

Parish of St. Thomas of Hereford and St. Bede the Venerable

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING

At: St Thomas's Church, Weobley

On: Monday 21st September 2026 at 7pm

Attendees:

Parish Council Members:

Fr. Simon McGurk – President

Tricia Carter – Chair

Frank McNally – Vice Chair

Charles de Rohan

Pat Roberts

Julie Gander - Secretary

1. Opening Prayer - Fr. Simon McGurk

2. Welcome & Apologies – Tricia Carter

Apologies: Patricia Stuart, Sarah Nicols

3. Minutes of last meeting and Matters Arising – Tricia Carter

- All members asked if they had anything to comment on in the AGM minutes.
- No points to add.

4. Parish Priest Report – Fr. Simon McGurk

Sacraments

- Baptisms – 1 (Martyn Price of Staunton-on-Wye on 26th July)
- First Holy Communion – 1 (Martyn Price of Staunton-on-Wye on 26th July)

General

- On Sunday 28th June the people of Weobley & Churches Together said goodbye to Vicar Philip Harvey & his wife Penny.
- On Saturday & Sunday 13th/14th July the parish had illuminating talks about the work of CAFOD from local representative Therese Warwick & field worker Harriet Cowley.
- On Wednesday 22nd July First 'Prayer for Ourselves', instigated by Rosemary Williams
- On Tuesday 18th August the Deanery Clergy meeting was held.
- This month we lost our dear Keith & Philomena who were finding the drive from Rhosgoch too difficult. The parish are grateful for all they have done for both churches.
- On Sunday 6th September the parish held its annual barbecue which had to be held indoors due to the inclement weather. It was a great success.
- On Wednesday 16th September there was a Churches Together meeting in Kington.
- Meanwhile, the garden of Remembrance is going ahead ably led by Charles

5. Finance Report – Charles de Rohan

- Charles gave the committee the preliminary accounts for the first 8 months of 2026. There is a surplus of funds in our day-to-day account which is controlled by Joanna. This amounts to £19,914 – it was noted that £18,000 is due to three generous donations to the parish from two parishioners.

- We have yet to receive the final accounts from Belmont so Charles took figures from the 2025 accounts and pro-rated them as a guide to our historical performance. It is evident that daily costs are increasing every year, the parish are trying to make economies where it can.

Information from meeting between Charles & Graham Neal, the Bursar of Belmont on 28th August:

- **New Accounting System** – Aim had been for this to commence beginning of 2026, but it has been delayed. Two systems are being assessed by Graham & the Treasurer of Belmont. They are Xero & the bespoke Archdiocese system. Aim for decision to be made in next 3 months.
- **Clarity on Parish's Financial State** – historically we can only take what is reported annually in the Belmont General Fund. This makes it difficult to understand what can be afforded & what can be requested. All large expenditure items can be submitted to the trustees for consideration. The parish is part of the overall Belmont Mission Trust – this means we do not have complete control over what we can and cannot do. But it also means we have a cushion over significant unexpected costs.
- **Belmont Abbey Mission Trust Accounts** – like us they follow January-December calendar, however the final 2025 statements will only be available after 21st September. Graham suggested waiting until October to search for them. These accounts will provide each parish's finances in detail.
- **2025 Audit & Accounting Books** – audit completed at end of August. Next year the aim is to have these accounts completed & ready before Parish AGM's. It may be advisable to have AGM later in the year. There were a few very minor queries over the 2025 transactions all processed by Joanna. **Charles thanked Joanna for her diligence.**
- **Bank Accounts** – Currently we have two bank accounts, work is under way across all parishes to streamline the excessive bureaucracy. More information to follow and will be reported at a later date.
- **Robin Williams Legacy** – In July 2026 this started its progress through the courts - the judges verdict is awaited.
- **Gift Aid** – A large claim has now been submitted for past years and will be allocated appropriately once received. The total claim is £170,000 which would mean a rebate of £34,000 for the Trust. Gift Aid forms not yet been completed from donations mentioned above of two practitioners.

Action: Fr. Simon to get forms completed by family members.

- Belmont stated that we are lucky to have a Parish Priest. We will in the future need to pay a pension in retirement of clergy. Currently no Pension Plans in place.

6. Garden of Remembrance - Charles de Rohan

- The Trustees meeting in September was well timed as a letter was received from Abbot Brendan on September 15th confirming that the Planning of the Remembrance Garden had been approved by the Trustees.
- There is no need to apply to the council for planning permission.
- Charles has completed all the required paperwork – an application for permission to carry out works to a listed Ecclesiastical Building.
- Once approved Cary Goode will complete the work, using sub-contractors. She will aim to use local companies to provide all building materials and plants needed.
- Decisions need to be made once Remembrance Garden works are under way.

These will include

- ensuring all plots are the same size, an upfront payment then a possible charge for general upkeep.
- Rules on how each plot needs to be maintained and specifications on size of memorial.
- Our thanks to Charles for his hard work on completing forms so far.

7. Allotment Society & annual rent – Tricia Carter

- This was looked into by Andy Palfreman and results shared in an email. The suggestions Andy made are to increase the rent from £500 pa (agreed 5 years ago) to £700 pa, this would then be reviewed every 2 years rather than the previous 5 year review.
- Currently each allotment holder pays £50 per annum meaning the total income equates to £1000.00. Of this £500 is paid to the parish and £500 is retained by the Allotment Society to meet their running costs.
- It is known that the Allotment Society received several significant set up grants which have not been spent.
- Currently each Allotment plot owner pays the parish £25 and the Allotment Society £25, this equates to 50p a week to each plot holder.
- It is suggested that the rent is raised to £700.00 – this means each allotment holder will pay £70 per annum. £35.00 to the Parish and £35.00 to the Allotment Society.
- The increase to the plot holders would be an increase of 20p per week to 70p, which is an increase of 20p over five years.
- It was confirmed that the Allotment Society have access to water.
- The committee all agreed to this.
- Andy requested a letter to confirm this increase. Charles to send draft letter to Tricia.

Action: - Tricia to do & send letter

8. Safeguarding Report – Julie Gander for Camilla Bengough

- Report sent by our new Safeguarding Officer Camilla Bengough, who apologised for not being able to attend meeting.
- Updated DBS information has been received from the Archdiocesan Safeguarding Team. On reviewing the current list that require a DBS check one member of the community is due to be updated.
- By way of clarification the following roles now require a DBS – Adult Altar Servers (18+), Altar Server Chaperone, Sacristan, EM visiting the housebound, Children's Liturgy, Children's Catechists (FHC & Confirmation), SVP, Parish visitors to housebound & sick, Lift providers to parishioners, PSR's, clergy, Bereavement Support volunteers and Youth group workers.
- **Safeguarding Cafes** – the Archdiocese also welcomes parishioners to monthly Safeguarding café sessions across the diocese take place on the fourth Thursday of each month. Posters will be available on Notice Board and parishes have been asked to add to newsletter.

Action: Fr. Simon to add to future newsletters

- **Heartstart** – Camilla attended a training session on 8th September comprising of CPR & AED Defibrillator practical training. If anyone on the committee is interested in joining the course it is highly recommended and free (they just ask for a donation).
- To see when next training sessions are and open it to the parish.
- **Joanna Helme, retiring Safeguarding Officer** – Camilla would like to thank Joanna for all her service to the responsibility of Safeguarding and keeping our parish up to date & informed over many years.

Action: Camilla to have a meeting with Fr. Simon to discuss Safeguarding matters before next PPC meeting

9. Churches Together in Kington – Pat Roberts

- There have been 2 meetings of Kington Churches Together since our last PPC meeting. At the AGM it was discussed whether they would continue to meet. As it is only the RC & Anglican churches involved, it was felt important to continue to work together.

It was decided to work on three main activities

- Christmas Carols at Oxford Barns
- The Walk of Witness ending with a short service at Kington Court.
- Food Bank – now have a new Chairman, Rev Phillipa Wright the curate at St Mary's & a new Treasurer Michael Horne. The Food Bank is temporarily at St. Mary's Parish Hall. This may become a permanent home, dependant on some alterations that would be required.
- It is planned to have Advent Windows in the town, various shops & individuals have been approached, the Rev Paul Roberts is leading this.
- The plan is that day by day throughout Advent participants are given a Bible verse, part of the Nativity Story and are invited to create a display in their window which will also contain the relevant bible verse. Those who do not wish to design a picture but are happy for their window to be used can be teamed up with local artists who live out of town. The windows will be lit up on the day they are given, day by day more lights will go on until Christmas Eve when there will be 24 windows lit up telling the Christmas Story. There will be a map of the town showing where all the windows are.

Churches together in Weobley – Fr. Simon

- Fr. Simon asked for it to be noted that Churches in Weobley continue to work well together, currently working towards Harvest Festival Celebrations.

10. Grounds & General Maintenance at St. Thomas's – Tricia Carter

- **Concerns were raised and identified in an email to everyone from Patricia.**

Grounds & General Maintenance

- Concern with regard to general up keep of grounds and grass around the church.
- Gardener is supposed to come every three weeks but think it is more likely that it happens monthly. We could possibly consider asking for volunteers to help tidy up area in early spring. This could include cleaning the statue and power washing the drive. And concentrating on all areas around the church.
- Parishioners could be asked to volunteer for 30-60 minutes to tidy up all areas via a notice in the news bulletin.
- The front entrance is more welcoming since Tricia put two planters either side of church door.
- Fr. Simon acknowledged the carport is need of repair and updating.

Flower Room & Kitchen

- Request to give these areas a refresh and new flooring – to see what we can do to improve these areas.

The Parish Room

- It was felt that this area was fine for the time being.

Pat brought up concerns about the maintenance at St. Bede's

- The Church needs redecorating and also H&S had concerns with windows, so this needs addressing.

Action:- Pat & Andy to do a five year plan of what is required at the church.

- We will discuss both churches in regard of maintenance concerns at our next meeting.

- Also discussed was the possibility of us taking over St. Bede's from the Archdiocese . We have paid for all outgoings over last 20 years. It was expressed could we buy the church for a peppercorn price. We need to give this some thought.

11. Any Other Business – All

- Fr. Simon reported all Fire alarms have been checked.
- Fr. Simon has met Graham Neal feels he will be a real asset to Belmont.
- The signage at the front of St. Thomas's is still showing incorrect time for Sunday Mass. The company who used to do this have not been responding to our telephone calls & emails. We may need to consider going with a different company.

Action: Fr. Simon to contact business again if no response to find an alternative company.

- The frame surrounding Kington Outdoor Board also needs replacing.
- Louise Wright has stepped down as Chair of Belmont Abbey Parish Pastoral Council, she continues as Chair of the Deanery Parish Advisory Council.
- Abbot Brendan enjoyed the Parish BBQ said we have a lovely parish.
- Deanery Meeting is next week, minutes will be sent out to all parishioners. The meeting will be held at Most Holy Trinity Church Ledbury.
- Fr. Simon stated that as a group of priests we are all doing different things within the Belmont parishes.

12. Date of Next Meeting – Tricia Carter

- St. Bede's, Kington on Monday 7th December 2026 at 7pm.

13. Closing Prayer – Fr. Simon Mc Gurk