

Parish AGM Meeting 13 th September 2025 12 noon	
Present:	Core Team: Sarah Cooper (SC), Kevin Rourke (KR), Canon Tim Madeley (CTM), Claire Fecher (Fe), Diane Fievez (DF) & Parish Members Minutes Secretary: Denise Bass (DB)
1.	Opening Prayer
2.	Apologies: Claudine Maude, Simon Matthews & a number of parishioners
3.	Minutes of the last AGM: The minutes of last year's AGM were approved. KR mentioned a matter arising from those minutes which was an attempt at St. Gabriel's to provide a longer period of silence during Communion. This has been achieved.
4.	Welcome & Thanks: KR welcomed and thanked everyone present at the AGM. He thanked all those who toil behind the scenes to make our parish work. He especially thanked the following in no particular order and apologised if he missed anyone out: • The catering teams who tirelessly cater for all events seen and unseen. • The flower arrangers who brighten our churches week on week. • The office staff who work behind the scenes keeping the parish running. • The maintenance teams who get quotes for work required, deal with contractors and make sure each job is done well. • The pilgrimage team who welcome visitors to the Shrine and organise all aspects of their visits. • The servers and MCs for their dedication in assisting CTM each week. • The choirs and musicians for their commitment, time and talent. • Those who organise our social gatherings who coordinate such successful events. • Thanks to everyone for their support and help. KR added that the parish is always looking for volunteers so if anyone has skills or talents that would be helpful please do not wait to be asked, step up and volunteer. KR reiterated that the Parish Core Team acts as a sounding board for CTM. He thanked the outgoing Parish Core Team members: Claire Fairlie and Denis Woodhouse for their contribution. He welcomed Diane Fievez and Simon Matthews to the Parish Core Team and said he looked forward to working with them.
5.	Pastoral Plan Update: CTM relayed how the plan is moving forward. Three new parishes in the Diocese have already been created and the clergy are working 'in solidum'. Our parish is in the next tranche of new parishes. CTM has been asked to submit the application in October and he thinks the new parish will be created between January and Easter 2026. The application will be discussed by the Council of Priests and Bishop Richard will decide if we are ready to go ahead. Structures such as Core Teams will remain. Finance Committees will be renamed Stewardship Groups. A new Finance Committee will be formed for the new 'big' parish. The Finance Chairs have already met with Sarah Kilmartin, the Chief Operating Officer for the Diocese. She recognises that initially the bank accounts will not be merged. She also acknowledged that the amount of expenditure permitted before requesting permission from the Diocese could be raised to £25,000. Any legacies given to a particular Catholic community would remain the property of that community. There will be a Steering Committee for the new parish made up of CTM, Fr. Tristan Cranfield, Fr. Nelson Daniel, Deacon Paul Russell, Claire Fairlie, a Parishioner from East Grinstead and another member of the laity. Below this group there will be another made up of the Chairs of the Core Teams or their representatives and their role will be to implement the decisions of the Steering Committee. There will be much more laity involvement, achieving greater balance and listening based on synodical principles. There will be a Deanery Congress for all the 'movers and shakers' from the current parishes giving them an opportunity to meet and discuss. The venue is yet to be confirmed but CTM hopes it will be at St. Wilfrid's School, Crawley. The date has been postponed to 22 nd November in order

	for more time for preparation. Unfortunately, the original organiser of the event Lizzie Wakeling is seriously ill and CTM asked everyone to keep her in their prayers. Still unknown the new 'big' parish's name and its parish church. These decisions will be made by Bishop Richard.
6.	Finance Report: presented by Sarah Cooper (SC), chair of the parish finance team. SC the current chair of the parish finance team introduced herself. She explained the following: The team have responsibility for stewardship of the parishes assets; this covers repairs and maintenance of the buildings, their fabric and grounds, as well as ensuring standards of health, safety, welfare, accessibility and safeguarding are maintained. Neville Barrie and Geoff Day, are our bookkeepers for St Gabriel's and OLOC respectively, Brian O'Connor and Carl Conroy, our Health & Safety officers and maintenance representatives for each church, Bertha is our Gift Aid Coordinator, Kevin our Safeguarding Officer. We are very grateful to them for all that they do. SC talked through the parish accounts. The figures presented represent the parishes combined assets, liabilities, profit and loss for the year ending December 2024 as finalised by/with the Diocese. The figures in the green column represent 2024. The figures in the pink column represent the corresponding value for 2023. The variance year on year is shown in the 3rd column with negative values shown in brackets. I've used coloured arrows green arrows show positive trends – increasing income or reduced expenses. And the opposite in red. Overall, we finished the year with £440,384 more funds available than in the previous December. This sounds great but worth noting this is unusually high due to the transfer related to the sale of St Crispin's at Pulborough. This money is held in a high interest account which we are drawing down on for expenditure such as building work and maintenance. So far it has been used to pay for the roof repairs at West Grinstead, fencing works at Billingshurst. In terms of income, we are very grateful to all parishioners that offertory donations have increased. Since the planned giving drive held in early 2024, we now have more offerings through standing orders than in previous years, which gives us more certainty allowing us to plan better. A big thank you to everyone for their continued support. We also received a very generous legacy in 2024. This was used to replace all of the lectionaries when the scripture translation was updated. We felt this was a fitting tribute to remember our departed sister. A dedication to Jennie Wren Scott RIP was placed in each book. We continue to supplement donation income through the repository, pilgrimages and lettings. So, when you need cards at Christmas, or next time you need a gift and card for a particular occasion, don't forget to take a look at the selection available. Or if you are organising an event, don't forget the hall at Billingshurst and have a chat with Jacqui Rourke about booking. I would like to thank all those volunteers who give their time to assist with repository, pilgrimages and lettings. Moving to expenditure, unsurprisingly, many of our everyday outgoings have risen reflecting inflation - 3% is in line with national statistics. However, you will see that the greatest increase is in expenditure on grounds and property – as already mentioned we had some significant building maintenance and repair costs. We have continued to spend more in 2025 on building improvements. It was lovely to celebrate the beautiful new font and altars here with the Bishop last weekend and this week a new balustrade will be fitted at Billingshurst to bring protection up to modern day standards. We appreciate that the St Gabriels church and hall are looking tired, and discussions have started as to how we can move redecoration forwards. At this point, I would like to specially thank Brian and Carl, for all they do behind the scenes to

	keep everything going. This ranges from obtaining quotes (we need 3 for any significant work), liaising with contractors, ad hoc fixing of broken furniture and appliances and ensuring safety checks are carried out. There are many more things they do, too many to list. If you have any spare time and could help with any of these sorts of things, I know they are both very open to offers. KR asked could the breakdown of the finances be in a larger font next year.
7.	Future Projects: Presented by Canon Tim outlined below in no particular order: St. Gabriel's: • The work on the balustrade at the front of the choir loft at St. Gabriel's is almost complete. KR explained that it was a health and safety issue that needed fixing as the original balustrade was not high enough for current regulations and the spindles were too far apart. The new structure will be made of glass so will be invisible from the main body of the church as long as it is kept clean. • The ramp to the front door requires new quotes. The last one received quoted £20,000+ for the work. • CTM appreciates that the church and hall are looking very tired. He has set aside £100,000 for the works required including the cleaning of the exterior of the buildings and the repainting of the interior. • Both churches are due their quinquennial inspections next year. CTM wishes to wait until he has received these reports on the structure of the churches before taking on any work. He is particularly concerned about the large crack behind the tabernacle. It is recommended that a different architect takes on the assignment each time so a diocesan recommended architect will be approached to do the work with permission of the Diocese. St. Ann's Architects will remain working with Our Lady of Consolation. • The hall too looks tired and work is needed on the walls, floor, toilets etc. In the long term the kitchen will need replacing. Horsham's new kitchen is a good example. • Property difficulties just pop up. There is a leak in the roof at the priest's house where the cement holding the tiles has disintegrated. Brian O'Connor has arranged a contractor to do the repair work for approx. £1,600. Our Lady of Consolation: • The installation of the altars is complete; they have been admired by many and really complete the church. The Diocese paid for their installation at a cost of approx. £100,000. • The font given to the parish by St. Thomas' Salisbury is in use and has been blessed by Bishop Richard. The removal and transport was paid for by the parish but a very generous donation paid for most of its installation. • The sound system has been updated. • The new confessionals are complete and are accessible to all. These were paid for by the parish. • The big project ahead is to replace the Pilgrims' Way. It is a 1940s construction that has had its day, It is disintegrating and leaks in bad weather. The goal is to have pilgrimages all year round. There are copies of drawings from the architect to be seen and feedback is welcomed. There is a lot of debate over roof styles. One roof will have solar panels and the pitch may be lowered to 15%. The estimated cost of the project is £1.7 million. The Diocese asked how much the parish would contribute so CTM offered £300,000. The Diocese offered £250,000 but will also be responsible for fundraising and claiming grants. The change in VAT rules now only cover £25,000 a project so the work may be split into two phase to help with finances. Ideally the work will begin in Autumn 2026 so the office is keeping the diary free of weddings and other events. No planning permission as yet until the finalised plans are submitted. The next AGM 2026 will take place at St. Gabriel's.
8.	Submitted Questions: The questions and responses are summarised below. 1. <i>Although I fully appreciate that the Pilgrimage Shrine of Our Lady at West Grinstead has to be in a very good state because so many visitors are welcomed over the year, is there</i>

	<i>any chance that very soon St Gabriel's may also receive some TLC? For quite some time now our once beautiful church has looked very sad and tired - very much in need of complete redecoration.</i> This question was covered by CTM during his presentation on future projects. 2. <i>Is it now accepted that the wooden altar which has had castors fixed so it can be moved from the sanctuary when Latin Mass is held is in breach of Canon law? If so what is the delay in having the castors removed. I have offered to arrange this. When will this be corrected?</i> • CTM read out the Canon Law on altars: Can. 1235 §1. An altar, or a table upon which the Eucharistic sacrifice is celebrated, is called fixed if it is so constructed that it adheres to the floor and thus cannot be moved; it is called movable if it can be removed. §2. It is <u>desirable</u>* to have a fixed altar in every church, but a fixed or a movable altar in other places designated for sacred celebrations. Can. 1236 §1. According to the traditional practice of the Church, the table of a fixed altar is to be of stone, and indeed of a single natural stone. Nevertheless, another worthy and solid material can also be used in the judgment of the conference of bishops. The supports or base, however, can be made of any material. §2. A movable altar can be constructed of any solid material suitable for liturgical use. Can. 1237 §1. Fixed altars must be dedicated, and movable altars must be dedicated or blessed, according to the rites prescribed in the liturgical books. §2. The ancient tradition of placing relics of martyrs or other saints under a fixed altar is to be preserved, according to the norms given in the liturgical books. Can. 1238 §1. An altar loses its dedication or blessing according to the norm of can. 1212. §2. Altars, whether fixed or movable, do not lose their dedication or blessing if the church or other sacred place is relegated to profane uses. Can. 1239 §1. An altar, whether fixed or movable, must be reserved for divine worship alone, to the absolute exclusion of any profane use. §2. A body is not to be buried beneath an altar; otherwise, it is not permitted to celebrate Mass on the altar. * 'desirable' does not mean 'compulsory' From all the above it was felt that the moveable altar is not against Canon Law. • The altar is not moved for the Extraordinary Latin Masses and has not been for quite a few months. • If the castors are removed, a plinth will need to be built to put the altar back to the correct height. • Eventually, in the future, a stone altar will be installed. CTM estimated the cost to be at least £40,000 - £60,000. It was remarked that in the Old Testament, both the prophets Ezekiel and Daniel had visions of heaven, at which the throne of God had 'flaming' wheels.
9.	KR closed the meeting with thanks to all for making us such a fantastic parish and CTM finished with a prayer and a blessing.