

Minutes of Parish AGM Thursday 10th September 2026

Present : Fr David,

Parish Pastoral Council members: Matt Greene (Chairman), Bob Drumgoole, Brian Malone, Jackie Rabone, Jo Farrington, Stephen Bamber

Council members introduced themselves and their parish responsibilities.

Other parishioners were also invited to introduce themselves and the parts they play in parish life.

Hazel Simmons, Helen Green, Larissa Freitas , Veronica Drumgoole, Anne Bracey, Veronica Jessamine, Pat Hartley, Anne Buttrum

Apologies received from Christopher Snelson, Nick Green, Jan Ireson, Peter Lawson

The AGM was opened with a welcome by Matt and a prayer by Fr David.

Amendment of the Constitution

Copies of the proposed amendments to the Constitution regarding the election of members to the Pastoral Council had been made available for parishioners to read during the refreshment period before the formal start of the AGM.

Matt explained the reason for the need for the amendment. It has been realised that a one-year tenure is too short as, during that first year, the elected members have learnt the workings of the Pastoral Council and really begun to show the value of their membership. As the Pastoral Council is now up to the optimum number, covering representatives from both Sunday Masses and groups across the parish with a suitable experience of parish life, it is not appropriate to co-opt those elected members as happened previously.

It is therefore proposed to extend the last elected members' tenure to two years and to make it possible for them to stand for re-election next year, when it will also give parishioners the opportunity to put forward other candidates if they so wish.

The amendments to the constitution set out the mechanism for this process.

The amendment was proposed by Matt and seconded by Jackie.

The changes were accepted unanimously.

Fr David's Report

Fr David welcomed parishioners and thanked them for attending. He extended his thanks to the Pastoral Council for advice and guidance through another busy year and particular thanks to Matt for chairing the PC and Jackie for her work as secretary. He said that, through a busy year, the whole parish family has been his support that has helped him with his extended duties.

Fr David reminded us that Parish is the local expression of the Church which needs to be like a 'Lifeboat' for our society and that we need to be missionary disciples working together in service of God and neighbour. His review of the year would be made in that light. He said that in both his parish and hospital ministries he was grateful to be involved in this mission and asked us to keep parish life in that perspective and support one-another.

Father thanked the SVP for their work in preparing for the Mass for the Sick which would take place the following day and for their work throughout the year in the care and support of others.

He thanked the Social Committee for developing the life of the parish so that we can grow together.

Father made special note of the Gala Night organised by the Indian Community, which had been a particular highlight during the year. He pointed out that we need to further celebrate the different cultures within the Catholic Church and show that even a small parish like ours can demonstrate that people can be blessed by diversity.

Father continued his review of the year by saying how happy he had been to see a small group of children preparing week by week for First Confession and Holy Communion. He said he was particularly pleased that Youth Alpha had been started as first steps towards preparation for Confirmation, which he hoped would be developed further during the coming year as the school will have less time allocated to prepare for the Sacraments during school time.

Father reported that people are now able to research parish information online through the parish website and thanked Mike Walsh for making this a reliable source.

Father said he was so glad that it had been possible to have the church open for prayer every day. He thanked Maggie McCarthy, our Safeguarding Officer, for her part in making church a safe place and pointed out that he and Maggie had been interviewed as part of a national inspection and that we seemed to have come through that well. Father stated that the commitment of a good number of people to weekday Masses is part of the powerhouse that makes our parish function and he thanked people for their support and prayers. He also thanked the Sacristans, flower-arrangers and cleaners. He also said we should thank each other for regular commitment to Sunday Masses wherever we are as this is the fundamental way that we draw on God's grace for our Christian lives.

Father then spoke about matters regarding Catholic Leamington, the cluster of churches and Diocesan plans for the future.

Regarding Catholic Leamington, Father said that he and Fr Stephen meet weekly. The cluster to which St Joseph's belongs also includes Kenilworth and Warwick, and Baddesley Clinton has now been brought into the cluster as part of Fr Patrick's Warwick parish responsibilities. Father said that he anticipates that the Diocesan plan will bring the cluster together as one parish. Decisions will need to be made on Pastoral Councils both locally and for the larger parish unit. Father said that thoughts about this plan could be raised with him at any time and there is no need for parishioners to wait for the next AGM to do so.

Father rounded off his report by saying that we all need to be missionary disciples working together co-responsibly to form a vibrant community of faith, all in the service of God and neighbour.

Discussion as a response to Fr David's report

The main focus of the response was on the matter of preparation for Confirmation becoming parish-based rather than through St Joseph's School.

Anne Buttrum, who is a governor of St Joseph's School, raised her concerns that children will be expected to attend sacramental preparation, notably Confirmation, at church and not be confirmed until they are in year 7 rather than having their sacramental preparation at school and being confirmed in year 6. She acknowledged that sacramental preparation would no longer part of the school RE syllabus but said that teaching about the Sacraments would still be covered and that sessions at school, outside of teaching hours, were planned for preparation for each of First Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Fr David responded by saying that children must be able to make their own commitment to Confirmation. They need to attend Mass, and this has not been happening. The last year 6 were invited to attend Youth Alpha to prepare for Confirmation and there was no response from pupils at St Joseph's. Father later commented that Mrs Wallace had said that Youth Alpha had been on the wrong date and at the wrong time and she had told them that it was voluntary and they didn't need to go. Anne said that had not heard of this.

Father stated that in the coming year, Youth Alpha will be run in June by Helen Green and Claudia Pallister in preparation for Confirmation in year 7. Children will not be admitted for Confirmation unless they have attended.

Anne acknowledged that children need to attend Mass. However, she also felt that children in year 7 already had other pressures adjusting to their new situation.

Anne said that the parents of St Joseph's children were not happy about the situation. She expressed her fears that, with the school already being in a dire financial situation, if Confirmation was not being offered in year 6 then fewer people would send their children to the school, making the situation worse.

Larissa commented that she had found the Catholic ethos at St Joseph's school better than in other places and suggested that the change be put off.

Jackie commented that children of primary school age are not capable of making the decision to be Confirmed.

Pat commented that Confirmation was seen as graduation from primary school.

Veronica Jessamine commented that it was a bit like a golf club with different types of membership (those at catholic schools and those who are not) and that the children lacked companionship.

Fr David said that, by having the children preparing together, whether or not they were at a Catholic school, we are trying to give them that companionship. He added that he sees sacramental preparation as the responsibility of the priest and parish, not of the school.

Anne said that she thought that, by year 6, the teachers knew the children and could adapt the teaching according to their needs.

Matt said that we need to reflect on what had been said. He had, himself been confirmed at the age of 14. It was his choice; he had not been forced. Parents wanting children to be confirmed is good: children wanting to be confirmed was also good.

Veronica Drumgoole commented that, in any case, grace will have effect if people are confirmed and suggested that confirmation in year 6 could be given another chance with a year group who were different to the last one.

Fr David commented that in our society at present we are losing a lot of the backing that grandparents used to give.

Points regarding Confirmation having been raised and noted, Matt drew discussion on this matter to an end.

Helen Green then pointed out that a meeting was being held on the coming Saturday regarding setting up a Youth Group for those who had already been confirmed.

Reports by members of the Pastoral Council

These had been submitted and made available for parishioners to read ahead of the AGM. Therefore, only brief summaries were given during the meeting so as to give more time for discussion from the floor. The full reports will again be available for parishioners to read following the meeting.

Chairman's Report

Matt gave a brief overview of his report.

Veronica Drumgoole stated her appreciation for the clarity of the report. She enquired whether there were any definite plans for maintenance work as interim reports have shown there would not need to be as much expenditure on the roof as had been anticipated. She said that toilet facilities needed to be improved.

Veronica also put forward a request, on behalf of another person, for access and safety improvements to be made.

Fr David pointed out that suitable rails were already under consideration. Bob commented that rails at the front entrance were needed ASAP and that safety is more important than appearance. Veronica Jessamine said that she had bought suitable rails for herself from Amazon.

There was also discussion regarding difficulties caused by the front door opening outwards, but Father stated that this was needed for safety.

In response to Veronica Drumgoole's query regarding why there had been more expenditure on supply priests in 2025 than the previous year, Fr David explained that, while he and Fr Stephen usually covered for one-another for free, the normal charge for a priest to cover was £95 for Sundays Masses and £55 for weekdays, so £1000 did not represent cover for many Masses.

Report on Liturgy and Worship

Jackie gave a brief resume of her report emphasising the important contribution made by our readers and our faithful team of servers, some of whom even came to serve for weekday Masses during their school holidays.

In the discussion that followed, it was suggested that more adults training would be useful.

It was stated that the hope would be that some children would start this term by first serving at school Masses then moving on to Sundays when ready.

Report on Foodbank

Jackie also gave feedback from the Foodbank, stating how gratefully donations had been received and how it was particularly helpful that donors from St Joseph's responded to the updated needs list.

Report on Formation

Jo gave a summary of the Children's Liturgy group, stating how well this was now being received with a large number of children attending each week. She said that having a pre-school aged group separately from the older children would be the aim. The group preparation for First Holy Communion had also gone well.

Pat queried whether there would still be individual parish Confirmations etc to which Fr David responded that the parishes would not necessarily be coming together for this.

SVP Report

Brian reported that the normal support for those in need continues. However, the Christmas Hamper project was under review and might need to be replaced by some other scheme, possibly vouchers. This was partly due to increased demand outstripping donations but also the fact that the storage and preparation space at St Peter's is not expected to be available.

Veronica Drumgoole suggested approaching Trinity School as they have rooms which are not being used and the new Head is very keen to help people.

It was decided that, with Fr Ryan as Chaplain and a new Head, it is worth trying and Bob agreed to approach the Head regarding this. He also said that he thought we should be more demanding with respect to donations as our parishioners will respond.

Social Committee Report

Peter Lawson was unable to attend but his report had been made available before the meeting.

Veronica Drumgoole said that, when social events were used to raise funds, it would be good to have knowledge of a target for a specific project.

Thoughts on money required led to discussion regarding the need for a Hall caretaker as we only have a cleaner once per week which is not adequate. Matt said he would put this on an agenda for the Finance Committee.

As the meeting was being rounded off, Veronica Drumgoole commented that the follow-up from last year's AGM had been good, particularly the improvements with the website.

Fr David ended the meeting with prayer.