



## VINCENTIAN COMMUNITY

Planning Department

London Borough of Barnet

2 Bristol Avenue

Colindale

NW9 4EW

7 May 2021

**New Presbytery for the Vincentian Community at  
2 Flower Lane, Mill Hill, London NW7 2JB**

Dear Sir / Madam,

My name is Fr Paschal Scallon, the Provincial Superior of the Vincentian Community in Britain and Ireland and I write in connection with our proposal to rebuild our existing presbytery at the Sacred Heart & Mary Immaculate Church (Sacred Heart) in Mill Hill.

### **Vincentian Community**

The Vincentian Community (formally known as the Congregation of the Mission), was founded in France in the early 1600s by a priest called Vincent De Paul. Since then Communities have been established around the world, which are organised into 'Provinces'. The Vincentian Community in Britain is part of the 'Province of Ireland' with our headquarters in Dublin.

Our presbytery (priests' house) at Mill Hill (NW7) is one of two houses we have in London (the other is at New Cross). We have been serving in the parish of Mill Hill since 1889 and in 1893, as London's population grew, the parish of the Sacred Heart and Mary Immaculate in Mill Hill was created and the Vincentians were invited to run it. A church was built in 1923. In the early 1990s this church had to be demolished and the present church, that sits on the frontage of the Broadway and Flower Lane, was built to replace it.

Provincial Office, Vincentian Community, Sybil Hill, Raheny, Dublin D05 AE38

Tel: +353 1 851 0842 | Fax: +353 1 851 0846 | Email: [cmdublin@vincentians.ie](mailto:cmdublin@vincentians.ie) | Website: [www.vincentians.ie](http://www.vincentians.ie)  
Charity No: CHY 7506 | CRA No: 20016678

## **Relationship between the Presbytery and Sacred Heart and Mary Immaculate Roman Catholic Church**

The Vincentians provide leadership and support to the parish and the local church in various ways. The current Parish Priest is Fr Eugene Curran CM and there are six other members of the Community residing in the presbytery, one of whom is Assistant Parish Priest and one a chaplain at The Passage (a resource centre for homeless and vulnerable people) in Victoria, central London.

Ministry in 'Sacred Heart' consists of the celebration of the liturgy (Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Sacraments and other devotional exercises) and ministry to parishioners in various other ways. These include formation in faith and social events which take place in the church and in the adjoining hall and rooms. Mass (Eucharist) is celebrated each morning, with four celebrations on Sundays.

The parish boundaries cover Barnet, Finchley, Hendon and Edgware, but in urban settings such as north London, 'parishioners' come from further afield depending on ease of access and transport links.

### **Work in Barnet and North London**

The church/presbytery spaces are well used by both church-based groups and the wider community. Among the church groups are the preparation classes for First Communion and Confirmation, reflection and prayer groups, senior and junior Youth groups, support groups for the elderly and various church committees. There are also a number of social events throughout the year which are open to all. These include quiz nights and events on occasions like St Patrick's Day.

The parish hall is also hired by individuals and groups, both inside and outside the parish community, for private events such as family celebrations, memorials, fundraisers and reunions.

Among the non-church groups that use the church space are some of the ethnic communities: Filipino, Nigerian, Indian and others. The Jasmine Group is composed of female asylum seekers and refugees, most of them Muslim, who feel more comfortable in a religious setting. The volunteers for this group are both from our local Christian and Jewish Communities and it is run in association with Barnet Council.

The facilities are also made available to a group of mothers and toddlers and to the 'Rainbow' group, a non-denominational group that works with children. There is also a Bereavement Listening Service which is open to all. A group of women come together once a week to knit and sew; this is an important social outlet for people who are more generally confined to their own homes.

Just as winter set in, we made the facilities available to a joint group from the local Catholic and Jewish schools which, under the auspices of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, were preparing care-packs for people living on the streets.

There is a very active 'Churches Together' group in Mill Hill and they often avail of our facilities too. We participate in a Night Shelter, which is run in conjunction with Barnet Homeless Services, and to which we are the largest contributor. The hall is made available to them for a number of their functions.

As we establish ourselves further in the community, we intend to make the facilities better known and available to groups.

The time-table for services and other functions changes throughout the year but information can be found on our website [www.sacredheartmillhill.com](http://www.sacredheartmillhill.com)

### **Need for a New Presbytery**

In order to continue the work of the Vincentians in the parish and London the current presbytery needs to be modernised. The current building at 2 Flower Lane was built in the early 1960s and whilst it has had some modification over the years, essentially remains a building of its time and now shows serious signs of deterioration. The fabric of the building, the electrics, the heating, the plumbing and the spatial layout generally are all obsolete.

Asbestos containing materials were used in its construction and its energy performance needs to be improved. More fundamentally the layout no longer works. The parish office is currently situated within the building but needs to be self-contained for privacy and safeguarding. The proposal is that a new parish office will be built as an extension to the church.

The new building will utilise energy efficient measures and modern services specifications and technologies including an air source heat pump, to ensure that the building is sustainable now and into the future.

The existing personal accommodation for the resident priests is inadequate and larger suites of the size proposed are needed by the members of the Community as these spaces will be used as sleeping, living and working accommodation, with some members spending much of their day working from these suites. In addition they require a lot of storage as each resident has his own books, files and other material.

As well as upgraded rooms for members of the Community who will reside permanently in the presbytery, it is the custom of houses such as ours to offer hospitality to visitors. The existing attic rooms are inadequate for this and we wish to provide some accommodation for guests visiting London either on business or holiday.

## **Oratory and Communal Spaces**

A presbytery is an unusual form of residence, with its own particularities. The principal communal area in a house such as this is the oratory or private chapel in which the priests and brothers can gather for their own, private devotions which often take place apart from the public liturgies. An oratory is used several times a day and allows a resident community to conduct gatherings without imposing on the activities of parishioners in the parish church. For the most part the oratory will be used only by the resident community but may occasionally be used for larger gatherings of up to 20 people.

The new presbytery will also have improved common areas for residents, such as a communal dining room, kitchen and a 'community' room which will serve as a common entertainment/recreation space and library. It is important to emphasise that keeping the presbytery close to the church offers both the members of the parish and those Vincentians ministering in the parish many advantages. Over the years, parishioners in many of the parishes in which we have worked have commented on what it means to them to have a centre of pastoral activity administered by a resident community of priests and brothers. The combination of both church and presbytery form a pastoral setting that is unique and can offer more than is available in other parishes.

## **Summary**

We have reviewed our mission and capacity in Britain. We wish to continue to invest in the work we have been doing in London and Mill Hill since the 1890s. London is one of the world's great cities with all that entails in terms of what benefits the human person but also in terms of human need. As ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ we seek to promote the spiritual and temporal well-being of those to whom we minister.

Rebuilding the presbytery at Flower Lane is a key part of our strategy to consolidate our presence in Mill Hill for the coming decades. The members of the Community who will live at Flower Lane will work in different ministries both locally and elsewhere in London. A presence in north London will also allow us to continue to fulfil one of our foundational roles, conducting parish missions, a work that will bring us to different parts of Britain.

The existing presbytery, as presently configured, is no longer suitable as accommodation for our community to live and work in. It is not feasible to refurbish it and we ask that you look favourably on our plans to rebuild and redesign a modern facility to help support our future work.

If you require any further information on our proposals at Flower Lane or on our work, please let me know.

Yours faithfully,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area of the letter.

Paschal Scallon CM  
Provincial Superior