

St. Benedict's Church, Stratton-on-the Fosse

Pastoral Council Meeting 26th October at 7.30 pm in St Benedict's Church Hall

Minutes

1. Fr Leo read the Gospel for All Saints Day (Matthew 5:1-12)

2. Present

Peter Beaven, Liam O'Gorman, John McGarvey, Liz Avis, Tim Clarke, Fr Leo, Fr Michael, Abbot Nicholas

Peter welcomed Abbot Nicholas to the meeting.

3. Apologies

None

4. Minutes of last Meeting September 21st 2021

These were approved.

5. Discussion of Abbot Nicholas's document (attached)

Fr Nicholas started by informing the meeting that the monastic community had reached a decision to move to Southgate House, in the grounds of Buckfast Abbey, by March 2022. This was to be a temporary move whilst the community spent time considering a permanent home. Fr Nicholas said this decision had just been unanimously agreed and was being announced immediately.

a. Parish Priest

This gave rise to discussion about the availability of a Parish Priest and the PPC's concern that Mass would continue being said in the Parish.

Peter started by asking the meeting not to repeat feelings of dismay and even anger felt by many in the Parish over the Downside Community's decisions over the last few years. He said that he had reported these feelings to the Abbot and that we now had to look forward to what needed to be done in the circumstances we find ourselves in.

Liam said that the key issue was the question of Mass.

Fr Nicholas explained that there would be a search for a Benedictine to take over as Parish Priest. This search would take a couple of months. He pointed out that such a search for the Parishes of Beccles and Bungay had failed and they had then to be transferred to the Diocese. Fr Nicholas also explained that the Downside Parish belonged to Downside, and not the Diocese, which meant that there was a protocol of exploring a Benedictine Parish Priest first. If that search failed, then discussion with the diocese would take place. He was to meet with Bishop Declan shortly.

When asked if the PPC should approach the Bishop directly, Fr Nicholas answered that the Bishop could not do anything until the Benedictine search had concluded. Concern was raised about the Parish being left without a priest to say Mass. Fr Nicholas said that this would not happen and that a monk from Downside would come to Stratton each weekend

to say Mass and hear Confession. Obviously, this could not be a permanent arrangement but would be an interim answer until a permanent solution was found.

b. The number and location of Masses

Discussion about how many Masses could be provided as a minimum ensued. It was accepted that, the interim solution of a monk travelling from Buckfast to celebrate Mass each weekend, would mean that weekday Masses at The Holy Ghost would probably cease and there would be a Saturday evening Mass and a Sunday Morning Mass. It was generally agreed that the Sunday mass would need to be held at the Abbey as current numbers of 100+ could not be accommodated in St Benedict's. The Saturday evening Mass could return to St Benedict's if required.

Obviously, these arrangements would be reviewed once proper longer term arrangements are in place.

c. The kind of support required from the Parish

Fr Nicholas emphasised that these circumstances made it vital that the Parish was well organised and active in order to support the Parish Priest – and to recruit one. Whatever the solution found, the Parish Priest would need good support, with the Parish organising and undertaking a range of activities.

Peter gave the example of how a priest would need to be supported in organising Mass if the priest was coming from Buckfast and hear Confessions before the service. Supplies of wine and hosts needed to be checked, microphones switched on and checked, candles lit, vestments put out, readers and Eucharistic ministers organised, welcomers in place, hymns sorted out etc etc. all of these things could/should be done by the Parish.

It was suggested that we speak to people from Peasedown who have had to do this.

d. Finance

Members of the PPC pointed out that nothing was known about Parish finances despite this having been on the agenda for some time. Fr Nicholas asked Fr Michael to update the PPC. Fr Michael explained that a small finance committee had been established with David Byrne as chair, Lorraine Zawatowski as treasurer and Sarah Dzioba, along with himself and Fr Leo. This committee has just been established and it will prepare a Financial Report for the AGM of the PPC on the 21st November.

Financial questions were briefly discussed and it was clear that income needed to be increased if it is to cover expenses. Peter stopped the discussion pointing out that the detail was the remit of the Finance Committee and we should await its report.

e. How can the PPC and the priest(s) to work together to draw up a strategic plan

Peter argued that the PPC, the Finance Committee and the Maintenance Team needed to be connected. Finance should be a standing item on the PPC agenda and Fr Leo suggested that a member of the Finance Committee should sit on the PPC. This was agreed.

The idea of developing a strategic plan for the Parish was raised. Members of the PPC pointed out that this had to be supported by the clergy as there were so many aspects of Parish work that they did not know about. Fr Leo agreed to start this and email some thoughts to Peter.

6. Preparing for the PPC AGM on November 21st

a. What are we trying to achieve?

It was agreed that the PPC needs strengthening. Members of the PPC will ask people to stand for election. Fr Michael and Fr Leo will seek out members of the Parish to co-opt.

b. What needs to be done in preparation and who will do it?

- i. Notice of meeting- this will be put into the newsletter and Fr Michael and Fr Leo will advertise it at each Mass and exhort people to attend.

- ii. **Agenda**

Peter will draft the agenda.

- iii. **Venue and Preparing the venue**

It was agreed that the Visitor's Centre will be used as the venue. Fr Michael and Fr Leo will prepare the venue and provide coffee, tea and biscuits.

- iv. **Running the meeting**

As outgoing Chairman, Peter will deliver a report on the work of the PPC and act as chair for the meeting.

7. Safeguarding

There were no safeguarding issues to report. Fr Michael will speak to Paul Justin to ascertain whether he can continue as Safeguarding Officer. If not he will seek out an alternative. Fr Nicholas pointed out that Kath Oxborrow, the Safeguarding Lead for the monastery, may be able to provide training and support

8. A.O.B

None

9. Date of Next Meeting

21st November after 11.00 Mass is the AGM

The subsequent meeting will be on December 8th at 7.30 in St Benedict's Church hall.

10. Final Prayer led by Fr Michael