

MINUTES OF EFFINGHAM AND FETCHAM ANNUAL PARISH REVIEW

Held at St Alphege Hall Effingham on Monday 4th December 2023 – 7.30pm.

Approx. 35 parishioners attended. Deacon Ian Wells in the Chair. Minutes by Rosann Miller.

1. Opening prayer and introduction by Deacon Ian Wells.

2. Fr Stephen Overview and Prospect for Parish –

Fr S acknowledged the uncertainty around his departure which will be around 10th January 2024 and reassured that information about new Parish Priest will be available soon. Fr S aware of the significant effect of change on our parish, he described how privileged he felt to be here and his sadness at leaving. However he is confident that our parish community which is strong and has great faith and love will do well.

Fr S summarised the key points from the recent Parish team away day with catechists at Ladywell convent in Godalming. Key priorities for Parish, under the themes of Parish and Worship, Formation and Mission included importance of involving young people, new model for Confirmation programme, linking with other parishes, improved Website and growth of social and pastoral care teams. Fr S also spoke about the new Pastoral Plan for Diocese which is due to be published and implemented in 2024 and that our new Parish Priest will guide us through this stage. Fr S stressed the importance of ongoing prayer, the need to keep pace with a changing world and how it is everyone's responsibility to spread the Message of God. Fr S then summarised some parish highlights of the past year including the successful Sycamore programme. Mass attendance is around 238 every weekend with 140 devices accessing the live streaming – probably representing about 200 people.

Fr S ended with some specific words of thanks –

Michael and Mary Agius for re-instigating the Eucharistic Adoration

Michael Bray and Rosann Miller for work on GDPR

Deacon Ian for all support

Frances Riches for completing her term of office on the Parish Team

Brendan Kelly for previous role as treasurer

Jean Wells for catechesis with older children

Christine Fahey for follow up sessions from Sycamore

Claire Fernandes and Kamila Smith for Children's Liturgy

Churches Together Team incl. Martin Hollins, Keith Walker and Marian Cutler

Tony Farino for service to Altar Servers Team

Catering team and Jo Matthews with Social Team

Fr S also expressed appreciation for all others involved in parish life e.g. help with music, linen, flowers etc.

Deacon Ian reminded people that there would be an opportunity to thank Father Stephen on 7th January 2024 with Mass and lunch reception.

3. Role and Membership of the Parish Team – Ben Kopieczek

BK described how the Parish Team including himself, Rosann Miller, Mary Sherrington and Kamila Smith have been selected by Fr Stephen, not elected by parish, in order to support Father by providing a sounding board for any ideas, decisions and plans for parish. BK stressed that this team is not the parish organising team for social events.

4. Finances – Tony Dowsett

Refer to comprehensive handouts of parish accounts which were available at meeting for review. TD explained some key points of the income and expenditure over last year, including how the Gift Aid Small Donation Scheme would need to be reviewed soon for tax purposes, Hall lettings are returning to pre covid levels, the cost of replacing photocopier and the donation to the South Sudan project. TD also highlighted that expenditure is lower than previous year, funds are available and stressed importance of submitting claims for expenses for parish events.

5. Buildings & Maintenance; Health and Safety – Alan Miller

Refer to detailed maintenance report. AM in charge of maintenance and works closely with Chris Speirs who has responsibility for Health and Safety. AM listed some key aspects of his role including replacement of carpet and floors, electrical, gas and fire safety, risk assessments for works, miscellaneous repairs and overseeing gardening contract. AM ended by asking for volunteer assistance e.g. for enabling access to premises and escorting contractors.

Deacon Ian expressed particular gratitude to Alan and Chris for their hard work.

6. Safeguarding – Graham Paulson

Graham introduced himself as Parish Safeguarding Representative, he liaises closely with diocesan safeguarding team and key aspects of his role are ensuring that DBS checks are carried out and updating safeguarding training. There have not been any safeguarding concerns reported this year, but GP stressed the importance of continued vigilance and the need to report any issues. Recent initiatives included having a register for altar servers in each church, new code of conduct for children's liturgy team with parental consent forms and ensuring that all volunteer drivers are DBS checked.

Fr Stephen thanked Graham for all his work and the importance of achieving Best Practice and ensuring that all young people and vulnerable adults are kept safe. Fr S also stressed that Graham and/or the Diocese should be contacted with any issues and that the police should be called if there was an immediate and serious concern.

7. Catechesis –

- a. Eileen Lavan on First Holy Communion Preparation – together with Christine Fahey and Frances Riches, Eileen described the very successful programme with 19 children this year, she demonstrated the books they use and the organisation of classes based in church with several activities and parental participation. EL mentioned that zoom meetings with parents worked particularly well.

Deacon Ian added that the involvement with the Grandparents Group as prayer partners was an initiative that had been adopted by the Diocese as best practice.

- b. Mary Sherrington – Confirmation Programme – team headed by Annette Turner and also included Janet Norris and Rosann Miller. Preparation occurs 2 yearly, and this year the parish prepared 8 young people for confirmation including 3 from Ashtead parish. Mary explained the programme and format, the retreats worked particularly well and the celebration at Arundel Cathedral was a special event. However MS noted that the team are now stepping down and the way forward is to use different models and combine with other parishes as our numbers are unsustainably too low. The team agree that a new model is needed and will discuss with new parish priest.

8. South Sudan Parish Project – Deacon Ian and Jean Wells

Jean gave brief summary of project, the connection with Fr Morris and the commitment of the parish in sharing financial resources with the Christ the King School in South Sudan. Jean explained the 3 key objectives of fund raising which were to provide desks and chairs, to enable education and to support a women's refuge. She confirmed that all money donated is transferred safely through a system approved by diocese and expressed gratitude for the overwhelming generous response from the parish with over £6000 raised to support education, and the support of the financial committee.

9. Parish Care Team – Jim Lyons

JL described positive recent formation of pastoral team with main purpose to visit parishioners in our community. Preparation for administering Eucharist to sick and housebound included consideration of medical and personal needs. JL is planning for future links with prison chaplaincy.

Marian Cutler also proposed idea of starting a system for parishioners who need lifts for Mass and Parish events. Volunteer Drivers are asked to sign up, and will need to have DBS checks.

Deacon Ian expressed concern about loneliness of some people in society and importance of enabling contact.

10. New Evangelisation – Graham Paulson

Graham gave examples of successful events since the New Evangelisation initiative was launched at the end of 2021. These included parish walks, night of light, Golf Days and new Young Men's group. Sycamore especially was a great success, well attended with good organisation, popular Fr Stephen Wang videos and healthy discussion. Graham expressed thanks to the catering team (e.g. Rosann, Mary S and Jo Bray), the people setting up and clearing away, the welcomers – Michael Bray and Frances Riches and especially Fr Stephen for his encouragement and who will be greatly missed. Graham asked for ongoing prayers for Evangelisation and Deacon Ian thanked Graham for this great initiative and agreed the absolute importance of Evangelisation.

11. Update on Synod – Michael Bray

Michael reminded parishioners that there have been follow up synod developments since our original meetings 2 years ago and encouraged people to access the latest

report and summary using links in emails and newsletter. MB stressed that the future of the Church is up to all of us and is being discussed in the Vatican. In the New Year the parish could look at the ways of responding to the Pope's Mission with the emphasis on the laity to do more.

12. Any Other Business

Mary Agius confirmed with Marian Cutler that there will be a list of people who need lifts, her number will be in newsletter and a pilot scheme will run in the new year.

Wendy Sampson asked if the names of readers could be in newsletter as a weekly helpful reminder. Fr Stephen and Deacon Ian will consider this idea.

13. Closing Prayer and Blessing – Fr Stephen.