

**DIOCESE OF DUNKELD: COUNCIL OF THE LAITY MINUTES APPROVED: 30 OCT
2017 BY E-MAIL**

Minute of the **fourth** meeting of the **Council of the Laity** held in the Conference Room of the Pastoral Centre, Lawside, Dundee, on Saturday **16 September 2017** at 11.00 am.

Present: Fr J High (Chair), Sr M Aladi, M Caswell, J Galligan, Canon K Golden, J Joyce, P Kearns, A Kenny, C Mulford, F Murphy, C McCrosson, M Parke, P Porter, N Sloan, D Smith, A Toshney, M Veal, P Veal, R Wylie
D McDowall (Secretary)

In attendance: Bishop S Robson

[Secretary's Note: The list of attendees and the Societies/Groups they represent is provided at the end of this minute]

Apologies were received from: Fr J McCrudden (Vice-Chair), S Smith and L Mclver

Father High opened the meeting with a reading from scripture and a prayer to the Patron Saint of the Council, St Vincent Pallotti.

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 27 May 2017

The minutes of the meeting of 27 May were approved subject to the exclusion of the reference to a "soundbite" in the final section of Paragraph 3.

[Secretary's Note: the amended, approved minutes were circulated to all members of Council and to Mr A Mitchell for display on the diocesan website via e-mail on 20 September 2017]

Father High invited those present to agree a timescale for circulation of minutes of Council meetings to Mr A Mitchell for display on the diocesan website. It was agreed that the draft minutes should be circulated to all members for comment with a week's turnaround and that thereafter, the final version should be passed, by the Secretary, to Mr Mitchell for publication and to all members of Council for display on parish notice boards.

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 27 May 2017

2.1. Repository in St Ninian's Pastoral Institute (Para 2.1 refers)

Father High reminded members that the Institute in its current form, had closed down and invited Bishop Stephen to share the implications of the closure for the future of the repository. Bishop Stephen stressed that the closure of the Institute was not synonymous with the closure of the Pastoral Centre, the former having functioned largely as an academic centre which had not attracted the numbers of participants required to make it economically viable. The closure of the Institute, having followed close on the heels of the HSE-instigated closure of Wellburn with the associated costs for relocation of residents and staff redundancy payments, had prompted a financial audit which highlighted the need to trim

costs. While the future of the Centre was still undecided, it would continue to function until the end of the calendar year. Canon Golden, Director of the Centre, hoped to develop the available space in St Andrew's Cathedral in Dundee, as a Pastoral Centre and discussions and plans were at an early stage. In the meantime, the eventual location of the repository and the library - home to some 10,000 books - had yet to be decided and would feature in the discussions about the Pastoral Centre.

2.2. Use of the Diocesan Website to Publicise Events/Parish Activities (Para 2.2 refers)

Members were reminded that at a previous meeting they had agreed that all Council of Laity members would offer to work with their parish priests to communicate matters of interest. Anyone who had any particularly useful suggestions about how to enhance communications between parish priests and their congregations was invited to share these. The identification of individual parish communicators - also an issue which had previously been discussed - was again mooted. During the ensuing discussion members reiterated comments made previously about how individual parish priests tackled communication issues differently. In some parishes for example, the priest might wish to have Council of Laity minutes displayed on the church notice board while in others, the priest might wish to include reference to the minutes in the weekly bulletin/newsletter - or perhaps even include the minutes in their entirety. Members were concerned to ensure that parish priests were not bombarded with information as this could impact negatively on communication within the individual parishes. It was agreed that it was paramount to ensure that parishioners had access to the information they needed about activities/events throughout the diocese, including their own parish. The most effective way for this to happen, was for the priest to make relevant announcements at Mass although it was accepted that this did not necessarily take place in every parish. The lack of uniformity of approach throughout the diocese was recognised as being an issue affecting communication as were the different parish pastoral councils' ways of working - where these existed. It was suggested that if individual communicators could be identified in every parish, then that person could assume responsibility for collating all relevant information into a separate "news-sheet" for distribution to all parishioners.

Bishop Stephen agreed to share these views and suggestions with parish priests at the next Priests' Council meeting and to encourage discussion in that forum about the identification and role of parish communicators.

3. DISCERNMENT

Members were reminded that at the last meeting they had discussed the need to be clear about the role of the laity - and more specifically - the role and way forward for the Council itself as the body representing the laity within the diocese of Dunkeld. They recalled that they had talked about how St Paul had described a range of similar concerns to those that had been discussed at Council meetings to date and that "discernment" was needed to help focus Council's work in the right direction. Bishop Stephen stressed the importance of taking time to "discern" within the context of prayer and reflection. Members agreed that it would be helpful to have a clear objective for Council and there were mixed views about how quickly such an objective could be identified. Concern was expressed that to date

Council business had appeared to be “just talk” and some members worried that the opportunity “to do” was being missed. Each member present represented a group/Society and in that role, each was clear about the objectives. That clarity of purpose was missing for some, in their role as Council of Laity members and this was causing anxiety.

Some members expressed the view that it was understandable that the way forward for Council was not yet clear, both because of its newness and because of the lack of clarity about its fit within the existing diocesan structure - and its complementarity with the soon to be established Diocesan Pastoral Council. The Council’s advisory capacity - in terms of advising the Bishop about the views of the laity of the diocese on relevant matters was highlighted. Members were reminded that the authority for the management of diocesan affairs was vested in the Bishop and they agreed that the objective - yet to be identified - for the Council of the Laity - needed to be contextualised within that authority.

4. CHRISTIAN UNITY

Ms Cecilia Mulford tabled a range of papers on Christian Unity which she described as “coming together and working as disciples of Christ”. She expressed concern that although the catholic laity are encouraged to “read the bible”, without guidance this could lead to confusion about and misunderstanding of Holy Scripture. It was acknowledged that individual groups - the John Paul Prayer Movement, for example, already ran sessions on bible readings and how to apply scripture into daily life, but Ms Mulford suggested that such sessions could be expanded to include ALL Christians, not only Catholics and that to be even more inclusive and far-reaching, modern technology could be harnessed to target as wide an audience as possible. Ms Mulford expressed the hope that the Catholic church might lead such an inclusive, far-reaching programme and that existing groups and societies well-versed in community activities could be pro-active. Members expressed interest in these ideas, although some advised caution, relating their own experiences with regard to unfriendly, non-inclusive practices within their own parishes and the diocese.

It was agreed that Ms Mulford’s papers be included in the agenda for the next meeting to give everyone an opportunity to read and digest their contents.

5. COUNCIL OF LAITY MEMBERSHIP

Members noted the contents of Papers 6a and 6b which had been prepared in an attempt to check whether every parish priest in the diocese had a member of his congregation on Council. In addition, when Council was being established, an attempt had been made to ensure that every group/society within the diocese was given the opportunity to nominate a representative to serve. For a range of reasons, not every parish, nor every group, had a named representative on Council and Fr High and Bishop Stephen were liaising on how best to resolve the situation, bearing in mind the preceding discussion - and the soon to be established Diocesan Pastoral Council. It was agreed that progress on this issue would be reported at future meetings.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Council of Laity Office-Bearers

Father High explained that when he and Bishop Stephen had first discussed setting up a Council of the Laity, they had intended that it be comprised of and chaired by lay representatives. While happy to take on the role of chair for the establishment of Council, Fr High now wished to hand over the role to a lay member. He invited members to identify a new chairperson from the current membership so that he and this individual could discuss a handover to take place during 2018. Father High explained that Mrs McDowall had also agreed to act as Secretary for the establishment of Council and that she too, would be happy to hand over the role during 2018. It was agreed that anyone with an interest in either of these roles should speak to Father High after the meeting and that this matter be included in the agenda for the first meeting of 2018.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The calendar of meetings for 2018 was agreed as noted below:

Saturday 27 January 2018
 Saturday 9 June 2018
 Saturday 22 September 2018

All meetings to begin at 11.00 am, venue to be confirmed.

Attendees:

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| Fr J High (Chair) | Mr F Murphy, KSC |
| Sr M Aladi, Hospital Visitors | Ms M Parke, ACROSS |
| Ms M Caswell, Legion of Mary | Ms P Porter, UCM |
| Mr J Galligan, Friends of St Jugan | Ms N Sloan, SERRA |
| Canon K Golden, Pastoral Centre | Mr D Smith, SSVP |
| Mr J Joyce, SSVP | Ms A Toshney, Carmelites |
| Mr P Kearns, Diocesan Choir/OLGC | Mr M Veal, Diocesan Administration |
| Ms A Kenny, Friends of Wellburn | Ms P Veal, Cecilian Choir |
| Mr C McCrosson, JPPM | Deacon R Wylie, CGA |
| Ms C Mulford, Independent Action Group | |
| | Ms D McDowall (Secretary) |

Bishop Stephen Robson