

St Paul's Parish Church, New Beckenham

**ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS
Sunday 14th May 2023**

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 the Parishioners held on 24th April 2022. Anthea Prendergast proposed, seconded Sarah Butler, 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 Richard Bradley for his work as churchwarden during the past year, and thanked him for his support. Richard thanked Simon Couper for his support while he had been churchwarden, and also thanked Rosemary Dear, Hazel Koungoue and Stephanie Fox for their help and support, and his wife Alison for her support. On behalf of the congregation Simon Couper presented Richard and Alison with thank you gifts.

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 Hazel Koungoue were declared elected for the following year. Rev Simon Couper welcomed them into their role as churchwarden and prayed for Anne and Hazel.

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETING
Sunday 14th May 2023**

Rev Simon Couper, Chairman of the Parochial Church Council, was in the chair and forty five members were in attendance.

The minutes of the Annual Parochial Church Meeting held on 24th April 2022 had been available to read on the church website and some hard copies had been distributed to members of the congregation. Hazel Koungoue proposed, seconded John Blakely, that the minutes be taken as read, approved and signed. **Agreed.**

Electoral Roll. Rufus Ballaster, Electoral Roll Officer, reported that there were 134 members on the Electoral Roll at the end of 2022, of which 60 were resident within the Parish and 74 were not resident within the Parish. He encouraged people if they were not on the Electoral Roll to speak to him. He commented that there is no cost to be on the Electoral Roll.

Election of six representatives to the Parochial Church Council. The PCC Secretary reported that she had received five nominations in advance of the meeting for David Charlesworth, Andrew Griffiths, Sandra Horner, Keith Howick and Nomsa Mafohla. There being no further nominations the vicar confirmed that each candidate was now elected and he welcomed them on to the PCC and said a prayer for them. There was still one vacancy on the PCC and members were reminded that it would be possible for people to be co-opted to serve on the PCC for the remainder of the year.

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 to serve in this capacity. David Charlesworth proposed, seconded Rufus Ballaster, that Sarah Butler should serve as the Licensed Reader on the PCC. **Agreed.** The vicar expressed his thanks to Sarah for all her work.

Election of two representatives to serve on the Deanery Synod. The PCC Secretary reported that she had received one nomination in advance of the meeting for Keith Howick. As a result there would be one vacancy on the Deanery Synod. The vicar encouraged anyone who might be interested in serving on the Deanery Synod to speak to him.

Vicar's report.

Rev Simon reported on the 150th anniversary year which St Paul's had been celebrating in 2022. He felt it had been a significant year in the life of the parish. Through the anniversary St Paul's had made great steps to renew its confidence in, and expectations about, our outreach to the community. We are thankful, first and foremost, to the Holy Spirit who has sustained our witness through the generations. As we give specific thought to what worked well in 2022, and what we should carry forward into the future, St Paul's had discovered a model of outreach that works well in our setting and is sustainable. There was a full digest of the anniversary in David Charlesworth's report. At this meeting Rev Simon wished to focus on the model that played such a significant part in renewing our confidence and joy in outreach. This was now called the "champion" model, and it had worked in various ways. At the start of 2022 a list of events, opportunities and activities had been drawn up. These were spread across the diary. A team had been put around each event, with a project lead or 'champion' to drive it forward. It was hoped everyone would be excited and passionate about the different events. This had enabled more people to get involved, to explore and exercise their gifts, and had encouraged a wider sense of participation in the life of St Paul's.

The 150th year had provided people with many memories, and had given St Paul's a platform from which it could continue to work out the Great Commission. Going forward the PCC would be reviewing the outreach programme at its first meeting after the APCM. It would be important to have a balance of events shaped by the two "p's" of evangelism – presence and proclamation. St Paul's was committed to hosting events designed to build relationships, and events designed to teach the faith.

Looking forward, it would be essential to breathe new life back into the formal Teams. He explained that these are committees with delegated powers from the PCC, which look after various areas of church life. During the pandemic the goal posts had moved so much, and the central Church of England had simply delegated a lot of decision-making power to incumbents for the sake of increased flexibility in the face of the epidemic. Now it would be important to reanimate these Teams, to share the load, and to better stabilise these important aspects of our shared life. There would be a sign-up sheet with a brief description of the remit of each Team, which would be available at the back of church. Formal qualifications would not be necessary, and members did not have to worshipped at St Paul's for any specific length of time if they were interested in serving on the Teams. He hoped people would be interested and looked forward to hearing from members.

Rev Simon commented on the impact on Church leadership on him and Anna during the pandemic. The past two and a half years had taken a lot out of them. He would eligible for a time of sabbatical and would be liaising with the Diocese in September about the sabbatical process. In conclusion Simon felt the Sunday services were warmer and more fun. There was a greater sense of participation which he felt was a sign of renewed confidence. He thanked everyone for their continuing support.

Annual report on proceedings of the PCC and activities of the parish for the year ended 31 December 2022

The full PCC had met ten times in 2022 to deal with church matters, with an average attendance of 73%. Following the re-opening of the church following closure during the pandemic it had been possible to return to holding services at 8.00 am (BCP) and 10.30 am (Morning Worship or Holy Communion), with a creche and Sunday School during the 10.30 am services. The 10.30 am services had continued to be livestreamed and available on the website.

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 10.30 am Service of Holy Communion. The group had been kept informed 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, churchwardens, Pastoral Assistant, Evangelist and Church Administrator had continued to meet each week during 2022, either in person or via Zoom, to review the previous Sunday services and to share thoughts and requests.

Home Groups had continued to meet, and this had been an important time for study, discussion and nurture outside Sunday worship. The Thursday Friendship Support Group had continued to meet weekly for friendship and chats, either outside in the Church garden or inside in the church hall. In 2022 there had been five weddings or blessings at St Paul's and twelve baptisms. The Babies and Toddler Group had continued to meet on a Thursday morning. In October there were 80 adults and 102 children registered. The organisers felt it was really gratifying to see new friendships being made by adults and children and they hoped to see this continue as the group grows.

The Church website had continued to be a source of information for church members, visitors and local residents. The Communications Team, which had been established in 2020, 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 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 promotion 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 had required greater involvement and the equipment had been updated.

The wardens thanked everyone who had contributed to the successful celebration of the 150th anniversary and the ministry team, staff and volunteers who had done so much to keep church life going through the year. They thanked 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 Communications team, 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 provide live streaming, video and sound, Ron and Pauline Barrett who had kept the church building clean and beautiful, the flower arranging team, brass cleaners, those who decorate the church for Harvest Festival, Christmas, Easter and other special days, those who make Christingles and put up the Christmas trees and lights outside and in the hall, the sidesperson team who help to make St Paul's a welcoming place, the catering team and those who

provide coffee and tea after Sunday morning services, the hard working gardening team, who ensure the garden looks at its best through the year, Judith Freeborn who had kept the first aid boxes stocked and up to date, the Babies and Toddler Group, the Friendship Group, Homegroup leaders for their hospitality, time, prayer and encouragement in the faith of the members of their groups, Ian Rodgers for his dedication and leadership of the prayer ministry at St Paul's, and Rev Simon who had lead and guided our collective efforts. They felt all of this was important in helping St Paul's to thrive as a worshipping community and a beacon of hope and encouragement for the neighbourhood.

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. Team reports had been received and summarised activity in the different areas.

Buildings Team

As no major fabric repairs or improvements had been required during 2022 the Team had not met and had not approved any building works.

The **Climate and Ecology Team** had met regularly to pray and to plan for how to better care for the Earth, as a church and as individuals. The Team had decided to register with A Rocha's Eco Church programme as this gave a helpful framework for action in key areas: worship and teaching, buildings, land, community engagement, and lifestyle. A great deal of effort had been put into organising a hustings, in advance of the local Government elections. On 27th April 2022 candidates from the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green parties had been asked a series of questions about environmental issues. Rev Simon Couper had chaired the event, which had been publicised widely and had been well attended by local residents and interest groups. In July two Open Forums had been held to give members of the congregation a greater awareness of how creation care is part of the Gospel, as well as an update on the work of the Team and a chance to ask questions. In the autumn an energy audit of the church and halls had been commissioned by SELCE (South East London Community Energy). CES, the company who had installed the lighting system in the church had been asked to advise on the feasibility of switching to LED light bulbs. The Team had produced a booklet "Keeping the Earth" to help individuals respond to the climate, biodiversity and pollution crises, with suggestions for action in the areas of energy, food, fairtrade, clothes, and "making our voices heard".

The vicar reported that much had been done by the **Communications Team** in 2022. The website had been refreshed, and Rev Simon recorded his thanks to David Charlesworth for his enormous efforts with the website over the past three years, to Naomi Couper for her *pro bono* work to refresh the website, and to Andrew Griffiths, the webmaster, who had done an outstanding job in monitoring the online content and making sure it was up to date. The Parish magazine *Connect* had been relaunched in electronic and paper format. T&C printers in Bromley had been reliable and professional. 1,500 copies of the Easter edition of *Connect* had been printed and T&C had also printed the artwork for the *Easter and Arts Holy Week* series. Sarah Butler was thanked for the wonderful job she had done with the weekly *Prayers for the Week* and for all the time and attention she had given to this work. Rev Simon thanked Stephanie Fox and Anne Howick for their work in composing and editing the weekly newssheet. He thanked David Charlesworth, Mili Tharakan and Arun Thomas for all their design work over the last year, which had helped to make the publicity so striking and eye-catching. He hoped in the coming year that there could be more consistent use of social media, and continued use of word-of-mouth. It would be important to advertise and reach out to the community about the exciting things happening at St Paul's.

Mission Partners team

The team had met three times in 2022. The team had recommended which organisations should be supported out of the budget of 10% of church funds from unrestricted giving. In 2022 the six missionary societies were: CMS in Tanzania, Wycliffe Bible Translation, OMF Thailand (supporting Julia Birkett), Crosslinks (supporting Nick Algeo and the Evangelical Church in Gambia), Christians Against Poverty (CAP) in Penge, and Welcare in Bromley. A portion of funds had been set aside for emergencies. In 2022 these had included Tear Fund for flood relief in Pakistan, Open Doors supporting Christians oppressed by Persecution, DEC (Disaster Emergency Committee) for Ukrainian refugees, and Medecins Sans Frontieres for relief in Afghanistan.

Worship Team

St Paul's had continued to seek to be a place that faithfully, and thoughtfully, teaches the Scriptures. The lectionary is used for major festivals, and there had been a variety of sermon series as well. In 2022 the vicar had canvassed the preaching team for new ideas when generating the sermon series. A range of topics had been covered, and quite a lot of time had been spent looking at Luke's Gospel. Sermon series had included parables from Luke's Gospel, the Ten commandments in the ministry of Jesus, meals in Luke's Gospel, the human story from Genesis to Revelation, Messianic promises in the Old and New Testaments, the "whys" of church life in the letters of Paul, and dialogues of Jesus in John's Gospel. Major festivals had been much better used as outreach opportunities, including putting the lectionary to good use, observing the major festivals in such a way as to tell the Christian story in a fun and engaging way. It was hoped that festivals like Trinity Sunday, Ascension and Pentecost could be a time of real food for thought. A regular pattern of All Age services on the first Sunday of each half term break had been established, which gives the children's volunteers a well-deserved break and had embedded within the culture of the church the conviction that children are welcome in the church space. Since the pandemic it had not been possible to commit to regular evening services. The Team had asked the congregation if, in future, they would like to have a mid-week service of Holy Communion on a Wednesday morning.

The team had expressed their thanks to John and Marion Blakely, David Storey and Andrew Griffiths for their tireless efforts with Sunday worship. Since the end of the pandemic John and Marion Blakely had made suggestions each week for the hymns to be selected, based on the theme and readings of each service. Pete and Ingrid Glenister were also a more regular feature in Sunday services. The increased range of music styles had been well received and it was hoped that the music group would continue to grow and develop as more volunteers join.

Concern had been expressed about the general condition of the church organ. Over the years it had fallen into a state of disrepair and required more attention. Going forward the wider fellowship would be consulted before the PCC makes a significant investment in the musical life of St Paul's church.

St Paul's Beckenham Pre-School

The Pre-School, which had been started by the church over forty years ago, was a registered charity and had continued to provide a thriving Early Year's environment for over thirty children. The team was led by manager Lorraine Knight. Liz Spencer, the current Chair, had reported on a number of staff changes in 2022. Keith Howick had served as a trustee. The other trustees were all ex-parents and thanks was expressed for their support and input. It was currently a challenging environment with working patterns changing and the level of funding for Early Years settings not keeping in line with inflation. The team continued to provide a full range of fund and educational activities both inside and out for the children. Discussions had been held about creating a woodland style area at

the back of the church grounds, funded by the Pre-School, and accessible for use by any visiting families. The vicar thanked Liz Spencer and the Pre-School team and trustees for all the work they do.

Andrew Griffiths proposed, seconded Nomsa Mafohla, that the Annual report on proceedings of the PCC and activities of the parish for the year ended 31st December 2022 be accepted. **Agreed.**

Independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2022

INCOME OVERVIEW

Keith Howick thanked Rosemary Dear for putting all the figures together. St Paul's was in the black overall by £5,458, a positive figure for two consecutive years. The Balance sheet was therefore little changed since the 2021 Annual report.

There were some areas of concern which members noted and would need to improve.

Planned giving. Although this was generally stable it was down from £76,380 in 2021 to £70,744 in 2022. Other giving, including collections, was also down from £21,306 in 2021 to £18,180 in 2022. St Paul's had been in receipt of a legacy of £10,000 in 2022. Income from the use of the church hall had increased from £10,899 in 2021 to £16,891 in 2022.

EXPENDITURE OVERVIEW

Parish Share was £69,650 in 2022, a slight increase on £66,447 which St Paul's had paid in 2021. There had been no major repair work. Church running costs had increased from £14,147 to £21,004. There had been a fixed three year gas contract in place since July 2020. With respect to the 150th celebrations, Expenses of £9,841 had been incurred, and income of £14,089 had been received which everyone was very grateful for.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next Quinquennial Inspection was due to take place shortly. Consideration would need to be taken regarding what repairs would need to be done to the organ, which would probably have major cost implications. New gas and electricity contracts would need to be discussed in 2023. There had been 64 regular givers in 2021 and also in 2022.

Anthea Prendergast proposed, seconded David Holmes, that the Independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ended 31 December 2022 be approved. **Agreed.**

Safeguarding

Sandra Horner had served as the Parish Safeguarding Officer, supported by Rev Simon Couper. Marian Sewell had served as the Lead Recruiter, including responsibility for ensuring those in position of responsibility, working with children and vulnerable adults, had the relevant DBS checks. Sandra Horner had provided leaflets regarding safeguarding concerns and encouraged and reminded people what safeguarding courses they needed to undertake. If anyone had any concerns regarding safeguarding they were encouraged to speak to Sandra or Rev Simon. Sandra thanked Rev Simon and Marian Sewell for their work. Members were reminded that there is a National Safeguarding Sunday which was a reminder of everyone's responsibility to be caring.

Church fabric, goods and ornaments

Fortunately this had been a year when no major repairs of the church fabric had been required, but a number of minor repairs and works had been carried out under the authority of the Wardens and the PCC as appropriate. These had included minor repairs to the external stonework and slate tiling of the South Porch; similar repairs to the roof of the Church Office which had been leaking badly; repair of a leaking downpipe and nearby stonework on the North elevation; repainting of the glazed doors in the North Porch which were badly chipped and worn; pigeon-proofing of the Tower, the Chancel roof and one of the East elevation windows, all of which were significantly infested; and the clearing of a blocked toilet and drain. Minor electrical safety works had also been carried out, following up a 5-yearly electrical inspection done in 2021 by CES.

Some minor repairs had also been necessary in the church halls, including fixing a leak from the disabled toilet; clearing a blockage in the dishwasher; repairing the timer of the range cooker which was essential to its functioning; installation of a blue towel dispenser in the kitchen to improve hygiene standards; and an essential mechanical repair to the “Operable Wall” (i.e. movable partition) which separates the two halls. The Pre-School Group had kindly gifted a new fridge-freezer to the church, for use by the Pre-School Group, the church and other hall users. No major new equipment had been purchased during the year. The Wardens had regularly checked the Defibrillator and also arranged Defibrillator training provided by London Ambulance Service in December for a group of church members.

The most significant new items of church property acquired in 2022 were 150 new pew Bibles and the Lectern Bible dedicated by Bishop Jonathan on 23rd October; and the new altar frontal for Ordinary Time, dedicated on 20th November. The frontal had been beautifully embroidered in gold thread and introduced a welcome note of modernity in our church furnishings, complementing our rich inheritance of Victorian and Edwardian fabrics.

Ann Birkett proposed, seconded Rosemary Dear, that the report on Church fabric, goods and ornaments be accepted. **Agreed.**

Deanery Synod

St. Paul’s had had three representatives on the Beckenham Deanery Synod; Rev Simon Couper had been the Deputy Area Dean, and Hazel Koungoue and Keith Howick were lay members.

The Deanery Synod had met twice in 2022, in March and July. A third meeting had been planned, but had been postponed because Bishop Jonathan had been keen to do the rounds, and so a plenary meeting of five deaneries in Bromley Borough had taken place in November. Bishop Jonathan had opened the floor to questions, most of which had been straightforward, and he had deflected effectively a question about ‘Living in Love and Faith’ because C of E deliberations had still been in process.

The March 2022 meeting (hosted by St. George’s) had gathered experiences of churches emerging from lockdown, and discussion of support for Ukraine and refugees, the Russian invasion of Ukraine having begun a month beforehand. There had also been presentations on EcoChurch from St. George’s and St. Paul’s.

The main focus of the July 2022 meeting (hosted by St. Paul’s) had been a presentation by Jennifer Ross, Communications Manager and Bishop’s Media Adviser. Jennifer and her assistant, Katerina Gerhardt, had overseen Diocesan communications such as The Digest (weekly), the website,

Together (quarterly), and provided Comms help and crisis and media support for parishes. The Communications Team is part of the support St Pauls' had received from the Diocese, paid for by the Parish Share, and are there to be used by parishes.

Sandra Horner proposed, seconded Hazel Koungoue, that the report of the Deanery Synod proceedings be accepted. **Agreed.**

It was noted that Rev Allie Kerr had been appointed as the new Area Dean and it was hoped there would be an opportunity to invite her to an act of worship at St Paul's.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

Rosemary Dear proposed, seconded Keith Howick, that in principle Ernest Kabera should be appointed to act as Independent Examiner for 2023. **Agreed.**

Open Forum

Alison Dockray asked who has a copy of the Electoral Roll, including contact details. The vicar commented that he would need to check with GDPR regarding the rules. Rufus Ballaster reminded members that there is a section on the Electoral Roll form where members can indicate if they are happy for their contact details to be shared or not.

Alison Charlesworth asked if the PCC had discussed issues of Living in Love and Faith. It was noted that General Synod had met in February to discuss matters regarding same sex couples and prayers. The vicar reported that there were two documents which would need to be worked on. Prayers of Love and Faith, and Pastoral guidance for ordinands and clergy. At the national level there was work to be done by Bishop Sarah Mullaly and there would be reports in July and November. The PCC had met to discuss this as much as they could in February. A precis was available.

Jill Brook commented on the church noticeboards and the information available. David Charlesworth felt the noticeboards were old fashioned. It would be good to make the church entrance more attractive and to update the noticeboards. Rev Simon hoped it would be possible to relay the path.

Ian Rodgers asked what the plans were for prayer ministry. Rev Simon hoped it would be possible to get back to where St Paul's had been before lockdown and to renew our commitment to prayer. Ian Rodgers reminded people that there is a Prayer Ministry team and he hoped that soon it would be possible to offer prayer ministry in the Chapel during and after Holy Communion services. There would be two people available who would be there to pray for anyone. Prayer would be regarded as confidential unless there was a risk to someone. The prayer cordon had been by telephone in the past but it was hoped it could be by email in future. There is the zoom prayer meeting on a Thursday evening and the table at the back of church has many prayer leaflets or cards which everyone is welcome to take. Rev Simon encouraged everyone, if there was something someone wanted to share, don't wait. Use WhatsApp or make a telephone call regarding your concerns, or approach the PCC.

Rev Simon reported that he hoped there could be a Deputy Churchwarden and he would be putting information together about the post.

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