



Report of the Parochial Church Council Meeting Monday 28 November 2022 18:30-20.40

With all six of our annual PCC meetings now being hybrid (ie attendance both in person and remotely via Zoom link) we had a good participation from PCC members at our last meeting (although two were working abroad) and a lively discussion. The meeting was also attended by our Senior Management Team of Nick Thasarathar (Operations Director), Richard Parry (Creative Director) and Brian Willetts (Development Director) and, for the part on safeguarding, by Jane Gray, Human Resources Adviser. A long-standing member Shirley Dixon had tendered her resignation which was accepted with sadness and profound thanks for her many years of service to SJP. The Rector would write on behalf of the PCC to thank her and would visit her at home.

As always, the meeting started and ended with prayers and any declarations of interest from those present.

It was noted that a few people had asked about the issue of enabling homeless guests to sleep on pews during the day. Prior to lockdown there used to be the 18 pews on the Piccadilly side of the church available and until the pandemic, St James's took part in the Westminster Night Shelter one night a week, not running at the moment. Now, a food outreach coordinator is employed and FEAST, WARDROBE and BREAKFAST have replaced these activities. Reserving and managing people sleeping in the pews during the day had been a significant task for paid staff every day pre pandemic. At the moment, prior to a security review in 2023, with new legislation that SJP will be subject to, we are not yet able to resume this facility but it will be reviewed in 2023.

Turning to financial matters it was noted that after a tendering exercise the firm of Goodman Jones had been appointed as our auditors. Seeking partners aligned with our values, the interview panel were pleased to appoint them at this important time. We look forward to a fruitful ongoing relationship. The projected outturn for the year, albeit with a budgeted deficit, is currently better than budget, but the situation is still volatile and uncertain, and SJP is still under considerable financial strain in common with many churches and central London institutions. The PCC noted the Heart of St James's Christmas Appeal, which would be crucial in raising funds for the ongoing outreach work of SJP. The Finance Manager confirmed the opening of the new NatWest account. The Operations Director took the PCC through the proposed Business Plan and Budget for 2023 (with a modest budgeted surplus) and the associated dashboard which monitors progress monthly. This will be open to further discussion at a separate strategy clinic for the PCC members on 6 December.

The Operations Director then took the PCC through the Risk Register and proposed that the PCC should set up a Finance Committee with experts co-opted on to it so as to give the PCC greater financial expertise. This will now be actively considered in conjunction with the independent Chair of the Audit Committee in agreement.

There was then a lengthy discussion about safeguarding issues (a standing item on PCC agendas).

Deborah Colvin, our new safeguarding officer, introduced the item by asking PCC members in pairs to consider what creates a good safeguarding culture. Responses included: being aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; opportunities to share; having visible champion(s); an understanding of what is in place, in terms of people and policies and procedures; doing everything we can to establish an environment and culture where children and adults are safe from all forms of harm, including harm perpetrated by those who should be working to keep them safe; why safeguarding matters beyond the statutory obligations; everyone understands processes in place to keep people safe; looking at how we recruit volunteers etc.

Revd Ayla Lepine then took the PCC through the Safeguarding Dashboard online. Categories included, for example, has the Parish Safeguarding Officer received proper training, is there safer recruitment, does everyone have access to the policy – the attitude should be that everyone is a loved child of God. The Safeguarding Team is Revd Ayla Lepine, Deborah Colvin, Jane Gray and now to include Nick Thasarathar for the meetings.

We have a designated safeguarding email address: safeguarding@sjp.org.uk to which only Revd Lucy Winkett, Revd Ayla Lepine, Deborah Colvin and Jane Gray have access. There have been 7 significant safeguarding cases since July, 5 resolved and 2 ongoing. Newsletter updates and sharing the Policies and Procedures document are to ensure everyone has seen it and knows safeguarding is a priority. The incidents reporting process has been reviewed and updated with a new form and clarity regarding the safeguarding brief and incidents/site brief. Jane Gray dealt with the updated Policies and Procedures document (handbook). Revd Ayla Lepine reminded the meeting that SJP mostly deals with the pastoral needs of vulnerable adults and she confirmed that pastoral care is being offered. The PCC thanked the small group who deal with safeguarding issues and asked that they made sure they themselves had appropriate support.

Revd Lucy Winkett gave an update on tenders for legal services and that four firms of very high calibre had been interviewed with the choice of Bates Wells to have an ongoing professional relationship with us for our legal needs.

Deborah Colvin raised the issue of a letter which was produced at the meeting on behalf of one of the 168 churches in the Diocese registered as an Eco Church urging the Bishop's Council Finance Committee meeting on 1 December to hold to its previous recommendation to divest and the Bishop's Council to reconsider and reverse its previous decision and resolve to divest from fossil fuel companies. The PCC agreed to support this.

Keith Best, PCC Secretary, 06/12/2022