

St Joseph's Birtley Church Pastoral Council
Notes of the meeting held 8th February 2026 in the Presbytery.

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

Present: Fr Martin, Hilda Fraser, Catherine Tumelty, Pauline Pestell, Tom Quigley, Margaret Taylor, Shirley Ennis, Pauline Lavery, Peter Monaghan, Mick Davison, Bernadette and Gary Bartlett, Michael Jacques.

2. Apologies: Doreen Cantwell, Jan Rafalski.

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

Fr Martin requested that several items were covered as he had to leave the meeting early.

- Parish Centre. Fr MW had met with Andrew Gillingham last week. The proposal is to keep the old Parish Hall as a meeting place and either lease or sell the remaining parts of the building. There were several concerns, parking and the issue of damp in the hall. It is hoped that the hall will be refurbished with money from the lease/sale of the building.

- Synodal meeting. The bishop's letter would be sent to parishes to be read in the first week of Lent.

As part of the synodal process in the parish there was the possibility of Amy Cameron being approached to hold a meeting for the parish.

- Parish secretary. Fr MW/St Joseph's would not be involved in the appointment of a new secretary. PL has offered to help Fr MW with the production of 'St. Joseph's News' and three people have recently received training to help with the parish finances.

- Sunday morning liturgy. Fr MW confirmed that the liturgy would no longer be taking place and he explained why this was the case.

MD reassured Fr MW that the Parish Council would always be there to support him with any situation. Lent/Easter. PL would check candle/palms/ashes. Stations of the Cross would be discussed later in the meeting.

Fr Martin left the meeting.

4. Matters arising from the December meeting:

MD would give GB the name of an electrician.

GB would go forward with the option of a contract with CHUBB to service fire extinguishers.

PAT testing had been carried out and some failed items disposed of.

5. Correspondence.

Michelle Irwin had tendered her resignation from the CPC. TQ had thanked her for the service she had given.

DC had sent a detailed account of the work done in the meeting room by a group of volunteers.

Gregory McCormick had sent an email re the Parish Centre which had been forwarded to all members of the CPC. MD explained the history of the parish centre, its move to a limited company with directors and the huge responsibility taken on by those individuals. The decline in customers meant it was not financially able to continue. The parish had paid for the use of the centre for parish events but due to the parish financial situation this had become difficult.

A General meeting had been called to inform members about the closure.

There followed a discussion about funding to support the creation of a space for parish use and the need to support Fr MW through the situation before and after the parish centre was passed back to the diocese/parish.

MD would write to Fr MW, Fr Martin Morris and Andrew Gillingham with the items that need to be addressed before the closure of the parish centre and offer the support of the members of the CPC.

PP reported to the CPC that two representatives from the War Commission had visited church to see the graves within the church grounds and had expressed how well they were kept.

6. **Synodal meeting** - see above.

7. **Sunday morning liturgy** - see above.

PL (Safeguarding lead). Reported that there had been some concerns around safeguarding as there were no named leaders. A liturgy could be held any other day but a Sunday.

In future a register of children attending Children's Liturgy should be taken. There was a discussion around Saturday's children's liturgy and how we could make more of the children e.g. speaking to them when they return to church/the children explaining what they have been doing.

Also around ensuring that the weeks when there is a first communion celebration that the children and families are welcomed from the altar and perhaps the homily could reflect the theme of the celebration.

8. **Parish centre** - see above.

9. **Lent/Easter** - see above.

There was a discussion about the best time to offer Stations of the Cross during Lent. The suggestion was 3p.m. on a Sunday. **PP would discuss this with Fr MW.**

10. **Lourdes Youth Group update.**

MT reported that there were 6 members of the parish travelling with the youth group on pilgrimage to Lourdes. Two of the young people had spoken at the Vigil mass and a second collection was taken to help with costs.

There are also two fund raising events being organised, a Race Night on 28th February and Afternoon Tea on 22nd March.

11. **Live streaming at St Joseph's.**

TQ would speak to Brian Towns to get an update on the situation.

12. **CPC email contacts.**

The CPC were asked for their permission for their email details to be shared with the group. **This was given by those present and MT would share these.**

13. **School updates/new schools.**

We hope to get an update about St. Joseph's at the next meeting. BB reported that the headteacher has been notified by the education department that St. Benet's are on the list for a new school.

14. **There were no future events discussed.**

15. **A.O.B.**

MD had attended the pastoral forum meeting and said there was a lot of work to be done through the pastoral council to parish level. He advised that we needed a representative from the parish on the Partnership council. There are 4 meetings/year usually on a Thursday evening. **MD would give the next meeting date to MT to circulate to the CPC to ask for a possible representative.**

PP advised that there is need for a new hoover for church cleaning. MD offered the hoover from the parish centre if they could wait a few weeks.

GB informed the meeting that he was still waiting on John Robson to return to mend the stone steps at the entrance to church. Although a meeting had been arranged this was yet to happen. There had also been an issue over the method of payment but a cheque sent for payment had been cashed.

16. **Prayers for the next meeting** – PP.

17. **Our next meeting** – 8th March 2026 at 7p.m.

18. **Closing prayer** – MT.

Rota for Saturday vigil mass - Feb 14th JR, Feb 21st MT, Feb 28th TQ, Mar 7thPP, Mar 14th CT, Mar 21st PL.