



## **Parish of St Mary's, Star of the Sea, Sandymount**

### **Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018**

Chairperson Janet Daly opened the meeting with a prayer and welcomed those in attendance. She introduced the members of the Parish Pastoral Council.

The minutes of the 2017 AGM were put to the meeting and were approved as presented.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT:** Janet Daly gave her Chairperson's report on the activities of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) during the year. These included Advent prayers in November/December, Christmas Carols and a hospitality reception in the Hall after the Carols, PPC members greeting people as they arrived for Christmas Masses, additional resources for the Church bookshop and a more prominent display of the reading material being made available, Lenten prayers, three Joy of Love sessions in preparation for the World Meeting of Families, film showings for young adults, adoption of new data protection guidelines to conform with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Corpus Christi procession onto the lawn.

In relation to the Pope's visit to the WMOF, she said that the Archdiocese office was not very forthcoming with information and this made it difficult to make arrangements such as organising buses. However, the overall impression was of a successful visit by the Pope and in his Phoenix Park sermon he emphasised the importance of community and that people cannot just live within their own circle.

The PPC recognises the importance of the contribution made by the many volunteers who contribute to the Parish and endeavours to support them. A comprehensive list of the volunteers was drawn up during the year in order to assist in liaising with them. Janet referred to the contribution of the people in the choirs, in particular the violinist at the Family Mass, the sacristans, the Eucharistic ministers, the Mass collectors, the Church cleaners, the people who open and close the Church, the Vincent de Paul, the Legion of Mary, the organisers of the Golf Classic and the assistance of Mary in the Parish office.

**PARISH PRIEST'S REPORT:** Father John gave his report on the Parish for the year. In relation to the outgoing PPC members, three years ago when they were elected the late Sean Hegarty said to Fr John; "you are blessed with the election of a very good Council, they'll be a great help". How right he was – Janet Daly, Tom Moran, Mark Cunningham, Ronald Long, Sr Joan Murray and Sr Felicia Matola each brought great energy and enthusiasm. Fr John thanked them all and in particular Janet for her role as Chairperson over the last two years. He welcomed the incoming members of the PPC and prayed for God's blessing on its ongoing work.

In looking at the past year the significance of Pope Francis's visit but also the abortion referendum can be recognised as factors impinging on the Christian community in Ireland. The Christian community is a family of families whose unity is in Jesus Christ – across countries and continents, across individual families and parishes down to our own parish. At the same time each parish is unique in its history and story and in the particular challenges and opportunities pertinent to it at a given time. Fr John evoked some images from Scripture for analogies to the current difficulties for the Christian community and how we should listen to and hear the voice of the Lord.

The activity in the Parish in the last year can be gauged by the average attendance of 679 at weekend Sunday Masses, 30 weddings, 55 funerals, 85 receiving Confirmation and 108 receiving First Communion. The connection with schools is important in preparing pupils for First Communion and Confirmation and the new Grow in Love programme is important in this regard. Classes are held once a week in the Church offices for pupils attending non-Catholic schools.

Fr John thanked all the Church volunteers and in particular Paddy Kavanagh who recently stepped down after over 70 years of involvement.

**PARISH ASSEMBLY:** Mark Cunningham gave a report on the recent Parish Assembly which was held at the request of the Archbishop to reflect on the Pope's visit and to have a consultation on opportunities for Church renewal. The Assembly was well attended and there was a willingness to contribute to the discussion. While there were many criticisms they were made in a constructive fashion. It was clear from the contributions made that people would like more social interaction after Parish events and that there is a need to do more to involve young people in Church ceremonies and the life of the Parish. Different types of events in addition to the normal ceremonies should be considered as attendance at one-off ceremonies can be a good way of engaging with people.

**CHILD SAFEGUARDING:** Elma Holohan gave a report on child safeguarding. She said Garda vetting procedures are still a challenge and the child safeguarding representatives are still working to ensure that all Church volunteers are vetted. Garda vetting needs to be re-done every three to five years.

Cathy Etchingham and Elma attended a diocesan meeting for Parish safeguarding representatives on 2<sup>nd</sup> May. At the meeting the updated diocesan child safeguarding policy was launched and a new booklet was issued to the representatives. The child safeguarding policy, which has been updated to take account of changes in legislation and national guidance, is available on the Parish website.

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** Gearóid Byrne presented the financial report for the year ended 31 December 2017. In the year revenues exceeded expenditure by €16,000. Gearóid said that the level of income is declining in line with the reduced number of people attending Mass on a regular basis. There is a need to look at ways of increasing revenue.

Gearóid said that money needs to be spent on repairs next year and the Finance Committee has recommended that €50,000 be allocated for capital projects together with a further €20,000 for the upgrade of Church lighting and other ancillary projects.

In response to a question, Gearóid stated that the latest financial figures are for the year 2017. No figures are available as yet for the current year. More information on the 2017 figures will be circulated when the final diocesan accounts for the year are published.

**ELECTION OF NEW PPC MEMBERS:** Janet referred to the outgoing PPC members and said it was a wonderful experience working with them. Five nominees were received for the six vacancies on the Council and Janet introduced them and they briefly gave some information on themselves. The nominees are:

Helen Byrne  
Joe McNamara  
Triona Long  
Valerie Sweeney  
Fiona O'Brien

In accordance with the procedure set out in the PPC Guidelines, a ballot was held and all were unanimously elected to the Council.

**QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION:** In relation to increasing revenue the comment was made that some other parishes hold occasional doorway collections in addition to the normal basket collections.

The value of having a list of all the Church volunteers was commented on and it was suggested that it could be used in ensuring that no Church activities get neglected.

While the need for Garda vetting was accepted there were critical comments on the need to have Garda vetting for each activity in every organisation in which a volunteer is involved. This causes problems as confusion arises as to which activity is being vetted. Elma said that in some other European countries one vetting is sufficient for all activities. The need for Garda vetting is restricting opportunities to volunteer for school pupils and also causes difficulty in situations where an overseas priest wishes to officiate at a ceremony here.

The recent Parish Assembly was favourably commented on and the importance of following up was emphasised. Making contact with PPCs in neighbouring parishes could be useful and organising workshops and other means of getting feedback from parishioners would be good.

The AGM was closed with a prayer by Fr John.

**Parish Pastoral Council 2017-2018:**

|                          |                  |                     |                 |
|--------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Janet Daly (Chairperson) | Fr John McDonagh | Fr Cormac McIlraith | Mark Cunningham |
| Karen Hickey             | Gerard Lincoln   | Ronald Long         | Veronica Lyons  |
| Sr Felicia Matola        | Joe McElvaney    | Thomas Moran        | Sr Joan Murray  |
| Allie Pigot              |                  |                     |                 |