



Minutes of the meeting of The Seven Towers Joint Council

**Tuesday 10th March 2026 at 7.30 pm
at Nature in Art**

Present: Simon Trapnell (Chair & Benefice Warden), Ian Donald (Benefice Warden), Carolyn Wright (Sandhurst), Jean Smith (Norton), Bob Warriner (DH), Tony Crawshaw, Derek Wright, Lynda Chan (Prayer Team), Phil Cotton (The Leigh), Hazel Cotton, Andrew Wilkins, Ali Moseley (Worship Team), Gareth Moseley (Safeguarding Officer), Graham Limbrick, Joan Howard.

Apologies: Janine Smith (Stav/Bodd), Ellie Stevenson (DH), Rev Philippa Donald (Pastoral Team)

1. Welcome and opening prayers

Simon welcomed everyone and Ian led the meeting in prayer.

2. Approval of minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 13th January were approved.

3. Matters Arising None

4. Clergy Report (circulated before meeting)

- Date correction: Bishop Robert will visit the Benefice to lead Communion on Sunday 3rd May (not 4th).
- Timing of Ash Wednesday service next year: daytime would obviously exclude working people. Moving this year's service to 6 pm (due to expected roadworks) may have contributed to poor attendance. Worship Team will discuss timing for next year.
- No Ascension Day gathering this year.

5. Vacancy Update

- A happy time was had by all those who attended Rev Joe's licensing service at Parkend on Sunday 8th March.
- All JC meeting on **Tuesday 24th March** with Area Dean Jacqui Hyde and Assistant Archdeacon Susan Cooke. No agenda yet. **Action: Simon to ask JH and SC about an agenda.**

6. Norton school governors: substitute ex-officio governor appointment

This is to replace Rev Joe's role at the school until the arrival of a new incumbent. The diocese had encouraged this appointment as we could be in vacancy until mid-2027. The post-holder should be a regular attender of our worship services. Joan Howard, also a Norton resident, was nominated and the vote in favour was unanimous. Tony Crawshaw will assist Joan with the necessary paperwork. Joan was thanked for her interest in the role.

7. Twigworth Churchyard

Two unauthorized large ornate monuments for Jesse Richards and for Britannia Davies have been erected in the churchyard without applying for the necessary permissions and breaking several churchyard regulations. With a third party recently requesting the installation of a similar memorial, JC need to take the matter forward. This is likely to prove extremely controversial and could well attract press attention. The resolution to be sent to Jos Moule, Registrar of the Diocese of Gloucester, needs careful wording and should focus on legal compliance. The following resolution was consequently agreed by JC:

"The Chair reported that it had come to the attention of Joint Council that a number of memorials had been introduced into the churchyard which did not comply with the requirements of the Diocesan Churchyard Regulations in many respects. It was further reported that these had been introduced without the consent of the incumbent and no fees had been paid for their introduction as required by the Parochial Fees Order 2024. It was accordingly resolved that the Secretary of the Joint Council be instructed to contact the Diocesan Registry with a view to their seeking directions from the Chancellor as to how to proceed in order to regularise matters."

Carolyn was thanked for all her work so far with this.

Action: Lynda (with Carolyn's advice) to send further correspondence with the resolution to Jos Moule.

Extra note: Parish Reps at all churches should ensure that churchyard regulations are clearly displayed on notice boards.

8. Update on benefice administration

- Updated fees tables need to be displayed at every church as well as on the website.

Action: All Parish Reps to ensure tables are displayed on church noticeboards, and Carolyn to upload to website.

- Moves are ongoing to ban the use of mechanical diggers in graveyards.
- **APCM Tuesday 28th April** at 7.30 pm at Nature in Art:
 - electoral rolls updated.
 - all reports to Carolyn by **Tuesday 7th April**.
 - Graham & Tony to stand down as elected members of JC.
 - Parish Reps to be elected at parish level and confirmed at APCM.
 - Deanery Synod Reps to be elected.

9. Sustainable Church Flowers

Rev Philippa had circulated a proposal that we could adopt:

- to promote the use of local, sustainable, biodegradable or compostable flowers and foliage.
- to source flowers & foliage locally.
- to eliminate the use of floral foam oases and non-reusable techniques and to rediscover traditional and environmentally-friendly methods of presentation and display.

JC agreed to work towards this. It would be helpful to source some alternatives that we could offer to our flower arrangers. Andrew agreed to help with this.

Action: Andrew to source some alternative methods of presentation and display.

10. Office bearers' photos on website

Currently the only office bearer's photo on the website is Gareth's as Safeguarding Officer. It was agreed to have everyone's photo on the website by the time of the APCM, along with general pictures of current events. Photos will be a set format and could include group and individual pictures.

Action: Simon/Ian to take the lead in organising "photo shoots".

11. Mission Team Report (circulated before meeting)

• Benefice Easter card

JC members were thanked for feedback on changes for draft card, some of which have been incorporated into final version. Distribution will mainly be to new housing in the benefice. JC members were thanked for offering to help with this as follows:

Ian - Athele Edge & Fallowfields

Lynda - Orchard Park

Phil & Hazel - new houses @ Coombe Hill - Villard Close, Meadow Brown Lane, Wimbrell Drive & Turnstone Close

Jean - new houses in Norton

Andrew, Tony, Graham & Derek - Twigworth Green

Ideally delivery will be over the weekend of **21st/22nd March** or early week of **23rd March**.

- **Coombe Hill**

Phil & Hazel have discovered that there's a Coombe Hill community noticeboard that we may be able to use.

- **Sportily**

As yet there's been no response from co-ordinator Kelsey regarding invitation to reconnect with the benefice.

Discussion arose over our mission priorities and whether we need a clearer vision of where we're headed. Perhaps we need to leave structure to any new incumbent, but in the meantime we can get on with the business of "scattering seeds" within our limited finance and resources.

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

- **Fund Raising Initiatives for Benefice**

- In addition to the suggestions listed, the idea was put forward for an outdoor music event at Norton. **Action: Simon & Joan to look into the possibility of this.**
- Although there is a fund-raising musical event organised in Staverton church on **Sunday 19th April**, the funds will be for the sole use of Staverton & Boddington Fabric Funds.

- **Co-op debit cards**

JC agreed to the provision of debit cards to Hazel, Simon & Tony.

- **5th Sunday collections**

JC previously decided to support different charities for these collections and members had been asked to make suggestions. We have four 5th Sundays this year and four charities have been suggested. Another one aiming to raise a great deal of money was also suggested but perhaps the relatively small amount that we'll be offering will have more impact on a smaller local cause. Following further discussion, the following was agreed:

Sunday 29th March: Any Christian Aid/DEC launched appeal for victims of the current turmoil in the Middle East.

Sunday 31st May: Increase the Peace (local Gloucester charity, information [here](#)).

The causes for the other two Sundays this year will be decided at the next ordinary JC meeting in May. It was suggested that when we are supporting a local charity, we could invite someone from that charity to that Sunday morning gathering to tell us a little about it for prayer support and to encourage donations. As our 5th Sunday gatherings are often a little different, this could fit in well. Rev Philippa is scheduled to lead on Sunday 31st May, when we could perhaps invite Delroy Ellis, the founder of Increase the Peace.

Action: Lynda to follow this up with Philippa.

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

Sandhurst

Sandhurst, Norton and The Leigh are all currently working on information/welcome boards for the churches. It was agreed that we should include some information that would be the same on all the boards to show that we are one benefice.

The Leigh

- The date for The Leigh and Norton Horticultural show will be **Saturday 8th August**.
- It's not entirely clear if Ben Troughton's "Shift" worship weekend is open to all or by invitation.

Action: Lynda to follow this up with Philippa.

Prayer Team

Gareth will not be attending the Harnhill prayer ministry training day on **Saturday 14th March** as he has arranged to work on the DH organ that day.

Pastoral Team

Discussion around idea of benefice notelet/card to send to those struggling at home, or in hospital or care, or recently bereaved. Perhaps a picture other than that on our verse of the year card might be more suitable. Also what would the aim of the card be – would it offer prayer support/practical help? Conclusion was that this idea is still in its early days and planning is ongoing.

Worship Team

Date correction: School Easter Activity Event is on **Saturday 28th March** (not April).

14. Benefice policies amendments

Although amendments had been finalised two meetings ago, it was agreed that additional amendments would be incorporated and policies sent to JC members with the minutes of this meeting.

15. Safeguarding

Gareth now has access to all dashboards and will bring updated policies and targets to JC.

16. AOB

- DH organ will be reconstructed the coming **Saturday 14th March**. Invitation to anyone who may be able to help. It will then be retuned on **Wednesday 18th March**.
- The Standing Committee has approved the resurfacing of the path at Sandhurst Church.
- Graham agreed to lead opening prayers at the next ordinary meeting of JC.
- As four JC members will be away on the date of the next ordinary JC meeting, it was decided to bring it forward to **Tuesday 5th May**. This will exclude two other members, including Gareth, who offered to submit a safeguarding report prior to the meeting.
- Carolyn was thanked for supplying some great resources for our Benefice Easter Trail at Norton church on **Saturday 28th March**. We'll also need church members to be a presence on the day between 10 am and 4 pm. Jean, Mandy, Ian and Simon have so far put their names down. Other JC members were encouraged to do the same.

The meeting closed with the Grace at 9.35 pm.

Scheduled dates of next meetings:

Vacancy meeting Tuesday 24th March

Ordinary JC meetings: **Tuesday 5th May** and Tuesday 14th July.