

## WGC Catholic Parishes Open Meeting 2019 Minutes

**Date:** Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019                      **Venue:** Holy Family Church  
**Chaired by:** Father Norbert  
**Present:** Fr. Tony, Approx. 40 parishioners, Maria Vargas (Minutes)

### 1. Welcome

Fr. Norbert opened the meeting at 7.30. Fr. Tony said the opening prayer.

### 2. Reports from Parish Groups

Ann Chappell spoke about the Hospitality group and Safeguarding.

The Hospitality Group helps with catering and clearing up during events such as after the Special Needs Mass and the party following the Cardinal's visit to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Our Lady's Church. Most of these events are "bring and share" so the work is mainly laying out the food, helping to distribute it and clearing up afterwards. More helpers are always welcome.

Safeguarding involves arranging to secure D.B.S. checks when required. People who work with vulnerable adults and children need D.B.S. checks, also drivers who are involved in transporting others to and from Masses. Each DBS authorisation is specific to a particular role in a particular place. Each church has its own Safeguarding Representative, Ann Chappell at Holy Family, Barbara Moore at Our Lady's and Cathy Staniforth at St. Bonaventure.

Missio (Association for the Propagation of the Faith, APF)

Mavis Cleasby spoke about the good work being done by the missions helped by contributions made by people taking Red Boxes. The WGC churches raised over £3,000 last year in this way, and she suggests that more people take a red box as a means to support the missions.

Used stamps are also being collected to raise money for St Patrick's missions, a box is at the back of each church for used stamps.

St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVP)

Fr. Tony read a report by Janet Lewis, President of the local group. The SVP aims to convert Faith into Action by helping clients in need, by listening and providing support in terms of lifts to hospital appointments, clothes, financial support, and whatever else may be needed. They currently have 50 clients and 7 members of the local group. They would welcome new members to be able to meet the ever growing demands on their support.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)

Margaret Green explained that a course is run weekly from October to the following Easter for anyone interested in becoming a Catholic or for those who were baptised but missed Confirmation as a child. The course is run by Fr Norbert together with 4 catechists. Last Easter there were 13 baptisms and 5 people confirmed following the RCIA course.

Confirmation Group

Michael Cade is the lead catechist for preparing young people for the sacrament of Confirmation.

Last year there were 48-50 young people confirmed from the three WGC churches.

The course is adapted each year to meet the changing needs of young people. Michael encourages members of the group to express their views to make the sessions interesting and engaging.

Focolare

Mary Gatheshill and Marie Christine Fournier told us about the Focolare Movement which aims to bring people together following the inspiration of Jesus. The UK headquarters are situated next to St Bonaventure Church. They run many events throughout the year, including "Carols in the Cloisters"

before Christmas which is very popular with families. Every 2 months they show a film about good news from parts of the world in conflict, to demonstrate the work that Focolare groups do, to improve the lives of people in those areas. They also publish a monthly magazine about the Focolare movement, "New City"

#### Interfaith Group

Valerie Skottowe explained the work of the group which has members from many diverse faiths. They have monthly meetings where a different topic is discussed. The aim is to promote respect and understanding between people of different faiths. They have visited 16 primary schools in the area telling children about the different faiths in order to teach tolerance of others. An Interfaith supper is planned for November, details will be in the newsletter.

#### Preparation for First Holy Communion and First Confession

Anne Keller who leads the preparation sessions at Our Lady's mentioned that there are 70-80 children each year across our 3 parishes, with about 50 in Our Lady's alone. There are weekly sessions for the children and 6 sessions for their parents to explain their responsibilities in helping them to prepare for the sacraments.

#### Catholic Womens League (CWL)

This group meet regularly in Our Lady's sacristy and often have guest speakers too.

#### Caring for Our World

A new group has been formed, led by Shelley Waldock which hopes to raise awareness about taking care of the environment. The group showed the film "Before the Flood" last year, about climate change, and there are ideas for a parish walk and further meetings in the future to promote ideas to live simply, to re-use and reduce waste. New members with energy and enthusiasm are needed

#### CAFOD

Bridie Nash told us about the work done locally to raise funds. The group meet at 2pm every first Tuesday of the month at Holy Family church. Last year £4,000 was raised and helped to provide aid to a community in Ethiopia and in Colombia with the aim to make such communities self-sufficient, so that they no longer need foreign aid.

#### Bereavement Support Group

Anna Grogan explained that the group which was formed three years ago hold two memorial services each year, at Easter and November. Those recently bereaved get an invitation to attend, and after the service there is an opportunity to talk to other bereaved people over tea and so get mutual support.

#### Christian Leaders Group

Fr Norbert told us that leaders of the various churches meet regularly and hold ecumenical events, for example the Canterbury pilgrimage in June which was attended by 125 people. A joint Service of Thanksgiving on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020 is planned to mark the centenary of Welwyn Garden City.

Our churches also have Special Needs Masses and fully signed Masses for the deaf community, during the year, also cultural Masses led by the African, Filipino and Polish communities which brings people together to enjoy each other's company.

The Transport to Mass scheme offers lifts to those who are unable to get to Mass. All drivers are DBS checked.

### **3. Finance reports**

Copies of finance reports from the churches were distributed and explained in some detail. Copies are available at the back of the churches. Representatives from the three church finance committees agreed that monthly standing orders are the best way to commit to a regular sum for church needs, and tax payers signing a gift aid form allows the church to claim 25p extra for each £1 donated.

There was a financial audit in June and a Health and Safety inspection.

The church aims to be 100% compliant with the recommendations made so that we get an excellent report in the re-audit due this month.

### **4. New Parish Centre**

Progress is continuing on the new build which should be completed by July 2020.

As yet, it has no title, there will be an opportunity to suggest names in the future.

Contributions towards the building fund are needed either for parishioners under the GIF scheme to continue to make regular contributions to the new parish fund, and also for new parishioners to join the building fund scheme.

### **5. One Canonical Parish**

The proposal for all three churches to be joined as one Canonical Parish will be shelved until after the new Centre has been built. In the meantime, the diocese has sought a Canonical Agreement between the three parishes for the new Centre and it was unanimously approved.

### **6. New Housing in the area**

Fr Norbert discussed the changes happening in the area with new people moving into newly built houses. He invited parishioners to think of ways to engage with newcomers and invite them to be a part of our community. Many endorsed the importance of welcomers before Mass, the newsletter which informs of upcoming events and the church website. Other suggestions were made such as tea after Sunday Mass and a newcomers get together every six months to tell people about the parish.

### **7. Year of the Word**

Fr Norbert asked people to suggest ways to make the Word of God accessible to people, in this the Year of the Word, which started on 30<sup>th</sup> September. One suggestion was a bible study course which could be run for 8 sessions starting in January. This is an ongoing topic and there will be more ideas coming up in the coming months

### **8. Closing Prayer**

Fr Norbert closed the meeting with a prayer by Blessed John Henry Newman who will be canonised on 13<sup>th</sup> October.