

CHURCHES OF THE FOREST OF DEAN

Our Lady of Victories Cinderford
St. Margaret Mary Coleford and Sedbury
St. Joseph's Lydney

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL DATED 7th APRIL 2025

1. Attendance

Present: Fr. Martin Queenan, Pip Deave, Peter Chisholm, Brian & Dot Lord; Fiona Mills, Sarah Perkins, Dorota Rapacz, Ruth Wood, Noel Riossi

2. Apologies: None

3. Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and accepted.

Matters Arising

- (1) The Chair attended the Diocesan Curia Day on 29th March. It was a useful and informative event. Of particular interest was the fact that the use of Card Readers for the making of Offertory Contributions is now widely adopted by churches throughout the Diocese. She had a short conversation with Bishop Bosco and was impressed with his energy and enthusiasm. He assured her that he would visit our Forest parishes as soon as his schedule allowed.
- (2) There has been no progress with regards to the Accessible Lavatory facilities at St. Joseph's Lydney. No further progress is anticipated. before the Easter celebrations.

4. Feedback on Recent Services and Future Plans.

Mass Attendances

The Council noted that:

- Attendances at St. Joseph's Lydney remain high
- Attendances at St. Margaret Mary's Coleford remain stable.

- Attendances at Our Lady of Victories Cinderford continue to be on the low side.

5. Spiritual Update

Jubilee Year 2025

The Council had previously been made aware that St. Wulstan's Pastoral Area would be organising dedicated events linked to the Jubilee Year declared by Pope Francis.

- As a subordinate event to the National 'Pilgrimage Of Hope' it was proposed that between 22nd May and 28th May there should be a St. Wulstan's Pilgrimage from Worcester Cathedral to Clifton Cathedral. It was disappointing to note that the number of walkers was less than ideal. The Council discussed why this might be the case. The overall view was that there was some lack of cohesion to the organisation of support for walkers and that this was compounded by a lack of publicity.

There were limits to what could be achieved at Parish level but it was agreed that a request should be made through the Parish Newsletter for parishioners who were able to assist with the provision of overnight meals and/or accommodation to contact organisers with offers of the same. Participation by Day Pilgrims should be encouraged, even if less than a full day could be managed. The Newsletter should include full details of both dates and routes. If there were sufficient Day Pilgrims coming forward then there would be a local initiative organised to create a 'feeder' route from the Forest to join with the main Pilgrimage on its way between Newent and Gloucester

- The Council was advised that there were other events planned within the St. Wulstan's Pastoral Area and that these were being organised by St. Peter's Gloucester. It was agreed that it would be best to advise parishioners, again through the medium of the Parish Newsletter, to consult the St. Peter's website for details.

Holy Week Services

Father Martin will plan for Easter Services to be celebrated in churches within the Parish along similar lines to those adopted in previous years. Full details will be published in the Parish Newsletter.:

Assistant Priests

The Council was advised that St. Peter's Gloucester had given advance notice of the fact that it would with effect from Summer 2025 no longer be able to provide priestly support to the Forest parishes. This was disappointing news, which was bound to have an impact upon our own Parish Priest. The Council was waiting to hear but feared that there was bound to be some reduction in the type and number of Services that could be provided across the Parish.

Merger of Parishes

The Diocese has approved the merger of St. Margaret Mary's Coleford and Our Lady of Victories Cinderford. The merger will simplify several administrative processes – for example it will no longer be necessary to maintain separate banking facilities. Unfortunately, the net result of this merger, coupled with the reduction in the number of Clergy available to say weekend Masses in the Forest is likely to be the closure of Our Lady of Victories in Cinderford.

The Council resolved to invite parishioners from the two churches to public meetings in May to explain the changes in more detail.

6. Safeguarding Update

There were no Safeguarding matters to report.

7. Volunteer Updates

There were no Volunteer updates to report.

8. Social Update

Parish Annual Summer Fete.

It was reported to the Council that a willing volunteer had now been identified to lead the planning and organisation for the Summer Fete, and that there might be several other individuals from within St. Joseph's Lydney who might be willing to assist. The Council was pleased to receive this positive news and resolved to continue preparations for the Summer Fete which was now scheduled to take place of 13th September next.

9. Financial Update

The Council approved the transfer of funds representing interest on monies held on deposit from Current Account to Investment Account.

10. Building Update

Replacement Kitchen Cupboards at Coleford Church Hall

The Council was informed that this work was continuing. There had been an issue regarding cupboard doors but the matter was in hand

Accessible Lavatory Facilities at St. Joseph's Lydney

This issue had already been discussed under Matters Arising. An Agenda item would be tabled for the next Council meeting.

11. Any Other Business

Induction of Parish Priest

Formal Induction was a necessary step in the appointment of our new Parish Priest. The Council agreed that the Induction process should take place in Coleford on 6th May next. There would be a 7.00 pm Mass at St. Margaret Mary's followed by a Celebration Buffet to be held in the Parish Hall in Coleford.

Card Reader for Donations

The matter had already arisen under Matters Arising. The Council had previously considered this possibility for the Forest Parishes back in 2024 and had come to the view that it would not be economically viable. Given however that such devices now appeared to be in widespread use across the Diocese the Council agreed that it would be appropriate to re-consider the issue afresh. An Agenda item would be tabled for the next Council meeting.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 1735 hours.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12th May 2025 at 4.00 pm (in Coleford Church Hall High Nash Coleford)

(Zoom connection available)