

## **Chairman's Report 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019 Annual General Meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council of the Parish of St Helen's Ongar & St. Margaret's Doddinghurst.**

The AGM of the PPC provides us with the chance to look back over the last twelve months and take stock of how we as a parish have fared. This is set against the background in the country as a whole of the continuing uncertainty, upset and division caused by the Brexit referendum. This very much emphasizes for us all that in order to maintain the cohesion of our small little parish we must continue to seek understanding, compromise and reconciliation in all that we do.

### **Spirituality.**

Father Emile, in what is now his third year as our Parish priest has tended to our spiritual needs in his humble and kindly way. As we continue to journey alongside him we gain with greater clarity how we can best help in the task of nurturing and nourishing of, our small rural Catholic community.

### **150<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries**

In April Saint Helen's marked its 150<sup>th</sup> year of founding. This very much caught us by surprise and without sufficient time to organize an appropriate way to mark the occasion. The idea of holding a special celebratory Mass in August on the feast of St. Helen was rejected on the basis that it fell during the school holidays and many parishioners would be away. It was subsequently suggested and decided instead to put the occasion back into at least September. An interest group has begun to meet to plan for the occasion and a suggested date will be announced soon.

Saint Margaret's anniversary will occur in 2020 marking its 50<sup>th</sup> year of coming into being in 1970. Some of our current parishioners were involved in supporting the building and initial setting up. A similar working group is currently meeting and further details are due to be shared in the not too distant future.

### **First Communion**

The appreciation of the Parish is extended to Dolores and Jenny for their work in supporting the children in their Communion preparation. The children received the sacrament for the first time over the weekend of 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June coinciding with Pentecost Sunday.

### **Children and Families.**

You are the life blood of our future. Please feel most welcome to join us at Mass. Many of your fellow parishioners have experienced the challenge of introducing their children to Mass. It is not easy and if left too late can be very difficult to initiate with the distractions thrown up when starting school and clubs. It is something of balance. It is amazing how quickly the children learn to adapt to quietly occupying themselves in Mass. Of course if they become distressed it is appropriate to slip out and comfort them. When they are old enough of course there is their own Liturgy of the word that helps provide the necessary activity and the 'Word' in ways more accessible. The most important thing is, we are all

routing for you, we know what it was like and should you have any good ideas to share as how we can make attendance at Mass easier for families please feel free to share them with the PPC and Father Emile.

It is our intention in the not too distant future to initiate Youth-Children's Mass's to try and help make Mass a fun and enjoyable experience for our young folk incorporating some of the approaches used in schools and youth projects. Similarly we are looking to provide some resources to help maintain the children's attention such as colouring materials and books.

### **Parish Partnerships**

Alan, more recently supported by Brendan, has kept us up to date with the latest thinking with regards planning for the likely arrangements for Sunday worship. We all appreciate that we are in a time of change and that in the not too distant future the impact of the limited numbers of vocations and aging clergy needs to be provided for.

### **Safeguarding**

Peggy Maxwell as our Parish Safeguarding coordinator has inputted a great deal of time and energy on our behalf into ensuring that as a parish we are in step with the direction in which the diocese is travelling. In a year during which revelations of historic abuse continue to surface relating to several highly renowned institution and individuals we all recognize the importance of a safe church based on transparency and good safeguarding practices. We must never be complacent and recognize that without vigilance and appropriate procedures Child abuse can occur anyway.

### **Finance**

As a parish we had for many years been in the red. Following Lesley' Boyle's bequeath we were for a while in a more healthy situation but in 2017 we were yet again in the red. The interim report that the finance committee has provided us with for this evenings meeting is very encouraging indeed, we are no longer in the red but firmly back in the black. Whilst some of this income is via donations it underlines for us just how hard everybody works in supporting the Parish through social events and other sources of revenue raising.

### **Social events**

As in every other year our small parish, has to use boxing parlance, punched far above its weight with the energy and enthusiasm with which you the parishioners have invested in coordinating, helping and supporting of our events. As remarked upon by other members of the Parish partnership it is incredible that such a small community manages to put on so much.

What has been very heartening this year is that other members of the wider parish community are stepping forward and helping to share the load. Some very committed and loyal stalwarts, recognize that their days of being able to set up events are becoming more and more difficult and that in order to keep things fresh and well supported we definitely need a continued injection of new energy.

Thank you to all who have been involved in the Jazz night, Christmas Bazaar, Irish Night, Lenten lunches, Spring Faire, Ongar Festival, Strawberry Faire and Parish Fun day. The Social events are another important aspect of the glue that binds us all together.

### **Events coordination Meeting**

In recognition of some upset unintentionally caused, it has been suggested that we should hold an events coordination meeting on an annual basis. It has been suggested that this year in order to get the ball rolling, we could hold the meeting on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September. The idea is that all who are interested in being involved in running of Parish events can meet and agree on the dates when they should be held and where appropriate resources shared.

### **Election to PPC**

As explained in last years Minutes, the PPC is still within an Extraordinary cycle due to its absorption and then reconstitution in 2017 where Twelve members came onto the council at the same time. The constitution identifies that four members having served a three-year term and where nominations exist, stand down. This would occur on a continually rolling programme. In the interest of maintaining some continuity it is not appropriate that everybody should stand down at the same time. It is likely unless there are mid term resignations that the Extraordinary cycle will stretch until 2021 when the last of the 2017 cohort stand down. I hope this explanation provides some clarity to issues.

Finally in conclusion may I thank all of the members of the PPC and wider Parish for all your efforts in supporting the life of our community and the works we all undertake in the interests of our fellow churchgoers.

Brian Sainsbury

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