

Church of the Transfiguration of Our Lord & The Shared Church of Christ the King, Stevenage

Minutes of the open meeting of the Parish held on Sunday 22nd June 2008 after the 11am mass to discuss the proposal to start a Parish Pastoral Council

Present: Tim Bonnett (Chair of the Hitchin Parish Council), Sister Loretta and 46 parishioners

1. Simon Williams (Chair of the Parish finance committee) welcomed everyone and handed over to Tim who had agreed to facilitate the meeting and answer questions about how the Hitchin parish run their committee. Tim stressed that there would be no answers to “problems” today, these are the things that the new parish council could consider. The point of the meeting was to try and set up a Parish Pastoral Council. At the moment Father Frank and Sister Loretta are co-ordinating activities. Tim suggested that if they were supported by a council, they could then concentrate on spiritual matters.
2. In order to set the scene Tim asked parishioners to consider the things that are done well and not so well in the parish at the moment.

Done well

- The parish uses its resources and space well.
- We are doing our best.
- Good prayer groups outside mass.
- Many successful groups running within the parish: e.g. Life Ascending (Assent); SVP (#); UCM (#); Bridge builders; Finance committee; Lent groups; Walk of witness.....
- There are many volunteers (*): e.g. cleaners; counters; flower arrangers; readers; gardeners; children’s liturgy...
- Parishioners are generous towards collections to help others.
- The parish is in a stable financial position.
- There is a parish website.

Not so well

- Need more involvement of young people
 - * More volunteers are needed
 - # More members are needed.
 - Mutual support between the two churches in the parish.
 - Communication of information (some new parishioners were not aware of the groups mentioned above)
 - New parishioner welcome pack.
 - Social side.
 - Music is ok but it could be better (choir?)
 - Always the same faces. We need to spread the load.
 - There is a struggle to support ecumenism.
 - No church meeting hall in the Old Town (some discussion of the Symonds Green facility)
3. In the middle section Tim asked the parishioners what they would like to see from a parish council. In answer to a question Tim said that the Hitchin committee met 6 times a year, once every two months. This is preceded by a finance committee meeting.

At this point he referred to and handed out the posters prepared by John O’Boy of which everyone approved.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Parish Pastoral council is to:

promote the development of the parish in all its different aspects;

to work with and assist the parish priest and his team in the practical and spiritual growth of the parish as an inclusive community.

The parishioners would like to see the following:

- Representatives of all ages and all interests.
 - Linked to finance committee (chair of finance committee on the parish council).
 - Co-ordination of communication.
 - A constitution that was simple and clear.
 - An input into: Health and Safety; access for the disabled; building/refurbishment work; finance; liturgy; all aspects of parish life.
 - A strategic overview.
 - Links to the Deanery and Diocese in order to inform on local developments. (e.g. extra building in Stevenage could mean an increase in the mass going population.)
 - To support the Parish Priest and Parish Sister so that they can focus on spiritual matters.
4. In the third part of the meeting Tim asked the parishioners to gather all these ideas together in order to produce a list of **Strategic Objectives:**
- Constitutional linkage between Symonds Green and Old Town churches. (Owing to the shared nature of the Symonds Green church it already has a committee).
 - Resources – Space and facilities
 - Resources – Volunteers, paid help?
 - Sound financial management.
 - Inclusion of all ages (links to local Catholic schools) , races, gender
 - Communication and consultation.
 - Decision making becoming an enabler and not a barrier (The constitution should be written in such a way as to enable important decisions to be made quickly after a consultation between the chairs of the parish council and finance committee, without waiting for a full parish council meeting. E.g If the roof fell in.
5. The next steps:
- At this point it seemed that the general consensus was that a parish council would be beneficial and so Simon Williams asked for volunteers to set up the first committee. The following people volunteered:
- Fran Birch; Liz Canavan; Sue Coy; Mark Cranny; Anne Francis; Seamus Grant; Glynn Jones; Marian Jones; Kris Kasperowicz; Tony Lennon; Audrey Murphy; Janet Page; Peter Stones.**
- In order to launch the committee, Sue Coy agreed to chair the first meeting. It was decided that this could link in with the Open Parish Finance Meeting, due after the 11am mass on **SUNDAY 13TH JULY 2008** in the Old Town church.
 - Further discussion raised the following points:
 - (i) An appreciation of the many new names on the committee.
 - (ii) How many people should be on the committee (Hitchin has 12)?
 - (iii) A suggestion that perhaps the Filipino community might be approached with a view to having a representative on the committee.
 - (iv) A suggestion that the younger parishioners be represented by a confirmation candidate on the committee each year.
 - (v) That a flyer of the highlights of this meeting be included in the newsletter in order to communicate with the parishioners. **(No decision as to who will to do this)**
 - (vi) Eventually it was thought that all of the above were matters for the new committee to discuss and make a decisions on.
6. The meeting closed at 1:10pm for lunch. The volunteers were asked to add their contact numbers and email addresses to the poster so that Sue Coy could co-ordinate the first meeting.