

## Vicar's Report

### Report to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

14<sup>th</sup> May 2023

#### 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

This has been a significant year in the life of our parish, and I wish to set it in some context. When a vicar first arrives in post there are 3 competing visions about what the church needs: 1. There is the parish profile, the job specification the PCC puts together when looking for a new vicar. 2. There's the archdeacon's perspective, which is a little more detached (and often involves reference to the parish share.) 3. There's the parishioners view on the ground, which you only discover on arrival. It took me about 18 months to make sense of these competing narratives and to discern what, in my view, was needful for the life of St Paul's. And I think I can express that need like this: *We needed a renewed confidence in our mission. Confidence in outreach.* There was something about our 150<sup>th</sup> jubilee that went a long way to doing just that. Through our anniversary, we made great steps to renewing our confidence in, and expectations about, our outreach to our community.

We are thankful, first and foremost, to the Holy Spirit who has sustained our witness through the generations. But as we give specific thought to what worked well last year, and what we should carry forward into the future; we have discovered a model of outreach that works well in our setting and is sustainable. Now the full digest of our anniversary year can be found in David Charlesworth's report, which can be found at the back. But today, I wish to focus on the model that played such a significant part in renewing our confidence and our joy in outreach. We have come to call this the "champion" model, and it works like this: at the start of last year, we drew up a list of events, opportunities, and activities. We strategically spread them across the diary, and then said, "let's put a team around each event, with a project lead or 'champion' to drive it forward." The only criteria we asked for serving on a project, was that you had to be excited, and passionate about it. That was it. This has enabled more people to get involved, to explore and exercise their gifts, and has encouraged a wider sense of participation in the life of St Paul's.

The 150<sup>th</sup> year provided us with so many memories, but even more importantly, it has given us a platform from which we can continue to work out the Great

Commission. Going forward, for as long as we feel this model is working, the PCC will review the outreach programme at its first meeting after the APCM. We will always seek to have a balance of events shaped by the two “p’s” of evangelism, “presence” and “proclamation.” We are committed to hosting events designed to build relationship, and events designed to teach the faith.

### **Teams**

As we continue to look ahead, and consider the challenges before us, it is essential that we breathe new life back into our formal Teams. These are the committees with delegated powers from the PCC which look after various areas of church life. During the pandemic, the goal posts moved so much, that the central Church of England simply delegated a lot of decision-making power to incumbents for the sake of increased flexibility in the face of the epidemic. Now that COVID is largely behind us, we need to reanimate these Teams, to share the load, and to better stabilise these important aspects of our shared life. From next Sunday, a sign-up sheet with a brief description of the remit of each team will be placed on the notices table at the back of church. As with our “champion” model for outreach, you do not need any formal qualification or to have worshipped at St Paul’s for any specified length of time to serve on these Teams. If you are interested, we would love to hear from you.

### **Sabbatical**

As we think about teams, and stabilising church life post COVID, I wish to share with you about the impact that Church leadership has had on myself and Anna, during the pandemic. We have always felt well looked after here at St Paul’s. But only now, as we have had more space and time to reflect, are we beginning to come to terms with just how much the past 2 and half years have taken out of us. And we felt we needed to share that with you, because we are not bullet proof. Now it so happens that I am approaching a significant anniversary in ministry - 10 years since ordination. From September I will be eligible for a sabbatical. That is not to say it will start in September, but I will begin to liaise with the diocese about the sabbatical process shortly thereafter.

### **Sunday Services**

I wish to conclude by noting, if only anecdotally, that our Sunday services feel warmer and more fun. There is a greater sense of participation which is itself a further sign of our renewed confidence. I would like to thank everyone for your continuing support, and I look forward to all that the future has in store.