

## THE SACRED HEART & ST MARGARET MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH, DEREHAM

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### Minutes of a General Meeting of the Parish held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at 1830 hours in the Emmaus Room

Chairman: Deacon Rick Jones.

There were 7 parishioners in attendance, along with Father Jay & Deacons Martin and Rick.

The meeting commenced with an opening prayer, the Prayer of Serenity, by Fr Jay.

#### 1. Apologies and Welcome.

Apologies were received from Robbie Meehan (Catechists), Kate Meehan (Youth Club), Sonia Oberding (Gardens), Jan Duffield (Flowers), Catherine Perkins (Cleaners/Counters), Marcia Slee (130 Club). Notes read out by representatives or received from them by the Secretary (except from the Social Team).

#### 2. To receive the minutes of the Parish Meeting held 15 October 2025.

The minutes of the last Parish Meeting held on 15th October 2025 were reviewed by the Chairman.

#### 3. Parish Priest's Reflections/Report.

- a. The Youth. Father Jay said that he wants to lead the Parish to activate the youth of the Parish, such as the Altar Servers and Eucharistic Ministers.
- b. Ethnic Diversity. Father Jay said he wants to consolidate the ethnic diversity of the Parish and get them to participate more actively in the running of the Parish, as the ethnic minority Parishioners will one day make up the majority of the congregation.
- c. Casting the Net. Father Jay said that we are a Missionary Church and we should spread our wings more broadly in the wider community.

#### 4. Parish Life:

##### a. Financial Matters

- (1) Parish Accounts – Report of the Parish Treasurer. Paul McIntee had provided a verbal summary and written summary of the Parish's finances at all Masses on the weekend before the meeting (2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> May 2026), explaining that we have a total of some £36,000 in all our Parish bank accounts, which includes a sum of just over £9,200 available for Alive in Faith medium to large spending projects, but that our regular income has fallen, and gave a précis to the meeting. He explained the Restricted Spending detailed on the spreadsheet provided and how he can add specific donation subjects to the Dona terminal as required, to encourage people to make donations more easily, when they feel they can comfortably afford to do so. While we are not in immediate danger of running out of money, we should look at ways of reducing our expenditure and raising funds. Father Jay asked if the church lights were LED and Paul confirmed they were, but the Presbytery lights do need to be replaced by LED lights.

- (2) Proposed Large Spend Projects. Proposed medium to large scale expenditure projects currently being considered by the Parish Finance Committee are:
  - (a) New set of high quality speakers for the church's electric organ (the speakers would be placed high on the back wall of the choir gallery). This would spread the sound of the organ more evenly over the whole church area and improve the sound quality.
  - (b) Presbytery Redecoration. The Presbytery has not been decorated for many years and Chairman of the Finance Committee, Rex, has pointed out for some time that it is not fair on the resident Parish Priest, or visiting priests, to reside in such a tired, glum environment. The beds for visiting priests are also in a parlous state and need replacing.
- (3) Alive in Faith Projects.
  - (a) Marian Garden. The new Marian Garden, with its self binding gravel pathway and wooden border edging, was completed after the last meeting and is looking very smart, watched over by the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes in the parishioner made and generously donated Grotto.

**b. Spiritual Life Matters**

- (1) Music Group (Mass Hymns). In Judy's absence, Paul McIntee gave a summary of the church's music situation.
  - (a) The music is going well, with good singing at the Masses and other services, by the congregation. The electric organ placement in the centre of the church is not ideal, but Judy is finding the right balances of volume and tone. Kathleen, however, still prefers to play the old organ upstairs in the choir gallery for now.
  - (b) Deacon Rick stated that the Altar Servers do not sing the hymns and present a less than flattering image to the congregation, both in the church and watching the live-stream. He said they should be encouraging others to sing. They should be provided with hymn books and a system devised to let them know which hymns are to be sung at that Mass. Father Jay agreed.
  - (c) Deacon Rick also suggested that a small musical group of Parishioners could be formed to perform additional and different forms of music on some occasions, in a similar way to the Filipino choir that play at the church. To be considered.
- (2) Lectors/Eucharistic Ministers. Gerry McCarthy reported that Easter went very well and we are managing well at the moment. More volunteers always welcome.
- (3) Catechists. Robbie Meehan sent notes to the Secretary prior to the meeting, which were read out by the Secretary, as follows: This has been a very busy year and a huge thank you to all who have helped support the Catechism groups.
  - (a) Children's Liturgy. Successfully running weekly during term time, we usually have between 7-10 children on Sunday mornings during the first half of the 11am Mass.
  - (b) First Communion. We have 15 children nearing the completion of their preparation for the First Holy Communion Mass on 7<sup>th</sup> June at the 11am Corpus Christi Mass. They also beautifully led the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday morning.

- (c) Confirmation. We have 10 candidates who are nearing completion of their preparation for the Confirmation Mass on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June at 7pm when Bishop Peter Collins will be coming to the Parish to Confirm them. This will be a very special occasion for the Parish as it only happens every three years.
  - (d) Altar Servers. We had 5 new Altar Servers receive their medals for the Guild of St Stephen on St Stephen's Day (Boxing Day) and they regularly attend our Altar Servers Meetings on every other Friday evening. Spurred on by their successful Nativity presentation, the Servers did a special Stations of the Cross this year combining Tableaux with the readings. They have already been practicing making teas and coffees ahead of joining the tea rota after 11am Mass in June!
  - (e) Volunteers. For the next school year if anyone would be interested in joining the Catechist team, for Children's Liturgy and/or First Holy Communion preparation please contact Robbie for information.
- (4) Baptisms. There were 2 baptisms at Easter 2026.
  - (5) Funerals. Father Jay said that we have had 6 funerals already this year and asked Paul McIntee if the funeral fees received go into the Parish's general funds. Paul confirmed that they are, as Stole fees.
  - (6) RCIA. Rachel Pugh summarised the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) course activities:
    - (a) Rachel said that the RCIA group had held 23 meetings over the last year, with 5 aspirants being converted to full reception into the Roman Catholic Church this Easter. Rachel and Kevin thanked all those who have taken part in the study sessions.
    - (b) Deacon Rick suggested a course review meeting be held and suggested that a date for this, for the course attendees only. Rachel and Kevin agreed.
  - (7) Flower Arrangers Volunteers Rota. The Secretary read out an email sent by Jan Duffield, as follows: "Fortunately we have 5 Ladies on the Flower rota at the moment, which is helpful."
  - (8) Church Cleaning Rota. The Secretary read out an email sent by Catherine Perkins as follows: "The cleaning teams are working well. We do need just one more cleaner, to replace Silvia, as her husband is now home. It is only once every 6 weeks. I can be contacted on the phone number on the list on the notice board."
  - (9) Collection Counters Rota. Working well, but one more counter is needed, to replace Silvia.

**c. Communal/Social Matters**

- (1) Safeguarding. Paul McIntee stated that Diocese will arrange training for all PSI authorised people and a PSR email address for the Parish, for all Safeguarding matters, for the anonymity and ease of reporting of concerns by Parishioners. Father Jay said Paul may be assisted, when a suitable volunteer can be identified.
- (2) St Vincent De Paul Society. Martin Sanderson said that the Dereham branch was in abeyance, due to a lack of personnel. With the sad loss of Terri Sanderson, the team now consists solely of Martin and Gerry McCarthy. Volunteers are, however, welcome.

- (3) Social. No members of the Social Team were present and no submissions had been received at the time of the meeting. Deacon Rick is, however arranging a Family Day in September. He is liaising with COLW to see if it could be held on the convent grounds.
- (4) 130 Club.
- (a) The Secretary read out an email sent by Marcia Slee as follows: "I have just finished with collecting all the monies which I will be handing to Paul at church on the 2/5/26 (*Sec note: done*). So you can see it takes me a good 4 months to hand out and collect all the money from the people of the parish. It is a long process and unfortunately this year the profit for the church has gone down considerably. Around £300."
- (b) Paul McIntee said that he has the money and names ready for digitalisation and is looking to enrol new active members.
- (c) Father Jay suggested the 130 Club draw be made immediately after Mass, to be witnessed and to generate excitement. Paul agreed.
- (5) Youth Club. Kate Meehan submitted a report, via Robbie: "Forms to complete will shortly be available ahead of a start of the monthly Youth Group on Saturday afternoons, beginning in June (date and more details to follow). A few volunteers have agreed to help."
- (6) Gardening Club.
- (a) Secretary received an email from Sonia Obderding immediately after the meeting, as follows: "The parish volunteers John (McGrath), Jo and Carlos are doing a super job in helping to improve and maintain the garden for the enjoyment of the parish. I work with the volunteers as and when I am in Dereham. No further volunteers have come forward. Jo has been kindly providing seed and plants from her garden, so we have a wonderful selection of colour for Our Lady to enjoy from her grotto."
- (b) John McGrath, of the Garden Team, asked the Meeting what they would like to do about the strip of land where the tall hedge had been between the Presbytery lawn and the car park – grass it over or something else. Those present agreed that it would be best to grass it over.
- (7) Pastoral Parish Council. Deacon Rick explained how a PPC works and established, normally consisting of several Parishioners selected by the parish priest and several others who are elected by the Parish. It is an advisory body only, providing advice to the parish priest but with the parish priest having the final say on how the parish is run. The Diocesan Deacons are meeting with the Bishop in June when we see more clearly the Bishop's views on the subject. Paul McIntee said he had discussed this matter privately and informally with the Bishop and he expressed a concern that he does not want to roll out a system unless the Diocese's priests will be happy with it. If we have a PPC, it will hold quarterly meetings and an Annual General Meeting each year. To be reviewed at a later date.

- 5. Other Matters.** The following additional matters were discussed:
- a. Corpus Christi. Donal Hannon suggested we should celebrate Corpus Christi with an all night vigil, from after the 1800 hours Mass on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June until the 0900 hours Mass the following day. Deacon Rick suggested a rota of volunteers should prioritise the early hours, say until Midnight, to make sure that at least that time envelope would be fully filled by worshippers. Donal felt we should go for the whole night's worth of volunteers from the start. Father Jay said that it should be only on Saturday evening or during the day on Saturday and that not many people attend Adoration anyway. The matter will be discussed again nearer the date.
  - b. Anniversary of the Consecration of the Sacred Heart church building. Donal Hannon asked if we should celebrate the upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Consecration of the church, the first to be Consecrated in the Diocese, on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1976 (which was itself established 13 March 1976). Father Jay expressed a concern that that would be too many anniversaries and, in light of last year's Centenary Celebration, may just confuse people. It could be mentioned at the September Family Day.

The meeting was closed with a prayer at 2050 hours.