

Act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God (Micah 6.8)

Rather than using the normal structure of parish meetings (with reports in turn from different areas of parish life), **the parish meeting on November 11** was structured around the famous text from the prophet Micah quoted above, because, as Fr. Rob explained, that invited us to focus on the three areas of our Mission and Witness, our Pastoral Care and Spirituality. Accordingly, those present (something over 40 people) were asked to choose which area they wished to look at and select the appropriate group. Fr. Rob explained that he felt it was time for parishioners to take a greater role in animating parish life – partly in anticipation of future reduced numbers of clergy in the deanery and partly because of his own increased responsibilities now that he is Dean of Weybridge. There was a healthy buzz during the meeting, but any new initiatives are very dependent on people coming forward to make them happen and see them through. Some of the ideas which emerged included:

Communications – It was suggested we might make greater use of the website to reach people, and offer e-mail circulation of the newsletter, etc. – Would *you* welcome this service? A display of photographs of key parish contacts in the church might be useful, too [we hope to put this in hand], together with explanation of parish groups and activities (remodelling our displays in the porch, revising our publications, etc.). Do *you* have skills in this area which you could offer?

Welcome – new parishioners’ parties every few months were proposed (one is planned for Thursday, January 27th, in fact) and it has been suggested that we create a proper rota for the welcoming ministry (rather than the informal system of signing up week-by-week): would *you* be willing to take on that role every few weeks? A need for visiting of those on the margins and those who might be drifting away was suggested: would *you* be willing to help with parish visiting, contacting newcomers in your road, etc.?

Reflecting On Faith – people wanted opportunities to discuss our faith, especially areas of doubt or uncertainty, as well as to learn about other faiths. We need to invite young people to get more involved and help them to grow in faith. The *Journey In Faith* group was spoken of warmly by one participant – but we need new volunteers to help with catechesis, teaching faith and work with our young people: could *you* help in any of these areas?

Spirituality and Worship – the need for **times of silence** (during mass and elsewhere) was mentioned – and Advent should offer a chance to bring more stillness into our worship (and our personal prayer – our own responsibility, of course!). Other suggestions which came up were an appetite for **retreat days**, **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament** (but at what stage of the day or week?), clarifying **opening times** for the church building (it is open until 1pm on days when the nursery is in operation and for services on other days); the possibility of **shared reading** (book clubs, etc.); the suggestion of a **parish spirituality and theology library**; opportunities for **prayer for healing**.

Lastly, it was recognised that it is necessary to keep people better informed of parish projects and developments, and so short reports were offered on three particular projects:

Helmut Wagner talked about **the opening of the water project in Buyamba**, our twinned parish in Uganda, the culmination of 4 years' hard work. This involves pumping water from 52m below ground into 24000 litre tanks, after filtering out iron and manganese. This means a huge improvement for villagers, who previously walked up to 15 miles to collect water. The plant can supply water for up to 4000 people (as opposed to the current 2000 villagers).

James Hayes spoke about **renewing the church fabric**. Flat roofs have been repaired and coated with anti-solar paint to prevent cracking. Water penetration has damaged electrical systems in the nursery area and these will be replaced around Christmas. The heating in the Stevenson Room is also due to be replaced with heat exchangers (more economical and safer in a nursery since there are no hot surfaces). The main church heating should be replaced next year. Although this will delay further reordering of the chapels, work is continuing towards this objective.

Eoin Connaughton spoke about **finances**. We currently have £135K in reserves which is £35K up on last year. Donations (by their nature unpredictable) were up but income from hall lettings down. A total of £230K was budgeted for renewals in coming years, which will create a significant deficit by 2012 – some of which could be covered if more parishioners would gift-aid donations!

In short, the parish is in a healthy position, but very dependent on new volunteers to contribute energies and skills in order to ensure that we continue to grow in our life and witness together. Please do offer to get involved!