

St Werburgh's Parish Council Meeting

Thurs 4th December at 7.15pm

Minutes

Present: Fr David, Lyn Williams, Lal Cook, Tina Bainbridge, Stephen Tierney, Pat Floate, Marian McCarthy (chair)

Apologies: Bernice Meredith

Welcome and opening prayer: Marian welcomed everyone; Fr David lead us in prayer.

Minutes of last meeting and actions: Minutes from last meeting were accepted.

Ongoing actions from previous meetings:

- Group updates for website in process (Lyn and Pete Penson)
- Parish census timescale to be agreed with Fr David.

Christmas Masses arrangements

There was discussion about roles of welcomers/stewards and fire marshals. Welcomers/stewards need to stay at the back of church to seat late-comers (everyone should be seated) It was agreed that once the names are filled in for all these roles on the sign-up board, then all those people should be emailed with clear information about how their particular role should be carried out.

ACTION: Lyn/Marian

The FSMs all need a reminder of the importance of their role, not only at the Christmas Masses, but at all Masses

ACTION: Marian

Children's Masses booking system to be opened on the coming weekend, 6th December.

Day Chapel/Meeting Room Conversion Progress

This is now urgent and the need, as advised by the Diocese, to move as much activity as possible, such as Children's Liturgy and meetings, out of the house means that the work to convert the Day Chapel into the Meeting room needs to happen as soon as possible. It is the No 1 priority of building works projects. The 'Faculty' providing approval for the work was signed off 15 months ago on 24th September 2024, and there has been little progress since.

Fr David to write to Michael Rooney (Diocesan Property Manager) and Martyn Wilshaw (designated architect) to press for immediate progress to start. **ACTION:** Fr David

Car parking

Marian raised the matter of the H&S issue associated with the fact that when cars are parked down the side of the church the fire exit route is blocked. The H&S team have offered a proposal for marking up the tarmac with hatching or similar to indicate 'no parking areas', illustrated with photos. It is estimated that such restrictions would reduce the number of cars which could be parked down the side by three; Fr David is now parking his car in the garage which frees up one or two additional spaces, so the net result would be a loss of only a couple spaces. It was agreed that this proposal should be progressed further with quotes for the work to be obtained.

ACTION: Marian

Parish Council in New Year

Marian explained the previous arrangement for a 6-monthly rotating Chair for the PC, as her term is due to finish in February. Fr David has said that he plans to use Lent as a time for reflection on the on-going PC format. Marian agreed to continue as chair until then.

Eucharistic Ministers

At the request of a current Eucharistic Minister, the future plans for this important role were discussed. Lyn explained that after the Covid hiatus, many Eucharistic Minister had not returned to the role. Fr David said that he plans to organise meetings in the new year for both Eucharistic Ministers and Readers, with the aim of renewing and encouraging people in both these roles.

Talks and Synod:

Stephen outlined his current proposals for two talks during the first half of 2026

- February for a talk by Steve McCarthy, based around his recently published book 'The Slow Work of God: Saving Humanity from Itself'
- May time, a talk from Jeremy Black, based around Rerum Novarum

Fr David emphasised the need to ensure that any talks were pitched at a level and in such a way that they would appeal across the board and not just to those well versed in theology!

Some potential February dates will be offered to Steve McCarthy. **ACTION:** Marian

Stephen then moved on to his exploration of the next steps in the ongoing Synod process. See attached summary from him. It was agreed that taking this further should be an agenda items at the PC meeting on 26th February.

AOB

- A 'Thank You' gathering for a cuppa and mince pies, to which all volunteers will be invited, will be held on Wed 17th December at 2pm in the meeting room or church.
- The porch: some discussion about the various boards in the porch with the need to review them, their use and effectiveness
- Hospice Appeal: the total will reach £25k by the end of the year, an amazing achievement. Lyn has asked Sam, our Hospice contact, to provide an idea of what £25k could actually fund; to be included at part of the winding up of the whole appeal
- St Werburgh's Feast: Fr David proposes a 5-day celebration of St Werburgh, from 2nd to 6th February, with a specific 'event' each day; to be discussed at the next meeting
- Communication within the parish: Fr David emphasised that all communications within the parish, whether by email or WhatsApp should be done in charity

Next meetings:

Thursday 15th January at 7.15pm: meeting for St Werburgh's Feast week planning and PC

Thursday 26th February at 7.15pm

Marian McCarthy

7th December 2025

Appendix: Synod Feedback from Stephen Tierney

For Parish Council meeting December 4, 2025.

I promised to feed back to the parish council about the reading, thinking and praying I have been able to do this autumn about synod that Pope Francis launched in October 2021.

After reading the final document of November 2024, and the Pathways document of June 2025, completing the online course offered by the Santa Clara Jesuit School of Theology and listening online to a number of talks, I thought about three questions and tried to come up with a small number of pressing answers to each.

Question one: what does this Synod ask of us, the people of God in the parish of St Werburgh, Chester?

- To listen to one another to try to grasp “what the Spirit is saying to the churches”. [Rev 2:7, Synod Final Document #3].
- To continue to walk forward together in the service of the mission of all the baptised, rejoicing in all the gifts and in all of the fruits. [Synod Final Document #3, #21, #36].
- To help make sure people will find St Werburgh’s to be a place of welcome, hope and joy. [Synod Final Document #3, #7,].
- To expand the “possibilities for participation”. [Synod Final Document #9, Synod Final Document #36]. Men and women should be given greater opportunities for participation, including exploring new forms of service and ministry in a spirit of collaboration and differentiated co-responsibility. [Synod Final Document #77].
- To help us to form flourishing relationships, including in areas we might have found this less easy in the past. This includes relationships between women and men, between older and younger parishioners, among people from different cultural, racial, social and religious backgrounds, and between ordained and lay. In this way, we can build up unity. [Synod Final Document #34, #52, #53].

Question two: why do we need to act quickly?

- The General Secretariat of the Synod, with the approval of Pope Leo XIV, has formulated a timetable for the implementation phase. Implementation activities in local churches began in June 2025 and are to run until December 2026. [Pathways, page 5].
- In reports for Ad Limina visits, each bishop is to say what has happened in his diocese regarding the synod, indicating what difficulties have arisen and what the fruits have been. [Synod Final Document, accompanying note from Pope Francis].
- We are to try to find ways to encourage “all the baptised, without exception” to be “protagonists of mission”. This will take time; time is tight. [Synod Final Document, #4].
- During the process, there has been “widely expressed pain” on the part of many women, lay and consecrated. The need within the Church for healing, reconciliation and the rebuilding of trust has resounded at every stage of the synodal process. To try to address this seems to be a matter of some urgency. [Synod Final Document, #46, #52].
- The vision of a synodal Church will only be credible if we can achieve some concrete changes in the short term. [Synod Final Document, #94].

Question three: how might we respond?

- Bishops' conferences have been asked to allocate people and resources to help local churches move forward. If any of these resources are available to us, we should use them to the full. [Synod Final Document, #9].
- If we need to, we could try to teach ourselves to use the tool that the documents call 'conversation in the spirit'. Lots of delegates at the Rome sessions have spoken of having reservations about this, only to say later that they experienced "joy, awe and gratitude". They refer to it as a path towards renewal; they have seen a strong link between 'conversation' and 'conversion'. Why wouldn't this happen for us too? [Synod Final Document, #7, #10, #45].
- Members of the parish council could learn to be facilitators for these conversations. We have regular opportunities to consult with Fr David and with each other on initiatives and decisions. We are called to provide as much opportunity as possible for others to do the same. This could tie in with an idea Fr David mentioned in October, of holding a listening exercise for the people of the parish to say what their priorities or concerns are. Parish council members would be welcome to come to our house (93, Black Diamond Park, CH1 3EW) one day in the new year to see if we can make it work. [Synod Final Document, #86].
- We can view all the fruits of our renewal programme since covid-19 through the lens of the Synodal path. The fruits are many, as we have seen throughout our 150th celebrations. [Synod Final Document, #7]

Stephen Tierney

6th December 2025