



Meeting led by Fr Martin. Began at 7:30 p.m.

Opening Prayer (Fr Martin)

Lord of peace,
Bless this meeting, all who gather here,
and the parishes we serve.
Give us patience, goodwill, and a spirit of unity,
that all we say and do may serve Your Church
and bring glory to Your name.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Fr Martin welcomed everyone (40 attendees at various points from the Parish), including Fr Michael, and noted the joy of welcoming back a vocation from the parish.

Fr Michael briefly introduced himself, sharing that he was ordained four years ago, grew up in Springfield, and celebrated Mass in SJP his old school earlier that day and was excited to minister to Chelmsford.

1) Sale of St Philip's Priory. Report by: Andy Jones, Chair of the Finance Committee (OLI)

- After the Norbertine community left, St Philip's Priory required significant work and was not suitable for current Parish needs. As previous meetings noted, the decision was made to sell the property.
- The property was valued at £1.15m being a reasonable sale price in satisfying responsibilities as a charity was placed on the open market.
- St Cedd's School showed early interest and initially agreed a price, but later withdrew, so the property was re-marketed.
- St Cedd's subsequently returned with an offer exceeding the valuation: £1.25m, which was accepted.
- The sale completed in July this year, providing financial stability for the Parish.
- A Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated to mark the closure of St Philip's and to honour its place in Chelmsford's Catholic life. Special thanks were expressed to the Servite Sisters and their dedication to the Chelmsford community.

2) Potential Purchase of Rochester House on New London Road.

- Contracts are ready to be signed after a 12-month wait from the initial offer while St Philip's was sold and the money realised as no loans were available to the Parish.
- The building currently operates as offices and will require renovation.
- Tenders were sought, and a contractor has been chosen.
- Ground floor: to be renovated for parish use.
- Upper two floors: to be converted into accommodation for two priests including living areas, bedroom, office, kitchens each, and an additional guest room an ensuite.
- Parking will largely utilise the space at Our Lady Immaculate Church as the building is in close proximity, being on the corner of New London Road and Anchor Street.

- The purchase of the building and the renovation costs is estimated at £850k. The renovation is expected to take 10 weeks.
- During the work Fr Michael will live at 161 Lucas Avenue close to Holy Name Church, and Fr Martin continues to reside in the guest accommodation at New Hall School.
- Future planning - Once a clearer property vision is finalised, the financial plan across the three linked parishes will be revisited in the New Year.

ACTION POINT 1) It was suggested that a new name for the property would be useful. An initial suggested name was Trinity House. Fr Martin agreed all suggestions warmly welcomed.

3) Parish Office accommodation

- Parish Office currently relocated to St Augustine's Presbytery as a temporary solution during the purchase and work on Rochester House.
- Further decisions on the future of St Augustine's Presbytery on hold.

4) Gospel of Matthew Lectures Autumn 2025 and catechetical programmes and events upcoming.

- Fr Andrew Robinson (Scripture Scholar, Oscott Seminary) will deliver four talks on the Gospel of Matthew, beginning Thursday 6 November at New Hall.
- Subsequent talks and Programmes will rotate across Chelmsford churches, including Blessed Sacrament.
- Eucharistic Ministry training planned before Christmas with commissioning planned for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception to be celebrated 8th December.
- Marriage Alpha Course during Lent (led by Chris & Dominique).
- Parish social events under discussion — potential Ceilidh over Christmas period.
- Parish Council renewal to begin in early 2026.
- Parish synodal group utilising resources from the Diocese of Northampton with Sr Clare planned to help guide synodal process and input from Parish
- 1st October: Knights of St Columba Annual Lecture (Ben Hitchen).

ACTION POINT 2) It was suggested that further talks on the life of the saints particularly those canonised recently would be well received, including Padre Pio. Fr Martin agreed this could be arranged.

5) Organ Project in Our Lady Immaculate Church

- Current organ is second-hand from a United Reformed Church and takes up considerable space in the church and is in very poor condition.
- Temporary organ hired at Easter was well received.
- Proposed solution: acquire the demonstrator model at £38k.
- Proposed funding: £20k bequest received, £1k donation pledged, £8k shortfall remains. Fundraising campaign to be launched.
- Planned adjustments to the organ will free up space: removal of windchest and bellows, including relocation of speakers to improve sound.

6) Forty Hours Devotion in Our Lady Immaculate Church 4th-8th of December.

- Planned for linked parishes leading up to the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.
- Volunteers needed for prayer slots to ensure continuous Adoration.

7) Deacon in Training

- Regan has been at New Hall since Easter last year and is Head of Chaplaincy.
- Married to Gail, with three children. Was a teacher for 23 years before moving into chaplaincy.
- Completed aspirant year at St Mary's.
- Has been working closely with Fr Martin during the summer.
- He gave insights on Diaconate: Deacons have a ministry of Word and Charity.
- Can preside at baptisms, weddings, funerals, proclaim the Gospel, and serve as a bridge for the Bishop between Church and world. Remains in secular employment while serving.
- Hopes to be ordained in 2028.
- Regan encouraged any questions about his role and commitment to serve the Chelmsford Parishes.
- Fr Martin noted that Our Lady Immaculate and Holy Name churches had not had a Deacon for many years, but that St Augustine had be beautifully served by Deacon Kevin for over three decades.

Fr Martin closed the meeting with a Glory Be Prayer at 8:30p.m.