

## **Annual Report 2024**



**Parochial Church Council  
St Paul's Church  
Wimbledon Parkside**

*Report to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2025 of the  
Ecclesiastical Parish of St Paul's Wimbledon Parkside  
118-120 Augustus Road, London SW19 6EW  
Presented on the 11th May 2025  
Reporting period 1<sup>st</sup> January - 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024*

**Registered Charity 1142917**

## Parish Ministry Report

As we reflect on the past year, we give thanks for many signs of life, growth and grace in our parish ministry at St Paul's. Across our worship, outreach, pastoral care and learning, we have continued to deepen our common life and our welcome to others. We have seen steady encouragements - both in numbers and spirit - among those who worship with us regularly and those drawn into community through newer pathways, including Messy Church, school links and seasonal services. Our Sunday worship remains accessible both in-person and online, helping us serve a geographically and spiritually diverse congregation.

At the heart of our vision is a call to be a growing Christian community where God is found in the beauty and joy of our worship, the warmth of our welcome, the breadth of our outreach, and our love for our neighbour. Following a helpful review of our Mission Action Plan, shaped by the PCC and wider congregation, we continue to focus on five key priorities: Nurture, Outreach, Welcome, Communication, and the Environment. This report reflects on the first of these: Nurture.

### Worship and Festivals

St Paul's is blessed to celebrate two Patronal Festivals each year, in January and June, marking the commemorations of our patron, St Paul. This year, our main Patronal celebration was joyfully moved to 7<sup>th</sup> July to coincide with the ordination of our Curate, Revd Jack Belloli, to the priesthood. The occasion was filled with joy as Jack presided at the Eucharist for the first time, followed by a festive parish meal.

Our weekly Sunday Eucharist continues to be the heart of our life together, drawing a mixture of long-standing members, young professionals and families with young children. We are especially encouraged by the number of people who stay for coffee and conversation afterwards, helping to build a sense of belonging and fellowship.

Our monthly All-age Messy Church continues to flourish. Since autumn 2024, the combined attendance of adults and children has frequently matched that of our main Sunday morning service. These gatherings offer joyful, creative and meaningful worship, and are forming a deepening community of their own. The Messy Church team also leads

our popular Christingle service, Christmas Eve Crib Service, and Children's Stations of the Cross on Good Friday.

### Pastoral Offices

We were privileged to celebrate several baptisms this year and to admit children to Holy Communion at Easter. A particular joy was officiating at the wedding of a former Summer Club participant. While only two funerals were held at St Paul's in 2024, one was especially significant as we gathered to honour the life of a beloved and long-standing member of our congregation.

### Special Services

Highlights of our liturgical year included Holy Week, with Compline, Maundy Thursday Communion with handwashing, Good Friday's Children's Stations of the Cross, Reflections and Music, and the Final Hour. Easter was a joyful and well-attended celebration of resurrection hope. Our first Baby Loss Service was held in October, offered with tenderness and compassion and one we hope will continue. November brought our All Souls' Memorial Service, and Advent and Christmas were marked by Lessons and Carols, the Christingle, a lively Crib Service, and Midnight Mass, at which we were honoured to welcome Bishop Martin Gainsborough as celebrant.

### Lay Ministry

We are deeply grateful for the contributions of our lay leaders, whose ministries support and enrich our common life. Evening Prayer on Sundays is sustained by the faithful leadership of Margaret Brown, David Gooderson, Eve Speare, and our Lay Reader, Norman Allen, who also preaches monthly at the Sunday Eucharist.

Equally valuable is the dedication of the Messy Church leadership team, which includes Caroline Werhle, Marc Stoneham, and Kana Jones, supported by Candice Andrade, Michael Bower, Benoît Boelen and Claire Neate. Their creativity and commitment make Messy Church a place of genuine encounter and growth.

We also give thanks for our schools visit team, comprised of Margaret Brown, Lesley Hazel, Norman Allen, Doreen Hewitt and Gill Thompson, who, alongside clergy, provide a warm and informative welcome to visiting students.

## Children and Youth Ministry

It has been a joy to witness new energy and engagement among our younger members. We are especially pleased that Candice Andrade has been selected by the Diocese for training as a commissioned Children's Worker. Her future leadership in this area will be a great asset, and her present contributions to Messy Church are already bearing fruit.

Albemarle Primary School visited us this year to learn more about Christianity and the life of St Paul's church. St Cecilia's School continues to join us for termly worship through the Worship in the Community programme, and we regularly participate in Faith Trails visits organised by Wandsworth SACRE. Revd Susan supported SACRE's Faith Direct Experience, which this year introduced a fast-paced, interactive element to RE GCSE learning. Ten faith leaders, each seated at a separate table, welcomed groups of pupils from ten schools in timed ten-minute rotations. This 'faith leader speed dialogue' offered pupils an engaging and informative encounter with a wide range of religious voices, and Revd Susan was delighted to represent the Christian perspective.

A number of families who first encountered the church through Tea & Toys are now attending Messy Church, and a small but committed group of older children (ages 9 to 13) have begun forming their own informal Bible study during Messy Church services. Increasingly, families from Messy Church are exploring our Sunday morning services and looking for deeper involvement.

It is encouraging to see young people beginning to serve at the altar, with more expected to join in the coming year. Occasional Junior Church sessions have also been offered during key festivals.

## Adult Formation and Spiritual Growth

Opportunities for adult faith formation have included Quiet Days in April and September, led by Fr John-Francis Friendship and the Revd Bill Warren, respectively. Our Lent and Advent courses attracted a faithful core of participants, and we were pleased with strong engagement in our preparation sessions for baptism and marriage.

We also value our interfaith learning, particularly the joint study sessions with Wimbledon Synagogue, and the growing relationships through conversations and events with the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

### **Music, Hospitality, and Behind-the-Scenes Ministry**

Our worship is richly enhanced by the musical gifts of Kevin Jones, our Director of Music, and our choir, whose offerings throughout the liturgical year uplift and inspire. The ministries of welcome, reading, and leading intercessions are well coordinated by Eve Speare. Altar servers, under the leadership of Claire Neate, contribute to the richness of our worship. The Flower Arranging Team, led by Doreen Hewitt, continues to beautify our space, and the Hospitality Team, headed by Juliet Childs, ensures a warm welcome at parish gatherings. We are also indebted to our Housekeeping Team - the Woolgars, the Hewitts and the Thompsons - for their faithful care of our church.

### **Gratitude and Acknowledgements**

The ministry and mission of St Paul's are the work of many hands and hearts. We are richly blessed by a community that offers its gifts with generosity and faith. I want to extend heartfelt thanks to our dedicated staff team: Revd Jack Belloli, our Curate; Norman Allen, our Lay Reader; Gill Thompson and Mike Lowe, our Churchwardens; Kevin Jones, Director of Music; Guy Booth, our Parish Office Manager; and Sam Egan, our Community Centre Manager.

We also thank our Treasurers, Gillian Jago and Sylvia Mpawula, for their careful stewardship, and Claire Neate, our Safeguarding Officer, for her guidance in maintaining a safe and welcoming church.

On behalf of the PCC, thank you to each and every person who contributes to our shared life at St Paul's. Your dedication and care make this community a place where God's presence is known and shared.

*The Revd Susan Bolen*



## Churchwardens' Report (including Fabric Report)

The number of people attending church services has increased again during the year and live-streaming continues to be an important part of our worship. The average attendance at the Sunday morning Eucharist service is 61, which is an increase on last year. The church continues to be open during the week for visitors and for private reflection and prayer which, although the numbers are modest, is appreciated by those who come in. There continues to be a midday Eucharist service on Wednesday each week attended by a small number of regular members.

We launched the Mission Action Plan (MAP) at the APCM in May 2024. The MAP presents our vision in three headings: (i) welcome; (ii) nurture; (iii) outreach; (iv) communications; and (v) environment. The PCC took time to think and pray about our strengths and weaknesses, hopes and dreams. That reflection and analysis was then taken to the congregation and the congregation of Messy Church for their input in the finalisation of our MAP:

- [Welcome](#): more children's activity, welcome meals for newcomers, replace our fence, open up the doors, external advertising board.
- [Nurture](#): organise retreats as well as quiet days, re-establish Junior Church, film screenings with discussions to nurture faith.
- [Outreach](#): additional interests to add to what we are already doing
  - concerts organised by St Paul's and outside hires, building on our rich musical tradition led by our very talented Musical Director, re-establish a Social Committee.
- [Communications](#): re-launch the web site on the new ChurchDesk platform, develop social media, set up focus group for review and refresh of Parkside Post.
- [Environment](#): eco-committee to pursue energy audit and solar panels, pursue the A Rocha Eco-Church award scheme, community gardening project, seek sources for grant support.

We launched a financial appeal in October 2024, to seek financial support from the generosity of the congregation and local community. This was presented in a 10:00 Sunday morning Church service and also at Messy Church. New information pages were set out on the Giving Table beside the door at the back of church, a request paper was placed in pews and text to encourage donations was added to the pew sheet; all

of these are ongoing. The church does not receive external funding from any source, it is entirely dependent on the funds it can raise from donations, use of the church and centre, and events. The pursuit of our Mission Action Plan, as well as running of many activities, is dependent on us being able to increase our income.

We once again celebrated 'Creationtide' in church with the display board showing a variety of art and interpretations by members of the congregation.

Our Christmas Fair in November was attended by members of the community and managed to raise £3,500 which the PCC decided to allocate together with a received grant to replace the fence. Our sincere thanks to all those members of the congregation who willingly turned up and helped on the day.

St Paul's also continues to work within the local community, running **Tea and Toys** on a Tuesday morning and **All-age Messy Church** on the first Sunday of the month at 4.00 pm. Both offer different activities: play at **Tea and Toys**, and more organised activities for **Messy Church**. There are also occasional meetings between the local synagogue and mosque. St Cecilia's Secondary School visited twice during the year by House Group for 'Worship In The Community'. **St Paul's Pantry** continues to serve those in need on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month.

### [Fabric Report](#)

The hinge on the right-hand side inner door of the main entrance was replaced in September (by Alan Endean and Mike Lowe). The upper hinge was re-manufactured in the same manner as had been done for the left-hand door in 2022. All hinges have been lubricated, both internal and external, so all doors can be opened fully if desired.

Last year we reported the repair of the floor where two wooden blocks had risen at the left side of the pews. Three more risen blocks have been observed to rise in the central aisle and will need to be treated in the same manner. This will best be done in dry conditions in the summer.

One of the double-glazed roof panels in the conservatory of the Community Centre has slipped and cracked. We are awaiting advice from glazing companies about whether this panel can be repaired or whether a more substantial project on the roof needs to be undertaken.



The electrical system for the Church and Community Centre was surveyed in April 2024; this is a requirement every 5 years. We undertook all required remediations that could be tackled ourselves; particular thanks to Alan Bryant for doing the majority of this. The items that were required to be done by a qualified electrician were contracted to CES Lighting & Electrical who had done the inspection. In the end we were able to pass the safety requirements at relatively low cost (under £2000); the next inspection will be in 2029.

*Gill Thompson and Mike Lowe*

## **Reader's Report**

2024 was another blessed year, with renewed Diocesan PTO (Permission to Officiate): twenty-three sermons, from 'Plato's Cave' to 'Desert Highways'. With grateful thanks for much encouragement and support.

*Norman Allen, Reader*

## **Electoral Roll**

This year we have had to completely revise the church Electoral Roll. This meant sending out letters and new forms to every church member on the previous Electoral Roll. After gathering these in, I had to create a new roll in time for the APCM. I have now closed the Roll.

We now have 85 people on our new church Electoral Roll, which entitles them to vote at the APCM, to stand for the Parochial Church Council (PCC) or stand for election as a Churchwarden.

If you are not on the Electoral Roll, and you consider yourself to be a member of St Paul's Church and have been worshipping with us for three months, then please fill out a form and I can add you on after the APCM.

*Joan Endean, Electoral Roll Officer*

## **Parish Safeguarding**

St Paul's church continues to follow the Safeguarding policies for children and vulnerable adults established by the Diocese of Southwark.

The Diocese provides online courses covering Basic and Foundation in Safeguarding as well as training to raise awareness in domestic abuse.

During 2024 we saw improved adherence to guidelines on safer recruitment for our volunteers. Face-to-face proof of identity checks are being carried out as part of the Disclosure and Barring service (DBS). DBS is renewable after 3 years.

I continue to encourage volunteers and staff to complete Safeguarding training online. Ann Parkin remains on standby for whenever I need her assistance.

*Claire Neate, St Paul's Safeguarding Officer*

## **Friday Group**

We meet regularly to share each other's joys, doubts and concerns, and to offer support to one another. We pray for people in need, specific situations, and we study a book. This may be a part of the Bible or a book giving us food for thought on our pilgrimage through life together. Last year we studied Dick Butler's 'The Four Gospels' and this year we're reading Richard Carter's 'The City Is My Monastery'. This often leads to lively discussions!

*Sue Chick*

## **Prayer Chain**

We are a group of people who pray for anyone in need. There is a list we all hold and anyone can add people to that list. Just contact Sue Chick, Daphne Foster or any of the clergy team and we will pray for those in need. It would also be helpful to know of any changes or if a person no longer needs to be on the prayer list.

*Daphne Foster/Sue Chick*

## **Church Birthday Card Scheme**

We give a birthday card to anyone from St Paul's who would like their birthday celebrated in this way. Their name also appears on the pew sheet in the relevant month. If you wish to receive a card for yourself or your family members, please contact Daphne Foster or Sue Chick. We don't need to know ages, but if we have the age of children we can try to find an appropriate card for their age.

*Daphne Foster/Sue Chick*

## Jean Garling Fund

This fund, set up in memory of Jean with a bequest from her estate, is available for lay members of the congregation for training to support their spiritual development. Once again this year no one has approached us for support which means the fund is in a good position to help going forward. With expanding work with children and young people, and opportunities for more 'Quiet' and /or Study Days, we are hopeful that the fund will be used again in the near future.

*Doreen Hewitt*

## Music

The choir continues to lead hymn singing on Sundays at the front of the church with singers sitting facing the congregation in front of the rood screen. Many in the choir and congregation feel that this arrangement provides a better lead, helps singers to sing more confidently and looks better on live-stream. Others prefer the choir to be seated in the choir stalls which is our usual arrangement for special services. This presents significant challenges with respect to confidence, ensemble and coordination when numbers are low, but works well with a healthy turn-out.

Choir numbers each week tend to be very variable - on occasions up to 24 singers, other times as low as 5 or 6 - but this year we have been delighted again to welcome some new voices whose contributions have been greatly appreciated.

To avoid making services too long (by request) the choir rarely sings a stand-alone anthem but will sing a Communion anthem when appropriate before the Communion hymn - a pattern which seems to work well. We continue to sing settings from a variety of periods, ancient and modern, including arrangements of music from other world music traditions. We have repeated some lovely settings and hymns from Ukraine, and were privileged to welcome young Zlata Shostachuk to join us to sing *Prayer for Ukraine* marking the third anniversary in February of the 2021 invasion. We also greatly appreciate Julia Raeburn's contributions of flute obligati and solos.

The organ has generally been working well, but the lowest 'Positive' manual continues to present challenges with additional stops joining the 'failing list'. When the more important 'Great' and 'Swell' were

upgraded a few years ago it was thought that the 'Positive' could wait, but with more parts wearing out it would now benefit from the same upgrading. Many thanks to Michael Chapman and Jamie Crooks for standing in during Kevin's absence. We were also delighted to welcome Christopher Slaski as guest organist for our Christmas Eve Midnight Mass.

Once again, many thanks to all choir members for their loyal support, and especially to John for his tireless commitment helping to copy music, organise the choir music library, and help with setting up; to Ann for dealing with music licence reporting and copyright; to Susan, Jack, Norman and Churchwardens for their support, and to members of the congregation and visitors who have made a point of thanking and complementing St Paul's musicians for our contribution to services.

*Kevin Jones*

## **Flower Group**

This year has been another busy one for the Flower Group. As well as the usual times when the church is fully decorated in celebration of the major festivals, we have had a wedding to celebrate and, sadly, funerals and memorial services to support. The team see working for every occasion as a privilege, and are happy to try to provide families with something suitable and fitting for their special service.

As always, we are grateful for the continued support from members of the congregation. Hopefully, once again, our time and talents have helped to provide a setting which is conducive to worship at St Pauls.

*Doreen Hewitt*

## **Youth and Children**

2024 saw the continuation of St Paul's three-tier approach to offering outreach to children and their families on term-time weekdays: **Tea & Toys**, our playgroup for preschool children and carers on Tuesday mornings which has run since 2019, and the more recent **Tea & Toast** (for 5-9 year-olds and their carers) and **The Wednesday Club** (for 9-14 year-olds) on Wednesday afternoons. We have continued to draw on our successful 2023 grant from the Wimbledon Foundation Community Fund (WFCF) to support the equipment and staffing costs for this work. We

continue to be especially grateful to Margaret Brown, for her leadership and coordination of the Wednesday activities and her liaison with WFCF.

Tea & Toys continues to offer a space of welcome for as many as 10 children each week, and one of mutual support for their carers. It has also been encouraging to see more families starting to explore Messy Church, and to ask about baptism, off the back of this provision.

The Wednesday Club now hosts a regular cohort of about 8 young people from several local primary and secondary schools, including some new faces with the start of the 2024-25 academic year. While we've not seen the hoped-for growth in numbers, we've been heartened by the more consistent attendance and the deepening bonds of trust we've seen both among the young people themselves and with adult helpers. When surveyed, the young people said that they enjoyed the range of sport and creative activities, the chance to meet friends and people who weren't yet friends - and, especially, that they had the freedom to express themselves and to try a bit of everything.

Take-up for Tea & Toast became minimal from autumn 2024: while it continues to be advertised, the decision was made to fold any children and their carers who present themselves into the Wednesday Club space in the Community Centre, and adjust activities accordingly.

The Red Balloon Foundation, who had previously provided us with youth workers for these activities, went into liquidation abruptly last autumn. Since the final weeks of 2024, we've been lucky to have the support of Katie Bondar on both weekdays: she has brought substantial experience with young children and a range of engaging craft activities for Wednesday afternoons. We are also immensely grateful for our team of loyal and patient helpers on Wednesdays, including Shanta Chellappoo, Anne Minors, Claire Neate and Benoît Boelen.

Beyond these regular activities, we have seen a number of one-off initiatives in which families in the community have got to know each other and new people in the congregation, as part of our process of becoming a more cohesive intergenerational community. As in 2023, a variety of groups took part in our Advent Posada, welcoming Mary and Joseph into their homes and lives as they prepared for Christmas. Some of these initiatives have come from families themselves. Following their engagement with our Mission Action Plan consultation last summer, a group of young people linked to Messy Church expressed a desire to do a

sponsored sleepout and cycle ride for the homelessness charity GlassDoor - this happened over the course of a very wet weekend in October (supported by their dads and Revd Jack!), and raised £900.

*Revd Dr Jack Belloli, Assistant Curate*

## **Community Hub**

The Community Hub has emerged out of a longstanding desire to revive the coffee mornings previously hosted in the Community Centre lounge on Thursday mornings, but with new emphasis on outreach and on supporting those in the local area facing mental health and other difficulties.

Since late 2023, Revd Susan and Revd Jack have been developing a relationship with the community organising alliance Citizens UK, and especially with their South London Listens project. This is a collaboration with local NHS Trusts which enables community groups to access free training in community organising and mental health first aid, with the aim of those groups becoming “BeWell Hubs”, in which participants are encouraged to take charge of their own wellbeing. Volunteers from several St Paul’s projects took part in this training in May and June 2024, so that its benefits can be felt in a range of contexts - but, off the back of this training, we also hosted a listening exercise in August, in which about 15 members of the local community met to discuss what their key needs were and how they might be addressed in a shared regular space on Thursday mornings.

The Community Hub has been open every Thursday morning since last September. Thus far, it has seen about 5 to 10 people - including some who were regulars at the previous coffee mornings, and some who attended the listening exercise - coming each week to share in conversation and shared activities including crafts, jigsaws and crosswords. Over the coming year, we hope to be more intentional about making it an intergenerational space, to learn from what other BeWell Hubs are doing, and to build more connections with people in the local community who might benefit from it. We are working with our local Citizens UK organiser, Claire Arkwright, on these goals; we were awarded a “micro-grant” of £800 to fund supplies and equipment as we grow.



We are grateful to David Hince for acting as lead volunteer for the Hub, alongside his work with the Pantry; to Sam Egan for support with set-up and refreshments; and to Isabel Heycock, Christine Brown and Eve Speare for their support. We are always looking for more people interested in helping us to build this space and to develop our mission through it.

*Revd Dr Jack Belloli, Assistant Curate*

## **St Paul's Pantry**

St Paul's Pantry has continued regularly to serve 30 - 40 households at least. It now opens once a fortnight, rather than first and third (and fifth) Thursdays. This change ensures a consistent interval of a fortnight between openings, making re-stocking and admin easier. The Pantry opening dates are publicised to visitors and volunteers and those visitors who have email receive a reminder before each opening. Many visitors seem to appreciate the Pantry as an opportunity for social contact in a friendly environment. The volunteer team also tries to 'signpost' Pantry visitors to other means of support, although the opportunities for this are limited during the one-hour time frame.

Michellie Brown, Amanda Gould and Chris Ward are no longer involved, and thanks is due to them for their considerable contribution in recent years. David Hince re-joined the team, managing the stock and becoming a leader. Juliet Childs also led during 2024 and continued to coordinate the volunteers, and Paul Tibbs became a leader. We have a good team of volunteers, with some turnover all the time as people's commitments change and new volunteers appear. One new young volunteer joined us, a sixth former who is studying for her IB (International Baccalaureate); all IB students have to carry out some community service as part of their course.

*Juliet Childs*

## **Open Church**

St Paul's has continued to maintain an Open Church for private prayer, access to listeners and for pastoral support. With the generous help of several volunteers, including Doreen and John Hewitt, Terry and Kay Woolgar, Gill and Shirley Thompson, Margaret Brown, Norman and Lois Allen, and Julia and Stuart Raeburn, the doors of the church have continued to be open four mornings and one afternoon during the week,

and a warm atmosphere of welcome has been acknowledged and appreciated by members of the congregation and passers-by.

*Revd Jack Belloli and Revd Susan Bolen*

## **Community Centre**

We are pleased to say the Community Centre continues to provide a warm and welcoming place for all those that use it, whether it's for hiring or visiting, and we continue to get great feedback especially on Google maps.

We remain a very popular venue for children's parties with many returning for future bookings. We are lucky to have an outside space, and this is always a bonus when holding events. This year has been especially popular with 1<sup>st</sup> birthday parties, and baby showers.

The regular bookings remain steady. Sadly, we are losing a couple of groups: 'Sisparo Chamber Music' is leaving after approximately 25 years (due to age and health issues) and 'Elite Ballet Academy', who now are holding all their Wimbledon classes at one venue and have been with us for 12 years. This does mean a reduction in income, but Sam is working hard to find new groups.

In October, I am pleased to say we were successful for the fourth year in securing funding as part of the Well-being Brighter Living week in Wandsworth, receiving £250.00. Sam organised an afternoon of activities for the elderly including lunch, book folding, painting, table tennis, snooker and we also purchased two wooden planters for the garden area and planted spring bulbs.

In September we had a visit from The Wandsworth Community Transport Choir made up of elderly and disabled passengers and volunteers. It is a sing-along choir and they supply the lyrics to ABBA and Beatles tracks. Whether singing along or tapping their feet, it was enjoyed by all those that attended and there was a great atmosphere.

We also had the pleasure of two visits from Brian (Entertainer) this year. Brian has been coming to us at St Paul's for many years, he plays music as well as playing the guitar, organises a sing a long and brings instruments for members to play and join in. His visits are always greatly appreciated and welcomed by all.

Alan and Jenny continue to help and support us with maintenance. We really appreciate their work and commitment.

We have new gardening contractors, Wimbledon Garden Services, who work March to November. They support small local projects and were able to offer us a discount for the transformation of the area at the side of the Community Centre. This included the planting, and has made the area look more welcoming and inviting. The Girl Guides group also very kindly donated towards the cost, following their purchase of a shed positioned behind the fence at the side of the Community Centre.

The committee met regularly during the year and agreed new terms of reference. Amanda Gould and Philip Warner retired after a long association with the committee and we thank them both for their support during their term of office. We welcomed two new members: Helen Lowe and Alistair Butcher and look forward to working with them during 2025.

*Samantha Egan and Gill Thompson*

## **Lunch Club**

The Lunch Club was set up by the church as a Millenium Project. In May this year the Lunch Club celebrates 25 years, and although during the year we had to scale down from every Tuesday to twice a month due to lack of team leadership, it is still going strong. Sam Egan stepped in to provide a light lunch of soup and rolls, sandwiches, and occasionally a ready meal donated by 'Cook' in Southfields on the alternate Tuesdays.

The number of members attending each week averages 20 and we very much appreciate and thank Sam Egan for taking the bookings and collecting the money. Sam continues to do a range of activities on Tuesday after Lunch Club, giving members a chance to join in activities that they might not normally get a chance to do. This includes regular bingo sessions. Bingo raised £845.00 and this was put towards the Community Centre fundraising.

Our two cooks, Janice O'Connor and Mary Novis, continue to work with us assisted by Eve Speare, Margaret McManus, Jan Sharp and Susan Hartwell-Mold. Our thanks go to all the volunteers. Once again thank you to Chris Wright for organizing carol singing and a pianist following the Christmas Lunch.

It would be ideal if once again we could offer lunch every week; however, we need at least two volunteers to lead a team. The team leader role involves choosing a two-course menu (main and dessert), shopping for the ingredients (money refunded by cheque on production of bills), and supervising the cooks and at least one volunteer. If you think you would like to be one of the team leaders, please get in touch with Christine or Shirley.

The Lunch Club is a very rewarding and worthwhile project. It not only provides a meal but a much-needed social get-together for many elderly people from the parish and surrounding area.

*Christine Brown and Shirley Thompson*

## **Church Bookings: Concerts & Recitals**

St Paul's continued to be in demand as a venue for concerts, recitals and rehearsals during 2024. We had bookings for 7 concerts / recitals by amateur choirs and orchestras, plus 4 separate rehearsals; 6 school concerts; and 2 piano student summer recitals.

We increased our church hire charges in January 2024 by 5% approx. to keep pace with annual inflation.

We were blessed over the year with four orchestral concerts by Wimbledon Symphony Orchestra (WSO) and two choral recitals by Putney Choral Society (PCS), at which the talents of the performers and the wonderful acoustic provided by our church combined to create a delightful experience for the substantial audiences in attendance. Thames Youth Orchestra gave a concert in January.

In February, Wimbledon Symphony Orchestra under conductor Marc Dooley performed 'The Happy Workshop' by Richard Strauss and Rachmaninov's Symphony No.2 in E Minor; in April, WSO returned under conductor Andy Morley to play Butterworth's 'Banks of Green Willow', Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, and Elgar's Symphony No.2 Op. 63, with violinist Benjamin Baker. WSO's Summer Celebration in June featured music from Bizet's 'Carmen' (Suites 1 and 2), Dvorak's 'Romance for Violin & Orchestra', and 'La Boutique Fantastique' by Respighi, under

Conductor Leo Geyer with Charlotte Edwards on violin; and in November the repertoire for WSO's Autumn Concert with conductor Dominic Grier and cellist Jayden Lamcellari included Borodin's 'Overture Prince Igor', Dvorak's Cello Concerto in B Minor and Tchaikovsky's ('Polish') Symphony No. 3.

Putney Choral Society, under musical director Jamie Powe were at St Paul's in May to sing Vivaldi's 'Gloria' and 'Magnificat', and 'Requiem for the Living' by Dan Forrest, with soloists Sofia Kirwen-Baez (Soprano), Bernadette Johns (Mezzo-Soprano), James Botcher (Tenor) and Ted Day (Baritone). On 7<sup>th</sup> December the choir returned to perform Rossini's 'Petite Messe Solennelle'.

During Advent, we were pleased to welcome back The Study Preparatory School for their delightful annual nativity concert, and to host Putney High School Juniors for their two carol concerts under new Head of Music Lizzie Davis. Albemarle School was in church for two year group concerts before Easter and again in December for a Christmas performance.

The concert year was rounded off with Wimbledon Choral Society's (WCS) traditional double-billed (matinee and evening) Christmas concerts on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December, which were well-attended as ever by a festive audience.

A special word of thanks to Chris Wright for very kindly volunteering to open and lock up church and support church hirers whenever required.

Total revenue from church bookings invoiced during 2024 was £7,705.50. This represents a 12.5% increase in revenue over 2023.

*Guy Booth, Parish Administrator*

## **Communications Group**

Two editions of *Parkside Post* were produced in 2024 - for Easter and for Advent/Christmas. These included reports on the following: a 'Pancake Brunch' in the Community Centre; the contribution of the Holland family to the fabric of St Paul's; the blue plaques erected in the parish in memory of Eleanor Roosevelt, American First Lady. Also included were posters promoting our outreach activities such as Tea & Toys, the Wednesday Club, and the Pantry, as well as details of Easter and Christmas services and events.

Copies were distributed around the parish through letterboxes and placed in local coffee shops, surgeries and Southfields Library. We are very grateful to all the volunteers who carry out the distribution, but more help is needed!

We were grateful for the support of Putney Choral Society and Wimbledon Symphony Orchestra who took out advertising which helped to defray printing costs.

Posters and banners were produced for display outside the church, also helping to advertise St Paul's worship and activities to the community, and hopefully, encouraging people through our doors.

*Juliet Childs*

## **e-Newsletters**

There were no e-Newsletters sent during 2024 as the website was not 'live' to receive click-throughs. We will resume regular communications by e-Newsletter using ChurchDesk in 2025.

*Guy Booth, Parish Administrator*

## **St Paul's Website**

The migration of our website to a new ChurchDesk (church management software) editing platform in late 2023 resulted in the loss of much of our existing content and as a consequence we have been offline during 2024. The project to rebuild the website took much longer than was expected owing to the demands on staff time as well as the challenge of becoming proficient in more sophisticated software. At the time of writing (April 2025), the new website is 'live' and working well.

We are confident that the improved functionality of the upgraded ChurchDesk editor, and our growing skills with the platform, will allow us to enhance the online experience for St Pauls' digital visitors, and improve the effectiveness of our outreach online.

*Guy Booth, Parish Administrator*

## **Charity Collections**

We distributed envelopes during **Christian Aid Week** to about 20 of the Parkside Post rounds, acting as a collection point, and collecting among



our own congregation. It is difficult to know how much was raised as most people now contribute online and by other means.

In December, our **Carol Singers** raised £232 at Southfields tube station for *Glass Door*, supporting church hospitality for London's homeless.

*Margaret Brown*

## **Interfaith Engagement at St Paul's**

Interfaith work continues to be a meaningful and valued part of our life at St Paul's. In a world that can too often be marked by division and suspicion, we believe that nurturing relationships with people of other faiths is a vital expression of our Christian calling to peace, hospitality, and understanding.

**Revd Susan** is pleased to offer local leadership in this area and serve the wider Church as **Interfaith Advisor for the Kingston Episcopal Area, Christian Co-Chair of the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ)**, and to be an **active member of SACRE** (the local body supporting religious education in schools). Through this ministry, our parish is well connected with wider interfaith networks and initiatives.

Over the past year, St Paul's has hosted and participated in a rich series of joint study sessions with members of **Wimbledon Synagogue**. These thoughtful and deeply respectful conversations explored key topics through both Jewish and Christian lenses, including:

- **Suffering and the Book of Job**
- **Pilgrimage, the Promised Land, and Spiritual Journeys**
- **Faith Practices in the Home**
- **Jerusalem - the Holy City**
- **Healing and Cure**
- **Receiving God's Teaching: Shavuot and Pentecost**
- **Lent and Pesach: Common Paths of Renewal and Hope**

These gatherings offered space to learn, reflect, and grow in friendship, as we recognised both the distinctiveness and the shared themes of our traditions.

St Paul's also played a key role in the **Faith Trails** school programme, organised by **SACRE**, which introduces children to local places of worship and helps nurture curiosity, respect, and religious literacy. This

year, children visited **St Paul's, Wimbledon Synagogue**, and the **Buddhapadipa Temple**. We are especially grateful to our dedicated schools team – **Revd Jack, Margaret Brown, Norman Allen, Lesley Hazel, Doreen Hewitt, Gill and Shirley Thompson** – who made this possible.

Our interfaith friendships continue to grow in other ways too. We shared several warm and lively conversations over coffee with the **Ahmadiyya women's group**, and we were glad to support the **Fazl Mosque** in their **annual Peace Symposium** – a public affirmation of our shared values of compassion and mutual respect.

We were also pleased to take part in the **Merton Interfaith Walk**, an uplifting day of welcome and witness across different places of worship in our borough. These walks provide a gentle but powerful way of building friendship through presence, walking side by side and learning from one another's traditions and communities.

One of the most significant moments of the year was a **Peace Vigil** held at **Southfields Station**, following the tragic events in Southport and unrest elsewhere in the country. Members of **Wimbledon Synagogue**, the **Fazl Mosque**, and the **Merton and Wandsworth Baha'i communities** joined us as we stood together in solidarity and sorrow. Each tradition offered a short reflection, candles were lit, a moment of silence was held, and many passers-by stopped to stand with us. It was a quiet but powerful act of shared humanity and hope.

As a parish, we remain committed to interfaith work not as a side interest, but as a core part of what it means to live the Gospel in a diverse and complex world. We give thanks for every opportunity to build trust, deepen understanding, and witness together to the peace that God desires for all.

*Revd Susan Bolen*

## **Eco Church**

The Eco Church committee met in April 2024 to review ideas and opportunities for actions. A wide scope was covered, including monitoring electricity and gas energy usage, improving heating controls, installing solar panels, installing long range infra-red heaters, seat/cushion heating, reduction of use of paper. For the longer term, it

was recognised that we will need to replace our heating by sources that do not use gas, so we will need to think about these in due course.

Energy specialists from the Diocese visited in November 2024 to conduct an energy survey of the church, to be reported and reviewed early in 2025. This will open discussion with the Diocese on their observations, as well as our own ideas, and critically we hope will initiate guidance on funding support for eco projects.

*Mike Lowe*

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## **ST Paul's PCC - Treasurer's Report 2024**

The church continued to receive generous donations from the congregation, with a noticeable increase in PGS contributions following the financial appeal made to the parish in October. All contributions were gratefully received and continue to support the ongoing work of the church. Income from community centre and church hire remained strong, alongside rental income from the Augustus Road investment property – reflecting the benefits of previous capital investment. We gratefully acknowledge Joan Wilson's legacy donation of £5,000. The Pantry remains in a healthy financial position, ending the year with a balance of £9,000. The Christmas Fair was a particular highlight, raising £3,000. These funds will be used to replace the fence on Augustus Road, supporting our mission to improve the church's welcome and appearance. While general expenses continued to rise in line with inflation, all spending remained in line with budget expectations. We have also made good use of digital tools to streamline our financial processes, something which we will look to expand. Overall, we ended 2024 with a deficit of just over £4,000 – significantly lower than in 2023, and better than forecast at the start of the year."

*The Finance Committee*

**N.B. Please see separate addendum for St Paul's Accounts 2025**

