



**St James's
Church
Piccadilly**

Report of the PCC Awayday and meeting on 11/12 June

The PCC met for its Awayday on Saturday 11 June in a dynamic interactive session. The main purpose was to discuss and amplify the forward strategy for SJP 2023-26, and specific objectives were identified for all five Missions. Other issues that were addressed were the need for clear communications, involving a new post, and engaging young people aged 18-24. When the strategy is finalized, it will become a public-facing document on the website for all congregation, community, neighbours and stakeholders to see.

The structure of the strategy was agreed:

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

Ambition: A larger, more inclusive, imaginative and influential SJP community, in a transformed site by 2026

Mission 1 - ROOTED: we will encourage environmentally innovative thinking, spirituality and behaviours in our community; enabling more people to connect with Creation

Mission 2 – JUST: we will advocate equity and open-heartedness in our community; contributing to a more just and inclusive society

Mission 3 - CREATIVE: we will strengthen the voice of SJP as a provocateur for good by generating imaginative programmes that stimulate and inspire wider and more diverse communities

Mission 4 - TRANSFORMED: under the Wren Project we will deliver a transformed, welcoming and accessible site that narrate the church's heritage honestly and embraces the future practically and efficiently

Mission 5 – SUPPORTED AND SUSTAINED: we will create and maintain the mission-aligned platform needed to support and sustain 1-4 in partnership with a wide community and with the support of the wider church.

The PCC considered feedback from the Congregational Meeting on 29 May on how the Congregational Objectives are understood by the PCC and SMT in their finalisation of the Strategic Plan.

Feedback in reaction to the four Congregational Objectives already presented was:

1. The 'spiritual deepening and transformation' objective is absolutely central and needs to be seen as such.

2. The meeting focused minds on potentially 2 years of site closure, possibly from 2024, including 8 months of church closure. It is very important that we keep as much going as possible, including activities like Camino, FEAST, pastoral support, online groups etc. We need to keep the church community vibrant throughout the two years, not just a borrowed location for Sunday services. All four discussion groups gave emphasis to this issue. Enthusiasm was expressed for the idea of framing these 8 months as a Camino Pilgrimage to build our community, and its links with others, which would then continue during the two years of development.
3. The 'advocacy' objective needs to state that it means the advocacy of our mission/values.

Feedback on issues not adequately addressed by the four Congregational Objectives was:

4. The congregation wants better communication. It was proposed that this topic should form a fifth Congregational Objective so that it is embedded in the Strategic Plan.
5. There should be a review of the website and Church Suite to consider how these facilities can be made to work better for the congregation itself.
6. Consideration should be given to how we give voice to members of the Sunday congregation in an effective and balanced way (e.g. Weekly Update, resuming congregation notices on a Sunday)
7. We need to aim for better integration of the congregation with itself; so that we don't get siloed. One issue raised was about a perceived generation gap between the younger and more mature members of the congregation, but broader integration might also help a sense of shared ownership of our different activities.

Part of the day was spent productively on PCC members working in pairs and devising specific objectives within the five Missions, presenting these to all the PCC members who then voted as to whether these were appropriate, realistic and realisable and under which Mission they should come. This generated a considerable number of exciting objectives for the future within the overall Strategic Plan.

A well-attended PCC meeting both in person and remotely the following day had, as usual, a full agenda. Among the matters decided were approval of the request for 2023 of our contribution to the Diocesan Common Fund of £93k. This fund, to which all churches are invited to contribute, helps to pay for clergy and other expenses in poorer parts of the diocese which cannot afford to be self-supporting. During the pandemic, St James's paid its costs in full but didn't pay more. The PCC felt that it was right that St James's should now resume paying a percentage over and above its costs to the Diocese in line with the request. As is the practice at every PCC meeting the management accounts and financial figures were reported. 2022 is as challenging as budgeted, and St James's is not raising income each month to cover its expenditure. Therefore, the deficit budgeted for looks accurate. Nick Thasarathar, our Operations Director, and the Senior Management Team are working hard to try to establish a new source of income for every month: for example, we shall now be running the food market on three days rather than two days a week, the hire of the site, buildings and

church will be communicated and marketed. All other income generation ideas are always very welcome.

Following our APCM in May it fell to the PCC to elect both the Lay Vice Chair and Treasurer and the previous incumbents, Wilson Wong and Ben Mariam were elected unopposed and unanimously. They were thanked for both their previous service and also their commitment to another year.

As all will know, Brian Willetts, our Development Director is actively engaged in the ambitious fundraising target so that we can proceed with the exciting Wren Project. The Wren Dinners held in the church have raised £1.3m so far and both individuals and institutions as potential donors have been identified. The American Friends has been set up as a non-profit s.501[c][3] for tax benefits. The target is to raise £20m over the next 12m. Wednesday 14 September is the dinner and auction in New York hosted by Christies, to which a group representing PCC, congregation, staff and clergy will go. Philip Bobbitt (Chair of American Friends) will be hosting an event in Washington's Metropolitan Club. The Earl of Wessex (our Royal Patron) will host the inaugural gala dinner on 27 September at Spencer House (in our parish). There will be other events plus contributions from funds and foundations with expectations of seven figure sums; the Wren Dinners will commence again in October; the Earl of Snowdon is now also supporting us too as the President of the Wren Project. Recruitment to the Development Team is proving very challenging in a very competitive market. Brian as Development Director needs team members to support this effort if it is to be successful. Another round of recruitment will be held shortly.

Lucy Winkett, the Rector, explained in detail the plans for transformation of the site and that in early 2023 we shall decide what we can institute in 2024 depending on the success of the fundraising. She outlined the main elements of the scheme, with which all PCC were familiar: on the south side of the church the original Wren door will be reinstated with a glazed porch allowing wheelchair access. Eternally this will 'open up' the church to the south, and internally these works may also afford a more intimate atmosphere to the side chapel. The 20th century Richardson lights will be retained and become free-standing with strengthening, but the pews shortened and become moveable (the idea of chairs had long been rejected as being less intimate and appropriate): diagrams showed various possible pew configurations. The north door into the Vestry will no longer open to the outside. There will be a new entrance to the east at the location of the current vestry. This will be covered to enable easy access to the church. The gallery of the church will remain largely untouched and there will be a modest improvement to the sightline, but the options were limited: replacing the balustrade with glass panels would have required extra security posts and if the inclination of the gallery pews was made more acute that would take light from the windows. The west door to the church will become the main entrance and step-free access to the garden can be created without removing the tree closest to the church tower. The current Vestry will be relocated to the north porch of the church itself. The current Jermyn Street building will become the Rector's flat. The current Rectory will have full primary cooking kitchens in the basement and a small kitchen in the top floor open space for functions (fire capacity 60 persons). There will be better access through the Jermyn Street archway enabling larger objects to be brought in for events. The railings in Church Place will be removed but retained on the south side; parking

space will remain. The woodland edge garden will enable people to sit under the trees; all ramps are being designed as step free access for all.

We shall need both planning consent (anticipated application summer for approval in September) from Westminster City Council and a faculty (permission to undertake the works) from the Diocese. The following was agreed unanimously: "The PCC resolves to apply to the Chancellor of the Diocese for faculty permission for 'The Wren Project'. To include the restoration and decoration of the church, the commissioning of a new organ, the creation of new public routes N-S and E-W through the site, the re-modelling of the Piccadilly and Jermyn Street ancillary buildings, the re-landscaping of the Southwood Garden to make every part of the site accessible to a wheelchair user without having to ask for help, and the construction of a wooden pavilion for hospitality and events."

Keith Best
PCC Secretary
20/06/22