

St Joseph's Birtley Church Pastoral Council

Notes of the meeting held 14th December 2025 in the Presbytery.

1. The meeting opened with a prayer led by PP.

Present: Fr Martin, Hilda Fraser, Jan Rafalski, Catherine Tumelty, Pauline Pestell, Tom Quigley, Margaret Taylor., Doreen Cantwell.

2. Apologies: Peter Monaghan, Bernadette and Gary Bartlett.

3. Notes of the last meeting were agreed as correct.

4. Matters arising:

Update from Gary Bartlett received by email.

- PAT testing has been completed and Gary is awaiting the testing report. Some items failed and will need to be taken out of commission on receipt of the report. These have been identified with a 'fail' ticket on the plug.
- Gary had contacted Andrew Gillingham and would speak to him again this week re. parish hall.
- Paving works are restarting on 19th December to replace three cracked paving stones at the front of church and some grout in the flags on the path to the grotto.
- Gary is still trying to find an electrician to fix the light in the porch of the north exit. Fr Martin said he had an electrician he has used and Gary was notified of this.
- Fire extinguishers are outside of the service schedule and Gary wants to set up a service contract with CHUBB which will reduce the ongoing service cost. Gary will discuss this with Fr. Martin.

Noticeboard – an update was given by MT who has liaised between Fr MW and Signtech. MT hopes that the new notice will be in place early January.

Fr MW would ask Audrey about availability of minutes of Partnership meetings.

It was decided to look at the availability of a QR code being used to access the bulletin in the new year.

5. Jesse tree/Advent service Birtley churches together/Coffee meeting fundraiser.

PP wanted to discuss the success of all these recent activities. A big thank you was given to all those who were involved and those who supported these events.

6. Preparation for meeting on 18th Jan re. Terms of Reference for Parish Councils.

MT will resend the document in the new year to allow members to familiarise themselves with it before the meeting. CT will resend St Joseph's own terms of reference for comparison.

MT said that Shirley Ennis would like to join the parish council and everyone agreed she would be a welcome addition.

Pauline Lavery had spoken to MT in her role as Parish Safeguarding lead. PL had recently attended training and wishes to share this at the next meeting. She also informed MT that all those on the Parish council need to have safeguarding training. PL will attend the February meeting.

7. First communion celebrations/dates.

CT drew attention to these dates so that whoever gives the introduction at mass can welcome the children and their families.

Jan 17th, Feb 14th, Mar 14th, April 25th. First communion dates St. Joseph's 16th May/St. Benet's 13th June.

8. Parish centre/car parking/Parish meeting.

HF raised concerns about the future of these items. Fr MW said that he had a meeting with Andrew Gillingham on Thursday about several issues and he would express our concerns about these items.

9. Parish Records.

A vote of thanks was given to HF, DC, Susan Petit and Ann Marshall for the huge amount of work they have done in the parish meeting room. DC said there was still a need for some secure storage.

10. Church and presbytery doors.

Dc expressed concerns about the state of the doors. FrMW said he had a decorator coming and he would discuss the painting/varnishing of the doors. FrMW also mentioned that BT were coming to look at the existing phone system.

11. Thanks to those who had assisted with Christmas tree and outside crib – this had appeared on St. Joseph's news.

12. There were no school updates.

13. Rota for Saturday vigil mass - Jan 31st PP, Feb 7th CT, Feb 14th JR, Feb 21st MT, Feb 28th TQ.

14. There were no future events discussed.

15. A.O.B.

Correspondence was received from Kathleen and Kevin Haigh thanking the parish for the use of the wheelchair.

TQ informed the group about the work carried out at the Belgian cemetery alongside the Birtley Heritage Group and Gateshead Councillors. There is a plan to place a blue memorial plaque to commemorate the 43 unmarked Belgian graves at the cemetery. The Heritage Group have received money from the council to fund the placing of the plaque on a boulder which be placed on an existing concrete foundation. At present they are awaiting permission to go ahead from the diocese. There is hope that it will be in place by September. TQ will keep the council informed of progress towards this.

TQ has produced a plan of the positional of cremated remains. He provided three copies. One will be kept by Fr MW, one by TQ and a third will be stored in the office.

16. Prayers for the next meeting.

Jan 18th CT 8th Feb MT

17. Date of next meeting.

18th January – Extraordinary meeting to discuss Terms of Reference document.

8th February – Parish Council meeting.

18. Closing prayer PP.