



CHURCH of ST. THOMAS MORE, Seaford

Parish in Council Meeting - Friday 8 July 2022 at 19.00

Over 60 parishioners attended, plus the Parish Pastoral Team: Fr Ian Byrnes, Deacon Colin Purchase, Jonathan Bird (chair) Chris Parkinson, Celia Cornish, Carol Gillespie, Kath Dawson (for Harold Pluss, who sent apologies)

Deacon Colin informed parishioners that, in response to letters from parishioners reacting to the Parish Announcement 2/3 July, there had been a significant change to the Mass times then announced. Details under 'New Proposal' below. Colin's positivity and hard work were applauded.

Opening Prayer

Deacon Colin likened our situation to a beautiful tapestry of which we can at present only see the workings on the back.

Welcome

Jonathan welcomed parishioners. This is one of the three Parish in Council meetings planned for each year. He outlined the business of the meeting – an update from each PPT ministry followed by a discussion and vote on the latest Mass times proposal.

PPT UPDATES

Finance – Chris Parkinson *see also Appendix A*

- Chris gave headline figures for the three current accounts. Our share from the Newhaven sale is held in a diocesan account which attracts interest. It belongs to us, not the diocese.
- Offertory sums are similar to last year.
- The new hall floor has been paid for, and we have paid our diocesan levy.
- Planned works include new railings to the steps from the A259, a replacement garden shed, and works to the presbytery prior to it becoming a family home.
- We recently received a substantial legacy. A further legacy awaits probate.

Questions and comments

- Could annual accounts be made available? Chris agreed to this. *Action*
- Are we able to release money in an emergency? Yes, the diocesan account is instant access.
- Are we able to choose where we invest? Yes, but the current arrangements are instant access and attract an interest rate of 0.5%.
- Some parishioners made suggestions for higher rates of interest, and Chris will investigate. *Action*
- Who decided how the proceeds from the Newhaven properties would be divided? The diocese. There was a complaint of lack of consultation with Newhaven parishioners.

Formation and Mission – Celia Cornish

- Celia noted how far we have come since we were able to meet again. In September we welcomed 2 new catechists. 15 children recently received First Holy Communion after preparation with the FHC team.
- Children's Liturgy takes place in the hall twice a month. Mass is streamed, and its elements are explained to the children, who also engage in craft and other activities. The children rejoin their parents at Communion, but this may move earlier in the Mass when children have learnt more about the proceedings.
- Together we contributed to the parish response to Synod 2023, and our parish report contributed to the diocesan submission to Pope Francis.
- We held Zoom meetings in Lent to discuss Richard Rohr's podcasts.
- More parishioners are contributing to the music in church.
- A questionnaire was circulated to encourage volunteering and participation. Parishioners have subsequently been linked up with activities in the parish.
- Further activities are planned or have been suggested from this September – Lectio Divina, Taize-inspired worship, an Advent programme and Word of Life.
- Celia reminded us that people are needed to initiate and run such activities in the parish. Anyone interested should contact her, likewise if there is anything further parishioners would like to see.
- Formation also happens as part of social activities such as Knit and Natter.
- We hope to have more opportunities to join with our neighbours from Peacehaven. We are not permitted to organise lifts formally, but anyone may come to informal arrangements.
- An informal survey of parents of young children concluded that most would find a Saturday Mass difficult, even if earlier than 6pm.

Questions and comments

- The superb Children's Liturgy was welcomed, and parishioners would like to welcome children as they return to their parents. Celia would also like to do this but some children are nervous and shy at present. In the future she would also like them to share what they have been doing.
- Michael Staples, who leads the altar servers, would welcome children into his team.

Community Development – Celia Cornish

- Coffee mornings are well attended.
- Piglets - the parent and toddler group in the hall and garden is very successful, attended by about 20 children and their parents. This is community outreach since it is not only for the Catholic community. Again, any help would be welcome.
- Churches Together in Seaford, of which we are a member, made a donation to Seaford for Ukraine, a networking and support group for hosts and guests.
- Deacon Colin continues frequent visits to Anney School. There is not enough time for all the community work that he would like to do.

Safeguarding - Carol Gillespie *see also Appendix B*

- This subject continues to be very important, and the diocese offers plenty of training opportunities.
- A register of altar servers is kept so that it is known who has been present when a server is not with their parents.

- Eucharistic Ministers must hold a DBS certificate and have undergone training before they are permitted to administer the Host in private homes or care settings.
- Those involved in First Holy Communion formation undertake additional safeguarding training.
- The diocese offers an online presentation (lasting a little over an hour) called Creating a Safer Environment. Those who have taken it say that it has broadened their perception of safeguarding issues in everyday situations. Ask Carol for a link if you are interested.

Health and Safety - Chris Parkinson

- Mary Purchase runs the Health & Safety Monitoring programme, alongside Chris. Checks are prompted by a program called Toolbox, and include such things as PAT testing and asbestos testing.
- A parishioner has renewed the markings in the car park, for which we are grateful.
- There is a Health & Safety Concerns book in the porch where anyone can log something that needs attention.

Questions and Comments

- An additional board for hymn numbers (part way down the church) was requested. *Action*
- Those who cannot hear or see well must be remembered when planning work or provision.

Communication – Kath Dawson

- Kath takes over from Harold in September and is currently assisting.
- She hopes to discuss with her counterpart in Peacehaven, Les Cluskey, what the role should entail.
- The original census questions did not comply with General Data Processing Regulations (GDPR). The forms have been rewritten in both printable and online formats and are now available on the website. There is now a single form for both churches in anticipation of the parish merger.
- Input of the approved parts of the original data will start soon and respondents will be contacted – by email where possible, to obtain agreement to its storage and use.
- The volunteer form has been improved in the light of experience. It is now grouped by ministry and allows respondents to indicate if they are already involved. A Peacehaven version is to follow.
- No-one needs to complete either form again if they have already done so.
- Kath will investigate mail handing products such as Mailchimp for secure email communication with parishioners. It is important not to disadvantage those who are unwilling or unable to use computers.
- There will doubtless be website changes when the parishes merge, and Kath and Les will liaise with the webmaster Jim Murray.

Questions and Comments

- There was a request for a parish newsletter. Kath would like to introduce one with contributions from parishioners. Dealing with the census returns and establishing an email system are the current priorities.

Liturgy – Jonathan Bird *see also Appendix C*

- The planning that went into the Easter services has fed into a more consistent approach to all Saturday and Sunday Masses. It is now clear who the readers are, and what the music provision will be, for example. It is good to see a growth in variety of and participation in music.
- A new Sacristan has begun working alongside Mary Purchase. She was thanked and commended. Further volunteers are welcome.
- Eucharistic Ministers have been recommissioned. Colin would like to see more now there are fewer restrictions on visits to care settings. He is unable to ensure the level of visiting for which there is a need.
- The Stewarding role has grown into that of Welcomers. Thanks to those who stewarded so carefully, and to new volunteers who have recently joined the team.

Questions and Comments

- Will Peacehaven ministers visit Peacehaven settings, likewise with Seaford? Yes, this is likely to be the case.
- Is there a prospect of Communion under both kinds? We will consider reinstating this when the diocese gives the go-ahead.
- May we have Holy Water again please? We are permitted to provide this but the stoups have to be cleaned weekly. (Perhaps someone would volunteer?)
- Are there plans to use projection for hymns and text, as in Peacehaven? Deacon Colin said there is nothing to stop us. The diocese is not promoting the idea but it is still an open issue for us.
- One of our retired priests asked if there are plans to have coffee before Mass in the hall occasionally, leading into the Mass itself. This had been tried in the past and more people had attended coffee. There was some concern about the obligation to fast, but Bishop Richard was happy to leave this to individual conscience. It had been appreciated as a special event, but excluded those whose conscience would trouble them, and might lead to queues for the loos during Mass itself. The Liturgy team will bear it mind.

New proposal for Mass times and arrangements - Colin

- Colin wished parishioners to know that he had been offered the post of Parish Administrator when it was proposed. He preferred to continue in his current role, and Bishop Richard then offered it to Deacon Stephen Sharpe.
- Deacon Stephen proposed that all Vigil Masses should be in one church and one Mass each Sunday in the other. (When Bishop Richard referred to Sunday Mass being available in both churches, this includes the Vigil.)
- Parishioners' well-argued letters following the announcement of 2/3 July (*Appendix D*) led to our own initial preference for alternating Saturdays and Sundays to be taken seriously.
- We are fortunate that Peacehaven was open to negotiation and very kindly agreed to this. Their Parishioners voted in favour at their equivalent of this meeting.
- It will be a simple alternating system, not dependent on the week of the month.
- Colin updated us on other arrangements. He had requested permission to hold a Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion on Sundays when there was no Mass. This was rejected, quoting Canon Law. The relevant document is over 40 years old. Colin felt that Jesus's injunction to 'Feed my Sheep' was consistent with his proposal. Colin wishes to preach the Gospel as he was ordained to do, but was informed that

he is not permitted to celebrate Liturgy of the Word on Sundays, even without Holy Communion. Fr Ian has supported Colin throughout.

- There have been painful moments in coming to the proposed arrangements.
- Colin thanked the PPT for their negotiations under pressure. He feels that we have the best solution in the circumstances.

Questions and Comments

- When do the new arrangements start? The weekend of 30/31 July. Deacon Stephen will take up his post in September.
- Can the churches accommodate the number of people who will wish to attend Mass, and where will they park? Fr Chris Benyon said that over 400 people have in the past attended a Mass at St Thomas More. There is no obvious solution to parking issues, apart from those who can use alternative means.
- What will be the times of Mass? 11am on Sundays; initially 6pm on Saturdays, though it is permissible to move this to 4 or 5pm. This may be trialled in winter.
- What about the Mass every first Sunday when a retired priest is available, as announced in the letter? That is no longer planned.
- What will happen at Christmas and Easter? We very much hope that our retired priests will be able to help us.
- Is Lewes losing any Masses? Yes, two of their 4, including the Vigil on Saturdays. The Latin Mass at 12.30 will be retained.
- A Latin Mass is not accessible, so why is that Mass at Lewes being prioritised? The Bishop has given specific permission for this Mass. Parishioners who are unhappy about this should write to him.
- Why can't Lewes have their 2 Masses one after the other, giving Fr Jonathan an opportunity to meet the parishioners in our churches rather than having to rush away? We should be grateful to Lewes for giving up half their Sunday Masses. Fr Jonathan will join parishioners for coffee on Thursdays, and Reconciliation will be available.
- Many parishioners work office hours and will not be able to meet him. He is not technically our Parish Priest so we cannot expect the same relationship with him.
- Parishioners feel that we have come to the best arrangements possible, but regret the confusion about whether we are already one parish. Bishop Richard spoke about 2 parishes. Many of us took this to mean Peacehaven and Seaford, but perhaps Lewes was one of them.
- If we are one parish, what is it called? It is sometimes referred to as Seapeace, but does this have official status? *To be confirmed.* Fr Ian said that even diocesan staff were unclear.
- There was a call for an apology for the way in which we as a community had been treated, which was seen as disrespectful.
- By whom is Colin employed? The Diocese.
- Why not differentiate our Saturdays and Sundays according to whether they are the first, second or third in the month and so on? Simple alternation is considered more straightforward.
- Parishioners regretted the lack of consultation which had eventually led to changes to the original proposals.
- Jonathan thanked everyone who had contributed to the eventual decision. Well done to everyone here and in Peacehaven who has contributed to this solution.

Vote

- Colin asked those present to raise their hands if they were in favour of simple alternating weeks. There were no votes against, and no signalled abstentions. The proposal was therefore carried unanimously. The agreed proposals will be circulated 9/10 July. (*Appendix E*)

Next steps – Jonathan

- We need to plan alongside Peacehaven, setting priorities and being willing to negotiate.

Questions and Comments

- Will livestreaming continue? Yes
- Will there still be two parish offices? Deacon Stephen said he has no plans to make changes, though this is not a definitive answer.
- Will there be one PPT? This has not been decided but at the very least there will be closer working.
- Will there be one bank account and one collection counting? This has not been decided. (Note: It is technically possible to have more than one account for a parish.)

AOB

- The church needs to prioritise communication with the housebound who are being left out. Some have not even had a phone call from us for years. Anyone knowing of someone in this category should alert Colin. *Action - all*
- What will happen about the garden? Celia had raised this with Deacon Stephen because it is valued by Piglets. It is likely to be divided in some way. There will still be garden provision for Piglets, and it may be possible to open up the area for some events.

Thanks

- Jonathan thanked everyone for attending and participating so actively.
- Fr Ian thanked us individually and as a community. The parish has moved from 'maintenance' to 'mission' in one week. Our community has strengthened his faith and annoyed him too! He reminded us that Pope Francis is dealing with equivalent issues on a world scale. Fr Ian also pondered the likelihood of the disciples arguing about the timing of the last supper. The Eucharist is not the entirety of the Church; the Real Presence however is fundamental.
- Fr Ian's last weekend here is 23/24 July after which he goes to Lourdes. When he returns he will be making preparations to move. He intends to visit the housebound before he moves out in mid-August.
- Deacon Stephen will be appointed on 28 August and will be Deacon Elect until 3 September.
- The PPTs will lead the communities during the gap, and the PAs will organise Masses.
- Will we have an opportunity to meet Deacon Stephen before he arrives? Colin will see if this can be arranged.

Closing prayer – Fr Ian

The meeting closed at 21.00

APPENDIX A

Parish in Council meeting 8th July 2022 – Finance Update

Financial Position at 30/06/2022

Bank balances across the 3 accounts at 30/06/2022 was £20,298. In addition there was £229,658 on deposit with the Diocese earning 0.5% interest. This latter figure includes Seaford's share of the Newhaven proceeds of £49,658.

Offertory figures, including the card machine are much in line with last year's amounts. Gift Aid continues to be a very important part of our income.

The bank balance figures above are after full payment has been made for the Hall Floor and the 2nd quarterly Diocesan Levy of £4,834 which was paid at the end of June 2022.

Overall the finances are in a relatively good position.

Maintenance Issues

We currently are working on 2 projects, a new Storage Shed for the back garden and New Replacement Railings to the main entrance steps. The combined expenditure on these projects will be some £6000.

Once these items are completed we will be looking at the Presbytery Fascias, Soffits and gutters.

Legacies / Donations

The parish does receive the occasional legacy. As previously mentioned we must be most grateful to Michael Clarke for his substantial legacy that we received last year. This year we have been informed of another legacy of £1000 from the late Patricia Morgan -Probate has yet to be granted.

Chris Parkinson

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APPENDIX B

Parish Meeting 8.7.22 – Liturgy update

- A Major planning exercise was held for the Easter services pulling in all aspects and groups involved.
 - The pro forma has been adopted for weekend Masses, music, singing, readings.
- Throughout the year the Church has been beautifully decorated, particularly for Easter, Confirmation and 1st Holy communion. Thank you to the Flower and decoration team who make our church such a welcoming place.
- Harold Pluss has taken on the Readers rota, it's really nice to be getting back to normal having two/three readers at Mass again.
- The Music and Choir teams are also growing now that restrictions have been relaxed, with more Parishioners joining the choir enhancing our experience at Mass.
- Following on from the call for more volunteers, we've been lucky to have a new Sacristan, to help reduce Mary Purchases overall workload.
- A number of Eucharistic Ministers were recommissioned this year, an annual event that had been postponed due to the Pandemic.
- The Alter Servers are back, as with everything Michael is always looking for more volunteers
- Stewarding at Mass has become more of a welcoming interaction since the relaxation of Pandemic measures. We're grateful to the new volunteers who help out each week and thanks to our longer serving Welcomers who have seen us through the pandemic.

Thank you to all in the Liturgy Group who make attending Mass a warm and friendly experience.

APPENDIX C



CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS MORE

Rev. Ian Byrnes Parish Priest

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Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C) 2nd/3rd July 2022

Parish Announcement

Dear friends, may no adversity paralyze you. Be afraid neither of the World, nor of the future, nor of your weakness. The Lord has allowed you to live in this moment of history so that, by your faith, his name will continue to resound throughout the world."

(Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI)

Following the visit from Bishop Richard to announce the changes for our Parish as part of the Diocesan Plan "The Word Who is Life", Jonathan Bird (Seaford) and Les Cluskey (Peacehaven), Chair and Vice Chair of the Parish Pastoral Teams (PPT), have consulted with the people of the Parish about the times of Holy Mass. I am very grateful to Jonathan and Les for their time and commitment.

The key changes announced by Bishop Richard:

- Fr Ian's retirement in August
- The merging of the Parishes of Seaford, Newhaven and Peacehaven through an 'extinctive union' creating a single Parish
- Appointment of Deacon Stephen Sharpe as the 'Pastoral Administrator' to lead and administer the single parish as its Pastor. Deacon Stephen will work with the assistance of Deacon Colin and in consultation with the Finance Committee and PPT
- Changes to the Mass times.

Following consultation with the parishioners and clergy, I am pleased to confirm the following 'regular' Holy Mass schedule has been agreed. The revised Saturday Evening and Sunday Mass times will take effect from 30/31st July. Changes to midweek Mass times will take effect from 5th September:

St Thomas More, Seaford:

- Vigil Mass (Saturday Evening) at 6pm each week (time can vary during winter months).
- Thursday 10am Mass with confession from 9:30am.

The Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, Peacehaven:

- Sunday Mass at 11am each week.
- Wednesday 10am Mass with confession from 9:30am.

Canon Jonathan Martin has agreed to celebrate the 'regular' Masses. We are grateful to Canon Jonathan and to the St Pancras Parish Community in Lewes for changing their Mass times to accommodate. The above schedule will be reviewed on Ash Wednesday 2023.

Whole Parish Mass

On the 1st Sunday of each month at 9:00am there will be a whole Parish Mass at St Thomas More Church, Seaford. This is subject to availability of retired clergy to celebrate Mass and will be in addition to the 'regular' Mass times detailed above. The first whole Parish Mass will be on 2nd October 2022.

Sunday Formation

In addition to the regular Mass schedule and existing activities within the Parish, there will be a time of 'formation' at the Church of St Thomas More, Seaford each Sunday Morning between 9 – 10:30am with a programme for adults and children. This programme will be established incrementally over the summer in collaboration with the Parish formation team and will come into effect from September. All parishioners are encouraged to get involved in this exciting work of Evangelisation.

I will be resident, with my family, in the Seaford Presbytery from September when I look forward to joining and praying with the whole Parish community.

Thank you all so much for your passion, commitment, and dedication to our Parish community, without which the Church could not exist in this place.

Bishop Richard has called the Diocese to 'Prayer, Formation and Mission' as we respond to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our Parish community and our lives together. And so we pray:

Lord, the Word who is Life. May all the people of our Diocese grow in openness to the power of the Holy Spirit, so that through a growth in understanding and courage, and truly open to your call, we may bear powerful witness to all around us, for you are Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

Deacon Stephen | Pastoral Administrator | 3rd July 2022

APPENDIX D

New Sunday Mass times Peacehaven and Seaford

Following last weekends Parish announcement regarding Sunday Mass times at Peacehaven and Seaford, a new proposal has been made following feedback from Parishioners. The proposal has the full backing of Bishop Richard, Fr. Jonathan Martin, Fr Ian, Deacon Colin, and Deacon Stephen. Sunday Mass will now be shared on alternate weekends between Peacehaven and Seaford. The weekend where a Parish does not have a Sunday Mass, there will be a Saturday evening Mass.

This proposal was recommended at both Peacehaven and Seaford Parish In Council meetings this week and was overwhelmingly approved.

The new schedule will commence on the weekend of July 30th/31st, as per the original announcement.

Peacehaven:-

Sun July 31, Sat Aug 6, Sun Aug 14, Sat Aug 20, Sun Aug 28
etc etc

Seaford:-

Sat July 30, Sun Aug 7, Sat Aug 13, Sun Aug 21, Sat Aug 29
etc etc

I would like to give thanks to the PPT and Parishioners of Peacehaven who have shown generosity of Spirit and sense of community by backing and approving the new schedule. I ask you to remember our whole community in your prayers to make this initiative a great success.

Thank you.