

ST WULSTAN'S INTERIM NEWSLETTER

4th October 2020

Details prior to the AGM and for your information

Parish AGM Zoom Meeting

This will be held on Sunday 11th October at 4.00pm and Tim Naylor will send you the link before. It has been difficult to decide, due to current restrictions, how to achieve a successful Zoom meeting where everyone can participate without total chaos reigning!

The decision made was that anyone wishing to raise their concerns, ask questions or make suggestions communicate them to June Stallard (01684 540357 or june@junestallard.plus.com) by **Wednesday 7th October** and the PPC and PFFC will try to address them. This, of course, means you may well all be on 'mute'. However, if you are not satisfied with the answers please let June Stallard know afterwards.

General Parish Report for AGM 2020 from Tim Naylor

The last twelve months have been challenging for the parish in many ways and our ability to meet these challenges is partly affected by our rather odd nature as a parish. St Wulstan's is a mission of a Benedictine abbey situated in a different diocese and which is in a precarious situation itself (in terms of manpower). Although our parish is physically situated within the territory of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, it is not part of the diocese, although the Archbishop has authority over the celebration of the sacraments within the parish. The implication of this is that we are not at the top of the priority list of anyone in the diocese and it is easy for us to be forgotten.

Last year we began a Parish Development planning discussion and the challenges that were highlighted were several:

- That it was unlikely that Fr Edward would be replaced by another monk of Downside whenever he retired. We decided as a parish to start planning our "defence" for continued existence and potential scenarios immediately, including contact with the wider English Benedictine Congregation.
- The cost of maintaining/improving buildings and the cost of any parish development activities is met by a small congregation, generous donors and fundraising activities.
- The relatively small number of parishioners. The number of active parishioners in Catholic churches nationally is likely to decline even further (in line with other Christian denominations). Actually, St Wulstan's has always been a small parish and current numbers are no smaller than in the last few decades.
- The increased costs of travel to what is a geographically remote parish.

The likelihood and impact of these is shown below:

1. Lack of a priest
2. Reduced number of parishioners
3. Increased costs - maintenance
4. Increased cost of travel

IMPACT

| | | | | |
|-----------|----------|-----|----------|-------------------|
| Very High | | | 2 | 1 |
| High | | | 4 | |
| Medium | | | 3 | |
| Low | | | | |
| Very Low | | | | |
| | Very Low | Low | Medium | High Very High |

LIKELIHOOD

Following the parish consultations - which identified the strengths and opportunities that could be embraced by the parish, as well as the resources (especially the knowledge, skills and experience of the congregation) an initial plan was begun.

However, events overtook the parish in two ways: the announcement at the start of July of Fr Edward’s imminent retirement; the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public safety measures has hampered the usual sacramental and pastoral life of the parish, both with the suspension of Mass in the church and our inability to visit the sick and housebound of the parish from March onwards. This is likely to continue for some time.

What has been the response of the parish and Downside in meeting these new challenges? I shall address the first item and Rob Taylor will address the financial side in his report.

The lack of a parish priest

- The conventual chapter of Downside has formally voted to surrender the parish and has consulted the other EBC houses regarding their ability and willingness to adopt the parish. The Abbot of Belmont and his Council are keen to take this forward but the conventual chapter of Belmont needs to vote on this.

Sacramental life of the parish and liturgy

- Since last year we have had six funeral or burials in the church. Among them, two much-loved parishioners: Paul Hothersall (who had been a longstanding member of the choir) and Carmel Glennie (one of the team of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion).
- Also, since the last AGM we have had a baptism and a wedding.

- Currently Mass is being provided at weekends: by Belmont on Sundays and Downside on Saturday evenings (via Zoom). Anointing of the Sick will be undertaken by the designated priest of the deanery (currently Fr Stephen Squires) when required. Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals will be arranged by the parish and conducted by clergy of the deanery. Confessions will soon be available with Fr Patrick.
- Visiting of the sick and taking Holy Communion is being maintained by June Stallard, Mary Wilson and Sean Devlin.
- We have three children and two adults who were being prepared for Confirmation or Reception into the Church before lockdown. This will be started again via Zoom, since - due to social distancing regulations - the Archbishop has now delegated confirmations to parish priests - and so we are no longer dependent upon the diary availability of the area bishop or his travel restrictions to book a date.
- The Beginning of School Mass and Remembrance Day Mass took place since the last AGM, but the planned Mothering Sunday Mass and Day of Recollection were cancelled during the lockdown period.
- Many thanks to the group of cantors who have made such a difference to our celebration of Mass on Sundays under difficult conditions: Anne Harris, Sue Griffin, Rita Vehbi, Patrick Cracroft-Brennan, John Verdult, Sheila Sheringham and their co-ordinator, Mary Verdult.
- Since the last AGM the church has been re-carpeted, the Stations of the Cross have been restored, the statue of the Sacred Heart has been restored and place in the church again and the sanctuary lamp has also been restored.

Administration.

- The Abbot of Downside appointed the current members of the Parish Pastoral Council (Gavin Purves, June Stallard, Peter Lutzeier and Tim Naylor) and the Finance and Fabric Committee (Rob Taylor, Chris Griffin, Chris Walsh and Richard Lee-Heung) to remain in office until the appointment of a new parish priest. The chair of the PPC is Gavin Purves; the chair of the FFC is Rob Taylor. The Abbot appointed a smaller Interim Management Committee to make day-to-day decisions (Tim Naylor, Gavin Purves, Rob Taylor, Chris Griffin and June Stallard), chaired by Tim Naylor. This Interim Management Committee met with representatives of the Pershore parish management team, who had dealt with a similar situation, to learn from their experiences.
- Peter Lutzeier has asked to stand down from the PPC and I would like to thank him for his hard work, sage advice, and sense of humour over the last year. Also thank you to Mary Pillon for agreeing to be co-opted onto the PPC.
- Members of the congregation have generously responded to the call for volunteers to assume positions of responsibility for the many areas of the parish's life, and I know you will join me in thanking them for agreeing to give their time and expertise, often without knowing what they were letting themselves in for.
- I would like to thank our voluntary parish secretary, Claire Bailey, for her all her work, most of which is unseen by parishioners due to its nature, but which has been essential to keep the parish running on a day-to day basis.

Although the parish church building is vitally important - and Rob will have much to tell us about that - in the end, the church is the people of our community. So, it is appropriate for me to close

with thanking on all our behalf, those who have worked to ensure the continuity of our community life together:

- Richard - for all his unstinting work in our cemetery;
- Those who clean the church, as well as our stewards;
- Our flower arrangers;
- Our readers and ministers of holy communion;
- Howard for maintaining the parish website, advising on technical issues and preventing me from blowing up the sacristy with my battery misdemeanours;
- Joan, Sean and June for facilitating our charitable works;
- Charlotte for her entrepreneurship in fundraising;
- James, without whom there probably would not have been a church building still standing, and for his vigilance and encyclopaedic knowledge of all things to do with St Wulstan's (and jam) and who is currently doing an inventory of all St. Wulstan's owns.
- Gavin and Rob and the members of the PPC and FFC.
- June, who keeps us all in touch (amongst 1001 other things).
- ...and all those whom I have not mentioned by name, but who deserve our gratitude.

Church "Fabric" Report for AGM 2020 from Rob Taylor

Church Restoration and Work Programme 2020 – Exterior North Side Elevation

The work consists of stonework repairs, repointing and window refurbishment / cleaning. After a delay to the stonework repairs due to Covid-19 disrupting the supply of stone from the quarry, these works are nearing completion and subject to the weather, should be completed within the next couple of weeks.

The general state of repair and maintenance of the Church and Priest's House

The quinquennial inspections of the Church and Priest's house were carried out in May and August, respectively, by historic building consultants, Nick Joyce Architects Ltd.

With regard to the Church, it is pleasing to read in the report, that "Although there are items requiring attention, the parish has a good record of maintaining the church fabric and I was extremely pleased to see that a large amount of repairs have been carried out since the last inspection". However, there are indeed a number of items requiring attention.

The report has four levels of "Priority". Priority A – Items requiring attention within the next two years, Priority B – within two to five years, Priority C – over five years, and finally items that need to be "Monitored". For "Priority A", there are 17nr. However, whilst a relatively large number, most are straightforward and low cost in nature to make good. A couple will require some special attention, but not at a significant cost.

With regard to the Priest's House, there are 18 nr Priority A issues. Again, whilst a relatively large number, they are also straightforward and low cost in nature to make good, but this has yet to be established.

The approach being taken by the Fabric committee, is to focus on ensuring that all mandatory inspections and tests are carried out and to work through the Priority A Items from the quinquennial reports, to safeguard and protect, the fabric and the visitors to the Church and Priest's House. The cost and associated benefit of any work undertaken will always be considered in relation to our ability to generate income and the interest of St. Wulstan's.

St John Henry Newman

The feast day of St John Henry Newman is this coming Friday, 9th October.
A Mass, celebrated by Dom Patrick Lubo, will be held in our church at 10.00am on that day.

Social Zoom meeting

The next one will take place on Tuesday 6th Oct at 4.00. Tim Naylor will send you the link beforehand