



Minutes of the meeting of The Seven Towers Joint Council

Tuesday 14th January 2025 at 7.30 pm
at Nature in Art

Present: Rev Joe Knight, Rev Philippa Donald, Simon Trapnell (Chair & Benefice Warden), Phil Cotton (The Leigh), Ellie Stevenson (Down Hatherley), Ali Moseley (Worship Team), Lynda Chan (Prayer Team), Hazel Cotton, Graham Limbrick, Tony Crawshaw, Andrew Wilkins.

Apologies: Adrian Hawkins, Gareth Moseley, Carolyn Wright, Janine Smith, Jean Smith, Derek Wright.

1. Welcome and opening prayers

Simon welcomed everyone, and Rev Joe led the meeting in prayer with John Wesley's Covenant Prayer.

2. Approval of minutes

Amendments were requested and agreed on point 7. **Matters arising from Parish Reports – Down Hatherley**, following which, minutes were approved.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Clergy Report (full report circulated before meeting)

i) Forthcoming events

Celebrate – Care for Creation

To be held at Boddington Church every 4th Sunday afternoon in the month, hoping to build on fellowship at Harvest gathering last year. The theme for January is light. Thanks to Janine, who has already made a plan for the year.

Action: Lynda to include info on pewsheets & in Feb magazine.

Intercessions Training Day

Rescheduled for Saturday 22nd February probably 10.00-12.00 at The Leigh Church. Everyone currently leading intercessions at any of our gatherings is strongly encouraged to attend to share experience with others, in addition to anyone who might be interested in starting to lead us in prayers.

Lent

During Lent, Home Groups will pause and everyone across the benefice will be encouraged to attend our Lent Course together. This will be The Lectio Course with Pete Greig and will be held at Nature in Art on the following Thursday evenings: March 13th, 20th, 27th, April 3rd & 10th.

Rev Joe will circulate plans for Easter later. Mention was made of the impact of the film, "The Rose of Auschwitz" recently shown in our Film Evening at Sandhurst, and whether it could be included in our Easter plans.

APCM

This will take place on Thursday 8th May at 7 pm at Nature in Art.

Action: Rev Joe to circulate info re paperwork and deadlines.

Informal Worship

This will continue to take place on 1st Sundays in the month at 11am at Sandhurst Church, will be renamed "Worship Together", will be aimed at all ages and will follow a 3-monthly cycle:

Sunday 2nd February: Café Church (led by Rev Philippa & Ian)

Sunday 2nd March: Explore (led by Rev Joe) – this will replace our Saturday Explore gatherings.

Sunday 6th April: Informal Worship (led by Simon)

ii) Discussion around our Benefice vision

While we may be working well together in terms of the Joint Council and prioritising benefice-wide worship that is open to all, some changes that were implemented last year with the aim of witnessing to new housing and welcoming children and families were not supported and even rejected in some cases. So how do we want to embody this vision now? Discussion arose around the link between prayer and other actions. Mission is a result of prayer. We pray to be guided to act. We are gifted in different ways, so what are we prepared to do, both corporately and individually? What do we think God is calling us to do?

Eco-church

We have started along this road and some practical actions are happening, e.g. litter-picking around the community. Is this an area where we can initiate fruitful links with local young people?

Stewardship

Following our recent focus on this area, what commitments have we made both within the church and within the community?

Twigworth Green new housing

What are we prepared to do to reach out to new residents? In December we organised carol singing around the estate. 4-500 leaflets had been distributed but few residents came. Use of social media proved problematic. A new school and a new community centre are planned for Twigworth Green, which may open up some opportunities. We plan to organise open-air worship on the green in the estate when the weather is better – could we do this every 5th Sunday in a month? Ellie has developed a good relationship with the Coop – is there more we can do there? Perhaps have leaflets about our more informal gatherings? Whatever we do, we should ensure that our approach is one of inclusivity.

Actions for all JC members:

Please think about and write your top 3 hopes for the benefice for the next year and for the next five years, and send to Rev Joe. Everyone is encouraged to be completely open and truthful – let's see what people really want.

Deadline: Friday 31 January

5. F & PC/Treasurer's Report (full report circulated before meeting)

Tony presented the report in Derek's absence. Derek was thanked for all his work as treasurer. The accounts were not quite finished yet – once they were, they would be submitted to Steve R for independent review.

Highlighted points:

- As expected, General Fund in December is showing a small deficit.
- 2025 budget – no change from last meeting. Significant deficit expected.
- JC agreed that our Zoom licence would be cancelled – Monday Home Group now meets at Rectory and few people use it on our monthly Prayer Days.
- Increasing income should be our priority for reducing shortfall.

A question was raised about releasing some of our held funds. The diocese is looking into this area at the moment.

6. Matters arising from Parish Reports

Rev Joe thanked all our Parish Reps for all their work last year, including all the connections made with local people. All reports were circulated before the meeting. Additional points as follows:

Down Hatherley

Appreciation was expressed for the Christmas for You gathering that was held for those wanting to mark Christmas in a more reflective way for whatever reason, and hope that this would take place again. We may need to give more thought to how we describe it and also to inviting those who we know to have been bereaved during the year.

Sandhurst

Discussion arose around the point included in Property Matters in the F&PC report regarding repairing the organ at a cost of about £10,000. Although a donation has been offered to cover the cost of this work, is this good use of such an amount of money and do we really need to fix the organ when we have a fully functioning keyboard? Although the organ has a different sound and is appreciated by our organists, how much does the organ help in worship? Perhaps such an amount of money could be used in other ways, e.g. to fund a part-time worker in another area of benefice life. At the end of the discussion, JC approved the repair request. Further discussion then arose over whether we should raise further funds to support mission.

Lynda prayed for all our parishes.

7. Matters arising from Team Reports (where submitted)

Worship Team

Will be meeting soon.

Prayer Team

- Some slots still available for Prayer Day next weekend. JC members encouraged to sign up.
- Team would welcome new members – training available at Harnhill in Feb & March.

Pastoral Team

- Team would also welcome more members. The Leigh still has no rep of its own.
- Rev Philippa is still keen to develop a Bereavement Ministry across the Benefice.

CYP Team

Prayers requested for two initiatives being planned:

- after-school club at Norton School on Tuesday afternoons
- mums & toddlers group at Nature in Art

SMT

This team will no longer have regular meetings but will meet as needed and at Rev Joe's discretion.

Rev Joe prayed for all our Teams.

8. Safeguarding

Carol has agreed to "hold the fort" as we are still waiting for someone to offer to take over as Safeguarding Officer.

9. AOB

- **24/7 Prayer** have produced some good resources around our next Prayer Day theme of New Beginnings.
- New Wine Women's Reset Day is being held locally in Cheltenham on Sat 1st February.
- A set of about 40 cream HC books is missing from Boddington Church. Ellie lent the DH set but will need them returned. Parish Reps and Rev Joe asked to check.
- Ian's musical "See the Servant of the Lord" has been rescheduled for Palm Sunday. Anyone interested in taking part is invited to Ian's house on Sunday 2nd Feb at 3pm.
- There had been some issues with the Advent prayer stations in the Prayer Room at The Leigh being replaced after the room had been used by other groups. We'll aim for better communication (and also avoid edible items).

The meeting closed at **9.20 pm** with the Grace.

Date of next meeting: 11th March 2025.