



Annual General Meeting MEETING MINUTES

7 October 2018

Meeting Details

Meeting Name:	Annual General Meeting
Chairman:	John Bates
Date:	Sunday, 7 th October 2018
Time:	3pm until 4pm
Location:	First Committee Room

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.

38 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 Bob Davies	Carmelite Community	Apologies
Kevin Murphy	Finance Committee	Yes
Sally Taylor	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	Yes
Kathy Slattery	Youth Activity Group	Apologies
Doreen Pooley	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	Kevin Murphy
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

- John Bates welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Apologies were received from Fr Bob Davies, Kasia Misiewicz and Kathy Slattery.
- John thanked those present for attending and showing their commitment to the parish. He thanked all those individuals and organisations which are mentioned in the annual report, who have committed themselves over the past year in developing our parish which is a wonderful thing for all of us. He expressed gratitude to those who support development of the faith in our community, from children through to adults, as well as to those groups who help the wider community with practical help, money and organisations such as CAFOD. He commented on what a wonderful soup lunch we had for Family Fast Day which made a tremendous amount of money for CAFOD. Thank you all for your commitment.
- John then handed over to Fr Michael who said an opening prayer.

2. Parish Priest's Report - Fr Michael Spain

- I find myself at this time of year looking back and looking forward. I find myself almost living in the present all of the time. I think of CAFOD and wonder just how so many can stay away from the soup lunch? I console myself by saying that they must have nicer soup at home! I did try six of the seven soups on offer and they were gorgeous. Well done to everyone – all the good things that go into that, the ingredients, the love that is there and the generosity of coming along and making a donation. I learned two things this morning. 1) Some of the money that CAFOD raises will be shared with the people who have suffered as a result of the tsunami in Indonesia. It is lovely to think that CAFOD is joining up with the wider charitable network. 2) In the Philippine Islands where there have been typhoons and great loss of life, CAFOD is involved in a programme to sow trees, so that the recent typhoon means that there was less people killed than before – long term things are happening.
- Last week we had an appeal by the SVP which is another organisation that is about teamwork; reaching out to those who are lonely or who need material help. They are there in the thick of it and it would be wonderful if we got two more volunteers for our parish group this year. Not everyone has the wherewithal to do it – to sit with someone who is unhappy or life hasn't been good to – and to open yourself up to that. The way the SVP works together astounds me and the sheer interest they have in people who are down on their luck or feeling sorry for themselves.
- There are around 40 groups and I counted 23 contributors to the annual report. That is a huge volume of people trying to sum up what they have been doing during the year. One of the things that hit me most was something I shared with eight parishioners. It was truly a privilege to go to Adoremus. The ladies in the group have been pushing me a little about what's next, and that's the reason why I chose them – I knew they would keep me on my toes! I felt the best thing was to share a seven minute video of Bishop Barron with you about his missionary journey...let's see where it goes.

- Bishop Barron's Missionary Journey to England – see <https://youtu.be/0Tglyak23wc>.
- It is an extraordinary feeling to come away from something like that feeling much smaller but at the same time feeling stronger inside and more determined to spread whatever happened and the goodness and sense of mission that is there. The central thing that will come out of the Adoremus conference is to bring people to a deep realisation that Christ Jesus is at the centre of what we do.
- Fr Michael then invited everyone to recite the prayer at the back of the annual report together:

Christ has no body now, but yours.
 No hands, no feet on earth, but yours.
 Yours are the eyes through which Christ looks compassion into the world.
 Yours are the feet with which Christ walks to do good.
 Yours are the hands with which Christ blesses the world.

St Teresa of Avila

3. Finance Committee Report - Kevin Murphy

- 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.
- First of all this year has been one where our finances are on the plus side. I won't go through the whole report and accounts as I'm sure that you've read them.
- We showed operating profit for the year to March 2018 of some £46,000 and expenditure throughout the whole year was £250,000. Our income comes from various sources – Events, 200 Club, Furniture Market, Parish Day – where lots of people give up lots of time and produce wonderful income for the parish and we are very much indebted to those people. On the outgoings side, our maintenance costs are very similar to last year at just over £20,000. Following the church refurbishment which took place there are still problems with our new roof. It has been an ongoing issue for us and the Diocese. The Diocese is currently in the process of coming up with a refurbishment plan to fix the things that are wrong with the roof. We have our own estimate in the pipeline as well, so when the Diocese comes up with its figure we can make a comparison between the two.
- There are various projects that we have in hand, if we can raise the money for them. The Chancery Chapel and Our Lady Altar (mosaics and gold leaf) are in need of specialised repair and cleaning. The Diocese did get an estimate for this work and it was extremely expensive; well over £50,000 without a contractor to run the job. We were under the impression that we were obliged to do this work, but that is not the case. Whilst we do want to preserve such beautiful parts of our church it may well be that other items will come up which the parish feels are more important for us to deal with.
- We are not proceeding with any huge works on the Hall or Parish Centre as we do not have the funds to do it. If we did decide to go for that, then we will need a very large fundraising effort. In the meantime, there are works to the building which do need to be completed in order to keep it running as a viable part of the parish (for example, the toilets need a complete overhaul).
- The cemetery wall and gate are in the process of being built. Hopefully that will be done in good time for Christmas. The new Memorial Wall will incorporate 114 double vaults, which can contain two urns. The size of each one is 400mm x 400mm (Kevin referred those present to the sample). We have not yet decided on the style of print. We are going to try to ensure that all the fronts are exactly the same, i.e. same print and same content (name, date of birth, date of death, RIP). We hope that when the wall is finished it will be a place where people can go and it will be pleasing on the eye. Hopefully by that time the cemetery itself will be pleasing on the eye as well – there are several stones which are leaning and dangerous and that is a project coming up, to see if we can change the format of the cemetery where we have flat stones for all the graves and in that way we will be able to maintain the cemetery and keep it in good state of repair. This is another job for the future.
- The side entrance for the less able has been completed and seems to be working well.

- The sale of the Infant of Prague in Chalfont St Giles has been delayed because the Diocese wanted to get a "change of use". The planners were insisting that they marketed the property as premises to be used by the local community. It is worth more as a residential site. Planning has now been given for residential, although the Diocese has not changed the sign to reflect this. Hopefully a sale will take place in the not too distant future.
- We are aware that the sound in the main church is still not what we would have expected after the refurbishment works were completed. We did have some sound panels installed which improved it slightly but know that several people feel that the echo and the noise in the church is simply not what it should be so that everybody can hear what is being said. We have had a training exercise for readers to help with voice projection, etc. Kevin said that as someone who wears a hearing aid the echo can be difficult, especially if one sits further back. We have had estimates for improving the sound quality but they would so change the whole look of church interior (for example, hanging panels) it wasn't greeted with wholehearted approval. Fr Bob is currently investigating an audio/visual system for the church and the company looking at this with him commented that our speakers were not the best – different speakers at different angles might help the situation. The research to improve the sound system continues to be a work in progress – really not sure what the answer is yet.
- Gift Aid is such an important income for the parish that we really would like everyone to be signed up to it if possible. It is up to us to spread the word and try to get everyone involved. Ditto regarding the 200 Club and it will have much bigger prizes if we can get people to join up.
- Kevin thanked John Forte for all his work as head of the Finance Committee and also Chris North for all his work over the past three years as treasurer.

4. Any Other Business - John Bates

Questions Tabled in Advance

There were no questions tabled in advance of the meeting.

Questions & Comments from the Floor

- **Francoise Forster** – *Two major concerns when it comes to projects and work around the church. One concerns the disabled; we are bound by law to reach certain standards to make the church more accessible to those with all sorts of disabilities. There was a report submitted which should be dealt with in accordance with the law. We have an obligation and, as Christians, we want to be as welcoming as we can to disabled people, whether from this parish or not. We need to cater for all the disabled, not only those of the parish. There has been a report brought in which should be implemented. We are bound by law, if only because we have already made improvements to the church and we are about to bring about more to the cemetery and so forth. Is it going to be done and when? The second concern is the acoustic paneling. I believe there is one answer only, which has also been given by an expert, and that is to cover it with panels.*

Kevin responded saying that as far as disabled entrance is concerned, before we completed the door at the side we invited someone from the local council in that department to come around and tell us if we were doing the right things. He looked around the whole of the church and at the fire exits, etc and he thought we were well ahead of the game.

Francoise – We also had a consultant, someone who is disabled himself, look around the church and he gave a whole list of things which haven't been given effect.

John stated that, as far as he was aware, the only things outstanding from that report are the extension of the handrails at the entrances of the church and the highlighting of all the places where the level changes with a colour flashing. Another aspect was to make the doors more easily opened by disabled people and, subsequent to that report, this recent inspection by the local authority said they were satisfied with the internal doors on the disabled entrance. We will re-look at the report next committee meeting and see if there is anything else we need to do.

Francoise – Highlighted that between disabled parking spaces there is normally extra room to allow people open the door and get in and out of their car. This isn't the case with our spaces.

John agreed with Françoise that this space was needed and should be marked out. We will re-visit this and the spaces will be re-marked accordingly.

Françoise – Asked that the rest of the report be fully implemented.

John replied that the rest of the report will be implemented as far as is practicable, in compliance with what we have been told by the local authority. This will be done as soon as we can, subject to the funds being available. Some work has been done to facilitate disabled entry to Parish Centre. As and when we improve the entrance, a permanent solution regarding disabled access can be put in place. As Kevin has already stated, we hope to address the lack of disabled toilets in the building in the near future.

Stephen Forster – Why are we putting a lychgate up in the cemetery? It is an improvement, but is decorative, hardly an essential?

John said that the lychgate is not going up at the moment because we haven't got planning permission for it. The new gate being put at the side is so that disabled people can access the rear of the cemetery. Kevin added that the lychgate is for the front of the cemetery, where you enter from the car park. Although we didn't need planning permission for the wall, we did need it for the gate.

Stephen – It is really essential to have an arch to go under? If it isn't essential then it is an improvement and we should consider what happens to someone in a wheelchair attending a function in the Hall or Parish Centre with no disabled toilet.

Kevin agreed with Stephen, saying that we should have disabled toilets in the Parish Centre/Hall.

Stephen – Progress on these matters has been very disappointing. It either reflects on the management by the parish or by the Diocese. The parish is active in so many respects and looking at the annual report there is a lot of good going on. However, when it comes to basic management of our premises we are not getting good value for money.

Kevin said that we have not spent much money on the Parish Centre/Hall in recent years and it is acknowledged that because we are not having a new building at the moment that we do need to spend money on it. The toilets and disabled toilets will be a priority.

- **Peter Freeman** – *Regarding the disabled entrance, it would be helpful if the button worked. If you are bringing a handicapped person into church and there are just two of you, there is a danger that the door closes behind you and propels the person forward. Richard Brumby said it was working a week or two ago, but Peter said it wasn't working this morning.*

John Bates thanked Peter for bringing the issue to our attention and asked David Bentley to investigate the problem straightaway.

Whilst the meeting carried on, David checked the door and subsequently discovered that the day/night switch was set incorrectly. He adjusted the setting and the door is now working perfectly. The clergy are responsible for opening and locking the church so they need to take care to ensure the door is set to the correct position.

ACTION: Fr Michael to ensure clergy are aware of correct settings for opening/locking door.

- **Charles Watters** – *At the AGM in 2016 I asked when the two large notice boards (which have always been in place next to the holy water fonts by the main entrance) would be re-instated. It was noted in the minutes that this would be addressed and rectified. These boards are important means of communication to parishioners...two years later they have not been reinstated – when will this happen?*

John Bates replied saying he couldn't answer the question. Will take the point and discuss at the next finance meeting.

ACTION: John Bates to put notice boards on agenda for discussion at next finance meeting.

- **Charles Watters** – *We have the detail on page 7 of the annual report of the response from parishioners to the consultation about the Hall and Parish Centre. How many responded? How many were in favour of each option A, B or C? What other suggestions were made?*

John Bates could not recall the numbers off hand. Kevin responded saying it was a terribly mixed bunch of replies, numbering in the region of 25-28. Some wanted the whole big project to go ahead, others thought it was a waste of money and others thought we should do bits and pieces as required. The parish did not come back with a strong preference for any of the options.

- **Charles Watters** – *Do we have a projected figure for how much would be raised from the sale of the Infant of Prague?*

Kevin stated that we do not have an accurate estimate. During the last discussion with the Diocese, they thought they would put it up for around £500,000.

Charles – Will 75% come back to the parish?

Kevin confirmed this.

Charles – Could we earmark a good proportion of this money for urgent works?

Kevin replied saying he hoped this would be the case. Whether it does sell for that figure is another matter, we will have to wait and see. It is being handled by the Diocese.

- **Charles Watters** – *Can you highlight what the issues are with the roof as mentioned earlier?*

Malcolm Johnstone has been dealing with that. Every fifth row of tiles should be firmly nailed through and apparently that has not happened in all cases. Various leakages have been found because pipes were not connected properly or the tops of walls were not done properly. The Diocese is currently providing us with an estimate to come and do the repairs.

Charles – Is the contractor who was engaged not responsible for rectifying the situation?

It would appear the contractor is not in a position to do so. Someone asked who chose the contractor and Kevin replied that it was the Diocese – the whole operation was run by the Diocese.

- **Charles Watters** – *Looking at page 8 on the accounts, the Repository shows £7k expenditure and £4.5k income. Does that imply a £2.5k loss?*

Chris North responded. It does imply that from a legalistic point of view. It is difficult to apportion between repository, bookshop and resources and doubt this is the true case. Someone else highlighted that there will be unsold stock remaining.

- **Charles Watters** – *With regards to Parish Day, what were the figures for the amounts raised this year and last year?*

John stated that the amount raised this year, including the raffle, was in the region of £10,000 and the amount raised last year was a similar amount. There are a few expenses pending for this year but we do not expect it to dramatically change the money raised.

- **Charles Watters** – *When the urgent works to church hall and centre are looked at, can we also look at the kitchen because it has been in need of an upgrade for a long time and people struggle in there?*

John replied saying that there are two main priorities for the building, namely the kitchen and the toilets but not necessarily in that order as it depends on the type of work and how much it costs.

- **Amedeo Reale** – *At the moment, parking is chaotic on a Saturday evening. There was a sign advising to park in the school but don't think we can because having been up there the gates are locked?*

John Bates said we were unaware of this problem on a Saturday; we do use the school for overflow car parking on a Sunday. We will have a look at this. We now have someone with a key to the school gate; we need to establish if we need the gate opened on a Saturday and if that is practical and/or feasible.

Amedeo – It was, at one time, mooted that the grass next to the Furniture Market would be used as a car park and I believe the residents complained. Has anything further happened about finding additional car parking within the grounds?

John said we have two meetings over the last six months with the residents. We don't believe they have an issue with car parking facilities next to the Furniture Market or between the Cemetery and the trees. Those that we have spoken to are generally in favour of that going ahead. It will, of course, cost and there will be work required to level the space and reinforce the ground – this won't come cheap. Unfortunately our list of things to do doesn't diminish and we don't have the money for doing everything that we would like to do. Doreen Pooley, the 5:30pm Mass Representative, said this was the first time she was aware of the parking issues at this Mass and will keep an eye on things. John said that the residents from the road have spoken about yellow lines, canvassing where they would go and how far they would extend as well as wondering whether the local authority would actually put them down. No consensus has as yet been found. We appreciate the issue raised and thanks for bringing it to our attention.

ACTION: John Bates to assess Saturday evening parking situation and determine whether overflow car parking can be provided at the school if required.

- **Richard Cottle** – Responding to comments about the sound quality in the church as raised here today and in the report. I am involved in music and know a little bit about sound. I am not an acoustician but I can tell you simply that it is not "rocket science". It is like a school gymnasium, you have flat, huge walls and ceilings that are reflective, so you are getting a 4-5 second reverb time. The refurbishment looks beautiful, but if you remember before we had those old fashioned speckled tiles on the underside of the ceiling which dampened the sound. Now without those you have a shiny, reflective surface that makes the sound bounce around. Some of you may have visited cathedrals or big venues that have flags, banners, etc hanging down – these are decorative but they have an acoustic property which helps deaden the sound. We can do something like hanging panels but it would spoil the beautiful look of the church and that's already been highlighted. There is a simple alternative which is to replace those tiles on the ceiling with acoustic panels – this is expensive but wouldn't spoil the look of the church. The sound panels which have been put up on the side of the church are not sufficiently effective. Any new audio/visual system simply won't work – you won't hear it, it will sound the same as there won't be any change to the acoustic environment. Don't think that changing or adjusting the speakers will have any effect.

Kevin stressed that one of things holding us up on making decisions on this is getting the roof repaired. We want to be sure that the repairs to the roof are finalised before we start doing anything to the ceiling. Richard agreed, suggesting that if we don't want hanging banners then we need to get something on those hard, shiny surfaces.

Stephen – Of all the people in the room, Richard is the most experienced on this topic, so why isn't he involved in the team solving this problem? The sooner this one is solved the better.

John reiterated what Kevin had said about the roof. Everyone involved accepts that we have to do something with the internal ceiling but there is no point in doing that if we are at risk of damage due to leaks, etc. Richard said he was more than happy to help in whatever capacity he can. Kevin said he would welcome any expert advice.

Eileen de Vletter highlighted that the First Committee Room was a case in point. We had to put panels on the ceiling in here because it was uncomfortable for all users.

John agreed, saying it was accepted by most people that we have to do something but went back to his previous point about what stage we effect the remedial work.

- **Charles Watters** – In light of this discussion, what timescale are we looking at in trying to effect the necessary work to the roof? As it is discussed more and more, it seems more significant and potentially damaging. Do you have a sense of timescale for resolving it?

Kevin said no, there is no timescale. I have a sense of frustration. It is not in my hands, this is down to the Diocese. The latest is that their surveyor has been around and done a report. They have acted on that report and got an estimate. They have also got an estimate for the scaffolding and they are now consulting their solicitors. Kevin chases them constantly – via phone or email on a regular basis.

- **Mike Carney** – *Is it not the case that whilst it is our church, the church belongs to the diocese?*

Kevin answered that it is registered in name of diocese (as per the deeds) but it is a parish asset.

Mike – But the control of the building, the asset, is with the Diocese?

Kevin confirmed that doing any works, over a fairly minimal figure, must have Diocese approval. So we have no control even though we provide the funds for the refurbishment to take place. John went on to highlight some of the challenges we have had working with the Diocese. The Trustees are aware and there is nothing we can do to make it move faster. If we interfere or try to go around what the Diocese is doing that could invalidate anything agreed between the Diocese, their insurers and/or contractors.

- **Charles Watters** – *Do you have a ballpark figure from the surveyor of what the repairs could cost?*

Kevin said their surveyor hasn't come back to us yet with a figure. We have an idea that it might be in the region of £25,000.

- **John Forte** – In these meetings people are quick to criticize. People are not so quick to say thank you to the many volunteers that do so much work for the parish. Without them we would be very poorly off indeed. They don't get enough appreciation from anybody. We have a fantastic report here; it has taken a lot of effort to compile that report so thanks to Joan Barham for producing the report.

5. Closing Remarks - John Bates

- In conclusion, I was pleased to hear what Bishop Barron said on the video about "christianising" society. I think what we can say that what we see in our annual report shows that this parish is firmly involved in those types of activities.
- Yes we have our failings, some of which we've heard about today, but I think this parish is a credit to everyone here and everyone who is a member of it for the way they perform and the way they support the outside community.
- Thank you very much for attending today.