**Minutes of the Walking Together Team meeting**
**Thursday 7th May 2026 at 7.30pm at Our Lady's**

**Present:** Paul Hayden/PH (Chair), Mary Holden/MH, Jonathan Holden/JH, Liz Mottram/LM, Anne Elson/AE, Canon David Hartley
**Apologies:** Fr Stephen Day, Kate Tennyson.

1. PH chaired the meeting, which began with the Synod prayer, followed by a reading from the Gospel of John.

2. **Matters arising from the minutes of 13th January Team meeting**

Matters arising item 4a: St Peter's post-it notes have been processed and the outcomes published.
Our Lady's post-it note analysis was shared in February Extra newsletter.
Matters arising item 4d: no further guidance has been received from Canon Fitzpatrick since the exchange in January with JH.

There are plans for a Catholic Leamington parish mission, on which the CPC will be updated by Fr S at their next meeting in a week's time.

3. **Updates from work of Combined Topics group**

LM reported on the January meeting and on developments through OL Vision.

The Combined Groups discussed the plans of the Outreach Group since the death of Peter Dimambro. Actions would move away from home visits towards making parishioners welcome, engaging them in parish activities, and developing and updating the welcome leaflets (eg. "Why Come Back?). MH mentioned her previous work with families of Special Needs children, and how home visits had been of such value.

MH wondered what more could be done with the welcoming guidelines, previously issued to welcomers in the 3 parishes. She felt that more could be done to develop the role. A discussion ensued over the current practice and expectations of the role, and whether it could be extended to contact after Mass.

Works such as Outreach and Welcoming were raised at the inaugural meeting of the OL Vision and Action Group tasked with "Parish Life and Mission." Liaison between OL Vision and these existing team members should allow dovetailing of activities and mutual support.

Some discussion of Outreach ensued, and how it needed to extend outside the parish.

At a later point in the meeting, an example of outreach by a Lillington mental health hub, whose leader had made links with Our Lady's, was raised by MH in the context of our parishes needing to open up more to the wider community. MH expressed a wish to be involved in outreach.

The appeals to SPAN funds by local Social Services was also mentioned.

4. **Updates on reports from international Study Groups arising from the Synod**

These reports are filed on the Synod page of the Catholic Leamington website, which is updated regularly by PH.

Some comments were shared on reports from Groups 2, 3, 5, 9.

**Group 2: Listening to the Cry of the Poor**

- The needs of the poor and the needs of the earth are inseparable.
- Increasing engagement with and representation of poor and marginalised people on parish/diocesan bodies is recommended.
- We should be listening to and encountering people where they are – learning from their direct experience.

**Group 3: Mission in the Digital Environment**

- Digital ministry (including social media) is with us – worshipping communities are not restricted to geographical constraints.
- Canon David said that some materials had been transmitted by St Joseph's, but the constant effort needed to maintain such resources is likely to be too much for a single parish to sustain.

**Group 5: Participation of women in the life and leadership of the Church**

Much has been said in previous Church documents promoting the role of women. Yet, much remains to be done for the promotion of the vocation of women in the Church.

**Group 9: Shared discernment of controversial doctrinal, pastoral and ethical issues**

This report examines synodal methodologies for addressing issues, which it understands as "emerging" from complex real-life situations rather than "controversial issues" requiring a problem-solving approach. It sees the doctrinal, pastoral and ethical aspects of these issues as essentially interrelated, requiring the Church to listen deeply to – and learn what is good in – lived experience, rather than develop abstract principles and then try to apply them to the immense variety of people's lives. The report offers two illustrative case studies of this holistic approach: attitudes to same sex attraction, and active non-violence in war situations. The "paradigm shift" implied is not a break with tradition but a return to the Gospel's original dynamism.

These reports are not easy reading, **and it was suggested that a study group might work on them to "extract the pith" of their meaning to share with others in catholic Leamington or the Deanery.**

5. **Consideration of Synodality and Participatory Bodies** (Para 103-108 of Final Document)

This item stems from a question posed by Canon David: how in practice one could move towards having such bodies at pastoral area level or diocese, and how one might decide who would sit on them...
*"104. A synodal Church is based upon the existence, efficiency and effective vitality of these participatory bodies, not on the merely nominal existence of them."*
*"105. Furthermore, the structure and operations of these bodies need to be addressed. It is necessary to start by adopting a synodal working method. Conversation in the Spirit, after appropriate adaptation, may constitute a reference point. Particular attention should be given to the way members are selected."*

The main 'participatory bodies' (pastoral councils and finance committees) have long been recognized in Canon Law and exist in Catholic Leamington. The Synod Final Document and "Pathways for Implementation" recommend that they be more widely established including at parish level, and become key actors in becoming a synodal Church at local level.
JH referred to a video from the School for Synodality's 'On-line Book Club' on Conversion of Processes which gives an example from the Philippines of a surprising approach to setting up a pastoral council.

JH has developed a PowerPoint presentation to deliver the idea of synodality to groups of people who have not been able to study the subject fully. Could this be used to help promote the synodal approach? Something Greater (comprising limited numbers from the Cluster involved in catechesis or lay ministry) might be receptive to the synodality presentation. They had already had an online session with Fr. Matthew Nunes from the Liverpool Archdiocese, who is a director of the School for Synodality. Might it also be of interest to the Deanery Pastoral Forum, or to members of our parish CPC and Finance Committee?

There was wider discussion on other groups that Canon David is involved with and aware of; this is in the context of clusters, deaneries, pastoral areas and preparing for future changes, outside the scope of this meeting.

6. **Where next for the Walking Together Team?**

Contributions were invited from around the table.

- "Don't give up!"
- Participatory bodies make decisions. Synodal teams are animators, not decision-making bodies – a separate function.
- The groundwork done by the Walking Together team in 2023, before the present CPC and Finance Committee were constituted is paying off in areas of being more welcoming and inclusive, deepening faith, and co-responsibility. But there is a perception in some quarters that the Walking Together team and these participatory bodies are rivals. As JH tried to explain at the January meeting, the 'Pathways for Implementation' document makes clear that their roles should be quite different: in Canon Law the participatory bodies at parish level are there to advise and give practical help to the Parish Priest in the day-to-day running of the parish as it achieves the conversion to being part of a synodal Church; the synodal ("Walking Together") team is there to help them do it in a synodal way and to animate the parish in this conversion to synodality. In this context JH hoped his presentation might be of interest and use to members of the CPC and Finance Committee and other interested parishioners, and possibly (if Canon David thought it appropriate) to their equivalents in other parishes.
- Keep abreast of wider developments, as in item 4, by PH's continued work on Synod page of website.
- Outreach identified as an area for development.

**Date and location of next meeting**: 7:30pm Thursday 17th September at OL.

The meeting closed at 9pm with a prayer and blessing from Canon David.