

# Minutes of parish meeting No2 discussing the sustainable future of the Parish of St Margret Clitherow

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Chair: HLy

Rev Deacon David Cross

Fr Kevin Trehy

CPe (minutes)

Members of the parish (register taken for Covid)

Apologies were received from two members of the parish, one expressing their wish to continue with the 'Churches Together' coordination and first Holy Communion and the second in relation to delivery of first Holy Communion and children's Liturgy. The chair thanks them for their comment and commitment.

**Father Kevin** opens the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and as we look forwards to the future to our church, please God, and with your help and God's help it will be a good future indeed.

**HLe** opens the meeting introducing the panel and defines the form of the meeting and format and outcomes. David Cross is here to facilitate the meeting this evening. He will also go through the poignant points raised in the last meeting and also then to explain what a missionary parish means and then as this is all up to you as this meeting is about us, to discuss what our strengths, concerns weaknesses and threats are and what opportunities we have. We would be facilitating two things here, one looking at one day we will not have a priest here with us all the time and also, as some of you who were at Mass on Sunday with Canon Harney will have heard, he was telling us that His Holiness the Pope has announced a Synod in Rome in two years' time, and part of what we are doing this evening then will go forwards to this synod as it is a problem for many - the lack of Priests in the priesthood. What Canon was talking about was three aspects for this; -

- 1) Communion, looking at the spirit of God that we get from communion, and that we are in communion with each other and the fact that we can work together to make this parish a great parish and helping to support each other.
- 2) Participation, and what we are able to do to support each other, we all have different talents and abilities and how we can best use.
- 3) Mission, what mission means about us going out in the community and helping them, and wider a field at St Paulinus for instance.

We have to remember that this is about us, this is about St Margret Clitherow and Haxby.

Helen passes to **Rev Deacon David Cross**. It is nice that when we gather together that we remember whose name we gather in. Pope Francis tells us that each time we meet we should

start with a prayer, this is what Bishop Terry read at the first meeting, this was said at the beginning each day at the Second Vatican Council.

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.

Amen.

(The Prayer of the Synod: Adsumus Sancte Spiritus)

A reading from Ephesians then followed.

Reverend David: I don't know about you but I was really encouraged by the last meeting, the positivity, the willingness to share our concerns, our fears, to share the good points. It was really good to hear people mention those things and we tried our best as everybody wanted to have a chance to say what they wanted, without being interrupted or being commented on. Bishop Terry set the scene for us - one thing that I took from it was that he said it was not his intention to see parishes close where there is a worshipping community. He wants that parish to remain open and to me that is a real sign of encouragement for us because we are all going through a time of change and change as we all know is not easy and often, when we go through change, we don't manage change very well. The Bishop is wanting to plan ahead to when we will get to the time where fewer parishes will have actual Parish priests, and be served from different communities and the Bishop is wanting to have a bit of time to work towards that and what came out since that meeting, after I handed out the framework document, we have already had comments from people, that we have had all that for years and by handing it out what we are not trying to say that this is not happening but it's a framework to get us thinking for the way ahead. Others have said some of it needs bolstering up a bit and tonight we will try to do some of that.

If we can turn to those beside us and discuss this point for 5 mins or so, looking at: why are we here, who are we here for, because by the rights of our baptism and our faith we are here to be missionaries to be going outwards-looking and not just be inwards-looking and what I would like you to do is have a chat about what we think it means to be a missionary community. At a time like this we should not be just concerned by what is only going on within the four walls of the church, and that's important, our Mass, liturgy is important but it's not the beginning and end of everything, but being a missionary community is what give light to us as a catholic community but also to those outside. The question I would like you to discuss is what do I think it is to be a Christian community.

Rev Deacon David Cross opens a discussion within the parishioners.

Comment #1: A good example I think would be to support your neighbours and those around you who perhaps do not go to church and trying to stay close to Jesus.

Comment #2: Last time we were here we spoke about caring and sharing, we do well with this within our community but not further afield reaching more vulnerable people, refugees in York. We do not do much of that, other parishes do. We do have an active third world group and I have never come across a parish that has a monthly collection for the world's most needy and that is a real strength here we can do more, and for the homeless, and finally we know one of His Holiness the Popes' great priorities is the environment and we as a community do not do anything in regard to this.

Comment #3: His Holiness the Pope is really keen about is our attitudes to those around us, how we interact with those in the supermarket, the queue in a shop, and trying to share kindness to those around us and looking after other people.

David Cross: I just wanted to root in a bit on the work going forwards. We are here and we are here for other people. I want to spend a bit of time focusing on this Ministries' framework, it's a list of all the things we thought we would need to keep a parish running. Can we think where we have strengths, and where we have weaknesses and gaps, can we spend a bit of time, maybe if we start where we think are really good, if we list them it gives us a bit of a bend of where we are as a parish, then to see where we have gaps, and not to beat ourselves up but to see where we go about plug in those gaps, and can we get more people and who can help. Where are we strong.

Comment #4: As someone who has been part of the parish for a very long time through my two sisters being here, and I am relatively new to York, I would like to say there is a great welcome in the parish and I was very stuck by the way people are welcomed into the church especially when there was tea and coffee after Mass.

Comment #5: I would like to query one element of the document where it defines two groups of eucharistic ministers, we do that with one group where some do go out to those to distribute the sacrament, why are two mentioned?

David Cross – That's fine we put them like that as some people would be happy to be ministers in the Mass and others who feel they have a real vocation.

Comment #6: Like everybody I love this parish, it's a wonderful parish, the thing that worries me are for obvious reasons we are struggling on attendance and it came up on the previous meeting without the children's liturgy and all the things that makes the fabric of this church as a community and I know we have Covid guidelines but I do think we need to try our hardest to move back to the way we were and before the life of the church comes back and the children back. Until we do this, we need to be straight with numbers to do what we are trying to do here until we get back, we will be struggling, we must accelerate our way back to make our parish sing again.

Comment #7: We need to closely look at the role of Sacristan, this is an essential role in any parish, I also go as far to say this should be a paid job as well as I think we have to reach that stage as I think it's going to involve quite a lot of time and effort, there is so much expected to be done on good will, but I think this is an essential role.

Comment #8: Someone mentioned that we would have a template to follow when Fr Kevin retires, but I have been asking others and I wonder if there should be a paid administrator to help Fr Kevin to facilitate all these different roles.

Comment #9: The document gives a lot of details and is very useful but I don't think tonight we are going to get past the first page. I think these meetings needs a roadmap to give us a direction. I know possibly not in Middlesbrough Diocese, but others that have been through similar experiences must have this information - I know where 7 parishes are maintained by one Parish Priest. I think we are jumping ahead in a meeting like this looking at individual roles and what we need is a plan going forwards.

Comment #10: I am a small part of the parish helping in part of the finance side, having read this document I'm struck how much work is done by and how much is carried by the Parish priest and he's a jack of all trades and a master of all, I take up with the previous speaker we need to define what is the way forwards and see how we can actually do it, looking at this document we are talking a lot of people taking 50% of their time and thus we need to look at some being paid and a paid Sacristan. This document ideally should be reduced to smaller documents and work in conjunction with St Paulinus and the Diocese and go forwards from there. We can talk all evening but where is this taking us, we need some action.

David Cross: that is possibly more about the weakness with the document rather than the parish.

Comment #11: All the other parishes that are being faced with this situation could they come and give us guidance to the way forwards?

David Cross: Bishop Terry said that this parish, Saint Paulinus, Filey and Hessle parishes are going through this, some parishes have closed, there are some where they have more than one priest serving in them, what the Bishop is thinking is where there might be one Priest with two or three parishes, we might have one priest with six parishes.

Comment on this note; In my village the Anglican church has one vicar serving ten churches and there is a rota for services at each, they only get one or possibly two services a month. The problem is looking after the fabric of the church and looking after it.

David Cross: That is why this document we gave you is not meant to be prescriptive on what needs to be done but it lists the ministries that we can have in a parish and is intended to show what we need to do to keep things running here, and what can we get by without doing here.

Comment #12: Unless people are coming into church and with this talk of paid positions - where is the money coming from without people being in church paying into the collection.

Comment #13: One key thing is to analyse where we are. We are a great parish but we are not in a great place with church attendance and church life. That's the truth, where we need to know where we are and where we want to be, and the how we get there with the resources and the people and the finance. It leads me to think we do need some paid positions within the Parish, what has been said about finance is critical. The sort of work required here, the resources and where we need to go will need some sort of parish council with people on it with experience of management of some level and that is where we need to start to analyse how we achieve this going forwards and representing across the parish to actually do this work. It is sad the church is not full and lively.

Comment #14: I would like to think about the church for our future generations - we want to save the world for our next generation. To me I really like the church but we really need to think about alternatives when there will be a time where this country will not have any priest. We can look afar but it might be time for the church to look at new holy orders - I do understand the sacrifice of our existing priests, possibly we can attract married men, and young women.

David Cross: Could I just comment on #13 to come back with a comment regarding why we are having large meeting and that is to involve the whole parish community and to try to get some ideas coming forwards. What often happens when a small group of people get together and make all the decisions that affect all the others and they don't play a role in it and feel no ownership and that group turns round a lot may walk. It's nice to have ownership and to try a little bit is what was mentioned about the synod with the journey together that is what it is about, why we have a meeting like this, where we have people wanting A,B and C and others would like X,Y and Z, we get there but by a process of journeying together, gently through then we come to the point we will have a parish council, one of the things the Bishop said was that each parish must have an active Parish Council, the other thing about the framework was Fr Kevin has given us some time to help work this out, but as it's been said tonight, the more we can take some responsibility off Father, which he can rely on us to help take on these, it may help him hang around longer so that the workload is more manageable for him, the idea that there was some paid assistance may help as he can rely upon that take on certain roles, but where is the money is going to come from, how would people respond to the prospect of putting an extra £10 in the collection? So, we should take the opportunity to take on some responsibility and also in working towards the sustainability of the Parish, we should be acknowledging those things that are already going on but also identify some of the gaps. We would like people to think about that> It would have probably helped if I had shared with you earlier when the Bishop asked me to draft some papers for doing this work, and of the things I put together was a series of meetings, an outline of a framework to work with, some of the points that have been made will be part of future meetings like the establishment of the parish council, identifying short and long term pieces of work that we need to do, the more practical task, and by the time we got to the forth meeting we would be sustainable with people who have bought into it, you mike talk to your fellow parishioners where you might discuss taking certain roles, so go to see father to see what we can do, try to talk to the younger people and with the young families that attend having the opportunity to ask them if they could help with certain tasks alongside others, we might be shocked and surprised.

Comment #16: on that point you were raising there, I do not think that we can go from this to another meeting without the basic fabric of this community such as coffee after Mass where all the networking goes on where people are asked to carry out little jobs or to help with tasks. We need a proposed communication channel for want of a better word, we need that dialogue back in the church, with Children's liturgy back, unless we get some of this back, we will not get progress. The other thing is that Father Kevin mentioned the first priority is the Sacristan, and this must be the first thing we do with the terrifying long list of tasks and if we achieve a few of these we will feel more confident to move onto the big things.

Comment #17: I think the whole parish agrees with comment #16, we are not going to move onwards until we can get back to some form of normality.

David Cross – is there any opportunity that we can get coffee back on after Mass, some parishes have started to move slowly here. I think comment #16 said about picking one or two priorities and trying to sort them out and I think that's a really good suggestion, and as Father Kevin says the key role is the Sacristan and we need to work on how that can become a reality very quickly if we can, and for Father to mention it, it must be a concern.

Comment #18: can I say we are putting him in a very difficult position, we should be thinking seriously within the next couple of months as we are putting too much pressure on the priest. I don't think it's very fair and we should start this now.

Comment #19; I was thinking this document is very good, but as you say we can already identify a lot of individuals who do these roles already and or groups of people who do these roles and what this document could have had was a few more pages perhaps a hieratical structure to coordinate these roles as these are individual roles rather than a management structure for it, some sort of committee that can start now to take the pressure off and with teeth so they can make decisions so Father can sit back and relax. Some of the things that has been mentioned are very amiable, but there are some urgent issues, so this (management) group needs to be started soon and perhaps Father Kevin would like to nominate some individuals to be on it, who could start to form a parish council and whop could start immediately. I do administer the church website and e-mail distribution so if anybody wants to have the newsletter by e-mail, please let me know or go onto the contacts page on the website:

<http://stmargaretclitherowYork.org.uk/contact-both-parishes/>

Comment #20: May I point out that St Paulinus has had a parish council for many years if you need any guidance then I'm sure they can assist.

Comment #21: I am slightly at odds with some of the things that are being said here because this document makes me quite depressed I must say, although I see it as totally necessary it's about maintenance of the Parish, that is a great concern and if it could be made to be practical as everyone is suggesting that would be a great relief to the Bishop to think that this Parish could sustain itself, can maintain itself but my spirit grows but the instruction of this evening that in the context of the synod, unfortunately we have a very low key start for this process when you look at the documents prepared for the synod they are about a very different way

of being in church the problem of what we have here looks a cut down roles to make things work, until we can get more information about the synod there will be a tension between these two documents, should we be using the synod documents, which is about bringing in as many people as possible to be served the way of God. Most of us do not know enough and we need further information.

David Cross: The Diocese only learned about this synod in July and have as the weeks gone on got a better understanding of what it will involve. At last weekend's Mass Canon, at the Mass of the Holy Spirit, Pope Francis had asked that every parish would launch the Synod after its launch in Rome, this is a worldwide process and this parish's role is to have a dialogue and that has to happen by the end of November. Each parish needs to deliver their thoughts via the synod process back to the Bishop who will form all thoughts from England then onwards to worldwide. Each Parish has been asked to nominate two parish coordinators to assist the priests and, on the 6th November, there will be a meeting for these coordinators. If we do this right, we can use the synod format as this is a calling from the Pope to be in church in different ways, the theme is journeying together.

At this point we may not have all the answers and I do not want you to get hung up on this this is to help get to the answers to take the workload of Father Kevin, we cannot take the workload off straight away, those who wish to help need to discuss this with Father and the formation of a Parish council, we will not solve this in a big meeting but we will get into the journey together here, and the suggestion that we listen the scripture, the holy spirit and above all each other which is what the Synod is about, it's not about we are right and you are wrong, it is about journeying together and with the help of the holy spirit going out into the community and helping each other. Two important points here, to explore this idea of a Parish Council with Father Kevin and also to look at how we can provide a Sacristan which is the important role and for Father to mention this indeed shows how much its required, and lastly to try to get tea and coffee back on after mass.

<https://www.synod.va/en.html>

<https://www.synod.va/en/documents/english-version-of-the-preparatory-document.html>

Comment #22: A lot of us will be in agreement with comment #7 We do understand why people have slipped away over the last year or so, amongst in every community there are those who feel confident in going out and some less so and some parishes there are certain masses that are putting on the tea and coffee and other masses not, so as to ensure people can choose and grow in confidence. Secondly, I agree with the need for a Parish Council and there are different ways of doing this, comment #14 talks about having people who have a background of management, there is a lot of information available from the bishops' conference 10 years ago whoever is in that role will need to study this.

David Cross: one word of caution about lading a parish council with professionals, where does that leave the people in the parish who feels they might have something to offer but may not be a professional, with the synod the Pope asks we engage with the hearts and minds of the

people we need to be careful that we are inclusive as possible. We have time from tonight and this is how we as parishioners engage with Father here.

Comment #23: I would like to ask that the minutes are distributed to everybody and if we have a parish council then the community can feed into it with ideas and suggestions and what comes out from the council are communicated back to them as these are decisions being made on behalf of the community.

Comment #24: call for anyone who wishes to subscribe to the parish e-mail please contact via the parish website. Also, can we look to distribute the minutes to those not on E-mail.

David Cross: thanks for the contributions for tonight's meeting.

Chair: With thanks to David, when I was asked to chair this meeting, it struck me at mass where the Synod was announced it sounded that the two processes are similar, and like others I do not know how the synod process works and what we do.

With thanks to David and links to the Synod pathway is available via the Bishop's website. Can we make a date for the next meeting?

<https://middlesbrough-diocese.org.uk/from-i-to-we-a-synodal-church-communion-participation-and-mission/>

Comment #25: Can we have another meeting without any more actions, and also do we need to book for these sessions?

David Cross: I do not mind if I do not attend the next session?

Comment #26: Is it necessary to book? Surely if we have been to previous meetings, we are entitled to attend without booking?

Comment #27: I think we need to be directed and from Middlesbrough and how and what we should have direction by David Cross at least.

Chair: I think there is a mixed consensus regarding booking, but it was agreed that we should book to attend. David Cross suggested that he does not need to attend the next meeting if we would like, it was the consensus of the meeting that he should be in attendance to be the conduit to the Bishop. It was agreed to make the next meeting 10<sup>th</sup> November at 7pm.

Comment #28: I would say that David is welcome if he wants to however the attitude that we need someone to tell us what to do is the problem, we don't, if we are going to take responsibility for church, we do not need people telling us what to do.

Chair: Can I interrupt, at the beginning of this (and I understand you had indicated you would be late) I outlined that this was to be for us, Haxby and St Margaret Clitherow church, and it is important to have somebody like David with us so that we can know what the Bishop is thinking and what some of us may miss from Middlesbrough.

Comment #29: Please can we have a structured agenda for the next meeting.

Father Kevin closes the meeting with a prayer.