

St Paul's Parish Church, New Beckenham

**ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS via Zoom
Sunday 11th October 2020**

Rev Simon Couper, Chairman of the Parochial Church Council, was in the chair. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised them that the meeting would be recorded and would be posted on the St Paul's Church website. He then led the meeting in prayer.

Appointment of Clerk

Rev Simon Couper proposed, seconded Ann Birkett, that Anne Howick should be appointed as Clerk to the Annual Meeting.

Minutes of the meeting of Parishioners held on 14th April 2019. George Burr proposed, seconded Ian Rodgers, that the minutes, having been available on the Church website, be taken as read, approved and signed. **Agreed.**

Elections of churchwardens. Rev Simon Couper thanked both Rosemary Dear and Bidy Gillman for their work as churchwardens in a very challenging year. He had appreciated all they had done and he had been very well served by the churchwardens, and particularly thanked them for all the work they had undertaken with regard to the risk assessment for social distancing in the Covid-19 pandemic. Bidy Gillman had indicated in April that she would like to step down from the role of churchwarden and in the months since then it had been a busy time for the churchwardens.

Rosemary Dear thanked Bidy for all her hard work and for diligently performing all the duties and more which were required of the churchwardens and gave many examples of the work Bidy had done. Bidy thanked Rosemary, the vicar and Anna Couper, and the sides people for their support.

The PCC Secretary reported that two nominations had been received for the posts of churchwarden. Richard Bradley had been proposed by Bidy Gillman, seconded John Blakely. Rosemary Dear had been proposed by Alison Charlesworth, seconded Elaine Storey. In the absence of any other nominations Mr Bradley and Mrs Dear were declared elected for the following year. The vicar thanked Richard and Rosemary for agreeing to stand. Richard commented that he felt it was a great honour to be asked to serve as Bidy's replacement as she was a hard act to follow. He would do his best to support the work and life of St Paul's with God's help and support from all the members of St Paul's.

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING via Zoom
Sunday 11th October 2020**

Rev Simon Couper, Chairman of the Parochial Church Council, was in the chair and at least 50 members of the congregation were following the meeting on Zoom. The vicar reported that the meeting would be recorded and would be available on the Church website.

Apologies for absence had been received from Rufus Ballaster, Pauline Grimsey, Marion Lowe, Brian Woolmer.

The Minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 14th April 2019 had been available to read on the Church website and some hard copies had been distributed to members of the congregation. Ian Rodgers proposed, seconded Alison Dockray, that the minutes be taken as read, approved and signed. **Agreed.**

Electoral Roll. Simon Dalwood, Electoral Roll Officer, reported that there were 132 on the Electoral Roll, of whom 56 were resident in the Parish and 76 were not resident in the Parish. He commented that some people had probably missed out on being on the Roll as the Roll had been completely revised in 2019. It was very important that everyone is part of the St Paul's community and it helps the church to communicate more effectively, particularly during lockdown, as the church has email addresses where possible. The vicar encouraged everyone to consider joining the Electoral Roll, as it enabled them to attend the Annual Parochial Church Meeting and to have a vote. The pastoral benefit was that it helps people to be better connected to the life of the Parish.

Election of six representatives to the Parochial Church Council. The PCC Secretary reported that she had received four nominations in advance of the meeting for Andrew Griffiths, Keith Howick, Barbara Judge, and Nomsa Mafohla. There being no further nominations, the vicar confirmed that each candidate was now elected and he welcomed them all on to the PCC, particularly welcoming Andrew Griffiths and Nomsa Mafohla who were joining the PCC for the first time.

Election of two representatives to the Deanery Synod. The PCC Secretary reported that she had not received any nominations. The representatives are also *ex officio* members of the PCC. The vicar commented that it is a very interesting time for the Deanery at the moment. There is a new Area Dean, Father Jeremy Blunden. The vicar encouraged everyone to prayerfully consider whether they might be interested in representing St Paul's on the Deanery Synod.

Appointment of a Licensed Reader to serve as an *ex officio* member of the PCC. The PCC Secretary reported that Simon Dalwood had asked to step down from the PCC for the coming year. The vicar thanked Simon for his time on the PCC since 1987, for being a faithful servant of the Lord, and for his act of service, which was much appreciated. Simon Dalwood commented that he felt it was time to take a sabbatical from the PCC but he would still be around. 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 serve in this capacity. The vicar welcomed Sarah Butler on to the PCC as the Licensed Reader representative.

Ian Rodgers noted that there were two vacancies on the PCC and two *ex officio* vacancies. He very much encouraged people to consider the possibility of serving on the PCC or to think of other people who might be suitable.

Annual report on proceedings of the PCC and activities of the Parish for the year ended 31 December 2019. The vicar thanked the PCC Secretary for putting the document together. The vicar commented that the past year had been a very challenging year for the safeguarding structure of the Church of England, particularly with the publication earlier in October of the IICSA report. Churches in the Diocese of Rochester had been asked to complete a Past Cases Review 2 report and the vicar thanked David Bryan for his support in looking at past paperwork. The vicar reported that in the coming week he would be publishing an open letter expressing

something of his grief and response as an ordained minister. He encouraged everyone to read the letter and members of the PCC were asked to read a precis of the report.

The full PCC had met ten times during 2019 to deal with church matters, with an average attendance of 72%. In 2018 the PCC had met ten times with an average attendance of 81%. The Prayer Ministry Group had continued to meet regularly during the year. The team work on a rota basis offering prayer for any who come into the Chapel during the 10.30 am Service of Holy Communion. Members of the Group had also been available after the Morning Worship service to pray in the Chapel or in church for any who would welcome a time of prayer. The Mission Statement and Guidelines are kept under review and training advice had been considered so that the group could offer, by the Grace of God, good practice in confidential prayer ministry. A Prayer Basket is available at the back of church with request slips, which can be completed anonymously or with a name. These prayers were offered at the weekly Friday prayer meeting. There was also a prayer cordon of people who had undertaken to pray in response to specific requests or emergencies. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings there had been a time of Morning Prayer for half an hour in the Chapel.

The Ministry Leadership Team, which consists of the Vicar, two Readers, two Pastoral Assistants, one Evangelist, two churchwardens and one former churchwarden, had met regularly to review the services and work of ministry at St Paul's.

The eight Home Groups, which about eighty members of the congregation attend, had continued actively during 2019, and had formed an important backbone of worship, study, discussion and nurture outside Sunday worship. Termly programmes had been co-ordinated by Simon Dalwood, in consultation with the vicar, and these had occasionally been related to preaching, particularly in evening services. The Wednesday Fellowship had continued to meet weekly for friendship and talks on a wide variety of subjects, and during Lent for a series of devotional talks. A small team of members had taken on the organisation since Liz Burt announced in 2017 that she did not feel able to continue to run the group. As part of our outreach and nurture we had organised a marriage preparation course to which all those getting married or having a service of blessing at St Paul's were invited. In 2019 there were four weddings and three baptisms. The St Paul's Book Club had met once a month to discuss a different book each time. During 2018 it had been agreed that the Parish newsletter should be renamed and following consultation with the congregation it was now known as "Connect".

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 had been 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 and David Charlesworth was thanked for all he had done in late 2018 to refresh it and to add more social media features such as Facebook. The webmaster role had continued in 2019 to keep them up to date. 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 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 was still too limited in terms of awareness of opportunity, the provision of information and those capable of working the technology. This area had become part of the 'new normal' for church and would require greater involvement.

The church had been extremely well served by its many volunteers who clean the church and the brass, serve refreshments after the services, operate the worship presentation software and sound system during services, arrange the flowers, serve on the Welcome Team, distribute the parish newsletter, maintain the gardens, print the weekly notice sheets, wind the clock, serve as sidesmen at services, and lead services and thanks was recorded for all their work. In October Ron and Pauline Barrett, who had cleaned the church each week for 18 years, had decided that the time had come to give up their cleaning duties. Members were most grateful to them for all their hard work over the years in keeping the church and halls clean and tidy. Members were also grateful to the musicians who play the organ or piano at each service, and who lead the "Where Faith meets Life" service on the 3rd Sunday in the month. Discussions had continued regarding the vision for St Paul's.

An on-going review of risks had been carried out and following consultation with the various PCC committees a Risk Register had been compiled and a set of policies had been adopted. In addition a standard checklist was available to be used by any committee in planning a church event.

The PCC has several committees, responsible for particular areas of the life of the church at St Paul's. All members of the committees were required to complete a Conflict of Interest form. The following committee reports had been received and summarized activity in those areas.

2019 had been a year of frustration for the **Buildings Committee**. Having obtained Diocesan Advisory Committee approval in 2018 for a combined project dealing with Quinquennial Inspection works, from the 2015 QI, and significant works in the Chapel, and with contractors lined up to start early in 2019, an objection to works in the Chapel had caused a major rethink. Much reduced works in the Chapel had resulted; the project had retained the key improvements of laying heating mats under a new carpet on the Chapel floor up to the sanctuary step, tidying up joinery to conceal redundant heating pipes and redecoration of the Chapel walls, while the QI works had remained much the same. It was hoped that all these works would be carried out in the first half of 2020.

The Buildings Committee had spent much time trying to find a cost effective way of lighting the church path, possibly with some light playing on the church building. Key considerations had been safety for path users, avoiding light pollution, and value. Enquiries had shown that it would be easy to spend £50,000 or more (the first ballpark estimate!), and the Committee had asked the PCC for a steer on a budget. As would be expected, the Committee was exploring a modest project, with safety for path users as the top priority.

One completed project had been the removal of half a pew off the centre aisle for wheelchair use and easy access. Members expressed their thanks to Jim and Ann Vice for superb craft in carrying out the work.

The **Finance Committee** had met regularly throughout the year to review the accounts, to prepare a budget, and to consider other financial matters, including giving and income generation. The Committee had been considering options for digital giving, looking into options for a further bank account to reduce risk and to increase return on the reserves the church currently holds, and researching ethical banking. The card reader earned a total of £439 since it had come into use in February 2019, and the committee had agreed continue to look for opportunities to incorporate this and other forms of digital giving. In 2020 the Mission of the Month would be changing from twelve charities per year to six. Away Giving had been discussed in the light of this, and it had been agreed that contributions from St Paul's would be calculated on a six month basis, rather than three months, in order to even out the contributions that each charity receives. David Holmes had been very generous with his time as Treasurer, staying on a year after his resignation to complete the 2019 accounts, and the Finance Committee recorded particular thanks to him. From 2020, as there had been no volunteers to take on the responsibilities of the treasurer, it would be necessary to pay a firm to prepare the monthly reports.

The **Growth & Nurture Committee** had worked to develop outreach in the local community, and to nurture and support the local community. The Parish magazine, Connect, had been distributed several times during the year, although there were still some blocks of flats which it was not possible to access. Home Groups had continued to meet. There had been discussions about how to open the church more during the day. St Paul's had continued to support the foodbanks at CAP (Penge) and Living Well (Bromley) each month, and there had been special foodbank collections at Easter, Harvest and Christmas, which members of the local community had also contributed to. There had been a New Year's Eve tea part on 31st December. A marriage preparation course had been held for all those getting married at St Paul's in 2019. Several classes from Worsley Bridge School had visited St Paul's for activity mornings, and the school had held end of term services at St Paul's. The Bereavement group had met on the first Saturday of the month, but had decided towards the end of 2019 that it would not be meeting. It had been agreed that, with effect from March 2020, there would be a Saturday morning Coffee and Chat time on the first Saturday in the month.

The **Mission Committee** had met three times during 2019, and its remit had been to research and recommend which Missions outside the Parish of St Paul's should be supported by prayer and financial support. 10% of unallocated funds had been set aside by the PCC for this purpose. Roughly half are foreign based missions, and the rest are UK based. During 2019 the following societies had been supported:

January – Spinnaker Trust
 February – Church Mission Society (Tanzania)
 March – Crosslinks (Gambia)
 April – Livability. John Grooms Housing Association and the Shaftesbury Society
 May – OMF (Thailand)
 June – Christian Solidarity Worldwide
 July – Wycliffe Bible Translators (Southern Russia)
 September – A Rocha
 October – Frontiers (Mission to Muslims)
 November – SAT-7, Christian broadcasting
 December – Welcare in Bromley

Out of contingency funds, which are set aside for emergencies, a donation had been made to the Mozambique Floods Appeal via Tear Fund and to Living Well, for local community care and lunches. Four members of the Committee had been invited for tea at the House of Lords with Baroness Cox, who had done so much to raise awareness of persecution of the Christian church abroad.

The **Social Committee** had met six times during 2019 to arrange a number of events. In March the Auction of Promises had been conducted by auctioneers Anne Harkness, David Charlesworth and Rev Simon Couper, who had provided entertainment as well as controlling the bidding. Cashiers Lindsey Lamb and Katie Burr had taken the money efficiently and £5,551 had been raised. Two walks had been organized, one at Easter with 17 people and one in August with 11 people, and the walks had ended with a pub lunch. The Christian Aid quiz and lunch had been held in May and the Committee had recorded its thanks to Brian and Tarina Carroll for being Quiz masters and to all who had prepared the soup for the lunch. There had been a further walk around London with Ben Virgo who had showed St Paul's Cathedral, Cheapside and the area around the Museum of London, from a Christian view point. The Annual Tea party had been held in June with a bouncy castle and steel band for about 200 people. The Committee thanked Simon Dalwood for his help with collecting the drums. The Autumn Fair in November had raised £1,600. There had been a soup lunch followed by apple pie and thanks were recorded to the members of Catering for all their contributions at this and other events. The funds raised from the sale of Christmas tags had been put towards a Bursary to be used by Nick and Harriet Algeo in their Gambian college. The Committee had also expressed their thanks to David Storey and the Community Choir who had sung at two concerts at St Paul's and had raised an amazing amount of money.

The **Worship Committee** had met several times during the year to discuss a variety of matters concerning the worshipping life of St Paul's, though much of the day to day organization of services had been handled by the weekly staff meeting and by the ministry team of clergy and readers. The Committee had considered a number of issues concerning the functioning and security of church equipment. The Committee had planned and reviewed the different "festival" services, such as Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas and Easter, anticipating some of the practical arrangements that would need to be made. A continuing item of discussion had been the format of the Evening services and how they could differ from the Morning services, noting that the 8am service of Holy Communion already had its own unique format. The Committee had also continued to look at the format and aim of the "Where Faith Meets Life" contemporary service which had been held once a month. The format of the committee meetings had often enabled times of far ranging, open discussion about the worshipping life of the Church going beyond the scope of the planned agenda.

Families Together had continued to meet each month with between 25 – 35 children with their families. The programme of a Bible story, related crafts and activities, song and a meal together had proved very popular and had reached many families who did not normally attend Sunday services. This had been possible due to the dedicated support of about twenty volunteers and the overall leadership team of Marion Blakely, Jill Brook, Sarah Butler, Alison Charlesworth, David Charlesworth and Marie Read. Thanks was recorded to all the volunteers and leaders, including the catering team, which had made Families Together an important part of our outreach. The **Babies & Toddlers Group** had continued to meet on a Thursday morning and certainly met a need for young parents who were coming along in increasing numbers to meet other new parents and make new friendships. Some weeks more than thirty children and accompanying adults had attended.

Our first foray into organizing a community week, New Beckenham Together, had taken place in September 2019, with the clear statement of St Paul's being at the centre of our local community. A varied programme of talks, practical demonstrations, musical events, refreshments, flower arrangements, litter picking, personal fitness and much more had offered 'something for everyone'. It had been amazing to see the talents available both within the church and from friends outside. The intention had been to have repeated the event in 2020 but unfortunately this had to be cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic, but hopefully members hoped it would be possible to hold the event in 2021.

Simon Dalwood proposed, seconded Katie Burr, that the Annual Report of the Parochial Church Council of St Paul's for the year ended 31st December 2019 be accepted. **Agreed.**

Independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2019.

David Holmes presented the accounts. There had been a more encouraging picture for 2019 and even though there had been an overall deficit it was considerably less than in 2018. He thanked Rosemary Dear for her support during 2019. The vicar thanked David Holmes for continuing to serve as the Treasurer, even though he had indicated that he wished to step down from the duty. In consultation with the Diocese it was hoped that St Paul's would be able to employ an accountant to provide quarterly reports. The vicar encouraged members that if they had financial skills and would be able to contribute he hoped they would contact him.

The total incoming resources for 2019 was £273,659 (2018: £145,238) and total resources expended was £175,367 (2018: £160,427). There had been an increase in the amount given by Planned Giving and an increase in the amount refunded by HMRC with the Gift Aid scheme. Giving including collections and CAF donations had been higher than in 2018. In 2019 no legacies had been received. A number of fund raising events had taken place during the year which had raised over £9,000. There had been a slight increase in the rental income from 3 Ashford House and a self-contained garage owned by the church, partly due to 3 Ashford House being empty for a short period. Income from hall hire at £14,727 was slightly down on 2018 (£15,358). Income from fees for weddings, funerals and interment of ashes had been higher than in 2018. In 2019 there were 63 regular donors compared with 58 in 2018. Commitment to regular giving, irrespective of the amount, was a sign of commitment to the church and its work, a confirmation of belonging to the church family.

David Holmes commented that the costs of St Paul's mission both within the Parish and outside the local area were very considerable. There had been a slight decrease in the amount St Paul's was required to pay as part of the Parish Pledge, and a small increase in the vicarage costs. Servicing and repair of the organ had been a significant cost in 2019, and some training on the audio-visual system had been provided by Kazbar in 2019. The running costs of the church halls were lower in 2019 as it had been necessary to purchase a new boiler in 2018. The Mission of the Month scheme, at £9,466, was down slightly on 2018 (£10,742). Nearly £25,000 was on deposit with the Diocese for future repairs to the church building. St Paul's continues to support the London Living Wage scheme and as a result the Church Administrator had been paid slightly more in 2019 compared to 2018. The unrestricted free reserves were currently at £63,312 which was in line with the church policy of keeping 3 – 13 months of annual resource expenditure.

Simon Dalwood proposed, seconded Ian Rodgers, that the independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31st December 2019 should be received and adopted. **Agreed.**

Report on church fabric, goods and ornaments. A report prepared by the churchwardens had been circulated. The churchwardens reported that Ron and Pauline Barrett, who had been the team who had kept the church in such good order, had sadly decided after 18 years that they now wished officially to retire. Over the years they had worked with great vigour, dedication and determination and had always been so generous with their time. Everyone had benefitted from their generosity and enjoyed their good humour. They thanked them for all their work over the year. There had been two Saturdays when parish members had been invited to do those 'extra cleaning' jobs and the churchwardens thanked all those who had accepted the challenge. A new church cleaner Chloe had been appointed and she comes in on three days. The churchwardens also thanked David and Daphne Bryan for always making sure the altar table was appropriately prepared and ready for Holy Communion. The flower team had continued to work hard from week to week and particularly for the special festivals which had been a feast for the eyes.

2019 had been a year of change to the layout of some of the pews so that there could be room for chairs, and if needed, wheelchair space towards the centre of the church. The churchwardens thanked Jim Vice and David Storey, for making this alteration. There were two wheelchairs stored in the back pews for use in church and these could also be borrowed on request.

The Church grounds had been well maintained by the Gardening team and the churchwardens thanked Moreen Lane and Ann Vice for all the extra work they had done to make the gardens so attractive and appreciated not only by the Parishioners but also by members of the local community. They also thanked the 'mowing' team for their hard work.

A new water heater had been installed in the hall kitchen. There was a team of people responsible for the opening and closing of the hall when it is let, but this task had mainly fallen to Juliet Bull and the Churchwardens.

The churchwardens confirmed that the Church's Goods and Ornaments register, and the Log Book were up to date.

Tarina Hill proposed, seconded Anthea Prendergast, that the report on church fabric, goods and ornaments should be accepted. **Agreed.**

Report on Deanery Synod proceedings. A report had been received. The Deanery Synod met three times in 2019 for regular meetings, and there had been a meeting of the 'Extraordinary Synod' in September. A dominant issue during the year (and the reason for the Extraordinary Synod) had been Indicative Offers, and the change in approach by Rochester Diocese about the amounts parishes could, might or should contribute to the Diocese. The model for calculation changed during 2019 from an initial proposal (Ministry costs + Diocesan support costs + 10% of gross income) to a final outcome (Ministry costs + Diocesan support costs + 50% of residual income), which had generated much concerned debate. As with any change of this sort, some parishes would gain and some would lose. St. Paul's had sat relatively neutrally during what for some had been a challenging period.

Term limits for Lay Deanery Synod members had been an issue at General Synod, but the outcome had been that no term requirement had been imposed on Lay Deanery Synod members. Keith Howick reported on two more positive issues. The Diocesan initiative 'Called to Grow' had been discussed at Deanery Synod in October, although Revd Fr. Jeremy Blunden (who had been involved in this at a Diocesan level) had been unable to be there to lead the discussion. There had been an initiative that churches in the Deanery should work together and cooperate more and this had borne some fruit. Parishes had been invited to contribute to Christian life in the Deanery, and St. Paul's in 2019 had featured with the Theology Course in autumn 2019, and the thriving Community Choir, which was open to all. Increased cooperation had been led by Rev Rob Hinton, and this was a significant legacy; he had stepped down as Area Dean in November 2019, and had been succeeded by Revd Fr. Jeremy Blunden, Rector of St. George's.

Katie Burr proposed, seconded Rosemary Dear, that the report on Deanery Synod proceedings be received. **Agreed.**

Appointment of Independent Examiner. The vicar expressed his sincere thanks to Ernest Kabera for his work as the Independent Examiner on the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2019. He reported that Ernest Kabera was willing to act as the Independent Examiner for the coming year. David Holmes proposed, seconded Keith Howick, that Ernest Kabera should be nominated to be the Independent Examiner for the year ending 31st December 2020. **Agreed.**

Vicar's Report. Rev Simon Couper acknowledged the enormity of events of the last year and felt that St Paul's had pulled together enormously well. There were many people that he would like to thank for their support in making church available and for supporting the services. He thanked the churchwardens, the ministry team which meets on a Wednesday morning, and Stephanie Fox, the Church Administrator. He thanked David Charlesworth and Judith Freeborn for their support for the 'Buddy' system. He then shared a video, "Growing in Christ, together: Objectives 2020 – 2025", with some thoughts and reflections and his sense of vision and strategy. The five headings were: Encounter, Enquire, Explore, Engage, Enable. Within these headings the vicar set out the following categories. (i) A call to public prayer; (ii) A Shift in culture; (iii) children and Families work; (iv) Communications and Social; (v) Safeguarding our work with the Vulnerable; (vi) Theology events; (vii) The landing ground; (viii) The Ministry team. The timeframe for each category varied from one month to sixty months. He encouraged members to read the document and to think seriously about how they could get involved or offer support. Members also viewed a stewardship video and the vicar thanked Katie Burr for her support in compiling this video. 2020 had been a challenging year for everyone. It had been good to see how many people had viewed or attended services online. He thanked everyone for their support during the difficult time during the Covid-19 pandemic. There was much to give thanks for. He reminded everyone that they had a voice and encouraged everyone to get in touch and share their talents.

Rev Simon Couper closed his report by referring to Philippians 3: 10 – 14.

At the end of the presentation, there being no further business, the vicar closed the meeting in prayer.