

PARISH OF ST. HELEN, ONGAR, AND ST. MARGARET, DODDINGURST
PARISH MEETING TO DISCUSS THE ADVENT 2018 VISION DOCUMENT
HELD IN THE PRESBYTERY ON 21st MARCH, 2019

[Attendees: Father Emile, Alan Chapman (Steward), Robert Fagan, Clara Greenaway, Kathy Hamilton, Ann Robertson, Brian Sainsbury, Jenny Smith, Bernie Wrobel and Stan Wrobel]

This purpose of this meeting was to continue discussions in the Parish on the Vision Document that was published in Advent 2018. Matters arising from the earlier Parish meeting that was held on 19th February, 2019, have already been summarised and circulated to all parishioners by way of Newsletter attachments.

Matters arising during the discussions held on 21st March are summarised below. They are now circulated for the benefit of all parishioners.

1. IMPORTANT COMMENTS FROM ALAN CHAPMAN, OUR STEWARD OF THE GOSPEL

- 1.1 Alan read a statement regarding the progress of his work with other Stewards
- 1.2 The two worshipping communities of St. Helen's and St. Margaret's are not planned to close
- 1.3 There are no plans at the moment to change times or frequency of services in our Parish
- 1.4 Parishioners will be notified of these matters in the Newsletter
- 1.5 Decisions made by the Parish Partnership will be implemented and parishioners notified
- 1.6 The Bishop will approve any proposed changes to Mass times
- 1.7 Fr. Dominic will be able to support Parishes in the new Partnership
- 1.8 The alignment of Parishes was the main thrust of the Stewards at this time
- 1.9 The work of the Stewards was to prepare for any future reduction in the numbers of Priests
- 1.10 All Parish communities in the parish Partnership are fearful of losing their Churches
- 1.11 Hutton Parish has the largest Church and Mass attendance but limited parking facilities
- 1.12 Hutton Parish serves a local Primary School
- 1.13 The other Parishes in the new Parish Partnership are of a similar size in Mass attendances
- 1.14 The Parish of St. Helen's and St. Margaret's appears to be the most active socially
- 1.15 Further meetings of the Stewards will take place to consider more logistical matters
- 1.16 Thereafter, the Stewards will focus on the 'Twelve Strands' of the Vision Document (see section 5 below)
- 1.17 The Stewards will also focus on 'Youth Work' in the immediate future (see section 5 below)
- 1.18 A professional Youth Worker may be employed in each Parish Partnership
- 1.19 The Youth Worker will be supported by three voluntary youth workers

2. CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY PARISHIONERS

- 2.1 Will the present discussions include a resident Priest in our existing Parish?
- 2.2 What is the feedback from the other members of the Parish Partnership?
- 2.3 We need to concentrate more on spirituality in the Parish
- 2.4 We need to ensure that we survive spiritually and have faith
- 2.5 We need to ensure that our SVP Conference continues and that it is promoted in the other Parishes
- 2.6 Concern was expressed as to how young people can engage more fully in Parish life
- 2.7 Not all children attend Catholic Schools and so their spiritual development needs to be provided for
- 2.8 We need to ensure that Catholic Schools play a part in the life of the Parish Partnership

3. PARISHIONER'S SPECULATION OF DIOCESAN FUTURE PLANNING

- 3.1 We need continual feedback relevant to our Parish from the other members of the Parish Partnership
- 3.2 We should not become complacent but support each other

4. PARISHIONER'S SUMMARY OF WAYS TO PROCEED

- 4.1 The PPC will approach Fr. Dominic in order to try and arrange a family and youth event at Abbotswick
- 4.2 We all need to be more positive about the way forward
- 4.3 We need to work more closely with the Parish Partnership
- 4.4 Alan would communicate on a monthly basis with updates published in the Parish Newsletter

5. RENEWAL IN THE PARISH PARTNERSHIPS

The Vision Document states '***Twelve Strands***' for Renewal in Parish Partnerships.

The thrust of these Twelve Strands seeks to evangelise within the Diocese.

'Each strand stands on its own but all twelve intertwined create a whole that is far stronger than the sum of the parts'.

The Twelve Strands that are put forward by the Diocese are:

1. Charity, Justice and Social Action
2. Christian Life and Worship
3. Education
4. Family
5. Formation
6. Integration
7. Leaders
8. Material Assets
9. Prayer and Spirituality
10. Priests and people
11. Vocations to the Priesthood
12. Young People

– extracts from the Vision Document relating to 'Young People' are noted below:

'Young people, Faith and Vocational Discernment have just been the focus of the synod called by Pope Francis and held at the Vatican in October 2018 and the fruits of that synod will inform our future work.

To be a young person right now is to enjoy a blend of opportunities for discovery, travel, new technologies, and the ability to immediately communicate internationally. All this is set alongside family breakdown, living with stress and anxiety, and poverty. For parishes to be able to dialogue with young people about the timeless truths of our faith requires a cultural change and freshness of approach.

Scriptural truths, our relationship with Jesus Christ, the value of prayer and sacramental devotion, as well as the moral compass offered by the Church, are elements which transform the lives of young people. The challenge we face is to bring them to a space where they are able to receive these truths, ask questions, and find pathways which make sense to them.

It is a strategic aim of the Vicariate for Pastoral Formation to support and encourage each Parish Partnership that wishes to employ a parish Youth Co-ordinator. It is our belief that a full time, paid, trained and well-supported person in this role is the best way to provide the resources and relationships required to sustain youth ministry in the rapidly changing landscape faced by our young people'.

Each of these Twelve Strands are worthy of much greater thought and of serious consideration. They are, in essence, what this whole restructuring process is all about.

Each strand requires further detailed consideration which will become the focus in the next stage of the work by the Stewards towards the actual transition of our Parish to a new Parish Partnership.