

## **St Robert's Church Parish Pastoral Council**

### **Minutes of Meeting held at St Robert's Centre**

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

**Present:** Fr. Simon Bradbury, Ed Dyer, Caroline Walker, Paul Barry, Justin Park, Sue Collins, Nihal Weerasinghe, Matt Blackamore, Richard Boscoe, Karen Shemwell, Jake Hutchinson

**Apologies:** Mick Hopwood, Emma Higgins

#### **1. Welcome & Opening Prayer**

Fr Simon opened the meeting with a prayer. Ed welcomed Jake to his first meeting.

#### **2. Minutes from the last meeting**

Agreed as read.

#### **3. Matters arising**

No comments made

#### **4. Clergy update**

We trialled Saturday evening exposition on the first Saturday of the month. For the first two months this worked well, unfortunately there was no one present on the third month which meant the blessed sacrament couldn't be exposed. Agreed to expose the blessed sacrament each Saturday from 4-5pm during lent and then review afterwards.

There appears to be an increase of spirituality in the parish.

17 parishioners are going to Lourdes in July with Leeds Diocese.

We currently have 7 journeying into faith; looking to be received into the Church at the Easter Vigil. Louise was received last Tuesday into church and had received catechesis from Elena.

The congregation is growing. There is a good demographic when you look around the masses at the weekend from all ages, an increase particularly in ages 18-34 group. Jake suggested younger people are looking for something deeper, social media is catalyst.

Dave and Marie are moving back to America, they will be sorely missed but it is important that Marie's legacy continues.

Fr Simon is able to concentrate on the spiritual, pastoral needs of the parish whilst Caroline picks up the administration.

#### **5. Committee reports**

Social – Report received from Marie

All Saints Day party on Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>. – Wonderful participation. The parishioners especially loved seeing the children in the offertory procession and later in the parade, held in the Centre. There were games, prizes and food for all. Many compliments from parents, with some saying they were already planning their costumes for next year!

Souls Cakes after the All Souls Mass was once again a highlight. Several parishioners volunteered to bake and there was more than plenty to go around with tea and coffee.

Women's Day Retreat – 24 Women participated in an all-day Retreat titled "Fiat...Let it be done to me" which was focused on living the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary in our every-day lives. The retreat concluded with the 5pm Mass and the retreatants families were asked to join the women, who participated in the Mass by doing the readings, offertory and bidding prayers. Had a good range in ages – 35-75 yrs. of age. Had a wonderful team of 5 volunteers leading and the Men's group served the lunch. Received many emails thanking us for all the work and attention given to the retreat. Several expressed "it was just what they needed!" Many asked if we could repeat again soon. All in all, it was a very spiritual and uplifting retreat.

Advent Wreath Making – Once again very well attended. Had over 25 people making wreaths with the majority after the 9:00 am Mass. It seems to be something families enjoy doing together, as well as individuals. There were so many people after 9am mass that they took up the entire space in the Centre. I feel that in the future, a second tea and coffee area should be moved upstairs for those not making wreaths, so as to allow for more space for families.

Soul Core and Cleaning Angels had their Christmas parties on two separate dates in December. Always fun to bring the 2 Soul Core classes together for fellowship and all the different crews of the Cleaning Angels as well.

Christmas party for the Cleaning Angels, Counters, Adult Altar Servers and Flower Arrangers was held on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Fr. Simon, Caroline and Serena hosted a fun filled afternoon.

Christmas Carol Service – Minced Pies and Mulled Wine was served after the concert in the Centre. Micheline and Bill McNamara assisted Caroline in organizing the event. Once again, very well attended; something the parishioners really enjoy.

Autumn Bible Study – 9 Oct – 27 Nov. 20 people participated in the study on "Ephesians – our inheritance." It was a very uplifting and insightful study, highlighting the beauty of the gift of our faith and how we are called to "live" it.

Tentative plans for the upcoming season:

Feb – Mar – Lenten Bible study

Stations of the Cross to include International Stations of the Cross

Mar – Pro Life Tea benefitting the Gianna Baby Bank

Hot Cross Buns after the Easter Vigil

Safeguarding – Report received from Mick

I don't have anything for the meeting other than to remind people that volunteers and leaders of groups need to let us know of new people.

We review our Parish list frequently and endeavour to capture into the DBS process those leaders and volunteers who need a DBS according to national guidelines for Catholic safeguarding.

If people are not sure who needs a DBS then let us know and we can clarify.

Children – Report received from Hayley

The Christmas eve 4pm mass was extremely well attended with over 50 children present on the altar singing "Away in a manger" organised by the children's liturgy group.

Children's liturgy has been well attended for the past two weeks as we settle into the new year.

There has been a steady flow of new Mum's and toddlers in our Mary's Angels group, they welcomed six new children at their last session

The year 5's and 6's all attended the midday mass on Friday 16th January. This was a very special mass and the children and staff at St Robert's school were warmly welcomed. The classes across the year groups will continue to take it in turns to attend a weekday mass (Wednesdays) which involves them walking to and from school and enjoying their packed lunch over in the parish centre.

The Sacramental programmes kick-start this year with the Sacrament of Confirmation in January, followed by the Sacrament of Reconciliation running from the end of February through to the end of March. There will be parents' sessions also running ahead of the children's catechesis. First Holy Communion preparation will begin after Easter. Children registered for first sacraments: Confirmation 12, Reconciliation 6 (deadline 1 Feb), Holy Communion 6 (deadline 22 Mar)

Music – Matt Blackamore

The 9am choir held a party last weekend for John Ibison's retirement and birthday which went well.

Sat evening Beryl plays the organ, Sun 11am is known as the traditional choir with Michael on the organ and Sun 9am is generally family feel hymns. Emma Higgins covered for John on the keyboard last weekend and would like to play more often to assist John and to free him up to sing. Both Sunday choirs would welcome new members and suggestion made to ask the children receiving the sacrament of confirmation whether they would like to play an instrument or sing in the choir (or serve). Announcement could also be added to the bulletin. Zoe, the 9am flutist, is no longer able to play at Mass.

One of the suggestions that came out of the Sycamore course recently about praying was people would like to come into Church before Mass to pray quietly and also when they receive communion. Could the choir practise upstairs in the parish centre before the 11am Mass and is it possible to leave a longer pause so that nearly all the congregation have received communion before the hymn starts?

Caroline to approach Michael not to play the organ during the 9am Mass as this drowns out the keyboard and singers.

Finance – nothing to report as the finance meeting was postponed due to not receiving the diocesan statements before the meeting.

## 6. Building Fund

Fundraising, including the 3 grants we were awarded and gift aid claimed back, currently stands at £201,000. This is a fantastic response and we are very grateful to everyone who has donated so generously.

Phase 1 is underway which consists of brick replacement, roof repairs to the south and west elevation, stone cross repair and the pillars at the front above the narthex doors. Some issues have arisen which are being dealt with and contingency plans are in place should the need arise. Phase 1 should be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March.

Originally the plan was for 5 phases to allow for fundraising however, as the fundraising got off to a fantastic start some phases have been able to merge and we are currently working to 3 phases.

Phase 2 will look to start in Spring 2027 and this will focus on the North and East elevation. We had asked the diocese if Phase 2 could be brought forward and this suggestion was declined for a number of reasons; we can only apply once to a grant fundraiser in a financial year and they will need to have the reports completed and filed before looking at offering a further grant and also time for the necessary permissions to be granted.

We will look to complete jobs outside of the building fund during this time including replacement of the entrance doors and improving the narthex area. The doors will be fully funded and won't require financial approval from the diocese.

A building fund update will be made to the parish the weekend of 15<sup>th</sup> Feb as the Lenten project this year will be the focus of the building fund as agreed at the last PPC meeting. We will look to set a target nearer the time, for example if we have £225k in the building fund we will aim to raise £25k during lent to get our total at £250k.

#### 7. Parish Priorities

The Pope asked "Is there life in our Church? Is there room for what is being born? Do we love and proclaim a God who sets us on the way?"

Keep the focus and encouragement of younger people; they are the future of the church.

Suggestion of a film night, social media – focus on what is available.

Society sees Christmas as the main liturgy but actually Easter is. Look at the way of the cross during lent. Suggestion of a parish open day to advertise to people across the town; to look at taking away some preconceptions, explain the tabernacle, vestments, chalices, thurible, monstrance, have a group praying the rosary – open up the parish centre too. Candidates preparing for Holy Communion do a treasure hunt in church asking them to look for baptismal font, tabernacle, lectern etc.

The international mass last year was very special and will look to do again.

Ensure we build on Marie's legacy to strengthen the parish, to encourage people to use their gifts.

#### 8. Any other business

Appeals for more readers has proved successful. A training and recap session for new and experienced readers will be on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March at 5pm with a recommissioning for all readers over the weekend 14/15<sup>th</sup> March.

The next Apologia will be on Suffering and Greg will present this on 15<sup>th</sup> March. The faith and reason session last night led by Sue Collins was brilliant as were the previous sessions on Last Things by Ed and the Mass by Elena. These sessions are fruitful in empowering people in the parish. Fr Simon had a discussion with Fr Paul Grogan, Episcopal Vicar for Education who was very interested in our Apologia and he had shared with the wider community.

Mass for Jill Collins, who is the headteacher retiring from St Robert's School, will take place on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July at 6pm with a reception provided by the parish in the centre afterwards.

Caroline to link up with Marie to look at previous events that have taken place and contact details of the team leaders involved in each event.

9.Dates for the next 2 meetings

7pm, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2026

7pm, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2026

10. The meeting finished at 8.20pm with a closing prayer.

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