

St Werburgh's Parish Council Meeting 9th Jan. 2025 (Draft minutes v1.0)

Present:

Parish Priest:	Fr Paul Shaw
Finance:	Denise Jones
Housekeeping and Hospitality:	Cristina Jones (via Zoom)
Liturgy:	Lyn Williams & Stephen Tierney
Outreach:	Lal Cook & Tina Bainbridge
Social:	Bernice Meredith & Pat Floate
Altar Servers:	Gerry Tighe
Buildings and Maintenance	Marian McCarthy
Admin Assistant to PP	Stephen Hutchinson

1 - Summary of Meeting

The first third of the meeting focused on planning the parish's 150th Anniversary Celebrations. Key points included forming a planning group with Stuart, Tina and Gerry, and considering events like a Mass of Thanksgiving, a Pilgrimage to Shrewsbury Cathedral, and sprucing up the graves of key figures from St Werburgh's Church from the last 150 years.

Other suggestions included rebranding existing events, creating a prayer book, a recipe book and a bookmark.

The idea of submitting a bid for BBC's Songs of Praise was discussed, emphasizing the need for a compelling story, and this will now be taken forward with a brainstorming meeting. Great thanks to Tom Rozario for his preliminary work on this project. Health and Safety guidelines for winter conditions were also reviewed, including measures for preventing slips and burst pipes.

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The second third of the meeting covered various maintenance and renovation projects. Key points included clearing drain blockages to prevent water damage, re-gassing lighters for candles, and a lighting renovation inside and out, with an architect visit already scheduled. Building work on the porch, led by Steve Smith, is progressing well, with plans to clean and polish woodwork and install Perspex splash backs. The need for fire marshals was emphasized, with 20 out of 41 potential candidates expressing interest. The website update was discussed, with a focus on group responsibilities.

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The last third of the meeting focused on organizing talks and events for the parish. Alex Ferguson was highlighted as an exceptional speaker. A proposal to invite Fr Michael Cowan for a talk on Rene Girard was debated, highlighting the potential to attract a broad audience.

Fr Gerry Proctor's Adult Christian Foundation Course based on James Allison's work was discussed. Plans for future talks included inviting public figures such as football managers like Alex Ferguson. The success of a recent theatre trip was praised, with suggestions for future trips to the Bridgewater Hall and Liverpool Philharmonic. Fundraising ideas for the hospice were debated, including selling hospice cards and organizing a charity event. The potential for a will-making service was discussed, with local solicitors potentially involved. The meeting concluded with the election of Lynn as the new chairman.

2 - Action Items:

1 - Form an organizing committee for the 150th anniversary celebrations, including Fr Paul, Tina, Gerry, Stuart. Schedule a meeting of the 150th anniversary planning group on Thursday January 23rd at 7.30pm. Group to be led by FP **Action: Create agenda for first meeting [Jan 23rd 7.30pm] and send invitations via email to all members of this group.**

2 - Contact each Parish Renewal Group Lead and ask them to propose how they want to mark the 150th Anniversary, with plans submitted by the end of February.

3 - Explore the possibility of having a historian, public figure or speaker give a talk as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations. **Action: Fr Paul/Stephen Tierney**

4 - Follow up with Tom on the progress of the “BBC Songs of Praise” bid and organize a brainstorming session to develop the story/narrative. **Action: Fr Paul**

5 - Ensure the ladders behind the church are moved to the garage for safety. **Action: Stephen Hutchinson**

6 - Keep the church heating on overnight during the exceptionally cold weather.

7 - Email details of outdated website content to the web team so this content can be removed. **Action: Lead of each renewal group & Web team (Chris Proudfoot/Stephen Hutchinson)**

8 - Create Proforma Webpage template that can be used by each Renewal Group to add their contents. Email details of the new website content to Marian. **(Action: Web team (Chris Proudfoot/Stephen Hutchinson) / Lead of each renewal group / Marian.**

9 - Contact renewal groups to ensure representation at the presentation by Chris Proudfoot and Liz Fellows. **Action: Stephen Hutchinson/Chris Proudfoot.**

10 - Send email with renewal group org chart information to Cristina. **[Completed]**

11 - Reach out to Fr Michael Cowen and Fr Gerry Proctor about potential talks on Rene Girard. **Action: Stephen Tierney**

12 - Bernice and Cristina to have a conversation about fundraising ideas for the hospice. **Action: Bernice and Cristina.**

13 - Explore the possibility of bringing in solicitors to offer a will-writing service for parishioners. **Action: Fr Paul**

14 - Organize the next parish walk, including a pub stop at the end. **Action: FP**

15 - Offer the Shrewsbury Cathedral pilgrimage to the deanery and the parish. **Action: Fr Paul / Gerry**

16 - Review and respond to Tom’s proposal for the music programme. **Action: Lyn Williams**

17 - Update the parish notice boards to remove the Christmas-related information. **Action: Stephen Hutchinson**

3 – Outline of meeting

Fr Paul opened the meeting with a prayer and welcomed everyone, noting there were no absences or apologies.

Fr Paul reviewed the minutes from November, with a correction from Gerry about the tenure of Canon Welch. (1944 to 1959)

3.1 Planning for the 150th Anniversary Celebrations

Discussion began on planning the 150th anniversary celebrations with Tina and Stuart expressing interest. It was suggested that individual groups within the steering committee could put forward and plan their own ideas for celebrations. It was emphasized the need for a formal organization committee to document and schedule events, and also the importance of having a clear plan and timeline for the celebrations.

Fr Paul emphasized the need for a meeting to form the executive committee and get input from the parish.

3.2 Suggestions for the 150th Anniversary Celebrations.

Suggestions for the anniversary celebrations were raised including:

- A liturgy of world books and a commemorative bookmark.
- Mass of Thanksgiving
- Pilgrimage to Shrewsbury Cathedral (n.b. Orchard Café has max of 40 seating capacity)
- Sprucing up the graves of significant figures.
- Focusing on Liturgical and Social events to commemorate the 150 years.
- Rebranding existing events like the St Werburgh's evening and Welcome Wednesdays for the Anniversary.
- A prayer book, a Recipe book and garden decorations (e.g. 150 bulbs)
- A bid for BBC's Songs of Praise to be hosted at St Werburgh's to be submitted (see next section)
- High School (space and facilities) or St Columba's Hall for a big social event.

3.3 Songs of Praise bid.

Fr Paul introduced the idea of submitting a bid for Songs of Praise at St Werburgh's emphasizing the need for compelling, uplifting and inspiring stories. Fr Paul shared the BBC's application form for Songs of Praise. Potential story ideas were discussed such as the history of the Church and its impact on the community. It was stated that Tom has already done a great deal of work on the proposal including contacting Parish Members and researching the story of St Werburgh's Church.

3.4 Health and Safety Guidelines.

Fr Paul reviewed the Catholic insurance service guidelines for winter safety including slips and falls, working at height and burst pipes. It was mentioned that we need to move the ladders to a safer location to prevent accidents.

3.5 Buildings and Maintenance.

Key points raised included the following:

- The team responsible for doing the porch work have cleared blockages to prevent water damage, on the flat roofs next to the porch.

- The need to turn off temporary heaters in the chapel and unplug them when not being used.
- Matches were being used to light candles, and the plastic candle lighters need re-gassing. Marian will investigate use of USB-powered plasma candle lighters as an alternative.
- Fr Paul confirmed the completion of the Lighting renovation inside and out with the Diocesan Architect scheduled to visit end of January.
- The outside lighting at the front and side of the house was discussed, with only one of three lights working.
- Marian discussed Steve Smith's porch redecoration team and their progress and plans (plaster stripping, woodwork renovation, cleaning the crucifix)
- The condition and potential replacement of this Crucifix was discussed.
- Access restrictions were mentioned due to the porch redecoration, with the need to use the side access.
- Marian emphasized the importance of having fire marshals and spoke about the progress in recruiting them.

3.6 - Website and Group Responsibilities

It was emphasized the importance of each group maintaining their own webpage on the Church Website, and a central commissary.

An idea proposed was to have a pro forma for this page to ensure consistent design across the website. February will be web team website design month, so expect some good progress in February on this matter.

It was also discussed the importance of linking the website updates with the music platform updates and announcements.

Cristina requested the organizational chart showing the A3 steering committee groups to be emailed to her.

3.7 – Future Talks discussion by Stephen Tierney/Fr Paul

Stephen put forward his proposal to invite Fr Michael Cowen to talk on Rene Girard, emphasizing his influence and potential appeal. Despite reservations from some members about the need to attract a larger audience from outside the Parish, this was seen as a very good idea. Stephen suggested that the talk could be publicized through the diocese and other available networks to attract a wider audience. Fr Paul discussed the qualities of great speakers, mentioning Alex Ferguson as the best he has heard. Fr Paul emphasized that the talk does not need to be cerebral but should focus on the speaker's vision of life. Future speakers could even include Football managers and public figures such as John Barnes, and Wayne Rooney. Stephen Tierney mentioned Fr James Allison's influence on Gerry Proctor's adult Christian formation course. Fr Paul and Stephen Tierney discussed the logistics of presenting Fr Jerry's course to the Parish, including the format and timing.

3.8 – Future Events

Fr Paul praised Tina's recent theatre outing and thanked everyone involved in organizing such a successful and enjoyable outing. Fr Paul emphasized the benefits of train travel for group outings. Potential venues for future outings were discussed such as Bridgewater Hall and the Philharmonic in Liverpool. Planning of the next trip was seen as very important.

3.9 Fundraising for Hospice and Card Sales.

Fr Paul emphasized that if the piety store sells goods on behalf of another charity (e.g. The Hospice), this must be made clear in the sale to ensure transparency. The financial implications of switching to selling Hospice Cards was discussed, and the need to support the repository. The importance of supporting the hospice was discussed, especially with the Church's opposition to the introduction of the assisted dying bill.

3.10 Discussion on Will-Making and Funeral Arrangements.

A suggestion to offer a free will service through the Good Shepherd, with donations to the church was raised. Fr Paul discussed the potential benefits and limitations of such a service. The importance of preparing funeral arrangements and Church Services was discussed. Fr Paul suggested involving local solicitors to help with the will-making process.

3.11 Emergency Contact Cascade and Other Business.

Fr Paul introduced the idea of an emergency contact cascade to ensure communication in case of a critical incident.

Denise mentioned the upcoming Drop In Social on Friday 10th January.

Fr Paul discussed plans for a parish walk and a potential outing to Shrewsbury.

Lyn proposed increasing the number of Liturgy Group Meetings to ensure the work does not accumulate and fall on one person. This way the work can be spread amongst the group.

3.12 Election of New Chairman and Final Prayer

Fr Paul conducted the election of the new Chairman with Lyn being elected. Lyn accepted the position (to chair for the next four meetings), and Fr Paul confirmed the schedule for the next four meetings (Feb, March, April, May).

Fr Paul concluded the meeting with a final prayer and thanked everyone for participating.

The meeting adjourned with a reminder of the next meeting date and time:

Thursday February 13th at 7.30 pm.