

Parochial Church Council Meeting Monday 5 February 2024 18:30-20.45 Congregational Life

Report to the Congregation

As by now you may know the PCC meets six times a year with four being business meetings and two being devoted to Congregational Life, as was the last one on 5 February. There was a discussion on safeguarding and how Diocesan procedures have been transformed over the last five years with more robust and detailed reporting, each parish having to complete a dashboard, etc. The safeguarding team at St James's is publicised and the quarterly meetings are chaired by Ayla as Associate Rector. Consideration was given to ensuring that our Walking Boots walks include maximum safety and ensure that our insurance remains valid (which covers such activity). The PCC was satisfied with the example of a risk assessment form which had been circulated. It was agreed that such an assessment prior to each occasion would include safeguarding, a checklist of issues such as gradients to be encountered and any allergies regarding the meal afterwards.

There was a small group exercise regarding communication between the PCC and the wider congregation and other stakeholders. A mapping exercise was done which looked at different groups or key 'audience segments' with which we should communicate such as longstanding members, the emerging generation / Gen Z, existing givers, non or occasional givers, regular and sporadic givers, the online community and regional / non-London based people and those in the London catchment area, those in their 30s who may not see the church as relevant. And acknowledging that within all of these groups there was a wide range of belief and Christian commitment, including people who had been part of St James's for years and others who were new.

The meeting then broke up into three discussion groups: [1] Wren Project (including Chelsea Flower Show) [2] Business Plan and Budget and [3] Congregational Life (e.g., Sunday activities, pace, giving, St Pancras partnership, St Bart's partnership).

The Wren Project group wanted to communicate that the project is much more than a building project as the transformed site will be amazing, enabling:

- full disabled access
- more rooms to meet in
- more, better concerts
- sustainable church

Things are already happening (people might think nothing has happened as there are no 'spades in ground' yet):

- partnership with St Pancras - already enriching us and not just a place where we decant during the Wren construction phase
- planning permission has been granted in full
- faculty permission has been granted
- a new partnership with Redemption Roasters has begun

We need to enable the Congregation to understand the time that fund raising takes and why it will be another two years before we decant to St Pancras and building work starts. There was a strong feeling to want to see the Congregation more involved with a sense of common ownership so that all feel we are on an exciting journey together.

The Strategy, Business Plan and Budget group wanted to make sure that people know the 'Rooted in God's earth' vision is real. At the moment the world and many feel sad and anxious and there is great need for an open-hearted church like SJP and a project like Wren.

It is important to emphasise that whilst there are some new/pilot activities, the core activities stay the same so that there is much continuity as well as change. It is especially important to stress that the Wren Project and church running costs are different and that we are not a rich church.

Even though the creative programme might be being delivered in a different way, we have always been a creative church and we should engage with the congregation about this.

The Congregation Group considered communications especially with those who cannot or do not read the newsletter, returning to pre-pandemic things such as a poster in the narthex with names, details and photographs of PCC members, a suggestion box or suggestion/question slips on the pews for completion, questions such as what should the church be doing. The online newsletter readership is monitored and this shows a significant difference as to the readership depending on when it is circulated. Perhaps we should be more provocative in order to stimulate responses from the congregation. We should explain on the website and elsewhere how easily the material can be translated on a mobile phone into other languages. We should resume posting short video clips on the work of the church.

The PCC wants to develop mechanisms in which we ask the congregation what issues should be discussed by the PCC before the PCC meetings as well as during sessions after the Sunday service. Also, we wish to know how the congregation wishes to communicate with the PCC and not just the other way around.

We need to find a way of bringing the strategy to life; the Temple diagram works for the PCC but not necessarily the congregation? We should agree and keep to an overarching, consistent message / set of key messages. Perhaps a WhatsApp Group or a Zoom for 'emerging generation' audiences; newcomers' lunches - building on the successes to date, explain the finance position simply on one page

with diagrams for people who like diagrams and bring Wren to life through variations on the model/film.

Finally, it was agreed that we should continue to offer the regular drop-in chats with PCC members after the Sunday services in line with the PCC meeting cycle to keep the momentum going after the last session showed promise; ask the congregation what issues should be discussed by the PCC before the PCC meetings during the sessions after the Sunday service and, also, ask the congregation how they wish to communicate with the PCC, rather than assuming.

Keith Best
PCC Secretary
12 February 2024