

St. Matthew's Parish Council Meeting

16th April 2026

PRESENT: Catherine Brown, Philip Brown, Stephen Duff, John Goodwin, Maureen Bradley, Fran Boyle, Cherry Stacey, Fred Stacey, Fr. S. McGrattan, Fr. K. Rennie

Opening Prayer and Introductions

Fr. Stephen to chair meeting

Maureen B to minute

Fr. Stephen thanked all for their attendance.

1. Review of Diocesan Boundaries

The Scottish bishops have commenced a consultation process regarding our diocesan structures and whether they, in their present form, are best for promoting mission. Conversation in the Spirit will be the method for discerning during the consultation sessions. (used during synodality consultation).

PPC members responded to the questions:

1. Where do we see good example of mission in our diocese and country?
2. Where does mission need to develop or even begin? What are the barriers to better mission and what can encourage it?
3. Does the present structure of 8 dioceses in Scotland support mission? Does our diocese already have all that it needs? Would it help if we were to share resources with another diocese or dioceses? Would it help if our diocese merged with another diocese?

Their reflection are noted in Appendix A to these minutes.

The response will be sent to Bishop Frank before the end of May.

2. Diocesan Parish Review

Bishop Dougan has asked every parish to complete a parish review document which asks for:

- **statistical information** like the estimated population, number of baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals etc
- **financial information** like income/expenditure from the previous year, bank balance, proposed large expenditures
- **liturgical practice** detailing all the groups which animate the celebration of the liturgy, especially the Mass
- **pastoral activities** detailing all the groups in the parish which reach out pastorally
- **health and safety information** ensuring certification is up-to-date.

The final part of the review is a reflection on the **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for growth, and threats/concerns** for the parish. The members of the PPC completed this final part (a kind of SWOT analysis), and their reflection will be shared in the parish newsletter to

allow other parishioners to add to the review document. The review from each parish will be submitted to the Diocese by 31st May.

Discussion continued re present situation and future structure of the deanery.

Big Question : ARE WE READY?

Amalgamation is not desirable but may become unavoidable. Mergers would be based on collaboration and integration. Strengths and experience of each parish could enrich this new community. As Fr Stephen says "What a parish, if all our gifts are given room to grow together!". All three parishes must have a shared sense of direction. Reassurance that groups and activities should continue eg Freespace.

Feedback on rationalisation in Kilmarnock

- Don't want to see closure but open to it. Lot of people walk and possible need for transport. There has been training and preparation. Need to ensure companionship and collaboration continues in new parish.
- St Joseph's seen as *Mother Church*. Always sad to see closures, take a long time to integrate in a community.

3. 50th Anniversary of Dedication of the St. Matthew's Church

This takes place on 24 April 2027. A newsletter item will invite what format this event might take.

4. October Faith Talks

Adult Education was seen as desirable. Quality of the homily is essential to ongoing formation, however it was recognised that other avenues should be explored.

Suggestions : History of Mission in our parishes

Laudate Si - Environment and Ecology

Fr Stephen happy to ask around.

AOB

Fr Stephen thanked group for their commitment

20+ members to meet at joint PPC in June.

Possible source of Gift Aid is the Community Box but this is thought to be awkward as danger of envelope overload. The current Gift Aid return, for 3 year period, should be in region of £10k. This will cover electrical upgrade.

Fr. Philip Kitchen will retire on last Sunday of July. Bishop Frank is currently exploring options.

The parish house occupancy is undecided at present because of decisions still to be made in near future.

Next Meeting Mon. 1. June 2026, St Joseph's Church. Exposition in the church at 6.30pm. Meeting in St. Joseph's Hall at 7pm.

Appendix A: Review of Diocesan Structures for the Bishops Response of St Matthew's Parish, Kilmarnock

Question 1: Where do we see good example of mission in our diocese and country?

- Parish: Foodbank, Children's Liturgy, Freespace, Ladies' Spirituality Group. Issues with lack of comms from groups to parish limiting involvement.
- Deanery: Good start, especially in Kilmarnock. Strong relationship rooted in similar mission and collaboration, but lack of comms within the deanery about what's happening.
- Diocese: Encouraging to see RCDG Youth & Young Adults events – the church of the future. Issues with comms at Diocesan level about what's happening.
- National: SCIAF. Lack of national awareness.

Question 2: Where does mission need to develop or even begin? What are the barriers to better mission and what can encourage it?

- Coming together – initial trepidation but gone well, especially shared newsletter.
- How could collaboration be enhanced?
- Mission – how do we involve Ecumenical movement?
- Developing volunteers – need to approach individuals directly (e.g. readers and extraordinary ministers)
- Barriers – communication and exploring what's expected of people

Question 3: Does the present structure of 8 dioceses in Scotland support mission? Does our diocese already have all that it needs? Would it help if we were to share resources with another diocese or dioceses? Would it help if our diocese merged with another diocese?

- Very political question – how much influence do we really have?
- Geographically Diocese is very large.
- Concern over shortage of priests.
- *Unsustainable.*

Comments:

- Need for clear communication: individually and to community.
- We're a small group – state of flux and source of worry.
- Green shoots of good things – Kilmarnock situation reflective of national.
 - o Where are we going in 10-15 years time?
- Mission nationally is vast and a worry – lot of difficulties.
- Care for parish & recognise that care – HOPE in parish.
- Huge task – need to take care of one and other.
- Necessity to be open – not an easy task but openness required.
- Distance – already large in Galloway, if we merge potentially more isolating.

Appendix B: Parish Review Document for the Diocese of Galloway Response of St Matthew's Parish, Kilmarnock

Date of Review: April 2026

Deanery: St Joseph's

Name of Parish: St Matthew's, Kilmarnock

Number and names of church buildings in parish including parish halls

Hall and church combined with separating divider, church house (joined by a corridor to the church)

Names of parishes with whom this parish shares a parish priest:

St Joseph's, Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Mass Times (and other public celebrations, including availability of Sacrament of reconciliation):

Sunday 9.30 am; Monday 10 am, Wednesday 10 am followed by Adoration and Confession until 10.50 am

Names of active clergy resident in the parish: Fr Stephen McGrattan, Fr Kevin Rennie

Names of retired clergy resident in the parish: N/A

Names of active Religious resident in the parish: Sr Mary Rose Confidence Maduka, Sr Mary Mabel Chukwu, Sr Juliet Obiorah IHM

Names of retired Religious resident in the parish: N/A

Names and job specification of employed parish staff: Mariella Hoestra Berry (Secretary) – shared with all three parishes

Names of Catholic schools in the parish: St Andrew's PS, St Joseph's Academy

Statistical Information

Estimated Catholic Population: 1,000

Recorded attendance at Census Weekend (in previous year): 160

Infant Baptisms (in previous year): 5

Confirmations of children (in previous year): 13

Adults receiving Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist (in previous year): 1

Adults being Confirmed and received into full communion (in previous year): 0

Weddings (in previous year): 0

Funerals (in previous year): 23

Financial Information

The income and expenditure totals from the last Annual Financial Return from the parish

2025 Income: £77,099.54

Total amount held by the parish in the Parochial Investment Fund (PIF): c. £21,800

Any possible large expenditures proposed soon: Electrical rewiring: est. £7,000

What is the number of parishioners who make up membership of the Parish Finance Committee:
5 parishioners

Liturgical Practice

Indicate activities which support and animate the liturgical life of the parish:

Music ministry (organist) and small choir (4-5)

Altar servers (3)

Team of sacristans (5)

Lay extraordinary Ministers of Communion (16)

Lay readers (18)

Children's liturgy leaders (6-8)

Monthly Sunday "I Belong" Sacramental preparation programme for First Holy Communion: run by Children's liturgy team

Live-streaming volunteers (2-4)

Flower arrangers (2)

Cleaning team (6)

Retreat/training sessions for liturgical ministers

Pastoral Activities

What is the number of parishioners who make up membership of the Parish Pastoral Council: 8

Indicate the various pastoral groups in the parish and the pastoral and mission work undertaken

- Freespace
- Ladies' Spirituality
- Community Lunch
- Foodbank
- Tea & Coffee
- SPRED
- Housebound Visiting
- Extensive community involvement/ usage of hall
- *No RCIA since 2023.*
- Fundraising groups.
- Bags of messages – integration and collaboration with other churches (St Kentigern's & Kay Park (?))

Health and Safety Information

What is the present state of all parish buildings: good

Has the parish up-to-date certification to comply with all gas and electrical legal requirements –
no but this is being urgently addressed (gas is fine, electrical upgrade required).

Are there any health and safety issues requiring attention: other than the electrical issues - none

Additional Notes:

- Fabric – Windows in need of repainting. Mosaic in need of covering/ repair. Kitchen hot water needs resolved (*in hand*).
- Good thing to see young people in Church & children from schools for school Masses where they may not be regular massgoers.
- Sacraments – Need for personal approach and possible personal meetings with sacramental teams to encourage parental ‘buy-in’.
- Need for transparency in the process across the Diocese.

Strengths:

- Inclusive and vibrant – always welcoming, personal.
- Strong links with the wider community (Hall)
- Singing
- In and at the heart of the community.
- Growing weekly attendance and ministry involvement.
- Long established spirituality which feeds mission.
- Willingness of parishioners to be involved.

Weaknesses:

- Lack of developing connection with schools – missed opportunities.
- Low number of young people – secondary age -> 25.
- Weakness of number of volunteers: always the same faces.
- Decline in number of First Communicants.

Growth:

- Bringing together newsletter.
- Sense of openness, transparency, professionalism.
- Collaboration between the parishes and movement between is good to see.

Threats:

- Reduction in clergy numbers in Kilmarnock.
- Many other concerns abated.