



St Peter's Eastern Hill, Melbourne

Parish Council Meeting
7:30 pm 28 February 2024
St Peter's Vicarage

Minutes

1. Convening of Meeting: opened at 7.33 pm.

We acknowledge the people of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations on whose unceded lands we meet. We respectfully acknowledge their ancestors and elders, past and present.

2. The meeting was led in prayer by Fr Michael.
3. Attendance: Mthr Kathryn Bellhouse, Fr Michael Bowie (chair), Geoff Bush-Coote, Michael Gronow, Stuart Hibberd, Helena Hughes, Daniel Mitterdorfer (secretary), Terry Porter, Anne Scott-Pendlebury, Craig Wilson. Apologies: Daniel Ferguson, Peter Griffin, Marcus Roberts, Michael Upson.
4. Minutes of previous meeting: 24 January 2024 **Moved:** Daniel Mitterdorfer; **Seconded:** Terry Porter; **carried.**

5. Vicar's Report

Fr Michael offered the following report:

Music/ Music Foundation – progress

Our new director of Music, Chris Watson has already made a significant impact on the quality and suitability of our music programme; there has also been an extensive culling, reorganisation and cataloguing of the Music library thanks to a joint effort of the Director of Music and our sacristan and now choir librarian Naomi Johnson.

I spoke last time about the need for a Music Foundation to be set up this year, and also more immediately about the need to provide for four choral scholars to ensure a stable core of two strong voices per part. I am happy to report that we look set to have achieved the necessary extra giving to the Music to make that possible. I can report that Chris Watson is working on recruiting those extra voices from Trinity. Michael Gronow and Marcus Roberts are, I believe, working on a trust deed for the Foundation which we should be able to achieve within this calendar year. There has been a generous offer of a substantial donation to seed it.

Holy Week & Easter

Preparations, both liturgical and musical, are well under way for our offering of worship for Holy Week and Easter. We have the good fortune to be welcoming Professor Dorothy Lee, distinguished NT scholar and Anglican priest, as our Holy Week preacher and I commend to you attendance at all the liturgies of the week at which Mthr Dorothy will be preaching. By way of preparation, you might like to attend the remaining two Lent talks which Mthr Kathryn is giving on the Holy Week Liturgies, next Sunday and on Sunday fortnight. If you missed the first two they can be found online.

Daily Mass and Sunday liturgies

I am delighted to report that daily Mass numbers continue to be strong, and that our High Mass is slowly recovering in numbers. That leads me to consideration of our Sunday programme. As you know

in October 2022 we revived the 9.30am Mass on Sundays and reverted to the pre-Covid pattern of 8am, 9.30 and 11am Masses. 8am, while small, is working adequately in the Lazarus chapel (there are more people attending than there were at the equivalent liturgy when I arrived in July 2022). High Mass, as I've said, has plenty of room for growth, but is nevertheless much better attended than it was 18 months ago. The 9.30am Mass, however, is not growing and remains very small. We made our best efforts to restore it in October 2022; we contacted previous congregants and Mthr Kathryn, after her arrival last April, has given it her best shot. But it is clear to both of us – and I shall invite her to comment in a minute – that at the present time, after the disruptions of Covid and other recent events, this is not a viable liturgy. Mthr Kathryn has spoken to all who regularly attend and I have also spoken to many of them: I think it is fair to say that while some will certainly regret the loss of this Mass, we can see that it cannot continue in its present form. It is a well-resourced and creditable liturgy, but it is stretching our Sunday resources too thinly. Moreover, when people turn up to it for the first time, expecting to see a Christian community at worship, they have the impression of a failing parish, which they are therefore very unlikely to join. When we've had baptisms at it, the often unfamiliar baptism party has so swamped the small regular congregation that it has been difficult to offer it as a parish Mass in the way that we would wish. It is therefore my view, and Mthr Kathryn shares this view, that we need to recalibrate our Sunday worship without this Mass and concentrate on building up High Mass. A positive aspect of the change would be that Mthr Kathryn will ensure that we make a good provision for children and young people during High Mass, but in the hall. The children and young people would join the entrance procession, go out to the hall for what would be their own liturgy of the word, and re-join us for Communion or blessing. There are several other advantages to this change, including for the musicians. I would propose that the change could take effect from Pentecost to give sufficient time for the altered children's ministry to be planned (discussion of which is already under way). We might also reconsider the time of High Mass, about which I would be happy to hear people's views. I am personally indifferent to the timing of High Mass, but it has been suggested by several people that 10.30am would be a suitable time for our principal liturgy (which already happens on two or three occasions in the year).

Fr Michael invited Mthr Kathryn to offer her thoughts on the proposed change. She spoke briefly to the experience that newcomers to 9.30am have when they arrive and see a very small congregation. As a result, there is probably little likelihood of these newcomers returning to this same service. The proposed change offers the possible integration of children in the entrance procession, acknowledging their place in the church community at St Peter's.

Stuart Hibberd spoke to the value of having the High Mass service at 10am, making it a more appealing option, freeing up more of Sunday. Others spoke to the advantages of having the service at 10.30am. Craig Wilson noted that, as a long-term congregant at 9.30am (and one who deliberately came to the parish for the 9.30am service), he wanted to thank those who have tried to make 9.30am a viable offering of worship. He proffered that those currently attending the 9.30am service would perhaps appreciate attending an earlier Mass. These types of changes are an opportunity for us to consider what we are about and what we offer. The proposed framework to grow the church and the proposal has his support, even though he personally would be impacted by these changes.

Fr Michael thanked those assembled for offering their thoughts, and continued:

Further to the proposed change to the Mass offerings, as you know, it has been an aspiration of mine since arriving here to restore weekly Evensong and Benediction to St Peter's, an aspiration shared by our new Director of Music. Though small, Evensong and Benediction is always better-attended than the Sunday evening Mass, and experience elsewhere indicates that if we wish to grow it, we must offer it every week. Evensong and Benediction and High Mass are the distinctive liturgical offerings of our parish in this diocese and city and they are where we need to concentrate our resources. I recently learned that Evensong used to be offered at 5pm. I suspect that if we want to build up E&B and add a social element after it, as Mthr Kathryn has begun doing, 5pm would be a better time than 6pm.

I am not especially attached to either time for either of these liturgies, but if there is support for changing from the current times I'd be happy to do that. If we are to make these changes, however, they need to be part of a single package of change, rather than piecemeal. I'd be interested in hearing views about that once I've finished this report.

Poets and the Faith / Lent talks

I've already mentioned and commended the Lent talks to you. You'll all be aware also of the series Poet and the Faith which begins on the second Tuesday in March. Please make an effort to attend and bring others with you. This is a great initiative led by Mthr Kathryn and others. If this series is well-supported, as I hope it will be, we should be able to build other similar programmes for the future. This is something that a city church like ours is well-placed to contribute to church life in Melbourne.

Please also put in your diary the **2024 Biennial Hughes-Cheong Lecture, on Thursday 21 March 2024, 7 – 9pm**, Craig Auditorium, Trinity College.

As you know, Fr Cheong offered one of the most significant priestly ministries in the history of this parish and we shall honour his memory by attending this year's lecture which is, topically, **Bearing Witness: An Approach to Christian-Muslim Dialogue**.

St Peter Statue and Font Cover Cross

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the matter of the statue of St Peter that used to be on the lectern, and the Cross which used to be on the font cover. Both were stolen some years ago. The St Peter statue that was obtained to replace the former one is nothing like the original and very badly carved; the latter was never replaced. Thanks to advice from our diocesan registrar, Malcolm Tadgell, I have been making use of a brilliant furniture restorer, Thomas Mintsentikos. I first needed his services to fix various items of my own, damaged by removalists; I have since engaged him to restore various items in the church. He works with a Russian Orthodox icon writer and wood carver, Mikhail, who has provided us with excellent drawings and models of what could be done adequately to restore what was lost. They are available for you to see tonight. We hope to gather some donations to complete this small project; there is also money left in our National Trust account which must be applied to such restoration, so it will not be paid for out of general parish funds. Craig Wilson, Guy Churchman and former sacristan John Jones (a sometime curator at the NGV) have approved the drawings and model. We hope to proceed with this very soon.

6. Wardens' Report

The minutes of the Wardens' Meeting were circulated before the PC meeting. Michael Gronow spoke to a number of points from the minutes, namely the state of the Hall Kitchen floor (needs replacement), and the installation of individual electricity and gas meters for each of the Keble House tenancies. The usage costs are currently borne by the Parish because we cannot assign usage to individual tenants.

7. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer requested that in his absence we refer to the notes included in the Wardens' minutes. Daniel Mitterdorfer read these to the meeting and they were briefly discussed.

8. Safe Worship Report

8.1. Update of Accident – 24/12/23

Daniel Mitterdorfer updated those present regarding the accident that had occurred on Christmas Eve. The chorister concerned has had their claim assessed by the diocesan insurers and they have made an initial payment in respect of the injury as well as reimbursed upfront medical costs. Further medical investigations have revealed possible damage to their Achilles tendon as a result of the fall. Further diagnostics are being performed this week.

Some of the Council briefly inspected the site of the accident after our last meeting. Fr Michael requested that Daniel follow the matter up with the Parish Administrator. Perhaps any remedial work on the step could be done at the same time as the kitchen floor.

8.2 Child Safety Report

There were no matters to report.

8.3 Child Safety Training

Anne Scott-Pendlebury noted that Rachel Ellyard was going to organise an in-person training session for Level 3. Daniel Mitterdorfer will follow up with Rachel to organise a time for this to take place.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1. Followup items from previous meetings. Fr Michael advised the door to the Hughes Room, damaged in the 2023 fire, had now been replaced. The chairs ordered to be placed in the former baptistry have been ordered and should be delivered in the coming months. The parish membership fee for MCCIA has been paid as previously approved.
- 9.2. Terry Porter asked how much money had been received by the tap-n-go donation terminals in the church. Daniel Mitterdorfer had asked the Bookkeeper in advance of the meeting and advised that the figure for January was \$476.54

Meeting concluded with the saying of the Grace at 8.29pm.

Next meeting: 24 April 2024.