MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL

Held at St. Columba’s on 10 November 2022 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: See list attached.

APOLOGIES: Pauline Rourke, Carol Galvin, Tim Moore, Jane Walsh, Lynsey Weightman

The meeting opened with a prayer led by Fr William.

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|  | | **Action** |
| 1. | **Welcome**  In her opening remarks Ann welcomed everyone and observed that the last AGM was held in May 2019. |  |
| 2. | **Minutes of the last meeting**  Nuala advised the meeting that, following discussion with Fr William and Ann (co-chair), as the last meeting was held more than 3 years ago it had been decided that minutes prepared at that time were not relevant to recent Pastoral Council activities. |  |
| 3. | **Review of Pastoral Council activities**  Ann provided an overview of Pastoral Council activities in the last 18 months. She noted that following the pandemic an open air meeting had been held in her garden in June 2021 to re-establish the Pastoral Council. This had been followed by an official meeting in September 2021. During that time several members of the Pastoral Council resigned and it was important to recruit new members.  *The Synod*  In the Autumn of 2021 attention became focussed on the commencement of the Synod. This had formed the foundation for all Pastoral Council activities since.  Ann provided a reminder of the purpose behind the Synod “ That by growing together in **Communion,** the people of God deepen their **Participation** in the life of the Church and so become more effective **Missionary** disciples in the world.”  Ann illustrated the symbolism of the Synod logo which shows a large tree reaching for the sky, the Eucharist , shining like the sun, the branches opened like hands suggesting the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide us and the diverse people of God sheltering under the tree. The image overall showing us journeying together and united in Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. The Synod prayer has been said aloud at all Masses during the “listening” phase and continues to be said monthly at Mass. In addition, Deacon Lawrence provides an update on the Synod process monthly in the newsletter.  Ann noted that in January and February weekly meetings of a Synod sub-committee of the Pastoral Council had taken place. These meetings led the planning for the parish response to the invitation from Pope Francis, considered how to engage parishioners in the Synod and prepared a response to be submitted to Bishop Mark.  Ann noted that the outcomes of these meetings included   * + Initial introductory statement in the weekly newsletter   + Display boards publicising the Synod were placed in the entrance to each church.   + The Synod prayer was printed in the newsletter and has been prayed aloud at every weekend Mass since October. This practice will continue until the completion of the Synod in 2024 to keep the parish alive to its being a long term process which still needs much prayer.   + Members of the Pastoral Council gave addresses on the Synod at weekend Masses explaining the background and the Synod themes of Communion, Participation and Mission.   + Further detailed information was included with the newsletter and a prayer and a whole parish participation and dialogue exercise took place over the weekend of 26/27 February. During this process parishioners were invited to make their own observations about the future of the Church at large and the parish, in particular. Postcards, post it notes, comment boxes and briefing sheets were prepared by the Pastoral Council and shared with parishioners to support this exercise.   Over 200 parishioners responses were collated and analysed by the Synod sub-committee and a submission made to Bishop Mark at the beginning of April. This submission focussed on the future of the Church at large.  The Synod sub-committee continued with the collation of parishioners responses in respect of development in the Parish.  The Pastoral Council convened four whole parish meetings during May and parishioners were invited to consider the urgency and impact of the suggestions for development and to determine high, medium and low priorities under the following themes:   * Involvement of children and families * Involvement of young people * Communications * Outreach/SVP * Volunteer recruitment * Social activities   The input from these meetings was further collated and assembled into a draft Parish Development Plan by the Synod sub-committee.  The draft plan was adopted by the full Pastoral Council at its meeting on 28 June. Members of the Pastoral Council took individual responsibility for coordinating action under each of the themes and liaising with other parishioners to deliver specific developments.  *Copies of the adopted Plan were available to the meeting and will be uploaded on the Parish website.* |  |
| 4. | **Update on the Parish Development Plan**  Ann explained that the PC AGM meeting provided the first opportunity for the Pastoral Council to provide feedback to the parish on the actions taken since June to deliver the priorities identified during the Synod dialogue exercise.  The Lead Pastoral Council member for each theme was invited to update the meeting.  *Involvement of children and families*  *(Lynsey Weightman)*  In Lynsey’s absence Ann reported that a team had been recruited to deliver Children’s Liturgy at St Columba’s. Four volunteers undertook DBS checks and training from the Diocese. Children’s Liturgy was now offered on the first Sunday of each month in the Newman Room. The numbers of children and parents attending was increasing every month. Also a box of books and toys had been assembled for use by the children in the hall after mass.  There had not been the same demand for CL at St Theresa’s but as the number of families attending mass had increased a little recently it was hoped to establish a team there also.  The CL team urgently need more volunteers to join them in order that the frequency of CL can be increased.  Discussions are underway to hold a special children’s mass and the social committee are planning to hold a craft afternoon with a religious theme during the school holidays – possibly during February half term.  *Involvement of young people (Helen Connor)*  Helen reported that Denise Lusk coordinated a Youth Group in the past and has agreed to re-instate this. Another 6 helpers have been recruited and all have been through the DBS checking process. The aim is for the group to attract 10-14 year olds for a monthly session. Amy O’Donnell is promoting through CHS. It is hoped to organise a Youth Mass next year.  *Communications (Matthew Pett)*  Matt reported that an initial meeting had been held with Fr William and Fr James. The aim is to direct more traffic to the website, to ensure that content is managed and to integrate the “old” and “new” websites to ensure accuracy and consistency of information. This is a work in progress and a further action orientated meeting will be held shortly. Matt is keen to recruit additional helpers to support him in this work.  *Outreach/SVP ( Sue McCarthy)*  Sue reported that 5 new members had been recruited across both churches. Some people have been through DBS checks – others in the pipeline. New recruits are shadowing more established members when on home visits.  It is planned to make up parcels for housebound parishioners for Christmas and the Children’s Liturgy group will be designing the Christmas card. The Youth Group are going to design food bank collection point notices to improve visibility and hopefully increase donations. It is planned to increase support work to the Food Bank in the New Year and to integrate with various parish groups to improve outreach in our community.  *Volunteer recruitment (Anne Mosquera)*  Anne confirmed that work was underway to update and integrate the Parish Directory. It is hoped to identify specific volunteer roles with “job descriptions” and an indication of volunteer time commitment required. In doing so Anne believed that it might be possible to encourage more volunteers to come forward and to match their skills and availability with particular roles.  *Social activities (Ann McCarthy)*  Ann thanked members of the Social Committee, led by Paul and Alison Wrigglesworth for their work. The group meets monthly and is working to respond to the issues identified in the Synod dialogue exercise and to increase the opportunity for parishioners to meet and get to know each other. It was disappointing therefore that a quiz, which had been arranged recently, had not been well supported. Future events include the Autumn Fayre on 27 November and the Christmas lunch for older parishioners on 7 December.  Ann described a new initiative - “ The Advent Journey”. A nativity scene has been created with the Holy Family on their journey to Bethlehem. Parishioners are invited to “host” the Holy Family for a night or two as they journey around the parish arriving at the Christmas crib during the Carol Service at St Theresa’s at 6.30pm on 23 December. A sign-up sheet was circulated and will be available in both churches. |  |
| 5. | **Update from Fr William.**  In his opening remarks Fr William stressed the importance of the PC AGM meeting and his pleasure at seeing the numbers in attendance. The Pastoral Council was a great support to him, Fr James and Deacon Lawrence.  Fr William reported that the Liturgy Group had been reinstated to help the clergy with planning for Advent and Christmas services. Involvement of the sacristans, altar servers, the choir and Children’s Liturgy was very much welcomed and he thanked all involved. Fr William was very pleased to see the success of the Children’s Liturgy at St Columba’s and noted that a number of families from St Theresa’s were attending. If the demand increases it is hoped to establish a CL team there as well. The congregation at St Theresa’s is increasing.  Fr William advised that Deacon Lawrence has taken over the preparation of the Prayers of the Faithful from Deacon Tom. It is hoped to share this role with a wider group in future.  Fr William was pleased to report on a very successful outing for altar servers which Richard Curtis had organised. New and current members of St Stephen’s Guild would make /renew their commitment promises at the 11.00 mass at St Columba’s on 8 January – the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.  Fr William hoped to arrange a meeting with altar servers and their parents in the New Year to support them, maintain their involvement and build a lasting sense of connection with the parish community.  With regard to sacristans Fr William commented that it was important to build this team at both churches following retirement or moves out of the parish.  Fr William reported on his recent school masses at both primary schools, including the Remembrance Day mass at St Theresa’s.  He updated the meeting on the development of the Peace garden at St Theresa’s and the £8k Lottery grant which had been secured to support this work. He thanked all involved for their work.  Fr William commented on the ongoing building issues at the presbytery at St Theresa’s. He is disappointed that the Diocese has so far been unwilling to undertake/approve the work necessary to rectify the many structural issues with the building. Fr William has been advised that the Diocesan Trustees are due to discuss this further at a forthcoming meeting and he is asking for an urgent report from the meeting.  Fr William observed the significant increase in the congregation at St Columba’s at 11.00am mass and also the numbers of parishioners who were dropping in to the hall afterwards. He is especially keen to foster this with families and he is encouraged that following the lock down this is beginning to happen. The numbers attending weekday masses and taking coffee afterwards in the Newman Room are also increasing and it is clear that people value the opportunity to chat and form and strengthen friendships with fellow parishioners.  Fr William observed that the grounds maintenance work at St Columba’s had much enhanced the appearance of the church and its surroundings. He remains concerned about the condition of the car park and this issue will be considered at a future Finance meeting.  In respect of Health & Safety Fr William reported on electrical works necessary to improve the lighting on the sanctuary. It is hoped that this work would be completed soon. Work to secure the front kneelers had been undertaken to avoid accidents. A full externally led Fire Risk Assessment had been undertaken at St Theresa’s and one was booked for St Columba’s shortly.  With regard to home visiting Fr William reported on a number of parishioners who were visited at home by himself, Fr James or a member of the Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers team. Fr William commended the team and those in the SVP for their work in the parish. |  |
| 6. | **Questions from parishioners**   1. Paul Wrigglesworth asked if training for Eucharistic Ministers and Readers from the Diocese was planned. Fr William observed that there was nothing planned at present and that Parishes are being encouraged to manage this internally. 2. David Savage asked for clarification about St Columba’s Central Account held at the Diocese. He noted that the published accounts related only to the current account. Fr William responded that these matters would be considered at the Finance Committee meeting next week. He observed that financial transparency was an essential component of the work of the Parish Priest. 3. Anne Mosquera asked whether any assistance was available to the Parish from the government in relation to increased utility costs. Nuala commented that all utilities were purchased centrally by the Diocese on behalf of parishes and that they were in negotiation with authorities for support and suppliers for best prices. 4. Deacon Lawrence asked if it was proposed to reinstate the Buildings Committee at St Columba’s. He observed that previously this group had coordinated proposals for repairs and maintenance as well as capital projects. They had supported the Parish Priest by securing estimates and advancing proposals for expenditure. Fr William commented that he hoped to re-establish such a group in the New Year and to arrange a meeting with the Diocesan Estates Manager to agree what needs to be and what can be done. David Savage observed a that a brief for the Buildings Committee had been drafted by himself 10 years ago and that this had been approved by the Diocese. |  |
| 7. | **Meeting close.**  There being no further questions Ann thanked Pauline Rourke (co-chair) and all the members of the Pastoral Council for their work and commitment in what had been a very active year.  Everyone was warmly welcomed to remain for refreshments.  Ann declared the meeting closed and invited Fr James to led us in a prayer**.** |  |

**ATTENDANCE LIST**

Fr William Damah

Fr James Mchamungu

Deacon Lawrence Hordley

Paul Wrigglesworth

David Savage

Kevin Keegan

Pauline Payne

Colin Hedley

Christine Hare

Anne Mosquera

Amy O’Donnell

Matthew Petts

Christine Harrington

Alicja Dale

Sue Carr

Sue McCarthy

Eileen Irwin

Carol Ingram

Josie Taylor

Nuala Keegan

Ann McCarthy

Helen Connor