

Holy Trinity and Sacred Heart Parishes

Parish Annual Meeting – 24th April 2024 - Notes and items discussed at the meeting.

Minutes

Present: 49 parishioners and clergy were present.

1.0 Introduction

Fr Michael introduced the meeting with an opening prayer and welcome. Fr Michael thanked everyone including the clergy for their prayers and for working together throughout the year and especially during his time of illness. A special welcome and word of appreciation was given to Fr Ryan, our new assistant priest. Fr Michael reflected on the amount of work he had been doing prior to Fr Ryan joining the parish with mass commitments, baptisms, funerals and weddings, which was really too much for one person.

2.0 Annual Report and Finance Review

Annual Report - Dcn Daniel emphasised that the report was a collaborative enterprise, which he and Dcn Owen had collated – much appreciation was extended to everyone who had sent in a reports, all of which helped to provide a good record of the years activities.

Finance – Judith (HT Treasurer) presented to the financial statements for HT and SH. Judith said that she had taken over the parish Treasurers role in July 2023 and it had been a very busy time. The accounts for both parishes were presented and included various building improvement works. Notwithstanding these latter costs, both parishes were in a financially strong position and additional diocesan units could be invested. The dioceses has now negotiated new utility service contracts to help keep these costs low. The gift aid refund for SH was still awaited but expected to be circa £5,000. The gift aid recorded for HT in 2022 included for a 2 year period. The question of how much credit should be carried in the parish current account was raised – advice from the dioceses would be sought.

Comments

- Dcn Daniel advised that, as in previous years, last years minutes for the Annual Meeting had been provided after the meeting at the back of the Church so that all parishioners could have a copy. This year a copy would be added to the website.
- Dcn Daniel confirmed that the HT Sanctuary handrail was in hand – a 2nd price was being obtained. Mgr Cousins confirmed that handrails had been fitted in SH.
- The request for a lift to the choir loft had been looked at, but for various reasons (impact on the piety store, costs/maintenance, limited utilisation and a lack of presidents in the diocese) Fr Michael did not consider it an appropriate expense – in addition, the choir could relocate downstairs if needs be as Oscott College have done.
- Dcn Daniel did however agree to look at an additional handrail to the choir spiral stairs to aid access.
- The disabled access to the Small Hall would be undertaken once the car park boundary wall was completed - it had not been considered prudent/safe to limit the car park with a second element of works.

3.0 Diocesan Pastoral Plan

- Liturgy – Fr Michael was pleased to see the 6.00pm Youth Mass on Sunday was flourishing. He was delighted that Connie (Hong Konger) was now the parish organist. A call for more Readers was emphasised and for Eucharist Ministers, especially those who could bring Communion to the elderly/sick – Dcn Owen was happy to provide any further training in these ministries.
- Fr Michael confirmed no changes to Mass times proposed, though the impact on reducing clergy numbers would in time mean that change was inevitable.
- Contact with Pat Salter would be arranged to see if further assistance on the Readers list could be offered.
- It was wonderful to see so many Altar servers at HT and Dcn Owen would be pleased to visit St Joseph's to encourage more Year 4 pupils to become Altar servers.

- Evangelisation - Dcn Daniel reported on another years RCIA success, and Margaret's role as Parish Catechist was commended for helping to prepare the children to receive the Sacraments of first Communion and Confirmation – a White Board/Screen in the Conference room was requested to aid this work.
- Volunteers to help with adding to the hospitality welcome teams that assist at the Masses was encouraged – this is a vital ministry especially with such a diverse community.
- Parish retreat days in Advent proved to be great success and was well attended.

- Social Outreach – Brian reported on the work of the SVP (combined across the two parishes). Numbers had increased and outreach programmes to assist prisoners, the poor, elderly housebound and homeless both in the local area and through a twinning arrangement with South India was good news.
- Food stuffs for the SVP can be left in the Conference Room entrance area for collection.
- The HT Bazar for Lourdes raised £2,500. The group are always seeking new candidates to assist in travelling to Lourdes where there is a need – please come forward to seek inclusion.
- Various social events – quiz nights etc had been held in the parish hall to bring people in the parish together and to raise funds for various charitable works.
- Co-responsibility – refer to Cluster agenda item.

4.0 Building and Maintenance

- Holy Trinity – Boundary wall was now nearing completion and looks splendid. Grants had met approximately 50% of the costs.
- Chimney repairs now complete.
- Sanctuary handrail to the Lectern was out to tender.
- Small Hall disabled access would be undertaken this year now that the wall was complete. It was not safe to undertake 2 elements of work that would have impact on the car parking at the same time.
- Choir loft lighting had been improved and the spiral stairs cleaned.
- External car park lighting improved.

- Diocesan Health and Safety Review –
- Dcn Daniel advised that the diocese required certain actions be taken to safeguard diocesan property:
- Asbestos survey at HT had been completed (no asbestos found).
- Fire Assessment survey report had been undertaken, which would require some works to the presbytery to safeguard the clergy living on site.
- A building Maintenance Survey had been started to aid in medium and longer term maintenance planning.
- Sacred Heart
- Flat roof renewal works completed.
- Entrance ramp to hall added.
- Boiler replacements works to the parish house fitted.
- Sanctuary handrail fitted.
- Hall Lettings and Management – Thanks to Christine – see separate statement of activity/lettings and management costs for HT issued by Les at the meeting.

Fr Michael wished to thank all those who helped with the buildings and maintenance, those who cared for the gardens and in the cleaning/repairs undertaken.

To those who wished to voice criticism, we were asked to remember that Fr Michael was still in recovery and not fully back in the parish fulltime. Along with all the clergy they deserve our heartfelt thanks and appreciation, respect and support. It was also said that the parish should remember that Fr Michael cleared a huge parish debt since becoming the parish priest and has steered us into a healthy financial surplus.

5.0 Catholic Sutton Coldfield Cluster

Dcn Daniel summarised the steps being taken to respond to the diocesan request to form parish clusters, and to begin the process of working collaboratively during a time of discernment on how the future of Catholic Sutton Coldfield might develop. To this end, a small group had been formed to aid in bringing forward a parish (HT & SH) cluster forum that would connect with the parish groups and with parishioners to illicit their voice, ideas etc and to ensure the diversity of the parish is represented along with the youth and families.

Dcn Daniel emphasised that collaboration across the 4 Sutton parishes would require more 'co-responsibility' – one of the key aspects of the diocesan plan. We must face the challenges of the future together, that will see clergy numbers decrease significantly, with enthusiasm, tolerance, commitment, energy and in a spirit of cooperation and harmony.

To assist in these developments the parish will form both a Finance Committee and a Parish Pastoral Council as advisory bodies to Father Michael. An open Annual Meeting will still be held each year to receive and provide reports.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm with a closing prayer followed by cheese and wine