



Annual General Meeting MEETING MINUTES

27 September 2015

Meeting Details

Meeting Name:	Annual General Meeting
Chairman:	John Bates
Date:	Sunday, 27 th September 2015
Time:	3pm until 4:30pm
Location:	Hall

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.

28 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	Apologies
Kasia Misiewicz	Pastoral Activity Group	Apologies
Nan Jacobson	Social Activity Group	Apologies
Paul Rayner	Youth Activity Group	Yes
Michael Carney	Mass Representatives	Yes
Joan Barham	Secretary	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 & Comments from the Floor 	John Bates
5.	Closing Remarks	John Bates

Meeting Notes

1. Opening Remarks - John Bates

- Apologies were received in advance of the meeting from Tom & Jill Tipler and Peter Freeman.
- John Bates welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending our Parish AGM.
- He invited Fr Michael to give those present a blessing and thereafter John led everyone in praying the Centenary Prayer (*see inside back cover of Annual Report*).
- On behalf of the parish, John gave special thanks to the Carmelite Order for 100 years of faithful service, thanking them for their guidance and spirituality over the years. He also congratulated Fr Michael on his 40 years with the Carmelites which he celebrated on 8th September.
- John also thanked all those who gave up their time and energy to plan the Liturgical and social centenary celebrations which have been wonderful.
- He said that it should not escape anyone that the Church is undergoing some major works and asked everyone to join in saying a Prayer for the Renovation of Our Church (*see prayer card*).
- He then went on to say:
- "...The main drivers for these works are:
 - ❖ An electrical upgrade which will improve safety and so that we can get current certification.
 - ❖ The need to redo the roof which has leaked on occasions.
 - ❖ To improve the insulation to reduce our energy consumption and costs and improve our environmental impact.
 - ❖ Improved capacity to safely accommodate the large congregations at major events such as Christmas, Easter, First Communion and Confirmation (with an audio/visual link between the Church and the Parish Centre so that services can be relayed).
- I thank everyone who over the years have made suggestions and contributed to the development process which has informed our thinking and the decisions made but with a major project as you will appreciate compromises need to be made.
- In setting out the programme for renovation the main considerations were:
 - ❖ To celebrate our Centenary.
 - ❖ To keep within a budget that would not require asking parishioners to make extra contributions.
 - ❖ To make modifications to the Parish Centre and Hall so that we could use the Hall for Masses whilst the Parish Centre could continue to be used for events and to provide service to our usual hirers.
 - ❖ To be able to be back in the Church to celebrate Christmas.

- Last week the contractors assured us that we will be back in the Church by Christmas which is good news.
- More will be heard from John, the Chairman of our Finance Committee, which should address the questions regarding financing and the work commissioning process.
- When we return to the Church I am sure there will be many favourable comments.
- I am sure there will also be questions regarding improvements you might have expected. We can look to address these after the contractors have left the site about February or March and also how these can be financed.
- Thanks to all of those who have contributed to the change process and to everyone for all your patience during these changes.
- Finally thanks to all members of the Parish who give witness to their faith by serving our Parish in the various groups that:
 - ❖ Provide instruction to our youth passing on the joy of the Gospel,
 - ❖ Help for the disadvantaged,
 - ❖ Organisation of social events,
 - ❖ The raising of finance for our Church and for worthwhile causes,
 - ❖ The smooth running of our Parish, and
 - ❖ Also those individuals who give themselves, time, money and by prayer to support the Parish and others.
- I ask that you please reserve any questions until the end after both Fr Michael and John have spoken.
- May God Bless you all...”

2. Parish Priest’s Report - Fr Michael Spain

- Fr Michael’s update was as per the Carmelite Community section of the Annual Report, as follows:
 - “...A momentous year so far with the centenary, and much achieved. Firstly the Centenary Mass was truly memorable with the symbols and the resonance of song and Bishop Peter’s informality, the subsequent candle ceremony in the cemetery and the quality of the food, followed by our time capsule helped into the earth by the children. If you missed the later dancing, music and song you did miss out. I thought our revamped Parish Centre looked smashing.
 - It is hard to believe that the celebration is drawing to a close. I do hope we will have the Church re-opened by Christmas. There have been no setbacks thus far and at this stage it looks as if the project will be beneath the budget figure.
 - Notable happenings for us included the moving on of our Youth Co-Ordinator, Michael Ellul, the advent of portacabins, scaffolding, vans on to our property, the ease of transfer to our new Mass premises and the sadness of closing the Infant of Prague in Chalfont St Giles.
 - Along with our daily and weekend Liturgies, we celebrate the Lord’s sacramental presence throughout our journey of life. This last year we celebrated 45 baptisms and 7 marriages. We also had some very special Masses and liturgical events; 82 children made their First Holy Communion and 43 young people were confirmed. At the Easter Vigil 1 adult was baptised and, together with 3 others, was confirmed and received communion for the first time. Thank you to everyone involved in preparing and supporting the children, young people and adults on their journey of faith.
 - We had a fantastic response to our appeal to hand deliver the Centenary Census and Events Brochure letters. 88% of parishioners replied and we’ve updated our Parish Register accordingly. We currently have 1,205 families registered in the parish with a Catholic population of 2,984. Our average Sunday Mass attendance (including all churches) is 796...”

3. Finance Committee Report - John Forte

- Refer to the "*Finance Chairman Report to Parish AGM 2015*" 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.

4. Any Other Business - John Bates

Questions & Comments from the Floor

- **Charles Watters** – *Where is the reference to Nancy Deeves' £750,000 legacy in the financial statement?*

The financial statement is for the year ending 31st March 2015. Nancy's legacy comes into the current financial year, ending March 2016, as her legacy was received in June 2015.

- **Charles Watters** – *If that is the case, what is the £2,728 (on page 5 of the Annual Report) for?*

This figure represents maintenance work carried out to make the property sellable (for example, cleaning gutters, cutting hedges, etc). The first attempt at selling Crossways fell through.

- **Charles Watters** – *In the financial statement Establishment expenditure was down on 2014 and Personnel was up. What was the additional personnel cost?*

Expenditure regarding personnel is not really something to be debated at a public meeting. However, John Forte said he would be happy to ask Chris North to take Charles through the details and questioned why Charles needed this particular information.

- **Maurice Carkett** – *Now Chalfont St Giles has been closed down and deconsecrated. Why did we spend £1,000 on fitting new doors, only to have it closed down weeks later?*

The Church doors were in a dangerous and inoperative condition. Replacing the doors was essential maintenance which simply had to be done. At the point where the maintenance was carried out, it had not been decided that the Church would close. We put in a proposal that it was no longer viable to run that Church, however it was up to Bishop Peter to make the decision, and that process took a long time. It was the protection of our asset that needed to take place.

- **Maurice Carkett** – *Will anything from the sale of Chalfont St Giles come back to the parish?*

The sale of the site is being handled by the Diocese. John Bates has looked at various websites and concluded that it won't come to great sums of money. It will most likely be bought by developers or someone local who will want it as a development opportunity. It is not likely to achieve the price of the most expensive house on the road, most likely half that amount. The Diocese will receive a percentage of what is raised and we will get the rest – we think the Diocesan share will be 25%.

- **Maurice Carkett** – *Regarding the Church refurbishment – I am interested and concerned about the lighting. I would like to think there will be new lighting and that a lighting consultant will be used. The lights we have at the moment require two men to change a light bulb – surely this is a waste of time and money?*

The brief we gave was to make the lighting maintenance free, or at least maintenance friendly, as we don't want that either. Our requirement is for the lighting to be cost effective and, from point of view of energy consumption, energy efficient. We want the same level of lighting throughout the Church so that wherever you sit you can read your Missal. A consultant was employed and the contractors appointed HACL LIGHTING LIMITED to follow that brief and we are sure that what we want is what we are going to get. Fr Martin and John Forte were shown some light fittings and asked to choose from that selection.

- **Maurice Carkett** – *Provided three names to David Bentley regarding lighting suppliers. David said he contacted one. What happened with these suggestions?*

These details were passed on to the Diocese and they invited these contacts to quote for the business. The final selection of the lighting contractor was made by the Diocese.

- **Charles Watters** – *Aidan Lynch said at the Church refurbishment meeting that the Parish would have one month to decide about the lighting. Why hasn't this happened?*

Aidan Lynch does refer to "the Parish" and by that he means those he consults with on a regular basis – Fr Michael, Fr Martin, John Forte and John Bates. This is the process.

• **Charles Watters** – Aidan said at the meeting that there were items parishioners might like to discuss amongst themselves and this was one of those items. So the previous statement is not correct? It is correct. There is a very clear process being followed. On the same vein, Aidan announced that the colour of the Church would be blue and he shouldn't have really said that. We had intended to poll the Parish for their opinion. The Wedgewood Blue was selected on Philip Fowke's recommendation as it was the original colour of the church.

• **Charles Watters** – From a Health & Safety perspective, if there was a fire here in this building how would a person in a wheelchair exit?

They would exit the building using the most appropriate door with help of others. There are three exits from the Hall two on the side level to the floor which lead to grass and one at the entrance with a slope to hard standing. We were advised by the Diocese that if we wanted to put in another slope at the entrance to the Parish Centre we would need planning permission. We accept this is not an ideal situation but we can't do any better at this particular point in time.

• **Mary Cross** – How does Health & Safety view this?

The Hall has been approved for use for Mass with the necessary Health & Safety measures in place, including exits for wheelchair users.

• **Mary Cross** – What if a carer cannot evacuate a person in a wheelchair? What about independent wheelchair users? How do they get out in a fire?

Wheelchair users are not here by themselves. It is a serious consideration for the carer if they take responsibility for a wheelchair user if they themselves are incapacitated. If a carer cannot manage by themselves then they need someone else with them. Those using wheelchairs independently have three exits which can be used.

Mary Cross persisted in trying to resolve this issue. Janet Bridden responded from the floor by saying that we have been told these circumstances are temporary and that we should accept this and stop being negative. Mary Cross was annoyed at this comment saying it was despicable. Francoise Forster said there was no reason why Mary should have been spoken to like that.

Fr Michael then stood up saying that this is a happy parish and he didn't like what was happening. Last time it happened, at the church refurbishment meeting, a donor came along who was willing to pay for the Church carpet but, by the end of the meeting, they didn't want to. He doesn't like the squabbling and turning on one another. Nor does he appreciate the consistent attempts by some people to seek questions which cannot be fully answered, looking for discontent, finding bad stuff. This doesn't have a good aura and Fr Michael detests this.

• **John Bates** – We will look at providing a ramp to both the Parish Centre and the Priory in due course. We haven't got around to all these things yet as we have a very big building project underway and we have to focus on that. We are trying to keep to what Fr Michael has asked for and we do intend to look at doing more things in the future.

• **Mike Carney** – Suggested that if a wheelchair user arriving for Mass makes themselves known to the Welcomer or Mass Representative they would be aware and able to help in the event of an evacuation.

• **Gerry Brennan** – Most people will agree that we are doing our best and asked what all the fuss was about? It appears that people are just stirring things up. If we had an emergency no one would leave someone vulnerable or less able stuck in the building; people would carry someone if necessary.

• **Charles Watters** – It is extremely unfair to characterise a parish meeting where questions are asked in good faith as bickering.

Fr Michael stood up once again and reiterated what he'd said moments earlier. He observed that many people don't come to open meetings like this precisely because of what goes on. Enough was enough.

At this point the meeting descended into silence. After a moment or two, John Bates asked if there were any more comments or questions from the floor.

• **Joan Barham** (speaking as a parishioner, not secretary to the Parish Council) – Assumed that people present have read the entirety of the Annual Report. There are some amazing things going on in this parish, with people being generous with their time, energy and talents. We have had a tremendous centenary year thus far with some incredible moments. All the parish groups and volunteers are doing a fantastic job and making a real difference – this is what we are about here in St Joseph's. No one has commented today on any of this. We should be so proud of our parish and what we achieve.

- **Mike Carney** – *Surely it is up to Fr Michael if he wants a Parish Council? And a meeting such as this?* That is correct. It is mandatory to have a Finance Committee but there is no obligation on a Parish Priest to have either a council or an annual meeting. Fr Michael confirmed that he is happy to have both a Parish Council and an AGM and wishes this to continue.

- **Sister Christina** – Having lived and served in many parishes, her experience here in St Joseph's is that we do consult and are open in our communications. She highlighted the fact that it is not always easy to work within the challenges and constraints of the Diocese. She congratulated Fr Michael and his team, saying they have done a fantastic job. They have, and continue, to keep things afloat, despite everything that is going on. Well done!

- **Terry McDonnell** – *Is it possible to split the collection received through the plate versus that received by direct debit?*

We can identify the different types of donor within the parish and agree with Terry that it would be good if everyone could make their offering via a Direct Debit Mandate. However, we do have to be careful about confidentiality. Bearing this in mind, we will see if it might be possible to differentiate between these two types of offering in future financial reports.

- **Terry McDonnell** – *The most staggering figure in this report is that we have 1,205 families in the parish with a population of 2,984 Catholics, yet only 796 go to Mass. This is very poor – by how much has our Mass attendance gone down?*

There is a small decrease in Mass attendance from 2014 to 2015. Every October we undertake a Mass Count, facilitated by the Diocese, mandated by Rome. For us here in St Joseph's it inevitably falls over at least one, if not two half term weekends. This is reflected in our statistics. We anticipate that when we do the count this year our numbers will be significantly down as there are clearly not as many people attending Mass here whilst the Church is closed. Over the past few years the number of families in the parish and our Mass attendance has generally remained the same.

5. Closing Remarks - John Bates

- The chairman thanked everyone for enabling the meeting to finish in a timely manner, as a music group was due to arrive imminently to practice for 5:30pm Mass.
- The meeting was closed with Fr Michael leading everyone in saying the Parish Prayer (*see inside cover of Annual Report*).
- Refreshments were served after the meeting in the Parish Centre.