenings at 7.45pm at St Bonaventure's Parish Hall. We primarily visit and befriend people and sometimes provide financial support. Currently there are 7 members visiting over 60 clients. Fr Tom is our spiritual director. Referrals are from a variety of places and the clients we befriend have different needs. They may be poor, lonely, have mental health or addiction problems. We provide food parcels when necessary and organize the annual Mass of the Anointing of the Sick followed by a tea in the Parish Hall.

- Peace Garden (Anne Stapleton)

The Peace Garden at Our Lady's was founded in 2012 as part of hosting the Peace Icon in readiness for the Olympic Games being held in London. Since then it has been lovingly tended by a dedicated group of parishioners. Phil Walters has been particularly helpful this year taking on the heavier jobs around the garden. Beyond basic maintenance, it will be put to sleep from now until the new Parish Centre is built.

- Catholic Women's League, CWL (Sally Rand)

The CWL meets monthly on the second Tuesday of the month. It currently has 14 members, new members are always welcome.

Fund-raising initiatives include Lenten Lunches, weekly coffee mornings, quizzes and a stall at the community fun day. Members also work in a variety of ways to support parish life including: flower arranging, catechists, ministers and hospitality. A new location needs to be found for the meetings during this period of transition.

Fr Norbert thanked everyone for their contributions and said that there are many other groups within the parish who also contribute to parish life

6. Reflections on being one canonical parish (Fr Norbert)

Bishop George Stack had a vision of one Catholic Community in Welwyn Garden City, with three churches: Our Lady's, St Bonaventure and Holy Family.

There would be one parish in Church Law, with one parish council and one joint bank account. The advantage would be that it would provide security to the Catholic Community of WGC, safeguarding all three churches. The process has already begun informally with parishioners attending Mass at all three churches, from time to time. There is much integration with fund raising, social events, pilgrimages etc. Fr Norbert proposes to start a conversation about the possibility of combining the churches in this way in a formal arrangement in Church Law.

7. World Meeting of Families and Vocations

Fr Norbert attended part of the World Meeting of Families which was held in Dublin in August. Of the many presentations, he highlighted two in particular. The first was given by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle from the Philippines, who presented a talk on "Choose Life, Pope Francis on the throw away culture". He emphasized the importance of members of the family, that we should appreciate their role within the family, in particular grandparents. The second presentation was given by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, entitled "Support and Preparation for Marriage in the light of Amoris Laetitia". So far we have 19 couples in the parish who are preparing for Marriage in the coming year. The next preparation Day will be Saturday 23rd March 2019. This day concludes with Mass at 6pm when the couples are presented to the congregation and parishioners are invited to pray for them and help them prepare for this very important Sacrament.

The Synod of Bishops takes place in Rome from 3rd to 28th October 2018. The theme will be Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment. We in the parish have to find ways to pray for vocations to the priesthood.

In commemoration of the life and work of Fr Mark Connolly, who celebrates his Golden Jubilee of Priesthood on 21st September Eddie and Mary Dunne have prepared a poster, made up of many photographs from different stages of his life. It will be displayed at the gathering in the Peace Garden Room after the 7pm Mass on the 21st September.

7. Closing Prayer

The meeting closed at 9.30pm with a prayer led by Fr Norbert.