

**Minutes of an extra-ordinary meeting of the Pastoral Parish Council of
St Cuthbert and the First Martyrs of Rome**
held on Wednesday, 14th February 2018 at First Martyrs' Hall.

Meeting commenced at 5.30 pm

Present: Anne Balson (AB)-Chair, Yvonne Coppin (YC), Hermie Davy (HD), Roxanna Drake (RD), Mary Gilmartin (MG), Gregory Knowles, Philip Walsh (PW), James Wierzbicki (JW) and Jo Geoghegan (JG)-Secretary.

1 Welcome and Opening Prayer

AB welcomed everybody to the meeting and asked Gregory to lead us in an opening prayer.

2 Apologies for Absence

Christine Walker (CW)

3 Human Beings and Human Relationships

GK thanked everybody for coming to the extra-ordinary meeting of the PPC which he had asked for in order to discuss changes in the parish and by extension our primary school, changes which are affecting the activities in the parish. He introduced his thoughts and there was discussion around them.

When the Bishop of Leeds visited the parish last year he was pleased with what he found and enjoyed meeting the parishioners. He was aware of the changing demographic of the parish which is reflecting the demographic of the area of Heaton and Manningham where the parish is situated. Changes have been happening over a period of time, about 15-20 years, and these are not overnight phenomena. Change is on-going.

Some of the changes were identified as follows:-

- There remains a body of people who live within the parish boundary. There are new parishioners from time to time
- People have moved out of the area to live but still come to Mass here and play an active part in the parish
- People have moved away because they have found work elsewhere
- The population of the parish is ageing and so in the course of time do die
- Parishioners don't come to church because of physical disability and family can't/won't bring them to Mass
- There was a large Pilipino population in the parish. They came to the UK to work in the NHS, our parish was near to the BRI and so this is where they settled initially. Many are still here but others have moved on because some came here as a stepping stone to the USA and other places such as Leeds where there are families. Some have made their home in the neighbouring parish of St Matthews where they support Fr. Canice McGinn
- There is a Syro-Malibar hub in Preston now which has attracted followers
- There are other minority groups who are regular attenders including a small number of Slovaks
- There is an movement of young people away from this area as they seek more opportunities elsewhere
- The economic background of residents in the parish is getting poorer, less "middle class" fewer people volunteer
- There are fewer marriages conducted in the parish-lack of younger people/couples not getting married

At a recent Deanery Conference these same changes were identified.

Our primary school also identify with the changes.

All are noticing that there is an effect on the life of the parish and school.

Evangelical Churches, e.g. The Abundant Life Church and the Sunbridge Road Mission seem to be thriving and have been attracting younger people for many years.

The shared observations met with the agreement of the meeting.

What does this mean for us a parish?

The Catholic Parish should be a place of community. It is recognised that there is a tremendous amount of work done in the parish which reaches out into its community-almost too many to recognise but things like Messy Church, Inn Churches. There are many Parish activities-visiting Eucharistic Ministers, SVP, transport rota, church cleaning, flower team, children's liturgy, catechists, school governance to name but a few. There are many other ways in which people involve themselves in Parish life. But there is a problem here in that many of these volunteers are getting older themselves. People are not coming forward to join in these activities. Parish cannot influence young people if the parents don't come to church and bring their children with them. The parish used to be central to the life of parishioners not only in its religious life but as a social hub too. This is no longer the case. The school finds these same difficulties with getting parents to join in school life and to volunteer as is the case in the parish. To thrive a parish is the sum of its parishioners with its priest at the helm. It is important as was identified at the Deanery Conference that the priest in a parish should look after himself to keep well and hopefully supported by the help of parishioners.

What next?

This should be an item on the agenda for one of our meetings.