



Curate's report

From the Curate—Rev Dave Pilkington

It has been a stretching time to be a curate. Lockdown has meant we have spent much time online and learning to host services on my own in an empty Church presented some interesting challenges. In September it was a privilege to be able to go on retreat with other Curates before being Priested by Bishop Joanne.

Shortly after that, James announced he was leaving and life got a whole lot busier as I had more to juggle, being the only full-time member of clergy at St Paul's. I have had to learn the realities of what can be achieved. However I have been incredibly grateful for the support of the Church and the staff team. It is a privilege to serve alongside April and Billy and I continue to benefit from their experience and wisdom. It has been great to see people stepping up and taking responsibility and I have been particularly grateful for support with broadcasting services from Louis and Tim.

Although challenging, it has been an exciting part to be part of St Paul's and I am very much looking forward to working alongside the Vicar once they are appointed.

Our staff team:

Divya Beeharry

Karen Diss

Christine Fryer

Christina Ganasegaram

Sharon Hartman

Rev. James Hughesdon

Mark Hutin

Rev April Keech

Kay Norman

Rev Dave Pilkington

Jessica Lawrence

Debbie Mack

Rev Billy O'Reilly

Chris Watson

Anne Zakiewicz

Churchwardens' report

From the Churchwardens—Neil Gilbert & Fiona Lowther

In last year's report we said that our wonderful staff team had risen to the challenge of the last few months. Little did we know that it was just a taste of things to come...

We are so grateful to our team for the flexibility they've shown in providing a safe environment and continually adapting to the difficult year we've had. This of course includes making church services safe (when we've been able to hold them in person) but also making sure our other building users have been accommodated in a safe way.

We're delighted to report that the team have been able to look to the future thanks to the grant from the Lottery Fund that is helping us to prepare for a post-COVID environment. We're hugely excited about the changes we'll all be able to see that will make our building safer and more flexible.

We are also very sorry to see Karen leave as our long-standing venue manager. It's almost impossible to imagine St Paul's without Karen and we are incredibly grateful to her for everything she's done for us and wish her all the best for the future. We're delighted to announce that Divya will be stepping up to replace Karen in this role from June 2021.

Welcome and hospitality



From the Premises Manager—Karen Diss

Although 2020 was a very strange year with Covid restrictions and lockdowns interrupting much of our normal work, we have managed to continue with welcoming visitors to the church when we could and always following ever-changing government guidelines re-Covid safety. Staff worked very hard to get the café space ready to re-open following the first lockdown and again in September. In October we responded very quickly to join in the nationwide initiative to feed families in need during the half-term holiday with Christine and her team of volunteers managing to prepare 178 meals for takeaway at extremely short notice, helped by donations from the congregation and local businesses.

Although the new year began during lockdown, there have been plenty of changes taking place. Karen is leaving (but not retiring!), Divya will be the new manager. A new Front of House Coordinator will be recruited. We received a Cultural Recovery Fund grant for restoration and repairs to the building, enabling us to carry out some work to the buttresses and the damaged pillars and cills along the south wall. The sum received is also allowing us to make improvements to the kitchen, enabling us to replace the dated cooker and extractor fan. We are excited to have a modernised kitchen to utilise for our Café and for hirers to book.

Our café supervisor Christine Fryer



Our cleaner Christina Ganasegaram



PCC Report



PCC Report – by Ceri Durham (lay vice-chair)

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is the leadership committee for the church and during the vacancy period (whilst we have no appointed vicar) takes on an even more important role to oversee the formal running and governance of the church, and also to be part of process of appointing the new vicar alongside the Church Patrons and the Bishop of Stepney. This means that this year we have been especially busy. Tim Murray and I were chosen by the PCC as the Parish Representatives which means we will take part in the shortlisting and interview process for the appointment. We also have finalised a 'Parish Profile' which tells prospective candidates about us. All being well, this should mean that this time next year, the PCC section is written by the new vicar who will be chairing our meetings and helping us shape the new vision for our church.

As reported in last year's report, since lockdown the PCC has been meeting mainly over Zoom. The full PCC has met six times in 2020. The Standing Committee (a small sub-group of the PCC concerned with making key decisions which cannot wait until the next full meeting) has met every fortnight since James' departure and grappled with a variety of decisions ranging from the budget for the Heritage Lottery project to the card-reader for contactless donations at services and what the Government restrictions mean for us re-starting services. In pre-Covid times, the PCC meetings were usually combined with a 'bring-and-share' lunch after church on Sunday, and we definitely look forward with hopefulness to those days again.

Thank you to everyone who has served and supported the PCC over this year, offering insights, leadership and wisdom for the good running of our church. We look forward to diversifying our membership and developing our PCC further in 2021 – and hopefully not only over Zoom!



We have **155** on our
Electoral Roll

Deanery Synod Report by Tim Murray

Like most other meetings, the Tower Hamlets deanery synod moved online in 2020. The group had several Zoom meetings throughout the year. Tracey Yewman remained one of our reps, and Tim Murray joined in the autumn.

The deanery synod is a forum where clergy and lay reps from all Tower Hamlets churches meet to discuss and work together on different issues that we have in common. In the past year, among other things, the group has discussed the Stepney area's new 'Stepney Lives' vision, and talked about what churches are doing to help the problem of loneliness.

Worship and prayer



By Rev April Keech, Assisting priest, (I work two weekdays and on Sundays at St Paul Old Ford)

At the beginning of the first lockdown, April through May 2020, I gathered a couple of people to help with a request from St Stephen's medical surgery. We received over 60 names of people who were isolated or with serious health problems. As their relatives or carers were not able to visit them, we called, shopped for groceries, picked up prescriptions and newspapers and made sure they knew they were not alone. Peter Kessler, Anne Zakiewicz, James, our vicar, and some caring neighbours made up the team. We continued for about four weeks until the government engaged their social prescribers to carry on the work when numbers went up to over one hundred.

While our pastoral team could not be in immediate contact with people, we created lists of people to call regularly and the team faithfully kept in touch with people by phone until we could begin to meet with people for walks or meetings in Victoria Park. The brilliant team of Anne, Joy, Chris, Andrew, Doris and Steve Beers (when he was out of hospital) kept in touch with our church folks and others who were alone or ill. We meet monthly as a team to pray for people in need and for one another. They continue to stay in touch with folks even as the restrictions ease. Members of this team help with the Death Cafés which I have done for the last several years. These cafés have been face-to-face meetings and latterly by zoom. We have had people from a local men's group, bereaved folks from our church family, and young adults from various parts of London. Participants come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. I have done two death cafés for two other churches as well. The Wednesday afternoon Bible study lead by Anne and myself went on zoom this year and now combines zoom and face-to-face participants!

Pastoral Assistant Report - by Anne Zakiewicz

I was commissioned as Pastoral Assistant here at St Paul's in 2012. My work falls into 3 strands:

- ♦ one of caring and visiting, and praying with people
- ♦ welcoming new people on Sundays before and after the services, and arranging occasional Welcome lunches after church on Sunday. These are an opportunity for new people to meet each other with a few members of the congregation over a relaxed and friendly meal. I also try to get to know people who come less frequently, who are less involved in church
- ♦ Bible study groups, as one of the leaders, meeting in the church café on Wednesdays in the afternoon at 2.00pm and evening at 7.15pm.

This year, during lockdown it has not been safe to visit some of our church family who are housebound, although I sometimes have doorstep chats and take cake! Sadly, hospital visits have not been permitted, so texts and cards have had to take their place. Lots and lots of phone calls and walks in Victoria Park have helped me to keep in touch with people.

In addition to my work at St Paul's, I am also Warden of the Pastoral Assistants in Stepney Deanery, and keep in touch with the 30 pastoral assistants working in the Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Islington churches.

I am so grateful that as lockdown eases, I will be able to get back to visiting my church family in their own homes.

I continue to be a regular celebrant and preacher at Sunday services and have officiated at other pastoral offices such as funerals; our beloved Ivy Thomas's funeral at the church being one of them. Our last large community service with James included two Remembrance services. As we moved into another lockdown, Anne, Fiona, and I packed up 10 turkey dinners and pudding desserts for those alone at Christmas.

As our mission partners Rob and Helen go off to Nicaragua, I am their pastoral mentor and will be in touch with them each month.

Outside of St Paul Old Ford, I lead formation groups for St Mellitus's *Beginning Theology* course and mentor students there and those from the London Centre for Spiritual Direction.

Youth and children - by Jessica Lawrence

Covid: Youth Work is about building relationships with young people, supporting them through day-to-day life, teaching and learning with them and eating lots of pizza - for us at St Paul's it is also about helping young people deepen their relationship with Christ.

The past year has been tough for everyone, especially the young people and we had to figure out new and creative ways to work with our wonderful young people. We ran the St Paul Old Ford Youth Bake Off, games nights, virtual Bible Study, virtual and social distanced mentoring and countless text messages and calls. (Jessica even tried out Instagram Live and TikTok...it was laughable!).

Rise: Rise has been on pause since the last lockdown. Previously we were doing our usual activities while social-distancing. We had great discussions around race, the Black Lives Matters marches and how to cope with stress and worry.

Schools Work: A new project for us has been our Lunch Clubs in Morpeth Secondary School. We run clubs twice a week for girls from year 7 - 11. We do craft, nail art, listen to music and chat about life. We are currently seeing 60 girls a week.



Mentoring: Both Jessica and Debbie are currently mentoring a number of young people. Each mentoring programme is different ranging from walks in the park, sit-down discussions and small Bible studies. During Covid, mentoring has been our most consistent form of ministry. To be able to meet young people at such a difficult time has been encouraging and ensured that we could support them in the best and safest way possible.

Bible Study: During the lockdowns we took our Youth Bible Study nights online. We explored the book of Ruth, Jonah and Jude. When we were allowed to form small support bubbles, the young people split into 2 groups of 5 for small Bible study sessions. We are now all back together for Pizza and Bible Study! We are now going to take a deep dive into the book of Genesis.

Sunday Group: Our Sunday Group sessions were paused for a full year BUT we are now back together again! We are currently taking a look at the Gospel of Mark. We have also welcomed three new young people into the group who have moved up from Sunday School!

Social Media followers

Instagram - 245

YouTube - 78

Facebook - 545

London Diocese Youth Apprenticeship Programme: A huge highlight for the youth work has been the addition of Debbie Mack to the team as our Youth Apprentice in September 2020. Debbie is completing a 3 year course in Theology in Ministry and Mission specifically looking at Youth Work.

St Columba



www.stcolumbaeastlondon.org



Report by Rev Dave Pilkington

Last year was challenging for us all due to the global pandemic, however God continued to move despite all the setbacks. In September the new barge, Genesis, arrived and the St Columba community had a new home. After various items of snagging were completed, we finally managed to meet on board in October for a few weeks. It was wonderful to gather in person until lockdown hit again. The Community that meets online has continued to be committed and stories coming out have told of lives being changed and impacted by the group, which has been so encouraging. When asking people how they find 'the Journey', our Thursday gathering we had these responses:

"I've found a sense of real belonging"

"A space that doesn't force people to conform"

"It has changed the way I want to be in the world"

"It's a place I can speak my truth without fear of being judged"

It has been through open and honest discussion and hearing people's stories that we are finding greater levels of support and freedom.

We continued to add to our numbers over lockdown and are hopeful to return to meeting together in person soon.

Due to lockdown and James leaving, meaning Dave has had to undertake more responsibility at St Paul's, we have not been able to expand as we would have liked. However, we are excited about future plans when time permits, of adding another gathering and developing a youth gathering to create a space for young people to meet and talk openly. Plans are also in place develop regular retreats allowing people more space and time to engage with their journey.



Finance and governance

Treasurer's Report—by Mike Zakiewicz

Most churches in the past year, in the face of the lock down, have struggled to avoid going into deficit. We have been very blessed in that I hope to be able to report a surplus at least as large as the deficit I had to report last year. We have benefitted from a very generous grant from the Heritage lottery Fund of £39,000 towards our general funds in order to help us through the financial difficulties we were facing. Our congregational giving has been substantially reduced due to the church being closed and our hall hire letting income fell to a fraction of what it was before the lockdown, because it was simply not possible to have the church open. We have also benefitted substantially from the Corona virus job retention scheme. Although we have been generous to our staff, in paying them their full wages while they have been on furlough, we have nevertheless been able to reclaim in most months 80% of the wages and this has provided us with an income of over £57,000 from the government, which has helped to offset the lack of income lettings and lack of income from the café. We have also been blessed by the fact that *Into University* and the *Montessori Nursery* that meets in St Marks Church have continued to pay their rent in full during the pandemic. *Ability Bow* gym which had been a concern of our church, as they struggled to pay their rent, received a very substantial grant during the year which has meant that their rent arrears are now no worse than they were this time last year. We are hopeful that with God's grace they will be able to pay back all their arrears of rent within the next year and a half.

It is with regret that I am unable to show you accounts which have been approved by the Independent Examiner, but clearly, while we have all been asked not to travel and the Church has been shut, it has been very difficult to keep the accounting records up to date and properly reconciled.

We have benefited from the *Heritage Lottery Fund Cultural Recovery Fund*. This includes a grant of £98,000 to finance a range of projects including a kitchen refurbishment for our café, new audio visual equipment for the church, and buttress repairs. At the time of writing, these projects are in development. We are particularly excited about the kitchen refurbishment and welcoming the congregation and local community back to the café and church buildings. We are hopeful that the new audio visual equipment will provide us with the ability to stream online services in a more professional manner than we have been able to do before. This will hence capitalise on our much wider congregation as well as make our Church more attractive for those who may want to use our church building to put on other secular productions.

We continue to look outwards to our new congregation in the barge on the canal by *Near East*. Although at the moment, this is not a financially beneficial arrangement to our church, we are able to provide training to our curate, Dave, who is spearheading the project and reaching out to a part of our parish that is a long way from our main church at St Paul's Old Ford.

St Paul Old Ford Parochial Church Council members following our 2020 APCM elections

Victor Cummings
Ceri Durham (Lay Vice-chair)
Neil Gilbert (Churchwarden)
Rev April Keech (ex-officio)
Fiona Lowther (Churchwarden)
Matthew McKay
Taf Muguwe (*now stepped down*)
Tim Murray (Deanery Synod rep)
Josh Niderost (Secretary)
Shola Ogunlade (*now stepped down*)
Rev Billy O'Reilly (ex-officio)
Melanie O'Reilly
Rev Dave Pilkington (ex-officio)
Joy Redman
Jennifer Redman-Hubley
Louis Smorthit
Gerry Spiteri
Israel Ubani (*now stepped down*)
Chris Watson
Tracey Yewman (Deanery Synod rep)
Anne Zakiewicz
Mike Zakiewicz (Treasurer)

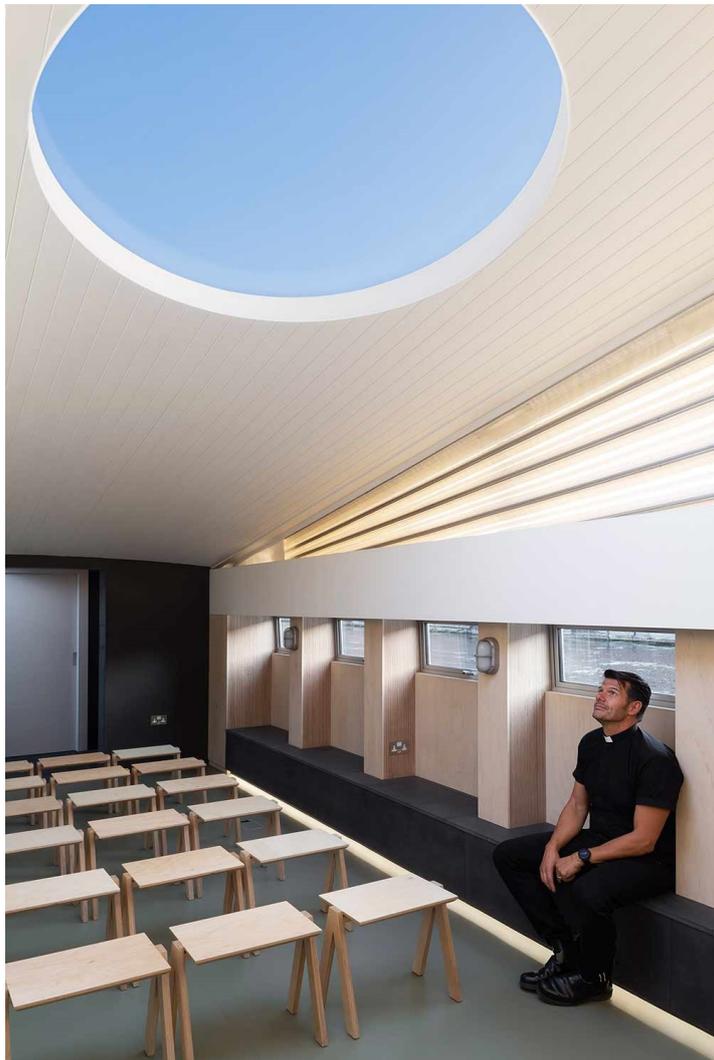
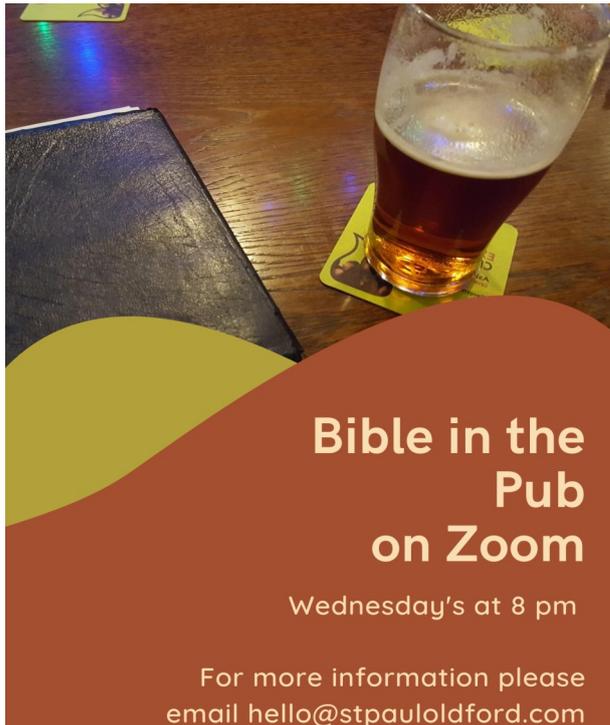
IntoUniversity 

 MONTESSORI
THE PARK

 Ability Bow



Memories of 2020!





Get involved

Serve:

There are many ways to give of your time and skills to support God's work here at St Paul Old Ford; whether it's by volunteering in the cafe, with the youth, on Sundays, joining the PCC or in many other ways. Speak to one of our wardens or get in touch using the contact details below to find out how you could get involved.

Give:

We believe that our financial giving is part of our worship to God and one way of saying thank you, as well as supporting the mission and ministry at St Paul Old Ford. You can give regularly through our parish giving scheme. You may also want to speak to someone about leaving a legacy to St Paul Old Ford in your will. To find out more, speak to Mike Zakiewicz, our treasurer, or contact us using the details below for further information.

Pray:

All we do is supported by prayer so keep praying that God will work through us here at St Paul Old Ford and for faithfulness to follow where the Holy Spirit leads. Specific prayer requests are on our notice sheet or join us each week day for midday prayer.

Get in touch:

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