

Parochial Church Council

This was Derek's third full year as vicar and it remained a busy one, with ongoing discussions about church growth, building development and paying our way top of the agenda.

The PCC had 20 members, including the vicar (chair), curate and one churchwarden, and three Deanery Synod representatives, who sat as ex-officio members. It met seven times and attendance averaged 15 people or 75%. PCC members are trustees of St James's, which is a registered charity, and can serve a maximum of two consecutive three-year terms of office without a break, either starting or standing down after the Annual Parochial Church Meeting in April. Only churchwardens must stand for re-election every year. They can serve a maximum of six consecutive years without a break.

The year began with our annual away day in January. This year's focus was church growth. The world would become a better place if more of us were Christians, and if the Church didn't reach people, who would? Derek said God wanted us to be confident. The Church was growing in the Far East and in Africa, but not in the UK. Why? It was not in our interest just to preserve ourselves.

The PCC agreed to a 5% growth target, which equated to 24 adults (about 16 households). New activity could draw in new people, but we had to be realistic about what could be achieved with the current number of volunteers. 35 out of 86 people involved in church life were already on more than one rota, with many on three.

Suggested ideas included launching an Alpha course; making the church play a bigger role in the community, using the *You're Invited* leaflets to correct perceptions that we are all about Sunday morning; and growing our core volunteers, enabling us to do more things, and better.

In March the main topic was our finances. We had ended 2018 in the red (though much reduced thanks to despite a 7% increase in planned giving pledges) and were forecasting an even bigger deficit for 2019. The church had begun marketing the building for concerts (providing a new income stream as well as showing off the venue to outsiders) and several groups had now booked to use it.

The meeting also welcomed two younger members of our church, to discuss how we might attract more younger members. Dani had already established a youth group for teenagers which was popular, but the church could do more to make them feel part of worship by involving them in roles, such as servers, and involving them in decision-making.

In April, the PCC discussed the pros and cons of videoing services. At present there was no prospect of live streaming, but churches that did post recordings on their websites claimed they attracted new worshippers who were first able to see if the church was 'for them'. Safeguarding and privacy questions were discussed against

the value of giving a 'window' on the whole of our worship, not just the audio of a sermon. In the end it was agreed that, in the first instance, we would record 'special occasions,' such as St James's Day or Harvest, with the appropriate public notices and not videoing any young people.

In May, our Safeguarding Officer, Jane Newman, reported that all risk assessments had been reviewed and revised where necessary. A recent Fire Safety Report from our Health & Safety advisors recommended we had a fire alarm in the tower that could be activated from the back of church.

The Diocese's Capital Vision 2020, a blueprint for church growth in London, was coming to an end and Bishop Sarah had asked churches to help shape the next decade's priorities. The PCC said the Diocese should become relevant to all people (an example recently being Grenfell), especially on the edge of society, appeal to more families, clubs and groups, reaching out to families in poverty, become a brave spokesperson for the poor and hungry, an organisation that supports and feeds the poor and has a role in their care, take away people's fear of walking into church, building with other faiths, scripture (teaching God and His word), greater evangelism, building worshipping communities, wider range of liturgy and worship according to needs, focus on fellowship, spiritual support, provide training to support those with mental health needs. The Church also needed to be representative of the diverse mix of people in the capital, especially BME, and with women at all levels.

The theme of growth also dominated the PCC's June meeting, with ideas to reach and include more people in the community in church events. The legacy money was being used on things that would help church growth – better facilities, toilets, AV system, seating – but improvements to the building would not in themselves bring more people into church. We needed to make our presence obvious by being noticed. Leaflets and copies of the Spire magazine were getting our name into every home in the parish, but we also needed to be clever with Social Media and spend a little more money on marketing. The idea of a summer fete was raised, as was using the Alpha brand for an autumn course, and we needed to find something for younger men to help them engage better with the wider church.

In September finances loomed large as we began to get closer to deciding on developing the church building. The PCC agreed to convert some of the legacy money from investments to cash over the following year so that it was readily available. Protecting the building was also discussed following metal thefts from some local churches. The PCC agreed to install a roof alarm, resulting in lower insurance premiums and being fully covered for losses.

Bishop Graham approved our request to allow children to receive communion prior to being confirmed; running alongside this would be confirmation classes. The church ran its first Holiday Club and was planning to run a course to help people talk about their Christian faith. Sharing our faith stories was a proven way of bringing new people to church.

In September the PCC approved the purchase of two collection plates that could be used to receive contactless payments (using a built-in card reader). Church redevelopment also moved a step closer after members appointed architects for the project. Detailed plans would now be drawn up. Dani was also planning to launch Messy Church in 2020 as a way of reaching parts of the community that we were not connecting with.

Nick Bagge
PCC Secretary