



CATHOLIC PARISH OF GUILDFORD

Minutes, Formation Team Meeting, Wednesday 23rd July 2020

Attendees: Janet Burr **(JB)** Zelma Braganza **(ZB)**, Peter Charlwood **(PC)**, Aseel Gilbert **(AG)**
Tina Nichols **(TN)** Chris Richardson **(CR)**, Fr Roy Waters **(FRW)**, Sinclair Webster **(SW)**

Apologies: Una Corning **(UC)**

Circulation: as preceding plus Mgr Tony Barry **(MTB)**, Susie Ball **(SB)**, Sandy Hunt **(SH)**
Parish Secretary, David Campbell **(DC)** Mission Team, Yvonne Newman **(YN)**
Communications Team

1. Welcome

- The meeting opened with a Prayer

2. **Apologies for Absence** Prior apologies were received from Una Corning

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 10th June 2020.

CR had been in contact with David Campbell, the Chair of the Mission Team, concerning Bereavement and support for the housebound. He tells me that these are topics that Mission have previously discussed. There are a number of existing housebound care networks such as SVP and Besom that do this already. He was not aware of the support that Aseel had set up.

Discussions at the Mission Team have highlighted the problem that bereavement support meant different things to different people and that until this question was settled there was no good way to proceed. To some people bereavement support focused on help with funeral arrangements and provision of wake hospitality. To others this meant help with grieving and coming to terms with death. It was not clear whether the Diocesan training provided sufficient experience for either role. Accordingly, Mission would welcome someone with a broad vision of bereavement support who could champion such an initiative. He will raise both issues again at his next meeting.

ZB asked that the Mission Team be made aware that there were people already trained who would be willing to serve once a co-ordinator was found.

CR had noted the need for interconnectedness. David had agreed that this was important and had assumed that this would be provided by the Co-ordinating Team that, as yet, has not been formed. FRW agreed that this group was still required but did not think that this was likely to happen before the Autumn because of the holidays and other pressures on the clergy. This did not seem unreasonable to the Team.

(Minutes 3.e) CR reported that Aseel was kind enough to send both Peter and himself the CCO Framework, which he thought provided a useful model. On reflection, he decided that it would be advisable to see whether it was something that Mgr Tony was comfortable with. Consequently the meeting with Aseel and Peter was postponed until he could arrange this. Unfortunately, with the reopening of churches and the start of public Masses it had not been possible to meet with Mgr Tony and so this item is still pending.

4. Being a Welcoming Parish In the context of the current pandemic restrictions that Team considered a number of questions:

a) What will the 'new normal look' like for our parish?

Accepting that we were speculating, members suggested a number of possible features of the 'new normal':

Up until Christmas it seems almost certain that live streaming of Mass will continue. Going forward, it was anticipated that there would be a reduction in restrictions on congregational gatherings.

It was pointed out that getting together is a physical thing that cannot be adequately replicated using electronic media. As another member said The Mass was a 'full on sensory experience' and you had to be there to get the full benefit.

There was concern that if people were turned away from Mass because all the places were booked, this was not only unwelcoming but also likely to discourage future attendance. To some extent this was mitigated by the fact that currently capacity was not being reached. Rather surprisingly it was reported that a number of people who had booked places did not turn up.

It was noted that some people are still cautious about attending and how quickly this would change was hard to predict.

It was suggested that live streaming had become normal and, in fact, was attractive to a number of people. It may well be the case that our relationship with the Mass is changing.

Although there was recognition that we could be living with the current situation for a long time and a winter spike could set things back again even if progress had been made. This was set alongside a feeling that we risked planning for a pessimistic future that might not materialise.

The provision of streamed evening prayer was considered very welcome and welcoming particularly as it allowed people to ask for prayers to be offered for their own intentions.

One positive action that could be taken would be to make the names and preferably photographs of various committee members available on the website.

There was general agreement that the way that Mass had been celebrated on the live stream had conveyed a real sense of welcome although it was not always easy to quantify this.

b) What does 'being a welcoming parish' mean in the new normal?

Much of the outreach through electronic media was regarded as welcoming. RCIA for example used email, Zoom, and phone calls to keep in contact with people.

It was recognised, however, that new start ups will be more difficult than maintenance of already established groups.

Some consideration was given to the extent to which we could ensure that people did not feel excluded. It was suggested that if you don't feel that anyone is listening to you then you don't really feel that you belong and therefore do not feel welcome. Could ways be found to 'listen' to the experience of parishioners more generally and not just the voices of the committed, who currently have the greatest online presence. Should we explore some sort of questionnaire through the data base contacts?

It was pointed out that not everyone who booked a place at Mass was on the data base despite the large number who were.

c) To what extent has the parish maintained a degree of 'welcome' during the shutdown?

The streaming of Mass and other liturgies had been well received and many people who had sampled other parish live streams considered the Guildford effort to be among the best.

The variety of website opportunities and the maintenance of current programmes via Zoom were considered to be characteristics of a welcoming parish.

The electronic newsletter and personal contacts with the housebound and 'coffee with the clergy via Zoom' were other positive expressions of welcome.

One member reflected on the experience of being met by a steward at the church door and being accompanied to a seat and given relevant information about the socially distanced Mass. This had been a very welcoming experience and one we could learn from going forward.

This discussion could have continued for much longer but we left it at that point in order to pick up the next agenda item

5. Agenda for Next meeting

Following receipt of an email suggestion from PC this item turned into a discussion about co-ordinating our formation effort. A number of interesting and sometimes challenging points were raised:

PC was concerned to help people to navigate what was already available. It was not always clear what a particular course or group was offering. People who were searching did not always know where to go to find things.

As an example, what is the role of RCIA in the parish? This is not to suggest that it is not important, but is it clear to someone who is searching, in the sense of trying to discern new directions for their life, what RCIA has to offer. This would be true of most if not all parish courses and groups.

It was pointed out that often the best way to introduce people to something new was to invite them and go along with them.

CR suggested that our main pathway should reflect the faith journey of the ordinary believer which started with baptism and moved through FHC, Confirmation and on towards Discipleship. Following this there was a period of 'vocational discernment' both in career

terms but also whether one was called to the married life, ordination or the single life. Whichever of these life choices were made there was need for further spiritual and pastoral support. Gradually people moved on to a mature faith with its own needs. We could identify what was required at each stage and try to provide it.

CR accepted that life was not quite so unidirectional but as a basic reference pathway it might focus what we do and allow us to make it easier for people to navigate our provision. People could still take part in anything that was on offer but they might be better able to judge if it was what they needed. (A brief outline of this is attached although it is a very basic initial draft)

There was some support for this approach.

AG shared her experience working across age groups and reiterated the importance of accompaniment which is planned and intentional. This is not just being a friend and listening ear but being an informed guide who has reflected on the faith journey that people are on. They need to practice listening, accompanying, discerning and articulating. The CCO course and the framework that underpins has proven to be a useful tool in facilitating this.

There was some discussion about the types of conversation that people have after Mass. Do they ever talk about what they have just experienced? Is this because they are not confident to articulate their beliefs? It was also pointed out that casual 'non religious' discourse is often the way into a more profound discussion. But ensuring this happens would be an example of intentionality.

There was interest expressed in the number of people who belonged to each of the parish groups. The data base gave some insights into this but it did not have comprehensive information. This might be something worth trying to collate.

Apart from ecclesial ministers there are other ministries that parishioners fulfil such as prison chaplains or visitors, street angles etc. It would be good to hear their stories.

Summing up, PC accepted that there were a number of entry points for those searchers and we needed to make it easier for them to navigate what was available. As well as accompaniment we needed to encourage a 'mindset of growth' where people are mindful of how they can grow. Groups within the parish need to be careful that they do not become closed in on themselves but remain open to the 'other' whoever that may be.

He reminded us that people are most positively influenced by witnesses, those who reflect their own personal relationship with Jesus in their lives.

6. Date of Next Meeting The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 16th September at & 7.30pm via Zoom.

7. Closing Prayer Fr Roy closed the meeting with a prayer and a blessing.

IDEALISED FAITH JOURNEY

This is just an ‘off the top of my head’ draft. It would benefit from an informed critique. In part it borrows from Fowler’s stages of faith development (which has no doubt been superseded).

On this pathway it would be easy to see where RCIA fits in and following RCIA and baptism or Reception an adult newcomer might decide to join courses such as those leading to discipleship, or a nurture group that can support the next stage of their journey.

Marriage guidance would be on offer as one moved towards a mature faith.

	Main influence	Parish support
BAPTISM <i>Family nurture –</i> <i>(0-3) develop basic attitudes about reality (pre-conscious disposition)</i> <i>(4-8) intuitive non rational faith - accepts parents’ faith - accepts that God is like parents [Imaginative]</i> <i>Sacramental Preparation</i> FIRST HOLY COMMUNION	Family Family and School Parish Youth Group	Sacramental preparation
<i>(6-12) needs to know how things are - accepts authority and rules - God is like a super hero [Literal]</i> <i>(13+) influenced by dominant peer attitudes - evaluates faith claims [Conventional]</i> <i>Sacramental Preparation</i> CONFIRMATION	Peers, School and Parish Youth Group	Sacramental preparation
<i>Continuing Catechesis (e.g. CCO)</i> <i>Incorporation into the community - feel needed and wanted - sense of belonging</i> DISCIPLESHIP	Close friendships Parish	Parish Courses Nurture group Diocesan events
<i>(20+) guidance through ambivalence and confusion - faith can be private and intense - critical of faith claims</i> <i>Vocational Discernment</i>	Friends Culmination of previous	Parish Courses Nurture group Diocesan events
<i>Marriage preparation - MARRIAGE - parenting - marital support</i> <i>Seminary training - ORDINATION - Spiritual Direction - fraternal support</i> <i>Single Life - COMMISSIONING - pastoral support -</i> MATURE FAITH	Parents & friends Parents, parish, priests Friends, parish	Active parish engagement Parish Courses Nurture group Retreats etc.
<i>(30+) God’s presence experienced at the deepest levels - lives with contradictions - embraces mystery</i>	Friends, Parents Parish	Active parish engagement Parish Courses Nurture group Retreats etc.

Following our discussion, it would not be too difficult to regularise this pathway, underpin its stages with intentional accompaniment and make it effectively navigable by specifying what various courses and nurture groups have to offer.

Chris Richardson (July 2020)