



St James's  
Church  
Piccadilly

## Report to the Congregation on the Parochial Church Council Meeting of Monday 31 October and the PCC 'Congregational Life' meeting of 6 November 2022

### INTRODUCTION

**Note from the PCC secretary Keith Best:** *Since I last reported on our PCC meeting on 25 July we have had meetings on 29 September and 31 October. On Sunday 6 November after the eucharist there was an hour's session with the congregation explaining the progress of the Strategy and updating on the Wren Project.*

### September's PCC meeting

There was a Powerpoint presentation by the SMT on the fleshed-out Strategy paper especially on rebalancing of the business model from the model built by the Curiosity Society in 2021 to include Development and Fund Raising for running costs as well as the capital project, and the investment needed in the team to achieve this. The PCC commended the imaginative and inspiring response to the huge challenges facing society that the strategy represented, which was the result of 2 years work and consultation with the congregation. The primary issue raised was regarding the financing of the strategy, including confirmation that the reserves policy could be adhered to. According to Charity Commission advice, the St James's reserves policy is to hold 4 months' running costs, and preferably, 6 months. The PCC noted the significant cash flow challenges around the Wren Project, which had confirmed pledges but a current challenge regarding funds received. Funds were expected by the close of 2022 and into 2023 to enable a decision to be taken on the scope of the project by the end of Q1 2023.

A vote was taken on the following propositions:

Approve, in principle, the proposal for rebalancing our operating model throughout 2023/6

Approve, in principle, the strategic objectives and delivery scheme presented

Approve, in principle, the costs of delivery in 2023.

All were passed unanimously.

It was agreed that there should be regular, clear reporting to the PCC on progress, and extra meetings were scheduled in December 2022 and January 2023 to provide close monitoring in what

all acknowledged to be a challenging and volatile financial climate. It was agreed that prudent decision making would require agility and flexibility in a high inflation and often fast changing external environment. The PCC and SMT reaffirmed their intent to work closely together to give the strategy the best possible chance of success.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Policy and the new Diocesan reporting dashboard were introduced. Our HR Officer Jane Gray reported that Jane Preest had stepped down from her role as Safeguarding Officer and St James's safeguarding was now overseen by a team led by Revd Ayla Lepine and Deborah Colvin, the new Safeguarding Officer. The Action Plan needs to come back to the PCC in November; reporting has to be at least twice a year. The Safeguarding Policy was approved along with the Safeguarding Action Plan. Formal thanks were given to Jane Preest for her many years' service as Safeguarding Officer.

### **October's PCC "Congregational Life" meeting**

At the last PCC meeting on 31 October the opportunity was taken to update and revise further HR and governance policies. These were Disciplinary and Dismissal, Retirement, Security & Confidentiality, Whistle-Blowing, Appraisal and Staff Eye Care. An update was given on the number of tenders received for both our audit and legal services and how the selection will be made now that the PCC has delegated this to the SMT. The PCC secretary reminded the meeting that it is part of good practice that every so often a charity should seek tenders for such external services rather than remaining automatically with the current providers, so as to ensure that we get value for money. The main business centred on the concept of a 'Creative, open-hearted church', considering especially the 'Building Community, Deepening Congregation' initiative. The PCC members broke up into separate groups to discuss this under two main themes of [1] voice & community and [2] faith, earth & social justice initiatives. In addition, the PCC looked at some of the 167 responses on post-it notes that had been received from the congregation about the nature, extent and experience of volunteering at the recent Volunteers Lunch. All these will be distilled into a report to be considered in detail. A proposal had been received from the retired bishop and academic Colin Buchanan, that the PCC consider a resolution on electoral reform, in common with other C of E bodies. "This PCC supports election by the single transferable vote in all public elections as being a fairer system in which the voice of electors is treated equally and effectively." A debate followed in which ideas regarding canvassing the congregation or putting the issue into the Newsletter were argued both for and against. It was also discussed that the PCC did not necessarily have to act on any opinion or movement in the congregation which expected the PCC to take decisions on their behalf. It was agreed, however, after discussion, that no action be taken at this time.

### **Congregational Meeting in Church 6 November**

The 2023-26 Strategy was presented to c.70 members of the congregation who remained after the eucharist for an hour. Questions were asked and responded to, primarily concerning the timing and arrangements for the closure of the site during the Wren Project construction phase. With assurances that the strategy was a live document, and would be re-presented at various points during the 3 years, the meeting concluded at 1.45pm.