

St Joseph's Birtley Church Pastoral Council
Notes of the meeting held 12th July 2026 in the Presbytery.

The meeting opened with a prayer led by CT.

Present: Pauline Pestell, Margaret Taylor, Catherine Tumelty, Mick Davison, Michael Jacques, Bosco Anthony, Tom Quigley.

Apologies: Fr Martin, Doreen Cantwell, Hilda Fraser, Peter Monaghan, Jan Rafalski, Pauline Lavery.

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

Matters arising – Fr MW was not at the meeting to discuss the use of card machines.

Correspondence. MT had received a suggestion from DC by email suggesting we look at the possibility of a new build Parish Hall due to the expense involved in refurbishing the old building.

Feedback from Fr Martin -

Garden Wall – 7 builders have visited the site and 4 quotes have been received. These will be forwarded to the local councillors.

Parish Centre – an independent surveyor has given an estimate of an annual lease and value for sale. The diocese will now move ahead to find a lease holder. Fr MW has stipulated that the use of the car park for church should be included in the lease conditions.

Partnership/Pastoral strategy – FrMW will attend the next meeting with the Gateshead Partnership along with Mick Davison on 16th July.

Church steps – Fr M had spoken to Alan Sexton about repairs of the steps and sacristy roof. Also one of the builders giving quotes for the wall advised that they could add these other jobs to his quote.

The meeting discussed this and felt that the steps were an urgent issue. TQ would talk to Tony Scott who might have contacts who could help.

School – Plans were moving ahead but unfortunately Japanese knotweed has been discovered on site and this must be removed.

Feedback from Pastoral Strategy

MD and PP reported back that both meetings they had attended, at St. Peter's with the south Gateshead group and at St. Mary's with the whole of the Gateshead Partnership, had been welcoming and productive. Fr Chris Warren had invited St. Joseph's representatives to the meeting where paperwork had been prepared which included our parish.

There is a suggestion that four churches may come together – St. Peter's, St. Anne's, St. Joseph's and St. Oswald's. The next meeting is on July 16th at St. Mary's Whickham where the four groups of parishes in the Gateshead Partnership will discuss the way forward. The final proposal needs to be returned to the diocese by the end of July. MT, MD and FR MW will attend the meeting.

Management/maintenance of the Parish Hall.

Concerns have been raised about the state of the car parks and area around the parish hall/centre.

It was decided to ask via the bulletin for volunteers to come together on 25th July to tidy up and cut back plants/weeds. MT would shop for weed killer. CT to send item to PL for the bulletin.

Sub-groups.

PP re-introduced the need to develop sub-groups and what would be expected of them and how they might feedback/meet with the Parish council.

It was recognised that the management of the Parish Hall is a major concern and it was decided that some members of the parish would be approached about getting involved with this group. It was felt that one member of this group should be a permanent member of the Parish Council.

Celebration at the Belgian Cemetery.

TQ reported that Birtley Heritage Group and Belgian nationals have promoted the idea of a memorial to mark community graves of some 60 children and women. A grant of £1000 has been given to create a memorial which will be unveiled at a ceremony on 12th September at 11.30a.m. This will be attended by family members, the Mayor and Fr MW.

Parish Summer Picnic.

This will take place on Sunday 30th August 12-4p.m. in the parish grounds. A notice will be put on the bulletin and information sent out to schools before the end of term.
The event will include games, tea/coffee, tombola, raffle and music.

A.O.B.

Ann Marshall had contacted CT with the suggested that we could perhaps introduce a blessing of the sick at a Thursday mass, and follow with tea and coffee in church. CT would speak to Fr MW.

MJ announced that this would be his final meeting as he and Barbara are moving house. PP thanked him for his support to the Parish, especially his musical skills and membership of the Parish Council.

The meeting closed with a prayer read by MJ.

Next meeting – Sunday 13th September.

Rota for Saturday Mass – July 18th CT, 25th JR,
August 1stPP, 8th MT, 15th TQ, 22nd PM, 29th PL.