

PARISH OF ST. HELEN, ONGAR, AND ST. MARGARET, DODDINGURST
PARISH MEETING TO DISCUSS THE ADVENT 2018 VISION DOCUMENT
HELD IN THE PRESBYTERY ON 19th FEBRUARY, 2019

[Attendees: Father Emile, Alan Chapman (Steward), Mike Anthony, Richard Arnell, Peggy Maxwell, Susan Mucklestone, Bill Mucklestone, Carmen Blackett, Jenny Smith and Adrian Smith]

Matters arising during the discussions were noted and these are summarised below. They are now distributed for the benefit of all parishioners.

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

- 1.1 The Vision Document (VD) introduces Parish Partnerships (PP) which focuses on new parish structures
- 1.2 The new PP's are not established under Canon Law
- 1.3 Our new PP will comprise Ongar, Doddinghurst, Hutton, Ingatestone and Stock
- 1.4 Our PP will have one priest who will be assisted by Fr. Dominic (Abbotswick) and half a priest from Loughton
- 1.5 We have the capacity to hold more masses but we don't have the numbers of parishioners attending
- 1.6 Hutton can accommodate 350 worshipers whilst the other churches between 80-120 worshipers each
- 1.7 Ongar is in a strong position as it promotes the Beatification of Fr. Byles
- 1.8 Doddinghurst is in a strong position as it is a Hall which needs to be used for religious services
- 1.9 Diocesan efforts and finances should be applied to recruiting more priests
- 1.10 The VD portrays the worst-case scenario following Diocesan restructuring
- 1.11 The VD highlights reduced numbers of priests and the need for financial restructuring
- 1.12 The Bishop will only allow a priest to say three masses over a weekend
- 1.13 Alan, as Steward, has been told to keep his negotiations with the other Stewards confidential
- 1.14 The Stewards meet monthly in order to discuss the on-going restructuring
- 1.15 The Bishop will have the final decision with the new PP structures
- 1.16 The Bishop has considered all views expressed to him and the VD is the outcome of these

2. CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY PARISHIONERS

- 2.1 The VD is not a good document in that the Diocese seems to abdicate its management of parishes
- 2.2 Parishioners are being asked to decide on their future within Diocesan guidelines imposed on them
- 2.3 Our PP is the largest in the Diocese and will be more difficult to manage
- 2.4 There are new housing developments throughout the Diocese
- 2.5 650 new homes are planned for Ongar and 400 new homes are planned for Ingatestone
- 2.6 More priests need to be trained and priests from religious orders could assist at Sunday masses
- 2.7 Priests will be needed to administer to the sick, the housebound and to dying parishioners
- 2.8 Parishioners need to be able to contact/phone a priest for help and feel able to achieve this
- 2.9 We need a business plan in order to set-out our aims and objectives
- 2.10 We need to retain our parish and retain our parish priest
- 2.11 There's a danger that our SVP Conference may not be able to operate within the new PP
- 2.12 The VD may result in a reduction in the numbers of practicing Catholics within the new PP
- 2.13 It's a pity that Religious Sisters are not able to celebrate masses
- 2.14 We should be mindful of the spiritual needs of our priests as well as considering their health
- 2.15 Our ageing Catholic population contribute more money to the Church than younger people
- 2.16 As older parishioners die then we will lose considerable levels of regular income
- 2.17 Lower levels of income will necessitate cost savings throughout the Diocese
- 2.18 Parishioners didn't necessarily want Eucharist Services as an alternative to masses
- 2.19 Parishioners may choose to worship Sunday Masses in churches in other areas

3. PARISHIONER'S SPECULATION OF DIOCESAN FUTURE PLANNING

- 3.1 Our new PP will comprise five worshipping communities (Ongar, Doddinghurst, Hutton, Ingatestone, Stock)
- 3.2 Parish boundaries could be abolished in preference to one new PP boundary
- 3.3 Our new PP will become an autonomous financial group sharing monies and assets
- 3.4 The new PP would be expected to share liturgical and social facilities
- 3.5 We could undertake Eucharistic Services if we can't have masses
- 3.6 Homily's could be pre-written or televised and delivered by laity
- 3.7 Ongar, Ingatestone and Stock do not have Parish Halls
- 3.8 Doddinghurst is both a Parish Hall and a Mass Centre
- 3.9 Hutton has a Parish Hall but a very limited car park
- 3.10 We could share parish hall facilities and come together more often
- 3.11 We could share lay ministries
- 3.12 We could share liturgical ministries
- 3.13 We could possibly undertake masses in other non-Catholic churches
- 3.14 There will probably be a new 'Managing Committee' to oversee the new PP
- 3.15 The new Managing Committee should include representatives from the five worshipping communities
- 3.16 Some church properties may need to close
- 3.17 Cost savings can be made by sharing secretarial/administration services
- 3.18 Cost savings can be made by having fewer priests to support and maintain

4. OUR PARISHIONERS SUMMARY OF WAYS TO PROCEED

- 4.1 To allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in this matter
- 4.2 To pray for guidance in all that we undertake
- 4.3 To identify the strengths in our parish and to reach out to the wider community in the PP
- 4.4 We should start to share what we have with the other worshipping communities in the PP
- 4.5 We should start to talk in terms of 'us' (being the PP) and not in terms of 'me' (our parish)
- 4.6 We should start to work together for the benefit of the PP as a whole
- 4.7 We could share liturgical needs, such as Baptism, First Holy Communion and RCIA training sessions etc
- 4.8 We should look now to the positives rather than the negatives
- 4.9 We should not be afraid to meet the challenges that the parish and the Diocese now needs to address
- 4.10 Diocesan challenges are also our challenges
- 4.11 We have two notable forthcoming events in celebrating Ongar's 150th and Doddinghurst's 50th celebrations
- 4.12 We should be encouraging inter-worshipping community social events
- 4.13 We need to just get on and work together for the new PP

5. FURTHER MEETINGS

It was mentioned that, following continuing meetings between the Stewards within our PP, we should have further parishioner meetings in order to discuss the progress made in our restructuring. It was felt that the minutes of these further meetings should also be made available to all parishioners.