

St Margaret Clitherow Parish Meeting – Tuesday 13th March 2012

Present: Ray James, Margaret James, Maureen Fraser, Chris Elwood, Peter Thompson, Peter Vetch, Audrey Yates, Fr. Andrew, Fiona Romano, Ann Davies, Helen Elwood, Maureen Keep, Barbara Thompson, Clive Midgeley, Ray Snape, Victoria Fattorini, Barrie Wilkinson, Mgr. Michael McQuinn, Angela Soper, Clare Guest, Ann Sugden,

Apologies: Cath Barclay, Joe Pope, Pauline Copeland

Minutes of last meeting: The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Boundary Changes Mgr McQuinn gave an overview of the proposed changes setting them in a historical perspective. He described the growth of the church during the 20th century and how the numbers of parishes had grown as people moved out from the industrial conurbations. In the mid 20th century there were plenty of priests following an influx of priests from Ireland and new parishes were able to be developed in response to growing demand. This resulted in a “higgledy-piggledy” pattern of parishes with very variable congregations and very uneven work-loads for priests – this uneven pattern has become more pronounced as, in recent years, church attendance has dropped and the number of priests has also fallen.

The Parishes for People initiative of 2004 was a response to this problem. At that time it was projected that the number of priests would fall from 123 in 2003 to just 75 in 2018, based on planned retirements at 75 and a conservative view of the likely number of vocations. Principles were established that a priest should ideally look after 500 people, undertake an average of 61 baptisms and funerals per year and typically say three Sunday masses. The initiative developed plans to adjust the distribution of parishes and priests to achieve this over the forthcoming years.

The plan for the Dales was that there would be parishes in Skipton, Settle, Barnoldswick & Pately Bridge. This plan was not to be forced but was to be implemented progressively as priests retired. Bentham & Settle have already merged following the retirement of the former priest at Settle, and the impending retirement of Fr. Parfitt at Broughton has triggered the next stage of the rationalisation.

Given the geography and distribution of people, amalgamation of Broughton with another parish is not an option and therefore it is necessary to close down the Broughton parish and divide it between Skipton & Barnoldswick as explained in the Bishop’s letter (subject to consultation – it is likely that the proposed boundary changes will be modified to make Thornton in Craven part of St Stephens parish). The chapel at Broughton Hall will remain open in the light of its historic significance. The parish assets will be divided equally, but the chapel at Earby will transfer to Barnoldswick parish.

Mgr McQuinn emphasised that this was not about individual priests, but rather about parish structures and how they would be served. However he indicated that it is the current intention that the current priests would continue, and that St Stephen’s would also be supported by Fr. Pat as at present.

St Margaret Clitherow Parish Meeting – Tuesday 13th March 2012

He also emphasised that this was a genuine consultation process – that there was a need for change but that the Bishop was keen to take account of the views of parishioners in finalising the proposals.

Fr Andrew added that between them he and Fr. Pat would have to cover six masses on a Saturday/Sunday – one at Broughton, three at Skipton, one at Threshfield & one in Harrogate. This would result in a need to change Mass Times as the pattern of Masses had to be capable of being supported by one priest if necessary.

The Chair thanked Mgr McQuinn for his very clear explanation of the background and the proposals and then asked the meeting for questions and comments.

Chris asked if the new Mass Times had been decided. Fr. Andrew stated that a key part of the consultation process was to canvass views on proposed Mass time changes and what would work best for people. He had originally been thinking of 8.30 at Broughton, 10.00 at Skipton and 11.30 at Threshfield. Based on feedback he had already received he was considering an alternative of 8.30 at Broughton, 9.30 at Skipton and 11.00 at Threshfield.

There was a general view from the meeting that it was highly desirable that Mass at Threshfield should be no later than at present, and Chris asked whether the pattern might be reversed with 8.30 at Threshfield and 11.00 at Broughton. The pros and cons of this were discussed including benefits for visitors, potential issues with bad weather in winter and the fact that this would interfere with the Latin Mass at Broughton – which will continue to be said by Fr. Parfitt.

Barrie expressed concern that making the Mass later would result in a fall in Mass attendance – and that might threaten the continued existence of St Margaret's. Mgr McQuinn said that St Margaret's was "the light on the lamp stand" in Wharfedale and that the proposals showed that the diocese was committed to Threshfield.

Peter Thompson made the point that it was critical that the morning Mass at Skipton was at a time that suited families with children as they represent the future of the Church. The importance of the Sunday evening Mass at Skipton was also discussed. Barrie asked when the decision would be taken and Mgr. McQuinn said that it needed to be in place when Fr. Parfitt retired in the Autumn. Fr. Andrew made the point that St Stephen's parish would cover a very wide area and would need to be served by a relatively young priest.

The Chair asked Fr. Andrew who would make the decision – the Bishop will make the boundary change decision, but the decision about Mass times is Fr. Andrew's – taking into account the views of all the parishioners as far as possible.

The Chair asked the meeting if they felt that views about Mass times had been adequately covered – and people confirmed that this was the case. He then asked if there were any other questions relating to the Boundary Changes – the meeting had no further questions.

St Margaret Clitherow Parish Meeting – Tuesday 13th March 2012

- Treasurer's report:** The balance at the bank stood at £6424-47; cash on hand was £38.17. An invoice is due for the mower servicing. The roof repairs will cost £4000 – to be funded 50/50 with St Stephen's – although St Stephen's will not pay their share until the end of the financial year.
- Church Maintenance:** The scaffolding for the roof repairs has been erected. The work will start when the weather is suitable. It will take approximately one week.
- Recent Activities**
- The Coffee Morning at Church House raised £403 for Church Funds
 - The Lenten Lunch raised £193 for Christian Aid – special thanks are due to Cath & Pauline who did an amazing job serving the soup in spite of a power cut.
- Future Activities:**
- Chris proposed the next works outing should be at the Racehorses in Kettlewell – price £14.50. This was agreed – a date of Tuesday 15th May was proposed. Chris to confirm with Kevin. Barrie reminded the meeting to ensure that they had their passports in order before venturing up the dale.
 - The Grassington Festival concert in St Margaret's will be on Saturday 16th June – programme not yet confirmed. Teas to be served.
 - The Buckden Singers Concert will be on 21st July at 7.30 p.m.
- Flower Festival**
- The Flower Festival is to be held at St Margaret's this year. An organiser is required. Fiona offered subject to understanding what is involved, and getting help and support from other parishioners. Fiona will discuss with Ann & Vicky. The weekend of 14th & 15th July was agreed as the date.
- Any other business:**
- The listing of St Margaret's by English Heritage looks likely to go ahead.
 - Easter Service times to be confirmed, based on previous years
 - Reverb – talk by Youth Worker delayed due to the Bishop's letter – to be re-arranged
 - Service to be held at Burnsall on St Wilfrid's Day (13th October) – details to be confirmed
 - The Keighley Catenians will join us at Mass on 1st July – circa 40 people
- Date of Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be held on Monday 21st May 2012 at 7.30 p.m. at Church (preceded by Mass at 7.00 p.m.)