

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL (JPPC)

Held at Our Lady Help of Christians, Rickmansworth  
23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026 @ 7.30pm

| In Attendance:                                 | Apologies:           |
|--|----------------------|
| Father Andrew Gallagher                        | Father Dom Matokovic |
| Ben Sadler                                     | Dee Vanstone         |
| Hannah Power                                   | Peter Kuncewicz      |
| Paula Castree                                  |                      |
| Sheila Harrington                              |                      |
| Margaret Simon (or Youth Group representative) |                      |
| Claire Johnson                                 |                      |
| Lucy Insua                                     |                      |
| Jo Rodrigues                                   |                      |
| Clare Hallett                                  |                      |

### 1. Welcome and Prayer

Fr Andrew welcomed everyone to the 38<sup>th</sup> JPPC meeting, and opened with a prayer.

4 new members of the JPPC were welcomed to the team, Claire & Lucy from Chorleywood, and Jo and Clare from Mill End, with Jo also being a member of the SLT. All new and existing members introduced themselves and welcomed the new members to the group.

Fr Andrew outlined the purpose of the JPPC, along with an explanation of how it works. He advised we have a vision, and a five year plan. The JPPC work to come up with ideas of actions that can be taken across the parishes, which are then taken to the SLT to discuss further and move forwards.

The JPPC allows parishioners to find out what is happening across the parishes, and to broaden understanding and spread the news of what is going on.

### 2. Appointment of new Chair

Following Richard Booth stepping down as Chair at our last meeting, Ben Sadler offered to take up the position going forward, to which there were no objections. Fr Andrew agreed to Chair this meeting.

Fr Andrew also advised that the JPPC names are noted on the minutes which are published on the website, and so if there are any objections, to let Fr Andrew know.

### 3. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

Fr Andrew updated us on the proposed Canonical Merger, as the consultation phase has now closed. Overall, there were 104 responses to the proposal. There were 100 positive reactions, 2 unsure, and 2 voted No. However Fr Andrew noted that of the 'No's, one gave no reason, and the other said they liked the three parishes and supported them.

Fr Andrew outlined that the next stage is that he takes this forward to the Council of Priests with his presentation of the proposal. He outlined that across the country, this type of merger is happening increasingly. Elsewhere there have been proposals to merge three whole dioceses together, and in Scotland to merge all dioceses into a smaller number.

Lastly, Fr Andrew explained to the new members how we use the minutes from the previous meeting to form the basis of each meeting.

#### **4. Discipleship & Evangelisation**

The Chosen – The Friday evening showings of The Chosen were attracting around 15-30 people per week. These have now finished until September, and the plan is to begin showing season 4 in the Autumn, with Season 5 then being shown on the run up to Holy Week 2027.

Young Adults Group – The group continues to be open to those age 18-35, with most attendees being in their 20s. The format is more structured, with a regular 6/7 attendees but with additional people attending each month. Ben advised there are people coming from further afield, including from Watford, and that there have been some people who have started attending since the History of Salvation talks. Amongst the topics that are being discussed is vocations, and there are 2 attendees who are considering the Priesthood.

The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month, and tend to have cookies & lemonade whilst discussing the topic for 1 – 1.5 hours, and then move on to the pub. As Summer approaches, Ben also thinks there will be more ad-hoc meet ups.

Baptisms – Fr Dom continues to meet with families in their own homes as the first step towards baptism, and the families are coming to mass regularly.

RCIA – 11 participants are receiving sacraments on Easter Saturday, including 1 Baptism. There have been 3 catechists who have assisted, and more people returning to faith are already enquiring about next year.

Men's Group - The first meeting has been arranged for April, and is open to men of all ages, to come together to have support, with their faith in common. The first meeting will help to gain ideas of how to drive this group forward, and what structure the future meetings will take.

Catholic Women's League – the National President of this group is a parishioner in Watford, and although the group is small at the moment, would like to grow this. The group get involved in various projects such as communicating with prisoners.

A suggestion was made that a communication outlining all of the groups is produced, maybe a flyer with a 'What's On' to advertise the great options for adults to be more actively involved in parish life, although Fr Andrew did note that they are all included on the website.

History of Salvation – This series of talks ended on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, and totalled 11 weeks of talks. It was noted that you can dip in and out of the sessions, rather than having to attend all 11 weeks. There were a consistent number of around 45-50 people per week attending, and was beneficial that each topic and ‘deep dive’ helped to compare your own faith to history. Fr Dom would consider running another course next year.

### Evangelisation

Community Faith Stall – Returns this coming weekend. It is a good resource to show the various courses that are offered such as Alpha, and also for spreading the word around events such as the SVP lunches at Mill End.

Fr Andrew also confirmed that Dee had booked the stall for the Chorleywood Village Fair Day, which is on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2026. She has started to gather volunteers.

Alpha – the Alpha team are meeting after Easter, and the next course will begin in September. Sadly, Mike Eaton who ran this has recently died, and so there will be new members needed to help. Alpha builds on RCIA and is a good pathway for those looking to continue this journey.

Quarant Ore – The Quarant Ore which happened earlier in the month was successful, and Fr Andrew felt fruitful also. Across the entire 40 hours, Fr Andrew was only alone for 30 minutes, and Fr Dom for 10 minutes! Fr Dom suggested doing this every year, although possibly with more support throughout the night.

We discussed that the exposition of this beautiful gift, and praying throughout the night is very calming. It was noted that some of the prayers and practices that parishioners took part in were happening all the time (such as morning prayers/offices), but that not many regularly take part or observe them.

Fr Andrew also told us about how St. John’s School took part and really understood the Sacrament and the importance of the exposition, through their understanding of the Blessed Sacraments.

On the Saturday morning, the parents of the families who were attending the GIFT session also took part in the exposition, and many had not experienced this before. The children made flags celebrating the event which then ended with a procession through the grounds of Our Lady’s.

Fr Andrew explained how he has a Divine Renovation coach. The Divine Renovation book was where GIFT originated, and assists with growing the Church through (amongst others) Discipleship and Fellowship. When Fr Andrew’s coach heard about the procession at the end of the Quarant Ore, she was so inspired that she came immediately from Chiswick to be a part of it! There were 38 children involved.

Finally, when discussing Quarant Ore, it was noted that during Holy Week and at other times throughout the year, there are Holy Hours.

GIFT – The GIFT community continues to grow. Fr Andrew explained to the newer JPPC members that he will go to the home of those who wish for their child to consider their

sacraments, and they talk about faith at home and about how they and their family can be supported.

There are 8 children who are making their First Holy Communion already booked this year, and there are 19 children who are on their journey to preparing for this also. The children who are involved are not only from St. John's School, there are children from lots of different schools, and families coming from other areas such as Watford and Ruislip too to Mass, who may become involved.

Clare asked about communicating in advance about upcoming Communions, so that the parishes can know in advance as parishioners may want to see and be involved in this with the celebration for the children. Fr Andrew noted this already is in the newsletter a week in advance of First Holy Communions.

Paula also had an idea that if we had a list or pictures of those who were preparing for the sacrament, parishioners could pray for them. Pictures probably wouldn't be allowed, but something that could let parishioners know who to keep in their prayers. Fr Andrew did note that during the Advent GIFT sessions, the children do make cards and send those to housebound parishioners, noting that they will be praying for them.

Youth Group – Continues with the same structure where the Commandments are the main focus of each session, and these discussions are positive and constructive. Numbers have dropped slightly, between around 6-8 attendees monthly, and the group also have a new helper who is of sixth form age.

ASCAT Post- Confirmation Discipleship – Events take place once every other month, around the local area. This is run by Deacon Liam, and there are a handful of peoples who attend. They also have a team of chaplains who are trained inworking with those children at that age.

Lourdes Red Caps – The group is run by St Joan of Arc, and Fr Andrew had been told there was a group of interested students, although waiting to have this confirmed. As a side note, Fr Andrew said that bookings to Lourdes had increased hugely recently, from around 70 applicants last year, to 400+ this year!).

Youth Choir - Fr Andrew continues to lead the Choir, as they are singing so beautifully that even though there is no replacement for the leader, he cannot stop! There have been some older children of teenage years join the Choir, and there are 13 participants. The choir are currently only singing at Our Lady's 6pm mass, and there are too many participants to be able for them to sing at St. John Fisher. He noted that the ASCAT trust are looking for a chaplain with musical talents, so this may then lead to being able to have the Choir managed. Generally with the ASCAT input, this will improve the visibility of the choir and managing the logistics.

## **5. Liturgy & Worship**

### **i) Altar Servers**

Fr Andrew advised that there has been a new Altar Server age 12 in Chorleywood which is the first of the younger generation in this location. It was noted that it was great to start seeing younger parishioners take on this mantle, which will in turn encourage other younger children to want to take up this duty after their own communions.

## **6. Faith in Action**

This area is Jo's focus as the SLT lead in this area, so it was great to have a 'specialist' present!

### **i) Love in Action**

This has now started across all of our parishes. This is the exploration of the Catholic Social Teaching method, and as each principle is explored there will be handouts at Mass, workshops, prayer cards, and a focus on the principle in homilies. Each parish group will also be aware of the current principle focus, and this will form a theme throughout the parishes, including the banners for each, which change colour and signal each new principle.

Jo talked us through the first workshop, which 17 people attended. Using scripture as a basis for discussion, and using statistics from our own area, potential support is considered. How could the support be offered in our area, who are those in need of help, and what sort of help is needed. At the most recent workshop (Option for the Poor), Maureen Fields of SVP was a guest speaker and explained the work that the charity does, again providing an insight into what help is needed.

Over the coming months up to November, as each principle is explored, and action plans are generated through the workshops, then a joint parish action plan will be drawn up, with an action plan of how we will put love into action.

The following principle is Human Dignity, and Jo plans to involve the Watford charity, Hope, in the workshop. The ideas generated by the workshops will form the basis of the action plan.

Fr Andrew will continue to advise the workshop details including the speakers in the newsletter.

We discussed that Catholic Social Teaching principles form part of Catholic School Inspections, and so there has been discussions with St. John's School and Mr Molloy as part of this. It was noted that the children of St. John's School had taken part in a full day of Catholic Social Teaching learning, and that they were very engaged. Fr Andrew also noted that Catholic Social Teaching was more understood and well known in schools over the parishes. Children across Catholic schools know the principles, can name them, discuss them, and recognise why they are important.

Pope Leo the 13th formed the principles, and is a hidden treasure of the Catholic Church.

### **ii) Community Lunch**

The Community Lunch generally attracts around 50 people each month, and is run by the SVP. Some attendees are parishioners, and some from the wider community. It is advertised throughout the local community, with regulars also attending other similar events in other locations in the area. Warm Spaces is also an initiative which takes place in all Churches in the area, including the Baptist Church, attracting regulars and also some families.

It was noted that some of the current Confirmation contingent are helping at these lunches as part of their journey.

### iii) Skills Audit

It has been agreed with the SLT that the next Skills Audit will take place in May 2026. This was last carried out in February 2022, and was fruitful for the parish. It will be good not only for newer parishioners to add their skills, but also to update additional skills that existing parishioners may now have.

### Parish Development Plan - Fellowship

Fr Andrew outlined how the Parish Development Plan works, and how we address this at each meeting of the JPPC. The current area for consideration is Fellowship, which is described as:

“Fellowship is community – what the New Testament calls *koinonia*, the common life. It is meaningful community where people are known and loved, called by name and supported in their call to holiness. It may include socialising, but cannot be reduced to it. Fellowship happens when parishioners are accountable to and for one another”

We discussed various thoughts:

House/Connect Groups – Fr Andrew is keen to have these in place. Although it has been discussed previously, it hasn't happened as there haven't been enough people to be able to co-ordinate it. It is a focussed time of prayer for up to 15-20 people at a time, and a good way to support parishioners. It has been discussed with the SLT.

Community Lunch – has grown and continues to be valuable to parishioners and for Fellowship.

Parishioner Profiles – these were arranged by Jane Irwin and Lizzie Quinn, but didn't take off as not many were prepared to do this.

Prayer Partner Families – Discussed that this could be arranged via GIFT, giving families other families to pray for, for example housebound parishioners, matching families who would pray for each other. Fr Andrew will bring this forward to the SLT.

Parish Mentors – For those who are new to the parish, to involve matching them with sponsors or mentors. It is important to think about and work on how we welcome new parishioners to our parishes. Previously, new parish members soup lunches have been held, and this could be an idea for future.

Updates to the current plan as follows:

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| 6 months | Men's Group – this has now been set up and will hopefully become established over the coming months.<br><br>Community Events – Good Friday Chorleywood Crossroads with hot cross buns afterwards, and in Mill End Good Friday children's workshop. |
| 5 years  | Market Outreach – through a Stall/Chorleywood Community Day – both achieved.   |

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|  | Food for new parents |
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### **Additions to the plan**

**6/12 months** – We discussed that we know that food brings people together, and that having events including this element may work. For example, we considered that once per month there could be a brunch at St. John’s (for example) where each time a different parish group are in control of organising/running it, so each group also has exposure to different parishioners who may benefit from joining the group themselves.

Corpus Christi and the other processions across the parishes could also be followed by sandwiches/cake.

**12 months** – The actions from the Love in Action plan (arranged after completion of the parish action plan from November onwards) will form part of this.

We discussed that there are often different events, but what follow up is there, and how are we looking to expand or for these to carry on. It was noted that social events had declined, but as Fr Andrew pointed out, these need people to run and arrange such events. It was also noted that Brass on the Grass has great community feel and many volunteers to help arrange.

Discussed if a social committee could be arranged for events throughout the year. Lucy outlined that she works for a charity, and considers where you are meeting people who want to be involved, and where are we taking them.

The purpose of Fellowship indicates that people want to be known and loved, and that this looks different for different people. It is important to encourage people to encounter Christ and go on their own journey to discover Christ – thereby making disciples as Jesus wanted us to do.

We are strategically looking at what we want to do, what works, and where the gaps are that we could look to address.

For example:

Those who are housebound – how to include these parishioners, aside from the Eucharistic Ministers/SVP members visiting them at home. Fr Andrew also noted that where masses are live streamed, he does mention that if a parishioner is housebound to let them know, and they will arrange a visit.

Sheila also noted that she had had a conversation with some people whilst visiting a care home, and she spoke to a lady who was Catholic. Is there any more that can be done? Fr Andrew explained that Fr Dom had contacted all local care homes, and that due to current regulations, it is not until they reach out that they can contact those people directly. Requests to see priests by residents are also not always followed through, and we are not sure that there are discussions with residents as to if they would like to see a priest. There is no way to

monitor that staff are following up with anyone who would like to see a priest, or that the details of our local priests are passed on.

We can use Catholic Social Teaching to guide us to identify areas to include in our Fellowship plan. Discussed that this is actual work and action that can be taken by parishioners.

Discussed Confessions. A guide could be produced, reminding people of how Confession works, and for people to learn about. This could be seen as a 'call to action', and is a good example of actions that we can actively take.

Sheila and Jo also discussed Catherine Robinson, of Right to Life, who sends regular newsletters and e-mails with actions that can be taken, for example, wordings that can be sent to your MP around the topic of the abortion act. This resource could be communicated to more parishioners through the parish newsletter for example, encouraging people to sign up and to take the action suggested.

There could also be sharing of other similar resources, such as petitions for assisted dying, and encouraging people to take action. Jo mentioned that this was something she could use in the planning of the next Catholic Social Teaching principle, human dignity.

Discussing the visibility of Fellowship, and how to make people aware. There are many groups across our parishes, and maybe we could encourage groups to come together and work across different themes. Could groups introduce themselves to each parish, and raise visibility of each. Again, this is a good idea but relies on people attending groups and being willing to speak. It was mentioned that at last year's Brass on the Grass, a version of this was in action where each group had their own stall, but the take up was not as high as maybe hoped. It was thought that maybe something like badges could be worth trying, which groups could wear and then this may open discussion between parishioners.

It was noted that older parishioners may struggle where groups meet in the evenings, as this is more difficult to attend than daytime events such as Faith & Friendship groups. One idea could be that people could offer to arrange lifts for people who would like to get to events in the evening, thereby also meeting new people. However, how would this be able to be done if we consider safeguarding, for example.

### **Any Other Business**

Fr Andrew thanked the new members of the JPPC. Much has changed since Fr Andrew came to our parishes, and it continues to be encouraging that more people are learning about what is going on across all of our parishes.

We finished our meeting with a prayer from Fr. Andrew.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2026 @ 7.30pm** Venue: St. John the Evangelist Church Hall, Mill End.