



Annual General Meeting MEETING MINUTES

28 September 2014

Meeting Details

Meeting Name:	Annual General Meeting
Chairman:	John Bates
Date:	Sunday, 28 th September 2014
Time:	3pm until 4:30pm
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.

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

Name	Role	Present
John Bates	Chairman Health & Safety and Safeguarding	Yes
Fr Michael Spain	Parish Priest	Yes
Fr Martin McDonald	Carmelite Community	Yes
John Forte	Finance Committee	Yes
Christine Cornwell	Evangelisation Activity Group	Yes
Ros Burton	Liturgy & Church Activity Group	Yes
Stephen Forster	Outreach Activity Group	Yes
Kasia Misiewicz	Pastoral Activity Group	Yes
Nan Jacobson	Social Activity Group	Yes
Paul Rayner	Youth Activity Group	Yes
Michael Carney	Mass Representatives	Yes
Joan Barham	Secretary	Yes
Michael Ellul	Youth Worker	Yes

Agenda Items

Item	Subject	Presenter
1.	Opening Remarks	John Bates
2.	Parish Priest's Report	Fr Michael Spain
3.	Finance Committee Report	John Forte
4.	Any Other Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions Tabled in Advance • Questions & Comments from the Floor 	John Bates
5.	Closing Remarks	John Bates

Meeting Notes

1. Opening Remarks - John Bates

- The meeting began with a welcome from the chairman. He reminded those present that Annual General Meetings are an opportunity to look at the past, review the present and plan for the future. During today's meeting we want to be positive and look forward rather than backward.
- Fr Michael then led everyone in saying the Parish Prayer (*see inside cover of Annual Report*) and gave a blessing.

2. Parish Priest's Report - Fr Michael Spain

- Fr Michael said that he had only **two things to say**...as follows:
- **The first point** is with regard to the building project that has been mooted for a long time. In our Annual Report, you will notice that at the end of John's introduction he has enumerated the present position (*see extract below for ease of reference*):

“...With regard to the updating of the Church and Parish Centre the way forward is now focused upon:

 - 1) Refurbishment and redecoration of the Church without re-orientation
 - 2) Consideration as to whether or not a Narthex will be provided
 - 3) Review of Parish Centre/Hall in consultation with the users to determine the way forward
 - 4) Feasibility of development at Denham...”
- Fr Michael only wanted to dwell on the first point at the meeting. He has decided to concentrate on the refurbishment of the church – the former development plans are no longer going ahead. The focus is on the church first and foremost; the other three items are open for discussion as to whether, how or when they are progressed.
- He noted that upon his return to the parish, he found things are changing yet familiar. A huge amount of familiarity in faces, the layout of the place and how things are doing. Change in terms of the people who work in the Priory and a new Carmelite Community. A very vital part of the years we spend here together is how we get on with one another. A big issue for Fr Michael is how he gets on with everyone – he wants to be positive, not distress himself and try to get on without compromising himself. God has a reason for Fr Michael to be here and whoever needs him will find him. We are fortunate that lots of people are doing things and wanting to do more. By God's grace we will all work well together.
- **The second point** is that Fr Michael is really going to try in his years here to encourage vocations. In our history, only one person in 99 years has become a priest. In Wincanton, where Fr Michael spent his early years as a priest, there were only two vocations to the priesthood in 113 years. A vocation is not a very common thing and if you ask Fr Maurice or Fr Martin they will tell you that it is not an easy thing. Many men drop out during their training and very few are coming forward for training.

- Fr Michael talked about enrolment in prayer and goodwill. He hopes that his declaration of this goal will mean a youngster will go ahead in that way. Every time our clergy preach they are doing their very best to help us interpret God's Word.

3. Finance Committee Report - John Forte

- Refer to the "Finance Chairman Report to Parish AGM 2014" for full details of John Forte's report.
- Refer to the "Finance Committee Report" and accompanying "Financial Statement" made available prior to the AGM in the Annual Report for information about parish finances.

Questions & Comments from the Floor regarding Finance

- **Charles Desforges** – *Been a parishioner for 42 years, was initially a member of the Council and worked on many projects. We have not yet incurred charges from Lee Evans – how much is that likely to be?*

At the moment he hasn't charged us anything, but he will be billing us per normal architectural fees. He will charge for the amount of time spent on the project, in preparing presentations for the Parish and the Council. The charges are reasonable indeed. We didn't pay anything in the last financial year because he was only employed in April of this year so we will see his charges, currently and up to now, expected to be less than £5,000, next time. We did have to pay £3,400 for a site survey which needed to be done and that does appear on our accounts for the last financial year.

- **Charles Desforges** – *Should we be making a provision for these eventual costs?*

We have not done so yet because we don't know what we will end up with and we haven't costed anything. We can certainly ear mark some of our reserves once we have an idea of what we need to do, but we are not at the point yet where we need to do that. Until Fr Michael instructs us that he wishes to go ahead with something specific then we are not going to upset the accounts at all. At such time, we can then estimate how much we should ear mark for whatever he wants to do.

- **Charles Watters** – *Regarding Nancy Deeves bequest, can it be clarified that the house is to the order of £800,000?*

We had an official valuation done for the property that we are selling. This was to comply with Charity Commission regulations. The valuation came in at just over £800,000. We have not received any offers at this time that are acceptable – all have been below that figure.

- **Charles Watters** – *Please explain the boundary query referred to in Note 5?*

There has never been a clear definition on this site as to what belongs to the Carmelites and what belongs to the Parish/Diocese. Fr John asked for clarification resulting in these charges. Having said this, Fr Michael has this well and truly in hand. These costs pertain to the identification of what is Parish versus what is Carmelite.

- **Maurice Carkett** – *Last year £6,400 was spent on Centenary celebrations. Is that included in these figures?*

No. These accounts refer to the financial year ended 31st March 2014. The charges you refer to appeared in the previous year's accounts. To explain this further, Fr John had got three committees together, one of which was a working group on the Church. At one point Fr John discovered that we were thinking of spending more on the Parish Centre than on the Church and he felt that this was not justifiable so he aborted the whole project. On this Church group was an architect who was working free of charge (in the hope) assuming that he would get the contract if the project went ahead. The project was aborted and the architect duly put in a bill for his expenses which had to be paid. This cost was reported in our 2013 Financial Statement.

- **Michael Carney** – *Can you give some idea of what work is required to bring the building up to the standards that are required?*

There are several things which we have pushed back and pushed back. The most important of these is the electrical rewiring, mostly concerning the lighting. At this point in time we cannot get a certificate for the lighting. It is unlikely that someone would get electrocuted because of the lights, nevertheless, it was identified as a fault and we were given five years to fix it – we are now three years into this. Look up at the state of the roof – we have not yet had an expert opinion on it but there will be work to do. We would like to see our insulation brought up to modern standards. If we do the roof we would also

look at the insulation. The Church could do with a paint job now, but if we do the rewiring we will definitely need to redecorate. As we know from our own homes, if you do one job you most certainly find that you have to do other things as well.

- **Francoise Forster** – *Would it not be worthwhile to look at our audio-visual facilities such as screens, microphones, etc when we do the re-wiring work? We do not have the means to properly project text on a screen, or show presentations or films. The sound system is poor, even when readers project and use the microphone we cannot hear.*

We really need a good interior design. As part of this we need a good electrical and lighting consultant because this is a complicated job. We also need a specialist for our sound system. An audio/visual consultant. All these important things can be looked at as part of the refurbishment.

- **Richard Brumby** – *Thanks for the positive finance report. Can you update us on "Together in Faith" and tell us how this is doing in regards to funds coming back to the Parish from the Diocese based on what has been contributed?*

"Together in Faith" is still continuing. The elements of "Together in Faith" that were identified for the priests have been paid and are ongoing. The education side has also been paid. As far as we are concerned, at the end of August 2014 there was £38,000 in our "Together in Faith" kitty that we could call upon to be used for any development of the parish. We would prefer to leave this alone until "Together in Faith" is over in two years time, then we will know precisely how much we have got and how much we can spend. We will use that money to carry on with whatever we decide to do.

- **Patrick Howe** – *Weekly giving has increased, but as Catholics, we need more teaching about the concept of "tithing". There is not enough from the pulpit about this and it is something that could be pushed harder – making people more aware of what the Lord asks of us to give. Using an envelope each week reminds me of my obligation to the Lord and could give others a greater appreciation of what they are doing and why.*

The envelopes are a good way of giving but the major reason why we advocate standing order is that our bills don't go on holiday. You will notice at holiday times our weekly collections are reduced.

Standing order is a good way to ensure that offerings are collected. We are trying to get more information about our finances in the Newsletter. I don't know what Fr Michael's view is, but his predecessors were certainly not keen on standing up and asking people for money and they were not keen on John appealing for money either. Fr Michael commented that he has been coming here nearly every year to appeal for money for the mission and got lots – he will do it again!!!

- **Sister Mary Christa** – *Consider those people who don't come regularly to church but may want to give money. Knew a priest who found that people would give money more easily than commit to coming to Mass.*

This is a very interesting idea and something for us to think about.

- **Terry McDonnell** – *If you look at the maths and divide the offertory collection by the numbers attending the figures look very impressive. However, this does not include our second/special collections which show a wider scale of giving. Propose that in future Annual Reports we also show what we, as a parish, have given to other charities.*

We don't record these collections as part of our parish figures because they go straight to the charities concerned. We will look into it and see how we can report such donations in the future. We don't want people's generosity for worthy causes to be confused with what we need to cover our basic parish costs.

4. Any Other Business - John Bates

Questions Tabled in Advance

- **Maggie Green** – *Questions regarding parish development project*

Maggie was present at the meeting and confirmed that all her queries were answered by the reports made at the meeting.

- **Peter Freeman** – *Peter was present at the meeting and made this plea for the third year in a row. He asked that the Celebrant state which Preface and Eucharistic Prayer they are going to say. This plea is for all those people whose hearing isn't as good as it used to be. In the Missal it says that the prayers of the Mass are not just the priest's prayers, they are the prayers of the parish. Cardinal Basil Hume said that the Missal was an invaluable tool for the prayers of the Mass. We want to avoid the paper*

chase as you flick through the pages of the Missal whilst trying to catch up with the Celebrant.

Fr Michael said in reply that he gets also gets confused by the different Missals, especially when visiting different churches. It seems as if the various companies who produced new Missals following the new translation are at loggerheads with one another. He promised to do his best to address Peter's request.

Questions & Comments from the Floor

- **Charles Watters** – *Concerning the Youth Ministry, could someone say a few words about what initiatives are going on with other churches in the local area? Also what is happening for those in the 16-25 age group?*

Paul Rayner took this question. He firstly took the opportunity to publicly thank Michael Ellul, our Youth Worker, for all the work he does with the youth in our parish. He mentioned the change to the way we prepare for Confirmation, introducing a Year 7 and Year 8 Confirmation Class. The young people get together from the year they leave primary school and we encourage them to engage with the parish and each other through this Confirmation process. The current numbers for each year group are in the Annual Report. Whilst the sessions are part social, it is not a youth club; it is about formation.

For 16-25 year olds, we have two initiatives starting this term. On Friday night last, we had a reunion for this year's Confirmation group and together we are looking to form a youth social justice group. The first thing is on the calendar is a parish car wash on Sunday, 19th October. We are trying to get the young people together to put something back into the parish. There are also plans for something in November and December. Last night we also started something new for those young people who want spiritual development rather than social development. This follows on from the Teen Group which was established as part of Children's Liturgy last year. Led by Liturgists, the young people meet for bible study, discussion and fellowship.

We have reached out to some of the other parishes in our area and it would be wonderful if, in the future, we could join together for youth events and activities.

Michael Ellul also spoke. He said that his first priority is our youth in our parish. It is important for ties to be in place with other parishes and churches (they are in some small way). However, until we have something lively in our own parish, our youth is his primary concern before starting to work with/in other churches. There have also been staff changes in local churches so new relationships have to be built. Michael's target group age-wise is secondary school and that is what he is predominantly focused on. We are interested in young adults, however, there are many Diocesan activities for this age group and we do not wish to duplicate or be in competition with these. Our focus right now is consolidating what we have rather than trying to re-claim what has been lost.

John Bates mentioned that for the 18-25 age group the Faith Exploration programme (see Newsletter and/or website for details) is geared specifically towards those who want to learn more or develop their faith. Young adults are more than welcome to attend and join those looking to become Catholics.

5. Closing Remarks - John Bates

- The chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their interest. Our parish is important to all of us and, under the pastoral care of Fr Michael, we can all work together for its future.
- There will not be any dramatic changes to the Church next year because we will need it open and fully operative for our Centenary celebrations.
- The meeting was closed with a prayer and blessing by Fr Martin.