

**Parochial Church Council Meeting
Monday 11 December 2023 Q4
Congregational Report**

The PCC Secretary, Keith Best writes...

One of the most important functions of the PCC is to monitor and comment on the finances of the church. Management accounts are produced monthly and the latest ones are discussed in the quarterly PCC meetings alongside the budget and forecasts to the end of the year. Although they take time to prepare, through a sterling effort of our Finance Director Radames Delgado, the November accounts were made available for the PCC at its last meeting. As usual, they showed many ups and downs in a very volatile environment as SJP is now reliant on fundraising from a variety of sources and has a system of giving a percentage of what is expected depending on its likelihood of being received (so an invoiced amount counts for more than just a pledge or expression of intent).

SJP finances

What the accounts showed is that, to date, we are heading towards a small deficit at the end of the calendar (accounting) year (but so much depends on the success of the Christmas Appeal - which we shall not know until after the end of the year). Earlier in the year the Creative Department had suffered a significant variation against their budgeted income in the first quarter. The high quality and adventurous programme was critically acclaimed and achieved much in raising the profile of SJP and attracted new audiences. Nevertheless, it struggled to generate budgeted income from ticket sales and people often only buying tickets at the last moment. As soon as these losses were registered remedial action was taken promptly. In reality, however, the 2023 finances had not been able to recover to budget. SJP reserves have been stretched but are currently on course to be within SJP policy at year end. The reserves policy will be reviewed at the PCC Awayday on 20 January and specific advice on this point will be received from SJP's auditors. The key issues are what is the appropriate level of reserves for a charity and a church of our size, how much of those reserves are unrestricted, designated or restricted and if the reserves dip below the policy threshold, which they do from time to time, how they are replenished and to what level. The PCC is taking advice on all this from the independently chaired Finance and Audit (Risk) Committee and from our auditors. If the free reserves are under the policy level at year end the PCC will consider undesignating some of its other funds. The PCC awayday on 20 January is the next decision point for the Wren Project also.

Christmas Appeal

The PCC were told that the Christmas Appeal 'Christmas for All' has now been launched (with £49k raised so far and an online auction which includes the American Friends which is worth c.£80k, depending on the bids received). We need the Christmas Appeal to do very well to ensure that the year-end deficit is kept to the minimum and also to maximise the amount we can give to The Passage, the charity with which we are partnering this year. The amount needed is £194k before the end of the year, which is extremely challenging. The profile of SJP and its work and ethos are still relatively unknown in the immediate neighbourhood, although thanks to the Wren Project this profile is rising.

2024 Business Plan and Budget

An important item of business for the PCC was to examine carefully and then sign-off on the Business Plan and Budget for 2024. There was encouraging information from the Development Team that Ted Smyth their Trusts & Foundations Manager is now increasingly negotiating three-year funding from these sources so that we are building assured future revenue for 2025 and 2026. The Plan incorporates a new staffing structure which separates our work into identifiable projects with specified persons in charge of each and also looks to our recent partnership with St Pancras whereby we can save on back-office costs by sharing that load across both churches in an efficient way. The PCC agreed unanimously to proceed with this and to review it again at the Awayday on 20 January.

St Pancras Partnership

There was an enthusiastic and broad discussion about our partnership with St Pancras which is separately set out in Lucy's comments in the Newsletter. There had been a whole day meeting with St Pancras which was very productive and they are as keen and enthusiastic about the partnership as ourselves. The Tuesday evening Sanctuary Service has already migrated there. First step is to provide Estates Management support for St Pancras shared with St James's. There is much to be done and together the two PCCs are optimistic about rebuilding the congregation which has been decimated by the pandemic. Suggestions during the discussion for closer working include a mutual PCC social evening in late January, an SJP pilgrimage to St Pancras etc. Together we shall create a Three-Year Plan for the Diocese (the Diocese will provide funding for the cost of a new priest at St Pancras to work as part of the SJP clergy team). SJP will review with St Pancras the possibilities for income generation, staffing and use of premises.

Safeguarding

In our PCC meetings we have a regular slot on Safeguarding and all PCC members are presently undergoing training on this. We also review existing policy so as to ensure that it remains current and appropriate: at this meeting we reviewed Social Media Policy and agreed the Code of Commitment for PCC members with our Young People's Policy, Children's Policy and the Risk Register as well as the Business Continuity Plan flagged up for future consideration.

PCC and Congregation Communications

PCC members and church wardens agreed to be available in the side chapel after the Sunday service as soon as the congregational report of the PCC meetings were available. For this one, they will be in the side chapel for conversation on Sunday 7 January 2024. In addition, as your PCC secretary, I do hope that anyone who wishes any further clarification or information will feel free to contact me directly.

I should like to wish personally all our congregation and their loved ones an enjoyable and peaceful Christmas and a wonderful New Year in which I look forward to meeting and getting to know more of you and seeing you participating in the friendship and work of SJP.

Keith Best PCC Secretary E: pcc@sjp.org.uk