



# Annual General Meeting MEETING MINUTES

2 October 2016

## Meeting Details

Meeting Name:	Annual General Meeting
Chairman:	John Bates
Date:	Sunday, 2 <sup>nd</sup> October 2016
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.*

**36** 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	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"> <li>• Questions Tabled in Advance</li> <li>• Questions &amp; Comments from the Floor</li> </ul>	John Bates
5.	Closing Remarks	John Bates

## Meeting Notes

### 1. Opening Remarks - John Bates

- Apologies were received in advance of the meeting from Terri Forte.
- John Bates welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Fr Michael to say an opening prayer. Fr Michael led everyone in saying the Parish Prayer (*see inside cover of Annual Report*).
- The Parish Council consists of 12 members, 7 of which are elected by some 41 Working Groups within the parish. In addition to the Parish Priest, there is also, by appointment, a representative from the Carmelite Community, the person responsible for Health & Safety/Safeguarding, the Chairman of the Finance Committee and a secretary.
- The parish is not required to have a Parish Council; it is not required under Canon Law and neither, I have been informed, is the Catholic Church a democracy. We are all here to serve, one way or another.
- Thank you to all those who participate in our 41 Working Groups for all that they do in service to the parish. Those who are here to lead are also here to serve; and so we also thank Fr Michael, Fr Martin and Fr Maurice as well as anyone who assists them in their service to the Church.
- Christine Cornwell and Michael Carney are now retiring after some sterling work on the Parish Council. Thanks to both of you for your time, energy and commitment. Christine will be replaced as the Evangelisation representative by Sally Taylor. Mike will be replaced by Doreen Pooley for Mass Representatives. Thanks to them both for stepping forward.
- St Joseph's Church, although it was built and paid for by this parish, in fact belongs to the Diocese as does the Parish Centre/Hall. For any work undertaken over £5,000 it is the Diocese's responsibility for authorising works and expenditure. It is also responsible for engaging the contractors and paying the bills, albeit with our money. We still have some snagging issues as a result of the refurbishment which we are actively working on. John Forte will touch on these in his report but we will need money.
- The Diocese is responsible for sale of the Infant of Prague Church in Chalfont St Giles and will retain 25% percent of the proceeds. At this point in time, we do not know how much will be left within the parish.

### 2. Parish Priest's Report - Fr Michael Spain

- This time last year a tarpaulin was over the roof of the church. I feel the project went okay over the five months. However, we have got to a stage where the "nag" with us priests who hear our own voices and the congregation in the body of the church is that there is an issue with the echo. I feel down about this; this blemish or flaw in the way the sound resounds around the place. It seems to come from the right hand side of the ambo and it would be wonderful if we can address it or get around it somehow. It niggles me. We have some very good readers and even with no microphone you can hear them. It is a privilege to have good readers. The majority of us aren't, so we need whatever assistance we can get.

- My other niggle is disability access. Very pleasingly another person has come on board to finance the job that we want to do as regards disabled access.
- Legacies from Nancy Deeves and Harry Hancock enabled us to refurbish our church. I know that there is dormant money around.
- We heard this morning from Bishop Peter about this Cathedral Centre project. We didn't "tax" you or ask for money for our own church, I would love to see you supporting Bishop Peter and his project. Northampton Diocese would then have what we have had for years; a place to meet, a room to talk, a space to dance, facilities to hire out. We are privileged – I'm privileged to be here in charge of that.
- The Holy Door to my way of thinking has been a real blessing. If half of you here have done the "*Pilgrimage Through the Holy Door*" then well done. If there is someone who it has not appealed to, why not come to Northampton with us the week after next. Pilgrimage is an ancient tradition of our Church, not something a charismatic Pope has plucked out of the air. Down the centuries many people have journeyed to many places on pilgrimage and the pleasure and blessings around it are immense.
- For the people who have come here throughout the year, it has been a privilege to hear their confessions and see the Catholic Women's League welcoming and feeding them. There has been nothing negative about this at all and I express my gratitude to the people involved. It has been such a happy and pleasant experience because we have all worked together.
- I hope something for the future is that more people come to confession, or come into the church as if they like the church, or feel like it's their home, whilst retaining a sense of respect and awe in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. I thank God for our church, the Holy Door and all of you. People who come and affirm the Church and what is being done. It doesn't come easily to me to be a priest and get my duties done; it doesn't come easily to many to be Catholic.
- We appointed a new Youth Co-Ordinator, Isabel Fawcett, in December. She is a very pleasant addition to our parish with a placid and prayerful presence among us. I do hope she will be with us for some years to come; it seems that youth workers do tend to move on after what seems like a short time. It would please me deeply if she stays as she gets on well with everyone at St Joseph's and we appreciate her, so I hope she signs on for longer. Thanks to the Young Ministry Team – I didn't realise what goes on until I got involved! Together we are moving to a more positive and prayerful place. Isabel worries about the young people as much as you and I do and we are blessed to have her.
- Every committee is going okay and seems happy. Our 41 different groups are active and the annual report reflects that they are happy in their work, even if they need more help. I am pleased to be able to thank you all publicly. I might be remiss about saying thanks but I do feel gratitude to you all.
- Our sacramental preparation is delivered by a great group of catechists. We also have a bevy of people who help with catechesis at Children's Liturgy.
- So what about the legacy of the Jubilee Year of Mercy? We will have the closing ceremony for the Holy Door on 12 November. Bishop Peter is coming to say our Saturday evening Mass and it would be lovely to have a big crowd there. If you normally come to Mass on Sunday, why not come on that Saturday instead? Bishop Peter has made much of us here in St Joseph's and I feel it is a reward for the good infrastructure set up over our 101 year history. It felt to me that having the Holy Door was in recognition of that. I'm grateful to all those who went before me and who attracted their own bit of "flack" along the line; Fr John, Fr Tony, Fr Rapheal, Fr Stan as well as the many parishioners who did their bit. I'm grateful to them and conscious of them. Let us take a minute now to remember all those who have gone before us, especially those who have died in the last year.

*[There followed a minute's silence.]*

- I'm now going to appeal to the men. My dream is to have a few men work with me as part of the cleaning team. It's not going away, so it must be possible! Is there a few of you who will do that humble task? I hope I don't have to embarrass you as I did my parishioners in Nigeria; when people in the outstations were procrastinating, Fr Sylvester and myself went out with our spades and started to dig the foundations of the church ourselves. If no men join me, I'm still going out with my brush on a Thursday morning. I'm not paying for, and besides we don't have the money, to have the church cleaned.

- What a wonderful cycle the "4 Mikes on Bikes" had back in June. £8,421 was raised for the London & Slough Run. Fantastic and so worthwhile. A man came into the parish and spoke to myself and Malcolm and do you know what happened as a result? A brand new minibus for the charity. One little bit of effort which then gained impetus and look what happened.
- We hope to increase the amount of car parking spaces available and are working with neighbours, representatives of the local council and Buckinghamshire council on this.
- We don't have someone to head up the Events Team. If someone feels motivated about taking that on - please come forward.
- Our Carmelite Chapter takes place in May next year. You have until 1<sup>st</sup> May latest to write in with your note of displeasure about Carmelite priests!

### 3. Finance Committee Report - John Forte

- Refer to the "Finance Chairman Report to Parish AGM 2016" 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. The report also included "St Joseph's Refurbishment" which set out summary costs for the project as well as its sources of funding.
- John Bates thanked John Forte for a very comprehensive report.

### 4. Any Other Business - John Bates

#### **Questions Tabled in Advance**

Re: Members of the Parish Council

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- **Charles Watters** – *When are the Chairman and Finance Committee Chairman going to stand down and be replaced, both of whom have served well in excess of the maximum 6 consecutive years?*
- **Charles Watters** – *When are other Council members who have served in excess of the maximum 6 consecutive years going to stand down and be replaced?*

Two members of the Council are standing down and being replaced, as mentioned in Opening Remarks. There followed a brief discussion about two paragraphs within the Parish Council Constitution, as follows:

- ❖ **Section 6.1:** "All appointed/elected Council members (members) will serve for a period of three years, at the end of which, they may stand for a second term. No member will serve for more than two consecutive terms on the Council without a break of a 3-year term, at the end of which they may be reconsidered for re-appointment/election."
- ❖ **Section 1.1:** "According to the Canon Law of the Church, there is no Clerical or Legal obligation on the Parish Priest to constitute a Parish Council. The formation of such a body therefore, is voluntary and at the discretion of the Parish Priest."

It is entirely up to the incumbent parish priest, at any time, to decide whether to have a Parish Council in the first place and/or whether the Parish Council Constitution still stands.

When Fr Michael first arrived both John Bates (as Parish Council Chairman) and John Forte (as Finance Committee Chairman) tendered their resignation if he wished. He asked them both to remain in their respective positions.

Following the July Parish Council Meeting, Fr Michael re-appointed John Bates for a second term in both his roles as Chairman and as Health & Safety and Safeguarding representative. John Forte's current term of office runs until October 2017 and Fr Michael is very happy for him to continue.

**ACTION: John Bates to review and propose amendments paragraph 6.1 of the Parish Council Constitution.**

Please find overleaf a list of all those on the Parish Council, together with their role, whether they are appointed or elected, which term they are serving and when that term expires.

## Parish Council Re-Appointment/Elections

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Term/Expiry</b>
John Bates	Chairman	Appointed	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Term</i> November 2016
	Health & Safety and Safeguarding	Appointed	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Term</i> October 2016
Fr Michael Spain	Parish Priest	Appointed	<i>Chapter in May 2017</i> September 2017
Fr Martin McDonald	Carmelite Community	Appointed	<i>Chapter in May 2017</i> September 2017
John Forte	Finance Committee	Appointed	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Term</i> October 2017
	Vice Chairman	Elected ( <i>by Council</i> )	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Term</i> November 2016
Christine Cornwell	Evangelisation Activity Group	Elected	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Term</i> October 2016
Ros Burton	Liturgy & Church Activity Group	Elected	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Term</i> October 2018
Stephen Forster	Outreach Activity Group	Elected	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Term</i> October 2018
Kasia Misiewicz	Pastoral Activity Group	Elected	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Term</i> January 2017
Nan Jacobson	Social Activity Group	Elected	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Term</i> March 2017
Paul Rayner	Youth Activity Group	Elected	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Term</i> October 2017
Mike Carney	Mass Representatives	Elected	<i>Annual Term</i> September 2016
Joan Barham	Secretary	Appointed [No Vote]	<i>Subject to Carmelite Community approval.</i>

Re: Costs of Church Refurbishment

- **Charles Watters** – Can we please be provided with a breakdown of the "Site prelim/Admin figure" of £153,000?
- **Charles Watters** – Can we please be provided with a breakdown of the "Internal work (incl decorating)" figure of £100,000?
- **Charles Watters** – Can we please be provided with a figure for how much was paid for the supply and installation of the Lighting in the church?
- **Charles Watters** – Can we please be provided with a figure for how much was paid by way of fees/remuneration for their services to Challenge Management?

The headline figures are shown on page 12 of the Annual Report. For a detailed breakdown (such as available to us from the Diocese) it was suggested that Charles Watters meet with Chris North.

Charles said that the purpose of asking in advance was so that the detailed figures would be available at today's meeting for anyone who wants to know. John Forte replied saying that the detail was quite complicated, hence why the figures were summarised in the report. There is no reason why we can't share the information but in order to give you the detail you want it's a question of going through lengthy spreadsheets, hence the suggestion to meet with Chris.

John Forte asked Charles why he needed the information. In response Charles said that he was interested. John replied that he hesitated to ask people who are volunteers to give up time to settle Charles' curiosity. He reiterated that the Diocese organised and managed the project and paid the bills from our account but offered to share what information we had from the Diocese.

Chris North said he was happy to go through the numbers offline. He recalled that Challenge Management had a top figure of 8% profit.

***ACTION: Charles Watters to arrange meeting with Chris North to look at figures and then follow up with the Diocese.***

Re: Significant Problems with Sound Reproduction in the Church at St Joseph's

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• ***Charles Watters*** – *What assurance and commitment is there to resolve the problems with sound reproduction in the church at St Joseph's speedily and effectively now which have been readily apparent for the last 6 months so that this does not continue for several more months?*

There is nothing wrong with the sound installation. It has been checked, double checked and checked again. What is wrong is that the acoustics, altered by the refurbishment works, are causing a huge echo and this is what we have to try to resolve.

There is a big rigmarole to go through; 3-4 sound surveys have been done over the last 3-4 months. We want to get it right but we can't promise how long it will take because we are in the hands of others.

The microphone that is on the Lectern requires that those using it put in re-chargeable batteries. Sometimes, it is brought out for the first Mass and then left out/on so it fades during the 9am or 11am Masses. We are looking at another type of microphone to overcome this problem, but we are obviously trying to get the contractor to help us resolve this issue.

• ***Francoise Forster*** – *You can't separate the echo and the makeup of the church. The sound system should have been designed to accommodate the shape of the church. 1) Can we have an acoustics engineer to tell us what to do? 2) Before each Mass can someone check that the microphone is in place with a fully charged battery? This is a simple job but someone could be appointed for each Mass to do this.*

An experienced acoustics engineer has been in and done a survey voluntarily for free. We await the report but cannot put too much pressure on them as they are giving their services free of charge.

The microphone was supposed to pick up from 1m away and clearly it doesn't do that. We don't have the same problem with the head microphones that the priests use. We know that when two people go up to read one or other might be heard. Having someone check the microphone before Mass depends on what we end up with. There is a process at the moment whereby the readers or the priest sets out the microphone, but we might need to change that once we know what's happening going forward.

Fr Martin said that the batteries for the microphone only last 5 hours. He does the best he can to keep it going; with one set charging whilst the others are in use. A 5 hour life-span isn't really that long. Also some people leave it on after Mass and don't switch it off.

• *Please can we have microphone for tall and short people? Having a microphone with a goose neck so that it can be adjusted to readers' height could help improve things.*

This is a good suggestion. At the moment we are currently trying to get the contractor to accept responsibility and resolve the issues through them in the first instance.

It was suggested we get more re-chargeable batteries and set up another charging station. It was also proposed that we get readers to practice with the microphone. Fr Martin said that he is planning a session with Readers and Eucharistic Ministers and will cover these points then.

Robert Barham observed that sound is one of the most difficult things there is. He recommended that when someone comes to address the sound that they attend Mass so they understand what the sound

level in the church is. He also noted his own experience of the level of noise coming from the congregation and pointed out that some of the best concert halls in the country have not got it right.

John Forte said that the Diocese told him that an acoustic survey would have cost between £2-3k. For anything under guarantee, such as the sound system, we are relying on the man who runs the project at the Diocese to sort things out. Part of the problem is that we can only work at the Diocese's rate of operation.

- **Stephen Forster** – *Why are we thanking Diocese for their help (reference Finance Chairman's Report)? We are only getting hassle and lack of performance?*

To be honest, despite the issues we are fortunate that that we've done the work and they managed it, especially given the recent downpour. Looking at the project in its totality, the sound was £75k, which is a small portion of the overall cost; however it is a significant problem which we are trying our best to sort out. We are bound to follow the established process that we have to get it resolved. The Diocese is reluctant to take official action against the contractors even though that might be what needs to happen.

- **Brian O'Hanlon** – *Is there a retention figure?*

Yes. 5% has been held as retention. There is sufficient held in the retention to cover the snagging list and maybe a little bit more. The contractors won't be paid in full until there is sign-off from the project team here. We have said that no retention money should be released until repairs have been done to our satisfaction. If it comes to it, we will get someone else to do the work and pay for it out of the retention held. We don't know exactly what the snagging list will cost; our biggest issue is the acoustics and sound.

We have had people in to assess First Committee Room and received some recommendations. We hope we can finance this and finally sort out the acoustics problem in there. We will do the same with the church but it will be more difficult.

- **Charles Watters** – *Why didn't we appoint an acoustic engineer at the beginning of the project?*

We were not involved in that aspect of the project. The Diocese managed the project and engaged the contractors. We absolutely mentioned the acoustics at beginning of project as we were going to modify aspects of the church. The answer given at the time was that whatever was going to happen inside the church would improve the situation because we were insulating the roof, etc. An acoustic survey could not be done until the works were completed. So we have had to wait. We could see Week 1 back in the church that there was a problem when the building was half or less than half empty. When we asked for a survey the response was that if you want to pay for a survey it will cost £2-3k. So it wasn't in our hands at that point to do anything, in fact we were asked to "lay off" about it. Furthermore, we have been told that if we interfere with what has been done it will invalidate any guarantees, so we have to follow the process laid down.

Robert Barham offered a simple suggestion that doesn't involve any cost. He proposed that anyone who reads in church comes down and stands at the Lectern and tries out the microphone with someone else sitting in the church. Some people you will hear clearly and some you won't, but by having this practice it might highlight a few improvements that might help – Speak up. Slow down. Speak clearly.

**ACTION: Fr Martin to explore this suggestion and arrange session(s) for readers.**

- **Stephen Forster** – *Does the Bishop realise the incompetence of some of his people? Does he realise what we are putting up week on week?*

We are pressing the Finance & Property Department and have clearly and repeatedly pointed out what we are not happy with. Hugh Davies agrees that our outstanding works have to be done; maybe they are having problems with their contractors. We are sure our experience will be mentioned at the various committees in the Diocese.

- **Rosemary Duncombe** – *Moved here in 1958 and seen the parish grow. Think we have a lovely church and when all these wrinkles are ironed out it will be a beautiful church.*

Our church serves the purpose it exists for: somewhere we can worship God. If we get the predicted weather this winter of two months of snow, we will be ever so grateful we've got the new roof in place.

### **Questions & Comments from the Floor**

- **Charles Watters** – *When will the notice board in the church be put back up? The Friendship Club used to have a notice on there as it was a good way to reach out to people.*

Yes there is a plan to erect a notice board somewhere in the church. There are a few other notices that should also be posted. We will put one up as soon as we can.

- **Tom Tipler** – Been in the parish since 1966. Think the church is a wonderful improvement although the sound difficulties are regrettable. Thanked everyone for their hard, patient work under what are trying conditions.
- **Peter Freeman** – Shared three opinions about the Oratory. 1) For Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, he is critical of where the receptacle is placed as it is below head height on the back wall and partially obscured by the Lectern. He feels it should be in a Monstrance on the altar. 2) He considers the receptacle (The Burning Bush) as “low tat” and would be happy if it was consumed by real flames. 3) He finds the crucifix in the Oratory less than inspirational and feels it does not conform to our traditions in any shape or way whatsoever.
- **Mike Carney** – *Do you have any update on vocations, particularly with the Carmelites?*  
There is one Carmelite novice who has gone to Spain. Currently there is no novitiate in England or Ireland and there is no one else in the pipeline that we are aware of.
- **John Bates** – Reminded everyone present about the Soup Lunch on Friday in aid of CAFOD. All are welcome.

### **5. Closing Remarks - John Bates**

- The chairman thanked everyone for attending and participating in the meeting.
- The meeting was closed with a prayer and a blessing by Fr Michael.
- Refreshments were served after the meeting.