

CHURCHES OF THE FOREST OF DEAN

Our Lady of Victories Cinderford
St. Margaret Mary Coleford
St. Joseph Lydney
Sacred Heart Sedbury

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL DATED 24th JANUARY 2024

1. Attendance

Present: Pip Deave, Peter Chisholm, Paul Dekkers, Brian & Dot Lord; Sarah Perkins, Ruth Wood, Noel Riossi

2. Apologies:

Fiona Mills, Phillip King

3. Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and accepted.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Feedback from Christmas Services.

The Council noted with pleasure that there had been good attendances at all the Christmas Services held across our churches. The Vigil Mass at Lydney had seen a particularly good attendance with some 120 parishioners attending. The overall view was that an early Vigil Mass was preferable to a late one and the Council resolved to repeat the exercise at Christmas 2024.

The participation of children in the gathering on Christmas Eve had been a great success. Many children and parents had attended. The children had a Christmas story, placed figures in the Crib, decorated the Christmas tree and sung a carol. They had also enjoyed the food that was on offer! The Council resolved to seek to repeat the exercise at Christmas 2024. Permission would be sought from the parents of children who attended the 2023 service for the use of their pictures in attendant publicity material.

5. **Spiritual Update**

Training for Safeguarding and Volunteers

Online modular training was now available for all volunteer roles on the CSSA website. Details would be published in the Parish Newsletter.

Despite the availability of online training it was thought that some face-to-face training would be beneficial. Discussions regarding this were ongoing.

Lenten Retreat

Despite best efforts it has proved impossible to obtain a suitable venue to host the proposed Lenten Retreat. Various alternatives were being investigated by the Spiritual and Pastoral Group including (i) online Lenten Reflection sessions (Light of Truth) being hosted by the Dominican Sisters for a 6-week period commencing on 20th February at 1930 hours, and (ii) a day retreat at Prinknash Abbey. Further information would be provided in the Parish Newsletter as soon as possible.

It is proposed to hold a Lenten Reconciliation Service at St. Joseph's Lydney on 18th March next. This would depend upon a priest being available to be in attendance and discussions were ongoing with the Gloucester Deanery to facilitate this.

6. **Financial Update**

Year End Accounts

The year end Financial Reconciliation statement was presented to the Council for approval. The year ended 31st December 2023 proved to be an expensive one for the parish due principally to the works undertaken to refurbish the presbytery at Coleford. It is not however anticipated that the required level of spending in 2024 will approach this figure and in consequence the Parish should be able to comfortably balance expenditure against income.

Income from Offertory contributions had shown some improvement towards the end of 2023 and it was also pleasing to be able to report that the sale monies from Sedbury had now been received into the General Deposit account. Going forwards these monies should produce further income via interest receivable upon these sale funds.

The Council approved the Financial Reconciliation statement and resolved that a copy should be displayed in each of the parish churches.

The Council formally thanked Teresa Hoult, Brian Lord, and Dorothy Lord for their sterling work throughout the year in connection with the management of parish funds.

7. Buildings Update

Coleford

The planned work at Coleford Parish Hall had now been completed and was satisfactory.

The outside lavatory at the Presbytery was insecure and there was evidence of recent access having been gained. The keys to the lock were lost and this creates difficulty in carrying out a straight replacement. The Council resolved to have an external hasp and padlock fitted to the door as soon as possible.

Several of the window locks at St. Margaret Mary's require attention and one window has a hinge that has seized and broken. The Council resolved to have new locks and handles fitted to the windows, to have the broken hinge replaced and to have all existing hinges freed and greased.

Some internal walls at St. Margaret Mary's show evidence of staining due to the hot air rising from the central heating. A solution was available: for now the issue would be kept under review.

8. Group Updates

The parish Faith Group has moved from evening meetings to afternoon meetings. Further details were available on the Parish Website.

The diocesan 'Invited' formation course, which was a 12-week course for those wishing to learn more about their faith and pass on that knowledge to others was due to commence in Stroud on 17th January. It has unfortunately been postponed and will now commence on 17th April next, and would be a series of 12 evening meetings

The Lecto Divinio Group now meets online each Friday. Further details were available on the Parish Website.

9. Social Update

The next Friday Lunch Club of 2024 was due to take place on 23rd February next at Coleford Parish Hall. All are welcome.

Following the success of the Quiz evening that took place in October 2023 it was proposed to organise another such event. Further details would appear in due course in the Parish Newsletter.

It is proposed that the Parish Picnic should be held on either 15th June or 29th June next. The venue has yet to be decided. As always volunteers are required to help both with preliminary organisation and with practical assistance on the day itself. The Committee resolved that an appeal for volunteers should appear as soon as possible in the Parish Newsletter.

It was proposed that a Parish Fete should be held this year. A date has yet to be fixed but early to mid-September was possibly the favoured time. It would however be necessary to set up a Fete Committee to organise and run the event. The Committee resolved that an appeal for volunteers should appear as soon as possible in the Parish Newsletter.

10. Safeguarding Update

This item was covered under Item 5 (Spiritual Updates)

11. AOB

Charitable Donations

The 20th October 2023 Quiz evening had raised several hundred pounds for charity but no decision had yet been made as to where these funds should be allocated. The Council was unanimous in its view that a local charity should be the beneficiary of these funds. Following discussion, it was resolved that the funds should go to 'Teens In Crisis' which is a charity focused upon assisting teenagers and their families who have been affected by mental health issues.

The attention of the Council was drawn to the fact that for many years the Parish had made an annual donation of Fifty pounds to the Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust. The donation had its origins in a grant that the Parish had received towards the installation of a loop hearing system. The amount given in donations since was probably more than the original grant. The Council resolved that the Parish should no longer make this donation.

Readings at Mass

The comment was made by a Council Member that, due in part at least to the acoustics at Our Lady of the Victories in Cinderford, it was often a challenge to hear the Readings being delivered despite the fact that the Ambo was equipped with a microphone. Several possible theories and solutions were put forward during a subsequent discussion but none received general acclaim. It was agreed that for now Readers in all Parish churches should be encouraged to direct their speech out into the body of the church rather than down into the Ambo.

Parish Priest

No update had been received from either the Deanery or the Bishop's Palace as to when a replacement parish priest might be appointed. The Council took due note of the fact that the Parish had to date been fortunate in welcoming visiting priests to the Parish. Unfortunately, the position post-February was less certain.

There being no other business the meeting concluded at 1545hours.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

**Wednesday 6th March 2024 at 1430 hours in Coleford Church Hall High Nash
Coleford**

(Zoom connection available)