

## St Robert's Church Parish Pastoral Council

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

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2026

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

**Apologies:** Mick Hopwood, Emma Higgins

#### 1. Welcome

Ed welcomed Rachael to the PPC. Paul Barry has agreed, with his corporate knowledge, to stay on the committee for another year.

#### 2. Opening Prayer

Led by Fr Simon

#### 3. Minutes from the last meeting

Agreed as read. Marie has covered her responsibilities for when she returns to America in May.

#### 4. Matters arising

Previous PPC meeting agreed on providing thank you gifts for the teachers at St Robert's primary school. Sue will to speak to Jill to identify a suitable time in the school calendar.

A parishioner suggested purchasing books for children including sacramental books. The meeting agreed that providing books is a parental responsibility. However, it was agreed it would be useful for the children to have access to Mass sheets so that they could follow the liturgy. Caroline to source costs for mass sheets. NW agreed to contribute financially to cover the cost of the children's mass sheets. Agreed to add links onto the parish website to recommend resources for parents to purchase books.

Children preparing for first holy communion are familiar with prayers and some responses. It was agreed that children, once they receive holy communion should remain in Mass rather than attend Children's Liturgy.

At the 9am Mass the Gloria is always sung; concern that children don't learn things in the same way as if it was spoken. However, it was noted with one the mass sheet is provided they will become familiar with the prayer.

There are some children's prayer books and missals available in the piety shop. Caroline to include a footnote about this in the next email to parents of children preparing for first holy communion. 80% of children attending Mass do so every week. Positive feedback given on Fr Simon's engagement with the children during the offertory.

Suggestion for counters to begin at the end of pew rather than the middle aisle to allow children to approach Fr Simon sooner. Agreed that the 9am Mass will routinely include 2 offertory hymns. Proposal to print the Creed and glue into the front of hymn books. Volunteers offered to assist Caroline with this task.

## 5. Clergy update

Building work is ongoing. Lent and holy week were well attended. Additional time for Adoration was given on Saturdays. Reconciliation Service and Stations of the Cross saw strong attendance. 6 new members were welcomed into the Church at the Easter Vigil. Following the previous journey of faith group, a new 16-30's group has been established, led by Jake. There are currently 6 new enquirers interested to join in becoming Catholics and an initial enquirers evening is planned for next Tuesday evening.

Fr Simon, Ed and Caroline attended a meeting with the Bishop and representatives from other parishes to look at the merging of Leeds and Middlesbrough Diocese. The following day, it was announced that Hallam Diocese would also be included in the proposal. Ed shared the below printout outlining the number of parishes and priests in all 3 dioceses:

## Parishes and Clergy

	Leeds	Middlesbrough	Hallam
Parishes	73	69	52
Diocesan Priests in active ministry	62	29	22
- Of whom are under 60	24	9	9
- Of whom are 60 - 75	43	17	10
- Of whom are over 75	2	3	3
- Of whom have incardinated	0	2	0
Missionary Priests/Religious	13	25	6
Priests in active ministry from other Dioceses	2	2	0
Retired Priests	43	21	12
Permanent Deacons	23	10	16

Review of current data suggests, that in the coming years, parishes and priests may need to be shared. Parishioners are encouraged to review the presentation available on the parish website and submit feedback by 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

The members of the meeting expressed strong respect and appreciation for priests and their ongoing service. Continued prayers for priests was encouraged.

Greg led the most recent Apologia on Suffering. Sister Patsy from Holy Child Jesus will lead the next session on Vatican 2 and this is expected to take place in June.

## 6. Committee reports

Matt Blackamore - Music Easter music went well. Maundy Thursday liturgy was described as particularly beautiful; John led the singing, Emma played the keyboard and a clarinettist contributed. Many compliments were received regarding the music throughout Holy Week. Choir initially nervous about losing Marie. A new member, Cat, has joined. Plan to encourage additional new members by placing an announcement in the bulletin.

Intention to further develop harmonies at the 9am Mass, building on strong congregational responses to hymns.

A couple of microphones need replacing. Due to health and safety (trip hazard) will look to replace with 2 radio mics; estimated cost is approx £40.

Offertory hymn currently continues to play while children come forward; this will change to two hymns going forward. During the offertory collection, counters will begin from the ends of the

bench keeping the centre aisle free for children – announcement to be made at the beginning of Mass. Justin to liaise with Stephen Gregson, John Tolan and Claire Rumford.

It was noted that the first communion hymn is not published at the 11am Mass. This is intentional to allow space for silent prayer after receiving communion.

Paul Barry – Finance there has been significant increase in the Gift Aid claims. Last year £22k and this year £35k. Offertory income has increased by £7k to a total of £148k. Noted more parishioners are paying by standing order, resulting in reduced administration of envelopes. The Diocesan Statements have only been received and inputted today. Overall the parish is recording a surplus, largely attributed to Building Fund contribution and nursery rental income. An annual financial statement will be shared with the parish in late summer. Historically, little feedback has been received from parishioners on this statement. The meeting agreed that the report provides sufficient detail and reflects a commitment to transparency, with no additional clarification currently deemed necessary.

Sue Collins – Catechesis 12 children received the Sacrament of Confirmation, 14 children made their first reconciliation and 21 children are preparing to receive their First Holy Communion. The 21 children preparing to receive FHC come from 8 different schools of which 10 children attend St Robert's Primary School. Following the 9am Mass last week and before the start of the 11am Mass, Sue gave the children a tour of the church showing them the Holy Water Stoups, the Sanctuary Lamp and the Tabernacle.

Rachael Wainwright – Children's Liturgy Group Attendance has grown consistently. Average weekly attendance is around 30. Easter Sunday saw an increased attendance of 48 children and Fr Simon thanked the CLG team for offering the session on Easter Sunday. Leaders meet once a term to reflect and plan future sessions. Discussion about possibly splitting the group and maybe the older children going upstairs. Activities are currently tiered towards age group 7/8 and then preschoolers. It is very positive to see strong participation from children at Mass. Children processing in to show Fr Simon their creations continue to be a valued and joyful part of the liturgy.

Jake Hutchinson – 16-30 Group 9 members met in the parish centre to watch a film about the life of Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati. This was followed by a group walk around Malham Cove. The group has now increased to 15. Suggestion made to create a dedicated page on the parish website. Looking for a group name. Plans for 26<sup>th</sup> April to watch the documentary 'Harry goes to Rome'. Hoping to plan a trip to Ampleforth in June.

Mick Hopwood – Safeguarding Report It is noted that SVP are now responsible for carrying out their own DBS checks. No consultation with parish priests took place prior to this change, and no clear rationale was provided. PB confirmed that the DBS organisation had incorrectly categorised the SVP which has resulted in the checks being managed in-house.

## 7. Building Fund

Healthy total of fundraising contributions to date. Phase 1 is nearing completion, pending the final snagging. Once the work is signed off, full accounts will be available to provide a clear indication of costs for the remaining 2 sides of the church.

We can apply for more grants for phase 2.

The Lenten project this year was the Building Fund. This was not promoted as strongly as previous Lenten projects.

Parishioners have been very generous so far. It is hoped that once phase 1 is fully completed, this will encourage further donations towards the remaining phases. Costs to 31 March 2026 for this project stood at £69k.

In addition to the building fund project, work is progressing in the Narthex. Paul Parker and John Tevlin are doing a commendable job improving the appearance of the Narthex with decorative wall panels to mirror the rear wall of the Sanctuary.

Permission has been received from the relevant diocesan committees to remove the false ceiling in the narthex. This will open up the space and restore visibility of the roundel window. The parish is currently seeking a principal contractor to carry out this work.

The glass doors have been ordered. Installation is pending arrival of the hardware, which is being sourced from America. The doors will be installed as soon as the hardware arrives – this project is being entirely funded by an anonymous donor, for which we are extremely grateful.

#### 8. 200 Club

Question was raised regarding whether the 200 club should continue or whether the prize money be reduced. Following discussion, it was agreed the club has not been promoted as strongly as it could be, given the current focus on fundraising for the building fund. Members noted awareness of winners being listed in the bulletin and forms being available in the Narthex, but many were unsure of further details about the club. Agreed Caroline to include more information in the bulletin to explain what the club supports and ask the promoter of the club whether they would be willing to make an appeal at Mass. Flyers will be made available in the parish centre during tea and coffee. It was unanimously agreed the 200 Club will remain unchanged for now.

#### 9. Covered earlier in the meeting

#### 10. Parish Priorities/Any other business

The Easter flower arrangements were widely appreciated and described as beautiful. A big thank you was extended to our flower arranging team for their work.

A suggestion was made regarding the candles distributed at the Easter Vigil Mass. Some candles were quite short, causing concern among parishioners about them not lasting the service and posing a fire risk with the card holder.

The parish is recognised as a growing and welcoming community. Initiatives such as Apologia, catechesis and the street sign on Station Parade were highlighted as positive ways of encouraging people to explore and share their faith.

It was suggested a printed order of service would make mass more accessible, particularly for those new to the church. There are some response sheets in the Narthex. Caroline to source child friendly sheets. There was also a suggestion to place sheets at the end of the pews for newcomers, though it was noted that welcomers usually identify and assist new parishioners directly.

Dave Baker has been supporting the altar servers at the 9am Mass but will be returning to America in May. It was agreed not to immediately replace him, allowing space for the children to take on greater responsibility and develop in the role. This was seen as a positive opportunity for growth. Last week saw 8 young altar servers, which is very encouraging. Children may begin serving once they have made their first reconciliation.

9. Dates for the next 2 meetings

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

7pm, 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 2026

10. The meeting finished at 8.35pm with a closing prayer.