

Minutes for the Community Open Forum, 2nd February 2026

The meeting was chaired by Dominic, and opened with a Psalm read by Agata. 23 in attendance.

1. Review of items from the Previous Meeting (13th October 2025)

Parish Lenten Retreat

The Parish Lenten Retreat, to be led by Fr Tony Rogers, will be held on Saturday 21st March from 2:00–5:00pm.

Rita Walter Legacy Fund (Kevin)

A fund of £5,000 has been made available largely to support refugee children. All local schools contacted; community links also being used to invite applications. Approximately £3,000 has been allocated to date. Funding has so far supported after-school activities, music instruments/lessons and provision of school uniforms. There will be a report to CAFOD in February, which will be shared in due course.

Live Simply Group

Two meetings have been held so far with 6–7 attendees. The aim of the group is to coordinate parish activities relating to the Live Simply project. Cut off for the Live Simply project likely to be around August/September. Activities in planning so far include:

Parish Cookbook (Nick)

This will be the third edition of the Parish Cookbook, anticipated to contain approx. 100 international recipes.

Estimated printing cost: £11 per book. It was suggested that there was no need to generate profit from the book, which would help to keep cost affordable. (Indications were that most people would be prepared to pay up to £15 for the book).

Potential launch: October/November (possibly linked to 50th anniversary).

Suggested launch event featuring prepared recipes.

Sponsored Creation Walk

Route: Whittlesford, to St Andrew's & St Mary's Church.

Proposed date: **7th June**.

May include lunch/tea.

Nature points of interest along the route.

Other Initiatives

Occasional outdoor coffee and cake gatherings after Mass, intended to include a wider representation of parishioners.

First Holy Communion

We have 8 candidates this year, with catechists Amy, Monica and Natalie. First Confession to be held Mid-May and First Communion Mass on **Sunday 14th June**.

Confirmation

So far we have 3 candidates with catechist Nieve. Confirmation will be held on **12th July**

Parish Quiz (Bernie)

Will be held on 20th March. Publicity is in progress with neighbouring churches having been invited. Suggested donation: £5 (or higher) with funds raised to support CAFOD (Sudan).

2. Parish Hall Refurbishment & Caretaking

It was previously decided that we should investigate costs to refurbish the Church Hall. Nick presented the following items:

- Replace 60 red chairs (£50–£60 each) – approx. £3,000
- Replace carpet with vinyl flooring (Sawston Carpets: removal, latex, installation) – £6,500
- Replace faulty left-side window units (cost unknown)
- Replace blinds (cost unknown – not expected to be high)

Estimated total cost: £10,000–£12,000

There was a suggestion to include toilet refurbishment in plans, with potential provision of additional toilets.

Thanks expressed to Ben and Lilly for hall decoration; rear wall to be completed shortly.

Ben has agreed to act as ad hoc caretaker for minor repairs. Parishioners are invited to report any issues to via the OLOL WhatsApp group.

3. Footprints Café (Peter Lawson)

Peter reported on the current operations of the Café and likely future staffing limitations.

One of five cafés in Sawston, established over 20 years ago, it is a not-for-profit (not a registered charity) organisation whose purpose is to provide training and work experience for people with learning difficulties.

Café faces long-term sustainability challenges. Financial position is currently stable with limited reserves. The key issue is that the volunteer workforce is ageing.

Currently staffed by 2 paid employees, with approx. 12 volunteers.

Café has 9 students involved with typically 2–3 working in the café daily.

Governed by 5 directors.

Works in partnership with the Free Church (quarterly meetings; financial support and volunteers provided).

Volunteer roles are flexible and do not require fixed long-term commitments.

A letter on the nature of the work previously sent to Dominic was read.

Request: Consider whether the OLOL community would enter into dialogue regarding partnership and volunteer support to help sustain the café. This was supported by the group.

There was some discussion as to how to support the Cafe – several suggestions including appealing for volunteers at mass, posting in the newsletter etc. It was also generally felt that support for the café needed to be a broad ecumenical base consisting of all the churches in Sawston.

4. Diocesan 50th Anniversary Celebrations

Planning meetings have begun. Pat is coordinating but will need volunteers to help with the activities.

Key Events to Promote

- 26th June – Feast of the Dedication of the Cathedral (Mass at the Cathedral)
- Walsingham Day
- August: Lourdes
- July: Clare Priory gathering with parish exhibitions

We have been asked to produce a Parish Pamphlet, in A3 folded format, to outline parish history and future vision (10/20/30 years). Parishioners will be asked to contribute any relevant photos they may have. Further content may be hosted on the OLOL website.

Younger parishioners will be encouraged to ask their parents a set of questions to help us understand parish wide history and vision.

8. Parish Charities (Next Two Years)

Support for Mary's Meals has ended. We will be selecting a new charity for the parish to support.

It was agreed that we should support one local and one international charity. A list of local charities was collated which will be used to create a poll on WhatsApp to allow a vote on which charity to support.

Kevin volunteered to seek suggestions from the Keralan community for a Keralan charity, which will be selected in due course.

9. Parish Finances

Peter presented the parish finances. Overall, the finances were reported as healthy with a reasonable surplus (slightly higher than usual due to limited expenditure last year on the parish house among other things).

It was noted that the Diocese is now taking a larger proportion of Gift Aid contributions, which will impact income next year.

In addition to other expenses, it was noted that Bishop Peter had required a £5000 contribution to Walsingham Sisters Mary's House Appeal. Furthermore, he had arranged for the sisters to hold a Mission w/c 22nd March. There was some discussion as to how this had been agreed and it was noted that there had not been a consultation process followed. Disquiet was expressed that the mission had been arranged in the same week that Fr Tony Rogers' retreat was taking place.

5. Spring Garden Watch

When the weather improves there will be another Saturday morning session to tidy the garden (similar to the successful session last year).

Any Other Business

LOLO will be hosting the World Day of Prayer this year on March 6th. Financial support has been requested for the event.

Once again, the absence of and the need to have a Pastoral Council, as required by the Vatican Council on Synodality, was raised. It was suggested that the parish needed to have such a body in order to function effectively.

A request was passed on from Slimming World to place an advertising banner outside the Church. It was decided that this was not appropriate and would likely cause complications due to the church being within a conservation zone.