

Congregational Report on Parochial Church Council Meeting Monday 2 September 2024 on Congregational Life

Your Parochial Church Council, the governing body which is elected by all those on the electoral roll at the Annual Parochial Church Council meeting in May, has six meetings in the year - four of them are quarterly business meetings scrutinising the finances and operations of the church and two are focussed on congregational life in which the spiritual dimension and activities of the church are considered.

The last meeting on 2 September was on congregational life and there were three presentations which had been prepared by the staff responsible for each of the activities. The first was delivered by Robin Campbell on Food Outreach. Robin took us through the origin and delivery of FEAST, Sunday Breakfast and Wardrobe all of which rely heavily on volunteers and the recent volunteer party which was held had been greatly appreciated. FEAST has been running since April 2021 and is reliant on the relationship with City Harvest for fresh produce. We save c.2.5 tons of food annually which would otherwise go to landfill. Robin raised the question for the PCC: what else can we offer beside food such as health and medical services. On Wardrobe an Amazon wishlist has been created for specific donations; storage room reorganisation is needed. The PCC then broke into discussion groups from which emerged the need for surveys, feedback on the impact on individuals, what is preventing access to housing, what gaps are we filling; also, do we need more partnerships eg with The Passage, Homes for Good; there is a need for more resources into finding and training volunteers (some have waited a long time to get DBS checked as required when dealing with vulnerable people). The appointment of the new post Outreach Projects and Partnerships Manager will provide more capacity in this area.

The second presentation on Congregational Giving was prepared by Hannah Prime with Ayla Lepine. It was pointed out that by the end of 2024 on current trends we shall have a shortfall of £7k on the target for Congregational Giving through regular donations, and a £5k shortfall for the specific fund raising idea that hadn't been progressed: a total of £12k. With regard to the music scholars, it was explained that a member of the congregation had funded the music scholars for the initial three years while the scheme got going, but this funding has now finished. The Development team have made a number of applications to foundations, but the challenge had been put to the congregation after the last PCC update that maybe the congregation could get involved. £25k is the annual cost, and so the contributions from the congregation are much appreciated. Topics from the discussion groups were the feeling that people need a specific purpose for giving, not just meeting a budget; maybe the Compline recording of the music scholars in Yorkshire, once produced, could be used for fundraising; we need to provide motivation for giving. PCC members suggested it would be helpful to talk to those who do not give to ascertain why; it is important to fundraise for specific items of keeping the church open such as heating, lighting even toilet rolls! The Giving Stories on a Sunday are proving popular.

The third presentation had been prepared by Max Fedyk and was on Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support. There are now 50 members of the International Group (IG). There is encouragement for members to take leadership roles- current referral is by word of mouth. The issue of bringing together the IG members with wider congregation was raised as an ongoing challenge. Topics that were discussed included: can we make a dedicated space,

how best to provide monitoring and guidance? Topics from discussion groups indicated that there is a wide group at SJP who are interested in this so we should engage with them:

In the constant desire to improve communications between the church, PCC and congregation there are plans to deliver focus groups.

Finally, there was a discussion about next steps with regard to Lucy Winkett's recent sermon on the breakaway faction opposed to the ordination of women and the blessing of same-sex relationships. It was noted it had been printed in the Church Times and had almost 10k views on Youtube. It was noted that the General Synod is split 52-48 on the issue of same sex blessings. The question was whether raising the SJP voice on this issue should be prioritised over existing SJP work, and can the Deanery Synod Representatives do something eg pass a resolution at Deanery Synod. There were differing views from taking this campaign forward to not letting it detract from existing work but it was agreed that support should be sent to our Bishop.

The opportunities for such discussions are greatly appreciated by the PCC and we very much hope that if you have views on any of this you will write to me so that I can pass them on.

Keith Best
PCC Secretary
9 September 2024