

THE SACRED HEART & ST MARGARET MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH, DEREHAM

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Minutes of a General Meeting of the Parish held on Wednesday 25th June 2025 at 1830 hours in the Emmaus Room

Chairman: Rex Baker

19 parishioners were present

The meeting commenced with an opening prayer by Fr Jay.

1. Apologies and Welcome.

Apologies were received from Martin and Terri Sanderson of St Vincent de Paul (prior commitments), Kate Meehan of the Youth Club, Sonia Oberding and Jo Hurst of the Gardening Club (away). Email or hard copy notes received from them by the Secretary.

Paul McIntee was welcomed into the Parish and thanked for taking on the responsibilities of Parish Treasurer and joint Parish Safeguarding officer.

2. To receive the minutes of the Parish Meeting held 2 October 2024.

The minutes of the last Parish Meeting held on 2nd October 2024 were reviewed by the Chairman. As planned and stated in the minutes, Philip Borthwick did replace Stephen Smith as Parish Treasurer and John Booth did take over as secretary of the Parish Finance Committee from Elaine Wilkes. Subsequently, however, Philip Borthwick, due to work obligations, has resigned as Treasurer and Paul McIntee has volunteered to assume the role of Parish Treasurer (though the handover of responsibilities is still at an early stage).

3. Parish Priest's Reflections/Report.

- a. Thanks. Father Jay thanked all the volunteers for the smooth running of the church and Parish community.
- b. Parish Pastoral Council. Fr Jay said the PPC is being worked on, under the direction of Donal. We have a growing parish, with increasing ethnic diversity, which should be represented in the PPC, which should try to represent all communities and Fr Jay will approach them and try to get them to contribute and participate in church related business generally.
- c. Church Centenary Celebration. Fr Jay said he wants a meaningful and memorable event to commemorate Sacred Heart Dereham's 100th Anniversary. The Treasurer has approved £1,000 from church cash funds to support the occasion.

4. Parish Life:

a. Financial Matters

- (1) Parish Accounts – Report of the Parish Treasurer. Philip Borthwicke explained that we currently, at the half yearly point, have a surplus, but with future expenses, fees

and levies factored in, we are on schedule for a end of year deficit of around £5,000. Much of the income and expenses to come in the second half of the year are, however, variable, so could end up better or worse. The church bank current account currently stands at around £9,000.

- (2) Alive in Faith Projects. John Booth explained that all the outstanding AIF projects in the last Minutes were now complete (the decoration of the church, including windows, flooring in the Emmaus Room and entrance lobby, refurbishment of rear windows and car park entrance). There are 2 new projects underway:
 - (a) Grotto on the theme of Our Lady of Lourdes. Father Jay has purchased a bronze statue of Our Lady, which was shown to the assembly. The cost will be reimbursed by AIF funds, if approved. A formal application was submitted to the Diocese, for approval, but has been referred to a special liturgical committee for consideration. Approval is unlikely to be obtained before our Centenary celebration on 25 Jul 25. The background cave grotto setting is in the hands of Indian parishioner volunteers, but we do not yet have a design. One concern is that we do not have detailed designs, with measurements and illustrations, which would be necessary for various permission requirements to be sounded out. The Chairman suggested professional expertise may need to be obtained for the project to proceed and maybe we should ask the Diocese for advice on how to go about installing a new Grotto.
 - (b) Resurfacing of the Presbytery Garden. We have applied to the Diocese for approval for laying of a new patio (about a third of the current lawn) at the garage end of the Presbytery garden and a paving path, along with a levelling and re-seeding/re-turfing of the lawn, to make it safer to walk on, easier to maintain and more pleasant to view. This application has been referred to another Diocesan committee for financial approval, due to the estimated cost of around £13,000 to £14,000. Again, any approval is unlikely to be given before our Centenary celebration 25 Jul 25. The Chairman suggested that other aspects of the gardens, such as the perimeter hedgerow, need tidying up significantly or replaced with fencing and we should really go back the drawing board and start again in looking at what we want to do with the church gardens. Fr Jay agreed and most present supported the Chairman's observations. To be further considered.

b. Spiritual Life Matters

- (1) Music Group (Mass Hymns). Judy Reid reported the following:
 - (a) Since October 2024, the most important thing is that we have introduced cantors for the Psalms. We have also introduced the Memorial Acclamations (or Plainsong) from the Mass Book. We have introduced the Gloria from the Missa de Angelis, but recently discovered a misprint in the congregational hymn book, which she will rectify.
 - (b) Kathleen and Judy continue to take turns in choosing the hymns, which they plan about 3 months in advance.
 - (c) Judy is looking forward to the Centenary Mass and will play the organ, as long as offered help in getting up and down the stairs is forthcoming. Judy's difficulty in managing the stairs is why the electric keyboard has been installed at the front of the Chapel, opposite the statue of Our Lady and that is where Judy now plays the church music.

- (d) Judy felt Christmas and Holy Week ceremonies went well and said she loves the Stations of the Cross with the First Communicants, expressing her thanks to Robbie.
- (e) Judy is particularly impressed by the way people respond to the interpretation of the music of the hymns. The slow, quiet, introspective hymns come back to her, and the people put their heart and soul into the more joyous, fast and rhythmic ones. She is amazed at how much the mood of the music affects the singing.
- (f) It was suggested this week that after Mass we have a music practice. How do people feel about this? She hasn't yet talked to Kathleen about it. The time to do it would be key. Judy suggested after 11 am Mass, as people wouldn't be there in time before Mass. A special time during the week was also suggested and this issue will be considered further.
- (g) Judy said there would be a dress rehearsal for the Parish Centenary Mass on Wed 23 Jul 25 at 1830 hours (6.30pm) and all welcome.
- (h) Finally, Judy thanked Father Jay, Kathleen, William (who has now left the area) and Mark, who though not even a parishioner, helps out during Kathleen's absences, and Paul McIntee, to whom we owe a lot because of his many hats, and the parishioners/singers who are so kind, helpful and supportive.

(2) Lectors/Eucharistic Ministers.

- (a) Gerry McCarthy reported that we are losing readers and Eucharistic Ministers and are desperate for more of both. He suggested that perhaps non-English speakers could sometimes read in their own language. Fr Jay it could perhaps work at the 11 am Mass, but the translation may be a liturgical problem. Donal said he felt it was wrong and that the Word should be proclaimed in English. Fr Jay will consider the possibility further.
- (b) Gerry said we are very short of Eucharistic Ministers who can go and minister to people in their own homes. More volunteers most welcome.

(3) Catechists. Robbie Meehan summarised her activities as follows:

- (a) Children's Liturgy. Term time Reception to First Communion age regular attending lessons 2 – 8 children. Two new Catechists helping.
- (b) First Communion. This year there were 11 preparing for Communion, including catch up sessions for 5 of these before Christmas. There were 2 staggered groups that merged into one. At last Sunday's Mass, Corpus Christi, 9 received the Eucharist for the first time, in a joyful Mass. Was a wider age range than usual In July another 2 will receive their First Communion. Robbie's most experienced Catechist assistant had moved away, so she wants someone to share the teaching and leading role. Next year she will need a Catechist who will work alongside her with a view to taking on more teaching as time goes on.
- (c) Confirmation. Confirmation takes place every 3 years in this Parish and the next cohort will start in October 2025 (parent/candidate session in September), for Confirmation in June 2026, for which the Bishop will come to the Parish. For school children Confirmation classes are for Year 9+.
- (d) Altar Servers. Kate and Robbie Meehan jointly train the Altar Servers fortnightly during term time, with fun evenings of learning how to serve and learning more

about the faith, often with games, prizes and snacks. Kate tends to lead on teaching how to serve and Robbie leads on teaching the faith. As a Mass and barbeque at the Cathedral is coming up on 26 July 2025 and a Bowling and Pizza outing in August, Robbie is hoping some new First Communion children will join.

- (e) RCIA. After receiving expressions of interest, planning started for RCIA sessions in November 2024. Five candidates, who have been dedicated to their preparation, will be received at the 6pm Mass on Saturday 5 July 2025, which will be a great celebration of them and the Parish. Robbie thanked Gerry , Andy Bell and Rachel and Kevin Pugh for their strong support and stated that Rachel and Kevin will soon take on full control of the RCIA work.
- (4) Baptisms. Robbie Meehan said that this year she had been asked to prepare parents for Baptisms of their children. She had prepared 9 families, with 13 baptisms, mostly infants, but including 3 older children, 12 to 16 years old, who then joined the First Communion group and 2 children of 11 and 12 years old.
- (5) Funerals. We have had quite a few funerals since the last meeting and thanks offered to those parishioners who attend. Fr Jay said that we charge the same amount for a funeral service as the Anglican church, as we offer at least the same quality of service, but do not want to be seen as profiting by charging more than them. Fr Jay says he tries to make every Funeral service a Mass, but sometimes only a service is requested.
- (6) Flower Arrangers Volunteers Rota. Jan Duffield said there are currently 4 flower arrangers, but only 2 people that do the flowers on a regular basis. She would like the Parish to know that more help would be much appreciated and that expenses on flower purchases, vases etc can be claimed back.
- (7) Church Cleaning Rota. Catherine Perkins said more people were needed as only 9 at the moment, on a 6 weekly rota. There was discussion of whether a professional cleaner could be paid to clean once a week or whether parishioner volunteers could be paid for regular hours, but was generally thought to be a bad idea to pay some volunteers and not others. More volunteers requested.
- (8) Collection Counters Rota. As with cleaners, more counters are needed. Volunteers please.

c. Communal/Social Matters

- (1) Safeguarding. Paul McIntee stated that Kate Meehan is not fully PSI approved yet, but when approved and her training completed, Kate will be joining Paul in the Safeguarding role. Donal suggested a notice should be put up somewhere in the entrance to the church to warn people that they may be filmed by our video camera and live streamed during certain Masses. Richard May agreed that this is a statutory requirement. A sign will be put up at the church entrance.
- (2) St Vincent De Paul Society. Terri Sanderson sent an email. At present the SVP is on a backburner, as they do not have sufficient members to be active. They have 4 members at present, but one couple are looking to move out of the Parish. Those they visit they will continue to support. They will see what pans out, but if no volunteers come forward this time next year the conference will be closed.
- (3) Social Group. Donal Hannon gave a summary of Parish social events:
 - (a) Centenary Mass. On Fri 25 Jul 25 we will be celebrating our Sacred Heart Church's 100th Anniversary of its consecration and dedication (21st July 1925)

and there will be a Mass in the church, taken by Bishop Peter, followed by a dedication of a blessing of our statue of Our lady of Lourdes and buffet in the Presbytery garden.

- (b) Christmas Party. The Christmas Party this year will be at the same venue, Yaxham Village Hall. Looking at 21 Dec 25. Donal said that the Filipino attendees felt that the event was terminated too early and they would like to stay longer. Fr Jay said an extension to 9 pm would be fine. All agreed.
 - (c) St Thomas the Apostle Feast Day. The Indian community celebrate St Thomas' Feast on the closest Sunday, which would be 3 Jul 25. Donal asked if there would be a Parish celebration on that day, like last year, and if it is now to be a regular part of the Parish calendar. Fr Jay affirmed it is to be the case.
 - (d) Barbeque. There will be a Parish barbeque in the Presbytery garden before the children go back to school at the end of the summer holidays.
- (4) Youth Club. Kate Meehan submitted a report, via Robbie:
- (a) The Youth Club has been dormant since Liz left the Parish, some time ago. Kate is, however, planning a monthly Youth Club meeting for a weekday evening, with a different activity each month and socialising with snacks and drinks. Will need funding. Chairman agreed that funding should be provided to help encourage the youths to attend.
 - (b) Kate also stated that she will need additional DBS checked adults to help supervise.
 - (c) Paul McIntee observed that a suitable social media platform for the group, which would need to be moderated, may encourage further unit bonding and participation.
- (5) Gardening Club. Sonia emailed the below points/suggestions for inclusion in the Minutes (received post meeting):
- (a) Budget for funding of plants, tools.
 - (b) Division of work – Hard-standing (trimming perimeter hedges and spraying gravel for weed free car park) and Ground-standing (flower borders). Hard-standing via paid professional gardener (proposal by Jo, a professional lady gardener from Jo's village to attend to the hard-standing); Ground-standing to be attended to by the volunteers (Jo, Carlos, John, Mike) led by Sonia, or Jo in her absence.
 - (c) Helpful liaising regarding general direction and plans for the garden.

5. Other Matters

- a. Thanks to Elaine Wilkes. The Chairman expressed thanks to Elaine Wilkes, who has excelled as Parish Secretary for many years and is a vital part of the Parish community. The assembly whole heartedly endorsed the sentiment.
- b. Donal proposed a Retreat be organised for this year as part of the Church Centenary celebrations, which could be taken by religious, such as COLW, who have offered in the past. Fr Jay agreed it was a good idea, depending on availability of such religious and other costs and logistics. Donal will investigate.

- c. Fr Jay has been approached by a website designer/hosting company who think they can make our Parish website more dynamic and appealing, but it would cost about £2,000. Richard May said he is happy to continue to host our current website for free and more could be done to it, depending on what it is expected to do, i.e. It could have a lot of Parish activities recorded on it and links to other sites of relevant interest, but at the moment nobody is submitting content. General feeling that £2,000 would not be a worthwhile spend, while further development of the current site is possible, depending on direction and content contribution.

The meeting was closed with a prayer at 8.23 pm.