



Dear friends, members, supporters of St James's Church Piccadilly

Rooted in God's earth, we envision a just society and a creative, open-hearted church

However you are part of the life of St James's Church, whether that is as a regular member of the congregation, or an online member, or a supporter or a neighbour, I'm writing to thank you for your ongoing involvement as we find our way through this pandemic together. On Sunday 28th February, we held a meeting on Zoom to keep everyone updated about the work that has been done over the Winter, and the plans for Spring and Summer. Our new vision statement is at the head of this letter, and at the heart of this vision are our core values as we emerge from the Covid 19 crisis: **Contemplation, Adventure, Courage, Action, Kindness**. These values will guide us as we commit to building a more diverse and inclusive community in our city and now, online too.

Rooted in God's Earth

Vision and values mean nothing without action. And prayer is itself taking action. All of St James's activity is rooted in our character as a church formed by contemplation and prayer. This is the 'why' of what we do, and will always be at the core of who we are and how we want to be in the world.

A Just Society

Justice begins with us acknowledging the unjust systems of which we are part. St James's support of and solidarity with people going through homelessness and in the asylum system has continued throughout the lockdowns. We want to expand this but also be part of challenging the multiple injustices of inequality, discrimination, racism and poverty, especially those injustices perpetuated by the church. We are currently exploring partnerships with social enterprise businesses, as we work to make a greater impact than before, helping people experiencing homelessness transform their prospects and their future. We would like to expand our current support of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers fleeing their home countries because of their sexuality.

A Creative and Open-hearted church ('a space to reflect, create, debate')

We are exploring ways to tell the stories of faith and the stories of our society more inclusively and honestly through art, music, poetry, debate, and science.

Art: 'Aftermath' 2021 will include science, poetry, congregational involvement. A new public art commission in partnership with the RA is planned during COP 26 in November. We have some funds, but will need more, to commission a memorial to the abolitionist Ottobah Cugoana, baptised here in 1773, in time for his 250th anniversary in 2023. An open call for proposals will be published in June. A partnership with U3A has brought together experts in wood and stone carving, together with young wood carvers for a documentary film 'Grinling Gibbons: the Michelangelo of carving' available on our YouTube channel in April.

Music: A Piano Festival in June will include performances by outstanding Black classical musicians, severely underrepresented in the classical music world. A new music scholars' scheme is planned for the autumn, recruiting musicians from diverse backgrounds to develop their music practice here for a 12-month programme. The music and spoken-word series 'Soul at Saint James' with our long-standing partners Soul Sanctuary Gospel Choir will be online in a series of short films in April developing spoken word artists exploring inclusive spiritual themes such as 'Solace', 'Hope', 'Love.'

Poetry: St James's has commissioned, in partnership with the Poetry Society, new poems by younger poets to be in conversation with the London poet and prophet William Blake, baptised here in 1757 for a film 'Blake: Now' to be released in April. We are thrilled that the contemporary poet Joseph Coelho has also agreed to be part of this project.

What do we need now?

Is this the kind of community you want to belong to and help shape for the future? We'd love it if you were. If you give regularly, are you able to review this and maybe increase your support? If you make single donations, could you consider becoming a regular giver? This makes a huge difference to our ability to be able to plan and have more impact in our city, community and online. Our government grants are restricted in both activity and time and we need help to get through the next year and into 2022.

You can donate [here](#)

If you are able to donate in any way, or would like more information, please contact Debbie and the team at plannedgiving@sjp.org.uk. For a brief regular newsletter, or to join our electoral roll (an important way to belong to St James's and give you a vote!) please email David Hamilton-Peters, Parish Secretary, secretary@sjp.org.uk.

Henri Nouwen wrote that in Christian communities, 'we accept the call to be deeply, deeply connected with unconditional love, with our own fragile humanity, and with brothers and sisters everywhere.' As we emerge through this pandemic, may it be so with us. And wherever you find yourself these days, however you are doing in this incredibly difficult time, we send you our love and our prayers and our heartfelt thanks for travelling with us.

Lucy Winkett, Rector, on behalf of the Planned Giving Group