St Robert's Church Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of Meeting
held at St Robert's Parish Centre

Monday 19th October 2026

Present: Fr. Simon Bradbury, Anne Marie Lund, Emma Higgins, Mick Hopwood, Paul Barry, Ed Dyer, Nihal Weerasinghe, Justin Park, Matt Blackamore, Richard Boscoe, Jake Hutchinson, Caroline Walker

Apologies: Sue Collins, Rachael Wainwright

1. Welcome

2. Opening Prayer
Led by Fr Simon

3. Minutes from the last meeting
Approved

4. Matters arising
Lenten Project

5. Clergy update
School – Jill Collins retired at the end of Summer. Amanda Rhodes started in September. Celebrated whole school mass at the start of term, very impressed with the singing and prayers. Regular worship in church with a class attending a midweek Mass once a term.

Parish life is flourishing. In the process of setting up dates for the First Sacrament programme.

Journey of faith continued throughout summer. 7/8 people currently exploring and looking to be received into the Church at Easter.

Few funerals and couple of weddings recently. 13 Baptisms yesterday.

Coming up we have All Saints parade at the 9am Mass and the blessing of graves at Stonefall. The All Souls' Mass on 2nd November.

Was asked to attend the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday but couldn't get supply cover for the 11am Mass. However, there is now a new Catholic Chaplain at the Army Apprentice College, and he will lead the prayer at the Cenotaph.

Work has continued with the repairs to the church, and much improvement has been made. Phase 2 will go out to tender shortly with a view to the work starting after Easter. The narthex is almost finished, just the last of the painting today. We appointed a contractor to install the glass doors but after 6 months of waiting and not receiving clear information the contract was terminated, and a new contractor has been appointed. Unfortunately, the permissions had expired and we

have had to go back through the committees. Final approval is due around 19th November. Ideally, we would like the doors in place by Christmas but realistically possibly the new year.

Apologia last night with Mgr. Keith Barltrop was very well attended. We feel there is opportunity for further discussion and Fr Simon will speak to Sister Patsy to request a follow up session looking at Scripture teaching. In December Sister Judith and Sister Carmel will lead the next Apologia session on the Infancy Narratives – the time leading up to Jesus' birth. In the new year Matt, parishioner and University of Leeds lecturer, will present Apologia on ethics of war.

Following the Bishop's letter re Call of Creation and Sustainability a few people have come forward. Sue Collins has been asked to take the lead and an initial meeting has been set up with members from St Aelred's who implemented this a while ago. An initial meeting for parishioners has been set for 7pm on 9th November. We received an introduction from Emma who is the CAFOD Community Participation Co-ordinator for the diocese of Leeds and we are inviting her to attend the meeting with St A members.

18-30 group is going well. Jake will update further.

Looking at 30-40 group. Open to everyone in the age range - single, married, with or without children. Christina and Matt are running this and have started to spread the word. Fr Simon has been identifying potential members and there is a date in the diary for an initial steering group meeting.

Advent coming up – Reconciliation Service, Apologia – would welcome thoughts on reflection later in the meeting.

Lots of developments, parish growing outwards. The improvements to the fabric of the building continue. Able to continue and move forward pastorally and spiritually.

6.Committee reports

Music – Matt Blackamore Held a meeting recently with Fr Simon and Caroline looking at the future direction of the music. John has taken a step back and has decided to withdraw from playing. He has played for many years and is keen to free his time to pursue other activities. Emma and Matt jointly have stepped in to lead. They are planning hymns for the liturgy and homily in advance, looking at a few weeks ahead. The old unused equipment has been removed and stored. Users' instructions have been laminated and placed near the mixing desk for others to use i.e. Diocesan Children's Choir. The padlocks have been removed from the mixing desk; we have CCTV in Church. 2 new members have joined the 9am choir. Carlos is an accomplished pianist and has offered to play when Emma is unavailable. The intention is for the 9am choir to meet as a whole group seasonally and plan the music, a season in advance. A meeting has been planned for advent preparations. Hoping to see more engagement from parishioners i.e. hymn requests or to join and sing with the choir. The layout of the benches has changed so that the choir are facing the congregation and can project their voices rather than the need for microphones, which has pleased some members of the choir. The feedback has been very positive. Matt and Emma are clear they are there to enhance the worship and it is not a performance. Comments of a tangible improvement noticed. Agreed for Fr Simon, at the end of 9am Mass, to address the congregation inviting people who would like to join the choir to speak to Matt and Emma. The more people in the choir gives more scope for harmonies. Emma, Matt and Lisa are involved together in the All

Souls' Mass. 18-30 group are leading Christ the King Mass and have been asked to let Matt and Emma know of their hymn choices.

Lisa has a new organist David, supporting the 11am Mass with Michael and 5pm Mass with Beryl.

Children's Liturgy and bible camp – Anne Marie Lund is thriving; average attendance is 35 but this can rise to 50 some weeks. Would like to split into two groups, however there are only 6 volunteers and are desperate for more leaders to come forward. Mick confirmed there are currently 13 DBS checked leaders for CLG, but this includes Bible Camp leaders and suggested reaching out to them to see if anyone would like to join. Agreed for some new people it would be quite intimidating with the numbers and parents present. Suggestion there could be a 2nd supporting adult rather than leader. It was noted historically there used to be 3 groups, toddlers, pre-school then first holy communion – if it was split into 3 groups there wouldn't be as much pressure which may make it more appealing for people to come forward to volunteer. Could use the carpet area for the toddlers, using the partition and the tables for the preschool children then the older children upstairs. The CLG leader will address the congregation, giving a verbal update of what the children have been learning on the first and last week of term. Currently the children are learning a carol to sing at the Children's Christmas Eve Mass. Suggested to liaise with Matt & Emma over hymn choices for this Mass. Bible Camp looking to go ahead next year and increasing the number of children to 35, ideally would like to extend to 40.

Catechesis – Emma Higgins Putting together dates for First Sacraments. The Bishop will not be confirming due to increase in workload with taking on Hallam and Middlesbrough Dioceses and he has given permission to parish priests to administer the Sacrament. Fr Simon will confirm the candidates, this worked well last year with a celebration held in the parish centre afterwards.

Women's evening was a huge success. 37 attended. Fr Simon, Bill and Richard were on hand to serve. Adoration followed by a meal. Good 'buzz' feeling. Will look to do again.

18-30 Group – Jake Hutchinson Would like more exposition; some have attended the sessions in Leeds with Youth2000. Made connections with other young people across the Diocese. Would like to host an event here and invite friends met through Youth2000.

Friendship and Social outing included visiting Ushaw College and Our Lady of the Crag and St Robert's Cave in Knaresborough. Would like to do more to serve the parish. Will lead the 9am and 11am Mass on Christ the King: welcoming, reading, offertory and refreshments. Will look to have a slideshow of photos. Looking to create a QR code poster for new members to join. Focus has been on building confidence within the group.

Planning a trip to Bolton Abbey as their next event (ideas are pulled from a suggestion jar of activities).

Joining St Peter's Church for a sponsored walk – community worship event with a meal afterwards at St Peter's.

Aiming for monthly events. Suggestion for service was made to join the hospitality team for the Diocesan Lourdes pilgrimage. Parish could look to sponsor. Catenians may be able to contribute for under 25's; they already contribute towards nurses attending Lourdes. Suggestion was made

for service to volunteer with the SVP. Fr Simon reminded the meeting that the 18-30 group is gelling and we have to give them scope to develop without putting too much pressure on them.

Attended the trip to Ushaw with the altar servers which was great. A thank you was offered to Fr Simon for the altar servers. The altar servers generally only see each other at Mass as they attend different schools, and it was great to hear the feedback that friendships had been formed. Members said they enjoy hearing the 9am altar servers saying the prayer in the sacristy, through Fr Simon's microphone, before Mass.

Safeguarding – Mick Hopwood the Parish currently have 43 DBS checked personnel for various roles including EM, CLG and Catechists.

The Diocese send out a list and for the first time we are red free, meaning we are up to date with the admin involved.

The parish is running well. Any issues are dealt with as and when needed.

Richard confirmed he has read the Safeguarding leaflet.

Finance – Paul Barry Total assets in cash banking as at 30/09 £599k. £300k was surplus built up pre covid. Since Jan 25 £257k has been raised for the building fund.
6 months in the current year offertories is £76k; loose plate and planned giving are reducing with more donations received via standing order and dona/web.
Total income for 6 months is £169k with expenses £186k (£86k was for the building fund)
Explanation was given to how the Diocese can access the £350k we have in our deposit account to assist other parishes however, this is ringfenced to us and if we requested the money back into our account today, we would receive the money tomorrow. Interest at a parish level is not accrued on this money, however, it stops other parishes being overdrawn. Questions were asked about the amalgamation of the other dioceses and whether this arrangement would be affected. We don't envisage any change, Middlesbrough Diocese are currently £16m in the black, Leeds Diocese approx. £10/11m.

Ed thanked Richard for his work on Gift Aid at the welcoming event and encouraging parishioners to sign up to Gift Aid.

7.Building Fund – Architects have carried out a survey on the car park side of the church and the rear, to include roof, bricks, gutters – we have appointed a new architect for phase 2. Work will hopefully start after Easter 27 – the tender process is going out. We will then look to decorate inside the church and investigate the rising damp around the pillars on the Sanctuary.

Property - With regards to the flower room it is still a work in progress in looking at changing the layout and getting running water (this is outside of the building fund).
Foundations in Beverley House need looking at as significant cracks have appeared.
Presbytery foundations and also dry rot in the parish office.
Parish Centre – ongoing issue with damp. We are hoping to secure a grant with the national lottery to assist with the cost.

Lenten Project
Discussion to reinstate the Lenten project took place. This has been on hold due to our own building fund. All agreed good idea to reinstate. Question was asked whether the Lourdes Fund could be a nomination. Currently the Lourdes account has £12k which doesn't cover the cost of consumables required for the pilgrimage. Kim or Phil could be approached to assist with resources. Agreed a sub committee to be formed, due to the tight deadlines as ideally announced in the bulletin beginning of December, nominations in beginning of Jan. Vote takes place and then successful nomination to start on Ash Wednesday, 10 Feb. Sub Committee to meet online: Fr Simon, Nihal Weerasinghe, Justin Park, Anne Marie Lund, Mick Hopwood.

8. Parish Priorities
Reflective Apologia
Spiritual Activities – Advent
Development of 30/40 group
Call of Creation – Sustainability

- Apologia – Mgr. Keith Barltrop presented well. Really interesting and quite challenging. Impossible to round up to a conclusion. Certainly gave food for thought. To prioritise people and individuals over process. A further discussion beyond last night to follow up. Encouraging to hear that most students had reported that a local school was where they felt most safe.
  Very interesting that the talk was started with the 4 Greek words of love Storge/Philia/Eros/Agape rather than simply sexuality. Conscious of language used they/them – should be us. Worth looking at inviting someone to do a follow up. Question asked of where the Catholic teaching came from originally. Fr Simon to invite Sister Patsy, Scripture Scholar, to give follow up allowing for further discussion to the members who attended last night.
- Advent – Suggestion made to have Advent Adoration, possibly 2 sessions. People that work cannot attend on Friday's at 11.30. Suggested time frame of weeknights 7-8pm and possibly 5-6pm Sunday. Infancy Narratives for the next Apologia. Reconciliation Service on 1st December. Look to invite Fr Chris Willis to do a Day of Recollection in Lent.
- 30/40 group – children/family based. Fr Simon has tapped on the shoulder 15/16 people. Could be family groups, single people. To see how it develops.
- Call of Creation – discussion around sourcing heat pumps, solar panels on parish centre – the group are meeting in November and we will see what they come up with.

9.Dates for the next 2 meetings

7pm, Tuesday 19th January 2027
7pm, Monday 19th April 2027

10. The meeting finished at 8.40pm with a closing prayer.