

## **Churchwardens' report for APCM May 2023**

Not only are we at the end of another church year but, for us, we are also at the end of an eventful six years so this is the last you will be hearing from us... We have been very fortunate again this year in having the much-valued support and collaboration of our extended wardening team, and we would like to express our appreciation for everything that Jen Veall and Claire Wright have contributed as Assistant Wardens.

### **Governance**

The new governance structure and senior management team are now firmly embedded, and we have been keeping an overview of the strengths and challenges presented by these really significant changes. The organisation has moved forward rapidly on many fronts, and as you can see from the Rector's report, each of the five directorates has had significant impact. In such a dynamic environment, churchwardens can play a useful role in ongoing monitoring of systems and structures, and we aim to help make the transition for our new wardens into this aspect of the role as smooth and effective as possible.

### **Strategic plan**

This year saw the swinging into action of the much planned and anticipated 2023-2026 strategic plan, following a huge amount of hard work by our Operations Director, Nick Thasarathar. We have got to grips with dashboard reporting and supported PCC training in this area to promote effective communication. We liaise with the Operations Director on a regular basis, on a range of issues, including for example installation of CCTV and new security arrangements. We continue to be involved in staff appointments, most recently that of our new Volunteering Coordinator. Trevor has taken on the role of champion for the Music Scholars programme and is currently supporting the Director of Music in recruiting new scholars.

### **New Associate Rector and congregational life**

We were closely involved in the appointment of Revd Ayla. Her arrival has made a huge impact on implementation of congregational initiatives. We have worked with her on the 'Building Community, Developing Congregational Life' strategy, and in building a new structure for pastoral support. The lunches for volunteers earlier in the year, and the monthly newcomers' lunches in the Rector's flat have been particularly important in rebuilding our communal life after the pandemic. Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, a stalwart and committed group of 'church sitters' maintained a dignified and pastoral presence throughout the period of national mourning. We are hugely grateful to these volunteers. Deborah has been working with Ayla on Earth Justice elements of programme 2 and as Safeguarding Officer, and Trevor is involved in the planning of church retreats.

### **Wren project**

We joined the newly established Wren project board which maintains oversight of all aspects of this large and complex project. We have attended fundraising gala events including the dinner at Spencer House, Christmas gala concert, and the recent auction of

art works by Royal Academicians held at Christie's. We lent our support to the final site visit by the Diocesan Advisory Committee which foreshadowed the granting of faculty permission and climbed to the 18<sup>th</sup> floor of Westminster City Hall, where we waited with bated breath for planning permission to finally be granted - followed by a celebratory visit to 'The Albert' nearby in Victoria St...

### **In conclusion...**

As mentioned, it's been an eventful six years and the St James's of 2023 is almost unrecognizable from the St James's of 2017. And yet, there is no doubt that the unique spirit of this place continues to thrive through all those who come, stay and leave. Thank you to all of you for your part in this community.

Deborah Colvin and Trevor Lines