

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 10th FEBRUARY 2025

1. Attendance

Present: MQ, PD, PC, BDL; FM, SP, RW, NR

2. Apologies: DR

3. Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and accepted.

Matters Arising

- (1) There has been no further word on the query relating to amount of electricity charges payable by the Forest Parishes. The Council assumption is that this has been resolved at Diocesan level.
- (2) Further investigation of the financial benefit that might result from the acquisition of a fixed/static card reader had not supported the acquisition of such technology. The Council resolved that the issue should be kept under review for now.
- (3) The Advent Retreat at Brownhill was a success. There was full attendance and generally positive feedback from those attending. The view was expressed by several people that more time for solitary reflection would be welcome. This suggestion would be taken on board for future retreats.

4. Feedback on Recent Services and Future Plans.

Mass Attendances

The Council noted with pleasure that Lydney continued to be a growth area with consistently high attendances. There had also been several enquiries from non-Catholics which was encouraging.

Coleford remains stable with an attendance in the mid-thirties

Cinderford attendances have declined somewhat due in part to the fact that there no longer appeared to be a steady attendance from itinerant Filipino workers.

5. Spiritual Update

Christmas Masses

The children's Christmas party was held at St. Joseph's Lydney on 23rd December. The Council was pleased to learn that it was well attended by 21 children and 16 adults. Christmas Mass at Lydney was also very well attended to the point that some parishioners left prior to the commencement of the Mass having failed to find seating. The Council was concerned to learn of this. Further discussion took place following which the Council resolved to make greater use of Welcomers or Ushers to guide people to available seating so as to avoid any future repetition of the problem.

Lent and Easter Services

The Council discussed in general terms the arrangements for Lent and Easter 2025. FM will give these matters due consideration, consult with St. Peter's Gloucester and convey his intentions to the Parish in due course. It was confirmed that there will be at least one Lenten Reconciliation Service.

Preparation for First Holy Communion

The Council was advised that Preparation Classes for First Holy Communion were due to commence on 23rd February 2025.

Diocesan Curia Day

The Diocese was proposing to hold a Curia Day in Bristol on 29th March next. Various workshops would be available covering topics of interest to Parish Volunteers, e.g. Communication, Property Services, Data Protection and similar. Council members were encouraged to view the website that the Diocese had made available and to attend on the day if possible.

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. Matters were progressing and a St. Wulstan's website would shortly be available providing information concerning activities in the Pastoral Area including Jubilee events. The Council was advised of two events that were worthy of particular note:

- 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. There would be a

mix of 'Perpetual Pilgrims,' who would complete the entire Pilgrimage, and 'Day Pilgrims,' who would accompany the Pilgrimage for part of the journey only. Recruitment was presently under way for both Perpetual and Day Pilgrims.

- It was proposed that there should be a special Jubilee Year Mass for children within the St. Wulstan's Pastoral Area. This was scheduled to take place at St. Peter's Gloucester in July 2025. Further details would be forthcoming in due course.

The Council agreed that the St. Wulstan's Pilgrimage should be fully publicized throughout the Forest Parishes. It also agreed that 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 St. Wulstan's Pilgrimage on its way between Newent and Gloucester

Discussion ensued as to whether it would be appropriate for Forest Parishes to organise local 'Jubilee' events throughout the year. The Council came to the view that this would probably be impractical given the geographical spread of the Parishes. The better alternative would be to seek to incorporate the aims and objective of the Jubilee Year into planned events.

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.

The Council was acutely aware that the 2024 Summer Fete had been cancelled due to a lack of available volunteers. In an effort to avoid any repetition in 2025 the Council resolved that planning for the Summer Fete should commence forthwith. Individual Council members would begin to sound out parishioners willing to assist with Fete organisation and would report back to the next meeting.

9. Financial Update

The Council approved the Financial Summaries presented to it by the Fabric & Finance sub-committee.

It was drawn to the attention of the Council that Offertory receipts were suffering from two problems:

- A sizeable number of parishioners had yet to adopt the Standing Order process for the provision of Offertory contributions. This had the effect of producing uncertainty surrounding available income for the Parish and did not assist in financial planning for repair and maintenance of churches and other necessary expenditure.
- Of those Standing Orders that did exist a fair number had now been in place for several years. The static nature of such contributions meant that inflation had taken its toll on the value of the same producing an effective reduction in Parish income.

The Council resolved to take steps in early course to encourage Parishioners to both make monthly Offertory contributions by Standing Order wherever possible and to request that Parishioners kept the value of their Offering under regular review to ensure that such kept pace with cost-of-living increases. An obvious route to highlight this would be an appeal in the next available issue of the Parish Newsletter.

10. Building Update

Parish Estate

The Council was advised that the Head of Diocesan Property Services had recently been invited to inspect several churches within the Forest Parish and had offered an expert view upon issues related to maintenance, repair, and improvement. The Council noted the findings and recommendations and would bear these in mind when considering future expenditure.

Replacement Kitchen Cupboards at Coleford Church Hall

The Council was informed that work was in hand. Replacement kitchen units had been ordered and delivery was expected in the near future. A kitchen fitter had been retained to complete the work.

Accessible Lavatory Facilities at St. Joseph's Lydney

The Council had previously discussed plans to extend the premises at St. Joseph's to create a multiple use space. For a variety of reasons work on the project had not progressed to any great degree. The project would shortly be revived but improvement of lavatory facilities could no longer wait. Accordingly an interim solution had been identified that merely involved the installation of an upgraded low level cistern and pan. The Council approved the adoption of this interim solution.

11. Any Other Business

Livestreaming of Mass

Due to holiday absence until the end of March 2025 Mass livestreaming may be intermittent. When possible, the Livestream will be from St. Joseph's Lydney.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 1635 hours.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7th April 2025 at 4.00 pm (in Coleford Church Hall High Nash Coleford)

(Zoom connection available)