

St Robert's Church Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of Meeting held at St Robert's Centre

Monday 20th July 2026

Present: Fr. Simon Bradbury, Mick Hopwood, Ed Dyer, Sue Collins, Anne Marie Lund, Rachael Wainwright, Jake Hutchinson, Justin Park, Emma Higgins, Matt Blackamore, Caroline Walker, Paul Barry,

Apologies: Richard Boscoe, Nihal Weerasinghe

1. Welcome

Ed welcomed Anne Marie, Children's Liturgy and Bible Camp leader to the PPC.

2. Opening Prayer

Led by Fr Simon

Anne-Marie was welcomed to her first meeting.

3. Minutes from the last meeting

Agreed as read. No comments.

4. Matters arising

Matt would like to discuss the Lourdes pilgrimage.

5. Clergy update

Fr Simon started off giving thanks to all the volunteers within the parish.

The parish seems to be thriving but always important not to become complacent. There are many events happening - rosary, exposition on Friday's, 18-30 group outings, Loss Café, Pets' Blessing, mens' evening. Confessions are well used on Saturdays and on appointment.

The atmosphere and feedback is that we are a welcoming parish. Hospitality after Sunday Masses and events are well attended.

A journey of faith course started some weeks ago with around eight candidates exploring become Catholics. Margaret Tolan is assisting Fr Simon with this. Jake has recently attended and helped with a session as have a few other parishioners.

Apologia – last one was well attended with approx. 40 parishioners present. The next one is in October and will be led by Monsignor Keith Bartrop from Westminster parish on the subject of human sexuality. Sisters Judith, Carmel and Patsy will lead a session on infancy during Advent.

A volunteer has come forward to lead a Bible study group for women in the Autumn; looking likely to be a Monday evening.

In terms of baptism preparation, rather than having a formal session with the parents together, Fr Simon has been meeting with the families on a one to one basis and found this very useful and likely to continue this format going forward. A couple of baptism parents who are not Catholic have shown interest in joining Journey in Faith.

There are a number of weddings, and sadly funerals, in the diary. The Loss café, held fortnightly, for bereaved families has started with Bill Clisham, Kathy Chalmers, Katherine Baylis and Margaret Tolan hosting.

Music and liturgy and we are hoping to attract new members in the future.

Looking to put on a welcome for new parishioners' event in the Autumn and some members may be asked to come and give a brief account of what your involvement is with the parish.

The stone cross has been reinstated following phase 1 of the building work.

Across the Diocese there will be some challenges ahead with Bishop Marcus overseeing Middlesbrough and Hallam dioceses and a consultation process underway towards unification. On the ground, day to day, we shouldn't see any real change for the foreseeable future. Bishop Marcus has given all parish priests the faculty to administer the sacrament of Confirmation in the future due to his own, more limited diary. We held our own Confirmation service this year, rather than a Deanery event and this worked really well. Across the three dioceses the numbers of priests, particularly in Middlesbrough and Hallam, are low. The Bishop has confirmed priests won't be asked to move outside of their own Diocese unless the priest makes a request. There will be some changes as priests retire. Parishes likely to be more lay led.

Ed thanked Fr Simon on behalf of the PPC members for all he does for the parish.

6. Parish Annual Statement – Paul Barry shared the annual statement with a brief about the nursery fees income we have received from the diocese. Confirmed if you strip out the building fund from the overall picture, we are in a strong position with 18% increase. The Annual Statement was approved and can be shared with the parish. Ed to send Caroline the final version. Caroline to put copies in the Narthex and a note in the bulletin.

7. Committee reports

Catechesis: Sue Collins confirmed the cycle of first sacraments has been completed for this year. One parent had questioned the format First Holy Communion and Fr Simon and Sue explained our rationale behind the way we carry out the Sacraments. After the sacrament took place, that parent seemed very satisfied, seeing what it is we are trying to achieve.

For first holy communion 21 children from 10 different schools attended. It would be great if these friendships within the parish stay committed and discussion was held about including the children once they had received the sacrament to keep their focus and attendance.

Once all the first sacrament had been completed, the catechists met with Fr Simon for feedback to see what worked well and what could we improve on. Agreed for the older children, year 6 receiving confirmation the sessions were two blocks of four hours over two weekends. This worked well and there was opportunity for the children to enjoy each other's company as

downtime had been built into the session. Tended to be one hour learning input followed by a fifteen minute break. Found this encouraged the children to open up in group discussions.

A question was asked about the possibility of school input but this was not thought to be a possible way forward. It was underlined that the onus is on the parents as first teachers for catechesis and support from the parish.

In terms of relations with the primary school, Fr Simon celebrates Mass in St Roberts school and once a term a class group attend a weekday mass here in church. The deanery priests provide Masses and reconciliation services for St John Fisher's throughout the year.

Sometimes children who have made their first reconciliation don't make another until holy communion unless family attend regularly. Discussion held around children regularly receiving reconciliation and a suggestion was made of a youth reconciliation service similar to the Advent/Lent services we hold specifically for young children.

For some parents, they can find 'teaching' about a sacrament challenging; they may not have attended or received a sacrament since they left school, and a 'buddy' system was mentioned. For example, after the 9am Mass a parent/catechist could be available for an informal chat, Q&A session. Miss Collins has now retired and a new headteacher, Ms Rhodes is starting in September. We will look to continue the good links established and possibly 'champion' one parent for each year group.

Matt Blackamore - Music going ok. Emma plays occasionally when John is absent. Congregation enjoy live music and have requested if this could be more regular. A new member of the choir has joined - Kat. Kat is a professional singer. Emma has been teaching the choir some of the Mass parts. As more members are joining looking to do more harmonies, folk hymns for the demographic of the vibrant parish. Trying to make the music broader. Would like to attract new musicians. Requested for a note in the bulletin for both singers and musicians.

There is a possibility that two organists may be willing to help out at the 11am Mass in the future. David and Jeremy.

The choirs are in a robust place and would like to keep the momentum going. There are regular requests for organist/singers for funerals and weddings.

There was discussion about how the children's choir might include the congregation, introducing the music beforehand so that the parish can better worship together. Live music works well for this as you can allow for silent peaceful prayer.

Lourdes – The pilgrimage was a great success. Delighted a group from St Robert's attended.

Matt informed, as the Diocesan doctor of the pilgrimage, that the diocese are struggling to recruit nurses to attend the pilgrimage. Nurses are self funded and use their annual leave entitlement from work. There is a small bursary from the Diocesan second collection however, this is for the hire of wheelchairs and the consumables. Don't have the manpower to take really poorly pilgrims unfortunately.

Matt proposes a collection inhouse to support nurses and/or members of our parish to attend who wouldn't be able to go due to the cost – a proposal well received by the PPC.

Matt gave an example of a pilgrim who had attended Lourdes alongside the diocese but had made independent travel and accommodation.

It was confirmed the Catenians support a clinical qualified nurse to attend Lourdes with the diocese.

The fundraising team for Lourdes are proposing roadshows around the parishes.

Likelihood 2027 will be the last Leeds Diocese pilgrimage to Lourdes as from 2028 it could be one large pilgrimage including Middlesbrough and Hallam.

Mick Hopwood – Safeguarding email was sent requesting members read the Safeguarding leaflet and email Caroline to confirm once read. If a role involves children, people will be asked to complete Level 3 training. Caroline will need to have a copy of the Level 3 safeguarding training certificate for all volunteers.

The renewal of DBS is confusing. The email from the Update Service states that if you are still doing the role then no further action is needed. However, the diocese request we see one piece of ID, the original DBS certificate and people have to complete DBS 4 which authorises the Diocese to check the Update Service to see that their DBS is still current.

We are in a good position with our DBS's; the bible camp volunteers were prioritised and going forward we will alert individuals when their DBS is due for renewal before it expires

Jake Hutchinson – 18-30 Group currently 22 members. Meet every 4 – 6 weeks, usually a solid 10 attend regularly. Events have included visits to Ampleforth and Lastingham which have inspired the group. They have a suggestion jar and once they have completed the suggestion a new idea is pulled out of the jar. They have had adoration. Met for picnics. Open to new ideas.

8. Building Fund - Phase 1 has been completed. The stone cross has been installed a couple of weeks ago.

The costs for phase 2 are unknown at this point, and we are exploring architect options. All being well phase 2 should start next year. Allowing for grant application cycles and necessary Diocesan permission from both Arts & Heritage Committee and Finance approval.

The glass doors are proving frustrating. An anonymous donor has donated the money needed and permission was given to a contractor earlier in the year. He is having difficulty sourcing the hardware. We will check with the architect to see if there is an alternative option.

9. Parish Priorities

It was felt that as there has been a change to the PPC since we last looked at the parish priorities. It would be good as a new group to look at what we do well and what can we do to improve. The members were spilt into two groups.

What do we do well?	What can we do to improve?
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- Welcoming and inclusive parish
- New parishioners regularly feed this back to Fr Simon or parish members
- We listen to ideas and suggestions
- Thriving vibrant parish
- Sermons are excellent
- Music and liturgy
- Lay people coming forward and naturally doing jobs.
- We empower people
- Children's Liturgy and Fr Simon welcoming the children back into Mass
- Momentum in the parish
- Empowered 9am Altar Servers
- Supportive Altar Servers
- Outside of church, groups meet regularly: Golf group, walking group
- House masses during Lent
- St John Fishers chaplaincy inspection; priests, feast masses, advent and lent reconciliation services, year 7 welcome. Good relationship with Francis
- Pilgrimages to Lourdes & Walsingham
- Trips out such as Skipton Castle and Rievaulx Abbey
- Utilise people's skills
- Website and bulletin. Communication is good with timely updates
- Close links with Miss Collins and Mrs Roxby at St R School
- Men's night
- Ladies' night – EH has offered to start in Autumn term
- Children's Liturgy continuing through the school holidays
- Growth in number of families attending church, particularly 9am

- Follow on from welcoming event hold a fresher fair: ideally a one off after 5pm Mass in September
- Utilise musicians more and include congregation with responses
- Integrate more of the ethnic minorities
- For teas and coffees don't sit with the same people each week, invite someone new to the table
- For tea & coffee make the parish centre room quieter; curtains, possibly carpets, trial closing the partition
- Social after 5pm Mass
- Ask the Children's Liturgy Leader to inform the congregation and show what the children have done in their session
- Confirmation children to meet regularly after receiving the sacrament – youth group – Anne Marie to link in with Maria Coyle at St Aelred's parish
- Encourage young families together
- Ask the altar servers what they would like to see/interests to have more input within the parish, youth group? Social event?
- Reinstate easter egg hunt at Apley Grange when building work finished
- Encourage families from St Robert's school to attend mass regularly – aware pupils from the school are linked to 2 parishes, closer links with St Aelred's
- Nominated person supporting parents i.e. explaining first communion over coffee and cake whilst children receiving catechism upstairs.
- Teenagers: youth group, youth mass where they could lead the music and readings (suggested Christ the King mass)
- Pupils from schools have more active roles, more input. Similar to Men's evening with Adoration and social afterwards
- Social media – such as Instagram

10. Any other business

Fr Simon thanked Anne Marie and Hayley and all the volunteers for all their efforts to take on the Holiday Bible Camp. The camp went really well.

Matt thanked Fr Simon for all his support and encouragement and all he does in leading the parish.

9.Dates for the next 2 meetings

7pm, 19th Oct 2026

7pm, 1st February 2027

10. The meeting finished at 8.45pm with a closing prayer.