

**DISCLAIMER: Approved by Co-Chairs, provisional until adopted by full Council.**

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL

Held at St. Theresa's Social Centre on 4 March 2024 at 7.00pm

PRESENT: See list attached.

APOLOGIES: Fr Desmond, Amy O'Donnell, Lyn Coyle and Christine Hare

1.	<p><b>Opening prayer</b></p> <p>The meeting opened with a prayer led by Fr William.</p>
2.	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>Ann welcomed everyone and reflected on the work which had taken place to action the priorities identified in the Parish Development Plan.</p> <p>She observed that almost all high priority issues had been addressed and details would be covered in the reports to be presented to the meeting.</p>
3.	<p><b>Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 10 November 2022.</b></p> <p>The meeting received the minutes, and these were agreed as a correct record. Proposed: Eileen and seconded: Carol.</p>
4.	<p><b>Reports on Pastoral Council activities.</b></p> <p>Ann thanked authors for the reports which had been circulated. Hard copies were available for parishioners in attendance. Reports would also be made available on the website and from parish offices, on request.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Matt, Carol, Eileen</p> <p>Reports were received as written, and Ann invited authors to present brief highlights. The following were noted:</p> <p><u>Children's Liturgy:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ 2 new volunteers had been recruited.</li><li>○ Hoping to offer CL twice a month at St Columba's</li></ul> <p><u>Youth Group:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Meeting monthly with regular attendance of 7/8 young people</li><li>○ Themes following the liturgical year.</li><li>○ Positive links to the SVP had been created.</li><li>○ Hoped to recruit more young people and young helpers at the SVP Youth mass to be held on 20 March at Catholic High School.</li></ul>

**ACTION:** Amy/Sue McC

- Opportunities to promote the Youth Group via primary school visits/newsletters were to be considered. Chris Steele offered to visit schools to action this. Ann agreed to draft information for school newsletters.

**ACTION:** Ann/Chris Steele

Liturgy Group:

- Mark confirmed the role and purpose of the group.
- Issue of potential copyright breaches was noted.
- The possibility of using recorded music at St Columba's was to be considered when Mark/Rob were not available to lead.
- The need to recruit an additional organist/pianist was noted.

Pam Jones raised the issue of Christmas and Easter Vigil masses at St Columba's and the lack of Stations of the Cross service in the evenings.

Mark noted that the LG did not set the programme for services but will request that these matters are considered.

**ACTION:** Fr William/Mark

Outreach/SVP:

- Sue noted with pleasure the increase in members over the year.
- The Christmas parcels had been very well received and appreciated.
- A similar programme was planned for Easter.
- Strong links had been created with the Youth Group for mutual benefit.

Communications:

- Matt noted that it had been a learning process to become familiar with WordPress.
- There had been several improvements in navigability although he noted that there remained some access issues to be resolved.
- He observed that some parishioners and PC members were submitting content for the site but that more was needed. In particular, event information/advertising before and photos/writeups afterwards.
- It was agreed that easily accessible information for new parishioners needed to be developed for the website.
- Anne thanked the editors for their work producing the weekly newsletter.

- It was noted that recruiting more volunteers to the team would be helpful.

Ann commented that a meeting of the website team was due to take place imminently. She was hopeful that some of the outstanding and developmental issues could be progressed soon.

Fr William commented that if short term professional IT support was necessary to complete the website development this could be arranged.

**ACTION:** Matt and website team

Ann briefed the meeting on the work of a “Welcome to Our Parish” group which aimed to produce a welcome pack for new parishioners. This to be available in hardcopy and on the website.

**ACTION:** Ann, Pauline and “WtOP” group

A question was asked regarding our Facebook presence. Tim Moore confirmed that he had responsibility for livestreaming on our FB page. There was a general view that a more active and dynamic FB presence would be beneficial to new and existing parishioners.

Safeguarding:

- Sue commented that there had been some confusion about DBS approvals for single /multiple volunteering activities. She confirmed that an existing volunteer might need additional DBS accreditation if they volunteered in another capacity.
- Jane noted that the role of the parish Safeguarding representatives was not a passive one. A significant amount of training and support was both required and delivered.
- Sue McCarthy commented that the training had been very valuable in her various roles.
- Jane and Sue suggested that it might be beneficial for them to speak after Mass to explain more about their role to parishioners. This suggestion was supported and will be progressed.

**ACTION:** Jane, Sue and Fr William

Volunteer recruitment:

- Pauline noted that there had been two volunteer recruitment campaigns in recent months.
- It is proposed to deliver a further appeal after Easter.
- A positive response had been made to both appeals and a number of new people had come forward. This helped to ease the load on existing volunteers and at the same time expand activities, for example the proposal to offer Children’s Liturgy twice monthly.

- It is proposed to include details of volunteering opportunities on the website shortly.

*Social Committee:*

- Ann noted that the Social Committee were keen to offer more family activities but there had been limited interest.
- A suggestion for film afternoons was being considered.
- Other suggestions for activities would be warmly welcomed by the Social Committee

*Buildings & maintenance:*

- Pauline referred to the recent upgrading of the carpark at St Columba's and the installation of a new boiler in the Hall. These works had been completed with minimal disruption to services and activities.
- The redecoration of the Iona Chapel resulted in a much more attractive space, conducive to worship.

In response to a question Pauline confirmed that the development of the Newman Room had been achieved through the "Our Mission Together" initiative which had provided a percentage of the overall costs of the project.

Utilisation had been delayed due to Covid, but the room was now in very regular use by parishioners and external groups.

In St Theresa's OMT funding had provided decoration and new furniture in the church.

A question was asked about leaks in the church at St Columba's. Pauline confirmed that investigation work was underway but had been delayed by lack of specialist "working at height" equipment. She noted that the Diocese had been helpful in responding to the issue and she hoped that the source of the problem could be correctly identified, and remedial action completed shortly.

Fr William reported on the poor state of the presbytery at St Theresa's and expressed his disappointment that consideration by the Diocese remained "ongoing" but without resolution so far.

*Finance – St Columba's:*

- Colin noted that the financial appeal made in the Autumn had been well received and that donations had increased. However, these were offset by parishioners leaving the parish or those who were deceased. The picture is effectively "stand still".

A question was asked about further promoting Gift Aid.

Pauline commented that there were several appeals underway, including those for Diocesan charities/activities and those of external agencies. These all had to be carefully balanced to avoid “donor overload”.

Finance – St Theresa’s

There was no written report available, but Eileen highlighted the key issues for St Theresa’s.

- Offertory envelopes and Standing Orders had remained at the same level although there had been a small increase in loose plate donations.
- The largest expenses were heating and lighting.
- It had been necessary for the Diocese to transfer £6000 to St Theresa’s current account to avoid overdraft.
- There was no funding left in St Theresa’s Central Fund.
- It is not known how St Theresa’s can continue to operate running at a deficit.

*A scanned copy of the notes was made available later and circulated to Pastoral Council members.*

5.	<p><b>Questions from parishioners</b></p> <p>1. Deacon Lawrence asked whether the Bishop would be made aware of the financial situation at his forthcoming visits to both churches.</p> <p>Fr William commented that a request from the Pastoral Council for a small group of PC members to meet the Bishop could be considered.</p> <p>Pauline commented that it would be highly appropriate for the Pastoral Council to request to meet the Bishop. This could enable concerns to be raised but also to brief him on parish activities, especially those arising from our work on the Synod. This was supported by Fr William.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Pastoral Council</p> <p>2. Deacon Lawrence enquired what arrangements would be put in place to ensure that the cancelled Walsingham pilgrimage would be able to proceed next year.</p> <p>Ann observed that there had been insufficient time this year to effectively plan and promote the pilgrimage and that planning for next year would need to commence in September.</p> <p>Fr William suggested that the possibility of a joint Deanery pilgrimage might be considered. He agreed to raise this at a forthcoming Deanery clergy meeting.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Fr William</p> <p>3. Sue Carr asked whether a timetable for the Bishop's visits was available.</p> <p>Fr William confirmed that the Bishop's Secretary would send a programme in due course.</p>
6.	<p><b>Election of Council and officers.</b></p> <p>Ann offered her thanks to resigning Pastoral Council members; Anne Mosquera and Lynsey Weightman.</p> <p>The meeting endorsed these remarks and extended good wishes to both.</p> <p>Ann noted that all other Pastoral Council members had indicated their willingness to remain in office. She commented that she and Pauline were willing to continue as Co-Chairs and that Nuala was willing to remain as Secretary.</p> <p>The meeting endorsed these arrangements.</p>
7.	<p><b>Closing remarks – Fr William</b></p> <p>Fr William expressed his pleasure at the sizeable attendance which he believed demonstrated our collective commitment to building our parish community.</p> <p>He especially thanked Ann and Pauline for their hard work and noted that the</p>

	<p>efforts to engage meaningfully with the Synod were highly commendable and marked out our parish from others.</p> <p>He expressed personal thanks on behalf of Fr Desmond and himself for the continued generosity of parishioners and welcomed all parishioners to raise any issues or concerns with him as he “always wants to say yes to suggestions”</p>
8.	<p><b>Meeting close.</b></p> <p>There being no further questions Ann thanked all parishioners in attendance for contributing to the meeting and members of the Pastoral Council for their efforts during the year.</p> <p>Everyone was warmly welcomed to remain for refreshments.</p>

## ATTENDANCE LIST

Fr William Damah  
Deacon Lawrence Hordley  
Pauline Rourke  
Ann McCarthy  
Kevin Keegan  
Bernard Payne  
Colin Hedley  
Anne Mosquera  
Matthew Petts  
Carol Galvin  
Alicja Dale  
Sue Carr  
Sue McCarthy  
Eileen Irwin  
Carol Ingram  
Josie Taylor  
Nuala Keegan  
Helen Connor  
Mark Traynor  
Jane Walsh  
Pamela Jones  
Eileen Mapp  
Sylvia Holland  
John Steele  
Chris Steele  
Maura Stone  
Maureen Nycock  
S. Crawford  
Anne Glover  
Tim Moore  
Eileen Hordley  
Sue Hutcheson  
Peter Robinson  
Roberta Robinson