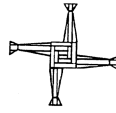


PARISH ADVISORY COUNCIL in the Parish of St Brigid & St Paul



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14 June 2010

Mgr R Reardon
Archdiocese of Cardiff
Archbishops House
42/43 Cathedral Road
CARDIFF CF11 9AD

Dear Mgr Reardon

CARDIFF CITY PARISHES FACING THE FUTURE

In response to the Arch Bishop's letter regarding the proposals for the Cardiff Parishes, the Parish Council of St Brigid & St Paul met to discuss how best to respond. We organised a fact sheet with a feedback form which was made available to parishioners at the end of Mass and held two open meetings.

The level of response was poor leading us to the conclusion that the majority of the congregation are content to be able to attend Sunday Mass and will adapt if and when changes to times are implemented.

Those who took the time to consider the proposals and responded are in the main supportive of the process of clustering Parishes. It is a good idea to share resources, human and material creating a more unified Church. A resume of the responses from the forms and meetings is attached addressing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats as requested.

These parishioners feel strongly that the price to pay for St Brigid & St Paul Parish and Christ the King Parish to be separately clustered is too high and ignores and disregards the last five years of hard work undertaken.

In some ways the clustering of St Brigid & St Paul Parish with Christ the King Parish has set the blue print and shows how two parishes can be brought together. Examples are set out below:

Our priests are appointed to both parishes; alternate all Sunday Masses and other activities across all three churches.

Sacramental Preparation

- ❖ Baptisms – Separate courses but in liaison, and available to parents from both parishes.
- ❖ 1st Holy Communion and Reconciliation - Preparation is undertaken separately.
- ❖ Confirmation – Preparation has been fully integrated in the last three years.

RCIA/Landings

- ❖ Separate teams for RCIA, but Landings has been developed jointly across both parishes.

FACING THE FUTURE PROPOSAL

Liturgy

- ❖ Separate liturgy groups, but strong liaison to ensure no duplication. Some events are rotated, e.g. the Mass for the Sick, and Services of Reconciliation.
- ❖ Areas such as altar servers and Eucharistic Adoration are separate but coordinated.

Communications

- ❖ 3 Churches Website & Newsletter – a joint resource for both Parishes.

Youth & Women's groups

- ❖ Junior Youth Clubs, Brownies & Guides, 3CY Teenagers and "Refresh" are all integrated. UCM and CWL are open to members from beyond their "base" parish

Social Concern

- ❖ United for Justice and Peace & the St Vincent de Paul Society cover all 3 churches.

Ecumenical

- ❖ Churches Together in Llanishen – both parishes are involved

THREE CHURCHES MASSES

- ❖ Over 5 years these have been the symbol of the growing relationship, in planning, preparation & celebration, involving a large number of people from all three churches.

The Parish Council feel the last five years of work in collaboration, co operation, delegation, empowerment, partnership, trust, and the sharing of resources will be lost, although recognise that we have the experience to work successfully with St Philip Evans Parish.

The Parish Council are also concerned that these proposals place our Parish Priest in an untenable position having to choose between staying having chosen one of his Parishes or ultimately moving on which would result in two new parish priest being required. On the basis this exercise is to address the falling numbers of priest this seems to be a contradiction to the purpose of the proposal.

The proposals do not address the need for new vocations and how the Archdiocese intends to attract new priests.

Given the Cathedral is a special case and the Rosminians have ring fenced their churches we respectfully suggest that reconsideration is given to the churches in north Cardiff and on the basis the existing three Parish priests can find a way to work together to create a cluster of the four Parishes – St Brigid & St Paul, Christ The King, St Philip Evans and St Teilo's /Our Lady of Lourdes thereby maintaining and building on the five years experience from "The Three Churches" combining with the ideas and resources from St Teilo's/OLL & St Philip Evans.

We would be pleased to discuss any points if required and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

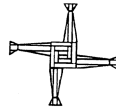
Yours sincerely

STEPHEN JONES: Chair PAC St Brigid & St Paul.

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Cardiff City Parishes - Facing the Future Responses from Parishioners

1. STRENGTHS

- ❖ Doesn't shirk the issues facing the Archdiocese and plans for a "worse case" scenario (hopefully). There is also an acknowledgement of the importance of the laity and Church volunteers in any new "cluster" system. I think most Catholics agree that a cluster system which spreads the load is the most sensible way forward.
- ❖ Our Parish could benefit from Lay volunteers and Lay ministry involvement from neighbouring Parishes with a younger age profile than ours - assuming that is that the "pool" of Lay helpers becomes cluster wide or inter - Parish and we start to spread the workload across the bigger grouping.
- ❖ Clustering a good idea. Sharing of resources, human and material would ensure a more unified Church. Perhaps Parish Priests within the cluster should rotate and e.g. celebrate Mass etc at other Churches within the cluster on a regular basis. We all need to widen our horizons.
- ❖ The Parishes of St Brigid & St Paul & Christ the King have over the last 5 years experienced the benefits of clustering, with many areas of sharing. Much hard work has gone into this. We should not be split up and see this work wasted. It would be far better to build on this and create a larger cluster - our 3 Churches with St Philip Evans and even bringing in St Teilo - Our Lady of Lourdes to create a cluster spanning North Cardiff.
- ❖ Working together, co-operation and collaboration are all worthwhile objectives to achieve.
- ❖ After 5 years of working to build up collaboration and co-operation between St Brigid's, St Paul's & Christ the King it seems a great shame to disband this already-made cluster which now works so well.
- ❖ Why break up the cluster of Christ the King, St Brigid's and St Paul when it has worked perfectly well for several years. Both Priests and some parishioners have put a lot of work into making it a success. People have started to bond well.
- ❖ Clustering of Parishes should help to strengthen Parishes as they work closer together.
- ❖ The coming together of St Brigid's, St Paul's and Christ the King accomplished over 5 years of hard work and co-operation has strengthened all 3, altered our attitudes towards each other and broadened our outlook.
- ❖ Not in favour of changing the existing cluster. Could we possibly have a cluster of four or six?
- ❖ Sorry don't understand this Form.
- ❖ We have all gained from the hard work done over the past years, enriching our three churches and feel it would be a shame for our three churches to change
- ❖ Good for when less priests are available.
- ❖ Good to work and collaborate with other parishes and share priests and resources when necessary.
- ❖ Recognizes the need to share resources in the future, throughout Cardiff. Good to consider this now.
- ❖ It seems that the amalgamation of St Brigid's & St Paul's with Christ the King is the blueprint on which the new proposals have been based, but on a wider scale.
- ❖ Keep our three churches together.
- ❖ If something is working as our present situation why change it.
- ❖ It is a shame to disband the three churches as they stand as there are many areas of co-operation and cohesion. I especially refer to the successful confirmation programme which is joint with the

FACING THE FUTURE PROPOSAL

- ❖ 3 Churches group. The combined music group to name but a few. I have personal experience of.
- ❖ Losing one to gain a new parish seems pointless and even more hard work and time which our priests have very little of.
- ❖ St Brigid's knows how to integrate so can help new groupings.
- ❖ The informal co-operation proposed would (in the short term) result in greater resources being available for St Brigid's and St Paul's.
- ❖ Good supporting parishes with active social, PAC and Liturgy groups
- ❖ The proposed clustering will enable fewer priests to cover existing parishes.
- ❖ Good.
- ❖ Eagerly awaiting the link between St Philip Evans & St Brigid's to develop the use of Welsh at St Brigid's such as the link forged with Christ the king on Dylan Thomas night.
- ❖ In every situation this Parish should not be deliberating on what we have done or will lose, but on what is best for the future with regard to Mass Attendances, available priests & Parish boundaries etc over the whole Diocese now & for the foreseeable future. With this Diocesan outlook the proposal is spot on.
- ❖ Clustering of Parishes in 2s or 3s is good. This will enable & encourage sharing of resources - human & material. Closing of churches faces up to the harsh reality that communities (if they are not fulfilling their mission as a Parish) are best served by being part of a larger Parish. Each Parish (even in the short term) will have their own parish priest.
- ❖ Social & PAC work together well.
- ❖ A possible new approach in some respects regarding the Liturgy.
- ❖ Bad.
- ❖ EG with whom St Philip Evans could be satisfactorily linked other than to St Brigid's Parish and to a slightly lesser degree who to link St Teilo's with other than Christ the King. In short let us look at the wider Diocesan considerations not just our own parochial wants & wishes.
- ❖ Initially, at least, the proposal will provide a priest to serve this one parish.

2. WEAKNESSES

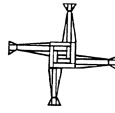
- ❖ I still think there are too many clusters and I am left asking the following questions:
- ❖ Why is the Cathedral still separate from a cluster?
- ❖ What happens if the Rosminians disband or retreat from Cardiff? They have the most important and vibrant cluster (B) under the proposals. Could we cope?
- ❖ Still appears to be a great reluctance in the Catholic hierarchy to cede genuine executive or decision - making power to any Lay parish or "Cluster" Council.
- ❖ What is the Catholic Church doing about the problem driving this proposal - shortage of Priests?
- ❖ No mention of celibacy or challenge to vocations.
- ❖ No mention of Diaconate or Lay Eucharistic service.
- ❖ No mention of recruiting Priests from Asia or Africa.
- ❖ No mention of a strategy to avoid getting to a situation where we only have 10 Priests in Cardiff.
- ❖ There appears to be nothing in these proposals addressing the problem of the supply of Priests. Are there plans to bring in more Priests from abroad e.g. Poland and India? In a multi cultural society this seems to be a good idea. We are a universal Church. How are we encouraging vocations here - both to the Priesthood and Diaconate?
- ❖ There is uncertainty over a large area of Central Cardiff. What happens if the Rosminians - a declining order - pull out of the Parishes making up Region B.? Will there be yet more re-organization?
- ❖ Feel we have been let down after working hard to together as 3 Churches.

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- ❖ As a Parishioner of St Paul's I feel the uncertainty which has dogged our Parish since the beginning is set to continue. Very frustrating.
- ❖ No need to split our 3 Churches, it works well and is role model to others.
- ❖ Resistance and objection from various Parishes.
- ❖ Breaks up existing arrangements between Christ the King, St Brigid and St Paul's.
- ❖ Lack of interest by many members of the Parish of St Brigid's/ St Paul's if the members attending the two meetings are anything to go by!!
- ❖ May be fewer masses, but we must expect this logically.
- ❖ May lead to difficulties with some people having to travel to other churches for services when necessary, when masses are reduced.
- ❖ May lead to fewer services in our parish.
- ❖ The geographical split whilst logical on paper ignores historical and practical links that have already been forged church and communities.
- ❖ Adding more parishes to our already existing arrangement could put too much pressure on the system as it is. It would be a great shame to break up what is already working well.
- ❖ If we separate, we will fall.
- ❖ St Brigid's and St Paul's have worked closely with Christ the King Parish formally during the past five years and historically. This is ignored in the proposals. While school catchments are not affected, the schools are part of the church community. As a result of the proposals, the parish of many of the children will not be part of the cluster that contains their school. Christ the King school is part of the historical link that has been ignored.
- ❖ Effectively we are one Parish Priest down as Christ the King lost its PP when it was joined to St Brigid's. This would mean the re-instatement of a PP at Christ the King to bring everything into line with the proposals. (That every parish would have a Parish Priest). If this was achieved it would open the door to include St Philip Evan's in the cluster.
- ❖ On the whole good communication this however is not consistent.
- ❖ Priests will have to travel more and this will have reduced time for various commitments.
- ❖ Cathedral stands alone with the least numbers of attendance; etc. Why can't St Peter's take the place of Cardiff Cathedral? Suggest that the very valuable site in the City Centre be sold. The Catholic Church is looking for funding. Let St Peter's stand alone; leave "Three Churches" grouped as they have been. Yes regroup the rest.
- ❖ If omitted the Cathedral from the Clustering plan giving it an unwarranted special case. The plan appears to take no recognition of the parishes which have been working together beyond clustering for several years. For them it may be seen to be a retrograde step.
- ❖ Liturgy Groups need to meet together occasionally.
- ❖ Parishioners will have to resign themselves to fewer Masses esp. in the weekday.
- ❖ At present St Philip Evans has no St Vincent de Paul society, but that the Parish Priest is hoping to start one. If this does not develop, St B's SVP could not cover their parish due to lack of numbers. Since SVP leadership is not parish based our current President will remain with our own group based at St Brigid's.
- ❖ The plan appears to take no recognition of the parishes which have been working together beyond clustering for several years. For them it may be seen to be a retrograde step.

3. OPPORTUNITIES

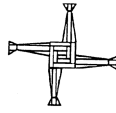
- ❖ If handled sensibly and sensitively a cluster system could provide tremendous efficiencies, in terms of labour (both Clergy and Lay) and also financial, in a City which has been left with too many Parishes after a period of over - expansion under Archbishop Murphy. Such efficiencies need not bring about a diminution in the quality of our Catholic faith, they may even enhance it.
- ❖ We currently rely far too heavily on a very small group of Lay volunteers who perform several ministries. As part of a cluster I would hope for a "pooling" of volunteers at cluster level that would help develop a stronger network of Ministry volunteers, and a stronger social calendar.
- ❖ There should be saving in manpower if there is to be sharing of Catechists etc. Volunteers would feel more confident with proper training and advice. There would be some financial savings.
- ❖ The "3 Churches" have over the last 5 years proved that collaboration and co-operation has worked very well.
- ❖ The Parishioners have come to feel that the two Parishes, St Brigid's/ St Paul's & Christ the King, (3 Churches) are one unit successfully served by their 2 Priests. These parishes have proved that clustering works so it seems illogical to disband a successful unit only to have to start all over again somewhere else. Why not extend what the 3 Churches have accomplished already to include other Churches e.g. St Philip Evans and St Teilo/ Our Lady of Lourdes. Extending, rather than dismantling, seems a much happier option where there would be further sharing and co-operating.
- ❖ Extend the Cluster to include St Philip Evans and St Teilo/ Our Lady of Lourdes.
- ❖ Why could St Philip Evans not join us - if necessary in the future?
- ❖ These proposals refer to the symptoms and not the cause of the present difficulty - i.e. the shortage of priests. I know it isn't possible to attack this locally, but we should recommend abolition of celibacy and employment of non-stipendiary priests, married and single, on the Anglican model - no extra cost to Parishes. It works well and would solve all difficulties.
- ❖ To save the Catholic Church The only way the Catholic Church in Wales and elsewhere in the UK is to persistently request every Sunday and Saturday Mass all grandparents to bring their children and grandchildren for Mass. If not the Church will very soon have only four walls and roof. People - Church goes - make the Church goers provide the Priests - if not everything will CRASH. See today only old people probably over 60, 70, 75, and 80 attend church. Where are the "young" men?
- ❖ Improved involvement of Laity as clusters develop and the number of Priests declines.
- ❖ Continuing expansion of involvement of Laity.
- ❖ With the proposed re-organisation it may be an opportunity to cluster with the six Churches in our geographic area. The experience gained in the joining of the 3 Churches would surely be of great value when adjusting to be part of six.
- ❖ If it comes to losing a Mass, finish St Paul's Saturday night and keep Sunday morning mass.
- ❖ The co-operation between parishes has to work. This will introduce Catholics to new people, new priests, and new ideas. There is an opportunity to do this. on a wider clustering co-operation basis so that historical links between parishes are not lost
- ❖ Opportunity for more families to be introduced to the parishes. In the event of a wider co-operation where Christ the King is
- ❖ An opportunity could exist to create a super cluster, comprising St Teilo's, Our Lady of Lourdes, Christ the King, St Brigid's St Paul's and St. Philip Evans. This could be for a given period to evaluate its effectiveness Then a re-assessment should take place to judge the success or otherwise.
- ❖ Where like organizations exist within the various parishes co-operation should be fostered, but where unique groups exist they should be permitted to carry on unless the other parishes wish to create similar organizations. E.g. not every parish has a scout or girl guides.
- ❖ Many new ventures available and with a motivated parish this will increase

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- ❖ The arrangements already in place in the "Three Churches" will have to be revised to include St Philip Evans instead of Christ the King. It may give new opportunities for both Parishes.
- ❖ As we have found in grouping - lots of opportunities for Parishes to work together.
- ❖ If the clustering plan is properly implemented it offers communities which have been under the pastoral care of long term/inactive/dictatorial Parish Priests an opportunity to break out and develop as a Christian community should.
- ❖ Many years ago at the first mention of the prospect of a shortage of priests, could a "community" of available priests help the situation? They could reside somewhere centrally, e.g. 2 houses in Cathedral Road, and apart from their personal connections with their original parishes) could work on a supply & demand basis. This would also have served another aspect, companionship. It was around this time of the tragic death of a young priest in the Rumney area who lived on his own.
- ❖ He can share our experience and expertise of working together with one Parish with another.

- ❖ **NEW PROPOSAL** - Merge Christ the King & St Brigid's as one parish & merge St Paul's with St Philip Evans as another parish. Following on from that St Teilo's & Holy Family could be a cluster.

4. THREATS

- ❖ I am sorry to say that a closure of Churches and the ending of certain Masses will result in people leaving the faith - they may not bother to travel to another Parish or change their habits if they see these reforms as a sign of the wider decline of religion in our society against secularism, consumerism and science. Then we have to be prepared for a drop in numbers and in revenue.
- ❖ Though sad to see Christ the King split from St Brigid's and St Paul's under the current proposal, I think the main threat and main worry is the future of St Paul's. St Paul's has never been held in very high regard by Archbishop's House - often spoken of as a "Mass Centre" or "Chapel of Ease" - and the silence on the proposed improvements to the building is deafening. It also happens to be the most valuable site in the Archdiocese and must be at or near the top of the list for closure and development, especially as the Archdiocesan Appeal is not going particularly well.
- ❖ If Churches close in all probability there will be a decline in attendance at Mass - a lot of people don't like change and loss of identity of Parish community.
- ❖ The schools issue has to be looked at. Many links between St Brigid's, St Paul's and Christ the King because of shared primary school - it is a vital part of 3 Churches cluster - so it won't be just the Parishes, which will be separated in these proposals but in all probability the catchment area for the Primary school will be re-defined.
- ❖ Knock on effect of Christ the King PS admissions strategy together with St Philip Evans PS and St Bernadette PS.
- ❖ The split of the 3 Churches, which took 5 years to build, is a retrograde step. Why demolish it now. Surely it would be better to add St Philip Evans and St Teilo/ Our Lady of Lourdes to make a super cluster and we will use all our experiences to make it work well.
- ❖ It seems a pity that the St Brigid/ St Paul's/ Christ the King unity is to break up.
- ❖ Resistance to change by Priests, resistance to change by Parishioners.
- ❖ Break up of existing 3 Churches group.
- ❖ To lose Christ the King from our cluster would undo the good work and the efforts of the PAC and Clergy and the interested members of the congregations would be largely lost.
- ❖ Our Parish Priest - his position is uncertain. If the proposal proceeds then his position becomes untenable or, as advised by the Archdiocese, the proposal implies that the present arrangement be discontinued. So what happens to our PP?
- ❖ Confusion as to what is actually being proposed, as often the thin edge of the wedge. Worry about further church closures if priest numbers and resources continue to dwindle.
- ❖ The years of working as three churches could be wasted. Feel we should be clustered with Christ the King, St Teilo's and St Philip Evans-- a rather large cluster.
- ❖ Future closure of St Paul's. Continued lack of investment in churches
- ❖ Sense of disengagement with Archbishop's House. Hard work that had been put into the three churches had been wasted and apathy towards proposed arrangements if three churches are split.
- ❖ Above all we should not lose what has been established, and three churches must stay together. It feels like one parish already.
- ❖ We couldn't manage without priests on loan from further afield. If this help dries up we will have serious problems.
- ❖ Generally age groups are ageing.
- ❖ Driving increased distances, difficulties ... for those people without their own transport.
- ❖ Displaced parish communities need to be properly considered (transport to new churches etc) or these people might be lost.
- ❖ The need for younger parishioners to join groups could be developed.
- ❖ Driving increased distances, difficulties ... for those people without their own transport.
- ❖ Breaking up all the hard work done for "Three Churches" over the last 5 years.