



Minutes of the meeting of The Seven Towers Joint Council

**Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 7.30 pm
at Nature in Art**

Present: Simon Trapnell (Chair & Benefice Warden), Ian Donald (Benefice Warden), Carolyn Wright (Sandhurst), Janine Smith (Stav/Bodd), Ellie Stevenson (DH), Tony Crawshaw, Derek Wright, Lynda Chan (Prayer Team), Phil Cotton (The Leigh), Hazel Cotton, Andrew Wilkins, Ali Moseley (Worship Team), Rev Philippa Donald (Pastoral Team), Gareth Moseley (Safeguarding Officer), Graham Limbrick, Joan Howard.

Apologies: Jean Smith (Norton)

1. Welcome and opening prayers

Simon welcomed everyone and Rev Philippa led the meeting in prayer from Hebrews 12: 2. "We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honour beside God's throne."

2. Approval of minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 11th November 2025 were approved.

3. Matters Arising

a) Welcome signs

Simon had circulated an example of a welcome leaflet that his dad had produced to offer some ideas as we continue work on our own welcome leaflets, sheets or boards. It would be good to work on these together across the parishes and to have something in place when we begin advertising for our new minister. Ellie has a good example of a "walkthrough" brochure for Down Hatherley church.

b) Ecochurch

As with the welcome signs, it would be good to work together on this across parishes. We need to clarify expectations of silver award from A Rocha website. Gareth has already put together some information about this.

Action: Gareth to get together with Carolyn & Simon to clarify expectations for silver ecochurch award.

4. The Vacancy

- Officially starts Wednesday 14th January with the meeting with Archdeacon Katrina and our parish reps/wardens, when initial timescales and expectations will be discussed.
- We need to get moving with writing our Parish Profile with input from parish reps/churchwardens and ministry teams.
- Rectory accommodation is obviously a big issue. Planning permission has been granted to build a new rectory in the benefice but clearly that's only a long-term solution and needs to be made into a firmer commitment, and we need something in the short term. We can all keep our ears and eyes open for possible properties to rent in the benefice.
- Proposal to reinstate Mission Team during vacancy with focus on huge number of new households in the benefice and on children's work. Distributing extra magazines each month could be a part of this. It was agreed that Derek would take this forward and an invitation included on following Friday's pewsheets for people with a heart for this to join the team.
- Our next scheduled JC meeting is Tuesday 10th March but we need to be prepared to meet sooner if necessary.

- Let's keep full of hope and with open hearts as we start this vacancy journey and "step into God's hopeful future".

5. Future Worship Patterns

Ian, Simon, Rev Philippa and Carolyn have worked on a proposed new schedule to start on Sunday 1st March.

The main factors are:

- It should be sustainable.
- It should include Holy Communion every Sunday.
- All churches should be equally involved.
- There should be a monthly worship gathering that doesn't include Holy Communion – this could be a different "flavour" and/or more informal.
- Rev Natalie will continue to lead on average one HC gathering a month, and Rev Philippa will lead two, which leaves one left to fill. Carolyn will work on this and has a good list that she can use.
- The new schedule should not be radically different to what we're doing now.

PROPOSAL for SERVICE ROTA DURING VACANCY

1st Sunday	Sandhurst	Holy Communion	9.30 am
	Sandhurst	Informal worship	11.00 am
	The Leigh	EP	6.00 pm
2nd Sunday	Staverton or Boddington	Holy Communion	9.30 am
	Norton	EP	4.00 pm
	Down Hatherley	EP	6.00 pm
3rd Sunday	The Leigh	Family Holy Communion	9.30 am
	Sandhurst	EP	6.00 pm
4th Sunday	Norton or Down Hatherley	Holy Communion	9.30 am
	Staverton	EP	4.00 pm
5th Sunday	any church TBD	Holy Communion	9.30 am

By moving EP sundays, this allows that there can be services at each church on alternate weeks

The proposal was accepted by the meeting.

6. Clergy Report – Rev Philippa (Report circulated before meeting.)

- Preference is that baptisms take place during the main Sunday gathering or shortly afterwards.
- Lent course film will probably be shown the weekend after Ash Wednesday in Sandhurst Church. Thanks again to Simon for allowing use of Nature in Art for the course.

7. F&PC/Treasurer's Report (Report circulated before meeting.)

a) Annual accounts

Points discussed:

- Variable nature of grants and ad hoc donations.

- Designated Fund for ongoing maintenance of Twigworth churchyard.
- Hardship Fund returned to General Funds.
- Availability of Mission Fund.

JC approved accounts subject to independent review.

b) Fund-raising

The Benefice Tree Festival at Norton Church and the fete at The Leigh Church raised almost £3000 between them. We'll aim for a target of £4000 for fund-raising this year. JC was asked for suggestions for events. Perhaps an Easter Festival at Norton Church to build on success of working with Norton School during the Tree Festival.

Action: Tony to initiate discussion with Norton school headteacher, Jane, about possible Easter Festival.

c) Allowance to Rev Philippa

JC agreed that an allowance of £100 pm be paid to Rev Philippa to cover extra costs during the vacancy.

d) Increased giving

Letters will be sent at end of tax year to regular givers to thank them for their donations and ask them to consider increased giving.

e) 5th Sunday collections

5th Sunday collection last November will belatedly be sent to Gloucester City Mission as it had been advertised on that week's pewsheets. There are four 5th Sundays in 2026. It was agreed that we would send to four different recipients. **Action: JC members to send ideas for recipients to Derek.**

f) Benefice mobile phone

This will be replaced – just simple one required.

g) Bank accounts

Clarification was given over our two bank accounts with Lloyds and the Co-op.

h) Income vs expenditure

As some of our expenditure is fixed, e.g. Parish Share, we should focus on increasing income. This website has some inspiration: www.stewardship.org.uk

8. Matters arising from Parish/Team Reports (Reports circulated before meeting.)

Worship Team

The Taizé Prayer gathering previously planned for The Leigh Church at Evening Prayer on Sunday 4th January didn't happen. Query over whether it could be rescheduled for later this year and whether other three previously planned would happen this year (March: DH, May: Sandhurst, Nov: Norton). Ian & Ellie agreed to plan to hold a Taizé Prayer gathering in DH on Sunday 8th March at 6 pm.

Action: Ian & Ellie to plan DH Taizé Prayer gathering for March.

9. Benefice policies amendments

• Magazine & advertising

JC agreed that amendments suggested at last meeting had been incorporated and policy was approved.

• Safeguarding, Equal Opportunities, Social Media

JC requested more time to read through these policies, so they will be brought to the next meeting.

Discussion followed regarding where/how policies would be made available and how compliance would be monitored. Initial thoughts were that they could be accessed on our website and also at the APCM.

10. Safeguarding

- Gareth now has information regarding renewal dates for training and will contact people individually. He will liaise with Rev Philippa and Parish Reps if there are any queries about those no longer needing training.

Action: Gareth to contact those who need to update safeguarding training.

- Gareth will finish leadership training by the end of January.

II. AOB

- Norton School needs to be informed of Rev Joe's last official day with Seven Towers regarding his role as a school governor there. **Action: Simon to confirm date with Tony.**
- Carolyn is now keeping a record of all benefice events, so please keep her informed.
- Thanks were offered to Simon for his work on the website.
- A new fan heater will be purchased for Boddington Church.
- Proposal was agreed that JC members can take it in turns to open in prayer if they'd like to do so. If Ian is at the next meeting, he will do this.

Simon shared some words of encouragement to end the meeting as we step into the vacancy:

Some days you just travel, but every day God can use you. In Christopher Columbus' journal, one entry was found on multiple pages: "We sailed on." You don't discover the new world every day! Some days you just sail on. We can be assured that God is working on us and can work through us during the vacancy months ahead.

The meeting closed with the Grace at 9 pm.

Scheduled dates of next meetings: Tuesday 10th March and Tuesday 12th May 2026.