

St Paul's Parish Church, New Beckenham

**ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS via Zoom
Monday 24th May 2021**

Rev Simon Couper, Chairman of the Parochial Church Council, was in the chair. He welcomed everyone and opened the meeting in prayer.

Appointment of Clerk

From the chair Rev Simon Couper appointed Anne Howick as Clerk to the Annual Meeting. He thanked her for all the work that she had done in preparation for the Annual report.

Minutes of the meeting of Parishioners held on 11th October 2020. Andrew Griffiths proposed, seconded Ann Birkett, that the minutes, having been available on the Church website, be taken as read, approved and signed. **Agreed.**

Election of churchwardens. Rev Simon Couper thanked both Richard Bradley and Rosemary Dear for their work as churchwardens during another very challenging year. He thanked them for their support at this time. He particularly thanked Rosemary Dear as she was standing down at this time. She had been very supportive, and bossy, in perfect measure! Rosemary thanked the vicar for his comments and commented that it had been a privilege and an honour to serve the church and the vicarage.

The PCC Secretary reported that two nominations had been received for the posts of churchwarden. Richard Bradley had been proposed by David Storey, seconded by Rosemary Dear. Hazel Koungoue had been proposed by Rosemary Dear and seconded by Richard Bradley. In the absence of any other nominations Mr Bradley and Mrs Koungoue were declared elected for the following year. The vicar thanked Richard and Hazel for agreeing to serve as churchwardens at such a critical time for the Parish. The vicar led the meeting in prayer for the churchwardens. Richard thanked the vicar for his support for Richard as a churchwarden and also Rosemary Dear for her support. He hoped he could continue to keep up the high standard which Rosemary had set. Hazel commented that she was under no illusions of the magnitude of the work as churchwarden. She was grateful to Rosemary and Richard for nominating her and for the vicar's encouragement, and hoped she could maintain the standard set by Rosemary.

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING via Zoom
Monday 24th May 2021**

Rev Simon Couper, Chairman of the Parochial Church Council, was in the chair and at least 45 members of the congregation were following the meeting on Zoom. The vicar reported that the meeting would be recorded and shared with members on the Electoral Roll.

The minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 11th October 2020 had been available to read on the Church website and some hard copies had been distributed to members of the congregation. Anthea Prendergast proposed, seconded Bidy Gillman, that the minutes be taken as read, approved and signed. **Agreed.**

Electoral Roll. The vicar thanked Simon Dalwood for his work as Electoral Roll Officer. The vicar commented that he felt we needed to make more effort to get people to join the Electoral Roll. Simon Dalwood reported that there were 123 on the Electoral Roll of whom 51 were resident in the Parish, and 72 were not resident in the Parish. Anyone who was interested in joining the Electoral Roll should contact Simon Dalwood, and the applications are considered by the Parochial Church Council at its meetings.

Election of seven representatives to the Parochial Church Council. The PCC Secretary reported that she had received four nominations in advance of the meeting for Tarina Hill, Ian Johnson, Paul Lashmar and Anthea Prendergast. There being no further nominations, the vicar confirmed that each candidate was now elected and he welcomed them all on to the PCC. It was noted that there were still some vacancies on the PCC, and the vicar reminded members that if they felt a sense of calling to serve on the PCC it would be possible for people to be co-opted to serve for the remainder of the year. The vicar then prayed for all members of the PCC.

Election of one representative to the Deanery Synod. The PCC Secretary reported that she had received a nomination in advance of the meeting for Keith Howick. There being no further nominations the vicar confirmed Keith Howick had been elected to serve as a representative on the Deanery Synod.

Appointment of a Licensed Reader to serve as an *ex officio* member of the PCC. The PCC Secretary reported that under Rule M15 of the Church Representation Rules 2020, if the annual meeting decides that one or more of the readers licensed to the Parish should be a member, then they are members of the PCC. Sarah Butler had indicated that she was willing to continue to serve in this capacity. The vicar expressed his huge thanks to Simon Dalwood, Sarah Butler, David Charlesworth and Anne Howick for the work that they do as Licensed Ministers for the Parish.

Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016

As required by Section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, the PCC had agreed at its meeting in November 2020 the Parish Policy Statement for Safeguarding Adults when they are Vulnerable and the Parish Policy Statement for Safeguarding Children. Copies of these statements were displayed on the noticeboards in the main entrance porch and in the Church hall. Anne Howick had been appointed the Parish Safeguarding Officer and Parish Children's representative, and Bidy Gillman had been appointed the Parish Safeguarding Adults representative.

DBS Lead Recruiter

The PCC had appointed Richard Bradley as the Lead Recruiter and the Vicar as the Deputy Recruiter Officer.

Vicar's report. Rev Simon Couper personally thanked the members of the Parish for the support and love they had shown to him and his family during the very difficult time of the pandemic and lockdown. He felt there was a real sense of respect and fellowship at St Paul's. Members then watched a video which the vicar had prepared. At the APCM in October 2020 the vision at St Paul's had been launched: *Encounter, Enquire, Explore, Engage, Enable - Growing in Christ Together, one step at a time.* The vicar felt that people were very much on that journey of faith, accompanying others on the way, even as we have been and are accompanied and encouraged by others.

The vicar felt there were three things that we had learned about ourselves in lockdown.

(1) Whether we are gathered or scattered, we are the church. (2) Fostering a culture of enquiry. (3) We must be led by our gifts rather than our structures. Like many parishes it was felt that St Paul's was committee heavy which was off putting for newcomers hoping to get involved. The Church of England had launched a ten year strategy, *Simpler, Humbler, Bolder*. St Paul's would be using this material to refine its sense of vision going forward.

Annual report on proceedings of the PCC and activities of the Parish for the year ended 31 December 2020.

The full PCC had met seven times in 2020 to deal with church matters, with an average attendance of 82%. With effect from April 2020 it had been necessary to hold meetings by Zoom, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2019 the full PCC had met ten times with an average attendance of 72%. The review mentioned various areas of church life which are hugely important, and some of which were affected by the pandemic in 2020.

Due to the pandemic it was decided that, when it was possible to meet in person, services would be held at 8.00 am (BCP), 10.00 am (Morning Worship or Holy Communion) and 11.15 am (Family Service). For many weeks when the church was closed the services were pre-recorded and were available to watch on the St Paul's website. Following the re-opening of the church for services the 10.00 am services and the 11.15 am services were livestreamed and available on the website.

On Sunday 1st March 2020 over 100 people gathered for a Service of Celebration for forty years of St Paul's Pre-school. Past and present leaders, staff, volunteers, pupils and parents joined together to give thanks for the dedicated service of the many who saw the need to help young families in our community. The Bishop of Tonbridge attended a special lunch for parents and children on 2nd March, along with special guests, Jean Pogose the first leader, Judith Frost, and Lindsey Lamb representing all the other current church members who had an association with the Pre-school.

The Prayer Ministry Group had been unable to meet during the year, and it had not been possible to offer prayer in the Chapel during the 10.00 am Service of Holy Communion. The group had been kept informed by email of any urgent requests, and a time of prayer had been set up on a Thursday evening, by Zoom, for anyone to attend.

The vicar, two wardens, one Reader, the Pastoral Assistant, the Evangelist and the Church Administrator had continued to meet each week during 2020, either in person or via Zoom, to review the previous Sunday services and to share thoughts and requests.

Some of the Home Groups had continued to meet via Zoom, and as always this had been an important time for study, discussion and nurture outside Sunday worship. Up to fifteen members of the Wednesday Friendship Support Group had continued to meet weekly for friendship and chats, either outside in the Church garden or inside the Church, in accordance with the Government Covid-19 guidelines on support groups. Due to the pandemic there were no weddings at St Paul's in 2020 and only one baptism.

With the Coronavirus lockdown in March 2020 a weekly 'buddy system' had been organised to prevent isolation and offer support to the local community. Through social media and leaflets offers to help had been received from 71 people, of which 36 were from the community outside St Paul's. Like many similar arrangements the level of volunteers had significantly

outstripped the 23 people asking for support. In addition a number of church members had been supporting each other in more informal arrangements. With the ending of shielding arrangements, the scheme was discontinued at the beginning of August 2020.

The Church website had continued to be a source of information for church members, visitors and local residents. In 2020 major efforts had been required as the church went 'virtual' to cope with Covid-19 lockdown. A Communications Group had been established to sort out the requirements for enhanced membership emailing, streaming of virtual services and the live streaming of services which had 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 link 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 going forward would require greater involvement and updating of the equipment.

The church had continued to be extremely well served by its many volunteers who clean the church and the brass, operate the worship presentation software and sound system during services, arrange the flowers, serve on the Welcome Team, maintain the gardens, wind the clock, serve as sidesmen at services, lead services and thanks was recorded for all their work. Members were also grateful to the musicians who play the organ or piano at each service, and to those who have pre-recorded hymns to be played at the online and actual services.

The PCC has several teams responsible for particular areas of the life of the church at St Paul's. All members of the teams are required to complete a Conflict of Interest form. The following team reports summarise activity in those areas.

Buildings Team

The Team had reported on the three most significant projects to have been undertaken in 2020, while taking the opportunity to thank the Gardening Team for keeping the church gardens so well, and for working around activities of contractors and their hut during Quinquennial Inspection works. The gardens had been a blessing and a gift to our local community during lockdown periods in 2020, and much used and loved.

Quinquennial Inspection Works

The 2015 Quinquennial Inspection had listed, as ever, many aspects of the buildings needing attention. These included replacement or repair of the external secondary windows protecting the clerestory windows above the nave, significant areas of plaster needing repair, and remedial works in the Church Halls, notably windows and a long standing concern about a leak over the hall stage. Nothing enormous, but a long list of works. The same contractor had also carried out improvements in the Chapel at the same time. The contractors had started on site during the first 2020 lockdown, and were at St. Paul's longer than planned because they used a smaller team, and because with the buildings closed, there had been less time pressure on early completion. It had been a great benefit to St Paul's that these works (and some additional plaster repairs identified as necessary by our architect) could be carried out during lockdown.

Chapel Improvements

Works planned for the Chapel had been scaled back for a variety of reasons. The project in the end had achieved the following improvements:

- Joinery works to make uniform the boxing in of redundant heating pipes around the base of the external walls.
- Laying heating mats on the floor (with an electricity supply and controls), providing a new carpet and replacing the mat at the Chapel door.
- Making good and redecorating the internal walls of the Chapel.

Halls Redecoration

A decision had been made to redecorate the Church Halls on a self-help basis, and much credit for leadership and motivation was recorded to the Wardens at the time, Bidy and Rosemary. A large team (including help from Pre-school staff) had assembled and Liz Spencer had created a project plan. There had been concern about the ceiling material over the stage, but a fresh asbestos survey had confirmed that no asbestos was present. So over a concentrated period of about three weeks in August 2020, the halls had been transformed. Huge thanks was recorded to all who had scraped, filled holes, painted walls, painted cupboards (there are so many cupboards) painted woodwork and got the job done before Pre-school term began in September.

Communications Team

During the first lockdown, St Paul's had adjusted quickly to many of the challenges presented by the pandemic. Lines of communication had been established in the first week of Lockdown, and the report noted particular thanks to:

Simon Dalwood, for setting up the parish email system and serving as Postmaster
 David Charlesworth for managing *St Paul's Connect* and serving as Webmaster
 Ian Rodgers for the vital prayer updates
 Richard Bradley for his diligent support of our offline members
 Gilbert Safarian for producing the content for the Prayers for the Day
 To everyone who had contributed a thought to the now weekly TFTDs.

Following the APCM in 2020 the Communications Team had been formed to take strategic oversight of the various channels of communication used at St Paul's, both in contacting the immediate church-family, but also in sharing news and events with the wider parish and beyond. In February, the team had reviewed the average weekly communications sent from the church.

Monday - Prayer For The Day Offline deliveries
 Tuesday - Thought For The Day
 Wednesday - Prayer For The Day
 Friday - News sheet
 Sunday - Service.

A Typical Week - this highlights that our "in house" or internal communications have been well established. The Team had responded to many aspects of the pandemic well, but the Team had reflected that there was much work to be done with the external communications, particularly with the strategic use of the website and social media. While the online presence had enormous potential as a tool for reaching out and connecting with new people, the Team had reflected that they had yet to answer the deeper questions of purpose. It was one thing to be online, and to make use of social media, but consideration needed to be given to:

What is the goal? What is the message? What is the response we are after?

Since April, the Team had tried to be more consistent in posting regularly on social media, but felt they must attend to these questions in the coming months.

Going forward, they would aim to:

- Sustain the support of our offline members
- Maintain our internal communications
- Develop our external communications

Finance Team

The Team recorded their enormous thanks to David Holmes, who had stepped down as Treasurer after preparing the 2019 Annual Accounts for the last APCM in October 2020. David had stepped down, but had not stepped back, as he had supported the process and answered all questions relating to the 2020 Annual accounts with his usual thoroughness, attention to detail and grace.

In the absence of a Treasurer, the PCC had concluded that it should find and appoint an external accountant to prepare the 2020 Annual Accounts and put in place provision of Management Information at appropriate intervals. The Team had only been in a position to engage readily with an external provider because Rosemary Dear and Stephanie Fox had kept fully on top of day to day management of recording and reconciling day to day handling of income, expenditure and reconciliation of the church finances. Five firms of accountants had been approached with an invitation to tender, and with a copy of the 2019 Annual Report and Accounts. Two firms had submitted proposals, and Assuretax Accountants in South Croydon had been selected and engaged by the PCC. Jayen Patel and Antony Thevathas had worked under significant time pressure to prepare the accounts, had engaged with the Finance Team and with our Independent Examiner. The Team also recorded its thanks to Ernest Kabera for undertaking Independent Examination of the 2020 Annual Accounts.

Looking ahead, the increase in planned giving shown in 2020 had been a wonderful witness to the strength of the fellowship and to the commitment to God's work at St Paul's. The vision for St. Paul's was all about people and their journey of faith, both individually and together in fellowship. The Team felt it was important to encourage giving if this vision was to become real. The PCC had been acutely aware that any expenditure would need to be aligned with the vision, and was totally committed to fruits for God's Kingdom that this would bring.

The **Mission Partners** team had met three times in 2020, twice on Zoom, to plan the Away Giving support by St Paul's for six Mission organisations and mission partners during the year and the contingency funds amounting to 2% of Away Giving. The PCC had requested that each Mission of the Month should be supported for two months. During 2020 each member of the team had planned the presentation of an organisation to the Church members. Ben and Katy Ray with Church Mission Society, Julian and Catherine with Wycliffe Bible Translators, and Nick and Harriet Algeo with Crosslinks had each received £1,269.87; Julia Birkett with Overseas Missionary Fellowship, Christians Against Poverty, and Welcare in Bromley had each received £1,460.61. 2% of Away Giving had been sent from Contingencies during the year to Societies giving disaster relief in Somalia, Syria, Beirut and Covid Relief in Africa.

The Worship (and Children's work) Team

The Team had met early in 2021 to review the Christmas services and the ongoing worship of the church in the light of Covid restrictions. Team members had also put forward suggestions for the sermon series between Epiphany and Easter.

Marie Read proposed, seconded Ian Rodgers, that the Annual report on proceedings of the PCC and activities of the Parish for the year ended 31st December 2020 be accepted. **Agreed.**

Independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31st December 2020

Keith Howick introduced a video which had been prepared giving an overview of where St Paul's was financially in 2020 and where the church hoped to be going in the future. It had been a strange year. It had, however, been a huge blessing and witness to the strength and commitment to God's work here that Voluntary Income had risen in 2020 to £135,806 from £120,323 in 2019. Gift Aid donations, which are a key financial indicator, as they exclude legacies and tax recoverable, had risen to £96,785 in 2020 from £78,692 in 2019. It was a matter for prayer that this upward trend would continue in 2021. There were 65 regular givers in 2020, as compared to 63 in 2019. There had been a 31% drop in 'Other giving (including collections)', and an 83% drop in 'Fund raising'. Incoming resources from charitable activities' had dropped 52% compared to 2019. All these income drops were a result of the Covid pandemic, as the Church buildings had been closed for long periods and it had not been possible to use or hire out the halls for many months in 2020.

Parish Share, which is what St Paul's contributes to the Diocese, in return for our Vicar and Diocesan support) had been essentially unchanged in 2020, and had been met in full. Away giving had increased in 2020, as it was related directly to the amount of planned giving, and most general running costs had been broadly similar in 2020 to what they had been in 2019.

The really significant expenditure in 2020, as was planned and expected, had been carrying out and completing Quinquennial Repairs (Repairs identified and prioritised in the 2015 Quinquennial Report). This project had been long in gestation and had been combined in the same contract as Chapel improvements, on the recommendation of the architects who had been appointed. The Chapel project had been scaled back significantly, and the opportunity had been taken to carry out more plaster repairs than specified originally, as areas needing attention were identified. The internal works had been carried out during the time the Church building was closed. Chapel costs and QI works were shown together in the Accounts as 'Quinquennial & other major repairs' and totalled £78,051. This expenditure had been met in large part from the Diocesan Repair Fund (the savings for QI works which are on deposit with the Diocese), and restricted funds for the Chapel and QI repairs.

The vicar thanked Keith Howick for his report and invited questions. In answer to a question regarding the Chapel, Keith Howick confirmed that heating mats had been installed, along with a new carpet and new door mat, and re-decorating had been completed. Various restricted funds had been used to finance the work. The vicar thanked Rosemary Dear and Keith Howick for their support. Ian Rodgers proposed, seconded Tarina Hill-Carroll, that the Independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31st December 2020 be accepted. **Agreed.**

Church fabric, goods and ornaments

The report from the churchwardens had been received. The onset of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdowns had meant that it had not been possible to use the church building or halls in the normal ways for many months. This had been especially challenging in the first lockdown, when the building had been completely closed, even for Easter – surely for the first time in its nearly 150-year history. However, a group of volunteers had used this opportunity to carry out a much-needed redecoration of the halls.

Following that lockdown the church had reopened in a Covid-safe manner, with an array of precautions which had become familiar. This had included opening the church building for private prayer and reflection on weekdays, a practice which had continued during the second lockdown and had been a major, visible sign of God’s presence in our community through the current pandemic. Work on building maintenance had also continued, including the repairs required by the Quinquennial Inspection, as stated in the report of the Buildings Committee. There had been no major changes or additions to the buildings and fittings in 2020, but several smaller purchases and maintenance tasks had been carried out. Early in the year the outside LED light over the hall exit had been replaced and the church halls had been redecorated. In July a package of AV equipment (an access point router, cabling, a micro-computer and a camera) had been purchased to enable the live streaming of church services, which had formed a vital part of the church’s new and highly important digital Ministry. In November a new security alarm system had been installed at a cost of £2,880, as the old system had been found to be no longer fit for purpose.

Another change made early in the year had been the installation of heated mats under the carpet in the Chapel of Remembrance. The churchwardens hoped that this had made the chapel more comfortable for those using it during the week or attending Sunday 8 am Holy Communion.

The Church garden had remained accessible throughout the year and had been a haven of peace and beauty for church members and the wider community, always highly appreciated but especially so during lockdown. A number of new plants had been added via the Gardening team. The churchwardens thanked the Gardening team for all their work and for their patience with the unavoidable Covid safety rules.

Following the church cleaner’s period of illness and subsequent resignation, the churchwardens were very grateful to Ron and Pauline Barrett for stepping into the breach. The church had continued to look clean and welcoming for us all due to their care and attention. The churchwardens also thanked the flower team and David and Daphne Bryan for preparing the altar table for Holy Communion. Inevitably the church had looked a bit different during the pandemic, but keeping it as close as possible to its normal appearance had felt both right and reassuring.

Rosemary Dear proposed, seconded Simon Dalwood, that the report on the church fabric, goods and ornaments be accepted. **Agreed.**

Deanery Synod proceedings

2020 had been an unusual year for the Beckenham Deanery Synod. Rev Jeremy Blunden had been appointed Area Dean at the end of 2019, and the first Deanery Synod meeting, hosted by

St. Paul's on 2nd March, had been possibly the shortest in recent memory. Lockdown had started soon after and the next Deanery Synod meeting had taken place on 8th December by Zoom. By December, St. Paul's had had its APCM, and the elected Deanery Synod representatives were Hazel Koungoue and Barbara Judge, with David Gillman and Keith Howick being on the Deanery Synod ex officio because they had previously been elected to the Diocesan Synod.

The December Deanery Synod had hoped to invite the area Growth Enabler, Abi Hiscock, to be present, but she had been furloughed. So the meeting had received short reports from each of the Deanery parishes, presented by lay members, focusing on successes and challenges. There had inevitably been some common threads of online worship, buddy systems and small group meetings on Zoom. Hazel had reported on the experience at St. Paul's, touching on our plans for an online Christingle Service using Christingle boxes/assembly kits and the distinctive reference to share our vision as a church (Encounter → Enquire → Explore → Engage → Enable), the focus being less on 'doing' Church and more emphasis on 'being' Church.

At the time of writing the report the following were members of the Deanery Synod Standing Committee:

Clergy: Fr Jeremy Blunden, Rev Gary Best and Rev Simon Couper

Lay: Sarah Poole, Astra Peters, Beccy Short and Gloria Sherman.

Keith Howick proposed, seconded Rev Simon Couper, that the report of the Deanery Synod proceedings be accepted. **Agreed.**

Appointment of Independent Examiner

The vicar reminded members that Ernest Kabera had been the Independent Examiner for the last two years and St Paul's was very grateful to him for his work. Rosemary Dear commented that Ernest had been delighted to serve in this way.

The vicar proposed, seconded Hazel Koungoue, that in principle Ernest Kabera should be appointed to act as Independent Examiner for 2021. **Agreed.**

Open Forum

In answer to a question regarding possible new members of the staff team, the vicar explained that St Paul's would cover the expenses of a curate and ordinand and the Diocese would find accommodation. St Paul's might be looking for someone to help with youth and children's work.

David Charlesworth expressed concerns regarding his work as webmaster. He encouraged people to let him know what events would be happening, to send him photographs for social media and the website. He also wondered if there was anyone who could help with getting information.

Ian Rodgers reminded members that St Paul's has a prayer cordon, which is circulated as and when there is a need, and encouraged people to let him know if they would like to be added to the list. The vicar thanked Ian for organising this area of prayer.

There being no further business the vicar closed the meeting with prayer and with the Grace.