

St John the Evangelist, Portobello.

Summary of Open Parish Meeting, 07 May 2017.

On the evening of Sunday 07 May, 34 parishioners gathered with Fr Jock in St John's church hall to hear about recent parish events and to discuss future plans.

Ten Strategic Priorities, on which the Parish Pastoral Council will focus during the coming 18 months, were presented. (see below). Diagrams showing parish governance and aspects of parish life were also given out.

The Strategic Priorities are:

- + faith formation, deepening knowledge and faith, leading to renewed and deepened discipleship
- + support for and encouragement to young people
- + support for parishioners and others with learning difficulties
- + welcoming and encouraging new people to St John's, not least in the light of current and future housing developments.
- + a renewal of our twinning links with Legho, and continued support of Twende Pamoja, along with a clarification of the parish's relationship with the latter.
- + analysis and adoption (where appropriate) of the outcomes and wealth of information which will become available from the three Cluster Meetings
- + raising awareness throughout the parish of opportunities for active involvement in parish life
- + succession planning, including seeking opportunities for continuing parochial involvement in outreach projects
- + redevelopment and redeployment of the Parish House basement
- + developing a parish social life

The meeting then divided into discussion groups to consider the Strategic Priorities. Very lively, focused and positive discussions filled the room for the next 30 minutes! The many splendid comments and suggestions arising from these discussions will be used by the PPC to refine its focus over the summer.

Another positive product of these discussions is that a number of parishioners have offered to be involved with the PPC to support the development and delivery of some of the specific Strategic Priorities. There is such a richness and range of talents, skills and knowledge within our parish.

Fr Jock, in response to points raised during the discussions, gave additional information on:

- + **volunteering** - although we need to learn from the accumulated wisdom of the 'volunteering' model, this must be integrated into the 'Jesus' model, whereby people are 'called' as well as volunteering themselves.
- + **a new Communications sub-group** - this might be useful in creating and distributing new 'seasonal' information cards for the local area (initially for Christmas and Easter services).
- + **the Prayer Room** - renovations are now complete: since it can only be accessed via the upstairs landing in the Parish House, the Parish Team has been discussing how best, gradually, to give parishioners the use of this resource without compromising Fr Jock's privacy or the security of the house. Fr Jock invited everyone to view the Prayer Room at the end of the Open Meeting.
- + **the Open Church initiative** - with CCTV now installed, longer open hours are possible: the initiative continues to be well received.
- + **inclusive Catholicism** - it is vital that all St John's parishioners are welcoming to individuals and groups who may feel marginalised.

Fabric Committee Report by Chris Vinestock (Chair)

- ✦ a rolling programme of maintenance to the church, hall and house is in place.
- ✦ electronic fire alarms within the church, a replacement central heating boiler and options for the redevelopment of the Parish House basement are all being investigated

Finance Council Report by Gary Zoltie (Chair)

- ✦ With RBS closing its Portobello High Street branch, and the next nearest RBS branch in Musselburgh, the Finance Council has begun the major process of transferring all of St John's accounts to the Bank of Scotland in Portobello High Street.
- ✦ St John's Church has 5 people on its payroll. Legislation now requires that these individuals be auto-enrolled for pension provision. The Archdiocese has insisted that this process is outsourced and it will be completed in coming months.
- ✦ The Parish Administrator, Karen Blair, is working with Gary to input many months of financial information to the parish system, another time-consuming task.

Cluster Report by Siobhán Sellar

- ✦ 382 people from the Cluster parishes attended across the 3 Cluster meetings. St John's had the largest representation when the totals of all meetings are combined.
- ✦ A 4-page summary of the 3 meetings has been sent to Archbishop Leo for his consideration.
- ✦ The Cluster Working Group has identified priorities for future development: these include communications, faith formation and young people. These Cluster priorities neatly overlap with the PPC priorities.
- ✦ A Cluster Picnic to Nunraw on Sunday 21 May 2017, 1 - 5pm and a Cluster Mass at 10am on Saturday 03 June 2017 in St John's have been organised.
- ✦ The Cluster will seek to consult the Youth Worker, who is based at St Mary's Star of the Sea, for best practice in engaging more young people.

Fr Jock then described the wide range of parish activities planned for coming months.

- ✦ Confirmations on 30 May 2017, which will be celebrated at St Mary Magdalene's.
- ✦ First Communions on 14 June 2017.
- ✦ Another Baptismal preparation course will start soon, involving several families.
- ✦ A ceilidh for our two parishes is proposed for later in 2017.
- ✦ A Pentecost get-together, to include reflection time, for those who participated in the Retreat in Daily Life.
- ✦ A Liturgy Planning meeting will be convened, involving leaders of all Mass ministry groups (Eucharistic ministers, readers, welcomers etc).
- ✦ Fr Jock and Rev Dr Stewart Weaver (minister of PJPC) will 'swap pulpits' over the weekends of 14 and 21 May 2017.
- ✦ The very successful Portobello Ecumenical Holiday Club will run again at the end of July 2017: last summer, about 70 youngsters attended.
- ✦ St John's will host a piano recital by Father Eleftherious Koumasidis, a Greek Orthodox priest, on Wednesday 14 June 2017.

Following the meeting, and after singing the Our Father, parishioners enjoyed a wonderfully tasty buffet and refreshments.

If you wish to find out more about the Strategic Priorities or wish to get involved to support a particular theme, don't hesitate to contact Fr. Jock or Siobhán Sellar, PPC Chair.