

## Vicar's Report for APCM (for year 2025)

I would like to start this report with a heartfelt 'Thank You' to everyone who supported me and my family, and who served God at St Paul's throughout 2025.

It is always risky to mention individual people, as I have felt upheld and encouraged by so many of you at St Paul's, but I must make a special mention to the Leadership Team, who encourage me weekly.

In 2025 our two Church Wardens faithfully served this congregation and humoured a vicar who has a stream of madcap ideas! Anthea and Anne worked tirelessly on projects, services and events; most of the sacrificial time they give you will be unaware of. But I am not. I could not imagine coping within this calling without them.

Similarly, in 2025 Anne Howick gave tirelessly of her gifts as PCC Secretary and Pastoral Assistant. Her work is thankless and often unseen, but very much appreciated, especially by me.

I thank Keith Howick for his many ministerial gifts, his time and energy given in serving others, and his steadying influence.

I am thankful for Sarah Butler's deep and faithful ministry in leading, preaching and providing excellent Bible study material for home groups.

I am grateful for David Charlesworth, who has led and preached, and championed so many initiatives in order to help us reach-out with Christ's love to those around us.

Stephanie, our Parish Administrator, works relentlessly and has been a joy to work with - we can often be heard cackling with laughter in the vestry (it does help to have a sense of humour in this role!).

But I do want to mention one other person, not on the leadership team, not 'officially' in ministry, but one who has been an earthly rock - Adam. My husband is wholeheartedly committed to supporting me in our ministry at St Paul's. He does everything practical to run the vicarage and to keep the vicar sane. He is always my 'go-to' person, who listens to me graciously and encourages me when the job is a challenge. I am so grateful for him.

Our 'verse of the year' in 2025 was Ephesians 4:16:

***'Christ makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.'***

In 2025 we as a church family worked so well together, each person playing their individual part to contribute to the flourishing of the whole. The church is full of people who might never otherwise connect, except that we share our love of Jesus Christ and want to work for the glory of God. Without exception, each person in this congregation has God-given gifts, and as we exercise these we *will* continue to see growth; not just numerical growth, but personal growth and transformation within our own lives.

In 2025, as we explored 'God's mission for St Paul's,' corporate prayer became a more regular discipline. (This is also what is happening further afield in Bromley Borough and among many London churches. Transforming Bromley Borough (TBB) church leaders

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recognise that *any movement of God is preceded by a prayer movement*. Since January our monthly 'One Heart One Voice' prayer meetings have been faithfully attended by individuals involved in church leadership. Our Christian unity in prayer has the power to move mountains ~ and a theme that emerges each time we meet to pray seems to be **'Think bigger!'**

I suspect that God's mission here at St Paul's means that we need to **'think bigger.'** Our building is not meeting our needs, we are not yet seeing a growth in numbers of children and we need to deepen the faith of those who are discovering Jesus here. It can feel like a daunting task - but let's remember, we have a big God, with whom 'nothing is impossible.' (Luke 1:37)

Our PCC Awayday with Archdeacon Allie was followed by a series of PCC Vision meetings, during which we agreed on our priorities and the 5 core values centred on our *Reflecting Christ* in all we do.



It was very interesting that our new Parish Administrator Assistant worked on the APCM service, with little knowledge of St Paul's Church. The material was given to Sarah, who then created a Power Point, adding her own wording to accompany the slides. What I noticed was that we came across as a community who care for each other and the environment, we are busy and active, offering friendship, great events and a variety of services to the wider parish... but there was little emphasis on our making Jesus Christ known to others.

We need to move from being a people who connect well with our neighbours to those who dare to share the message of hope we have. We recently read in Acts 2 that the early church grew by thousands, *'and the Lord was adding to their number daily.'* This growth was not just because the community of believers were 'loving' people, but because of the gospel message they shared.

We are more than just a kind gathering of diverse people, we are the very **body of Christ**, with a life-transforming message to a broken world. We live with the wonderful freedom of having been forgiven our wrongdoing, we have the *power* of the Holy Spirit who

transforms our lives, and we believe with certainty that our eternity is with Christ. *This* is what we need to share with those we actively connect with.

In 2025, during one Morning Prayer time, I asked people '**how different are you from this time last year?**' It is a challenge to live a dynamic life of faith, to be ever-growing, ever changing, always allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us into the likeness of Christ. This time *next* year it should be obvious that our core value of *Reflecting Christ* underpins all four of our Mission Action Plan priorities.

### **Going forward**

We face some big challenges as we forge ahead:

How we work together as a church through these challenges will test our patience, our unity and our trust in God.

### **Our four priority areas:**

#### **1) Buildings**

As we face the certain disruption ahead, in particular regarding the installation of the heating, how will we remain 'welcoming' when our facilities are out of bounds?

As we anticipate huge financial costs, will we reflect Christ in good stewardship and generosity?

As we seek to move forward with the building changes, can we reflect Christ as we navigate differences of opinion, and will we learn to '*submit to one another out of reverence to Christ*'? (Ephesians 5:21)

#### **2) Families, Children and Youth**

We have some listening work to do as we figure out how to grow our children and family numbers attending church. We need to reflect Christ as we demonstrate patience and persistence in the face of low numbers - holding on to the idea that we are *not called to be successful, but to be faithful*.

#### **3) With our wider parish links**

We want to be more outward-looking and see God's kingdom grow in the wider context beyond the parish. Can we reflect Christ and work with other churches collaboratively and *uncompetitively*, with a desire to see God transforming the whole of Bromley Borough, and not just St Paul's?

**4) We need to deepen our fellowship**, nurture new believers and demonstrate good stewardship so that we can resource and facilitate this work. But let's remember to reflect Christ, understanding that *any movement of God is preceded by a prayer movement*.

How we attempt all these plans will be discussed in detail at 12.00 noon on 28th June at our Vision Lunch after the main service.

2025 was a year for us to seek God's mission for St Paul's.  
2026 and beyond is when the *action* needs to happen.

If ever there was a time to pray daily our verse for 2026 it is now:

***'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.'*** (Proverbs 3:5-6)