



Annual General Meeting MEETING MINUTES

30 September 2012

Meeting Details

Meeting Name:	Annual General Meeting
Chairman:	Charles Whitehead
Date:	Sunday, 30 th September 2012
Time:	3pm until 5pm
Location:	Parish Centre

Invitees/Attendees

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was an open meeting for all parishioners.

They were invited to hear the Council report on the state of the Parish, including highlights from the past year and an outlook for the next 12 months.

53 parishioners were present at the meeting, including the following members of the Parish Council:

Name	Role	Present
Charles Whitehead	Chairman	Yes
Fr John McGowan	Parish Priest	Yes
Fr Bob Davies	Carmelite Community	Yes
John Forte	Finance Committee	Yes
John Bates	Health & Safety and Safeguarding	Yes
Christine Cornwell	Evangelisation Activity Group	Yes
Ros Burton	Liturgy & Church Activity Group	Yes
Stephen Forster	Outreach Activity Group	Yes
Janet Bridden	Pastoral Activity Group	Yes
Tony Hetherington	Social Activity Group	Yes
Paul Rayner	Youth Activity Group	Yes
Mike Carney	Mass Representatives	Yes
Joan Barham	Secretary	Yes

Agenda Items

Item	Subject	Presenter
1.	Opening Remarks	Charles Whitehead
2.	Chairman's Report	Charles Whitehead
3.	Parish Priest's Report	Fr John McGowan
4.	Finance Committee Report	John Forte
5.	Introduction of Activity Group Leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evangelisation Activity Group (Christine Cornwell) • Liturgy & Church Activity Group (Ros Burton) • Outreach Activity Group (Stephen Forster) • Pastoral Activity Group (Janet Bridden) • Social Activity Group (Tony Hetherington) • Youth Activity Group (Paul Rayner) • Mass Representatives (Mike Carney) 	Charles Whitehead
6.	Any Other Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions Tabled in Advance • Questions & Comments from the Floor 	Charles Whitehead
7.	Closing Remarks	Charles Whitehead

Meeting Notes

1. Opening Remarks - Charles Whitehead

- The meeting began with a prayer led by Fr John, who then invited all those present to join him in saying the prayer "Come Holy Spirit".
- The chairman then welcomed everyone to the meeting. He outlined the agenda items and stated that no questions had been tabled in advance of the meeting.
- He mentioned that Saumya, our Youth Worker, had not had her baby yet. It is an exciting and tense time for Saumya and her husband, so please keep them in our prayers.

2. Chairman's Report - Charles Whitehead

- Refer to the "*Letter from the Chairman*" made available prior to the AGM and the "*Parish Council Constitution*" published in May. These focus on the role, membership and operation of the Council which has been reviewed and overhauled this past year, so as to create better mechanisms for communicating with groups, volunteers and parishioners.
- We have not had an Annual General Meeting for a number of years. One of our priorities this past 12 months since Fr John's arrival has been a re-organisation of our Parish Council and a review of our procedures. We believe it is important to have an AGM and, going forward, the intention is that this will happen at the end of September/beginning of October every year.
- Ahead of the AGM we circulated a lot of reports which were made available at St Joseph's, The Most Holy Name and The Divine Child of Prague churches as well as on the website – this provides the framework for our meeting this afternoon. These reports cover our current financial situation and highlight what is happening with our volunteer groups.

- Working Groups are teams of parishioners involved in performing the duties they have volunteered for. They are, as the name suggests, the people who are doing the work. Activity Groups consist of working groups with similar volunteer interest/work within the parish; they share a common area of activity. Such definitions are not perfect, but every effort has been made to organise our groups as logically and appropriately as possible. Working Groups come together within their Activity Groups to elect someone to represent them at the Parish Council level. These representatives are vital to facilitating two-way communication between the Council and Working Group volunteers. We are indebted to John Forte and his team for bringing this re-structure about.
- It needs to be understood that the Parish Council is primarily an advisory body to the parish priest. He can delegate authority in some respects as and when required. We can make recommendations with various degrees of authority and strength to the parish priest; we cannot demand. Ultimately, the Council is there to offer advice and whatever assistance the Parish Priest may deem necessary for the efficient running of the Parish.
- Today, we are asked a lot more about the opinions of the parish. We are in a much stronger position in this regard than we have been for some years.

3. Parish Priest's Report - Fr John McGowan

- Refer to the "*Fr John's Address to Parish AGM 2012*" for full details of his report. This covers his reflections on the past year, his priorities as parish priest and his plans for the future. At the end of his speech he thanked the Catholic Women's League for providing the refreshments for today's meeting.
- The chairman thanked Fr John for such a comprehensive picture of his view of the parish, together with what he wants for the future. He also highlighted the need for adult formation and training – this is something we need to take into serious consideration.

4. Finance Committee Report - John Forte

- Refer to the "*Finance Chairman Report to Parish AGM 2012*" for full details of John Forte's report.
- Refer to the "*Finance Committee Report*" and accompanying "*Financial Statement*" made available prior to the AGM for information about parish finances.
- At the end of John's talk, the chairman thanked him and the Finance Committee for all the work the hard work they have put into our parish finances, saying how grateful the Parish is for their efforts.

Questions & Comments from the Floor regarding Finance

- **Legacy** – The question was asked, what happens to legacies bequeathed to our parish. John Forte explained if a legacy is made in the name of St Joseph's Parish then the money comes to St Joseph's. All our banking is done by the Diocese, and any monies requested to go to our parish are lodged into our account. This also applies to Standing Orders; so it is very important to clearly state that the funds are specifically for St Joseph's Parish when setting them up.
- **Census** – With the coming Centenary it was asked if we should consider doing a parish census? This was considered to be a good suggestion, and would be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting.
- **Together in Faith** – This Diocesan initiative should return money to the parish, so the question was asked, have we included that in our future planning and whether it will help our financial situation? John Forte explained that it would, but we won't get any money from the Diocese unless the money is in the bank. Together in Faith is a commitment over five years and a lot of pledges won't mature until then. Over the five years the money is paid to the Diocese and then transferred to us as and when it materialises. The Bishop has specified four distinct areas for this money to be spent and day-to-day running costs is not one of those areas. We can't count our chickens before they are hatched! We did achieve our target for Diocese.
- **Offering Time** – The point was made that some people can't afford to increase their financial offering in the current climate, that if people can't do that, then they could consider giving some of their time to the Furniture Market and/or Events Team as this ultimately helps to increase the revenue of the parish.

This was considered another excellent suggestion. John Forte remarked on the tremendous amount of goodwill that exists in our parish.

- **New Phone System** – One person questioned whether £4,000 was not too much for a new telephone system. It was explained to him that a lot of work has been done investigating various options. Expert advice was sought. More than one opinion was offered but in the end it was felt that BT was the best option, as they gave us the best and most effective technological solution to our needs.
- **Interim Financial Updates** – It was suggested that a mini financial report be included in the Newsletter every quarter or half year. In response it was highlighted that the practicalities of this are slightly difficult. We need a lot of information from the Diocese to produce such a report and unfortunately we don't always get the data promptly. We could possibly provide some headline figures. This matter will be discussed at the next Parish Council Meeting.
- **Collections vs Costs** – The point was reiterated that for many parishioners their experience of the parish is just one hour on a Sunday. From reading the Newsletter it seems we have a healthy collection, but the cost of running a parish is not generally known. Most parishioners have no idea if the collection is enough to cover what we have to pay out; why don't we include a comparison so people know where we stand? This is another excellent suggestion to be considered. However, as regards costs, we could only provide the average cost per week rather than specific figures (i.e. total cost of running the parish over a year divided by 52 weeks). Based on our last financial year, this is circa £5,000 per week.
- **High Maintenance Costs** – It was pointed out that over £69,000 was spent on property and maintenance in 2011. What was that for exactly? In response he was told that it included a huge number of different items, all of which can be accounted for. John Forte offered to explain in detail with anyone interested in this matter.
- **Financial Control** – It was brought to our attention that there was a rumor that spending on the refurbishment of the Priory was out of control. The point was made that people will donate more if there is transparency and they know what their money is being spent on. John Forte replied that we have no reason to be secret. We have introduced better, more robust controls into our systems. He is satisfied that we are managing our finances in an appropriate manner, improving things over the last three to four years. We can account for every penny we receive and spend.

5. Introduction of Activity Group Leaders - Charles Whitehead

- Refer to the "*Council Activity Working Group Diagram*" which depicts the makeup of the Council, including the composition of each Activity Group. The chairman introduced each leader in turn.

The **Evangelisation Activity Group** is represented by **Christine Cornwell**. It includes the following Working Groups:

- Alpha
 - CaFE
 - Charismatic Prayer Group
 - Christians Together
 - Faith Sharing Groups
 - Men's Breakfast Group
 - Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites
- Refer to the "*Evangelisation Activity Group Report*" made available prior to the AGM for information about this group and their activities.
 - Christine thanked Charles Whitehead for heading the previous Outreach & Evangelisation Forum, the forerunner to this Activity Group. It was one which met regularly and actively worked on new initiatives since its inception. One of the most successful events was the "Life in the Spirit" seminars which were well attended, had excellent speakers and good music. She said we would like to do more of this in the future and thanked the parish for their support.

The **Liturgy & Church Activity Group** is represented by **Ros Burton**. It includes the following Working Groups/Ministries:

- Altar Servers
 - Banners
 - Bookshop
 - Church/Brass Cleaning
 - Eucharistic Ministers
 - Flower Arrangers
 - Mass Readers
 - Music Ministry
 - Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration
 - Repository
 - Rosary Circle
 - Sacristans
- Refer to the "*Liturgy & Church Activity Group Report*" made available prior to the AGM for information about this group and their activities.

The **Outreach Activity Group** is represented by **Stephen Forster**. It includes the following Working Groups:

- Catholic Women's League
 - Justice & Peace
 - Life/Pro Life Group
 - London Run
 - Slough Homeless Our Concern (SHOC)
 - Third World/Cameroon
 - Traidcraft
- Refer to the "*Outreach Activity Group Report*" made available prior to the AGM for information about this group and their activities.

The **Pastoral Activity Group** is represented by **Janet Bridden**. It includes the following Working Groups:

- Ministry for the Disabled
 - St Vincent de Paul (SVP)
- Refer to the "*Pastoral Activity Group Report*" made available prior to the AGM for information about this group and their activities.

The **Social Activity Group** is represented by **Tony Hetherington**. It includes the following Working Groups:

- Coffee Rota 11am
 - Coffee Rota 9am
 - Events Team
 - Tea in the Pot
- Refer to the "*Social Activity Group Report*" made available prior to the AGM for information about this group and their activities.

- Tony said that the Events Team has been thanked, but they raise the money with the help of parishioners. It is the whole parish who raise the much needed funds by organising and supporting events. He thanked everyone for attending the various events held throughout the year.

The **Youth Activity Group** is represented by **Paul Rayner**. It includes the following Working Groups:

- Children's Liturgy
 - First Holy Communion
 - St Joseph's School
 - Youth Management Team
- Refer to the "*Youth Activity Group Report*" made available prior to the AGM for information about this group and their activities.

Mass Representatives are currently represented by **Mike Carney**. He has been appointed for one year to ensure that the congregation at each Mass has a representative. This area is work in progress.

- Refer to the "*Mass Representatives*" document made available prior to the AGM for details about this role.
- Mike said that he has been co-opted on to the Parish Council to resurrect Mass Representatives. His assignment is to go and find people to represent each Mass. Their main task is to create a welcoming church – "meeters and greeters". Another aspect of the Mass Representative role is dealing with issues – if you have a concern you can take it to the representative and they will either deal with it or direct it to the right area so that it gets resolved. This is better than having to wait for an AGM to report a problem.

6. Any Other Business - Charles Whitehead

Questions Tabled in Advance

- No questions were received in advance of the meeting.

Questions & Comments from the Floor

- **Catholic Free School** – One parishioner said he had tabled an item for AOB regarding education in the parish and it had not been included on the agenda. Fr John replied that he had written regarding this matter before the AGM and then reiterated the negative view of the Bishop, that a Free School would be detrimental to the present RC Schools in the area. The matter had been discussed at the Parish Council and follow-up communications had been sent.
- We have three catholic schools within 12 miles. In some parts of the Diocese children have to travel over 70 miles to get to a catholic school. 20 children from St Joseph's have just started at St Joan of Arc RC School in Rickmansworth. Thanks to the support of the parents a bus facility has now been provided, alleviating the transport problem.
- A motion was proposed from the floor and seconded that "the Bishop is asked to re-visit the question as to whether there should be a new Free Catholic School established in the Parish". There were 10 votes in favour, 18 against and 16 abstentions, so the motion was not carried.
- **Furniture Market** – A question was raised: as the Furniture Market is very successful, could it not also sell clothes? An explanation was given: the volunteers work very hard as it is and there isn't really any room for clothes. It was suggested that any clothes be donated to the London Run.
- **Preface & Cannon** – Fr John was asked if the priest could let us know which Preface and which Cannon we are going to use during Mass. Fr John replied that, strictly speaking, we should not be reading this (also he is forgetful!).
- **Re-Cycling** – Eileen asked if the Priory could use more re-cycling. Fr John said he would love that and invited Eileen to take responsibility for looking into this. Fr Bob said that part of the problem is that we don't have our rubbish collected by the Council as we are not a domestic/residential user. It is

collected by a commercial company and they simply don't do re-cycling. Joan pointed out that the Office re-cycles as much as possible, this is typically paper and card.

- **Hymn Books** – Someone asked for more hymn books in St Joseph's Church. The Finance Committee was asked to look into this.

7. Closing Remarks - Charles Whitehead

- The chairman thanked everyone for their input. We are trying to move forward with greater accountability and have the support of the Carmelite Community in doing so. We will definitely be running an AGM every year and hope that more parishioners may decide to come. He thanked everyone for coming.
- The meeting was closed and all those present were invited for refreshments.