



Good Shepherd Parish Think Tank- Special Meeting: 23rd April 2022

In attendance: Reg Carter, Pat Faulconbridge, Caroline Ford, Polly Jarvis, Fiona Mackenzie, Philip Martin, Fraser Sanders and Caroline Smith.

1. Opening Prayer

The meeting opened with a prayer led by Reg.

2. Think Tank review

It was confirmed that this special meeting had been convened to review the way the think tank is working, with particular regard to reevaluating its vision and role. The issues for consideration had been set out in the agenda for the meeting and in the comprehensive paper which had accompanied it. Reg formally recorded his thanks to Philip for the quality of the documentation.

The following issues were then discussed:

a) Vision

- i. *Achievements:* There was a range of views about the think tank's achievements to date. The following were identified as examples of things that had been achieved:
 - the development of the directory of parish services and the parish prayer pack, both of which had been well received within the wider parish
 - providing a group view which had helped to inform the change in Mass times
 - playing an active role in the development of the Holy Hour and Fatima initiatives thanks to the efforts of Caroline Smith
 - the group had received feedback from the visit to the Sacred Heart parish in Tamworth and had in response actively supported the development of an updated parish website, work on which is ongoing through a separate project team
 - the group had been a vehicle for involving more people in the life of the parish and creating positive relationships.

Beyond that there was a general view that the group could be seen as a "talking shop" which has impacted on the number of people attending the meetings. However it was felt that the think tank is a good idea and can develop ideas to take us forward in conjunction with our parish pastoral team

The group had originally been formed to help Fr Philipp, reflecting the current shortage of priests and the imperative to involve the laity more actively in the running and development of the parish. This mission remains the same and the group's terms of reference are fine. We would however like more direction from Fr Philipp as to what his vision is. We should therefore change the time of our meetings to ensure Fr Philipp is able to attend.

- ii. *Future of the Think Tank:* With this background in mind, the group addressed the fundamental question as to whether a parish think tank was actually needed. The consensus was that the group had the potential to be helpful -particularly when we had clarity about the parish vision -but its role and links with other parish structures, particularly the embryonic parish pastoral team, need to be understood/improved.

ACTION: Reg to ask Fr Philipp to provide the group with details of his vision for the parish to help inform its future work.

b) Priorities/success criteria

- i. *Success:* It was suggested that successful outcomes for the group's work could be measured by:
 - increased attendance at Holy Mass
 - more parishioners actively engaged in the life of the parish
 - increased vocations from the parish to the priesthood and religious life
 - positive feedback from the parish priest.
- ii. *Priorities:* The following were discussed:
 - Refresh/improve communication with the parish regarding the role and membership of the think tank and provide contact points.
 - Encourage parishioners to put forward ideas/suggestions for improvement- provide a suggestion box and an email address for ideas to be submitted to the group.
 - Be clear as to what issues should come to the think tank- a recent disability access issue should for example have been referred direct to the parish priest or the new parish pastoral team (PPT).
 - The think tank might helpfully have a research role- for example, to find out what other parishes within and beyond the diocese are doing and whether we can learn from them (as per the Tamworth visit).
 - Encourage vocations- the diocesan vocations team input in the parish and at CTK should be progressed. **ACTION: Fraser** to link in due course with Lucy Farrelly, the new chaplain at CTK, and pursue with Fr Liam Carpenter in the diocesan vocations team.
 - A more disciplined approach to following up ideas discussed at the group's meetings is required- in each case we need to agree (and record) how ideas will be taken forward and by whom.

- Parish communication generally need improving- eg the “What can you offer” envelopes and cards in the corridor adjoining the parish centre are an excellent initiative to seek volunteers for the range of available parish ministries and activities but haven’t been effectively communicated and thus aren’t generally known by parishioners unless they stumble across them.

c) Structures

The following issues were discussed:

- *Divine Renovation Programme- suggested parish structures:* Reg explained the structures/lead posts suggested by the programme, comprising-
 - (a) administration and operations;
 - (b) communications;
 - (c) pastoral ministry; and
 - (d) clergy and sacraments.

It was suggested that the proposed senior parish administrator post could perhaps cover (a) and (b) and that the appropriate members of the PPT could cover (c) and (d). But it was agreed that whoever was allocated the roles should be empowered by an appropriate level of delegation.

- *Links with the parish finance committee:* We already have a longstanding and functioning parish finance committee whose role is defined by the diocese. Links to the finance committee are through Fr Philipp, Philip and David Staiano who are members of the committee as well as the think tank.
- *Parish pastoral council:* It was recognised that we do not currently have a parish pastoral council. This is a matter for Fr Philipp but the group did not have any enthusiasm for this to be established given the PPT and think tank structures.
- *New structures:* The new parish structures (PPT and the proposed senior parish administrative post) are promising developments and should in due course help relieve the burden on Fr Philipp.
- *PPT:* The role/composition of the PPT is not currently widely known or understood- it needs communicating to the parish when the arrangements are finalised.
- *Links with the PPT:* The think tank’s link with the PPT will need to be developed- to that end it was suggested that the PPT members could be ex-officio members of the think tank. **ACTION: Reg/Fraser** to raise this at the next meeting of the PPT.
- *School links:* Links between the think tank and our schools (GS, SMC and CTK need strengthening- it was suggested that the new Academy Trust Chaplain (Lucy Farrelly) should be the generic schools’ representative on the think tank rather than school staff members. **ACTION: Reg** to approach Lucy about this when she takes up post in September 2022.

- *Young people representation:* It was agreed that young people's representation on the think tank should be encouraged. Altar server representation is currently being pursued by Adrian Staiano. It was agreed that CTK sixth form representatives should also be sought via Lucy Farrelly. **ACTION: Reg** to discuss with Lucy in due course.
- *St Anthony's:* Representation on the think tank from St Anthony's at Calverton should be sought as soon as the Bishop has made a formal decision about the amalgamation of the parishes **ACTION: Fr Philipp** to pursue and provide Philip with contact details for the representatives so they can be invited to the group's future meetings.
- *Current think tank membership-* It was suggested that those members of the group who haven't attended its meetings in the recent past should be sent individual emails to see whether they want to remain as members given we are looking to reinvigorate the group. **ACTION: Philip** to action accordingly.
- *Representation of parish ministries on the think tank:* It was agreed that we don't necessarily need all ministries to be represented, just key ones such as the children's liturgy group. However, all ministries should be able to engage with the think tank on specific issues as appropriate.
- *Annual "open" meeting:* It was felt that an annual (informal) open meeting of the think tank with the PPT and representatives of all the parish ministries might be helpful. Other parishioners could also be invited to attend. The Marian Hall could be used for the meeting, with the first event taking place perhaps in October or November 2022. Name badges could be provided to help identify the think tank and PPT members. The open meeting would provide an opportunity for the ministries and parishioners more generally to meet the think tank and PPT members and raise any questions with the individual members on an informal basis. It was agreed we would need to plan the event carefully to ensure it was a worthwhile experience and that it should be an agenda item for the next think tank meeting **ACTION: Philip** to include it on the agenda for the group's next meeting.

d) Logistics

The following issues were discussed:

- *Time of the think tank meetings:* Future meetings to be held from 11.00am-12.30pm on Saturdays to enable members if they wish to attend Mass at 10am and also to make it easier for Fr Philipp to attend the meetings.
- *Chairing the meetings:* It was agreed the role of chair could helpfully be rotated but it was also recognised that not all members would feel confident in undertaking the role. It was agreed that for the time being Reg and Fraser will rotate the role-Fraser to chair the next meeting.
- *Secretarial support for the meetings:* Philip to continue in this role for the time being but Caroline (Smith) volunteered to provide cover if he is unavailable.

- *Catering arrangements:* The group formally recorded its thanks to Pat and Caroline (Ford) for their hard work and the quality of the refreshments provided at the meetings.

3. Next meeting

It is confirmed that the next meeting of the group will be from 11.00am-12.30pm on the changed date of Saturday, 14th May 2022 in the Joseph Hall. **ACTION: Philip** to send out the agenda for the meeting in due course.

4. Closing Prayer

The meeting closed with a prayer led by Fraser.