

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

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE PASTORAL COUNCIL

Held at St. Columba's Hall on Saturday 19 July at 2.30pm

PRESENT: See list attached.

APOLOGIES: Fr William, Fr Peter, Jane Walsh, John Steele, Mark Traynor, Helen Connor, Colin Hedley and Gill Blatch

1.	<b>Opening prayer</b>  The meeting opened with a prayer led by Deacon Lawrence.
2.	<b>Welcome</b>  Ann welcomed everyone and spoke briefly about the role of the Pastoral Council which exists to identify the pastoral needs of the parish and work closely with the Parish Priest and clergy to support those needs.  She observed that the main activities throughout the past year have been guided by the Parish Development Plan which emerged from consultations on the Synod. She commented that the Pastoral Council had worked hard to respond to what parishioners identified for the future of the parish. She explained that the Development Plan was an evolving document, and the AGM provided a further opportunity for input from parishioners.  Ann noted a pleasing development which is the work by Mark and Giovanna for their work with the young guitarists and percussionists at 11.00 Mass at St Columba's. This is really involving our young people in the life of the parish. On behalf of the Pastoral Council Ann expressed thanks to Mark and Giovanna.  Finally, Ann commented that as part of the Parish Jubilee celebrations the Pastoral Council were very keen to encourage involvement from younger people and consequently an art competition on the theme of Jubilee had been organised, led by Amy. The entries were on display and Ann encouraged everyone to take time to look at these after the meeting.
3.	<b>Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 4 March 2024</b>  The meeting received the minutes, and these were agreed as a correct record. Proposed: Kevin Keegan and seconded: Tim Moore.
4.	<b>Matters arising from the Minutes</b>  <i>1. Safeguarding (minute 4, page 3)</i>  Pauline reported that unfortunately there had been a delay, outside the control of Sue and Jane, for an update to be given to parishioners after Mass. However, it is intended that arrangements for this would be put in place on Fr William's return. In the

	<p>meantime, she extended thanks from the Pastoral Council to Jane and Sue for their continuing work in this field.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>2. Questions from parishioners (minute 5, page 5)</i></p> <p>There had been a suggestion that a small group of Pastoral Council members request a meeting with the Bishop regarding the financial situation of the parish.</p> <p>Pauline reported on attempts to undertake this. She observed that this matter was of such importance that she considered a full report was required at this meeting.</p> <p>The following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fr William had requested, via the Bishop's Secretary, that such a meeting be arranged. He was advised that this would not be possible.</li> <li>• In light of this Pauline had attempted to brief the Bishop after Mass, during his visit</li> <li>• The Bishop had responded that <i>"he never met with Pastoral Councils.....that Fr William had already told him what the parish was doing"</i> and that <i>"it would be far worse if it ran out of faith rather than money"</i>.</li> <li>• Pauline provided the Bishop with a copy of the Pastoral Council AGM minutes and followed up with correspondence detailing activities and expressing the concerns about the financial situation.</li> <li>• In his reply the Bishop noted that <i>"it is the Parish Priest who would be able to communicate anything of significance"</i> and referred our concerns to the Financial Secretary of the Diocese. A meeting was subsequently held in November 2024 which appeared to be concerned solely with the potential operation of a contactless giving scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Pauline concluded that regrettably not a great deal of progress had been made.</p>
5.	<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> Lyn, Magdalena and 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: Gill</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The report was received.</li> </ul> <p><u>Youth Group: Amy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The group aims to support young people with activities based on the liturgical calendar and the Jubilee Year 2025.</li> <li>○ A successful Jubilee walk had been undertaken between the two churches.</li> </ul>

- There is an intention to use the website more to promote activities and report on achievements

**ACTION:** Amy and team

Liturgy Group: Deacon Lawrence

- Deacon Lawrence gave a definition of liturgy as “*the official public worship of the Church*”.
- He noted that as such we are all part of the liturgy at Mass, through the Sacraments and whenever we gather to give praise and thanks to God.
- He explained that in order to facilitate this there was a need to plan, engage and to consider resources.
- He referred to the detail of the report and invited questions later in the meeting

**ACTION:** Fr William, Fr Peter, Deacon Lawrence

Communications: Lyn

- Lyn referred to her report and also noted the need for more helpers as there is a desire to extend the work of the Communications Group and the Friendship Thursday programme.
- Lyn confirmed that she is the link for the website. Items are to be sent to her. Mike Forber works to upload content with Lyn exercising overall editorial management on behalf of the Communications Group.
- Lyn asked that a few days’ notice be given for content uploading.

**ACTION:** Lyn and team

Outreach/SVP: Sue McC

- Sue thanked everyone for their help and donations through the year
- She encouraged anyone who was aware of people requiring assistance to get in touch with her.

Social Committee: Ann McC

- Ann referred to the report which detailed a full calendar of activities.

Pauline noted with thanks the work of the Social Committee which had organised the Afternoon Tea which we were all to enjoy later.

Churches Together in Upton: David

- David highlighted two points from his report. The first relating to the desire to increase representation from St Columba’s on the CTU Committee. He currently attends with Lyn Coyle, but the Constitution allows for 4 lay people and 3 clergy from each church.
- Secondly, David outlined the need for a volunteer to undertake the planning and delivery of the quiz which normally takes place in October. Without a volunteer

	<p>coming forward it was anticipated that the event would not be able to take place.</p> <p><u><i>Buildings &amp; maintenance St Columba's: Pauline</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pauline referred to her report in relation to the satisfactory completion of the exterior painting of the church.</li> <li>○ She advised that through the use of local known contractors, rather than the Diocesan commissioned team, a significant reduction in cost was achieved in the work to repair leaks in the hall roof.</li> </ul> <p><u><i>Buildings &amp; maintenance St Theresa's: Eileen</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Eileen commented on the completion of the works in the presbytery and the removal of damaging trees from the garden. The trees were subject to Tree Preservation Orders and therefore special permission had to be obtained prior to their removal.</li> </ul> <p><u><i>Finance – St Columba's: Colin/ Pauline</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pauline presented Colin's report which gave details of the loss in St Columba's account. This can be attributed almost entirely to the contribution being made to support St Theresa's, without which St Columba's would be at a breakeven position.</li> <li>○ It is intended in the autumn to make a fresh appeal to parishioners to convert loose plate collection contributions to Planned Giving and Gift Aid.</li> <li>○ The income from the hire of the Hall and other church premises is a significant source of income</li> </ul> <p><u><i>Finance – St Theresa's: Eileen</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Eileen briefly presented her report and confirmed that offertory income had decreased slightly.</li> <li>○ The Diocese had to support St Theresa's in the sum of £7700 in their current account to avoid the account running in deficit</li> <li>○ As in 2023/24 there is no funding left in St Theresa's Central Fund.</li> <li>○ A full copy of the accounts is on display on the notice board at the back of church</li> </ul> <p>In concluding the presentation of reports Pauline urged parishioners to read these in full as they provided important detail.</p>
6.	<p><b>Questions and comments from parishioners</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>How much remains in St Columba's Central Fund?</b> It was advised that this was £131,716. Pauline observed that St Columba's Central Fund had been built up over many years due to generosity of parishioners and it had stood at £250,000. However, reduced income and additional expenditure, including support to St Theresa's, had significantly reduced the Central Fund.</li> <li>2. <b>How are the figures reported on in the newsletter of typical Standing Order values arrived at?</b> Eileen advised that a quarterly average combined</li> </ol>

	<p>figure for both churches was used. It was observed that previously offertory collections had been reported separately for each church in the newsletter.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. <b>It is a source of regret that although St Columba's is a larger community, providing the larger income that there is no resident priest.</b> A comment was made on the need for "<i>the rich to help the poor</i>".</li> <li>4. <b>For how long will it be possible to sustain the financial situation?</b></li> <li>5. <b>What happens to the income from the St Columba's presbytery?</b> Pauline advised that this went into St Columba's Central Fund. She went on to comment that it was for these financial concerns, which had been raised last year, that every attempt had been made to raise the financial viability of the parish with the Bishop. As she had been advised that all contact with the Bishop must be via the Parish Priest this approach would now have to be explored further.</li> <li>6. <b>Are all the special collections required?</b> There seem to be a lot.</li> <li>7. <b>Would it be possible for a priest to spend more time at St Columba's?</b> It was noted that Fr William does go to St Columba's regularly but that parishioners may not be aware of when he's there. Perhaps a regular time could be agreed when Fr William would be available at St Columba's and parishioners advised of this.</li> <li>8. <b>It is rare to see a priest greeting people after Mass in St Columba's.</b> It was acknowledged that this does happen in St Theresa's except when the priest has to dash off to another Mass. It was commented "<i>that is how you get to know your people</i>".</li> <li>9. <b>Can there be more effective communication between the laity and the clergy?</b> There had been occasions when things did not happen as planned and members of the parish felt let down. There is no clear process for feedback and that the Synod had highlighted the need for "listening". It would be helpful to have a process in which views could be expressed and concerns raised without any suggestion of confrontation. Particular disappointment was expressed over the form of the Penitential Service held earlier in the year.</li> <li>10. <b>It had been understood that with the appointment of the Spiritans that there were to be two priests serving the parish,</b> but one priest is away for much of the time.</li> <li>11. <b>Fr Philip commented on the need for the practice of "living in community"</b> for members of the Spiritan Order which was why both priests were resident at St Theresa's.</li> <li>12. <b>Fr Philip asked whether there was a Parishioner's Suggestion Box in each church.</b> Pauline replied that there wasn't but extensive consultation on parishioner's views had been gathered during the Synod. She later thanked Fr Philip for his question and observed that Suggestion Boxes could be adopted.</li> <li>13. <b>A number of parishioners go to other churches</b> on a regular basis as the accents of the priests can make them difficult to understand.</li> <li>14. <b>Could/should parishioners be consulted on the re-introduction of Holy Communion under both kinds?</b> A number of churches have reintroduced this since Covid and it appears to be a matter for local determination. Pauline agreed that it was important to consult the whole parish on this matter.</li> </ol>
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	<p>15. <b>Can sharing the Sign of Peace by handshake be re-introduced?</b> It was said that this was a matter of personal preference and could be adopted by any parishioner who wished.</p> <p>16. Tim Moore informed the meeting that the parish has its own <b>YouTube</b> channel, with 12 subscribers. If we were able to increase this to 50 subscribers it would be possible to live-stream Holy Mass on this platform, rather than FaceBook. There is no cost involved in subscribing. Parishioners can subscribe on the YouTube page - @stcolumbaandtheresarc.chur. St Columba and Theresa RC. – Chester. (As at 29 July the page has 23 subscribers)</p> <p>Pauline drew the Q&amp;A to a close as she noted that several issues were being discussed in some detail, which in the absence of our clergy, should not be explored further in the meeting. She observed, however, that there a number of concerns and suggestions being expressed from the floor and she agreed that the Pastoral Council should take these on board.</p> <p>In summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ That the financial situation was getting worse and a response from the Bishop be sought.</li> <li>○ That parishioners at St Columba's wish to have easier access to a priest.</li> <li>○ That consideration be given as a matter of urgency as to how we can improve communications between clergy and laity.</li> <li>○ That the full parish be consulted on the re-introduction of Holy Communion in both kinds.</li> <li>○ That a Parishioner's Suggestion Box be made available at each church and parishioners encouraged to use them.</li> <li>○ That parishioners be encouraged to become a subscriber on the parish YouTube channel.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Pastoral Council</p>
7.	<p><b>Election of Council and officers.</b></p> <p>Pauline thanked all the members of the Pastoral Council for their service. The current membership and Officers were willing to remain in their roles.</p> <p>With approval of the meeting the Pastoral Council membership was re-elected en-bloc.</p> <p>Tony Flynn expressed thanks from the floor for the work of the Pastoral Council and its Officers.</p>
8.	<p><b>Winners of art competition</b></p> <p>Ann commented on the excellent entries from children of the parish to the art competition on the Jubilee theme.</p> <p>The winners were announced and congratulations extended to them all.</p>

	<p>Thanks were also given to Amy and staff at all the schools for their efforts in making the competition such a success.</p> <p>All the artwork was on display, and everyone was encouraged to view it when refreshments were served.</p>
9.	<p><b>Closing remarks</b></p> <p>Pauline commented that the meeting had been very well attended, and she thanked all participants. She hoped that everyone would stay for the social part of the programme and enjoy the afternoon tea prepared by members of the Social Committee.</p> <p>The free raffle was drawn and two winners awarded with boxes of chocolates, courtesy of Helen Connor, who had not been able to attend the meeting.</p> <p>Eileen expressed thanks to the Co-Chairs and Secretary of the Pastoral Council and a parishioner asked that these be formally noted.</p>
10.	<p><b>Meeting close and Jubilee Prayer</b></p> <p>The meeting was closed with everyone saying the Jubilee Prayer together, led by Deacon Lawrence.</p>

Afternoon tea was served.

## ATTENDANCE LIST

Deacon Lawrence Hordley	David Savage
Pauline Rourke	Giovanna Moretto
Ann McCarthy	Luca Lenzi
Kevin Keegan	Jacqui Worrall
Bernard Payne	Tony Flynn
Pauline Payne	Ronnie Walsh
Anne Mosquera	John Wall
Carol Galvin	Barbara Wall
Sue Carr	Cathy Murphy
Sue McCarthy	Eileen Hordley
Eileen Irwin	Anne Clarke
Carol Ingram	Ann Jones
Josie Taylor	Christine Hare
Nuala Keegan	Margaret Curtis
Eileen Mapp	Maggie Burns
Sylvia Holland	
Maureen Mycock	
Ann Glover	
Tim Moore	
Susan Hutcheson	
Christine Harrington	
Marion Wolfe	
Margaret Williams	
John Millett	
Ann Whitby	
Katherine Oates	
Jane Nash	
Lyn Coyle	
Fr Philip Marsh CSSp	
Stephen Parry	
Paula Bownas	