

Minutes of the Walking Together Team meeting
Thursday 18th September 2025 7.30pm in Our Lady's Church Hall

Present: Jonathan & Mary Holden, Jenny Armstrong, Anne Elson, Margaret Dimambro, Liz Mottram, Fr Stephen Day.

Apologies: Canon David, Deacon Paul, Paul Hayden.

1. Jonathan chaired the meeting, which began with the Synod prayer, followed by the reading of Matthew 9: 36-38.
2. **Matters arising from the minutes of 15th May Team meeting (overlapping with Combined Groups meeting)**
 - A suggestion to adopt the spiritual conversation method at the St Peter's and Our Lady's AGM on 1st June was not taken up as the meeting did not break into smaller groups.
 - "Ecumenism should be raised as a discussion item for the Synod Team": this has been put to the CPC as one of the top 10 priorities by the Combined Groups
 - "Walking Together group to submit to CPC a summary report after completing consideration of the 100 actions in the Catholic Leamington 2nd Synod Report with the 10 top priorities:" action completed by Combined Groups.
 - "Buildings: Mary raised her concerns again about wheelchair access and disabled toilet access when prioritising our building concerns." This is among the top 10 priorities submitted to CPC. The current audit of disability provision will raise issues such as wheelchair access.
3. **Progress report on work of Combined Topic Groups**

The minutes of 22nd May were considered.
The Lenten study series on the Mass was deemed successful.
The meeting had assessed the long list of actions from the Phase 2 report and decided on 10 points to send to the CPC as top priorities.
4. **Review the current state and possible next steps of implementation in Catholic Leamington of the Synod final document**

Jonathan recommended the School For Synodality website for informative YouTube videos on each section of this document: <https://www.schoolforsynodality.org.uk/our-resources/final-document-book-club-2025>

Introduction to the document - quotation

"The whole people of God is an agent of the proclamation of the Gospel. Every baptised person is called to be a protagonist of mission, since we are all missionary disciples."

The whole process requires repentance and conversion: of relationships, of processes and of bonds.

4a Conversion of relationships

The meeting considered *relationships from a parish perspective with the local community, the poor and disadvantaged, the disabled, with those on the margins of our Church and with children*. There was a lengthy discussion including the following (no attempt here to lay out arguments).

- How well do we know or reach out to our fellow parishioners at Mass? We would like to do better. "Welcoming" has many facets.
- There may be much individual engagement with vulnerable groups by parishioners through groups not linked to the parish. What we had in the Saturday Friendship Group has gone with the withdrawal of Salvation Army support. We have Pastimes, SVP at Christmas. Others spring to mind, but were not mentioned.
- There is evident appreciation for what goes on at Our Lady's at Sunday Mass and for the sense of community there, as shown by the post-it notes. Also, a great sense of community at the gathering

after mid-week Mass. OL post-it notes have been processed, with the outcomes yet to be shared. St Peter's post-it notes are still at processing stage.

- Several comments emphasised the need to listen to various groups, including children.

4b Conversion of processes

Decision making structures and processes, transparency, accountability and evaluation at parish, cluster, deanery and diocesan levels.

Various points of view, which did not always concur, were aired.

Eg. how can "Conversation in the Spirit" be brought into various decision-making processes, such as those going on in the CPC?

Anne, a member of the CPC observed that CPC meetings and finance meetings were very different from the type of meetings where "Conversation in the Spirit" has been, and is being, used effectively.

The example of the AGM was cited as an occasion on which a decision (to close Dormer Conference Centre) was reversed as a result of listening to other avenues of action presented at that meeting.

Are people higher in Church structures listening attentively to those lower down better in Britain and Europe than in the Church on other continents? Disagreement here. However, the need to improve things to achieve co-responsibility was not disputed.

Fr Stephen reported that the CPC had discussed the topic of communication at their meeting the previous evening and were "vexed" by it; the CPC is already trying to be as open as possible and receptive to ideas.

Q: Who are our Deanery reps?

Martin Foley and Ira Winter

Q: Do we know whether the things they say on behalf of St Peter's and Our Lady's are adequately reported back to us the parishioners?

Minutes of the meetings are posted on the deanery website

<https://banburyandwarwick-catholicdeanery.org.uk/deanery-pastoral-council-dpc>

Q: Should the invitation to speak to any member of the CPC in the weekly bulletin be augmented with reference to the local Cluster and Deanery?

Q: Are the members of the CPC made sufficiently recognisable? More pictures needed, such as on the noticeboard at St Peter's.

Fr Stephen said that it is important to note that the Deanery Forum and the Cluster Forum are not decision-making bodies. They function as places for consultation: parishioners and clergy to meet and get to know each other across parish boundaries, to share good ideas and practice, to promote working together (such as catechetical provision and acts of witness) and to hear of joys or concerns, challenges and successes in parish life.

The Diocese has instituted structural layers, these being:

- The Deanery Meeting of clergy, chaired by Canon David
- The Deanery Forum for clergy and laity
- Local clusters of parishes with both clergy and lay reps
- CPCs at parish level

Canon David had communicated to the Team by email in advance of this meeting. He cited various things to celebrate already along the road to conversion of process and of bonds:

- Walking Together course on the Mass, Lent 2025,
- Diocesan course "Something Greater", now underway for the Cluster (and beyond) in Warwick
- Good cooperation between our local parishes and SVP, Youth Group

He also said this:

“For St Joseph’s, I would like to think that we can begin again with an invitation to parishioners to have “Conversation in the Spirit” and engage a lot more people than have been so far, and we might be asking for help with this. It is one area of our part in Catholic Leamington which I would like to air and consult on in our AGM in early October.” Jonathan was encouraged by this.

In conclusion, it was felt that the views of the entire community should feed into the processes of decision making. The means of doing that through the structures in place is something to work on.

4c Conversion of bonds

Fluidity of parish boundaries, identification and exchange of “gifts” between parishes within our cluster or at a wider level, ecumenical outreach.

Some discussion of what goes on within the local cluster of parishes took place. Use of the newsletter Extra, sharing of skills, ideas and services were mentioned. Clusters may offer mutual support and provide a means of networking between local parishes. “Come and See” is an example of a group operating across the cluster.

The post-it notes were mentioned as a way of ascertaining parishioners’ individual gifts. A previous drive for volunteers was made through Walking Together through the issuing of green forms (with Margaret D). It had led to a few more volunteers being brought into action.

Fr Stephen was questioned on the extent of live-stream viewing. A typical recent audience numbered 62.

Liz mentioned the newly formed Vision Action Group at Our Lady’s, where volunteers are forming working groups to fulfil needs in working towards the parish vision, currently dominated by the need to fix the roof.

4d Formation for missionary discipleship through Synodality

Lifelong catechesis, use of synodal methods in formation, collaboration between parishes and other Christians in learning about faith and mission.

Something Greater (Diocesan programme) already mentioned; this is a starter course for potential and existing catechists to be better equipped for catechesis.

Time was limited for discussion of 4d and quickly moved on to how we get on with

Implementation phase of the Synod 2025-2028.

We wait for Canon Paul Fitzpatrick to deliver further Diocesan guidance. The Diocese has only laid out the structures, described in 4b above.

Fr Stephen was keen to emphasise that we are already doing things. As an example of involving people from different ethnic backgrounds, he listed several ministries being carried out at St Peter’s by people of diverse ethnicity. More young adults are attending St Peter’s through Gabriel’s efforts.

In conclusion

Jonathan emphasised the importance of taking stock and seeking discernment in what to do next, suggesting another programme of meetings using “Conversation in the Spirit.” We should distinguish the role of synodal teams on the one hand from that of diocesan, deanery and parish councils or fora and finance committees on the other.

Others suggested that the addition of that programme to a burgeoning number of working groups and activities would over-burden those who are already deeply involved.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm with a blessing from Fr Stephen.

The next meeting will be Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 7.30pm. Venue tbc