

St. Vincent's Parish Council Meeting. 14/01/2021

Present: Father Walsh; Russell Brynes (chair); Catherine Evans; Kathleen Baster; Theresa Rice; Dominic Rice; Peter Delamere; Columba Timmins (minutes).

Apologies: Peter Twomey; Andrew Hayes; Christine Hopewell.

The meeting opened with a prayer.

Minutes from last meeting reviewed.

Managing Church opening for Mass: Churches may remain open for public worship during the current lockdown. However discussion below was informed by new problems regarding the ease of new variant virus transmission, and serious pressures on the NHS. Noted that some local churches have stopped services for now, and others have reduced frequency of opening.

Steward rota remains currently manageable.

Booking system: options and advice for booking a place at Mass have been re advertised by print, social media and word of mouth. Since Christmas, Sunday morning Mass has remained fully booked. Evening bookings are reduced, but there is a steady number of parishioners who regularly attend. People arriving at morning Mass without booking are advised to return in the evening.

Telephone booking has been used once so far.

Safety at Mass can feel compromised when the church is fully booked. A combination of possible reasons was discussed. Maintaining safe space between people and the length of time people are together are two potential hazards.

Conclusions: it will be safer to reduce the number of places available at Mass to allow leeway for safe spacing.

The steward taking names at the church entrance will remain at the back of the church during Mass in order to manage seating latecomers, and to ensure the names of any late arrivals who have not booked are noted for the Test, Track and Trace list.

One steward only to manage exiting from the pews after Mass, to reduce accidental crowding at the doors.

A more directive stewarding of 2 metre spacing should be followed during the current health emergency.

Father will omit the Bidding Prayers and be circumspect about homily length;

Bulletins not to be left in Narthex during lockdown to reduce risk of transmission by touch.

The bulletin is important to a number of parishioners. How to distribute it was not definitely resolved, but 2 council members are willing to hand deliver if necessary.

It is acknowledged that the strict managing of Diocesan safety guidelines risks marring the experience of our coming together for Mass. It is important that Mass continue for the spiritual and social welfare of our community. In a spirit of community, it is hoped to find a balance to achieve a safe environment for us all.

Guidelines for stewards will be reissued.

Cleaning: The advisability of stewards wearing mask, apron and gloves when cleaning after Mass was re-viewed. It is re-emphasised as necessary both for personal and communal safety.

Church was deep cleaned on January 7th. Industrial carpet cleaning, including moving the pews, to be arranged.

A supply of concentrated cleaning liquid is now being used to refill spray bottles. The bottles have been marked to indicate correct dilution with water.

Some of the hand sanitisers can be very stiff to operate. To be checked.

Test, track and trace: this system, along with the effort to keep the church clean in terms of Covid transmission, is undermined if people come into the church when it is not open for Mass. The church should not be open for private prayer during the current time of increased risk.

Liturgy: the Christmas liturgy and music were appreciated for their more communal aspect. The outside crib and the car park carols evening (where space permitted the safe attendance of over 100 people) both lifted many parishioners' spirits.

Candlemas, The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, February 2nd. This feast creates an opportunity to share symbols of hope (blessed candles, spring growth) among the parish, including those more isolated. Father will bless candles for distribution on the Sunday before the feast. Arrangements for distribution and for possible individual or group prayer outside are under discussion.

Lent: Ash Wednesday, February 17th: 2 Masses, 9.30 and 7pm, places to be booked. There will be no individual distribution of ashes.

Palm Sunday: outside service? - for discussion. Maundy Thursday, booked Mass inside. Good Friday ?simplified outside service.

More concrete arrangements for Easter Vigil and Sunday to be discussed at the next meeting.

Day by Day books much appreciated. No issues.

Community Sponsorship Scheme: There has been no further contact from the Diocese as yet. The Syrian Refugee Project was put on hold during the 1st lockdown and has not yet been reinstated. Meanwhile parishioners could spread the word and discuss the potential of parish support for a refugee family among ourselves.

Covenant with the Poor: as first steps, an attempt will be made to identify existing work going on in the parish towards alleviating poverty eg SVP, St. Justin's, UCM, CMS and Cafod. The Parish Council will liaise with the Finance Committee on the question of dedicating a proportion of parish funds towards efforts to alleviate poverty.

AOB: How do we make spiritual formation, especially for young people, available to families during this time when we cannot meet in groups for Communion or Confirmation preparation?

A suggestion for the parish to consider is an online resource <https://formed.org/> provided by the Augustine Institute in the US (www.augustineinstitute.org). This is a digital evangelisation platform providing an array of Catholic films, ebooks and audio books. St. Vincent's has free access to this site until January 28th so parishioners can look at the resources provided. A course of programmes 'The Search' is suggested by the organisation as appropriate for Lent. Details for access and encouragement to check out the site will be shared with the Parish whatsapp group. The annual subscription is approximately £750.00.

The meeting closed with a prayer.

Next meeting: Thursday 11 February 7.45pm.