

Parochial Church Council Report to the Congregation April 2026

March was a momentous month for the PCC and SJP overall and the PCC have been very active on a number of fronts.

On 16 March we had a PCC meeting focussing on Congregational Life. Safeguarding is a crucial part of our responsibilities and we comply with Diocesan requirements, policies and practices. Our Safeguarding Officer Charley Matthews came to this meeting being the required annual attendance at the PCC to discuss safeguarding at SJP. The role of the PCC is to offer leadership and guidance. Charley made reference to the posters around the church with six commitments to promote a safeguarding culture. The meeting broke into six groups to discuss each one which then completed a review grid. There were suggestions for developments such as regularly occurring and scheduled congregational safeguarding training, open to all (in the past these sessions have been well received), consideration of safeguarding implications during our move to St Pancras and increased visibility of key safeguarding leads in congregational activities.

Steven Overman, a PCC elected member, who chairs the joint SJP/St Barts Steering Group gave a report on the recent meeting for the upcoming week in New York commencing with the service at St Barts on Sunday 20 September at which the music scholars will attend the eucharist; this is also UN General Assembly week so the city will be very busy! There will be specific events, including a dinner event at St Barts and lunch at Christie's to help our fundraising. Joint activities between the two congregations and other 'thought leadership' events are proposed as part of a holistic partnership between our two churches, strengthening our character as inclusive churches at a critical time for this sort of Christianity to be amplified both in the US and UK.

There was a lengthy discussion about how we can make the move to St Pancras go smoothly for all, and how to keep our momentum going, worshipping at St Pancras on Sundays but not vacating our physical parish in the meantime. The PCC broke into three discussion groups on [1] our congregation [2] our parish and [3] 2026 preparation year. Finally, the meeting considered the upcoming Annual Parish Church Meeting on Sunday and elections to the PCC. The focus was on how to encourage members of our congregation who are on the electoral roll to stand for election to ensure a diverse and effective PCC for this next critical period. We want to demystify what goes on and ideas included inviting those who wish to attend PCC meetings as observers so that people are not excluded because they may feel they do not possess the right skills. The PCC is a board of trustees, in some ways like any other charity board, but is also a gathering of the wise 'elders' of the church congregation. The PCC is not filled with accountants and lawyers (although they have their place and are extremely helpful. Importantly, those with the welfare and work of the church at their heart are vital.

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Then, on Saturday 21 March we held a PCC Awayday at the kind hospitality of the Army & Navy Club in St James's Square just around the corner from the church. After prayers, Biblical reflection and singing (led by Lucy (!)) Ross Ingham who is the Wren Project Coordinator (Ingham Pinnock Associates) and Nick Thasarathar (SJP Chief Operating Officer) gave important presentations regarding the Wren Project. Ross gave an outline of the nature and extent of the building works and what will be covered and the timescale involved. He predicts that there are a number of large contractors who are eager to tender for the work. This process will start fairly soon with a view to works commencing in the first quarter of 2027 (by which time, of course, we shall have to have vacated the site). In these days of uncertain inflation and costs of materials and labour a substantial amount has been put into the total project costs for such matters and other contingencies. Nevertheless, there are other costs of fittings and the expense of packing up all our equipment and belongings and then physically moving to St Pancras for which we must still continue to fundraise. So we are still looking for generous donors! The greatest news and relief, however, is that we have been able to raise the funding required by the Heritage Fund for them to be able to honour their commitment of over £4m. The total project is estimated to cost £22.9m.

Nick's presentation was about the way in which we shall prepare ourselves for the move and the implications for our staff and premises. Even though St James's will be a building site we need to maintain a presence in our parish, not least finding ways of continuing our outreach work with the local community and, hopefully, holding events such as concerts, talks and other gatherings in nearby other premises. Part of the plan is to complete the works to the church first so that we can move back to having services here as soon as possible - our estimate is that it will be two Easters and one Christmas that we shall be away. As you can imagine (anyone having moved house will understand!) there is a lot of organisation not just around the move but also the staffing and governance of SJP once we move out. Already, we are sharing many resources (including staff) with St Pancras and we hope that the move of our services there will be smooth and involve as many as possible of our existing congregation. At this meeting the PCC formally agreed unanimously that we should proceed with the Wren Project. More work needs to be done on the shape of our organisational chart which will apply during the move.

Another exciting development that was discussed at the Awayday was the creation of a permanent endowment fund for the church (we do not have one at present). It was felt that with all the contacts with actual and potential donors we have made for the Wren Project the time is right now to move to the second phase which is to create a lasting endowment of a capital sum, with annual income coming to support the activities of the church. At the moment we struggle to make ends meet through congregational giving and our commercial income (market stalls and concerts) to fund all that we do on outreach work with people experiencing homelessness,

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refugees and asylum seekers in our International Community, LBGTQ group, Earth Justice, drop in counselling, and importantly, the expensive work of keeping our church site, building and garden open and accessible 7 days a week for whoever needs us. If we can establish a good fund the income from that will relieve the constant pressure on trying to make ends meet. The PCC unanimously agreed that we should proceed along these lines and will review options at future meetings.

Following the Awayday and in anticipation of our next formal PCC meeting Nick held an online "clinic" for all PCC members who could attend to talk through in greater detail the management and staffing implications of the commencement of the building works and our move to St Pancras (albeit always keeping a presence throughout at SJP in our parish) as well as the associated financial issues. These themes were examined in greater detail at the following PCC meeting on 13 April. Although we have raised nearly all the money necessary to complete the Wren Project building works (at the moment less the pavilion in the Southwood Garden and the replacement of the spire with lead and copper) there are considerable financial challenges for our operations' budget. This is because, of course, we shall not have the income from the market traders or the concerts when SJP becomes a building site. We do have an alternative which is the income from advertisers on the hoarding which will surround the site. That is welcome but you can expect to hear many pleas for your continuing (and, if possible, enhanced) congregational giving to tide us over while the works are being undertaken. This is because we want to continue our outreach and other work in the parish even if it has to be done from other premises while we are away.

Keith Best
PCC Secretary
20/04/2026