

**Parochial Church Council Q3 Meeting
Monday 25 September 2023 18:30**

Congregational Report

There was a significant agenda with some important decisions to make regarding the second year of the 2023-26 strategy and other future plans. The meeting was dominated by a detailed debate about both the current financial year and 2024. In 2023, forecasts to the end of the year look extremely challenging. The budget the PCC signed off forecast a surplus, but the challenges in achieving this in 2023 are very significant. Income generation is a big focus and significant challenge. Juggling priorities such as hiring the site, the rectory rooms, the food market, holding concerts (for which ticket sales are not high enough) and attempting to recover some of the financial shortfalls in the creative programme will mean both looking for savings and focusing on income generation until the end of the year. The financial situation is extremely difficult in the current climate, and reports were received from the Development and Fund Raising team, who are working very hard to make the budget balance, and aim to achieve the surplus at the end of the year.

The series of ongoing events celebrating the baptism of Quobna Ottobah Cugoano was noted as impactful, important and reported around the world. It was affirmed as a creative way to amplify the voice of Cugoano in the story of abolition, and SJP was honoured to be part of doing this. At the same time, narrating the history as honestly as possible, with the complicity of members of St James's never ignored in the slave trade conversation. The new opera by Rachel Jones was innovative and popular and the PCC are committed to the adventurous and impactful creative programme, but also discussed the realities that financial support is needed to do so.

There was a strong plea from our Church Wardens for the PCC to keep explaining the finances to the congregation, especially how and where the money is spent. It was observed that some people in the congregation may see a number of staff working at SJP and don't understand why the congregation is being asked to give as part of their belonging to St James's. The PCC will work harder at communicating the finances clearly, given that SJP, unlike some other churches has no endowment fund. If SJP wants to continue to be the sort of church that runs both social outreach and creative programmes, and wants to run a safe and open site 7 days a week, the finances will be a challenge. SJP can't afford many full time staff, so many are on short term contracts or are part time. The point was made that the Development Team raise their own costs and so are not paid for by SJP Congregation. In discussion it was clarified that the Congregation share of the income generated is something like 12% annually, so the vast majority of the income is raised by the working staff during the week. In running a 7 day a week lively creative ministry, many activities have financial risks associated with them but, in order to move

forward in a dynamic way, the PCC accepted these risks noting that they are all financial ones.

There was a detailed debate about the 2024 Business Plan and budget (which is at this stage planned as break-even). The general principles of the Business Plan were approved by the PCC. It was explained that 2024 is the middle year in the current three-year strategy. One key focus therefore is that next year we shall need to find another location for when the church is closed for the Wren Project building works. This is an ongoing strand of activity and planning. There was a discussion about how SJP social outreach relates to services provided by other nearby churches. Some of the discussion was around whether Feast, Breakfast and Wardrobe could really be described as social justice projects; it's more part of SJP 'radical welcome'. The Cugoano250 art commission was more in the social justice space. The PCC had an in depth discussion about priorities, and affirmed that the creative programme was a vital part of SJP's voice, alongside the social and earth justice programmes. But the way that the creative programme was being delivered had to be 'de-risked' financially for 2024.

The PCC passed a resolution seeking faculty permission from the Diocese to install a memorial plaque for the pioneering choreographer Dame Gillian Lynne, whose memorial service was at St James's in 2019.

At all PCC meetings there is a standing item on Safeguarding and at this meeting the Safeguarding Working Group Terms of Reference were considered and approved. There is obligatory DBS training for all PCC members (who are also trustees of the church as a charity) as well as Basic and Foundation courses to be completed.

Keith Best
PCC Secretary
9/27/2023