

**PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL OF OUR LADY'S CHURCH ACOMB AND  
ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH GREEN HAMMERTON  
Minutes of the meeting of 7 February 2017**

**Present:** David Barber, Joe Dale, John Kesterton (Chair), Kath Lyall, Kevin Melody O.Carm, Rosemary Phizackerley, Nan Saeki.

The meeting began at 7.35 pm.

**1. Opening prayer**

The opening prayer was said by Kevin Melody

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from David Copeland, Rebecca Kramm, Marek Lichtarowicz, Giles Nightingale, Amanda Sturdy, Peter Warren and Claire Young.

**3. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting of 15 November 2016 were approved as a correct record.

**4. Matters arising from the minutes**

- Kevin Melody reported that a microphone and portable speaker had been delivered for use in the parish hall.
- In answer to a query, Rosemary Phizackerley agreed to circulate an updated list of member contact details.
- Kevin Melody reported that a parents and toddler group would be set up using church premises, but would not be organized by Our Lady's Church.
- Giles Nightingale was unable to attend the meeting to give his presentation on evangelization. The Chair clarified that he would be invited to give it to the next meeting, following discussion with him about the format.

**5. Amendments to the Constitution**

A clause was proposed for addition to the Constitution to read:

'Meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council shall be open unless the Council resolves to go into closed session for a particular item of business. Non-members of the Council may not vote, but may speak if invited to do so'.

It was also proposed to delete paragraph 2.5 concerning the duties of the secretary which were duplicated in paragraph 3.7.

It was noted that changes to the Constitution required the attendance of two thirds of the membership of the Parish Pastoral Council, not present at the current meeting.

**Agreed**

That the amendments to the current Constitution be carried forward to a meeting convened with at least two thirds of the membership for approval.

**6(i) Reports for information.**

**Youth Group**

Claire Young sent a report updating the meeting on the next meeting of the Youth Group planned for 12 February. The meeting would include arts and crafts. Refreshments would be provided. Joe Dale reported that more information would be provided about future meetings.

**Agreed:**

That the update and information be noted.

**(ii) Access audit: update**

Rosemary Phizackerley reported that MIND had emailed to say that funding could become available in the summer for training awareness on mental health issues for faith organizations in the city. They thanked Our Lady's Church for their willingness to take part and would be in touch when the funding became available.

It was suggested that action be taken to tape the steps leading to the altar and lectern to ensure that partially sighted people could see them. Kevin Melody advised members that a more permanent form of aid or adaptation would require consultation with the diocese. As the tape was removable, this would not be necessary. The Chair noted that safety was paramount, however, there would be an impact on the aesthetic view of the church. It was noted that no objections had been made so far to the tape attached to the steps to the left of the altar.

**Agreed**

1. That the offer by York Mind for future training be accepted.
2. That Rosemary Phizackerley undertake further consultation with a view to taping the steps to the altar and lectern.

**7. Bereavement Group**

Under the item for evangelisation, a discussion by the PPC had considered available support for people dealing with the death of a family member. A suggestion had been made to form a group to support bereaved people.

In relation to support at funerals, Kevin Melody had requested in the parish newsletter that, when possible, parishioners attend the masses to support bereaved families. This was particularly helpful when few people had come to a funeral or when families were unfamiliar with the liturgy. Kevin Melody reported that, in his experience, he had encountered a wide variety of knowledge about the church liturgy when visiting the families of people who had died. His role included providing a point of contact before a funeral and visiting the family about six weeks afterwards.

Following a death, information was provided by hospitals (a booklet) and funeral directors were very helpful. The Chair suggested that website information could also prove useful.

**Agreed**

That Kevin Melody provide information for people making funeral arrangements on the website.

**8. Inclusion and disability – talk by Lynda Corker from Parents and Children Together (PACT).**

Lynda Corker gave a talk on how to make Our Lady's church more accessible. She described the access audit as 'a work in progress'. Lynda's talk covered the following points: the difference between the medical and social models of disability, the legal basis for equality, employment for young disabled people and attitudes towards hidden disability. Lynda explained that she had extensive experience of working with younger disabled people including in her own family. In spite of such experience, it was important to remember that it is not possible to view other people's lives through our own lenses.

Lynda began by explaining that, traditionally, the medical model of disability defined a disabled person in terms of whatever was 'wrong' with them (described as an impairment). Most of us have an impairment of one kind or another, which places us all on a continuum of disability. The medical model saw disability as a sickness. We can be born with an impairment, or we can acquire one; it may be transitional or long lasting. Lynda highlighted the traditional view of the Catholic church which too often uses the medical model of disability by defining a disabled person as sick and as someone who is seeking a cure.

By contrast she emphasized the social definition of disability as 'being wonderful as you are' and empowering people rather than stereotyping them as victims. According to the current social

model of disability, we only become disabled when society fails to provide the facilities we need. The social model of disability does not look at what is 'wrong' with someone, but says that we only become 'disabled' when we are excluded from society through its organizations, attitudes or physical barriers. Society often disables people, sometimes knowingly, sometimes unknowingly. For example, when the microphones in church do not work it follows that we cannot hear what the priest is saying. The solution is to make the necessary adjustments by fixing the microphones so that people can hear, and are thereby included in the mass.

More hopefully, there are now greater moves towards more collaborative working between groups in the community to enable all of us to live a more autonomous life. Although lack of funding for community care and the NHS is a worrying factor, there is still much to be optimistic about.

Lynda then focused on employment from which many disabled people are excluded. She cited the statistic that only 6% of people who are learning disabled are in work. She described this figure as a sad indictment of our society. Her organization, Parents and Children Together (PACT) had worked alongside young people who have many gifts to bring to the workplace. Lynda cited the example of one young person who worked in a shop dealing with music and entertainment merchandise. That person was refused permanent employment because, although he could do most of the job excellently, he could not manage a few of the tasks required. Lynda suggested that this kind of problem could be resolved if tasks within any given job are re-divided to be distributed in a way that allows everyone to benefit. She suggested that we are too often willing to follow procedures, but we forget to challenge them. If we thought more creatively, we could then do something about the statistic that excludes so many people from work. When people are excluded from the workplace, they are often excluded from life.

Often, if asked, disabled people can provide their own solutions to allow them to do a job. Lynda provided the example of a young man who applied for work with the Children's Society. He was an excellent candidate apart from his inability to write up the necessary records when taking children out into the community. PACT asked him what he required to undertake this task and he replied that he used a dictaphone. This was a satisfactory adjustment that enabled him to fulfill all the requirements of the job. Given a small amount of flexibility, many young people go on to further achievements in the job market. Practical adjustments may be small but they have a significant outcome.

In the past, PACT worked with transport, leisure centres and schools. Schools were expected to be tolerant of children with learning disabilities, but had sometimes only offered a token compliance with equality law. PACT had undertaken an audit for schools, which offered them advice and avoided a 'tick box' response to dealing with disability. Lynda pointed out that some children manage mainstream education whilst others need specialized schooling. However, this separation can make children feel as if they are set apart from their peers. She offered the example of a single parent on a limited income, who has three or four kids, can't communicate easily, is not on Facebook and does not have a car. Trapped in these kinds of limitations, children become isolated and lonely and cannot set up ordinary friendships.

Here, the church provides an important area of inclusiveness because it remains one of a few areas where people from all social groups get together. Activities such as the church's coffee after mass become particularly important. It is a part of the community where all ages are involved. As a society we are becoming too age segregated, separating people into young versus old, where we need to be more inclusive

Highlighting the legal basis of rights for disabled people, Lynda pointed out that a lack of case law does not provide a good basis on which to challenge attitudes. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was passed in 1995, and was then included in the Equality Act of 2010. These laws

came into force long after other equality legislation, because disabled people were often seen as 'invisible'. Under the law, service providers and employers are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' but there are still few cases from which to mount a challenge when discrimination occurs. Under the Equality Act, churches are expected to make adjustments that are affordable and reasonable. This is not limited to making the building wheelchair accessible, but covers all aspects of disability.

By way of example, Lynda focused on children with challenging behaviours such as autism together with their parents and carers. In the past mothers who brought autistic children for baptism, have said that they felt uncomfortable about bringing them back to church because they are stared at if the child becomes noisy or disruptive. Autistic children can be upset by unexpected sounds such as the sudden ringing of a bell during mass. Some parents say that people in the congregation view church as a quiet place and are not understanding of children's behavior. Some mothers carry a card explaining that their child is autistic. Lynda pointed out that this was about educating people to be tolerant and understanding. The Chair asked if we should challenge the 'one size fits all' mentality. Lynda endorsed this view.

A welcoming approach with reasonable adjustments could reduce the anxieties of parents who may hesitate to bring a child to church fearing a critical or hostile reception. Lynda highlighted the existence of these 'hidden disabilities' which challenges the church to question who they manage to contact and who they fail to reach. Other organizations such as cinemas provided special film performances for autistic people and for mothers and babies. The church could investigate ways in which they might imitate this good practice. Members considered that there was a general, although not a complete, acceptance that children can be noisy in church, particularly during the 9.30 am mass and hoped that any specific issue that came to light would meet with a constructive response.

Kath Lyall reported that members of the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) visit older people in their homes. Members were reminded that the Mass for the Sick on the first Friday of each month was available for anyone who wanted to come along.

Nan Saeki highlighted the isolation of carers who often needed practical help and respite to allow them to continue looking after a disabled relative. Lynda pointed out that this was a skilled job and could not be provided by 'the person next door'. Social care was a facility which was becoming very stretched, and its lack caused parents and carers to become stretched in turn, and in some instances, to crack.

Lynda emphasized that no-one has all the answers, but it is important in any given situation where you do not know the solution, to find out who might. Many of the issues are difficult and require resources that are not always available, but this is no reason to stop trying. Becoming aware of hidden disability was important as was raising awareness of disability issues and understanding who we are reaching and those we fail to reach. We should ask ourselves 'How are we making our environment better and more accessible?'

### **Agreed**

1. That Lynda Corker be thanked for her talk, and possibly be invited back to give another talk in the future.
2. That Kevin Melody liaise with Rosemary Phizackerley about the signage guiding people in and around Our Lady's church.

## **9. Music and the Liturgy**

The Chair reported that:

- a set of additional Glorias and mass settings was available together with additional hymns to increase the range of music.

- Hymn singing had been restored to the mass on Sunday evening.
- The beginning of the cycle of children preparing for First Communion had taken place the previous Sunday.
- Kevin Melody reminded the meeting that a review audit for music and the liturgy had been agreed.

**Agreed**

That the item for a review audit of music and the liturgy be retained on the agenda.

**10. Any other business**

**Care for our Common Home**

Nan Saeki asked if the PPC would like to receive reports from Care for Our Common Home. Kevin Melody agreed that they should be sent to Council meetings and requested the information for the parish website.

**Agreed:**

That reports on Care for Our Common Home be brought to meetings of the Parish Pastoral Council and forwarded to Kevin Melody for the parish website.

**Fundraising for St Leonard's Hospice**

Kevin Melody asked that money from the tea/coffee fund on 5 and 12 March be donated to St Leonard's Hospice towards their fundraising tea and cake sale on 11/12 March.

**Agreed**

That funds from the tea/coffee morning on 5 and 12 March be donated to St Leonard's Hospice.

**11. Closing blessing**

Kevin Melody gave the closing blessing.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm.

Dates of future meetings:

Wednesday 15 March 2017 **venue to be confirmed**

Monday 22 May 2017

Tuesday 11 July 2017

Wednesday 13 September 2017