

St Paul's Parish Church, New Beckenham

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

Sunday 11th May 2025

Paul Lashmar opened the meeting in prayer.

Appointment of Clerk

Anne Howick was appointed as Clerk to the Annual Meeting.

Minutes of the meeting of the Parishioners held on 12th May 2024. Ian Rodgers proposed, seconded Paul Lashmar, that the minutes, having been available on the church website, be taken as read, approved and signed. **Agreed.**

Election of Churchwardens. The PCC Secretary reported that two nominations had been received for the posts of churchwarden. In the absence of any other nominations Anne Harkness and Anthea Prendergast were declared elected for the following year.

ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING

Sunday 11th May 2025

The minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 12th May 2024 had been available to read on the church website and some hard copies had been distributed to members of the congregation. Sue Rodgers proposed, seconded Marie Read, that the minutes be taken as read, approved and signed. **Agreed.**

Electoral Roll. In the absence of the Electoral Roll officer, the vicar reminded members that in 2025 a new Electoral Roll had been prepared and all members had been required to sign up again. In 2024 there had been 146 on the Roll. Currently there were 111 on the new Electoral Roll. Some people had moved away, others had died, and some had not yet filled in a form. Sign up forms were available at the meeting. As previously the majority of people do not live in the Parish. The vicar wondered why more people in the Parish are not on the Electoral Roll.

Election of one representative to the Parochial Church Council. Anne Howick had been nominated by Anthea Prendergast and Ian Rodgers. There being no further nominations it was confirmed that Anne Howick had been elected. The vicar thanked Anne for her work as PCC Secretary and for her support with wedding and baptism preparation.

Appointment of a Licensed Reader to serve as an *ex officio* member of the PCC. Sarah Butler had indicated that she was willing to continue in this capacity. Anne Harkness proposed, seconded Ann Birkett, that Sarah Butler should serve as the Licensed Reader on the PCC. **Agreed.**

Annual report on proceedings of the PCC and activities of the parish for the year ended 31 December 2024.

The full PCC met ten times in 2024 to deal with church matters, with an average attendance of 70%. Individual reports from the PCC teams follow later in this report, but this review needs to mention various areas of church life which are hugely important.

There had continued to be services at 8.00 am (BCP) and 10.30 am (Morning Worship or Holy Communion), with a creche and Sunday Squad during the 10.30 am services. The 10.30 am services had continued to be livestreamed and available on the website. During the interregnum the 8.00 am services were either Morning Prayer (BCP) or Holy Communion (BCP). Following the appointment of Rev'd Rachel Winn, the new incumbent, in July 2024, the 8.00 am services had returned to weekly Holy Communion (BCP) from January 2025. Sunday Squad had continued to meet in the halls on a weekly basis during term time. Members of the Prayer Ministry Group were available in the Chapel at the end of every 10.30 am service. The Group was kept informed by email of any urgent requests, and a time of prayer had continued to be held on a Thursday evening, by Zoom, for anyone to attend. The vicar (from July 2024), two wardens, Reader, Pastoral Assistant, Evangelist, the trainee Licensed Lay Minister and the Church Administrator had continued to meet each week during 2024, either in person or via Zoom, to review the previous Sunday services and to plan for the coming weeks. In 2024 there had been three weddings at St Paul's, and three baptisms.

Home Groups had continued to meet, primarily on a fortnightly basis, and as always this had been an important time for study, discussion and nurture outside Sunday worship. The Thursday Friendship Group had continued to meet weekly for chats, talks and friendship in the church hall. The Babies & Toddler Group had continued to meet on a Thursday morning. Plans were made to create a music Worship Planning Team to coordinate and combine the various worship styles and traditions of services at St Paul's.

The church website had continued to be a source of information for church members, visitors and local residents. The Communications Group, along with the AV Team, had played an important part in sorting out the requirements for enhanced membership emailing, streaming of virtual services, and the live streaming of services which necessitated improvements to the church internet and provision of a camera. As a result of lockdown the website, streaming and social media had become the most important general communications and promotional links to the wider community. The use of these media by the church generally had been limited in terms of awareness of opportunity, the provision of information and St Paul's was grateful to those who had continued to support the use of the technology at the Morning services. This area had become part of the "new normal" for church and had required greater involvement and the equipment had been updated.

The churchwardens thanked everyone for their support, particularly during the interregnum. They thanked the Ministry team, staff and volunteers who had done so much to keep church life going through the year: the talented musicians and singers; the creche and Sunday Squad team and Youth Group; all the preachers, service leaders, scripture readers and intercessors; the PCC members and Anne Howick, the PCC Secretary; the Assistant Treasurers, especially Rosemary Dear; the Church Administrator Stephanie Fox who, among many other duties, had

prepared the regular rota of volunteers for services, and the video presentation; the AV team who had provided live streaming, video and sound, Ron and Pauline Barrett who had kept the church buildings clean and beautiful; the flower arranging team; brass cleaners; those who had decorated the church for Harvest Festival, Christmas and other special days; had made Christingles and put up the Christmas trees and lights outside and in the hall; the sides person team who had helped make St Paul's a welcoming place; those who had provides refreshments after Sunday morning services; the catering team; the gardening team; Judith Freeborn who had kept the first aid boxes stocked and up to date; the Babies & Toddler Group; the Friendship Group; Homegroup leaders for their time, prayer and encouragement in the faith of the members of their groups; Ian Rodgers for his dedication and leadership of prayer ministry at St Paul's.

Safeguarding report

During the interregnum Sandra Horner, the Parish Safeguarding Officer, had worked to raise the profile of safeguarding in the church community, and Sandra had continued that work with Rev'd Rachel Winn since her arrival in July 2024. Training for those who needed it had been achieved, and refresher courses had started for those who had trained three years ago. Most of the training had been on-line and very well presented. Rev'd Rachel and Sandra had agreed to offer in-person group training for those who would prefer not to undertake the individual on-line method. In November 2024 there had been a well-received Safeguarding Sunday service. Rev'd Rachel, Keith Howick and Sandra Horner had promoted the message that safeguarding was everyone's business and that it was important to have a culture of good safeguarding practice. Sandra had continued to report regularly to the PCC about current information coming from the Diocese, and at each PCC meeting a scenario had been discussed by all to raise awareness. The noticeboard had been kept up to date with information about where help is available.

The PCC had several teams responsible for particular areas of the life of the church at St Paul's. All members of the teams were required to complete a Conflict of Interest form.

Buildings Team

Terms of reference: The Buildings Team is responsible for maintaining and improving the church buildings, grounds, and facilities. The work ranges from minor repairs to significant projects. The team meets monthly to discuss and progress work, perform jobs within house if possible, and obtain quotes from contractors if the work is beyond the team skill set.

Report to the APCM for the calendar year 2024

In 2024 the team had completed several minor repairs themselves. They had arranged for regular work including quarterly cleaning of the windows on the halls and south facade of the church, annual cleaning of the guttering and downpipes on the halls and church, and emergency fixing of toilet and sink leaks. In January 2024 the team had organised a deep clean of the church and halls. The church wardens had been very grateful to everyone who had helped with this.

In 2024 the team had obtained quotes and arranged for suppliers to perform larger works:

- In July 2024 Rolins had restored the worn wooden floor at the rear of the church.

- In Oct 2024 Simmons had performed repairs on the main church roof.
- In Nov 2024 the two yew trees at the church entrance had been reduced in size for better visibility.
- During 2024, after obtaining several quotes, PCC approval, a faculty from the Diocese, and planning permission from Bromley Council, the team had engaged CES to install new lighting at the church and hall entrances. It was hoped that this work would be completed in April 2025. The team was very grateful for the anonymous donation of £10,000 + £1,000 gift aid which would cover most of the cost. In 2025 the team would be applying to the Diocese for a Minor Repairs and Improvement Grant to cover the remaining cost and would try to recover the VAT from the Government's Listed Places of Worship Grants Scheme.

In 2025 the team planned to arrange for the halls kitchen to be repainted, to clean and fit pigeon deterrents to the west windows, to perform more roof cleaning and repairs to the south porch and main roof, and to repair two blocked downpipes. The team would also look to repair and repaint some of the doors and windows, repair the broken garden wall, remove moss from the garden walls and church buttresses. The team would be starting to explore making good the failed plasterwork in church and replacing the edging on the path and around the church.

Climate and Ecology Team

Terms of Reference: The Climate and Ecology Team is responsible for encouraging St Paul's as a church, the congregation as individuals and our wider community, to think differently and live more lightly, in order to serve and steward well. We work under the aim of one of the Church's 5 Marks of Mission: *To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.* Our remit involves meeting regularly as a team, planning events, contributing to worship and teaching, and completing Eco Church surveys.

Report to the APCM for the calendar year 2024

The Team had continued to encourage integration of care for God's creation into all our activities at St Paul's. This had included having a Green Corner at the Connect Café for people to browse information about environmental concerns and what we can all do, even in small ways, like recycling. The Team had produced a Procurement Policy which had been agreed by the PCC and a copy had been placed on the website. The Team had taken part in No Mow May again, leaving areas of the grass uncut to encourage insects and biodiversity. In June, as part of Great Big Green Week, the film 'Our Planet: Too Big to Fail', produced by WWF had been shown on a Saturday afternoon in the chapel, with time for a discussion afterwards. It had been attended by a few local people as well as members of the congregation. Also in June, the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LiCC) had published a booklet entitled "Jesus Died to Save the Planet" written by Paul Kunert who had worshipped at St Paul's for a time. The booklet had been mainly aimed at church leaders, and copies had been given to the PCC and other members of the congregation who had requested it. This book would be forming the basis of Home Group studies in the new year. Creation Sunday had been celebrated on 29 September with members of the Team taking part in the service. In October the Team had organised a Planet-Friendly Autumn Fair with stalls including pre-loved items, a book give-away, and environmentally friendly products. Money raised from the Fair had been donated to the charity

Ripple Effect who work with farmers in eastern Africa to help reduce poverty and counter the effects of climate change. A Rocha had produced a new version of the Eco Church survey which had gone live in November.

Communications Team

Terms of Reference: The Communications Team was established in 2020 and has oversight of the various channels of communication used at St Paul's, both in contacting and connecting with the immediate church family, but also in sharing news and events with the wider parish and beyond. The team ensures the website is kept up to date, makes good use of social media, and has effective measures in place to stay in touch with those who are not online. This team also has responsibility for the technicalities of broadcasting our online services, advertising special and seasonal services and events and designing all publications.

Report to the APCM for the calendar year 2024

The team had continued to meet occasionally through the year to consider communications strategies/plans, but the practical work of the team was ongoing. Communications Team workload had increased, due to our increased community engagement. The effort required to produce the Christmas and Easter parish 'Connect' leaflets and the increased poster/flier publicity for church events had been substantial. More of the advertising (via flyers and posters) had been done in-house following the purchase of a new printer; this had been more cost-effective than using printing companies but heavier on admin time. Likewise, the workload had increased in keeping the website up to date and making more frequent posts on the St Paul's Facebook page.

The Team had also:

- Reached the point of ordering new external noticeboards.
- Seen major improvements in the use of internal noticeboards
- Supported the process of creating the new Electoral Roll and a Church Directory compliant with GDPR.
- Started gaining the necessary permissions for more targeted church email communications.
- Continued to provide sound and live streaming for regular services as well as providing cover for special seasonal services and occasional offices, such as weddings and funerals .

Whilst not strictly a 'Communications Team' item, the Team had been leading in the delivery of the IT/AV project tackling the inadequacies of the church internet and Wi-Fi systems, not least the impact on the Service streaming, access for the Pre-School and reliability of the new 'CollecTin' for on-line giving.

Into the future this work would continue, but the Team also intended to look closely at:

- the physical aspects of visitors feeling welcomed into the building – the foyer and entrance doors, the attractive presentation of 'who we are' and 'what we do', hospitality provision etc.

- how to improve the general impression from our graphical 'branding' including a replacement of our logo.
- A communications 'Guidelines' for how church members can more effectively use the skills they have, and also contribute to our on-line presence in the community.

The Team had thanked all those who had helped behind the scenes as well as the more obvious faithful week-in, week-out technical input that facilitates the sound for services and had enabled St Paul's to live stream to the community.

Finance Team

Terms of Reference: This team is responsible for all matters relating to finance and stewardship at St Paul's. This involves drafting the annual budget for the approval of the PCC, and working with the vicar to make sure financial news and concerns are communicated regularly and transparently with the wider fellowship.

Mission Team

Terms of Reference: This team has responsibility for developing relationships with St Paul's mission partners, both in the UK and overseas, and with the organisations they are connected to. This team supports our partners through regular correspondence and prayer, and ensures that any updates either from our partners, or their respective organisations, are shared with the wider fellowship. This team is also involved in suggesting new partners to the PCC as and when a link with an existing partner comes to a natural close.

Report to the APCM for the calendar year 2024

Six regular missions had been supported by the Church during 2024 with a donation of £1,632 to each. They were:

Wycliffe Bible Translators, supporting Julian and Catherine and translation in the Caucasus

SAT-7 – Broadcasting to the Middle East and North Africa, Christian programmes in Arabic, Turkish, Farsi, and English

Overseas Mission Fellowship – supporting Julia Birkett in Thailand

Church Missionary Society – supporting Ben and Katy Ray with disabled people in Tanzania

Christians Against Poverty – especially in the local area

Bromley Welcare - Welcare raised money last year at a mince pie tasting held at St Paul's Church, and also by singing carols in the Glades Bromley. A Christmas tree festival at

St Frances of Assisi church in West Wickham had helped to support the charity. Welcare Bromley had continued to provide a service to families in the Bromley borough through individual and group work.

The Mission Team had met three times over the year. For **Contingencies** – supported from funds set aside for emergencies - £1,225 each had been sent to Tear Fund for their Middle East Emergency appeal, and to Open Doors for persecuted women's projects. The donations for Christmas tags in lieu of a Church member sending lots of cards to other Church members had been given this Christmas to **Hope into Action Bromley** and amounted to £115.00.

Informal Team reports

Leading/Preaching Team

The team had met quarterly to pray and plan the service rota, to decide upon sermon series and resources and to plan special occasional and seasonal services. In 2024, during the interregnum, the team had met and organised the leading and preaching rota based on the Church of England lectionary. The rota had been put together and distributed by the Parish Administrator. Following the appointment of the new incumbent, the team had continued to meet and primarily followed the lectionary, although this had altered for certain services, such as Safeguarding Sunday in November, Mission Partner Sundays and a sermon series on 'Mountains' in the autumn. Other alternative services had been added, including a Taizé service one afternoon in October, an outdoor Remembrance Service on 11th November and a Dress Up Nativity service in December.

Worship Team

St Paul's had started 2024 without an Incumbent, but with support from our former Archdeacon, Rev'd Paul Wright who had presided and preached at many of the 10.30am Communion services. At 8am, Morning Prayer had alternated with BCP Holy Communion, with occasional help from Rev'd Neil Fairlamb from Bromley College, and Rev'd Rachel Winn, who was serving her curacy at St Augustine's with St Luke's, Bromley Common. In January, Rev'd Clive Grinham preached on the St Paul's Verse for the Year: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5: 6-7). In February Bishop Jonathan had visited St Paul's to lead a service marking Racial Justice Sunday.

On Sunday 17 March the Church Wardens had announced that Rev'd Rachel Winn had been appointed as the next vicar of St Paul's. The announcement had been greeted with a spontaneous burst of applause. Rev'd Rachel's installation had been held on 11 July, with a packed church.

A service of All Age worship had been held at approximately monthly intervals, led by members of the Ministry team and Sunday Squad team. St Paul's was delighted to be able to welcome children from Worsley Bridge School for 'Experience Christmas' in December (a multi-sensory experience involving a journey around the church with volunteers acting, story-tellers to guide and craft activities to enjoy). St Paul's had also hosted the Worsley Bridge Carol concert, which Rev'd Rachel spoke at. As a follow-up Years 2 and 3 had been invited to 'Experience Easter' for three days in March 2025. During the year our worship had been enhanced by an increasingly varied mix of music. As well as Marion and John Blakely and David Storey, on organ and piano, we had been pleased to see the music group led by Pete and Ingrid Glenister expanding to include new members. Two members of the Prayer Ministry Group were available at the end of every service in the Chapel to pray with anyone who requested it, and many people had taken the opportunity to do this.

From September Rev'd Rachel had introduced Morning Prayer worship every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings; these times of worship had included music, open prayer and a shared time of scripture Reflection. Morning Prayer had been well attended, and on average 23 people had attended each week over the three days. In October on a Sunday

afternoon a Taizé Service had been held in the chancel, which almost exceeded seating capacity; this kind of alternative service had been requested again for a Sunday afternoon.

In November as well as the usual Remembrance Day service on the Sunday, a short, well-attended service, including a 2-minute silence had been held on Monday 11 November outside the church, followed by refreshments inside. The “nativity” service this year had been a chance for everyone of all ages to come dressed up as a character from the Christmas story, an opportunity most of the congregation had embraced with enthusiasm! Christmas services had been well attended, and the Community Carols, once again accompanied by members of the Crystal Palace Brass Band, had proved popular, although this year the weather meant that these had been held inside the church.

Youth and Children’s work

Sunday Squad

Sunday Squad had been run on most Sundays in term time, with the odd Sunday off for an all-age worship service, such as Mothering Sunday. Children had been encouraged to attend communion with their parents and occasional all age worship services had been aimed at inclusion for children and young people, where some of the older children had been encouraged to take the Bible reading in the main service during All Age Worship. There had been a small but dedicated group of leaders who had been using the Stepping Stone resources for activities and craft, discussion and prayer had taken place each week; afterwards, children’s work had been displayed on the church noticeboard in the child-friendly area within the church. All leaders and helpers were required to be DBS checked and undertake safeguarding training and updates.

Earlier in 2024 six – eight school age children, aged between 5 and 11, had regularly attended. Sadly the numbers had reduced when the group had had to say farewell to two families in the summer. Subsequently there had been fewer children this year in the group, which had ranged from reception to year 6 in primary school. Most weeks there had been 2-5 children on a fairly regular basis. A ‘stay and play’ crèche had been set up running alongside the Sunday Squad, with the service being streamed on the mobile TV; this had required parents to stay with their very young children under school age.

The Sunday Squad leaders and helpers had met for about three meetings a year when they had reviewed the programme and had planned any future events. Some of the leaders had volunteered their gift of working with children to support our Experience Christmas and Easter events.

The team had thanked Liz Spencer, who had decided to stand down in July 2024 and they had expressed their ongoing appreciation and thanks to all the team who had been committed to teaching other children about faith in Jesus and the gospel.

Youth Group

The Youth Group had been run by Jash Masih and his team of supporters, on alternate Sunday mornings during the interregnum. Due to being unable to continue to use the vicarage space, meeting on Sunday mornings had discontinued after July 2024. Rev’d Rachel and Eric Barney had joined the team and in December 2024 a Christmas Youth Group had been held on a Sunday afternoon. Subsequently links had been forged with Holy Trinity with St John’s Church

and two Youth Group events had been held by both churches, alternating the locations where the group had met.

Looking ahead: The team had continued to work with Rev Jessica Smith to connect our young people and to separately grow the two youth groups; the team were hoping there would be an increase in numbers when more Year 7's could join in September. The team was planning an after-exam BBQ at St Paul's on Sunday 29th June, and were conscious that it would be important to have a venue to meet on a Sunday morning.

The team had thanked all those who had been involved, especially Jash and Olivia Masih and Marion McNally, who had worked hard and given of their time and skills to keep offering our young people spiritual guidance, connection and fun.

Independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2024

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

David Charlesworth and Keith Howick reported on the income and expenditure for the year. The total incoming resources for the year had increased to £210,647 compared to £173,882 for the year ending 31st December 2023, particularly thanks to planned giving and Gift Aid donations, and Income from use of the hall, which had increased. Expenditure had increased by 3%. Overall there was a profit of £14,000 for the year. The cost of Church management and administration had risen and maintenance of the buildings had risen. The underlying position was weak but St Paul's had been very fortunate with the gifts, including legacies, which the church had received. If there are no legacies in a year, that has an effect on church finances. People have been generous in the past and St Paul's was not bankrupt.

Designated funds.

The PCC had put aside money for planned purposes, but the PCC would be able to decide to "un-designate" these funds if it needed to cover deficits or switch expenditure to changed intentions. Currently £58,600 was held in the Diocesan Repair Fund for future building repairs, which can be substantial, given that St Paul's has Listed Building status. Restricted funds are donations or legacies where it has been specified what the donation or legacy can be used for and cannot be added to general income. It was noted that regular income is static. Members asked about the Parish Share and whether it was negotiable. Historically it had been based on the Electoral Roll numbers in October. Keith Howick explained how the amount are calculated, including clergy costs and contribution to the Diocese and administration. St Paul's had taken the view that it is important to have our own vicar. St Paul's has a good amount of reserves, but it would be important in the coming months to try and encourage more regular giving. In answer to a question regarding time when a church is in interregnum, it was noted that there is a concession when there is a two year vacancy. Sometimes the challenge with restricted funds is that if they are not spent they devalue. It would be good to start spending some of the restricted funds, for example on exterior lighting.

Members were asked if they felt St Paul's should seek God's vision for St Paul's in the coming years, and agreed. There would be a prayer day for everyone to think about the resources which are needed. The PCC would be having an away day for vision and strategy and Archdeacon Allie Kerr, who had been extremely helpful and supportive, would be attending the away day. The Diocese has a Generous Giving Adviser, Liz Mullins, who would be attending

St Paul's on 28th September and giving guidance on what can be done. The PCC would be exploring how to make the AV system and the Internet more reliable. Members asked if there would be advice to those who are not at the APCM regarding increasing their giving, and about the responsibility of tithing. These would be part of the sermon series in September. The vicar commented about the Parish Giving Scheme. The plan was to put together a brochure and response form, asking people if they would like to give regularly, and giving details of the Scheme. Following further discussions and thoughts regarding the future and financial giving at St Paul's, Alison Charlesworth proposed, seconded Anthea Prendergast, that the Independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2024 be accepted. Agreed.

Safeguarding

Sandra Horner, the Parish Safeguarding Officer, reported on 2024. The last few months had not been easy with Church of England failings, including the John Smyth report. At the Parish level members were continuing with their training as required, including DBS checks. Rev'd Rachel thanked Sandra Horner for her work as the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Church fabric, goods and ornaments.

A report had been received from the churchwardens. They thanked all those who help keep everything ticking over, including cleaning the beautiful buildings and maintaining the garden. Overall, the fabric of the Church had continued to be in good order. A regular Quinquennial Report had taken place but, due to an extensive programme of works following the previous Report, there had been no serious issues identified. The Buildings Team had worked hard to address the recommendations made and continued to ensure that any other minor maintenance problems that had arisen were sorted out, including a new double-glazed window in the Accessible Toilet.

A Quinquennial Report had been made on 3 Ashford House in 2024 and work was underway to address its recommendations. The churchwardens thanked Robyn Ranu for her experience in managing the upkeep of the property and ensuring the correct level of landlords' property insurance was maintained.

The annual testing of Portable Appliances, Lightning Conductor, Fire Extinguishers, Alarms, and the servicing of the Gas Boilers had been carried out according to their schedules. A full electrical inspection had not been due in 2024 but it had been noted that a number of light bulbs in the Church were in need of replacement. A thorough Spring clean of the church had taken place one Saturday during which the bulbs had been replaced. Inevitably, since then a few more bulbs would need to be replaced. A job for those not afraid of heights! They had proposed that a further Spring clean should take place in early 2025 which would focus on the Halls and Kitchen.

The Church had continued to be open daily to visitors for viewing, private prayer and reflection. Due to the tireless work of Ron and Pauline Barrett, ably assisted by Tony and Shiona Pilgrim, and others who had polished the floor and cleaned the brass, the interiors of the Church and the Halls had been well maintained, always looked their best and were regularly admired by everyone who used them. The wardens gave their thanks to all.

The Buildings Team, along with other interested parties with the help of a Lighting Contractor, had drawn up plans for the lighting of the main Church path and the enhancing of the main

entrance. Relevant permissions from the Diocese and Local Authority had been granted and work would commence after Easter.

The gardens and lawns had continued to be well maintained by the Gardening Team and those who cut the lawn, and they were thanked for their hard work. Everyday members of the local community visit and enjoy the gardens, including dog walkers, families playing games on the lawn, and others who welcome the space for rest and reflection.

Deanery Synod proceedings

A report for 2024 had been received. Sandra Horner and Keith Howick had been the St Paul's representatives on Deanery Synod. Keith Howick reported that the new Area Dean is Rev'd Richard Jones, who was very active with CTiB and Transforming Bromley Borough. The Beckenham Deanery Synod had met three times in 2024.

On 20th February, 2024 they had met at St. John's Penge, when Anna Khan from Welcare delivered a presentation about their work.

On 9th July 2024 at Christ Church Anerley. Claire Boxall from the Diocese had been due to attend to talk about the Diocesan Strategy, but had been unable to come. Father Jeremy Blunden, the Area Dean, had reported on the 'Change, Serve and Grow' vision, and this had continued to develop. Further details were available on the Diocesan website at <https://www.rochester.anglican.org/about-us/ourvision/>.

Sarah Poole, Gloria Sherman and Keith Howick had been elected as lay members of the Diocesan Synod.

On 3rd October 2024 the Deanery Synod had met at St George's. This was the first Deanery Synod which Rev'd Rachel had attended. Father Jeremy had spoken on Diversity and Inclusion and given examples of how St. George's had tried to improve inclusivity. These had included work with children, a dementia audit (which had led to more helpful notices), paying attention to Black History Month and the importance of visual signals.

On 22nd September, there had been 19 candidates for confirmation at St. John's, Penge and 12 at Christ Church, Beckenham on 1st September. There had been an opportunity for all the Deanery churches to give an update.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

Sandra Horner proposed, seconded Keith Howick, that Ernest Kabera be appointed as the Independent Examiner.

Vicar's report

This is my first 'vicar's report' and I want to start on a personal note, and I make no apology for this. In 2023 Adam and I felt God clearly calling us to St Paul's, we responded to his call and have not looked back once. Over my lifetime I have worshipped, and more latterly been involved in leadership, within three different churches. Each time we have moved on I did not think it would be possible to love the fourth congregation more than our previous church, but I was wrong. In the last ten months here we have felt incredibly loved, supported and valued. We daily feel blessed to be here. You have made us feel *personally* welcomed when we arrived, which was also reflected in the way the vicarage was prepared beautifully for us to settle straight into. Thank you so much for your care of us as I have *literally* limped through the

last six months. Thank you, especially, for your kind messages, food deliveries and **patience**. A big thank you to the Leadership Team (including Stephanie) and all of you who worked to keep the services going and the congregation growing during this time, as well as throughout the interregnum. I now hope that we can look forward to some exciting times and to what God has planned for us here at St Paul's.

Going Forward

We are gradually growing and becoming a more diverse church. Our Vision Statement '**Growing together one step at a time**' reminds us that the Christian faith is always *dynamic*. As the five year Vision and Strategy document for St Paul's written in 2020 suggests, our mission is to help those seeking God to progress their faith journey: moving from **encounter** with others, to **encouraging** an exploration of faith, to **equipping** people as disciples. Contemporary Mission is summarised in the C of E's '5 marks of mission' as: TELL – TEACH – TEND – TRANSFORM – TREASURE

We TELL our story to others: Signs that the good news of Jesus is reaching people: this year we are planning for four baby baptisms, three or four adult baptisms, six church weddings, and a number of Confirmations, hopefully with the Confirmation service being held here later this autumn.

We are called to TEACH the scriptures. This includes nurturing individuals with potential into positions of leadership. Three of our congregation have completed a Leading Worship course recently and two others are attending the It's Your Calling day next week.

We are called to TEND those who are in need by demonstrating loving service; we are developing a Pastoral Care Team this year and seeking to develop a strong Safeguarding culture.

We are called to TRANSFORM the unjust, unfairnesses within our society. We should have an expectation of God's transforming power occurring in Beckenham, but firstly within ourselves, as we seek personal reconciliation in areas of our own lives.

And we are called to TREASURE what God has blessed us with; to seek sustainable ways of living, to be wise stewards of this beautiful building, the grounds, the parish and, where possible, beyond. Many churches focus on one or two of the Marks of Mission; TELL – TEACH – TEND – TRANSFORM – TREASURE. I wonder where our emphasis currently lies?

Teamwork

Here at St Paul's we have an exceptional volunteer culture, which has been spurred on by the 2020 vision of creating Teams and 'Champions.' It is an absolute joy to attend groups, events and meetings and be there without the weight always falling on the leadership. The typical '*all the work being done by a few individuals*' thankfully does not seem to apply here. I think we have the **people-power** to push forward with a vision.

Vision

So this brings me to the 'vision question'.

Ps 127:1 '*Unless the Lord builds the house the labourers labour in vain.*'

So, what is God's vision for St Paul's?

As much as some would like me to, this is not a question I can answer alone. It is important that we as a church explore this together.

Prayer: The first stop...

On June 7th we are holding an open morning prayer meeting; if you want to see God move us forward, please come and pray about his vision and listen to what God is saying.

The second: is our PCC Awayday on 19th July. Led by Archdeacon Allie, we will be prayerfully exploring God's Vision for St Paul's before widening the discussion to the church.

Stewardship is important for vision: Following on from David and Keith's helpful presentation, it is clear that we need to evaluate our giving and seek wisdom regarding our stewardship. This year we will be embracing the C of E **Parish Giving Scheme**, the presentation of which is planned for the end of September. A group of us will be working with the Diocesan Giving Advisor, Liz Mullins, who is helping us with this. If you wish to be a part of this group please let me know.

Outreach: Before I came here I was delighted to hear of the various outreach initiatives going on at St Paul's. I see *huge potential* for us developing our community outreach; this vision being in line with the Transforming Bromley Borough strategy, where churches of denominations are seeking to link up with secular organisations so that the church has an influence and a greater presence within the borough:

A few examples:

We could develop our links with:

- **Health services:** There are Wellbeing Cafe's in the borough which need a venue: Primary Care networks offer everything from advice, to exercise groups and toenail clipping... we could forge strong links as a church with our more vulnerable neighbours through a Wellbeing Café.
- **Pastoral Care:** A Pastoral Care Team could link well with our health colleagues *and* Bromley Council (who I know have a strong, bold Christian presence at the moment)
- **MP links:** We have made positive connections with our local MP, Liam Conlon, who is a Christian and who hoped to use these premises for his Community Cafe. 100's of parishioners are invited to these events, which would offer direct links to many more of our neighbours.
- Worsley Bridge School and the Preschool: Both are on our doorstep. Reaching out in new ways to connect with to the parents and children, such as through an after-drop-off café which could be vital for the development of our children's work.
- The **problem** that forging ahead with these kind of initiatives is that we do not have adequate facilities to accommodate them all. A few years ago, plans were considered to develop the halls here, but these stopped because it was unclear *why* development was needed. Now, I wonder if it is becoming clearer that we are unable to move forward with some outreach ideas primarily because we do not have the facilities.
- We have other building issues regarding the health of the organ, our limited hall space, restricted office facilities, no place for young people to meet on a Sunday morning, and no meeting rooms...

This is a long list, but an important one. If we want to grow our groups and our connections the building surely needs to grow.

So to summarise:

- ~ God is moving in St Paul's
- ~ We are blessed with a wonderful church building and a willing congregation
- ~ We need to seek God's vision for mission within the parish
- ~ and we need the Spirit's power to move forward together.

Open Forum

Members were invited to ask any questions following the update on events at St Paul's. Alison Bradley asked that the minutes record thanks to Rosemary Dear for all her work as Treasurer, and to Ron and Pauline Barrett for their cleaning work. A copy of the report from St Paul's Pre-School had been available and Liz Spencer reported that there had been an Ofsted inspection and the Pre-School had been outstanding. Alison Charlesworth asked about increasing the size of and expanding the halls. Rev'd Rachel reported that she and the Church Administrator had met with Liam Conlon, the local MP, regarding the hall. He had been enquiring about having a Wellbeing café and felt the halls were too small and there was not enough access to the halls.

Anne Harkness thanked Rev'd Rachel for her ministry at St Paul's and how delighted everyone had been to celebrate her installation in July 2024, and for the services which were now taking place, including Morning Prayer, the Taizé service, and all the Christmas activities, developing the pastoral care team, encouraging others to lead worship. Rev'd Rachel was thanked for her support, teaching and prayers for all, and the community. Anne prayed that God would bless Rachel and her family in the coming year as we progress God's vision for St Paul's. She also thanked Adam Winn for his part in the life of St Paul's.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1.20 pm.