

Minutes of Parish Partnership meeting 7th May 2019

Attendees: Chris Busk(SAL), Mary Busk(SAL), Fiona Christison(LOL), Michael Eggleton(STOC), Anne Marie Fox(LOL), Fr Isidore (STOC), Fr Neil(SAL), FR Patrick (LOL), Fr Quentin(STOC), Patrick Shiel (SAL), Kit Tranmer(STOC), William Yeung(STOC)

The minutes of the meeting of 5th March 2019 were approved.

Representatives of all three parishes introduced themselves and were asked to start the process of drawing up a Parish Partnership plan beginning with the questions – What? Why? How? By whom?

There were areas of agreement but it was also apparent that there were clear and major areas of disagreement on how we should proceed. There are three visions for Parishes working together as a Partnership in the Vision Document – a) Parishes working side by side and co-operating fairly loosely b) Parishes working in a more integrated and linked fashion and c) Parishes merged together completely.

STOC thought option (a) to be the best probably evolving to option (b) as time went on and as needs dictated. LOL wanted to go for (b) straight away. It was the view of LOL that we should firstly get on and have a structure for the Parish Partnership mapped out with a top down approach – for example as to where the (two?) priests in the partnership will live in 2025. STOC felt we should be looking at a more pastoral approach – how we can meet, learn about each other and begin sharing resources such as Catechesis, Marriage preparations, Baptism and other ideas. This approach seemed to be more in tune also with the thinking of SAL.

STOC did raise the question if we should park the issue on priests for the time being as there is:

1. An unknown certain date of it becoming effective (if at all)
2. Unknown requirements at that time. So we would need to assess when known/if needed.
3. A continuing reduction in mass attendance

They would, therefore, focus on:

1. Halting and then reversing the decline of worshippers
2. Evangelisation
3. Partnership activities

SAL seemed to be accepting of this idea whereas LOL were opposed to it.

Various issues mentioned and questions asked:

SAL: Will there be new priests available by that time? Is it true that 25 priests are being allocated solely to hospital and school work and therefore being taken out of parishes? This needs to be clarified.

STOC: Are communities Christian by going to mass? Are they (Christians) reaching out to the community? At present some areas are short of lay volunteers. If we give people responsibility for a project they will own it. Start small.

LOL: Restructuring = sacraments, pastoral care.

STOC: Sacraments should be on the ground with sick people and local. Should we be making plans now for 14 masses to become 6 by 2025 or should we wait to see what is happening?

SAL: not in favour of merging the 3 parishes.

LOL: Fr Pat suggested that each parish should appoint 4 people to carry on developing the Parish Partnership. It is essential that these should include young people.

Conclusions with which all parishes were in agreement were:

- That we need to get to know each other at all levels (PPCs and the laity in General). The PPCs will get together first with a Cheese and Wine event at STOC – a suitable date for this needs to be agreed.
- Each Parish should by the end of the year find an activity (Religious or Social) where all parishes are invited and are able to participate e.g. 40 hours adoration, Mass etc. – we will work together to coordinate dates. The aim is to have this decided by the next meeting
- Finally – another meeting of the SOTG and others will be arranged near the end of June.

We haven't had a social event together. We can pick and choose certain things which we want to amalgamate. We all agree that care for the sick should be localised. We could offer catechesis e.g. sacramental preparation, across the 3 parishes as a beginning activity. We need to build confidence in what we are doing as parishioners may get nervous or worried about what is going to happen. We need to explain and discuss with them what is going on. OLOL seem to have been doing this for a while. SAL – catechesis is an issue that has been shipped from schools into the parish. We need to be able to deal with it.

OLOL proposed we have a joint mass as well as prayer together eg. 40 hours adoration which they will arrange in June.

SAL have begun a DVD bible sharing evening which would be suitable for all parishioners in the partnership to attend.

STOC will have an open air mass on 2nd June to which all parishioners in the partnership are invited.

One suggestion was to have a spreadsheet of our ministries, groups and activities to see where there is a crossover and where we can possibly share.

SAL: We need to preserve the existing parish communities.

The meeting ended with the decision that we would all go back to our respective parishes and share what we had gained from the evening. We then look forward towards building the parish partnership model upon which we can all agree.