

**Parochial Church Council Meeting
Monday 27 October 2025 18:30-20:00 Quarter 3**

Congregation Report

Our PCC meetings are characterised by good discussions and forthright expressions of views. Usually ending up with consensus and an agreed way forward, robust and often differing views are expressed and discussion is always lively, friendly and with clear commitment to St James's at heart.

We experienced that during our latest PCC meeting at which some challenging agenda items had to be considered. The PCC took a look at the first draft Business Plan and Budget for 2026 and considered the implications of the November deadline for the final submission of our bid for the next stage of the grant from the National Heritage Fund (worth more than £4.5m in total). This is both exciting and nerve-wracking because we have to show that we have raised sufficient funds ourselves to trigger the grant. We want to put our bid in this month with our match funding in place or thereabouts: the decision will be taken in March 2026 by their London & South Committee. With the Heritage Fund, the decision is all or nothing - no half-way house: we either get the full amount or nothing at all! That is why Brian our Development Director and his team are working so hard to convert expressions of financial support or pledges from potential donors into firm plans or cash in the bank. More of this in a moment.

Another feature of our PCC meetings is the high turnout as it was on 27 October: only one apology from a member abroad and another on sabbatical otherwise all others of the nineteen were there (two by virtual link). We always start with a prayer led by one of our PCC members. This time, we then had a group photograph and a presentation from Derrie Shurville, our Digital Communications Officer (to whom we give great thanks for our weekly newsletter). She came to brief the PCC on how all of us - including every member of the congregation - can make a huge contribution to St James's during the week of the Big Give 2-9 December. This week in December is a special few days which all that we can raise from whatever source is match-funded by the Government and other trusts and foundations. It's a week where every £1 donated becomes £2 and is a huge opportunity for St James's to help ourselves get to the end of the year and break even. A short film is being made featuring members of our congregation, International Group, staff and clergy and every member of our congregation will be asked to share it and help publicise the work of St James's to make the most of the Big Give match funding opportunity.

The draft Business Plan & Budget 2026 (which will be signed off finally by the PCC meeting in December after scrutiny by the Audit & Finance (Risk) Committee in November) was discussed in detail at this meeting. Two persistent issues remain at a time when St James's is focussing on getting the Wren Project funding together, alongside ensuring that our core activity - core church services and social outreach - flourishes. The greatest expenditure is people - our staff - and once again, it was reported that all staff capacity is very stretched. PCC members gave feedback regarding the 2026 plan, commenting that the pace of activity and stretch remains very high. The question was considered as to what activities should be paused or stopped, in this intense period. The difficulty, of course, is knowing what that might be, when all that we do is so integral to our mission. As always, funding is the key to our continuance with all our activities. The PCC affirmed the priorities for 2026: [1] Wren Project with a Heritage Fund decision in March 2026 [2] Church & Outreach work

but with no major new initiatives, [3] St Pancras partnership as part of the preparation for moving during the Wren construction

We are continuing to develop our relationship with St Barts in New York so as to build a closer engagement between our two congregations, within which we too are fundraising for the Wren Project, and we have established a NY Steering Group, chaired by Steven Overman, one of our PCC members who has worked previously with the SJP congregation in our 'Season of Listening'. Our first online meeting with the Interim Rector and others from St Barts is in early November.

There was a detailed briefing on the status and development of the Wren Project by Ross Ingham <https://www.inghampinnock.com/>. Ingham and Pinnock are the Wren Project coordinators. In briefing the PCC, Ross split the next period up into three phases: [1] progress during next two weeks (before submission to the Heritage Fund) [2] what the Heritage Fund involvement looks like if SJP were successful in their bid and [3] resources and how it will be organised.

On [1] we are on target to submit to the Heritage Fund (HF) before the deadline in November. This is a major piece of work: our final submission for HF Round Two funding is being finalised now. This will then be assessed over the next few weeks, including a site visit from the decision makers, before it goes to London & South of England Regional Committee which will meet at the end of March for a final decision.

On [2] Ross described a Heritage Fund five year involvement. Spring 2026 to Spring 2027 will be RIBA stage 4 (detailed) design and procuring a contractor before the congregation moves to St Pancras for Sundays; the contractors will probably be on site for two years (the plan is that they would be able to release the church after one year but until a contractor is procured this is not certain). After the construction phase, in 2029, the whole SJP site should be fully active. The Heritage Fund remain involved for a further two years, bringing to life the Activity Plan, which HF have designed with thorough consultation with congregational groups, PCC and staff. At end of five years will be a project evaluation and closing down with the Heritage Fund with some legacy conditions.

Finally, on [3] the Project Management Plan: the PCC is always the ultimate decision maker, but management of the project is delegated through the Senior Management Team (our COO Nick Thasarathar is Wren Project Champion) and the Wren Project Board. Ross reported that in their wide experience of managing projects, this governance structure is clear and simple, ensuring good information flow and decision making. Key actors are involved in all three levels plus a series of thematic sub-groups eg Design & Planning, Contractor, Activity Plan etc. If the Round Two bid is successful, there will be four new staff for the Activity Plan all funded through the Heritage Fund, helping SJP with its capacity stretch.

On our relationship with St Pancras Euston Road, I reported that we are having regular monthly review meetings alternating between in person and virtual which ensure that we are keeping track of all developments and that our move there when building work starts at SJP will be smooth. We are delighted with the close co-operation we are receiving with mutual benefit to both churches. Tuesday night Sanctuary services are now at St Pancras, SJP congregation are attending St Pancras on Sundays, joint celebrations of patronal festivals, and a number of other initiatives in development are designed to ensure that we get to know each other well over 2026 so that a move in 2027 is one between friends.

Finally, the Diocese has opened a consultation over the sort of person who should be appointed as the next Bishop of London following the current incumbent, Sarah Mullally, having been selected to be the next Archbishop of Canterbury. The deadline is tight but it

was agreed that alongside encouraging individuals to fill in the survey, St James's PCC should make a submission – not least because we want to make sure that the voice of inclusive churches is heard by the vacancy-in-see committee responsible for appointing the new Bishop.

Keith Best
PCC Secretary
28/10/2025