



Good Shepherd Parish Think Tank Meeting- 15th January 2022

Attendees: Reg Carter, Pat Faulconbridge, Chris Forbes, Polly Jarvis, Theresa Joseph, Fiona Mackenzie, Philip Martin, Janet Myers, Fraser Saunders, Caroline Smith, Adrian Staiano and David Staiano,

1. Opening Prayer

The meeting opened with a prayer led by David.

2. Notes of the previous meeting held on 13th November 2021

The notes of the previous meeting were accepted as an accurate record.

ACTION- Philip to post the notes on the think tank's page on the parish website and on the notice board in the narthex.

In relation to the points raised at the previous meeting, the following matters were discussed:

- It was acknowledged that the parish is very fortunate in having a significant number of volunteers but more are needed if the parish is to be able to offer a greater range of services, including extending its outreach capacity. It was felt we need to communicate more effectively within the parish to seek such help. **ACTION- All members** to reflect on this and if possible make suggestions; **Fr Philipp** to consider addressing this from the pulpit during weekend Masses.
- It was noted that children are often keen to volunteer (eg to help with collections at Mass) but are not always supported in this by their parents. We need there to continue to try to get the message out to parents, although the difficulties and sensitivities in this respect were recognised.
- There is a need to encourage young people to engage more actively in the life of the parish after they have been confirmed. **ACTION- All members** to consider and feed any ideas to Fraser.
- We should reconsider assigning altar servers to specific weekend Masses to ensure all Masses have a reasonable number of servers in attendance. **ACTION- Adrian** to consider.
- The involvement of our schools was seen as an important aspect of parish life. The Mass led by Good Shepherd Academy at 10am on Sunday, 5th December 2021 had been very inspiring. It is understood that, notwithstanding the curriculum and other pressures on its time, the Academy may be able to offer similarly supported Masses 3/4 times a year. Christ the King Academy has also indicated that it would like to lead the Mass on the feast of Christ the King.

- It was felt that children at our schools should in due course be encouraged to read at Mass again (this arrangement was suspended because of the Covid restrictions).
- It was suggested that it might be helpful to ask Fr Neil Peoples, the diocesan vocations director, to arrange for vocations related talks to be held at our schools (particularly CTK) and in the parish more generally. **ACTION- Fraser** to contact Fr Neil. *[Postscript: Fraser subsequently contacted Fr Neil who has confirmed that the vocations team would be happy to come into CTK at a date to be determined. He also advised that Fr Liam Carpenter might be able to talk to the parish at a time to be negotiated.]*
- It was reiterated that we should consider using appropriate signage to advertise the availability of our parish centre facilities for use by the wider community. **ACTION- Adrian** to discuss the feasibility of this with Fr Philipp.
- It would be helpful for the think tank to know more about the Alpha programme. **ACTION- Fraser** to provide a synopsis in due course.

3. Synod process

The think tank considered the three questions it had been asked to address and feedback to Fr Philipp before 20th January, viz:

- What has the Synod process revealed to you about your parish / school and / or what do you experience the Holy Spirit may be saying to your parish / school?
- What are the actions your parish / school going to carry forward and what would the hoped for fruits of these actions?
- What similarities or opportunities are there to work more collaboratively for the benefit of our Deanery / County in making Jesus and His Church more known here?

There was a wide ranging discussion on these questions, with following points being put forward:

- There was a view amongst some think tank members that the parish synod day event held on Saturday 2nd October 2021 had to some extent been a lost opportunity. Although it was recognised that a lot of hard work had gone into organising the day, and Joe Hopkins' involvement was very much appreciated, it was felt the structure of the day had been a bit confusing and could have been better organised to ensure a more productive use of time and better outcomes.
- It was noted that there has not to date been any feedback to the parish since the parish synod event, although it was understood the parish pastoral team (PPT) was currently coordinating the outcomes to help inform the future strategic direction of the parish. It was suggested that feedback to the parish would be helpful as well as an explanation of the role of the PPT. It was felt this required more than just a note in the parish newsletter.

- There was a general consensus that children and young people should be a priority area of focus for the parish as it moves forward. It was recognised however that many parents will themselves need support and encouragement to enable them to help their children to practise and grow in the Faith given their own knowledge of the Faith may be deficient. It was felt that we need to equip parishioners with intellectually based answers to difficult questions about the Faith rather than just pass down doctrine as it is given by the Church. That said, it was felt we need to talk in easily understood language in order to get the message across and not deter people from engaging.
- There would be merit in considering the establishment of a youth focused SVP group. The wonderful support provided by young people for the SVP Christmas lunch was noted in this respect. It was suggested that this might be considered as part of the Confirmation programme discussions.
- It was felt the parish tended currently to be somewhat introspective and that we need to develop a more open, outward looking community minded approach.
- It is important that the parish and its schools work more closely together, although it was noted that much was already being done in that respect. It was suggested that more cohesive links between the different parish teams (including the PPT) and our schools should be developed.
- There was a recognition that change will inevitably take time and our planning should reflect that.
- The possibility of “reunion” gatherings for young people (18-35 years?) who have in the past been involved in such things as the Confirmation programme was suggested. Fraser advised that the diocesan Christus Vivit programme was a vehicle for this sort of approach.
- It was felt we should be more proactive in seeking to work collaboratively with other parishes in the deanery, including but not limited to St Anthony’s at Calverton. In order to facilitate this it was suggested that our parish could perhaps offer to act as a “hub” for other parishes to join in specific areas of activity.
- We should consider encouraging greater youth involvement in the parish’s successful Holy Hour arrangements, as well as developing further opportunities for young people to participate in Eucharistic Adoration (including using Fatima as an area of focus), including organising the events as well as attending.

4. Proposed revised dates of the think tank meetings in the 2022 calendar year

It was confirmed that the dates for two of the group’s forthcoming meetings (in March and November 2022) have had to be rearranged owing to the non-availability of the parish centre on the original dates. The revised schedule of dates (Saturday mornings (10am-12noon)) for the remainder of 2022 is now as follows:

26th March 2022 (previously 19th March)
 21st May 2022
 16th July 2022

17th September 2022

12th November 2022 (previously 19th November)

ACTION- All members to note in their diaries.

5. Any other business

The following items were discussed:

- a) **Disabled access-** arising out of the parish synod day discussions, Chris mentioned that there was a strongly expressed view in his discussion group that more should be done to enable disabled access to the parish centre from the church rather than, as at present, expecting parishioners with mobility problems to go outside to access the centre given the difficulties in negotiating the internal set of steps that connect the buildings. It was explained that this issue had been raised before and the parish was already deemed to be discharging its legal obligation to make reasonable arrangements in this respect. It was also understood there were significant cost and logistical implications for the parish in pursuing this issue. Chris suggested there may be a possibility of developing a suitable route from the back of the church and offered to produce a mock-up of alternatives so the options can be explored. **ACTION- Chris** to action accordingly.
- b) **Membership of the think tank-** it was noted that around 12 people or so regularly attend the think meetings. It was agreed that the current membership list could usefully be refreshed by seeking some younger participants and David agreed to approach some younger parishioners to see if they would be prepared to join the group. **ACTION- David** to action accordingly.

Meanwhile, those members who have not attended the think tank for some time would be asked to confirm that they still want to be members of the group as otherwise they will be removed from the circulation list for future meetings. **ACTION- Philip** to action.

6. Closing Prayer

The meeting closed with a prayer led by Chris.