

Parishes of Sacred Heart, St Antony's and St Bonaventure's

'Parishes in Communion for Mission'

Meeting 21st June 2025

10.00 am

Newman Hall

Minutes

Present: parishioners from all three Parishes

The meeting was opened with welcome and Opening Prayer

1. Reflection by Canon Tom

Canon Tom shared reflections on his early ministry at St Bonaventure's parish which started 30 years ago when he was appointed as a curate to St Bon's shortly after his Ordination, and where he stayed for 3.5 years. He stated that it is an enormous privilege and challenge of looking after parishes of SB, SH and SA. Canon Tom talked about the principle of collaborative ministry, where parishes will begin working in collaboration with parishioners and the clergy to ensure that we all exercise the call of our Baptism to be ministers to one another. He said that it is a great opportunity for us to continue growing in that experience of enabling SB, SH and SA to be able to be thriving parishes in collaboration with one priest but not at the direct command of the parish priest.

2. Presentation of PPC at St Bon's and St A's & SH (Roger Layet and Mary Moore)

Members of both pastoral councils present at the meeting introduced themselves.

Roger Layet reported that SH and SA's council got under way this year and had 4 meetings so far. The group had discussions on how the council was seeking to fulfil a local role within Pope Francis's call for synodal church - 'collaborative ministry'. Some examples were given on what have been achieved so far: rota established to ensure there were flowers at SA's, rota for welcomers at 9.15am Mass. The opportunity for young people to attend the social and spiritual groups at the Cathedral and St Mary on the Quay was published and advertised. Bristol North West Food bank contributions were publicised and collection box moved to the narthex to increase visibility and collections. List of activities that go on in the parish along with the person to be contacted about each of them is being compiled. Two-way communication between the council and CT was agreed and need for younger members noted, resulting in 2 younger members accepting the invitation to the pastoral council.

Mary Moore reported that the main focus of SB group, which also started under a year ago, was to establish its purpose, the parish mission and the role of its members within that. One of the outcomes was St Bon's Open Morning, which involved Mass, coffee, socialising, and presentations from SB parish groups. There's been work on building strong links between the parish and 2 schools: St Bon's Primary and St Bede's Secondary school, as well as development of a youth group or looking at how to welcome newcomers more effectively.

3. Table discussion regarding priorities for all parishes and feedback

Parishioners discussed in mixed groups about 'Priorities in their parishes and why?' A representative of each table was asked to share an account of discussion. Some points included:

- Issues of community, consolidated across the 3 parishes, the hope that people will continue to attend

- Transition period - what things will be like, how we hold people and support people to continue to do their roles?
- Need for volunteers, all to step up and do things
- Existing parishes, how do we meet the need of parishioners who cannot come to Masses anymore?
- Ageing congregation, what to do to retain young people in the church?
- The priest being in the school is the key piece of evangelisation
- Addressing the root cause – why do we have the lack of priest?
- Change a mindset that although we have 3 parishes, we are 1 community

4. Questions directed to Canon Tom

CT answered questions from SB Pastoral council:

Could a Eucharistic service by a deacon be held in addition to one Sunday Mass? – Canon Tom said that although technically it could, but it is not within the Bishop's will and can happen only in extreme situations (i.e. Priest unable to say the Mass or where supply cannot be found)

Will there be any weekday Masses at St Bon's? – Yes, there will be a Mass at on Thursday 9.15am.

What about school Masses for both St Bons primary school and St Bede's? - CT had a meeting with Sarah B (St Bons HoS) and confirmed that there will be continuation of school Masses and is looking forward to being involved with both: primary and secondary schools.

What will happen at Christmas and during Holy Week? – CT will think about how this can be managed; i.e. for Triduum Masses - a probability of 3 major services – 2 in one parish and 1 in the other, this could alternate; the same with Christmas Masses.

Will St Bons retain its own separate First Communion preparation programme and First Communion Masses? – Yes, FHC preparation will continue at SB as it will at SH. CT look after catechises at SH with help of the parents, and SB has a catechist, but some input would be needed for the preparation of the children. The same goes for Confirmation.

Could we have some joint social events with the other two parishes, to get to know each other? – Yes of course. Newman Hall seems to be a better venue because of a good accessibility.

We'd be happy to work together and share resources, eg. music for liturgies, social events. – That's great, the more the better. Would be great to have mixed resources.

What kind of support do you (Canon Tom) need from the various parish groups to make your role manageable? – Most of all patience!, love and support.

Will you let us know, please, which areas you'd like to be consulted about, and which you'd like parish groups to get on with? – (the involvement is paramount). CT to be consulted about buildings, finance, liturgy in worship. Happy to be asked questions when they arise.

We understand that we'll be keeping an administrator based at St Bons? – Yes, Joanna at SB and Jo at SH

Will we continue to have a separate parish newsletter? (obviously advertising events in the other parishes too, and Mass times in all three churches). – Yes

Other questions:

Who are CT's backups? (to say Masses in his absence) – Active retired priests.

Will Deacons continue in their roles? – Yes.

Food Pantry at SB will operate as it currently does.

A question arose about how SB church will be opened and closed, to which CT responded that this would operate on a rota. The church to remain open as much as possible.

How would you like to be addressed? – Preferably Canon Tom but to say Father is fine as well.

Do each Parish carry on doing their rotas? – Yes, adjusting to the new Mass times.

How will we battle our financial problems? – Finances are a challenge to all 3 parishes, and it may well get worse with the reduction of Masses and potential loss of parishioners. CT pointed out that there is a shortage of clergy in the Diocese, but the problem is that we've got too many churches – having 7 churches less than 5 miles away, 5 churches less than 3 miles away, 3 churches less than 2 miles away.

Times Of Masses – CT reported that after about 6 weeks, parishioners had plenty of opportunities to respond to the Mass time questionnaire. There's been 300+ responses. CT announced that on the last Sunday of September, 28.09.25, the Mass at SH will be on Sunday at 9.15am, the Mass at SB will be on Sunday at 11am. Answering an earlier question on how we fit people, CT suggested that there is capacity for extra seating at SH if needed, 20 – 30 places.

CT to attend PPC meetings - on 16th July at SB and on 6th July at SH.

The meeting closed with the Final Prayer and Blessing by Canon Tom.