



the DIOCESE of
EAST ANGLIA

ST. MARY MAGDALEN

Roman Catholic Church

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Saint Mary Magdalen's AGM

The parish Annual General Meeting will be held in the Garden Room on Tuesday evening 18th July 2023 at 7pm. All parishioners are welcome and indeed are enthusiastically encouraged to attend. The agenda itemised below has been compiled following many weeks of open opportunity allowing people to submit topics for discussion.

Our Parish Priest Father Luke Goymour will Chair and Father Chanh will be in attendance. The proceedings will be recorded, to facilitate the production of an accurate written record.

AGENDA

- 1 Opening prayer
- 2 Parochial administrator's report
- 3 Statement from Bishop Peter
- 4 Finance Report
- 5 Fabric report
- 6 Hall report
- 7 Topics for discussion submitted by parishioners:
 - 7.1 Social committee
 - 7.2 Catechesis
 - 7.3 Parish volunteers
 - 7.4 One Mass Sunday
 - 7.5 Sign of Peace
 - 7.6 Peace Candle
 - 7.7 Mass times
 - 7.8 A men's group
 - 7.9 Offertory collection
 - 7.10 Hymn Books
 - 7.11 Weekly Bulletin

Closing prayer.

The Garden Room Tuesday evening 18th July at 7pm



Parish AGM Minutes from meeting of 18th July 2023.

- 1 The gathering in our Garden Room comprised of thirty parishioners, as well as our assistant Priest Father Paul Chanh, and the Parochial Administrator Father Luke Goymour who has overall management responsibility for three communities in the Ipswich Deanery.

Father Luke started proceedings with a prayer and then gave his comprehensive overview of our recent history and initial plans for our future development which is reproduced in full here.

- 2 **Parochial Administrator's Report – Fr. Luke Goymour**

As a parish community, St Mary Magdalens has, in recent years, gone through a significant time of upheaval. Multiple priests, stopgap appointments, and sudden departures over a short period of time coupled with the devastation left in the wake of the Covid Pandemic have contributed to a general decline in many areas of the parish.

Some areas of challenge that should be noted, aside from a drop in Mass attendance, concern a general lack of engagement in the life of the parish and a dearth of volunteers for the many tasks required to run a parish. Whilst we indeed have a small and dedicated group of volunteers who help to keep things going, it falls, ever more to this dwindling group to do most of the jobs in the parish. Special mention should be made here of Treasurer Chris Croker and Finance Chair Declan Moore, as well as Michael Long who works hard behind the scenes with the newsletter, website, and other technical and administrative tasks. I am grateful to all of you, who give of your time and help keep our parish going.

If St Mary Magdalen's is to survive and thrive as a community this must change. At present for example we have only two people who count the Offertory collection once a month. We were audited by the diocesan auditors recently and have failed in this area. We desperately need more people to help with the counting of the money. This means that we would then comply with our legal obligations and importantly, unload some of the burden which is currently being placed on two individuals. We also need people to help with the sacristy, readers at Mass, and more volunteers to help with cleaning and maintaining our buildings.

It's not all bad news, however, and there are real signs of life and hope. The creation of the new Garden Room last year, the active use of our hall by groups in the local community, (to which we are indebted to Linis for all her hard work in organising and managing the bookings). The parish garden is a thing of beauty and a testament to the volunteers who have made it happen. The active ladies group in the parish and the First Holy Communion programme and subsequent Masses last weekend and those young people who were confirmed by Bishop Peter (with others from St Marks) last Thursday, give us much to be hopeful about, indeed there is a lot to be thankful for, but still much to do.

Last October we moved into a new chapter in the life of our Parish when Father Paul and I came amongst you as Parochial Administrator and assistant priest. The arrangement was, that whilst I served as Parish Priest to St Mark's I would also have pastoral and administrative oversight of St. Mary Magdalen's with Father Paul Chanh living on site to provide day-to-day pastoral care. To help facilitate this and to try and build a connection with the parish I decided from the outset that once a month, Fr Paul and I would swap over allowing me to celebrate the Masses here at St Mary Magdalens.

This new arrangement is very much still in a time of transition, and clearly, there is still much to do, but I am grateful for Fr Paul's ministry and ongoing support.

At this time the diocese, and Ipswich specifically, are discerning how we can best function as the Catholic Church in our town. A significant part of this will mean greater collaboration with other parishes. To this end, beginning this autumn, significant changes will be made to how we operate



pastorally in the town. I am already in consultation with my brother priests in the town, working through how we can share resources and work more collaboratively for the gospel. For our parish, this will mean that from this autumn we will have One First Holy Communion programme that will prepare children for both St Mark's and St Mary Magdalen's together. I will be talking to catechists in due course to work through how this will look. In fact, all sacramental preparation, Baptism, Confirmation, and Marriage courses will be undertaken as a joint enterprise between St Mark's and St Mary Magdalen's. First Holy Communion parents will be required to take part in a course as well as their children.

To be more effective in identifying the needs of the parish, to help us be more authentic in our witness to Christ, and to help in our proclamation of the gospel, I will be forming a consultative body to help shape the mission and life of the parish. This Parish Pastoral and Mission Council will be comprised hopefully of 4 representatives from St Mary Magdalen's, 4 representatives from St Mark's, and 4 representatives from Holy Family Brantham, and will meet 6 times a year to consult with me. They will also serve as points of reference and leadership for the parish.

I will also be looking for ways to strengthen the bonds between the two parishes, and in consultation with Father Paul, we will explore how I can be more visible as your pastor here at St Mary Magdalen.

There is much to be thankful for, and much to do, please let us pray for the parish, pray for each other, and pray for me as we move forward and outward together as the Church of Jesus Christ, here on Norwich Road, Ipswich.

A statement from Bishop Peter Collins was read to the meeting, announcing that he was coming to visit the Parishes of St Mark's, with Holy Family Brantham, and St Mary Magdalen's Ipswich, on the 15th, 16th, and 17th September 2023. The bishop said "that in visiting Ipswich he intended to analyse an Ipswich scenario that has developed over many years, and which now requires a revaluation." He emphasised that "no one should assume or presume anything from what is a starting point of exploration. And that he will be coming as bishop, to enquire, communicate, listen and to challenge."

The contents of Father Luke's address combined with the Bishop's statement set the general sense of direction for Father Luke's administration of our parish and his subsequent answers to questions asked on the night were all exactly in step with those communications. Father Luke stated that he had no inside track to the thinking of the new Bishop and that in the fulness of time the Bishop's direction will be made clear. In the meantime, he had the stewardship over three communities (two parishes and three churches) and was himself just coming to terms with the enormity of that obligation.

However, no merging at this time, was a strong message from Father Luke, just doing practical and harmonious things together across the three communities to make real positive headway under his leadership and guidance, recognising that St Mary Magdalens is in real need of significant rejuvenation on many fronts.

3 Discussion in response to the Parish Priest and the Bishop

People immediately asked about finances if we merged, and how would they be handled, the point being made that at least one of the parishes is much more wealthy than ours.

People asked about the value of the priest's house if we merged. Would there ever be a point where it was considered as a saleable asset if we did not have our own resident priest.

People asked about the Mass times and how they might be changed, and would parishioners have a say in any such proposals.

Father Luke was very clear in again stating that he is not talking merger, and emphasising that at this time 'we are nowhere near a state of merger'.



We were also assured that no major expenditure of any kind can be undertaken without the approval of the Diocese. There are no plans to alter financial independence from one parish to another. Each parish must be financially viable in their own right, was the message.

Father Luke assured the meeting that each parish will keep its own identity, we are just going to do things together, differently from how we deliver the parishes at this time.

Father Luke stressed that the priests and the Mass timings are not changing at this point. He told the meeting that such radical steps would not be taken without prior consultation with the Bishop. No changes are to be expected in the near future, not only is Father Luke coming to terms with his own position but so is the Bishop himself and it will take time for these considerations to morph into any significant action.

There was much interest in what level of consultation will we be engaged in as parishioners. Father Luke again spoke of the absolute need for one consultative body one Council across his three communities, not three separate bodies which he suggested would be quite impracticable and unwieldy. Father Luke emphasised the enormity of the task and that it needed a combined leadership approach if we are to be able to make progress in supporting and developing our individual parishes not merged parishes. Father Luke's message was of separate parishes working coherently and in a complimentary communion, to deliver the gospel message within the limitations of the resources available.

Father Luke again spoke of his vision of having appointed representatives from each community having equal influence in a single consultative body which would meet with him six times a year. He was also aware that the timings of Masses across the town were somewhat un-coordinated and their rationalisation could benefit the both the clergy and the Catholic communities.

4 Finance report from Chris Croker

| St Mary Magdalen Income & Expenditure Summary for the Period January - June 2023 | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Income | | | Expenditure | | |
| | Actual YTD | Full Yr Forecast | | Actual YTD | Full Yr Forecast |
| Main Offertory Collection | 14138 | 28000 | Property | | |
| Hall Rents | 5561 | 9000 | Church & Grounds Maintenance | 684 | 1500 |
| 150 Club Fundraising | 2325 | 2325 | House Maintenance | 1512 | 2500 |
| Tax Rebate from Gift Aid | 1961 | 4500 | Hall Maintenance | 3760 | 7000 |
| Easter & Christmas Offerings | 1382 | 3000 | Rates & Utilities | 2910 | 5835 |
| Second Collections for Others | 1256 | 3000 | Insurance | 879 | 1800 |
| Stole Fees (For Funerals etc) | 655 | 1200 | Other | 79 | 200 |
| Mass Stipends (Intentions etc) | 630 | 1000 | | 9824 | 18835 |
| Votive Candles & Flowers | 552 | 1400 | Priest | | |
| Other | 572 | 1300 | Salary & Expenses | 4683 | 10500 |
| TOTAL INCOME | 29032 | 54725 | Easter & Christmas Offering | 1382 | 3000 |
| Surplus | 9676 | 4042 | | 6065 | 13500 |
| Cash at Bank | 18378 | | Diocesan Levies | 0 | 10868 |
| Debtors Owing | 6035 Giftaid | | Administration | 595 | 1600 |
| Creditors Owed | -620 | | Liturgical Supplies | 638 | 1200 |
| Total General Funds | 23793 | | Other | | |
| | | | Second Collections for Other | 1246 | 3000 |
| | | | Flowers & Votive Candles | 513 | 1000 |
| | | | Other | 475 | 680 |
| | | | | 2234 | 4680 |
| | | | TOTAL EXPENDITURE | 19356 | 50683 |



A summary of the accounts for the 6 months ending 30th June show the parish making a surplus of £9.7k excluding the first instalment of £6.3k in levies which have yet to be posted by the Diocese. Expenditure includes (a) a contribution from general funds towards hall roofing repairs of £3.1k, the repairs costing £35.6K of which £32.2K was funded by a donation and £0.3k from Alive in Faith income and (b) £1.0k for presbytery lounge furniture.

Income is relatively stable and includes an accrual of £6.0k for tax reclaimable on gift aided amounts of which £4.8k was claimed for the tax year 2022/23 and is yet to be posted to our accounts by the Diocese.

Hall income is looking healthy as a result of Linis's efforts to increase turnover. The hall continues to be a key source of income which in past years has assisted with ensuring parish financial sustainability. We have however now reached the stage where a substantial part of the annual income needs to be channelled into updating and improving it to meet modern day standards and to ensure the continuation of this valuable income stream. Items on the improvement list include (a) installation of uPVC double glazing (b) upgrading the toilet block and changing the layout to accommodate construction of a wheelchair accessible facility (c) renovating and modernising the kitchen (d) installing better and more energy efficient lighting (e) improving the heating system (f) renovating the floor. The total cost of these works is estimated to exceed £50k and sources of grant funding to help pay for this work are being sought.

The first task will be to have double glazing installed and it was agreed at the meeting that when sufficient funds were available we should proceed with this.

The latest forecast for the year shows a surplus of £4.0k which depends largely upon estate maintenance costs in the next 6 months.

General funds totalled £23.8k at the end of June including cash at bank of £18.4k.

5 **Fabric Report from Declan Moore**

The presbytery was generally in good condition with some internal areas requiring a painting refresh. The heating and hot water boiler has recently been renewed and since the opening of the Garden Room the Guild Room has been converted into the parish office. The small kitchen and two toilets attached are fully functional.

One of the garages is in need of some low level repairs to the wooden fascia, otherwise they are sound. The work is not urgent.

The Church is in good internal condition throughout, including the electrics. Externally some work is needed around the windows and also where the lowest level of roof tiles meets the guttering lest the water which is currently damaging our fascia becomes more problematic. This will be an expensive matter to rectify, and will need to be done professionally.

The gardens around the Church and Presbytery are just wonderful.

The Hall has had a major refurb of the roof and that was paid for by a single donation from a parishioner. However other parts of the hall are dated and worn. This is evident in the windows, the kitchen and toilets. We estimate that the windows alone would cost £15k and the parish does not have those sums of money available at this time.

6 **Hall Report from Linis Dolby**

In the immediate aftermath of the Covid pandemic the income from the Hall had been quite low. However, much work has gone in to increase the earnings which are such an important addition to the overall viability of our parish finances which without Hall income would be in a precarious position. At this point in time the Hall is being used every evening at a rate of £20 per hour.



However, during the day there is not much uptake with only three mornings in use in the week, and one afternoon letting on a Thursday.

The Hall does need fabric attention. The mezzanine floor needs to be cleared cleaned and redecorated. It has been left for many years and the gardens around the Hall are somewhat like a wilderness at this moment in time and are in need of some urgent volunteer action.

7 Under agenda item seven the meeting addressed topics that had been put forward by parishioners.

7.1 Social Committee

In the general clamour for the establishment of a Social Committee the initial talk was of the merits for having one in today's world and would we get volunteers to take on the task.

There was positive talk of money raised at a Burn's night to help Tsunami victims, of popular gatherings at picnics and barbecues in recent times identifying that if there were organisers money could be raised for good causes.

It was suggested that an active Social Committee could raise money for all the issues of repair and refurbishment that had just been discussed.

Father Luke talked of four good events in a year and noted that they can be important in building a parish community. However, he stated that they needed people to drive them and volunteers had been rather scarce in St Mary Magdalen's in recent times.

At this point in the discussion only one person was expressing keen interest and there was much talk of what used to happen 20 years or more ago. In an aging congregation can we get younger people involved? It was noted that they are not greatly numerous in our parish at this time, and largely invisible at this meeting.

Three people then agreed to form a committee and to try and resurrect a social dimension in our parish. There was enthusiastic talk of a quiz, a barbecue and a cultural jamboree before year end.

7.2 Catechesis and Children's Liturgy

It was believed that the person who put the Catechesis topic forward for discussion was not able to attend on the night and so discussion was somewhat limited from the floor. However, the majority of the people thought it was an essential and most desirable aspect of parish life. There was talk of the successful first Communion and Confirmation programmes of recent years and a desire to rejuvenate this area. Father Luke said that we need properly trained and devoted people to lead on this subject and to get children's liturgy up and running is important. It takes significant resources to deliver correctly.

He made clear that welcoming families is important, the life blood of the church, noting that without the young families attending and embracing the faith the church cannot continue.

We need more welcomers for our Masses and indeed a Welcome to Saint Mary Magdalen's 'pack' may be a valuable development. Are there people out there who will help with this task?

There was talk of a lack of engagement in our parish which needs to be overcome if we are to get these matters operating effectively once more, and of course we have the benefit of the Garden Room for children's liturgy these days which we did not have in earlier years.

Father Luke was clear in emphasising that it is for the parishioners to come forward and make these wonderful things happen. We need support and we need co-ordinators and he stated that the delivery of a Children's Liturgy Group makes families feel welcome and makes the children feel important. The lack of it does the opposite and makes them feel neglected.



7.3 Volunteers

Father Luke understood the recent history of our parish well and wanted to look to the future which needed to be based on a more active laity. Discussion points covered all of the following areas:

- Volunteers were needed to take on the task of maintaining the grounds around the Church Hall.
- There is one volunteer to take forward the issue of Children's liturgy but this is not a singleton post and more volunteers are needed in that area also.
- There are insufficient people to activate the organ at all the Masses and again more volunteers are needed.
- It would be nice to increase the number of people who can read at the masses. Father Luke aims to have two readers for each Mass and we are currently a long way off that.
- There appears to be a particular lack of support to the priest at the six o'clock Saturday evening Mass and it would be nice to get some continuity there.
- Special Ministers of Holy Communion are required and Father Luke stated that Bishop Peter would like to see the use of the Chalice re-instated. That would again require further suitably trained volunteers.
- Father Luke said that school readers would be very welcome at Masses, but of course they must come to Mass in the first place.
- Finally, we discussed recruiting more people to assist with the counting of the Church collections to make us audit compliant with the HMRC, Charity, and Diocesan rules and regulations.

The need for so many volunteers was quite stark and thought provoking.

7.4 One Sunday Mass and Mass Times

7.7 As can be seen from the agenda these two items are somewhat related and are therefore recorded as one topic in these minutes.

The attendees recognised that rather than being one united active parish, we had evolved into three separate communities attending three separate Masses. There was generally not a whole parish feel to our Church.

People were concerned about that situation and recognised that it was a difficult position to recover from.

There was a suggestion that one chosen Sunday we should have just one Mass in an attempt to encourage the sense of togetherness. The idea was not universally endorsed but what is to be done?

Similarly a suggestion to have Benediction on one special Sunday afternoon with a barbecue in the garden afterwards was left without any real conclusion.

There was no easy way forward and all through the meeting the feeling was one of few active and the many dormant parishioners - how is that to be overcome how can we re-energise our Catholic Community?

The 'One Sunday Mass' experiment was rather left in limbo with no firm commitment.

Father Luke was clear that there would be no change of Mass times without consultation with the Bishop.

There was much talk of returning the Saturday Mass to a Sunday evening again but all decisions are off for now as Father Luke and the Bishop and the other priests in the Ipswich area need to be operating together to deliver what is efficient and effective for the Catholic Communities, while realistically matching the resources available in the Deanery.



Father Luke assured the meeting that there is no plan at this time to deliver only one Sunday Mass at St Mary Magdalen's Church. Equally it was suggested that delivering three Masses every weekend may not be viable and it is noted, the numbers attending the Saturday evening Mass are very low.

Father Luke was very clear in saying that these questions fall to the Bishop's lead, in discussion with his Priests, and will be resolved in the fulness of time, but the views of the congregations were both important and valuable.

7.5 The Sign of Peace

It was suggested by some that they would like to reinstate the shaking of hands as the sign of peace during the Mass. Father Luke was quite clear that people can do what they want on that score as it is quite optional and there would not be any centrally directed single response.

Many people liked to use the Indian namaste rather than have physical contact, others wave, and clearly some family members embrace.

Father Luke was content for people to do what they liked as individuals as long as the action had a sense of proper reverence, and there was no imposition on anyone to step outside their comfort zone.

7.6 The Peace Candle

Discussion took place around the continuance or otherwise of the Ukrainian Peace Candle. Not all parishioners are supportive of its continuing presence.

There was a voice to change it to a more general Candle for Peace on Earth. Father Luke was happy to keep things as they are and is happy to light the candle as it currently exists in St Mary Magdalen's church. He emphasised that Peace on Earth is an integral part of our liturgy and there is nothing further to be created at this time.

Our Mass is a consistent sacrifice and is theologically ordered and must always remain so.

7.8 Men's group

It was noted that as there was a women's group and that perhaps there should be a men's group in the parish.

There was no opposition to such a proposal it just now needs a volunteer to set it up and drive it forward. It will stand or fall on its own support or lack of it.

7.9 Offertory collection

An interesting debate took place regarding cash collections in the church during the Mass. Father Luke reminded us all that giving generously what we can of our wealth to the church, is an act of worship.

The installation of a digital collection point was put forward for consideration as something that has had much airing in the Finance Committee over recent years. At this meeting not one single parishioner found favour with the idea.

Father Luke said that we were not compliant with the rules and regulations that governed our Charitable status when it came to counting the collections. That needed to be rectified so that we become audit compliant. Again this was a matter for people to come forward and volunteer to get us back to the pre-covid era once again.

7.10 Hymn Books and other requirements

People were very happy to see the newly established hymn numbers board and appeared equally keen to get a new set of Hymnals.

Similarly they wanted to enhance the integration of music into our Masses. Laudate Hymn books cost £6.26 per unit and there was a very clear appetite for a special collection to fund these.



Father Luke brought our attention to the fact that we also needed some new vestments in our parish as we really do not have a decent range to match the liturgical demand. Basically we need four new sets in the four different colours that are required throughout the year.

Similarly we do not have any tabernacle covers and they are also required.

Father talked about our devotion to the Glory of God where we needed to equip our Church with cleanliness, with vestments, with altar cloths, with sacred vessels, and that they should be all of fine quality for the Glory of God. Our parish gathering agreed unanimously on the need to provide such important religious items as would display our proper devotion.

7.11 Weekly Bulletin

Father Luke has a plan to produce one weekly bulletin to cover all three churches and three schools, two primaries and Saint Alban's, and would like to have it in place before Christmas.

It will be a four page document and will enable us all to see what the other churches are engaging in and of course will encourage mutual activities as well as some consistency in approach.

The meeting came to a natural conclusion after two whole hours considering how to move forward under the guidance of Father Luke assisted by Father Paul.

Attendees were asked to indicate their willingness to volunteer for various tasks within the parish. The resulting lists are attached below.

Father Luke's final point was that we are not really short of priests but rather just needed to be re-organised and dynamic. He saw in the current situation a real opportunity to develop into the modern era with confidence and faith.

The meeting concluded at 2100hrs with a prayer. At the end of the meeting people were encouraged to sign up as volunteers for various roles in the parish. This is the list of responses on the night. Parishioners who would now wish to join any of these activities should pass their names to Father Chanh.

| | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <u>Collection Counting</u> | <u>Social & Fundraising Committee</u> | <u>Mens Group</u> |
| Enid Cleary | Teresa Barker | Nigel Fox |
| Joe Cleary | Val Croker | Paul Riches |
| Nigel Fox | Linis Dolby | Joe McSorley |
| Jean McSorley | Nigel Fox | |
| Declan Moore | Tony James | <u>Operation of Electronic Organ</u> |
| Martin Pakes | Chrissie Riches | Nigel Fox |
| Chrissie Riches | Jean McSorley | |
| Paul Riches | Joe McSorley | <u>Children's Liturgy</u> |
| Irma Suttle | Irma Suttle | Nigel Fox |
| | | |
| <u>Hall Grounds Maintenance</u> | <u>Readers</u> | <u>Welcomers</u> |
| Nigel Fox | Martin Pakes | Chrissie Riches |
| Tony James | Val Croker | Paul Riches |
| Lucy Pakes | Nigel Fox | |
| Paul Riches | Chrissie Riches | |