

**MINUTE OF THE MEETING OF THE OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL PARISH
PASTORAL COUNCIL HELD AT 7pm ON 21st APRIL 2026**

Members present

Father Stephen McGrattan, Parish Priest
Suzy Hollywood
Celia McQueen
Agnes Starrs
Kathleen Jones
Jean Murphy
Linda Hefron
Stuart Clark
Charlie Harper (Minute Secretary)

Father Kevin Rennie was unable to attend due to other commitments and submitted apologies.

Father McGrattan welcomed members to the first meeting of the Our Lady of Mount Carmel (OLMC) Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) since he had become Parish Priest in December 2025.

He explained that there would be a number of meetings which would comprise individual Parish meetings and combined meetings of the three Parishes. In January 2027 the intention is to move to a single PPC for the three Parishes.

Father McGrattan advised that the outcomes from this meeting and those of the other two Parishes would be combined into a single document and circulated to the congregations within all three Parishes to allow the widest participation possible.

1. The meeting was opened with prayer.
2. Charlie Harper was appointed as Minute Secretary.

3. Consultation on Diocesan Structures

Father McGrattan drew members attention to the circulated paper ***“Consultation on Diocesan Structures - Statement from the Bishops of Scotland”***

This document is attached at Appendix ‘A’ to this minute. The statement indicates two possible pathways are being proposed for careful discernment: developing deeper cooperation and the sharing of resources accross dioceses within our present structures, or the merging of some dioceses.

The PPC was invited to discuss this further using the following three questions:

1. Where do we see good examples of mission in our Parishes, deanery, 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 eight diocese 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?

The PPC response to this is detailed at **Appendix 'A'**

4. Diocesan Parish Review

This agenda item comprises two parts, the first being a Parish Statistical and Data Review. Father McGrattan discussed the main items included and the details are attached at **Appendix 'B'** to this minute.

The second item is an analysis of what are the strengths and weaknesses of the Parish, what are the opportunities for growth and what are the threats and concerns for the Parish.

The PPC response to this is attached at **'Appendix 'C'**.

5. Parish representation at Synodality Training Day - Saturday 16th May 2026

Father McGrattan asked for three volunteers to attend the above training day. Celia McQueen volunteered to attend and was asked to seek the support of another two volunteers.

6. Parish Finances

Father McGrattan circulated a copy of a document entitled **'Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St Mathews, Kilmarnock - Running costs 2025'** which includes details of income and expenditure for the two Parishes.

This document had previously been circulated widely within the two Parishes and will clearly become the focus of the Fabric and Finance Committee.

A number of items were discussed, however, the main issue identified is that the Our Lady of Mount Carmel expenditure exceeds the income significantly for 2025 and that a withdrawal of £33,000 had to be made from the Parochial Investment Fund in order to balance the books.

7. AOCB

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9pm.

8. Date of next meeting

Monday 1st June 2026, St Joseph's Church Hall, 7pm

CONSULTATION ON DIOCESAN STRUCTURES

Statement from the Bishops of Scotland

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Following a request from the Holy See, the Bishops of Scotland have been invited to reflect on how the structures of the Church in our country can best serve her mission in the years ahead, specifically whether the present situation of eight dioceses is suitable.

We are all aware of the challenges before us — fewer clergy, changing patterns of practice, and increasing pressures on our diocesan resources, among other things. Yet our mission remains unchanged: to proclaim the Gospel and to lead our people to Christ.

Two possible pathways are being proposed for careful discernment: developing deeper cooperation and the sharing of resources across dioceses within our present structures, or the merging of some dioceses.

In order to best inform ourselves and the Holy See, each bishop will engage with his diocese over the coming months for the first part of this process. Everyone will be given the opportunity to pray, reflect, and contribute.

Following-on from the presentation of a discussion paper, responses from each diocese will contribute to the initial findings which will be given to the Holy See in the Autumn.

This is not simply an administrative exercise. It is a pastoral and missionary response to our changing landscape. This process will ensure our Church in Scotland will continue to grow ever more missionary, more Christ-centred, and more collaborative in the service of God's people.

Entrusting this work to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to the intercession of Our Lady, we move forward together with confidence and renewed hope.

Groups are invited to discuss this further using the following three questions:

The following three questions will be used to focus discernment:

1. *Where do we see good examples of mission in our parishes, deanery, diocese and country?*

DEANERY.

- *Youth development*
- *Pastoral Council - a forum to share good practice.*
- *Pilgrimages. Birnieknowe a great example.*
- *Collaborative work between the three Parishes*
- *Very active St Vincent de Paul Society, Foodbank outreach to the poor and marginalised. Visiting the sick and provision of afternoon teas for senior parishioners.*

- *RCIA has been consistent over a number of years now with regular subsequent Mass attendance.*
- *Sacramental preparation of children.*
- *The UR Welcome Club welcoming others who have lapsed and brought in new members.*
- *Liturgy and music ministry that attracts people beyond the Parish.*
- *Warmth and welcome of the Parish Community.*

DIOCESAN.

- *Study Days, eg recent Vatican II document study days.*
- *Pilgrimages. Whithorn, Lourdes, Core Group on Adult Faith Development.*
- *Diocese Safeguarding Advisory Group.*
- *Diocese Risk Assessment Management Team.*
- *SPRED*

COUNTRY.

- *Training and Lay Leadership development by the Archdiocese of St Andrews, Edinburgh and Glasgow in partnership with Glasgow University equipping people to share what is working for them in their Faith.*
- *The running of courses such as 'Alpha' could assist in sharing experiences.*
- *SSVP Magazine - spreading the word and best practice.*
- *Synodality Exercise.*
- *Participation in Diploma in Catechesis.*

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

- *Clear intentional evangelization, not just maintenance, building relationships and providing welcoming spaces to bring people together.*
- *Are people who have lapsed, frightened to return to Church.*
- *Promote resources such as 'Being Catholic' TV.*
- *Age of 30 to mid span years- struggle to hold onto people.*
- *Explore the reasons for poor return to church among children after 1st Communion.*
- *Delivery of 'ALPHA' Training could be beneficial. Has been successfully delivered in other diocese around discussion topics such as 'Who is Jesus' 'How to pray and does prayer help' This could be helpful for both practicing and lapsed Catholics.*
- *Develop men's scripture class/discussion groups.*
- *Develop prayer groups.*
- *Bishops Conference to be more visible, upbeat, informative.*

3. Does the present structure of eight 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?

Could better communications resolve the need to merge. Would this assist in the sharing of resources?

The feeling of the PPC members was that improved communications and sharing of resources would be the preferred option rather than merge.

The current structure of 8 Diocese was discussed and it was felt that if there was a move to fewer diocese then greater back office/admin support would be required to service the needs of fewer Bishops who would have an exponentially higher workload.

Parish Statistical and Data Review

Date of Review: April 2026

Deanery: St Josephs

Name of Parish: Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Number and names of church buildings in parish including parish halls: two buildings - church and house connected, garage.

Names of parishes with whom this parish shares a parish priest: St Joseph's, St Mathews, Kilmarnock.

Mass Times (and other public celebrations, including availability of Sacrament of reconciliation): Sunday 11.30am, Tuesday and Friday 10am, Confession and Adoration on Tuesdays after Mass until 10.50am; Rosary on Friday before Mass.

Names of active clergy resident in the parish: Fr Stephen McGrattan, Father 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: Our Lady of Mount Carmel PS. (Not in the Parish but Pupils go to Joseph's Academy)

Statistical Information

Estimated Catholic Population: 1,000

Recorded attendance at Census Weekend (in previous year): 146

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):1

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.
Income: £77,099.54. Expenditure: £83,727.48

Total amount held by the parish in the Parochial Investment Fund (PIF)
c. £118,000

Any possible large expenditures proposed soon:
Replacement of electrical distribution boards, potential kitchen replacement in convent.

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

Liturgical Practice

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

Music ministry and choir (12-14)

Altar Servers (3)

Team of Sacristans (3)

Lay extraordinary Ministers of communion (17)

Lay Readers (13)

Children's Liturgy leaders (6-8)

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

Live-streaming volunteers (2-4)

Flowers arrangers (1)

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

Health and Safety Information

What is the present state of all parish buildings: poor/satisfactory/good: **satisfactory**

Has the parish up-to-date certification to comply with all gas and electrical legal requirements: **no but it is in hand.**

Are there any health and safety issues requiring attention:
Electrical, but they are in hand.

SWOT Analysis – Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish (Kilmarnock)

Strengths

- **Strong sense of community**

A predominantly retired congregation often brings loyalty, consistency, and deep-rooted relationships within the parish.

Warmth and welcome of the community.

Strong and active ministries: music, Children's Liturgy, SVDP, RCIA, Foodbank,, visiting the sick, senior club, sacramental preparation.

Diversity of congregation.

- **Established faith foundation**

Longstanding traditions, regular Mass attendance, and committed volunteers help maintain parish stability.

- **Shared priest across three parishes**

While challenging, this can foster collaboration and unity between the three Catholic communities in Kilmarnock.

- **Youth engagement initiative already underway**

The fact that youth groups are being actively promoted is a major positive signal of forward planning.

Proximity to Primary School.

- **Volunteer availability**

Retired parishioners may have more time to contribute to ministries, events, and parish upkeep.

Weaknesses

- **Aging congregation**

Heavy reliance on older parishioners raises concerns about long term sustainability.

Uncertainty in Mass attendance.

Limited pool of young parishioners to enable succession planning for ministries.

Inability to retain youth beyond Caritas/Secondary Education.

No active engagement with 30-60 year olds.

Late Mass time on a Sunday.

- **Limited priest availability**

One priest serving three parishes can lead to:

- Reduced pastoral care
- Fewer Mass times
- Burnout/ill health risk/no resilience to cover for ill health.

- **Potential resistance to change**

Older congregations may be less receptive to new formats of worship or outreach aimed at younger people.

- **Limited appeal to younger demographics**

Without consistent youth presence, it can feel less relevant or welcoming to families and young adults.

- **Volunteer dependency imbalance**

Over-reliance on a small group of active members can lead to fatigue.

- **Finance**

Currently running at a loss.

Age and fabric of the building places an additional burden on available resources.

Limited opportunities to create additional revenue.

Imbalance of shared costs between parishes.

Opportunities

• Growth through youth ministries

Expanding youth groups, social events, and faith-based activities could:

- Build a future congregation

- Attract families

Proximity of Church to Primary School and good relationship with teachers could assist with parent engagement.

• Collaboration across the three parishes

Shared:

- Events

- Resources

- Ministries

could strengthen all communities and reduce duplication.

Fellowship of churches - ecumenical group- OLMC as venue?

• Lay leadership development

Training parishioners to take on roles (e.g., liturgy coordination, pastoral support) can ease pressure on the priest.

Assist with the development of Adult Faith formation programme.

• Digital engagement

Use of:

- Social media

- Livestream Masses

- Online communication

to reach younger people and those unable to attend physically.

• Community outreach

Partnerships with local schools, charities, and civic groups in Kilmarnock could raise visibility and relevance.

Repurposing of the Convent for income generation should the property become vacant.

Provision of welcoming spaces for discussion groups, evangelisation, retired priests, a hub for community services/events.

Opportunities to engage and evangelize with 30-60 age group through Alpha courses/ discussion groups.

OLMC is situated in an area of private housing development with potential for evangelisation.

Threats

• Declining church attendance (wider trend)

Secularisation across Scotland poses a long-term challenge.

• Priest shortage worsening

Future availability of clergy may decline further, potentially leading to parish mergers or closures.

OLMC Closure.

• Aging volunteer base

Loss of key contributors without replacement could weaken parish operations.

- **Competition for young people's time**

Work, education, and social commitments can make regular attendance less likely.

Competition from other churches or community organisations.

- **Perception challenges**

If the parish is seen as "for older people," it may deter new, younger members.

Negative reputational challenges affecting the Catholic Church in general.

'Do Nothing' attitude and we fail to discharge our responsibility as a missionary church.

Ongoing secularisation and alleged declining interest in organised religion.

Perceived threat of church closures.

Church not seen as diverse, for example perceived to be unwelcoming for certain social groups, eg. LGBTQ. Resistance to change involving female clergy for example.

- **Finance**

Rising church maintenance and utility costs.

