

## **St. Vincent's Open Parish Meeting, Wednesday 27 September 2023, 19:00**

Meeting chaired by Russell Brynes (RB), chair of parish pastoral council. Around 20 parishioners attended (one apology received from someone unable to attend). Notes taken by Dominic Rice and Josh Glicklich.

The meeting started with a prayer from Fr Paddy. RB introduced the meeting and asked the council members present to introduce themselves.

The bulk of the meeting was taken up by going through the points raised at last year's open meeting (14.09.23), summarising what had or hadn't happened on each of them, and allowing further discussion prompted by the points.

### Following up on issues raised at last year's meeting

**Building on mutual support developed during lockdown:** some of the phoning round has continued; SVP has followed up on much of this

**How might people be encouraged to return to mass?** Not specifically addressed during last year; but some relevant issues covered in discussions later in meeting

**Having a Mission in the parish:** was pursued last year but had to be cancelled. Still hoping to arrange one in near future. Noted that four Advent talks are planned.

**Engaging young people / regular mass for young people:** Some progress here, albeit limited. Sue McDonald (Diocesan youth officer, who was at the meeting) met up with some of the young people in the parish after a Sunday evening mass. They expressed an interest in doing "intergenerational" things. A few young people from St. Vincent's are engaged with the Diocesan youth ministry. Currently c. 20 young people are preparing for Confirmation, meeting each Sunday evening (hope would be to keep them together in some way after Confirmation). Mentoring of young readers is happening at the 6pm mass.

**Children's Liturgy at 9:30 mass:** Several developments, eg. more publicity, celebrating children's return to mass after their liturgy, re-instating offertory hymn, box of instruments for children to play at final hymn at 9:30 mass.

Some discussion about the timing of the return to mass. Ideal is that they come back and join in the offertory procession, at which point Fr. Paddy talks with them about what they have done. However, agreed that if they come in later than that they should just go back to their seats (don't interrupt the Eucharistic Prayer). Noted that they don't have a lot of time for activity, and sometimes it can be difficult to get the children organised for a timely return. It was suggested that an alternative would be for the priest's engagement with the children to take place towards the end of mass.

**Restoration of communion chalice:** been discussed at Parish Council; some parishes have re-introduced it; for now stick to communion under one kind at St. Vincent's.

**Communication between council and parish:** some attempts to improve this, eg. poster with photos of council members in narthex and hall; minutes of council meeting on website and reference copy put in narthex. Keep thinking about this.

At this point a query was raised about the amount of money coming in by standing order, and putting it in the bulletin alongside the figure for the weekly (cash) collection. Not straightforward as many of the SOs are monthly, and come in at different points in the month. It was said that the monthly total is noted in the bulletin.

**Social events / having a social rep on the council:** no one came forward to take this role on the council; of course, all members can be a “social rep”, and any parishioner/group is welcome to arrange social events. At this point Fr Paddy noted that he would, in general, no longer be renting out the hall to external groups for large events.

**Churches Together in Crookes:** some developments here; warm hubs last Winter started off better links; now have eco-church activity; probably will be further opportunities to work together in future.

**Booklet on groups/activities in parish:** this was taken forward in 2023 (resurrecting the draft that was prepared before lockdown); a final draft is now available on the website; plan to produce a printed copy in next few months.

**Healing Mass:** there was one following last year’s meeting; plan to have another one in future, ideally involving mini-Vinnies if possible; Fr. P mentioned possibility of adding a healing blessing at end of Tuesday evening mass.

**Working with The Hub:** RB discussed with Fr. Lee at the Hub, and at that point they were not in a position to work with parishes; may be possibilities in future; they have a programme there relating to discipleship and leadership.

**Display for St. Vincent’s about Blessed Carlo Arcutis:** had to be postponed last year; hope we can get a new date in the future.

**Need more volunteers for coffee rota:** this has happened for 9:30 mass; and coffee after 6pm mass started (though not currently happening, due to Confirmation preparations). People can now make a donation for coffee/tea (which goes to St. Justin’s) via the electronic payment device.

**Being more welcoming to people:** welcomers continue at both Sunday masses; welcome cards have been introduced, which a lot of people have filled in. Other churches have “welcome points” near the entrance – this idea will be raised at one of the next council meetings.

**Synod – how to take things forward?** This item led to a fair amount of discussion. Main points:

- Arguably the process is now just beginning – it has not ended.
- If anyone wants to get involved, please do.

- There is clearly a lack of understanding of the Synod, synodality, the process, what will happen next, and how parishes and people can engage with it.
- Could we use a future Mission in the parish to help people grasp the idea of synodality?
- A document will emerge from the Synod of Bishops – can we react to that?
- Cath Bailey (trustee of Diocese) is happy to raise the issue of getting more clarity at the next trustees meeting.
- Do we need to do more to tell people where they can find information/materials?

**Parish Environmental Policy/Living Simply:** several developments here, eg. becoming a Fairtrade parish, using eco-friendly cleaning materials, work in church grounds, shared table after mass. The Live Simply Group in the parish has been key in this.

**St Vincent's & Sacred Heart as sister parishes:** not much happened here, though a few attempts have been made; it was noted that the SVP groups work together well.

**Potential 'two-tier' system between 9:30am & 6pm mass?** addressed to some extent; 6pm rota for ministers now established and more people are on it; there is now a music group at 6pm mass, and coffee afterwards did happen for a while (but is it continuing?). There was a feeling that there is not really an issue here, and it is good that the 6pm mass is different to the 9:30 mass.

**Setting up warm centre in Winter:** this happened, and was done in conjunction with other Crookes churches.

### Other issues discussed

**Fewer people going to mass: why?** Discussion around this - some points:

- Culturally, society is becoming more secular
- There is a misunderstanding of Christ/the Eucharist/Christianity
- We don't evangelise, we catechise
- People have lost trust in the Church (abuse, scandals)
- Some studies have suggested (abroad?) that one reason is that people can't understand the priest

**Christmas Masses:** This year these will be:

- Christmas Eve 5pm (geared towards children/families)
- Midnight (with plan for small choir singing some of the prayers in Latin, in form of Gregorian chant)
- 9:30am

The **Midnight Mass** prompted some discussion:

- Why have it at midnight? (compared with 8pm in recent years). Some felt this was too late for some parishioners; others welcomed a midnight mass. In recent years the 8pm Christmas Eve mass has not been well attended.

- Why sing some of the prayers in Latin at the mass? Some were unhappy with re-introducing Latin, feeling it is a backward step. Who – and how many – are the people who want this?
- In response it was noted that Vatican II had never banned the use of Latin in the mass, and had said that the propers of the liturgy should be preserved in Latin; also, the Church acknowledges Gregorian chant as suited to the Roman liturgy.
- It will be tried as a one-off this year, and will see how it goes.

### Points made on post-its

Only one this year: *Where did the picture come from on the top of the bulletin? – it looks very old-fashioned (something from the 1950s?).*

Meeting closed at 20:37; several attendees stayed on to chat and celebrate the Feast of St. Vincent.