

**ST GEORGE'S PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL
MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
18th November 2013 at 7.30pm.**

Apologies: received from Dianne Alexander, Jim & Denise Filmer, Pat Shead and Shawn Clarke

The meeting was attended by 29 parishioners and 12 members of the Parish Council.

Father Graham opened the meeting with a prayer.

Welcome by Chair of Pastoral Council and Report

Frank McEvoy welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Council members. His report had been circulated to the meeting which listed activities since the last AGM and the revised membership after the Constitution changes, after voting last year to widen representation of the parish on the Council.

- New external light fitted at St. George's and quotes received for external noticeboard.
- Charges not to be levied for weddings and funerals although donations will be accepted if offered.
- Specialist firm carried out survey of sound and loop system at St. George's and he will send a detailed quote for recommended work to improve the sound system. Once the quote is received and considered it is hoped to be able to make rapid progress on these improvements for parishioners.
- Sharon has compiled the Coffee Morning rota for 2014 which is oversubscribed with requests from various groups and charities.

- PPC have been considering how best to mark the 75th anniversary in 2014. Father Graham said that the anniversary celebrations will be launched around the Feast of St. George in April. Parish Mission from 12th – 27th July run by the Sion Community. It was noted that a planning & preparation meeting will take place in the hall on 19th January for parishioners to be involved.

It is hoped that the Bishop will preside at a celebration Mass on 9th July.

Father Paul Keen has been booked to give a talk on 'The 'English Martyrs' on Sunday 4th May. Tony Shead is collating any archived materials to form an exhibition of the history of the parish and thanks were extended to him for all his work in this respect. Old photos have been collected which will be used for a parish calendar which hopefully will be available to purchase by early December.

It is hoped to run a parish coach trip to Ingatestone Hall in May half-term to hear about and see the history of the Hall where our first priest, Father George Last, travelled from to say Mass in the parish.

Father Graham has designed a coat of arms for the parish to celebrate the occasion, in the shape of a triangle with images of St. George, St. Gregory and St. Edmund.

Suzanne confirmed that the summer fayre next year will have an 'anniversary' theme.

A notice will be put in the newsletter asking for parishioners with any other ideas for activities to let Father Graham know.

- The Memorial Book has now been installed in a cabinet at the rear of St. George's and thanks were extended to Jane Harris for all the time she has spent in calligraphy writing the dates and names. Father Graham asked that the cabinet should not be opened and pages turned to other dates as the book could become damaged. It was suggested that the names from the book could be put on the website or listed in the newsletter each month, including the year deceased, and Father Graham will consider this.
- Fund-raising and social events diary – Sharon to be kept updated with any new dates for the diary to ensure clashes do not occur.
- Thanks were extended to Emma, Sarah and Dave for the very popular Family Masses. Frank thanked Father Graham and all those involved with the organisation of the monthly Youth Masses.
- Thanks were extended to Annabelle as copies of the school newsletter are now available each week in the porches to provide a further link for parishioners not connected with the school.

- It was noted that as well as our weekly collection for the Homeless Centre, a 'food bank' has been set up at the Shoebury Baptist Church. At the monthly youth Mass, Jacquie Patterson pointed out that the young people bring up contributions to the Homeless and Father Graham said he would announce that this is taking place.
- Although the area to the rear of St. George's has been cleared, it is still very uneven but now can be used as an 'emergency exit' but Simon Smalley said that the gate is always locked and this will be looked into.
- New first-aid boxes etc. now installed and all sides-people to be aware of where the equipment is kept.
- Father Graham extended thanks to Paul Gwilliam for the new stained glass windows which were installed in Our Lady of Walsingham Chapel and blessed at a special service in July.
- Les Dowie said that a fluorescent cross used to be on top of the tower but Jacquie Patterson said this was removed as considered a hazard for aircraft.

Frank extended thanks to everyone for attending, to the representatives on the PPC for their ideas and hard work over the past year, particularly to Father Graham for his guidance and support and to all who help make the parish a thriving community that it is.

Report by Father Graham

Mass attendance – average 450 weekly from October figures.

Baptisms – 13. Marriages 3. Deaths 18.

- As the Pope has said he wants parishes to focus on and promote Marriage and Family Life as a vocation, Father Graham asked that parishioners should look at the on-line survey which had been advertised in the newsletter. It was suggested that the general language of the survey would not be understood by the general public and Tony Castle said that a more simplified version had been prepared which he will email to anyone who is interested.
- Father Graham said he feels that Adoration is an important part of Catholic spirituality and would like to find initiatives to encourage more people to attend the twice weekly Adoration and Friday Benediction.
- Lorna Smith asked Father if he would give a talk on the Blessed Sacrament and Eucharist and he said he would try to arrange this in the new year.
- Margaret Munson said that the numbers staying to say the Rosary had increased and this continues after weekday Mass.
- Father Graham said maybe the parish could put on a production of 'Oh What a Lovely War' or maybe an evening of war-time songs and Maureen Woodcock suggested dressing up for the event.
- Father Graham has looked into the possibility of our parish joining the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes next July which falls as the Mission finishes, possibly Sunday – Thursday, travelling as a separate group which would be cheaper and a few parishioners at the meeting expressed interest in going. Father Graham will advertise to the parish to get feedback.
- Father Graham confirmed that the Befriending Society will start soon visiting people in their homes.

Financial Report

Graham briefly explained his Finance report and balance sheet which had been circulated to the meeting. Fund-raising events have taken place to help maintain the parish buildings and to unite the parish socially. Graham said he was happy to answer any questions relating to his report.

Suzanne Petchey - felt that the Gift Aid figure was low and, although Graham said we are one of the best in the Diocese, it was agreed that another campaign will be held to encourage more parishioners to sign up.

Brigid Hogan said parishioners should be reminded of how Gift Aid works to encourage them to sign up and not just put their weekly donation in the basket.

Les Dowie – cannot hear readers but Graham confirmed that this is already being addressed.

Eileen Jones – parish used to have socials (events held recently advertised in the newsletter).

Maureen Woodcock – maybe use grounds at St. Gregory's for a BBQ when the weather improves.

Open Forum

Eileen Jones – would like the new noticeboard to be clear with large lettering.

Sharon Chambers – feels that there are other more urgent issues to consider for spending rather than what would be nice to have.

Bernard Patterson – has produced some parish Christmas cards with all proceeds to parish funds.
Jacquie Patterson – thanks to the team of gardeners for all their hard work in keeping the front of St. George's very tidy. Thanks also to the PPC. She pointed out that the new external light at St. George's is completely dazzling when leaving after 6pm Mass in the wintertime and you cannot see the steps. Les Dowie agreed with Jacquie and it was agreed that this will be investigated as a Health & Safety issue.

Alan Parker – maybe LED lights could be installed in the steps.

Kim Conroy – feels that if parishioners know what any monies raised was going to fund, and then many may respond well and give more generously.

Jacquie Patterson – feels that some insist the parish is very well off and would like the parish financial position clarified to everyone when the next appeal is made.

Les Dowie – said it would be a good idea for a St. George's Anniversary Fund to be started for main expenditure to mark the momentous occasion of 75th anniversary, such as the Mission which it was confirmed will cost £8,000 to run.

Frank thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 9.25pm.