



the DIOCESE of
EAST ANGLIA

ST. MARY MAGDALEN

Roman Catholic Church

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St Mary Magdalen Parish Forum
19 March 2022

The parish forum had been advertised in weekly bulletins and parishioners were asked to submit agenda items in advance.

The agenda was published on Sunday 13th March and the Forum was scheduled to start at 11am on Saturday 19th March 2022. Father Paul was in the Chair and started with a prayer.

There were 26 parishioners in attendance. The meeting started at 1110 hrs and was concluded at 1215hrs.

Agenda Item 1 Cleaning of Church, Garden Room and Hall

It was agreed that for some time now there had been a shortage of volunteers to support the cleaning routines that were necessary to maintain the desired standards, even within the Church itself. Previous requests for assistance did not produce the desired results so a different plan of action was proposed today.

The forum was presented with the idea of a once a month gathering of volunteers to meet on a Saturday morning, and get the task effectively completed in one session, due to the increased numbers and enthusiasm generated by the larger group interaction.

Brief discussion debated whether that would be sufficient, and the general consensus was that we should at least give it a try. The situation would of course be monitored, and all present agreed to pilot the idea with some people actually making a personal commitment to join in with the scheme. The priority would be Church, Garden Room and then Hall.

It was agreed that the cleaning schedule dates would be published through the weekly bulletin and on the Parish Website, and that they would take place on those Saturdays when Father Paul was saying mass at Hollesley Bay and Warren Hill Prisons, thus not interrupting any services in the parish.

The church hall's role in our finances.

The Forum then heard of the Hall's importance in providing a vital element of our overall income, year after year, without which our current stable financial position would not have been achievable. In recent years an extraordinary amount of not just maintenance, but actual improvement works, have been completed in Church and the Presbytery while there has been rather less attention given to the Hall, despite it's vital role in keeping our parish financially sound. It was said that the receipts from hall lettings over the last decade have brought in somewhat over £100,000 of revenue. That money has kept us handsomely solvent and has been wisely spent in the general upkeep and refurbish of our real estate. However it is now apparent that we must prioritise necessary improvements in the Hall itself, in order to preserve this valuable asset for the future generations.

The deterioration of physical condition of the hall now needs to be arrested and the forum was told that the roof, the windows, the kitchen and the toilets all need to be refurbished at a potential cost of up to £75,000. We would need to reinvest in the hall, all its income over the next five years to pay for such extensive but necessary upgrading works.

For this to be achievable, we, the people of the Parish will need to do our very best to make up the gap in our income. There is clearly much higher mass attendances than we have had for many years so there is potential in that, and there is hope that we may be able to tap into grants from public bodies and also from the diocese. Any such good fortune would of course ease some of the parish pressures.

There was discussion around revitalising our own fund raising abilities as we have utilised in past years. Fund raising through social events, concerts and other tried and tested methods were mentioned with enthusiasm and conviction.

It was emphasised that this was a long haul project and there would be no quick or easy outcomes. The clear message is that we, the people of our parish, need to support our finances more directly in the early years of this venture so that progress can be made.



Agenda Item 2 The Memorial Garden

Father Paul spoke about the fact that we have the ashes of several parishioners buried in the garden to that side of the church which is adjacent to Highfield Approach. Father Paul wishes to more fully recognise and utilise this Memorial Garden. He would like to offer the service to all interested parties to have the ashes of their loved ones interred there with a suitable memorial brass plaque affixed to the church wall. All donations received from this facility will be re-invested into the upkeep and development of the Memorial Garden.

The 'fee' to access this site would not be a fixed stipend, but rather a donation offered by the bereaved families, on an ability to pay basis, so that all peoples across the financial spectrum will feel that they are welcome, indeed encouraged, to use this facility.

There was discussion about access, garden maintenance, the size of brass plaques, and future benches, all of which issues were fully supportive of this initiative.

Agenda Item 3 The Easter Triduum

Father Paul advised that he had ordered palms, and we will process from the Hall to the church at the 8am and 10am Masses on Palm Sunday.

Father Paul also wants to engage a full range of readers to cover multi-part delivery of the gospels for both Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday and Good Friday services.

There will be a washing of feet in the Holy Thursday service and both women and men are asked to volunteer to participate in that aspect of the service.

Similarly there is a requirement for readers to cover the Easter vigil mass on Holy Saturday evening which will commence at 8pm.

There will be a complete list of requirements in the narthex for readers to sign up to.

After the Holy Thursday ceremony there will be a period of 'Watching' in the Hall and there will be a request for people to sign up to a period of presence so that throughout the proposed time of that 'watching' at least two persons will be on site.

Agenda Item 4 The One Mass Sunday

It had been suggested that on the Sunday of the Queen's platinum jubilee celebrations we would have our own party in the church garden. However that has proved rather problematic to deliver, as many parishioners already have commitments to their own street parties. As an alternative the feast day of Saint Mary Magdalen was considered so it has been decided that it will take place in July.

On a chosen Sunday in that month there will be only one Sunday Mass and all our congregations will be encouraged to attend. Mass will still be available on the Saturday evening. Mass will be held outdoors in the church garden, and there will be a picnic on the grass thereafter.

As always the information will be published in good time both on the parish website and in the weekly bulletins.

Agenda Item 5 Foundation Masses

Foundation Masses are those said annually over a twenty five year period for a named individual for a fee paid to the church at the start of the period. (In days of yore Foundation Masses were contracted to be said for a 50 year period.)

The money donated over the years was held and distributed to parishes through Diocesan control. The scheme appears to have fallen on hard times and the pot of money to pay for them is reducing dramatically.

Father Paul suggested that we should keep our own register here at Saint Mary Magdalen's and does not want the principle of Masses said in perpetuity for an individual to be allowed to just fade away. He suggested that our parish should rejuvenate the process and ensure that it continues unabated for many years to come.

The money received for such a request is simply entered into our parish accounts as any other mass stipend would be and he assured the forum that very accurate records would be kept for every family or individual.

The forum attendees agreed that we should proceed with that idea.



Votive Candles.

There has recently been a Fire Safety Inspection report that identified candles in Church as being an unnecessary risk, with safer alternatives available on today's market.

Not only are the alternatives safer but they are also environmentally more friendly.

Father Paul introduced a new votive candle which is clean safe and simply does not make the considerable mess that the traditional candles do. One lady attending the forum was able to tell of just how difficult it was to clean the current candle stands, when they get clogged over the months of continuous dripping! The new system ends such drudgery being totally clean and free from such issues.

It was noted that we may still need some 'traditional' candles in small numbers for certain ceremonies but otherwise the forum welcomed a move into a more modern safer cleaner alternative. A leaflet about the new candles will be displayed in the narthex, as the idea was accepted unanimously at the meeting.

The current candle stands will be stored securely and not otherwise disposed of.

Contactless Collection option

Father Paul is hoping to re-introduce the basket collections during mass in the near future. Such intention will be published in the weekly bulletin and through the parish website giving everyone ample warning of its return. Alongside the traditional collecting basket, the matter of contactless collection using I-Pad, mobile phone, or debit card was discussed. It was recognised that ever fewer people are carrying cash these days, and contactless payment is the method of convenience and choice. Other churches in the diocese are already using this technology as an addition to all other methods and it is proving both popular and successful. The system allows for payments covering main collections and second collections. They still allow for gift aid to be collected for those who have signed the appropriate forms and can be used for mass intentions, as well as Christmas and Easter collections for the clergy. Very flexible and very user friendly as it obviates the issues of counting, bagging and banking!

It was agreed that we would give it a try, and so at some time this year, we will establish an electronic reader in the narthex and take another small step into the modern world. In the meantime watch out for the return of the wicker basket!

Primary school

The final point to be mentioned at the forum referred to improving the engagement between our primary school and the parish. The sentiment expressed was clearly shared by those present. Father had a longer term plan, and recognised the value of developing a closer relationship.

The forum having no further business to discuss was brought to a conclusion with a prayer.