



Sacred Heart Wimbledon Parish Pastoral Council

Minutes of PPC Meeting
Thursday 5 March 2026 at 8pm

Members in attendance

The PPC members present were Rob Hitchcock (*Acting Chair, Faith Minister*), Canon David Gibbons (*Parish Priest*), Fr Peter Mudu Frank, Sr Dorothy Perrott, Jerric Chong (*PPC Secretary*), Maria Christopher, Teresa Engley, Graham Kennedy, Jude Mariadoss and Peter Taylor.

David Hurst attended as an observer.

1. Welcome and opening prayer

The PPC met at 8:03pm in the Youth Room.

Rob, acting as Chair, opened the meeting with the Lord's Prayer.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from William Morris (*Chair*), Fr Edwin Raj, Deacon Julian Burling, Nina Beltran, Annette Campbell Black, Jose Garibaldi, Henry Gates and Chris Woodward.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The draft minutes of the previous PPC meeting, held on Thursday 5 February 2026, were accepted as an accurate record (subject to one minor amendment).

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Called to Bear Fruit: Report on the Consultation (2025)

This area is being overseen by Henry. A further plea was made to fill out his questionnaire in advance of the PPC mini-retreat on 21 March. Henry has not yet spoken to Peter. Henry will present the analysis of the results at the mini-retreat.

Peter remarked on two points from the report that stood out to him:

1. The first point was a call for inter-parish cooperation. Although it is not common to be invited to neighbouring parishes' events, and not much happens as a deanery, Canon David's Lenten talks have had attendees from other parishes. The Sacred Heart parish being larger than average, we could have events to which people from other parishes might want to attend, but there might be a sensitivity that smaller parishes may feel 'taken over' by the bigger parish. It could be possible to help neighbouring parishes set up groups, e.g. bereavement groups, if needed.
2. The second point was the focus on youth, and the existence of the Southwark Catholic Youth Service, in which the archdiocese has been 'investing greatly'. This programme is in its infancy; the Archbishop has commissioned individuals who go round the archdiocese to give days. They have done things in Richard Challoner School, and it might be possible for a group from Wimbledon to go and attend an event. Canon David noted that a small group of young people from Wimbledon have previously gone to diocesan events. Jude remarked that there was an event happening in Crawley happening in a couple of weeks for 10- to 14-year-olds.

Rob is working with the chaplains of Wimbledon College and Ursuline High School as regards joined-up thinking from a youth perspective, as they are active both in a school setting and a parish setting. There are sensitivities with other parishes on the sacramental front, e.g. candidates for Holy Communion going to Sacred Heart rather than their home parishes, so there is a need to work more collaboratively across the deanery. Peter remarked that young people are more likely to go an event if their friends go as well, and it may be that some parishes are simply not big enough to support a vibrant confirmation group. Rob confirmed that there are parishes in the deanery that are happy to send their candidates to a nearby, better resourced parish. Flame, the Catholic youth conference, is taking place next spring in Wembley; it could be possible for a group from across the deanery to attend collaboratively.

Canon David remarked that the shape of the archdiocese stretches 'from Ham to Sandwich'. Some deaneries do have a single confirmation programme, which is practical only if there are small numbers. This was looked at the deanery meeting; an issue is that parishes conduct confirmation at different times of year and ages. It was agreed that the document be further discussed at the mini-retreat.

The agenda for the mini-retreat was discussed. Canon David said that he would start with thoughts on what the parish council should look like, followed by Henry's Some

Definite Service questionnaire, and then Called to Bear Fruit. The parish plan, which has been drafted and submitted, should be the starting point. Rob agreed to obtain a copy of the parish plan and circulate it before the mini-retreat. Key challenges and opportunities for the parish can be decided based on responses to Henry's questionnaire. Rob suggested that having small-group 'synodal conversations' at the mini-retreat might be good strategy for the day. Instead of Called to Bear Fruit's 15 identified action points, Henry's analysis should be a better focus to inform discussions.

Maria opined that Called to Bear Fruit also asks for a change of strategy and culture to a mission-centred longer-term plan. Sister Dorothy remarked that the conversation is vast, and subsequent PPC discussions could perhaps be focused with one or two areas per meeting. Sub-groups and synodal conversations with the foundation of the analysis to frame conversations. The parish plan, which as the archdiocese says is a live, working document, can be re-evaluated.

6. Pastoral care (including update on the Be Well Hub)

Graham presented his report on the parish Be Well Hub, which is starting to be brought to life. Fourteen parish staff and volunteers have been trained. There have been good outcomes emerging from conversations with Be Well champions. Training the clergy and Thelma has been particularly beneficial; Fr Peter related that signposting in the confessional can help those penitents who leave confession feeling unfulfilled, perhaps burdened with heavy sins or addiction. The Be Well Hub could be a place for priests to help people overcome their challenges in a more suitable setting. Graham noted that the confidential environment of the confessional gives them an opportunity to talk about such things and be accordingly referred to the Be Well Hub, and is keen that the parish, the archdiocese and the wider church build on it further.

Graham remarked that it would be ideal for Canon David to be Be Well trained. He plans to meet with Canon David, Fr Edwin, Fr David and Anthony Lee to discuss scenario guidelines, and produce a small signposting document to be provided to anyone who might need help. Graham further raised the possibility of a promoting the Be Well Hub's work during the parish feast day (Sunday 14 June). Canon David remarked that it would be unfeasible to have stalls advertising all the parish groups, except in a way that complements the garden-party nature of the feast day. The PPC members agreed that they were happy with the way in which the Be Well Hub is proceeding.

The arrangement of the garden party was further discussed. Canon David said that previous attempts to persuade the Scouts to organise a game at the garden party had been unsuccessful; games would be helpful to keep people at the party.

David H remarked that a parish fair run eight years ago as part of newcomers' day was very helpful equally for parish groups as for newcomers, as the stallholders could find out about each other's groups.

Peter suggested that the next new parishioners' welcome event (in September) could be combined with a fair with groups advertising at stalls – it was remarked that not all groups might want to advertise in this way. Canon David remarked that some parishes organise a event like this at Pentecost, but this would be infeasible given that we have six Sunday masses. Canon David also suggested that welcome events for new parishioners be held twice a year.

7. Evangelization

Jude reported that he attended a diocesan programme, Sparks of Light, a couple of weeks ago. This event has been run in a couple of parish and opens the church to people in general who walk through to be invited in for adoration with music. This may be an opportunity to organise an event with other parishes in the deanery.

Jude's group with parents of confirmation candidates is going well; the regular parents appreciate it.

8. Catechesis

Following on from Jude's point, Rob remarked that parent formation for confirmation is something new being trialled this year. This seems to be going well; one parent sent a long email to Rob conveying how positive the sessions have been.

Children for FHC formation received confession for the first time last Saturday. Rob is also working with a small group of boys at Wimbledon College going through formation and is fixing dates for them to receive the sacraments. Things are going in the right direction, but more help is needed, either with sacramental formation or the parish youth group. This could be advertised via word of mouth; the parish newsletter may not be the most efficient way to recruit people. There are now former confirmands who attend as young leaders, facilitating conversations and sharing experiences of being 'on the other side'.

Canon David remarked that young people are drawn by social media and vibrant websites, coming from afield beyond the parish.

Fr Peter stated that young children coming for first confessions could be better prepared and drilled (e.g. with scripts).

Rob has about 90 to 95 candidates for first Holy Communion, and about 80 for confirmation. There is a team of ten catechists for Communion, and five for confirmation; more manpower is therefore needed to help reduce group sizes.

The question of whether other parishes think that we poach their candidates was raised again. Canon David responded that the answer was yes and no; some candidates want to do it with their friends, and some parish priests send candidates to us. Rob observed that we do not lose all the children after the sacraments – this is

creditable to the parish as a whole, with families taking an active decision to continue attending a strong community rooted in its values.

9. Adult formation

Canon David's first Lenten talk this week, on St Bede, attracted 60 or more attendees; the talk is on the parish website.

Nina ran the first meeting of her discussion group based around *Ambassadors for Christ* this week. The group was not large (12 to 15), but had a good discussion. The attendees were not just regulars, but included people who may be making an extra effort for Lent.

Fr Peter suggested that positive comments or quotes from attendees could be published in the newsletter to advertise these events.

10. Matters from the Parish Priest

Can David has asked David H to collate an annual report to summarise the year 2025 in the parish. David H will ask groups to send him a summary of the past year. This report will replace *Edgeways* for April.

David H reported that he and Deacon Julian attended the meeting of governors of Sacred Heart School last Friday. The school has voted to join the Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust, which currently has 13 members and five more thinking about joining. Membership of the trust should provide further opportunities for staff CPD.

David H further reported that Richard Smart – who is affiliated with the Salvation Army and a Blue Badge guide for Central London – is organising a Merton interfaith walk on Saturday 6 June, and will come to our church for the first time. Richard's idea is to invite people to train as White Badge guides for the church, and he has a programme (comprising three seminars and test) to train people to give 20-minute tours of the church. ChurchExplorer could be a way of both hosting self-guided tours and encouraging more donations. A recruitment advert will be placed in the newsletter, explaining the time and monetary commitment (probably £25, means-tested) for training as White Badge guides. Sarah Norville, the headteacher of Sacred Heart School, has agreed to train youth leaders (11-year-olds) to offer tours to younger children.

David H further reported that the Merton Citizens assembly has been moved to Monday 27 April, at 6pm at Wimbledon College. Councillor Ross Garrod, the leader of Merton Council, will be in attendance. This assembly will be in advance of the local elections on Thursday 7 May and is an opportunity to challenge decision-makers on four particular issues: housing, refugees, the living wage, and mental health.

11. Parish website

Discussion on this item was deferred to the next meeting.

12. AOB

Teresa sends apologies for the meeting on 7 May as she will be involved in the local elections.

13. Closing prayer and date of the next meeting

Rob led the PPC members in the Gloria Patri, and Canon David imparted his blessing.

The PPC adjourned at 9:30pm until Saturday 21 March at 10am for the mini-retreat. The next PPC meeting will take place on Thursday 7 May at 8pm in the Lounge.

Forthcoming meetings and events

- **Saturday 21 March 2026 at 10am** – PPC mini-retreat
- *No PPC meeting in April 2026*
- **Thursday 7 May 2026 at 8pm** – PPC meeting (Lounge)
- **Thursday 4 June 2026 at 8pm** – PPC meeting (Lounge)
- **Thursday 2 July 2026 at 8pm** – PPC meeting (Lounge)
- *No PPC meeting in August 2026*
- **Thursday 3 September 2026 at 8pm** – PPC meeting (Lounge)
- **Thursday 1 October 2026 at 8pm** – PPC meeting (Lounge)
- **Thursday 5 November 2026 at 8pm** – PPC meeting (Lounge)
- **Thursday 3 December 2026 at 8pm** – PPC meeting (Lounge)