

## **PCC Awayday**

**Saturday 20 January 2024**

### **Congregational Report**

A very productive Awayday was held at the Oxford & Cambridge Club, Pall Mall, for the PCC members together with our project manager for the Wren Project to discuss this, the level of our reserves, our relationship with St Pancras, communications with the Congregation of SJP and other issues.

### **Wren Project**

A comprehensive paper had been circulated with the original decision-making framework set out, indicating the thresholds for funds that could trigger the stages of work. It was noted that a new and more accurate fundraising forecasting system had been adopted since the last decision point and a strong, robust due diligence process had also been shaped. The paper included a reminder that the fundraising feasibility study commissioned by the PCC in February 2020 through Brakeley consultants estimated that given SJP was starting from scratch with fundraising, a Five-Year campaign was needed to raise the significant sum for the whole project. From the time of re-starting the Wren Project after the pause caused by the pandemic, SJP was 2.5 years into its campaign. Independent advice indicated that forecasting and timing of major fundraising campaigns was notoriously difficult to predict but the more cautious and accurate forecasting tool that had been adopted of percentage estimates was the right one.

PCC members agreed that overall they could see that the campaign has good momentum and has achieved impressive results in terms of funds raised and relationships developed. They particular noted that St James's relationships with its physical neighbours have been transformed in the past 2.5 years. Given the timing of the granting of Planning Permission (February 2023) and the very recent granting of Faculty permission (August 2023) together with fund raising momentum, the Senior Management Team recommendation was to fundraise for a further 12 months and reconvene in January 2025 for a decision on how to proceed which the PCC agreed unanimously.

### **Reserves**

The PCC's current reserves policy is to aim for the Charity Commission advice of 4 months church running costs, although current free reserves are under this because of the 2023 year end. There are additional designated reserves which the PCC could undesignate at any time but the policy under consideration covered free reserves. Members agreed that as a registered charity, it was essential for SJP to follow Charity Commission guidance. It was agreed to ask both The Audit & Finance (Risk) Committee and our auditors for their views and plan accordingly.

### **St Pancras capacity building**

There was continued enthusiasm and support was expressed for the partnership with a joint PCC party planned for 31 January. Funding applications had been submitted to increase capacity substantially and it was hoped that these would be successful and at the same time relieve pressure on SJP capacity overall.

### **Changemaker Foundation**

Revd Dr Mariama Ifode-Blease gave an update on the 'Task and Finish' group working on the detail of the Changemaker Programme which included congregation members and US Friends. More detailed papers were being worked up to include selection criteria, KPIs, syllabus, partners and so on. This work would be dovetailed with NLHF Activity Planners in the first two quarters of 2024.

### **Congregational Communications**

As a result of several comments throughout the awayday during all sessions, the PCC decided to set up a 'Task and Finish' group led by the Associate Rector, to include Head of Communications, PCC members and Development Department staff to improve PCC/staff communication with the congregation. It was agreed that this was not going particularly well in some areas and this needed dedicated attention and resource: particular areas included strategy communications, the longer story behind the development and changes and The Wren Project. The coms work should be focused on the vision, the journey and story that the PCC were familiar with in detail but the congregation at large were less familiar with. This to include but not be limited to or focused on the Development Department activity on behalf of St James's.

After some small group work, several ideas were put forward such as (a) permanent exhibition in the church explaining the Wren Project (along the lines of the public consultation boards which were up during 2023) (b) a series of videos (c) regular blogs and (d) Virtual Reality. The point was made and accepted that different people learn in different ways and so a Congregation Communications Strategy should be crafted as part of the overall Communications Strategy which the Head of Communications was prioritising this year.

Keith Best  
PCC Secretary  
29 January 2024