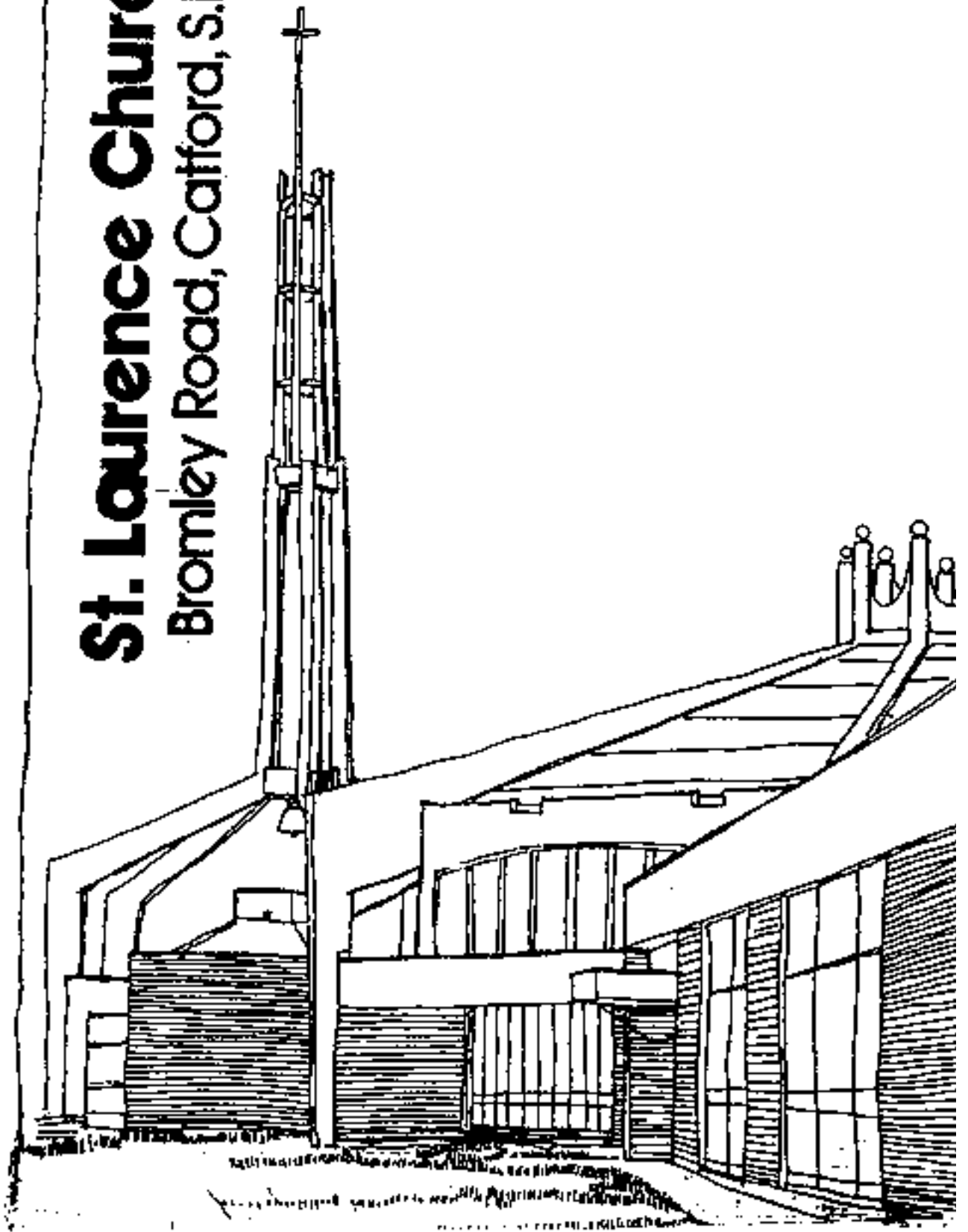


St. Laurence Church
Bromley Road, Catford, S.E.6.



Annual Report 2024-2025

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VICARS REPORT 2024-2025



Extraordinarily, this is my 35th Vicar's Report to the parish of Laurence, Catford. Looking back at some of my earlier Vicar's Reports, it is evident how very different the parish is today from the one that I inherited in 1989 – and yet at the same time, how similar. A parish often has a personality that seems to endure, despite very different members of the congregation and clergy coming and going. Perhaps it's a combination of the particular building, the particular area in which it lives and the particular saint to which it is dedicated – but there's also a sense of God's presence embodied in a distinctive way in this particular place that is powerful and mysterious but also unique.

When I first arrived in the parish, Catford was, like much of London, still rather depressed, with many empty shops and a sense of being run down. The population of inner London as a whole had only just stabilised, having been going down for decades as people fled to the outer suburbs and into Kent and Surrey as soon as they could afford it. My first two decades saw a reversal of this trend, with London beginning to boom, and then in the late 90s and early 2000's, there was a golden age for the capital, with money flowing from the City across London. There was a sense of hope and confidence, mirrored by political events across the globe, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Russian empire, and the Arab Spring. In London, grand public building projects were completed such as Tate Modern and Millennium Bridge, tourist areas opened up such as Covent Garden market, and there was a resurgence of community groups.

Sadly, the corollary of this was rapidly inflating house prices. The temptation to speculate wildly

on housing was too much for some less disciplined banks: in 2008 the bubble burst, and ever since we have been facing austerity of one sort or another, with a rolling back of the nation's shared wealth and democratic freedoms. And then the Covid pandemic arrived, perhaps the single most dramatic event of recent decades, and in parish life, as indeed across society, many things changed, from the way we worship through to the streaming of services we now provide every week.

Jesus characterised the Christian life as worship of God and service of neighbour. This is beautifully reflected in the two halves of the building. Our beautiful church, increasingly valued by local people and visitors, stands ready to welcome all those who come looking for God, or to say their prayers, or to sit in silence, or come to a service. Our Centre, run and managed by the Church, welcomes those who come for social events, public meetings, training days, blood donation, small groups, keep fit and yoga, or for a whole variety of reasons. To flourish, communities need space – and we have always seen the space that the Community Centre provides as vital to the well-being of people locally and key to our mission to the people of Catford. It is increasingly well-used, thanks to the management skill of Richard Swann, our parish manager, who juggles taking bookings, dealing with finances, negotiating with hirers and tenants, maintenance and repairs – all requiring a huge range of skills – with extraordinary competence. This year has seen more rooms in use more of the time by a greater diversity of users than for many years. The Centre is the beating heart of Catford life, just as perhaps the Church is central Catford's soul.

There have been two particular areas of focus this year. One has been that of encouraging young people. We are proud that we can offer our young people something challenging and outside the cultural mainstream. God, finally, is something other than what we can understand; his holiness summons us to leave our comfort zone. In our worship, we hope to allow God's holiness to permeate through the cracks of our liturgy. And we hope in this way to enrich the lives of those young people who choose to learn to sing the demanding music and disciplined serving that we ask of them. Our choir has gone from strength to strength, with a new choral scholar, Govind Nair, replacing Johannes Gerges, an outstanding bass.

The top line of young people continue to receive special training in music and singing. And we like to give our choristers new experiences: this year, they sang a Fauré *Requiem* at St Mark's Kennington with a live orchestra on May 11th.

Additionally, over the last year, in order to encourage recruitment Jocelyn Freeman, our Director of Music, has developed the 'Rushey Green Songstars' the afterschool singing club at Rushey Green School created by Elspeth Wiley, in conjunction with Louise Ravayeh, the school music teacher, and the young people from the club have taken part in some Sunday services at St Laurence's. Additionally, aided by a Diocesan mission grant, Jocelyn has started up an afterschool choir in our own premises, 'Tunes and Chips', where we collect young people from Holbeach and Rushey Green Schools at the end of the school day, give them time to play, and then an hour's singing lessons followed by chips. In return they sing for us at monthly family masses. This scheme has been a particular success, and we have up to a dozen young people – who formerly had no connection with St Laurence's –



coming to church monthly with their families.

In addition, many Sundays Mairéad Sheerin, a professional singing teacher, is able to take all the young people in church to the Lady Chapel during the sermon, and teach them to sing. This minichoir performs on family masses, often leading the intercessions or at the peace, or, on Mothering Sunday, having all forty children present in church singing an appropriate version of 'Jesus' love is very wonderful' with great enthusiasm

Our young servers are also beginning to flourish. We have been able to recruit several younger members of the congregation, who have recently completed or are in the middle of first

communion classes, and Joy Rasaretham, our new deputy sacristan is proving an able trainer, assisted by our sacristan, Kofi Hagan, who is all that one could hope for in a sacristan.

On July 14th, Fr Andrew held a meeting for all younger members of the parish, to get their views on what they would like. The results were a little inconclusive; it seemed none could guarantee the sort of regular pattern of attendance that would make a club or similar event possible. In October, however, Antoinette Ojiako began a new preparation for first communion course. Her four students (Samara, KingJayden, Rachel, Christian) will be admitted to communion on Easter morning.

In addition to all the young people's work listed above, it is hoped that in the near future it may be possible to recruit a youth worker or volunteer to run a young people's club on Sunday mornings after mass, while the adults are having coffee in the hall, which could also be a chance for Christian teaching.

The second focus of the year has been our parish consultation about an updated Mission Action Plan. Beginning last summer, the Church Council consulted widely to try to discern where members of the congregation believed that the future direction of the parish should lie over the next few years. There was a PCC awayday on June 30th, where the Church Council reflected on who we are, and what is most important about St Laurence's at present. On September 22nd, Mtr Bridget Shepherd led an after-mass discussion with the whole congregation. Many suggestions were made, which were collated and then fed back at a second meeting of the congregation on February 23rd this year. The full MAP appears later in this booklet. The principal themes were the encouragement and education of young people in the congregation, and expanding our mission of hospitality to the wider communities of Catford through the Centre.

Liturgically, we have had our usual rich fare this year. The year since my last report began with a confirmation service by Bishop Peter Selby on Easter Eve, with seven adults confirmed (Miles, Simone, Calum, Maureen, Dorna, Hilma and Donna) – followed by 6 young people admitted to communion on Pentecost Sunday (Vino, David, Leia, Neo, Prosper, Giovanni and Chloe). They have all continued to play their part in coming to St Laurence's, with two of the adults

being elected to the church council.

Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter followed their usual pattern, with on the Monday and Tuesday of Holy Week devotional music from Mairéad Sheerin's 'Cats Chorus' and Calum Ward. On Good Friday, a musical meditation for organ on our stations of the cross, composed by Huw Morgan, a former Director of Music, was this year played by the composer. Easter Day saw the clocks going back, and we were glad not to be having a dawn mass! We had a series of family masses, some of them accompanied by Jocelyn on the piano: Sea Sunday, Harvest Festival, Advent 2, Mothering Sunday, focused more on young people and families, with our Scouts also present, parading their banners. Fr Kayode led some Community Hymn Singing Sunday evening services; although enjoyable, and fulfilling a purpose, these never took off in quite the way we had all hoped. In April, Fr Andrew preached memorably on giving to the church, which led to many members of the congregation increasing their giving.

We had a Wednesday morning healing mass most months, and early in the year made the decision to transfer the Wednesday mass back into the Lady Chapel from the main church, reflecting the retreat of Covid, and the Thursday mass was moved from 9.45 to 10am, in order to attract those attending the Thursday morning Knit and Natter (which has been a huge success under the care and skilled tuition of Joyce Turpin, as well as raising money for charity).

July 21st saw our Dedication Festival, celebrated memorably with a family mass followed by a family fun day organised by Beverley Chin, with a barbeque and games. It was a great end of term event, well-attended and enjoyed by all. The new term began with a very well-attended Harvest Festival mass followed by an African-themed lunch organised by Anne Obasogie, in honour of Fr Kayode, whose last Sunday with us was that day, and we were delighted to be able to make him a generous presentation from members of the congregation; we have all benefited from his ministry with us, and we wished him well, now that his training was had been completed, for his future ministry in Southwark Diocese more widely. We also had a parish lunch after the 2024 annual meeting.

For Advent, as is now our tradition, we used the Merbecke mass setting, and enjoyed some ex-

cellent sermons from Mtr Ayla Lepine (associate rector, St James Piccadilly), The Very Rev'd Mark Oakley (the newly installed Dean of Southwark cathedral), and our new archdeacon, the Ven. Chigor Chike, who expressed himself impressed by the harmonious diversity of the congregation here. At Christmas, as well as our usual ecumenical Advent Carol Service (beautifully led by the choir, and with the Gospel of the Annunciation read by Fr Antony of Holy Cross Church) and Community Christmas Carol Service with contributions from a variety of local choirs, we also hosted the Mayor of Lewisham's Carol service for the first time for thirty years. The latter, by candlelight, was particularly impressive.

As usual, we hosted the two Rushey Green School carol services, though not this year St Dunstan's juniors. We hosted Lewisham Foodbank's tenth anniversary thanksgiving service in September, ably led by Carol Bostridge, attracting a range of people we wouldn't usually see here. The New Year's eve vigil service was very well-attended this year, especially by people from outside the St Laurence community, and continues to play an important part in the devotional life of local people.



For Ash Wednesday, aware that numbers at the 8pm evening mass had been in decline, we moved the evening service to 6pm. Numbers were little improved, and the earlier start time did mean that some regulars who worked elsewhere were unable to attend. During Lent, as have been our tradition for nearly 30 years, we gave up the organ and were rewarded with excellent singing by the congregation, which grew more confident every week. During Lent, our preachers were Fr Chris Henriette (pioneer minister at Good Shepherd, Lee), Fr David

Vyvyan (Vicar, St Saviour's Brockley), Fr Sam Dennis (Vicar, St Luke's, Woodside, and previously a curate in the next-door parish) and Fr Grant Bolton-Dabbage (All Saints, New Cross). For Holy Week itself, we have invited the Ven Jonathan Sedgwick to be our preacher in residence, who will conduct us through the week. For Lent, we reinstated what had been our practice before Covid, that the choir leave their stalls and stand behind the altar during the eucharistic prayer, to reinforce the responsive nature of the eucharistic prayer.

Beyond the sanctuary, we have had various events over the year. I'm delighted that our interfaith work continues to flourish, despite the difficulties imposed on us by the Gaza war. I still meet regularly with Imam Shakeel and Rabbi Bryan. On September 8th, we had the annual interfaith peace walk from the Synagogue to the Mosque and beyond. At the synagogue we were introduced to a young man (not a Jew) who had very impressively come to the aid of the Rabbi when he was being subjected to verbal abuse on a train: a courageous thing to do. The General Election was held in July, and in June, in partnership with the Islamic Centre, we hosted a general election hustings for local faith groups. We invited members of faith communities all over Catford, and had a good turnout. We were pleased to include some of the more obscure parties, who had not been invited to a larger hustings held at St Mildred's Lee. We followed this up on July 3rd, again with the participation of the Islamic Centre and the GLA, with an evening designed to encourage the importance of political participation. It seems that many people locally do not use their vote, and the evening was designed to counter this. Sadly, it appears that people who do not use their vote don't attend encouragement meetings either.

However, much more successful was an evening on assisted dying/suicide. The brainchild of Brian Weisz, the local rabbi, this multifaith evening was addressed by Bryan, Imam Shakeel, and Canon Roxanne Eversley from Southwark Cathedral, while I chaired. Very well attended – the Jubilee Room was packed – there was a remarkable degree of unanimity about the dangers of this proposed legislation. The one dissenting voice came from a Buddhist person. People spoke with passion about their experiences of death and dying; but the atmosphere was extremely respectful, and it

proved a good way of bringing a diverse range of people together to discuss a really difficult topic.

Due to the vagaries of the calendar, we hosted two study days for the clergy of the Woolwich area over the year. The first was on the Bible, the second on Christianity and science. Both were well attended, and Beverley Chin and her team provided a magnificent lunch for all the participants. Local clergy always enjoy these days, and it is good that we are able to play a role in encouraging and supporting them in their ministry. When it came to teaching the congregation, we had monthly Bible studies through the year after mass on Sundays, looking at the readings for the following Sunday, led by



members of the ministry team.

The Advent Fair this year raised £700 for the church, which was encouraging, though over the course of the year there were fewer fund-raising events than usual. There was no parish pilgrimage this year, although Fr Andrew did organise a much-enjoyed trip to Ghana with several members of the parish.

Much of my year was spent on fundraising from Trusts and Charities, looking for funding to improve the fabric of the church and for our big Spring project. At the end of last year, I announced that plans were well under for installing a football field's worth of solar panels on the church hall roof. Sadly, over the course of the year, our structural engineer decided that she couldn't guarantee that the roof would be strong enough to take their weight. (The issue is not the weight of the panels so much as of the ballast required to ensure they will not blow away). She had been unable to inspect the

strength of the beams supporting the roof as they are coated in asbestos – a common building practice in the 1960s – and removing the high level asbestos has proved prohibitively expensive. So we have had to abandon this scheme, at least for now. On the other hand, we have put a good deal of work into raising funds for replacing all the lights in church and in the centre with LED's. Not only would this save us a great deal of electricity, but help us on our way to being zero-carbon, an aspiration for all churches by 2030. We received the offer of a grant of £10,000 from Lewisham Council, and we hope that the bulk of the rest will come from City Bridge Trust, although their eco-buildings grant is fiercely competitive and we shall be lucky to get it all. We have designs in place for the church lighting to be renewed, including the final disappearance of the terrible 1960s fluorescent tubes that dominate the interior at night and on a dull day, and in their place have strips of high-output LEDs that will also be dimmable.

Second, we were successful in our bid to the Heritage Fund for a £17,000 grant to stage a community drama project that will build on the success of the Gyrotory Project a couple of years ago when Lewisham was Borough of Culture. We are presenting an evening that will celebrate the hope and resilience that having a rooted cultural heritage can bring to life, a lesson especially important for young people who sometimes tend to undervalue the heritage of their parents. To this end, we ran two training sessions for young people aged 9–11 from several different primary schools in interviewing techniques. These were run by experts in interviewing for heritage from Age Exchange, Blackheath. Then we held a large tea party, to



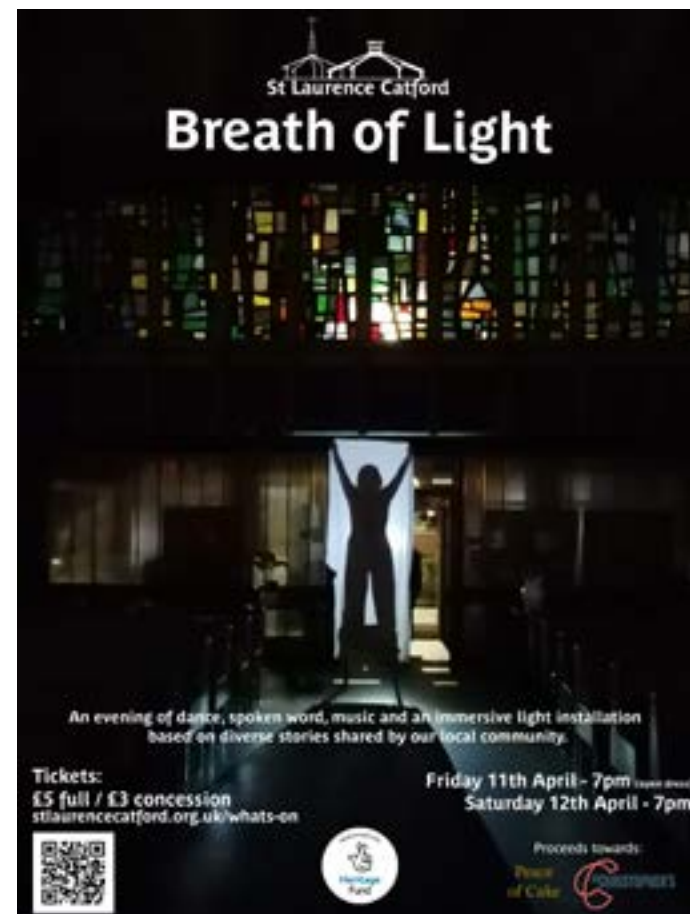
which we invited as many people from across the various communities of Catford as possible. With the participants sat at tables having tea and cake, the young people went round the tables, interviewing the older people with questions they had prepared. These ranged from asking about special events in their childhood, family traditions, and tips they would like to pass on to the younger generation, to questions about their cultural background, and about what helped them to survive when times were tough. The interviews were all recorded.

The result was an extraordinary blend of stories from all over the world, representing the many heritages represented – people from India, Pakistan, Israel, Cyprus, Ireland, Wales, different parts of the England, North Africa, Nigeria and elsewhere, and included, amongst others, Christians, Jews and Muslims. The tea party was catered by 'Peace of Cake', a local organisation of mainly Muslim women run by Asma Meer, dedicated to creating the conditions for peace by providing tea and cake. We are particularly grateful to the Islamic Centre for encouraging a significant number of children and adults to participate. From the transcripts of these conversation, easily obtained thanks to a recent AI tool called 'Transcribe' which reduced what would have been many hours of patient listening to around half an hour, a number of interesting scripts have been produced which will feature in the final performance the day before Palm Sunday, and after this report has gone to print.

Dagmara Bilon has been appointed as Artistic Director to oversee the process, and Liam Paterson is the composer. The performance, 'Breath of Light', will include dance, music, singing, acting and storytelling, to flesh out this rich cultural heritage. It will be a snapshot of the cultural richness of the many communities that live peaceably side by side in this part of south-east London at this moment of time – something that may well prove to be a golden moment in the history of the world.

Other artistic events over the year include some excellent concerts in church, generally on a Sunday. On May 12th, we hosted a 'Fauré Marathon', where a team of singers and pianists performed every song Fauré ever wrote over the course of several hours. In April, the well-known musical writer and teacher Emily Kilpatrick gave us an introduction to Fauré to mark the hundredth

anniversary year of his death. And in June, a magnificent Nigerian-American soprano, Francesca Chiejina, gave a recital attended by many Nigerian members of the congregation. Finally, on January 26th after mass, we had a demonstration of how our organ works, which the large number of members of the congregation who stayed to hear it found fascinating.



The final event of the year that bears record is the magnificent birthday lunch that the parish gave me two days after my 70th birthday on March 16th. It was a great occasion, and I was most grateful for this celebration that did sugar the pill of being quite so old!

We raised our usual amount for charity: we collected just under £200 for Christian Aid week; we were used as a base for people to drop off gifts for Barbados and Jamaica, when the Caribbean was struck by hurricane Beryl; Knit and Natter raised £70 for St Christopher's Hospice, to which the PCC added another £500; our Harvest Gifts went to Lewcas (Lewisham Churches for Asylum Seekers); we had an extra collection for Friends of the Holy Land in October, at the height of the Gaza crisis, which raised £668; we collected pre-loved warm overcoats for Wrap-Up London; and our midnight mass collection and proceeds from our parish Christmas Card booklet (£137) went

to the Manna Society, a London homeless charity whom we have often supported, and £126 to the Alzheimer's Society. In addition, the Church Council voted to give £500 to each of the following: Smile Train, Melqosh International, The Amos Trust, Cancer Research and Mammakind.

In turn, the Church received some much appreciated gifts: a new votive candlestand in memory of Bob Knight, hand made by Victoria Rance; a garden bench for the memorial garden in memory of Nick Turpin and Ashley Gregory; and a beautiful new Gospel book in memory of Dave Blyth.

Sadly a number of parishioners or relatives died over the year. Among others, we remember especially Ernie Brown, Richard Sutton (who generously bequeathed us £10,000 in his will, to be spent on the fabric of the church), Ros Wilkes (who, although never a parishioner, used to play the piano at the Wednesday mass for many years), Myrna Perkins who goes to rejoin her beloved Buster, Des Edwards, Ina Wood (the wife of a former Vicar here, Bishop Wilfred), and Mike Lee. I should also mention Frank Field, who preached several times at St Laurence's in my early days here.

It just remains to say a huge thank you to all those who take part in sustaining the community of St Laurence's, of whom we are blessed with a huge number, so apologies if I have accidentally omitted anyone. A big thank you to Sybil Bair, who has finally stepped down from leading the flower arranging team after many years, and to her helpers Lorna Aiken, Marcia Wilson and Sinclair Gittens (who is also retiring). Thank you to Liz Thussu, who took over the reading rota when Corinne Browne-Marke became churchwarden; to Kofi Hagan, Joy Dayanithy and Kevin Counihan who are in the sacristy every Saturday morning preparing for the Sunday mass, and to their wonderful serving team, young and old; to the eight members of the chalice team; to Beverley Chin and Joyce Turpin, who have spent hours looking after the flowers in the church grounds; to Lesley Ihekuna and her streaming team, who bring our Sunday mass sometimes to thirty or even forty homes; to all our sidespersons; to Jocelyn Freeman our energy-filled Director of Music (who miraculously manages to combine being a pianist of international repute, a choral director and director of a small charity promoting classical singing in south-east London, as well as looking after her own family!) and the wonderful

choir, who provide the back-bone of our worship and fill the church with glorious sound; to Lan Vi, our parish finance officer, Mark Gayfer, honorary accountant, and to our safeguarding team, Lesley Ihekuna, Fiona Tyrell-Jackson and now Julia Jones; to Richard Swann, our indefatigable parish manager, who manages our team of caretakers with aplomb as well as sorting out all the problems that arise from running a community centre and church, and dealing with vast amounts of admin and to Ray Williams and the members of the Centre Management Committee. We are very blessed that he and Lan make such a competent team, and the parish benefits hugely from their expertise and equanimity. A big thank you to Beverley Chin, PCC treasurer, to Joan Baker, who stepped down from being churchwarden at the annual meeting having cheerfully served her three years; to Corinne Browne-Marke, elected in her place; and to Marva Mayne, about to embark on her third and final year as churchwarden. Finally, to my colleagues in the ministry team – Ijeoma Nwajiobi, our pastoral auxiliary, Grace Blyth, our reader, Fr Anthony and Fr Andrew, whose liturgical competence and pastoral care enable parishioners here to enjoy good and varied liturgy and also to feel loved and cherished. Having a dedicated and committed ministry team has over the years been absolutely the key to this parish's growth and to my own continuing service of the people of God (as best I can) in this place that he loves, namely Catford.



It has been a huge privilege to have been ministering in a London parish through the thick of these turbulent years, in good times and in bad, and I have sense that it is time to hand on the baton to a younger person with fresh ideas and new energy. I am really pleased that, thanks to so much committed work and giving of time, energy and ideas by so many people, I shall be passing on the leadership of a vibrant and dynamic church that has huge potential for fresh life and new growth

Fr Charles

CHURCHWARDENS REPORT

As we reflect on the challenges of the past year, it's heartening to witness our congregation's resilience and growth. We are delighted to continue to welcome numerous visitors to our church, with many people transitioning to regular congregation members over the year. We continue to see lots of young people at our 10am service, attending our holy communion course, participating in mini choir and contributing to the service as part of the serving team and the choir.

Our spiritual journey continues with momentum. Our ministry team hosted a number of bible study sessions and community hymn singing events over the year. We also hosted 2 study days for clergy from local parishes. We hosted family mass services for Sea Sunday, Harvest Festival, Remembrance Sunday, and Mothering Sunday where we joined by the Tunes & Chips choir, Rushey Green Songstars and the Scouts. The Knit & Natter group continues to meet every Thursday and has grown in numbers over the year. We also held a special collection for the Middle East raising £200, which was shared between Christians in the Holy Land and the Disasters & Emergency Fund.



We have marked significant milestones this year; the Consecration of Alistair Cutting as the new Bishop of Woolwich, the swearing in of Rev'd Canon Dr Chigor Chike as the new Archdeacon of Lewisham & Greenwich, saying farewell to Fr. Kayode and Ronke in October. We wish them well on their next endeavours.

We bid farewell to congregation member Myrna Perkins. May her soul rest in peace. In September a new bench was consecrated in the memorial garden. This was in memory of Nick Turpin and Ashley Gregory; may they rest in peace.



Community engagement remains a cornerstone of our mission:

- In June, we hosted the joint election hustings for the Lewisham East constituency in collaboration with the Islamic Centre, before opening as polling station for the general election July.
- In September, we hosted a special thanksgiving service honouring the 10th anniversary of Lewisham Food Bank.
- In December, we were honoured to host the Mayor of Lewisham's Civic Carol Service, attended by the Mayor, local councillors and other distinguished guests. The service was well attended, and we made our way to the church hall for mulled wine and mince pies afterwards.
- In January, St Laurence hosted a community-wide discussion on Assisted Dying. The event was attended by several religious groups, generating balanced and thought-provoking discussion from different perspectives.
- In March, we were honoured to host the memorial service for Ina Woods, wife of Bishop Wilfred who was once a priest of St Laurence's and went on to become Bishop of Croydon.
- Finally, we were pleased to coordinate the 'Breath of Light' project, an inclusive community engagement project, which culminated in a mesmerising performance in April. Congratulations to all who were involved, including a number of performers from the St. Laurence congregation!

We hosted our parish family fun day in July. The summer celebrations were well attended with plenty of food, live music, barbecue, drinks, craft stalls, and a raffle. The day was a success, and we



raised a fantastic amount of £700. We celebrated our advent fair in December with food, stalls and entertainment, including a hand-knitted craft stall courtesy of our knit and natter Group. We raised over £700 and would like to thank everyone who contributed to making this event a success. In March, we held a parish lunch to celebrate Father Charles 70th birthday. It was a joyful occasion with plenty of food and drink enjoyed by all.

We were lucky to enjoy various visiting preachers over Advent and Lent, including Mother Ayla Lepine (Associate rector of St James's Piccadilly), the Very Rev'd Mark Oakley (Dean of Southwark Cathedral), Ven Chigor Chike (Archdeacon of Lewisham and Greenwich), Father Chris Henriette (Pioneer minister at Good Shepherd Church, Lee), Father David Vyvan (Vicar of St Saviour's Church, Brockley Rise), Father Sam Dennis (Vicar of St Luke's Church, Woodside), Father Grant Bolton-Dabbage (Vicar of All Saints Church, New Cross) and Ven Jonathan Sedgwick (Archdeacon of Southwark). We were blessed to hear their diverse and inspiring sermons, which provided us with spiritual guidance and encouragement.

We have continued to collaborate with many members of the congregation to collect the offering each week, and we have added new members to the sidespersons' rota this year. We would like to thank the congregation members who take part.

Over the last few months, we have also spent time exploring what we like about St. Laurence and our values, which have fed into our Mission Action Plan. We have had great involvement and engagement from the congregation to do this and look forward to taking these ideas forward over the coming months.

Throughout these endeavours we have been guided by the steady hand of Father Charles, whose unwavering support, wisdom and lead-

ership have been instrumental in navigating the challenges and opportunities that have defined our journey so far. We heartily thank him.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the members of the congregation and parish leadership team who have supported and encouraged us throughout the year. We look forward to continuing to work together as we navigate this new chapter in the life of our church.

I (Corinne), would like to thank Marva my fellow warden, former churchwardens (Dele, Ray, Joan and Beverley) who have stepped in to help out and cover duties, and all of the congregation for your warmth, support, and encouragement as I have settled into this new role over the last this year.

Marva Mayne and Corinne Browne-Marke
Churchwardens



PCC SECRETARY

The Parochial Church Council meets bi-monthly to discuss matters relating to the day-to-day running of the church receiving and discussing reports from various individuals, for example the Churchwardens' report, the Centre Chairman's reports, and the financial reports. Issues arising from the church's role as a landlord and employer are also dealt with during the meetings. Resolutions voted on by the PCC included concessions on the community centre hire fees, access improvements and repairs to the church and agreeing new employment contracts for the centre employees.

Current members of the Standing Committee (all members of the PCC):

Canon Charles Pickstone, Joyce Turpin (PCC Secretary), Beverley Chin (Treasurer), Joan Baker (Church Warden), Marva Mayne, (Church Warden), Victor Obasogie (PCC) and Ray Williams (Centre Chairman).

Current members of the PCC are listed below:

Canon Charles Pickstone, Ray Williams (Centre Chairman), Joyce Turpin (Secretary), Grace Blyth (Reader), Beverley Chin (Treasurer), Corinne Browne-Marke (Church Warden), Marva Mayne (Church Warden), Lesley Ihekuna (Safeguarding Officer), Victor Obasogie, Florence Browne-Marke, Jennifer Thorne, Paul Omondiale, Donna

Archibald, Dorna McCorkle, Alice Prince-King, Leanne Harvey Thompson Robert Green, Kofi Hagan.

Charities

The church is committed to donating a percentage of its income to charity. One of the important decisions the PCC has to make is which charities to support each year. Suggestions were received from members of the congregation, and various charities contacted the church requesting funding. This year six charities were chosen to receive £500 each, they were Amos Trust, St Christopher's Hospice, Melquosh International, Cancer Research, Smile Train and Mamma Kind. Also a large amount of money has been raised for other charities this year including Christian Aid.

Knit and Natter Group: This group provides fellowship and place where new skills can be learnt and old skills improved to members of the congregation. The group meets on a Thursday morning in the choir vestry and has 13 members. It makes a variety of items some which have been sold to raise funds for the church and a percentage donated to charity. This year the group donated to Alzheimer's Society.

Joyce Turpin
PCC Secretary

CENTRE CHAIRMAN

Once again this has been a very good year for the St Laurence Centre. The success of the St Laurence Centre is based on good foundations. This can be summed up via a knowledgeable and hard working Parish Manager in Richard Swann. Supported by a great caretaking team and of course the Centre management Committee. So, to the Committee, Father Charles, Jean Mynette, Robert Green, Marva Mayne Beverly Chin, Leanne, Corinne and Kay. Thank you to everyone. You've done a great job once again.

Richard is supported by Lan our Accountant. The two have worked great together. We are currently in the process of employing an additional member of staff to help with the administration such is the expanded workload for the centre. Richard has a dedicated volunteer in Artie who is a valued and reliable member of Richard's team who assists in the office two days a week.

Besides from offering major support to the maintenance and upkeep of the church, we have major projects in the pipeline to improve the Centre and Church. These include a new lighting project for the church, updating the old system to LED's. CCTV to add to our security. A new floor in the Main hall and more subject to funding.

Over the last year Richard has organised the plan to refurbish the kitchen and its equipment. The redesign and decoration of the Youth room and the pollarding of the trees in the Church grounds.

Montessori Nursery were replaced by 'Mindful Nurseries.' This has resulted in a much more reliable tenancy. They had agreed a good financial arrangement with the Centre. They also have invested in making physical improvements that benefits us and them. The halls and offices within the Centre are rented out the majority of the time and bookings from the council for public meetings continue.

Overall income has been supported by Richard maximising use of our parking facilities. By arranging for a limited number of parking bays to be rented out daily this has led to a substantial increase in our parking revenue. We have been fortunate in having the Community Payback team joining us regularly to assist in the tidiness of our grounds.

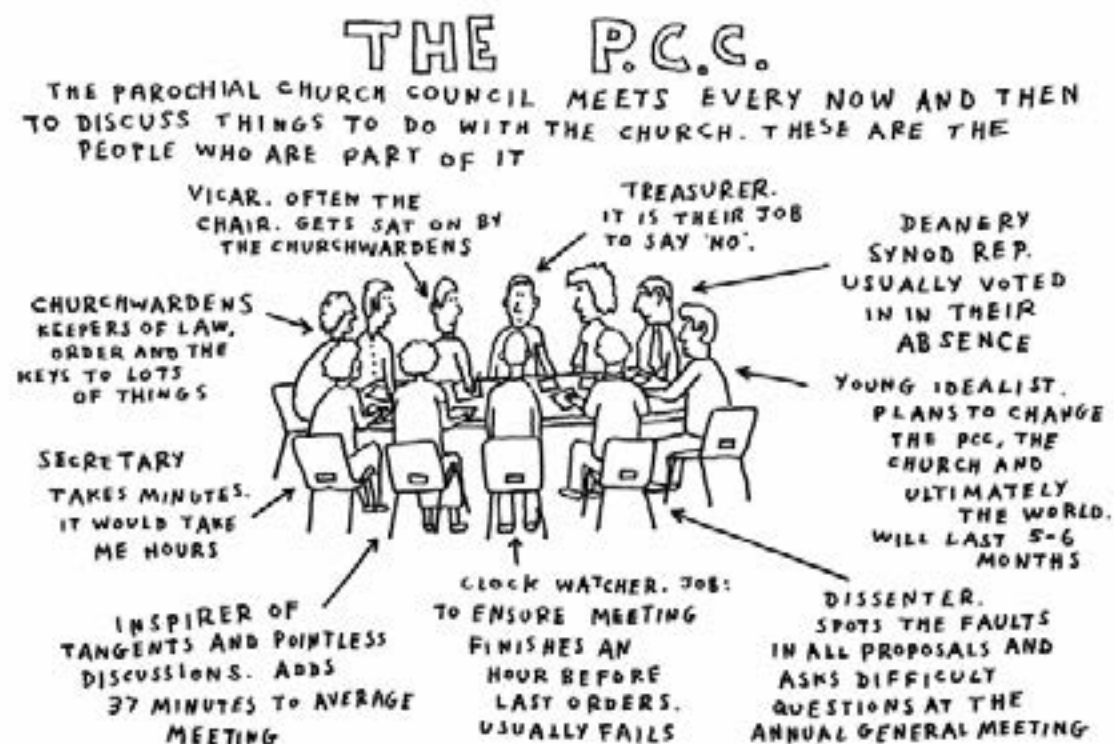
The hall and meeting rooms are bookable by the hour and word-of-mouth advertising is always the best, do share with friends and family our brochure and website, the rates are incredibly reasonable. Or why not leave us a Google review to help us boost our visibility and rating within the community locally?

There are a whole list of other projects and tasks that have been completed over the past year which progress reports are received monthly at our meetings. Most importantly, I would like to thank Joyce Turpin for her support on the committee during the many years that she served prior to leaving us.

Many thanks to all.

Ray Williams

Chair



MUSIC DEPARTMENT

Thank you for your ongoing support of the choir. The last year has seen some exceptional results for the St Laurence Music Department, and we have made some great in-roads into recruitment challenges with our new Tunes & Chips Choir. Our main choir continues to demonstrate good ensemble skills and beautiful voices, many of whom have been a stable of our choir for many years, or are emerging as young adults with outstanding skills having been in the group since childhood.

CHOIR

Despite recruitment challenges being felt around the country, we remain an impressive group in double figures most weeks. We're blessed that the number of regular adult choir members has increased slightly over the last year, and we are also seeing a significant increase in the number of Catford Cathedra (semi-regular ad hoc singers) members joining us at more regular intervals. This will be most noticeable in the deeper, richer sound coming from the choir stalls, and you will have noticed our newest choral scholar, Govind Nair beginning to lead from in our ranks. It is an honour to nurture him on his musical journey, alongside his Masters studies in Philosophy.

We are also delighted to be nurturing and empowering new junior choir members too, and you will have heard some phenomenal solos in recent months, especially over Christmas with *Once in Royal* in our carol services from Faith Gyan and our new Head Chorister, Lisa Gyan. MiniChoir continues (see below) with the expert guidance of Mairéad, and are beginning to train several apprentices to shadow her, and replicate her guidance in her absence.



ORGANISTS

We gave up the organ for Lent, as per tradition here at St Laurence, but I have been really encouraged by the quality and confidence of our singing during this time. I am aware that at times it has felt at the limit of our vocal range, we have done ourselves proud and have unequivocally enhanced our vocal skills and range in the process! We continue to nurture strong relationships as in previous years with a handful of outstanding organists, including Ian Shaw, Lucy Morrell, Andrew Jones, Andrew Storey and Marcus Wibberley.



TUNES & CHIPS CHOIR

Our pioneering Tunes & Chips Choir began in November and we had 20 sign-ups. As expected, attendance has been best in the lead-up to Christmas, but the continuing singers are already beginning to shine and gain extra confidence, as demonstrated on Mothering Sunday! The children enjoy refreshments, craft activities, games and even instrument practice before singing action songs and learning core pieces to perform with us.

With the incredible team of volunteers and young singers we have in place, we are set to grow stronger and larger as we approach our first birthday, thanks to church support. Several members of this choir have already expressed an interest in joining our Junior Choir, which is fantastic news. This is a key strategy for creating new feeder streams into our choir to combat the challenges facing recruitment in all similar organisations, and to ensure a strong future for church music nationally. We have also benefitted from several donations of Airfryers to aid our food preparation. Please let us know if you would like to support this venture in any way, from volunteering to making a donation.



RUSHEY GREEN SONGSTARS

Work with our local school has continued for much of this year, seeing around 20-30 children involved on a regular basis. It has been a privilege to continue this work, and we have heard these pupils shine through singing on several occasions – Mayor's Carol Service in December, in particular. We hope to work closely with the school, and look for further ways to build this connection, and our goal is to bring them together with our choir more frequently.

OTHER MUSIC ACTIVITIES

Our partner, SongEasel, continues to bring wonderful song to the area. We can look forward to several further inspiring events here across the spring and early summer:

Sunday 11 May: a Listening Club event for the works of Clara and Robert Schumann, whose marriage 185 years ago inspired some of the best-loved songs of all time.

Sunday 15 June: exceptional young Zambian baritone Themba Mvula brings us an imaginative selection of songs on the theme of 'Belonging'.

Sunday 13 July: incredible soprano Nadine Benjamin MBE brings us a personal programme performed by her mentees, reflecting her life and journey, which includes being the recipient of a Voice of Black Opera Award.

There will be a range of masterclasses at 12noon across June 27-29 from Pauliina Tukiainen, Stephan Loges and Juliane Banse, for anyone who is interested in learning more about performing songs.

Look out for posters with full details and tell your friends - we want these free events to be attended by as many people as possible!

RESOURCES

We are pleased that the church budget is in place and is able to grant us funds to develop the music here further. Recent purchases include bringing in extra singers, and the purchase of sheet music for the Candlemas for Tunes & Chips Choir to join forces with our main choir. We look forward to using these important contributions to enhance the musical life at St Laurence, helping us to elevate our praises to God at special moments during the liturgical year.

Thank you again for your ongoing support and encouragement. It has reinforced our work building our team of leaders both young and old. I can confidently say your support has meant that the music department is as stronger and committed as it has ever been, and the team we now have in place is outstanding: a credit to the church, and one that any parish church in the country would be proud to possess.

With love,

Jocelyn

Director of Music

MINICHOIR

By Mairéad Sheerin

Minichoir takes place most Sundays during the sermon. It is led by Mairéad, supported by Matthew and sometimes adult choir members. It is attended by any children in church at the time – congregation, servers and Junior Choir. We have an average attendance of 12 children (including Junior Choir).

The objectives of Minichoir

- To sing! Learn about singing, the basics of what it involves physically and how to perform.
- To support the teachings of Jesus. The songs we sing are either based on the theme of the Mass's readings or key teachings of Jesus.
- To play a part in the musical life of the Church. Minichoir sing in Family Masses and other important celebrations in the Sunday church calendar.
- To have fun. We want the children to have a positive experience attending Mass whilst learning without knowing they're learning.
- To socialise. We hope children get to know each other. I often pair shy younger children with the confident young people from Junior Choir. They also mix with children from the various Scout groups and Tunes&Chips.
- to learn about music. We have experimented with conducting, composing and improvising.

The challenges

As ever, attendance varies. We see some children regularly, others occasionally and some just once. Of course, all are warmly welcomed but it can make planning difficult. Thankfully there is almost always the core of Junior Choir to lean on so that even if no little children appear on a Sunday when we have planned to sing in front of the congregation, Junior Choir are always ready and willing to sing. I would like to thank them here – they are supportive, positive and helpful, which means a lot!

Sometimes I am expected to accommodate a large amount of children with very little warning. Luckily, I am experienced enough to deal with this but it's always good to have warning.

The future

I am very willing to continue leading Minichoir. With a busy professional and family life, it is something I feel I can continue to accommodate. I would find it difficult to extend it in any way and I generally do not run it at half-terms and school holidays for this reason!

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

The Safeguarding team was Fiona Tyrell-Jackson (Lead) and Lesley Ihekuna (Training), but Fiona has recently resigned and now Julia Jones (Lead) has been appointed as replacement by the PCC on 26th March 2025.

We recently had to complete an online Diocese Safeguarding Audit, which had to be submitted by the 4th Mach 2025, now complete, we await any actions/advice from the diocese in our continued mission of being a Safe Church.

A reminder that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

In the last 12 months Safeguarding training has been ongoing in all the various aspects of church life, so if anyone has any Safeguarding concerns, then Julia and Lesley are the ones to contact, details can be found on posters dotted around Church.

Thanking you for your support,
St Laurence Safeguarding Team.



SACRISTY REPORT



We are very fortunate to have very dedicated servers in this Parish who serve at the 10am parish mass and at other special services.

At the moment, we have the following regular ones namely:

1. Ijeoma
2. Vitalis
3. Titi
4. Leon
5. Joy
6. Moji
7. Ariyan
8. Sandra Sealey
9. Kevin Connihan

I am pleased to report four young people have joined us recently. They are:

1. Ikes
2. Sochi
3. Christian and
4. Samara

They are still undergoing the usual initial training and are doing well.

We need more servers of any age so do join us and more blessing will be showered upon you by the Creator.

Special thanks to LADY KATHLEEN who has been doing a great job by ensuring that the linens are kept very clean and ready for the services.

Joy is being trained as an Assistant Sacristan and she is doing fine, we work well together.

Finally, I thank Father Charles and Lesley for helping me to do my role as a Sacristan very satisfactorily.

Thank you all and God bless.

Kofi, Sacristan



DIGITAL MINISTRY

Live streaming on a Sunday is a lifeline for many parishioners who cannot attend Church in person and still want to be part of the St Laurence Church Family. In the last 12 months, viewing numbers have increased to 25-30, which also includes parishioners in Australia, Nigeria, Caribbean. Currently we stream across three platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Twitch).

Throughout the Church year, we have also streamed Funerals, Weddings, Celebration Services, Community Hymn Singing, Carol Services, Christmas, Holy Week, Easter Eve, Easter Day (Mass of the Dawn) to name a few.

Recently, we have had members of the congregation who had been unable to attend in person, and so they have watched online and joined in the service there had been a comment if we could include more of the congregation, so as part of this AGM we need your thoughts. Do let us know if you have any objections or concerns to more of the congregation being filmed during the mass.

Unfortunately, we have had two instances when we could not live stream on a Sunday due to problems with the YouTube platform, but instead we filmed the service via the camera and then this was uploaded to the streaming platform.

Sadly, due to Paul moving house, we lost a member of the streaming team, as it is too far to travel to St Laurence, so Fr Charles thanked him for his support over the years and wished him well for the future.

We have reached out to younger members of the Church to come and have a go. Aaron decided to try and is a natural, so far he is trained on Camera and Sound, but will learn the computer once Lent and Easter services are over as these are complex, we are very proud of his achievements so far.

The streaming team is only small, but work well together, and are still looking for younger members to join, in current team Jaden, Aaron and Lesley, and we proud of what we do.

Should anyone wish to join team, please enquire.

Thank you from the Streaming Team – Jaden, Aaron and Lesley

DEANERY SYNOD

The Main topic of the Deanery Synod meeting in June last year was around Youth and Crime and the contributing factors including Homelessness and poverty, and what measures Churches might take to challenge these issues.

Jason O'Shea, who works part-time for the Diocese and Part-time with the London City Mission talked about the work of Operation Forgiveness, an organization set up after the tragic loss to knife crime of Jason's brother-in-law.

Jason provided questions for members attending to discuss in small groups.

The agenda also included some follow up to discussions on environmental issues that had been discussed at the previous Deanery Meeting.

Also in June the Deanery provided Husting opportunities for Church members to question prospective candidates for most Parliamentary Parties in the run up to the General Election. St. Laurence organized and hosted jointly with the local Islamic Centre, one of these sessions.

In October last year, The Good Shepherd Church Lee, hosted a Deanery Session focussing on the renewed Diocesan vision and financial plans. Much of the Diocesan vision was similar to St. Laurence's own Mission Action Plan.

In February this year, at All Saints' Blackheath, East Lewisham Deanery Synod were informed of the outcomes of election to Diocesan Synod. Rev'd Michael Bailey and Rev'd Nick Walsh and had been elected as Clergy Representatives, and Bill Bishop and James Murdoch as Lay members.

The main agenda item for this Deanery Meeting was the issue of Modern Slavery. Consideration was given to how Safeguarding Training could include sessions on recognizing Slavery as it presents in society today.

'A victim of modern slavery could be anyone – as soon as you become vulnerable, you could be at risk. Slavery may now be illegal, but it never went away.'

It is estimated that there are 50 million slaves in the world today. The Church of England reckons that there are, on average, 1000 victims of modern slavery in each Deanery of our Diocese.

The next East Lewisham Deanery Synod Meeting is planned for the 24th June 2025. Venue TBC

TREASURER'S REPORT

Year ended 31st December 2024

Income

Giving in the open plate and through the bank have increased this year. There are a few members who are still using their "brown" envelopes and continue to be comfortable with that way of giving. St Laurence Church is blessed to have a caring and giving congregation.

The SumUp machine is used regularly by the congregation on Sundays and by visitors who attend special occasions here. The machine has been a good investment and offers yet another way of increasing our giving.

The flats have had no change of tenants this year and they continue to be one of our major sources of income.

Hiring in the centre has also increased from last year. It's busy in the week and all the rooms are fully booked on Sundays. Income in 2024 reached over £154,000, an increase of £8,000 on last year.

Total income for this year was £358,000 compared to £318,000 last year. This increase is a combination of congregation giving; lettings in the centre and flats. We have also implemented a new online car park system which enables anyone (not just church/centre attendees) to book and pay for a parking space online, which has increased our income in the year.

Restricted income

Restricted income received in the year was made up of:

- £5,000 for the church lighting project
- £1,500 Diocesan grant for the Tunes and Chips youth choir project
- £8,200 Passion play money from the Lottery Heritage fund.

Expenditure

St Laurence have given for their annual pledge to the Diocese a total of £75,000, an increase of £4,000 from 2023.

Expenditure for the year was £342,000 which was an increase of £10,000 up on last year. We undertook a large project in the year to fully refurbish the centre toilets.

With the increase in centre lettings, caretaker costs also went up in the year.

Overall, St Laurence had a £17,000 surplus for the year, of which £10,000 was restricted funding.

Beverley Chin
Treasurer

St Laurence Catford, PCC

Mission Action Plan 2025-2027

Who are we?

We are a local congregation rooted in our area who offer a distinctive ‘open catholic’ style of church, which values receiving communion, diverse and challenging sermons, a relaxed yet relatively formal style of worship, a wide range of musical styles, a robed choir and servers, and plenty of space for prayer (the church is open to all during daylight hours). Above all, we try to create a sense of holiness in worship while being accessible to all.

The diversity of the congregation reflects the local population, and is much valued. We are strongly engaged with our local community thanks to St Laurence Centre, a large community centre that is entirely run by the parish.

The future

Over the next three years we aim to achieve the following goals

A) Worship

Goal: We will build on our strengths in worship by looking to draw in more young people and families.

We look to achieve this by focussing on:

- the choir (especially the Tunes & Chips and RGS Songstars projects): Jocelyn
- training more young servers: Kofi, Joy
- the streaming team (especially more sixth formers/students): Lesley
- first communion classes: Antoinette
- building up minichoir: Mairéad
- integrating baptism services back into the main parish mass to encourage parents and young families: clergy
- making our monthly ‘family masses’ more distinctive, with more choruses, lighter music, more child-friendly sermons, invited drama groups, etc: clergy
- restart a formal junior church/Sunday school after mass on Sundays (as we do for first communion classes), while their parents are having coffee – led by volunteers, or look to employ a teacher/youth worker: clergy, churchwardens, PCC; work more closely with our Scouts
- within two years, initiate a young people’s

planning committee, to start young people-led services – e.g. on Sunday evenings or Sunday morning family masses: clergy

Target: within 12 months, have increased the proportion of young people in church on an average Sunday from the current 20% to 30% of the congregation, with increased numbers of children aged 8+

B) Community

Goal: St Laurence Centre is a key part of our mission of service to the people of Catford. We will strengthen our support for the Centre, and build on its success in providing a unique resource for the local neighbourhood.

To achieve this we will:

- strengthen the Centre Management Committee, and encourage at least six more members of the congregation to volunteer with the work of the centre, and to help with fundraising for it: Churchwardens, chair of Management Committee
- have more combined church/centre projects like the Passion Play project to strengthen the intracultural links that already exist locally: Centre Manager
- continue to build up our links with local primary schools, our uniformed organisations, the town hall, ecumenical groups, local elders’ groups: Incumbent, churchwardens, Centre Manager
- continue to strengthen our links with other local faith communities and their clergy, notably the Crantock Road Synagogue and Lewisham Islamic Centre
- within the church community, continue to celebrate each other’s national days, with 4 parish lunches over the next 12 months. Build up a social events planning team reflecting the diversity of the congregation: Churchwardens, clergy

Target: within 12 months, to have increased use of the Centre by 10%–15%, at least 6 new volunteers, 4 parish lunches, and to have a committed social events team

C) New Vicar

Seek the appointment of a new Vicar as quickly as possible after Fr Charles’ retirement: Vacancy team, Churchwardens

Target: new Vicar in post by Christmas

Approved by the congregation Feb 23rd 2025

2024 Report and Accounts for the Parochial Church Council of St Laurence Church, Catford

Aim and purposes

St Laurence’s Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Canon Charles Pickstone, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of St Laurence Centre.

Objectives and activities

The mission of the parish, as expressed in the parish mission statement, is ‘to offer, on behalf of a place that God loves, namely Catford, the praise that it has largely forgotten to express’. The PCC is committed to inviting as many people as possible to worship God, and if they feel so called to become part of the parish community at St Laurence’s. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament. Concomitantly, we invite local people to express their worship of God in altruistic service to their local community.

When planning our activities for the year, we have considered the Charity Commission’s guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the gospel; developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus especially as expressed through the sacraments
- Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish
- Missionary and outreach work.

To facilitate this work, we regard the maintenance of the fabric of the church of St Laurence and St Laurence Centre as of great importance.

Achievements and performance

2024 has been a period of slow growth, marked by a number of key developments.

(1) There have been important developments in our work with young people, especially with regard to music. A key aspect of our work locally, going back to the founding of the parish, has been making available to young people a rich musical repertoire, in particular in enabling them to understand and appreciate the emotional languages of classical and contemporary music as an expression of worship of God. To this end, we have developed increasingly strong links with our local state primary schools. We have been running an after school club in our neighbouring Rushey Green School premises in conjunction with their music teacher, ‘The Rushey Green Songstars’; we are now running our own after school club in the church, which provides education in singing and also oven chips, known as ‘Tunes and Chips’. Attended by children from Rushey Green School and Holbeach School (another state school in the parish), this has been very successful, thanks partly to a significant number of dedicated volunteers from the congregation. In return for their free musical education, the young people sing at a service in church every month.

(2) The year has seen a particular focus on giving to charity; during Lent, we had visiting preachers from the Manna Society, Christian Aid, Friends of the Holy Land and Action for Conservation. Representatives from these charities had the chance to speak at length about the work of their charity after mass in the church hall.

(3) The work of the Centre, which is run by a subcommittee of the Church Council, continues to flourish under the able direction of the Parish Manager. The usage rate has increased over the year, so that on many days all the rooms are in use much of the day. The church continues to make its hall and ancillary rooms available to local people (of every faith and none) as cheaply as possible, to allow for the growth of community locally. The facilities are used for public and private meetings, social events, training sessions, exercise classes, funeral wakes, blood donation, luncheon clubs, meetings of the local assembly, and Scouts, Cubs and Beavers. Thus church’s facilities are used to benefit the diverse communities of Catford, demonstrating our commitment to serving the broader community beyond our regular parishioners. The nursery who use two rooms in the Centre changed hands over the year, which required considerable negotiation. Members of the church also engaged in various charitable activities at an administrative and managerial level, including providing support for older people’s organisations like Ageing Well in Lewisham, the hugely popular Hummingbird Club for Caribbean elders, and Lewisham Elders’ Forum.

(4) Use of the church for occasional services during the week has increased. Sadly, this is partly due to the large number of funerals in church that we are asked to conduct (this year 18 funerals in church, up from 12 the previous year). In particular, the Windrush generation of Caribbean people who came to the UK in the 1960s are reaching the end of the lives, having made an important and distinctive contribution to British life and society, and many of their families are looking to have their funerals conducted at St Laurence's. We also hosted the 10th anniversary service of our local foodbank, and were honoured to host the Mayor of Lewisham's Civic Carol Service for the first time for many years. The Bishop of Woolwich's annual clergy study day for all local Anglican clergy took place here in the autumn.

(5) Finally, despite the challenges posed by the continuing conflict in the Holy Land, St Laurence's managed to maintain interfaith dialogue and cooperation, especially with our Jewish and Muslim neighbours, notably through a general election hustings organised by and on behalf of local faith communities.

(6) We have continued to stream our Sunday morning services via social media, attracting a wide range of followers all over the world from Barbados to Australia, and on occasion being seen live in 30-40 homes.

Financial review

We made a small surplus, before gains on investments, of £2,313 in unrestricted undesignated funds (£7,277 including gains on investments and designated income). Voluntary income was higher than the previous year. Giving by the congregation increased satisfactorily, despite the cost of living crisis that continued to affect many households. We contributed £75,000 towards Diocesan funds. Staff costs went up due to the increased number of lettings necessitating extra caretaking; also, there was a considerable increase in the London Living Wage, which we pay as a minimum to all staff.

Reserves policy

It is PCC policy to try to maintain a balance on free reserves (net current assets) which equates to at least six months' unrestricted payments during normal times. This is equivalent to around £160,000. It is held to smooth out fluctuations in cash flow, to meet emergencies and to protect members of staff in the case of failure. The balance of our unrestricted reserves at the year-end was £167,877 which is comfortably above our target.

The balance of £13,523 in the fabric fund is retained towards meeting the upkeep of the Church Hall, Church and Flats, while the £16,289 restricted fund is money that has been given specifically to renew the church lighting. The boiler reserve is the residual value of our Air Source Heat pumps, which is depreciated over 20 years. It is our policy to invest the short term investment fund balances with the CCLA Church of England Deposit Fund, and the remainder in the CCLA Church of England Investment Fund.

Volunteers

We would like to thank all the volunteers who have worked so hard over so the year to enable the church and community centre to survive financially and morally, to care for the congregation, and to keep everyone who enters the building safe. In particular, we want to mention our churchwardens Mrs Baker (until April), Ms Browne-Marke (from April) and Ms Mayne, who have worked so tirelessly on our behalf. We have an estimated 50 volunteers who contribute time and energy to the running of the Church and Community Centre, and the entire community of congregation and Centre users are extremely grateful to them.

Structure, governance and management

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC is a Registered Charity, no 1131092.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. At St Laurence's, the membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent (our vicar) and other licensed clergy, churchwardens, the Chair of the Centre Management Committee, the safeguarding officers, the readers and members elected by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the church. The Director of Music, Parish Accountant and Parish Manager are required to be in attendance when invited. All those who attend our services/members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the electoral roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish, including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent.

The full PCC met six times during the year with an average level of attendance of 75%. Given its responsibility for managing St Laurence Centre, the PCC has a Centre Management committee dealing with the running of the Centre. This committee is responsible to the PCC and reports back to it regularly, minutes of their decisions being received by the full PCC and discussed as necessary.

Administrative information

St. Laurence Church is situated at 37, Bromley Road, Catford. It is part of the Diocese of Southwark within the Church of England. The correspondence address is the Parish Office, 37, Bromley Road, London, SE6 2TS. Registered charity number 1131092.

PCC members who have served at any time from 1 January 2024 until the date this report was approved are:

Ex officio members:

Incumbent: The Reverend Canon Charles Pickstone (chairman)

Clergy & readers: The Rev'd Olukayode Oyeboode (to October 2024), Mrs Grace Blyth

Wardens:

Mrs Joan Baker (to April 2024)

Ms Marva Mayne

Ms Corinne Browne-Marke (from April 2024)

PCC hon treasurer

Ms Beverley Chin

Deanery Synod representatives:

Mrs Grace Blyth, Ms Florence Browne-Marke, Mr Robert Green (from April 2024)

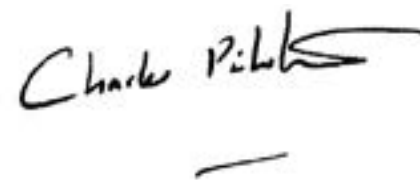
Elected members: Ms Donna Archibald (from April 2024); Ms Elaine Dixon (until April 2024); Mr Kofi Hagan (from April 2024); Ms Leanne Harvey-Thompson; Ms Lesley Ihekuna; Ms Dorna McCorkle (from April 2024); Mr Victor Obasogie; Mr Paul Omondiale; Ms Alice Prince-Gilbert; Ms Bridgit Sam-Bailey (to April 2024); Ms Jennifer Thorne.

Chair of Centre Management Committee: Mr Ray Williams

Church Council Secretary: Ms Joyce Turpin

Parish safeguarding officers: Ms Lesley Ihekuna, Ms Fiona Tyrell-Jackson

Approved by the PCC on 26th March 2025, and signed on their behalf by the Reverend Canon Charles Pickstone (PCC Chairman)



Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of St Laurence Catford Parochial Church Council

I report on the accounts of the church for the year ended 31 December 2024 which are set out on the subsequent pages, which show that income exceeds expenditure by £17,827 (of which £7,277 is in unrestricted funds). The net assets are valued at £347,609.

Respective Responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

The church's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The church's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- To follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners (under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act); and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of Independent Examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the gross income for the year exceeds the amount provided in section 145 (3) of the Act, I confirm that I am qualified to act as Independent Examiner under the provisions of that section of the Act and that my qualification is as shown below.

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



26th April, 2025
Gavin Ellis
Accountant
34 London Road
Hailsham
East Sussex
BN27 3BW

Parochial Church Council of St Laurence, Catford
Statement of Financial Activities
for the year ended 31 December 2024

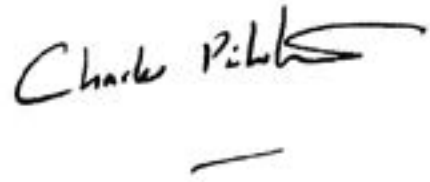
	Notes
Incoming resources	
Voluntary income	2(a)
Activities for generating funds	2(b)
Income from investments	2(c)
Church activities	2(d)
TOTAL INCOME	
Expenditure	
Church activities	3(a)
Raising funds	3(b)
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) BEFORE INVESTMENT GAINS AND LOSSES & RESERVE TRANSFERS	
NET GAINS/(LOSS) ON INVESTMENTS	5
BOILER RESERVE TRANSFERS	
NET INCOME Transfers	
Total funds brought forward	
Total funds carried forward	

	Unrestricted funds		Restricted funds		Total funds	
	General Funds 2024	Designated 2024	Boiler 2024	Other 2024	2024	2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£
	67,187			14,700	81,887	58,765
	70,228				70,228	72,902
	3,030				3,030	2,902
	200,278	2,500			202,778	183,564
TOTAL INCOME	340,725	2,500	-	14,700	357,925	318,132
	337,689			4,150	341,839	331,360
	723				723	578
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	338,412	-	-	4,150	342,562	331,938
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) BEFORE INVESTMENT GAINS AND LOSSES & RESERVE TRANSFERS	2,313	2,500	-	10,550	15,363	(13,806)
NET GAINS/(LOSS) ON INVESTMENTS	2,464				2,464	9,234
BOILER RESERVE TRANSFERS					-	-
NET INCOME Transfers	4,777	2,500	-	10,550	17,827	(4,572)
Total funds brought forward	8,652	12,023	(8,652)	13,439	-	-
	139,925		164,395		329,781	334,353
Total funds carried forward	153,354	14,523	155,742	23,989	347,609	329,781

Parochial Church Council of St Laurence, Catford
Statement of Financial Position at 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Investments	5	113,556	108,061
Computer equipment		-	1,207
Boiler		176,769	186,589
		<u>290,325</u>	<u>295,858</u>
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors and prepayments	6a	27,187	25,696
Short-term deposits	6b	9,124	5,500
Cash at bank and in hand		58,714	49,780
		<u>95,025</u>	<u>80,976</u>
LIABILITIES			
Creditors – due within 1 year	7	37,741	47,052
NET CURRENT ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)			
		57,284	33,924
TOTAL ASSETS			
		<u>347,608</u>	<u>329,781</u>
PARISH FUNDS			
Unrestricted funds			
General funds	9	153,354	139,925
Designated funds	9	14,523	12,023
Restricted			
Boiler reserve	8	155,742	164,394
		<u>347,608</u>	<u>329,781</u>

The notes on the succeeding pages form part of these accounts Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 26th March 2025, and signed on its behalf by



The Rev'd Canon Charles Pickstone (PCC Chair)

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST LAURENCE, CATFORD
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The PCC is a public benefit entity within the meaning of FRS102. The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 and in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 governing the individual accounts of PCCs, and with the Regulations' 'true and fair view' provision. They have been prepared under FRS102 (2016) as the applicable accounting standards and the 2016 version of the Statement of Recommended Practice, Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP(FRS102)).

ASSETS

Consecrated and benefice property

In so far as consecrated and benefice property of any kind is excluded from the statutory definition of 'charity' by Section 10(2)(a) and (c) of the Charities Act 2011 such assets are not capitalised in the financial statements.

Moveable church furnishings

These are capitalised at cost and depreciated over their useful economic life other than where insufficient cost information is available. In this case the item is not capitalised, but all items are included in the Church's inventory in any case.

Tangible fixed assets for use by the charity

These are capitalised if they can be used for more than one year, and cost at least £1,000. They are valued at cost or else, for gifts-in-kind, at a reasonable estimate of their open market value on receipt.

Depreciation is calculated to write off the capitalised cost of fixed assets less their currently anticipated residual fair value over their estimated useful lives as follows:

Land: nil

Boilers, fixtures and fittings: 20 years

Computers: 3 years (starting from the first full year after purchase).

No depreciation is provided on buildings as the currently estimated residual value of the properties is not less than their carrying value and the remaining useful life of these assets currently exceeds 50 years, so that any depreciation charges would be immaterial.

An impairment review is carried out at each year-end and any resultant loss identified included in expenditure for the year.

Investments

Investments quoted on a recognised stock exchange or whose value derives from them are valued at market value at the year end. Other investment assets are included at PCC's best estimate of market value.

Short term deposits

These are the cash held on deposit either with the Deposit Protection Fund or at the bank.

FUNDS

Unrestricted Funds

These represent the remaining income funds of the PCC that are available for spending on the general purposes of the PCC, including amounts designated by the PCC for fixed assets for its own use or for spending on a future project and which are therefore not included in its 'free reserves' as disclosed in the trustees' report.

The Church Council consider it appropriate to keep approximately six months of expenditure as unrestricted reserves.

Restricted Funds

These are income funds that must be spend on restricted purposes and details of the funds held and restrictions provided are shown in the notes to the accounts.

2. INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	TOTAL 2024 £	TOTAL 2023 £
2(a) Voluntary income				
Planned giving: Gift Aid donations	37,664		37,664	31,618
Tax recoverable	10,614		10,614	9,784
Other planned giving	5,266		5,266	7,298
Collections (open plate)	9,064		9,064	7,626
Grants		14,700	14,700	(1,813)
Donations, appeals, etc	3,071	1,509	4,580	4,252
	<u>65,679</u>	<u>16,209</u>	<u>81,887</u>	<u>58,765</u>
2(b) Activities for generating funds				
Fundraising	1,796		1,796	6,968
Rent-temporary let of clergy flats	68,432		68,432	65,934
	<u>70,228</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>70,228</u>	<u>72,902</u>
2(c) Income from investments				
Dividends on CCLA Investment Fund	3,030		3,030	2,902
	<u>3,030</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,030</u>	<u>2,902</u>
2(d) Income from church activities				
Fees for weddings and funerals	2,735		2,735	3,235
Church Centre lettings-local community use	189,498		189,498	177,795
Other Income	10,545		10,545	2,534
	<u>202,778</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>202,778</u>	<u>183,564</u>
Total income	<u>341,716</u>	<u>16,209</u>	<u>357,925</u>	<u>318,132</u>

3. EXPENDITURE

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	TOTAL 2024 £	TOTAL 2023 £
3(a) Church Activities				
Missionary & charitable giving, (note 11)	3,196		3,196	3,167
Ministry: diocesan parish quota	75,000		75,000	71,000
Other ministry cost	2,005		2,005	2,469
Church running & maintenance	146,902		146,902	132,997
Major repairs	25,679		25,679	29,440
Printing, postage & stationery	2,778		2,778	3,626
Bank charges	1,456		1,456	1,409
Director of music, organist, tuning	10,043		10,043	19,882
Caretaking	72,514		72,514	65,036
Events	134	2,131	2,265	2,334
	<u>339,707</u>	<u>2,131</u>	<u>341,839</u>	<u>331,360</u>
3(b) Raising funds				
Costs of refreshments	723		723	578
	<u>723</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>723</u>	<u>578</u>
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	340,431	2,131	342,562	331,938

4. STAFF COSTS

	2024 £	2023 £
Wages & salaries	116,106	114,398

No. of permanent employees 10 10
There were no employee benefits to key management personnel in the previous or current years.
During the year, the PCC employed a Parish Manager, Director of Music, a Finance Officer and a number of caretakers.

5. FIXED ASSETS

Investments	2024 £	2023 £
Amounts invested with CCLA		
Amounts held in trust by CCLA through The South London Church Fund and the Southwark Diocesan Board of Finance in respect of monies in connection with:		
Sale of 34 Canadian Avenue (1987)	36,811	36,811
Miss Hilda May Augusta Marsh & Miss Pansie Beatrice Edney bequests (1989)	<u>3,180</u>	<u>3,180</u>
	<u>39,991</u>	<u>39,991</u>
These funds are principally invested in units of the CBF Church of England Investment Fund		
Market value of 4,780.34 units at 01 January 2024 (2023:4,646.20)	108,061	95,925
Sale of 0 units during 2024 (2023:0)	-	-
Cost of 130.67 additional units purchased during 2024 (2023:134.14)	3,030	2,902
Increase/(Decrease) in Market Value during the year	<u>2,464</u>	<u>9,234</u>
Market value of 4,911.01 units at 31 Dec 2024 (2023:4,780.34)	<u>113,556</u>	<u>108,061</u>

	Units	Value (£)
Cost of additional units 34 Canadian Avenue	110.61	2,565
Marsh & Edney	<u>20.06</u>	<u>465</u>
	<u>130.67</u>	<u>3,030</u>

	Units	Value (£)
Units at Dec 31st, 2024 34 Canadian Avenue	4,157.07	96,123
Marsh & Edney	<u>753.94</u>	<u>17,433</u>
	<u>4,911.01</u>	<u>113,556</u>

6. CURRENT ASSETS

6(a) Debtors and prepayments

	2024 £	2023 £
Prepayments	1,173	1,108
Accrued income	8,000	8,000
Debtors	<u>18,014</u>	<u>16,588</u>
	<u>27,187</u>	<u>25,696</u>

6(b) Short term deposits

Deposits with Nat West Bank	3,724	100
Deposit protection scheme	<u>5,400</u>	<u>5,400</u>
	<u>9,124</u>	<u>5,500</u>

7. LIABILITIES

Amounts held on behalf of others

	2024 £	2023 £
Vicar's Discretionary fund	2,194	2,194
Women's fellowship	800	1,649
Choir holiday fund	-	268
Choir Bursary fund	1,384	2,247
Minichoir fund	-	337
Choir Concerts Fund	-	55
Benevolent Fund	-	200
Toilet Twinning	-	-
Other	<u>260</u>	<u>260</u>
	<u>4,639</u>	<u>7,211</u>
Flat deposits held	5,400	5,400
Other creditors and accruals	<u>27,702</u>	<u>34,155</u>
	<u>37,741</u>	<u>46,765</u>

8. RESTRICTED FUNDS

The restricted funds have evolved as follows:

	Balance 31/12/2023 £	Donations 2024 £	Expenditure 2024 £	Transfer 2024 £	Balance 31/12/2024 £
Church Lighting Fund	13,439	5,000	2,150		16,289
Green Boiler Fund	164,394			(8,652)	155,742
Tunes & Chips (Diocesan grant)	-	1,500	1,500		-
Heritage Fund - Passion Play	-	8,200	500		7,700
	<u>177,834</u>	<u>14,700</u>	<u>4,150</u>	<u>(8,652)</u>	<u>179,731</u>

9. SUMMARY OF UNRESTRICTED FUND MOVEMENTS

	2024 £	2023 £
Designated unrestricted funds		
Church maintenance fund		
Balance 1 January	7,679	7,679
Transfers during the year	<u>1,500</u>	<u>-</u>
Balance 31 December	<u>9,179</u>	<u>7,679</u>
Centre maintenance fund		
Balance 1 January	4,344	4,344
Transfers during the year	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Balance 31 December	<u>4,344</u>	<u>4,344</u>
Parish Hardship fund		
Balance 1 January	-	-
Transfers during the year	<u>1,000</u>	<u>-</u>
Balance 31 December	<u>1,000</u>	<u>-</u>
Total designated funds	14,523	12,023
Unrestricted and undesignated funds		
Balance 1 January	139,924	131,169
Surplus and transfers during the year	<u>13,429</u>	<u>8,754</u>
Balance 31 December	<u>153,353</u>	<u>139,924</u>

	Restricted £	Designated £	Unrestricted & undesignated £	Total £
Total reserves at 31st December 2024	179,731	14,523	153,353	347,608

10. SUMMARY OF ASSETS BY FUND

	unrestricted funds £	restricted funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Investments & other fixed assets	134,583	155,742	290,325	295,858
Debtors & prepayments	27,187	-	27,187	25,696
Short term deposits	9,124	-	9,124	5,500
Cash at bank and in hand	34,725	23,989	58,714	49,780
less creditors due within one year	<u>(37,741)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(37,741)</u>	<u>(47,052)</u>
	<u>167,877</u>	<u>179,731</u>	<u>347,608</u>	<u>329,781</u>

11. CHARITABLE DONATIONS

	2024	2023
	£	£
Lewisham Churches Care		500
St Christopher's Hospice	570	500
Sense		500
Smile Train	500	500
Melqosh Mission	500	500
Friends of the Holy Land	668	500
A Rocha UK		125
Royal British Legion		42
Cancer Research	500	
Mammakind	500	
Amos Trust	500	
Alzheimers Society	126	
Christian Aid	343	
The Manna Society	297	
Action for Conservation	78	
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	4,584	3,167

12. SUMMARY OF GRANTS RECEIVED

The PCC wishes to record its gratitude to the following generous donors:

	2024	2023
	£	£
The SLCF and SDBF (school singing project)		925
London borough of Lewisham (The Big Help Out)		50
The National Lottery Heritage Fund (Passion Play project)	8,200	
Southwark Diocese (Tunes & Chips project)	1,500	
London borough of Lewisham (Church lighting project)	5,000	