

St Joseph's Birtley Church Pastoral Council

Notes of the meeting held 9th November 2025 in the Presbytery.

1. The meeting opened with a prayer led by CT.

Present: Hilda Fraser, Jan Rafalski, Catherine Tumelty, Bernadette Bartlett, Pauline Pestell, Peter Monaghan, Tom Quigley, Margaret Taylor. Gary Bartlett as Health and Safety Parish representative.

2. Apologies: Fr Martin, Mick Davison, Michelle Irwin, Doreen Cantwell.

3. Notes of the last meeting were agreed as correct.

4. Matters arising:

PP expressed how wonderful it had been to see the new altar servers and thanked John Sexton for his time and hard work.

MD had sent a message to clarify that the Youth and Community Hall (old parish hall) was not the responsibility of the Parish Centre Management Committee, it had been excluded from the Parish Centre's lease more than 10 years ago. After a short discussion GB said he would speak to Andrew Gillingham about the possible options for the hall. The question was asked as to whether there was an opportunity for parishioners to meet about the position of the parish facilities. This item would be put on to the next meetings agenda.

5/8/11. Update on garden wall, Middle Lodge, Christmas trees and Noticeboard.

CT had received an email from Fr. Martin as he was unable to attend the meeting with the following information:

Pauline would get the Christmas trees for the two primary schools and church. (BB would inform C. Young and ask her to pass on the information to K. Swaddle).

Garden wall – The surveyor would not put a price on the repair of the wall but suggested something not too dissimilar was £1.3million. The council's insurance company have brought in another surveyor to check whether they are liable. We must also have another survey of our own carried out.

Middle Lodge – long term the lodge will be removed for the school. Provisional date for the start if the build is Summer 2027.

Noticeboard – finances are ready to improve this. However, we will not act on this until the end of February. Although we could put something up on the outside, either by volunteers or professionally until then.

6. Terms of Reference for Parish Councils (MD).

There followed a short discussion about the document sent to the Parish council by MD, who was unable to attend. PP felt it was concise and had some pointers for the way forward. There was concern expressed that more time needed to be given specifically to this item and a date was put in the diary to meet on 18th January at 7p.m. in the presbytery to continue this discussion.

7. Health and safety. Gary Bartlett.

Gary told the parish council that the fire drill went very well, with excellent response from those in church. The building cleared in 2mins 10sec, with all three exits being used. He intends to repeat the drill in 6 months.

There is still a need for an emergency evacuation sign and better lighting at the north exit.

Repairs have been made to the pavement at the entrance of church and grouting of some ridge tiles. GB felt the work was not complete and would speak to the builders involved.

A tree survey had identified 2 areas to look at where some trimming of trees was required.

The flat roof has been cleaned.

A company is coming to carry out PAT testing.

PP expressed thanks to GB for his time and effort.

8. Noticeboard - see point 5.

9. Money collections(PP)

PP asked about money collections and the handling of these. JR said that he was taking over the Gift Aid scheme and was waiting for DBS and some training. Also that MD had some people organised to support with counting collections.

10 Advent (PP).

There was no information to share re Advent services or mass times within the partnership. PP would speak to Fr MW about any information from Partnership meetings which needs to be shared.

Date for the diary – 23rd November 10a.m. Jesse Tree and 6p.m. Birtley Churches Together Advent Service.

MT would talk to John Stewart re setting up the outside crib.

11. School and church Christmas trees - see point 5

12. Information before the vigil mass.

New rota – 15th Nov PP 22nd Nov JR 29th Nov MT 6th Dec TQ 13th Dec PM

20th Dec PP 27th Dec CT 3rd Jan JR 10th Jan MT 17th Jan TQ 24th Jan PM

12. Future parish events. To be discussed at the October meeting.

13. Parish Hall (HF) – see matters arising.

14. Future parish Events.

Fundraising coffee morning will take place on Sunday 23rd November. Support was asked for setting up tables after the Saturday Vigil mass.

15 A.O.B.

MT had been approached by John Sexton about the purchase of red cords and two silver St. Stephen's medals. It was agreed to go ahead with this and MT would ask John to source these.

MT had been approached by Fiona Sexton to display posters in church re St. Leonards School. It was agreed to put the posters up.

MT raised the celebration of YMT/Youth Sunday on the feast of Christ the King. MT will speak to FR MW about this.

CT had been contacted by Simon Bell, who sends out the bulletin, to ask if we would be interested in offering QR codes as a way of people obtaining the bulletin in church. They are trialling the idea at St. John Boste. CT will discuss this with Fr MW.

TQ advised the meeting that he is finalising the plan for burial of remains in the garden. He has concerns about debris from the wall. TQ felt that there must be a designated, safe place for the plan to be kept. He also expressed concerns about historical documentation relating to the parish and its safe keeping.

Thanks were given to the team who have been working in the meeting room.

16. Prayers for next meeting – PP

14. Next meeting – 14th December at 7p.m.

15. Closing prayer – CT.