

**SACRED HEART PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024 in the Youth Room**  
**MINUTES**

<p><b>1. Welcome, opening prayer and apologies</b></p> <p>Primavera opened the meeting in prayer at 8.03pm.</p> <p>Present were: Ruth Naylor (Chair), Rachel Purvis, Jude Mariadoss, Siobhan Heffron, Christopher Woodward (for the Finance Committee), Sr Dorothy Perrott, Maria Christopher, Teresa Engley, Deacon Julian Burling, Primavera Moretti (taking minutes), Fr Matthew Donnelly, Fr Jackson Sebastian, Max Toone, Canon David Gibbons, Rob Hitchcock (Faith Minister). Apologies were received from David Hurst, Giovanni Peruzzo, Annette Campbell-Black. Adrian Pinington, the coordinator for small groups in Sevenoaks Parish was also in attendance.</p> <p>With a minor update re: the RCIA from Sr Dorothy, the minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record and signed by the chair. They will be uploaded to the website shortly. <b>Action: Primi/Ruth</b></p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Primi/Ruth</p>
<p><b>2. Minutes of last meeting</b></p> <p>Due to the full agenda, a discussion on the status of actions from the last minutes which would not be picked up in agenda items was curtailed to include only this item:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Talking to the RCIA group – Chris went to meet the group and explained something about the parish groups and how the parish works. Next year it would be nice to have a proper organised welcome social after Easter (just after they’ve been received) as they don’t stop meeting until Pentecost). <b>Action: Primi to note for agenda next year.</b></li> </ul> <p>The other topics, to be revisited at the next meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Website working group</li> <li>● Edgeways subscriptions/print copies</li> <li>● Primi and Ruth to discuss DofE / Volunteering</li> <li>● Praetorium (hall letting company) (Chris and Max).</li> <li>● Uniformed organisations update (Primi)</li> <li>● New screen (Rob)</li> <li>● Parish Directory (Chris)</li> <li>● Website working group update</li> <li>● Updating fundraising messaging (Ruth)</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: right;">Primi</p>

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**3. Parish Groups**

Adrian Pinington, the coordinator of the Home Groups in Sevenoaks Parish spoke to us about his experience of setting up home groups / home cells and particularly about using the website formed.com. Adrian pointed out that the Church didn't start with presentations in halls but people meeting in small groups in people's homes (and in this way it grew at a rate of about 3% per year).

In a survey of Sevenoaks parish, it emerged that people didn't have much of a sense of community and they wanted more of a sense of belonging and opportunities for networking. They also mentioned the need for faith formation, formal training for catechists and more opportunities for evangelisation.

As a result of this, they formed a steering group of about 5 chosen people to work out if/how it would work. They then gathered a wider group of about 20 people and set up 5/6 cell groups which each did a different course using material sourced by the Parish but selected by each host/group as suited to that group. This wasn't widely announced but people were aware it was going on. It took a few months to run. The feedback was very positive which sowed the seed to set up the groups. They created a sign-up form (using MS forms) on the website and invited people to sign up. 60-70 people did so ten groups started and these started attracting in extra people from the very start. They were encouraged to share meals but most settled down to wine and nibbles.

The group chooses which course to do and when to meet. The sessions tend to take 1.5-2 hours and a few weeks/months sufficient to do each course. Sessions tend to stretch as the social aspect is important. So many people have said it's completely transformed their faith. It was hard for some people to come back to church if they hadn't been for a while (e.g. since Covid) but it was easier for them to join a home group.

Primavera asked whether mass attendance was going up and whether more people are coming to confession? Adrian wasn't sure but both Adrian and Fr David said that it had had a noticeable, transformative impact on people's connection with their faith and sense of belonging.

The groups use Formed.org (a parish license is about £1,500 depending on the size of the parish. As soon as someone has the login they're able to access a huge amount and variety of courses).

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The groups are organised around availability, interests, location and demographics. Some people have sensitivities about whether their homes are 'good enough' to provide hospitality. Most groups have a set host (or maybe two hosts who alternate) and the other people bring refreshments. A group can be led by anyone. At the moment, the hosts typically came from the original pilot groups, but the host isn't a leader – they're not expected to answer questions; the material itself provides the answers – so no preparation is required. Sometimes there's a discussion afterwards but groups don't have to do this. Any questions go back to the priests.

Groups choose their schedule for themselves. Weekly is good but not always possible. Groups can quickly incorporate friends, spouses etc. It would be good to do this even more and you need to make sure they don't become cliques. It's important to make sure people mix and don't always stay in the same groups. It takes a few meetings for people to get comfortable with each other – 6-8 sessions – but 2 years become a clique! If a group has been together for a long time (and this can be very important for people who need a bit more support), the group could simply break in two so it maintained some of the same elements/links but also incorporated new people to keep it fresh.

People in small groups support each other so people less likely to fall away. In a big parish no one will notice if people stop coming, but a small group will notice. Small groups deepens people's understanding and therefore practice of the faith and binds people into the community; they feel part of something in a way you don't in a big parish. People start reappearing at parish functions.

Explaining how new enquirers are handled, Adrian explained that registration stays open and people can register at any time or group hosts or the coordinator can chat to anyone who expresses an interest. Coordination is 'light touch'. They can periodically run a taster session mixing everyone up into different groups so newcomers can get a feel for what goes on. The registration form asks if people are able to be hosts.

Action: all to ponder. To discuss at next meeting. To obtain a couple of volunteers to start the House group pilot scheme.

ALL

**4. Some Definite Service**

Primavera helped Giovanni, Jude and Maria to complete the draft Parish Plan using the template from the Diocese and this has now been sent to **Canon David to consider and bring for discussion at the next meeting.**

Canon David

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<p><b>5. Volunteering</b></p> <p>A discussion was held concerning the matters in Primavera’s accompanying paper. Sr Dorothy explained that some teenagers want to do stewarding but sometimes it doesn’t fit with their schedule. There’s no need at the 10am Mass because there are little kids helping so 5pm might be better. Chris remembered that a while back, there were Sixth formers on reception and a team of college boys helping the caretaker, but it was knocked on the head because of safeguarding. Primavera pointed out that if it was framed in the right way it would be realistic to return to this. David Hurst was not in attendance but had sent a note explaining how he was working with Jesuit schools to encourage volunteering. He is also looking for some young people to help him with youth pages for Edgeways. Jude commented that it was really good that Rob/Canon David had encouraged kids who had just made their First Communion to get involved in choirs/serving/welcoming. <b>Action: Siobhan asked Rob to forward the notice to her so she can encourage children at the school to do this.</b></p> <p>There was a general agreement that we should be encouraging volunteering among the young. Action: <b>Primi agreed to approach the people responsible for each activity and ask them how feasible it would be for them to have DofE volunteers</b> (for example Angela Maher who organises the continental breakfast would love some help) <b>Action: Sr Dorothy speak to Judy. We always need volunteers, and this should be made clear on the website. Action: Ruth</b></p>	<p>Rob/Siobahn</p> <p>Primi</p> <p>Ruth</p>
<p><b>6. Updates from the clergy</b></p> <p>Youth 2000 and first communion all went well.</p>	
<p><b>7. Parish Community initiatives</b></p> <p>In the absence of David Hurst, it was agreed to save this discussion for the next meeting.</p>	
<p><b>8. Parish Social Life</b></p> <p><u>(a) Fr Matthew’s leaving do</u></p> <p>Fr Matthew is leaving at the end of August but it would be better to have his leaving do early September as there will be more people around. It would be after 6.30pm mass on a Friday. <b>Action: Max will ask people in the YA house to do the music.</b> Ruth asked if anyone in the house would organise it? It would be a bring and share event. They would need to put a notice in the newsletter asking for help with setting up and clearing away, organise a collection for a leaving present and plan a presentation speech and the choreography of the evening. <b>Action: Max to seek a volunteer.</b></p>	<p>Max</p> <p>Max</p>

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<p><u>(a) Youth 2000 Retreat Day</u>  Max thanked everyone who helped out and donated; they completely sold out. There were 200 young people present and they could have had even more. 5-10 people messaged them saying they'd like to become part of the YA group and there was a young person's walk arranged that has come out of it. Max is trying to talk to Youth 2000 about doing another one and keep up the momentum. Canon David commented that there was a remarkable buzz about the day. Max also thanked the priests for hearing lots of confessions. Max would like to give a talk in the parish about what it's all about and what we can do to encourage more of these kinds of events. There should be an article going in Edgeways this month. They are also airing the idea of a ball; from the pool of talent in the YA house they can produce music for Sacred Heart Feast and a ball for all ages. Chris commented that the best kind of dancing for a community is a Ceilidh as it's suitable for all ages and talents. Fr Matthew spoke to JP about doing something in July. Primi said this was very soon to organise a substantial event and that people go away in July.</p> <p><u>(b) New Parishioners' Welcome events</u>  <b>Action: Ruth to check with Thelma if the lounge is free on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> Sept.</b> There should also be one in February (not during half term).</p> <p><u>(c) Feast of the Sacred Heart – Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June</u>  Giovanni and his team are doing the food, which will be delivered on the weekend of the event. Music is being organised by Max and the Sacred Heart Primary School. There will be a bottle stall, and plant, book, toy and cake stalls, teas, a BBQ and children's games (organised by Rob). Gazebos and a BBQ are needed. At least 4 able bodied people are needed to set up on Sunday morning from 10am. <b>Action: Primi to ask Richard Starke if we can use Scout gazebos etc. if anyone from Scouts is available to get things out of the cupboards.</b>  Primi thanked Ruth for the coordinating this event and the Pancake Party on top of the huge amount she does as chair of the PPC and pointed out the need for a social committee is ever greater to spread the load.</p>	<p>Ruth</p> <p>Primi</p>
<p><b>9. AOB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primi asked about the Marriage enrichment day on 26th October and whether we would be running a creche? We agreed to reflect on this and discuss it next time. <b>An ad for a coordinator and volunteers could go in the newsletter. Action: Canon David</b></li> </ul>	<p>Canon David</p>

