

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 4th NOVEMBER 2024

1. Attendance

Present: MQ, PD, PC, PDe, BL, DL; FM, DR, RW, NR

2. Apologies: SP

3. Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and accepted.

Matters Arising

- (1) The next meeting for organisers of the St. Wulstan Pastoral Area participation in the 2025 Jubilee Year is to take place on 23rd November next. Two representatives will be attending from the Forest parishes and will report back in due course.
- (2) All necessary bins for the disposal of nappy and sanitary waste have been put in place.

4. Feedback on Recent Services and Future Plans.

Mass Attendances

Saturday/Sunday Mass attendances were remaining stable within the Forest parish area averaging around 100 parishioners across all churches. Lydney continued to be a growth area with more than 100 people in attendance at one recent Mass in that church.

Live Streaming

The number of parishioners using the Mass Live Streaming service remained stable at around forty individuals. Not all users watched the full Mass; anecdotally and through data interrogation it was possible to discern that a fair number of people who had physically attended at a Mass subsequently used the Live Stream facility to re-visit individual parts of the Mass e.g. Readings, Gospel, Homily.

5. Spiritual Update

Parishioner Participation in the Mass

The Council was advised that there was some concern being expressed as regards inconsistency of approach within individual churches when it came to issues such as Readings, Gospel Acclamation, Bidding Prayer and Communion Antiphon. After a brief discussion the Council, noting that a new Lectionary was about to come into use, agreed that Father Martin would reflect upon these matters and in due course issue guidance to the parishioners involved. The Council also agreed to look to arrange a Reader tutorial at an early date.

Restoration of Sunday Mass Service in Cinderford

It was reported to the Council that representations had recently been made by several parishioners at Our Lady of Victories concerning the restoration of a Sunday Morning Mass at that church. The Council was in the main aware of the background to the issue so that it was unnecessary to run through matters in detail but in brief parishioners raised the following points:

- The regular and long-established Sunday Morning Mass had been removed from OLV by Bishop Declan as part of an experiment that had been due to conclude in October 2023;
- The conclusion date for the experiment had long passed but no outcome had been publicized to Forest parishioners and OLV had not had its Sunday Morning Mass restored;
- As a Parish church within the Forest and as the largest remaining church in the Forest OLV was entitled to expect primacy when it came to the organising of Mass celebrations. St. Joseph's was a Chapel of Ease and as such was subordinate to OLV.

Accordingly, the parishioners who had made representations now requested the restoration of a Sunday Mass celebration at OLV as quickly as possible.

The Council noted the views expressed by the parishioners concerned. It understood the importance of bringing the matter to a final resolution but in the absence of a Parish Priest it had not been possible to re-visit the position earlier. Whilst Father Martin had now been appointed he was still new to the role and in the process of transition from his previous parish. It was only right and proper that he should be given time to gain

an understanding of the Parish and its churches. Accordingly, the Council resolved to hold over further discussion on the subject to the December Council meeting.

Sacramental Event

The Council was informed that there is to be a Wedding Service at St. Joseph's Lydney on 29th November next to which all Lydney parishioners have been invited to attend. There was a concern that this might cause problems due to the limited space within St. Joseph's, and so the question arose as to whether it would be possible for the public parts of the ceremony to be Livestreamed. Technically it was possible, and Father Martin indicated that, provided that the wedding couple had no objection, he would be content to permit this. The Council agreed that discussions could proceed with a view to facilitating a livestreamed ceremony.

Advent Retreat

Preparations for the Advent Retreat were well advanced and there appeared to be a distinct possibility that numbers would be over-subscribed. The Council was pleased to learn of this.

Parish Registration Form

Council members had been provided with a copy of the revised form at the September meeting and asked to review the same. After brief discussion the Council approved its introduction forthwith.

6. Safeguarding Update

Pastoral Visits

The Council was advised that there were currently ten parishioners on the list for Pastoral visits with seven regularly in receipt of the Eucharist. This was currently manageable [but see Item 7 below]

Safeguarding Sunday

The Council was informed that Sunday 17th November has been designated as Safeguarding Sunday when all are requested to pray for vulnerable people and those charged with protecting them from harm. Appropriate prayers can be found on the Clifton Diocese website.

Children's Party

The Council was aware that a Children's Party is to be held at St. Joseph's Lydney on 23rd December next. Further details will be provided to parishioners in the near future.

7. Volunteer Updates

Eucharistic Ministers

The Council was advised that due to several factors Our Lady of Victories no longer had a reasonably-sized pool of Eucharistic Ministers upon which to call for home visits. The situation was not yet critical but nonetheless early action was advisable. The Council noted the position and agreed to consider what steps could be taken to address the situation.

8. Social Update

St. Vincent de Paul Fun Bingo.

Preparations had now been completed for the monthly SVP fun bingo evenings. The first event was to be held on 6th December next. Full details were available from the Parish Newsletter and all were encouraged to attend.

Christmas Quiz

The Council agreed that, if possible, it would arrange a Christmas Quiz evening building upon the success of a similar event in 2023.

9. Financial Update

There were no matters to report.

10. Building Update

There were no matters to report.

11. Any Other Business

Parish Website

The Council was reminded of the need to place a photograph of Father Martin on the website. Arrangements would be put in hand.

Deacon Paul

All Council Members were aware that this would be the last meeting attended by our Deacon who was moving out of the area to be closer to his daughters. During his time in the Forest he had been a valued friend and counsellor to many people, and his absence would be felt deeply by Forest parishioners. On behalf of the Council and of the Forest parishes the Chair expressed our deep thanks to him for his tireless service

down the years and our very best wishes for the future. Whichever parish he ends up residing within will gain for itself a truly first-class Deacon.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 1750 hours.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9TH DECEMBER 2024 at 3.00 pm (in Coleford Church Hall High Nash Coleford)

(Zoom connection available)