

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 18th AUGUST 2025

1. Attendance

Present: MQ, PD, PC, BL, DL, FM, SFP, RW, NR

2. Apologies: DR

3. Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and accepted.

Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising.

4. Feedback on Recent Services and Future Plans.

Mass Attendances

The Council noted that attendances had fluctuated of later due in part at least no doubt to parishioners being away on holiday. This was to some degree offset by Catholics coming on holiday to the Forest and attending at Mass.

The Council was pleased to receive news that a couple of potential Catechumens had recently made themselves known to a Council member.

5. Spiritual Updates

Jubilee Year 2025

There were no updates to report regarding Jubilee events. The Council was informed that more information might be forthcoming following the next meeting of the Pastoral Area Council but no date for such meeting had yet been set.

Canon Liam Slattery

The formal induction of Monsignor Canon Liam Slattery as Dean and Parish Priest of Clifton Cathedral was due to take place at the cathedral on 14th October 2025. The event had been publicised in recent editions of the Newsletter so parishioners were aware. The Council agreed that if sufficient interest was generated consideration would be given to organising a coach to take parishioners to Clifton and back. The Council was also aware that a coach to take Gloucester parishioners to the Cathedral was being organised by St. Peter's and no doubt they would welcome interest from Forest parishioners.

6. Merger of Parishes

The Council confirmed the introduction of the revised Mass times across the Forest parish. In consequence the last weekend Mass at Our Lady of Victories Cinderford would take place on Saturday 30th August 2025. Thereafter OLV would remain open for other religious services pending formal closure later in the year.

The Council was advised that a total of nine OLV parishioners had requested the provision of transportation to an alternative Sunday Mass. There had been unanimity of choice with all expressing a preference for the 9.00 a.m. Mass at St. Margaret Mary in Coleford. PC volunteered to take forward the logistical planning for this matter going forwards and the Council accepted his offer with gratitude.

The Council discussed at some length the issues of (i) a new name for the merged parish and (ii) the identity of the new parish church. Several possibilities were put forward and debated. Ultimately a consensus emerged for both issues but the Council resolved to carry the matter forward to its next meeting to allow for background work to be undertaken by MQ.

The Council expressed the hope that once the revised Mass times came into effect the Forest parishes would be able to come together as one in Christ. The Council was firm in its belief that all parishioners wanted the same thing namely a vibrant thriving Forest Catholic community that would go from strength to strength in future years and in so doing build a fully integrated community for the benefit of those that were to come after the present generation.

7. Safeguarding Update

Safeguarding Policy

The Council was advised that the Diocese had now produced an updated Safeguarding Policy to which all Diocesan personnel (including lay volunteers) interacting with children and/or adults at risk would be expected to adhere. A copy of this Policy would be displayed prominently in all Forest churches in the near future.

The Safeguarding Co-ordinator reminded all Council members of the need to ensure that all volunteers were identified and registered and individual roles properly defined.

After some discussion the Council resolved to update and improve the existing Volunteer Register once the revised Mass times had been given a chance to bed down.

8. Volunteer Updates

Parish Health & Safety Representative

The Council had been informed at its last meeting that consequent upon internal Diocesan changes it would be necessary for the Forest parishes to appoint a Health & Safety representative. The issue had been carried forward from July due to time pressures but the issue was pressing. Following a short debate the Council resolved to hold the matter over to its next meeting on the basis that some detailed consideration of the question would be necessary not least as to whether the role could properly be performed by a volunteer or whether it would be better to engage a paid employee to undertake H&S planning and administration.

9. Social Update

Parish Annual Summer Fete.

It was reported to the Council that preparations for the Summer Fete were going well. Several entertainments had been booked and both volunteers and donations were starting to appear. Hopefully this trend would continue.

10. Financial Updates

There were no financial updates to report.

11. Building Update

Improvements at St. Joseph's Lydney

The Council was pleased to note that the pre-planning application submitted by Apex Architecture to the Local Authority for an extension to St. Joseph's and for an associated change of access route had been approved. This gave the Council the confidence to move on to a more detailed discussion with both Architects and parishioners of what any actual application might entail.

The Council discussed at some length what improvements and enhancements might feature in the planning application and how best to involve parishioners in any decision-making process. One option floated was that of creating a 'Wish List' and circulating this to parishioners to obtain views. Another was simply to ask parishioners to name three improvements that they would like to see made to facilities at St. Joseph's and to see whether consensus emerged,

The point was made that available funding would not be unlimited so that a priority listing would need to be established. Improvements to vehicular access and car parking, to the Sacristy and the provision of facilities for Reconciliation were all considered to be priorities but there should be no exclusivity of ideas.

The Council came to the view that any decisions on such an important issue should not be rushed and resolved to hold over further discussion until its next meeting. In the interim a preliminary meeting with the Architects should take place to obtain some general idea of costings for the priorities identified by the Council. Once these were known the Council would be better placed to inform parishioners and provide guidance around possible options.

Lavatorial Facilities

It was reported to the Council that the toilet and handwashing facilities at St. Joseph's were now fully functional.

12. Any Other Business

Car Parking at Coleford Parish Hall

The Council was advised that this issue was in hand

Parishioner Suggestions.

The following suggestions had been received:

- Changes to the signage at St. Margaret Mary Coleford and St. Joseph's Lydney to correctly identify both Mass times and the Parish Priest
- Erection of some form of symbol (e.g. a Crucifix) in the gardens of both SMM and SJ so as to identify these building as Catholic places of worship
- Provision of additional Readers and Eucharistic Ministers at St. Joseph's

The Council resolved to give these matters further consideration. Regarding the latter point it might be the case that parishioners who had previously fulfilled these roles at Our Lady of Victories Cinderford would offer their services.

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

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

29th September 2025 at 4.00 pm (in Coleford Church Hall High Nash Coleford)

(Zoom connection available)