

## Parochial Church Council Meeting Monday 24 April 2023 Congregation Report

The PCC meeting on the evening of Monday 24 April was another full agenda with much discussed and many important decisions taken.

The meeting was attended at the beginning by representatives of the law firm Bates Wells and the accountants Goodman Jones both of whom have been appointed as our legal advisers and auditors after a comprehensive tendering exercise.

Bates Wells attended the meeting for their advice while the PCC examined the proposal to set up a subsidiary trading company wholly owned by the church. The commercial income from activities which fall outside our charitable objects can be channelled through this subsidiary. Any profits of the trading company are then covenanted to the church. This is an arrangement which is practised by many charities. The PCC wished to be assured that any such commercial activities were consonant with the ethos of the church and that these will be safeguarded by the Rector, a senior PCC member, one of the Senior Management Team and an independent person being directors of the trading company. The decision was approved unanimously.

The audited 2022 PCC Annual Report & Accounts were discussed in detail and there was satisfaction that the end of year outturn was better than had been anticipated in the budget with income higher and expenditure lower than was forecast. It was noted, however, that in FY2022, we ended the year in deficit, albeit one smaller than forecasted. The church still needed to generate income from as many sources as possible including the congregation. Goodman Jones presented the audit report, commended the excellent work of our finance manager RD and departed when the finance discussions ended.

The proposal to set up a Finance Committee was also approved and that, for the first year, it should be amalgamated with the Audit Committee to form the Finance & Audit (Risk) Committee. The independent chair would be the current chair of the Audit Committee. This would mean that the combined Committee would meet four times a year (currently, the Audit Committee meets twice: to consider the budget in the autumn and the Annual Report & Accounts in the spring). The PCC would receive four reports a year from the combined Committee. The Finance Committee differs from the Audit Committee in that it is more focused on internal financial controls and mechanisms and how to improve financial reporting delivery. This new committee gives needed increased oversight, scrutiny and support for SJP financial management.

The Rector, Associate Rector and three Senior Management Team directors leading the five programmes of work [Voice & Community, Faith, Earth & Social Justice Initiatives, Culture & Diversity, Transformation & Rebalancing and Sustainability & Resilience] then gave progress reports on their areas of activity using the information

on the SJP management dashboard. The dashboard is updated regularly and accessible to all PCC members at any time. The Rector highlighted the danger of being “too risk averse” in the face of an ever-changing external environment and that the church must remain brave and focussed on its vision of becoming more inclusive, imaginative and influential. She noted that increased contributions from the Friends of St James’, raised by the Development Department, is welcome income, although Congregational giving is back now at around 6% of overall income for SJP. The Associate Rector mentioned that the new Volunteer Co-ordinator Mac Olagoke started that day. The Development Team and Giving Team meet quarterly and ongoing communication and joint working is vital. In response to the objective of ‘increasing capacity’ at Feast, she confirmed that the Feast space is for 33 guests: we have 50 volunteers on the books to assist but far fewer turn up regularly or are active, – so there is a great need for more volunteers to assist in preparing and distributing the food on a Monday early evening.

The Creative Director (Richard Parry) reported that Piano Festival and Preach had been culturally successful programmes with large numbers of tickets sold, especially for the former. Preach was innovative and important with excellent feedback on the night. The Burial Grounds exhibition is currently attracting c. 200-250 people per day. We have worked to unlock free advertising on Google to assist in ticket sales.

The Development Director (Brian Willetts) said that we have a new Wren Project brochure and revamped website section. We are receiving £5,843 per month through the Friends scheme, including local businesses. The Gala Dinner raised £389k on the night for the Wren Project. There are three other upcoming events such as the art auction on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, King Singers on 17 June and a Women’s lunch at the end of June. We have received a significant donation for the Chelsea Flower Show Garden next year.

The Operations Director (Nick Thasarathar) reported that wifi has been increased in the church and courtyard; two newly refurbished rooms are available for hire in the basement of the Rectory; the alcohol licence obtained, and we are training licence holders. There has been an increase in enquiries for dry hire. Our new security partner is providing 7 days a week cover which is more effective and proactive protection than previously. Approval has been given for CCTV in the church and courtyard as added security. We are rolling out our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). There has been a useful skills audit input from the survey of the congregation.

The Management Accounts for the first quarter of the year were accepted with the realisation that much more income needs to be generated from Q2 onwards.

The PCC also confirmed earlier electronic resolutions that will give permission from the Diocese for the commissioning of the chosen artist Che Lovelace, for original artwork to be placed in the narthex of the church commemorating the 250th anniversary of the baptism of Quobna Ottobah Cugoano on 20 August 1773 and for the placing of a relevant plaque in the interior of the north wall of the church.

At every meeting of the PCC there is a standing item on safeguarding so that any new developments or issues can be raised – this is an issue taken most seriously by SJP.

The Associate Rector reported that there is now new software and further training is being arranged.

On behalf of the PCC, the Rector acknowledged the service of both Church Wardens and the Lay Vice Chair, who had served their full terms of 6 years each, with grateful and heartfelt thanks for exceptional service, especially during the pandemic and guiding SJP through all the changes of recent years.

#### Post meeting note from the PCC Secretary

We very much hope that you will want to participate fully in the programmes and in the life of the church. To that end it is not too late, if you are on the electoral roll, to put your name forward as a Church Warden, Deanery Synod Representative, or member of the PCC for the elections to be held at our Annual Parochial Church Meeting in the church after the morning service on Sunday 14 May. Even if not standing or on the electoral roll we very much hope that you will be with us for the meeting. Please contact me if you need any further details.

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