

ST MARY'S WOOLHAMPTON PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting 18th February 2009

Present: Fr Benedict, Paul Barras, Sandra Brewester (standing in for Kate Burke), GERALYN COLLINS, Joanna Harrison (chair), Tom Huelin, Barbara Jones, Paul Paniccia, Marc Servais.

Sarah Chaudoir was welcomed as a new member from Woolhampton who would be alternating attendance on the PPC with Sean Murphy.

1. Apologies

Apologies received from Kate Burke, Sean Murphy

2. The meeting opened with prayer

3. **The minutes of the previous** meeting were approved as a true account of the proceedings.

4. Matters Arising & Review of Actions

a) **New PPC Members** – This is gradually being addressed in the various communities of the parish. Representation from Burghfield on the PPC will be resolved at the first meeting of the new church committee. **Action: Fr. Benedict**

b) **Day of Recollection** on Saturday 13th June – Some members of the PPC indicated their attendance at this event. As the new church committees meet they should also identify members who will be attending. **Action: Church committees**

c) **Parish Pilgrimage to Rome** – This had been cancelled due to an insufficient number making a booking.

d) **Lent Penitential Service & Holy Week Liturgy** – there will be no Lenten penitential service in the parish, but there will be one in the pastoral area at St. Joseph's Newbury on Monday 6th April at 8 p.m. The arrangements for Holy Week liturgies in the parish are subject to discussions between Abbot Geoffrey and Fr Benedict which have yet to take place.

e) **Pastoral Area Ecumenical Representative** – An individual from Theale has expressed willingness to be one of the two pastoral area ecumenical reps.

5. Formulation of Verbal Communication to the Church Communities

It was agreed that the following statement would be communicated at Masses on the weekend 28th February/1st March:

There will be a meeting on March 6th between the Pastoral Area Pastoral Council and Bishop Crispian Hollis, Msgr John Nelson, Moderator of the Diocesan Curia, and Nicky Stevens, Head of the Dept. of Pastoral Formation. The purpose of the meeting is to affirm developments to date within the pastoral area, to clarify and commit to next steps, both short- and long-term, in the process of the pastoral area becoming a single parish and to highlight outstanding issues. Our own parish pastoral council have prepared and made a submission for this meeting.

6. Submission for the Episcopal Review of the Pastoral Area

The PPC addressed questions sent by Bishop Crispian preparatory to the meeting with the PAPC on 6th March. The following is the submission by the PPC which supplements the submission prepared by the PAPC.

1. On Building Relationships

Firstly, experience within the parish of getting 4 communities to think of themselves as part of one parish has been difficult. Progress has been made such as the formation of a PPC, but there is work to be done to establish the fact of one parish in the consciousness of many of the faithful attending Mass at each of the four communities. St. Mary's was held up as a model at the Diocesan Assembly in 2005 for other areas of the diocese to follow. Relations with neighbouring parishes, although positive when they occurred, are limited and we, as a parish, are not particularly outward looking to develop such relationships. The 29th June 2008 celebration at Douai Abbey was an example of the Pastoral Area coming together although it was a tremendous effort of organisation to achieve. Although many took part they still represented a minority of the total number of active Catholics in the Pastoral Area.

Our situation is largely rural where it is considered to be more difficult to form a single unit compared to an urban environment simply because of the huge geographical area. Within the Pastoral Area there is a split with Wash Common, Newbury, Thatcham forming a natural unit because of their proximity to one another and all being situated in a town environment. St. Mary's Parish covers a wide, largely rural, geographical area with the four communities sharing the same pastor as the common link. The links that have been forged between the two respective groupings are also a result of historical circumstances.

More positively, there has been the formation of the PAPC and the *Together* newsletter publication, which serves to define us, as an instrument of communication. Also, some parish newsletters are e:mailed to certain other parishes. A start has been made on joint activities such as the celebration of the sacrament of confirmation.

The financial administration of St Mary's Woolhampton comes under the Douai Abbey Parishes Trust so that it is not possible to have unified financial accounting for the whole of the Pastoral Area without violating the Trust arrangement. There is an issue of leadership on the implementation of the diocesan strategy of being aware of anomalous circumstances which prevent the uniform application of the diocesan plan. There is no relationship between the individual PPC's. The various youth groups

work independently of each other. Catechists of the confirmation groups have met together to exchange ideas and practice and although awareness of the availability of training courses at Douai in the parish is high, this is not necessarily so across the whole of the Pastoral Area.

Clergy in the Pastoral Area have had 2 social events and they have communicated on the arrangement of penitential services, but community and, especially, prayer life together is non-existent. There is a subconscious division between regular and secular clergy.

2. Initiatives

Pastoral Area celebration at Douai on 29th June 2008 as detailed above.

3. Current Relationships

a) with the different parishes/communities

There is a natural coalescence of a cluster in the west and another in the east of the Pastoral Area, but there is little relation across the whole of the Pastoral Area. This subdivision is a consequence of how the faithful feel they are being served. Changes, or styles, in particular communities result in adjustments of patterns of practice by individuals to suit their faith requirements.

b) with groups such as PPC's, ministry groups, SVP etc.

Any coming together is a result of clerical initiatives and historical circumstances.

c) clergy

There is an east/west split in clergy relationships mirroring the situation described in a) above and relationships are developing as a consequence of geographical and logistical realities unconnected and independent of the diocesan plan.

4. Exercise of Leadership in the Pastoral Area

Any leadership is essentially through the PAPC. Its makeup reflects the east/west divide whereby the east is under-represented given the tendencies described above of existing working relationships gravitating to the poles of the Pastoral Area. The exercise of leadership is manifested in seeking individuals with the skills required by the needs of the Pastoral Area.

5. Next Steps Over the Coming 12 Months

There is a restriction in moving to a unified status due to the trust arrangements outlined in 1) above unless there is an insistence in implementing the diocesan strategy by a drastic, and traumatic, reordering of the current arrangement whereby the diocese takes on full responsibility for Pangbourne and Theale communities. Further co-operation and joint activity of pastoral, sacramental and social programmes could be achieved. Also, priests could occasionally rotate and preside at Mass in the other communities in the Pastoral Area.

6. Optimum Number of Priests

3 – 1 for Newbury/Wash Common, 1 for Thatcham and 1 for St. Mary's Parish

7. Any Other Business

The Council was made aware of a Lent course taking place at St. Oswald's Burghfield Common to mark the year of St. Paul and the 50th anniversary of the calling of Vatican II entitled *Reflecting on Mission and Growth Through St. Paul and Vatican II – A Spiritual Audit*. The course is open to all parishioners and will be advertised in the parish bulletin. **Action: Paul Paniccia/Parish Office**

The Council was alerted to a teaching document in preparation by Bishop Crispian on the centrality of the Mass in the pastoral areas. The PPC would need to address this at a future date.

The suggestion of having a Parish Facebook was accepted. **Action: Marc Servais**

In answer to a question it was clarified that the parish priest is available to visit the sick at home for the sacrament of reconciliation and giving holy communion by appointment made through the parish office.

The Next Meeting will be on Wednesday 18th March 2009 at Douai Abbey when the main item for discussion will be Friday Self-Denial.

Dates of future PPC meetings are:
Wednesday 22nd April 2009
Wednesday 20th May 2009

The meeting closed with prayer.

Chair.....

Secretary.....

Date.....