

# The United Benefice of St James and St Anne's Bermondsey Annual Report 2024



# The United Benefice of St James and St Anne's Bermondsey

## ANNUAL REPORT 2024

### Table of Contents:

|            |   |          |
|------------|---|----------|
| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Vicar's report</b>   | <b>3</b> |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Formal Reports</b>   |          |
| <b>2.1</b> | Electoral Roll Reports: St Anne's – Ruth Reid                     | 3        |
|            | St James – Marian Greenwood                                       |          |
| <b>2.2</b> | PCC Proceedings: St Anne's - Ruth Reid, PCC Secretary             | 4        |
|            | St James - Ruth Reid, PCC Secretary                               | 4        |
| <b>2.3</b> | Treasurers' Reports: St Anne's - Graham Russell                   | 5        |
|            | St James - Claire Mayne-Constantinou                              | 5        |
| <b>2.4</b> | Fabric Reports: St Anne's - Suzanne Adofo & Yvonne Lubwama        | 6        |
|            | St James - Pat O'Connor   | 6        |
| <b>2.5</b> | Deanery Synod Proceedings - Ruth Reid, Deanery Lay Chair          | 7        |
| <b>3.0</b> | <b>Parish Groups &amp; Activities during 2024</b>                 | page     |
| <b>3.1</b> | Urban Missioner's Report - Paul Warren                            | 8        |
| <b>3.2</b> | Reader's Report - Penny Molyneux                                  | 9        |
| <b>3.3</b> | Children's Groups: St James – Rosie Reynolds                      | 9        |
| <b>3.4</b> | St James 11+ Sunday Group - Becky Hilton                          | 9        |
| <b>3.5</b> | Ladies' Bible Study Group – Marian Greenwood                      | 10       |
| <b>3.6</b> | Wednesday Night Church – Katie Kelly                              | 10       |
| <b>3.7</b> | Bermondsey Brew - Marian Greenwood                                | 10       |
| <b>4.0</b> | <b>Additional Reports</b>   |          |
| <b>4.1</b> | Proceedings of General and Diocesan Synods - Adrian Greenwood     | 11       |
| <b>4.2</b> | Safeguarding Officer's Report - Patricia O'Connor                 | 13       |
| <b>4.3</b> | St James CofE Primary School - Penny Molyneux, Chair of Governors | 14       |
| <b>4.4</b> | Salmon Youth Centre - Jamie Anglesea, Director                    | 14       |
| <b>4.5</b> | Mission Giving - Some of the Charities supported during 2023:     | 15       |
| <b>5.0</b> | <b>APPENDICES</b>   |          |
| <b>5.1</b> | St Anne's Financial Statements                                    |          |
| <b>5.2</b> | St James Financial Statements                                     |          |

It was with enormous pleasure that I took up my post as vicar of the United Benefice on Ascension Day. Only a week later we said goodbye to Captain Paul Warren and his wife Mandy. They had generously stayed on to support the benefice during the extended interregnum and I join in the gratitude of both parishes for this service. In my second week we had the APCM, so it was quite a busy first month. Much of the year has been spent learning the ropes and meeting people both in and out of church. I have been blessed by the fellowship and encouragement of the Deanery Chapter and C4T (Christians for Transformation)

It has been good to get to know the Wednesday Night Church crew, and I have also enjoyed the occasional visit to the Women's bible study and Bermondsey Brew. Assemblies at St James primary are always lively and entertaining. I am so impressed by the zest and knowledge of the children. My first Christmas was an experience to remember; particularly the chaos of the Crib service with double the numbers we were expecting, and the beauty of the two candlelit carol services. It was wonderful that the community all came for a blessing even if they didn't receive communion, and some went for both!

During the first few months I met with the joint PCCs and interested church members to discern the future vision together. These were fruitful sessions leading to a presentation in January. That meeting was outside the timeframe of this report but given that the work was done in 2024 I will share the vision we arrived at- that the churches would be Rooted in Christ, Growing in Love and Going to share good news, in the power of the Holy Spirit. We have much to look forward to and to work out together in the strength and grace of Christ. The best is yet to come.

Katie Kelly- Vicar

## **Formal Reports**

### **2.1 Electoral Roll Reports for 2023**

#### **2.1.1 St Anne's**

There are 17 people on the Electoral Roll as of 26 April 2025. 9 are non-residents and 8 are residents.

Ruth Reid

#### **2.1.2 St James**

As this is the year that the electoral roll must be completely renewed, there is an inevitable reduction in numbers from last year. There were 122 names on the roll at the end of March 2025. There are now 87 names on the roll, 54 of whom are resident and 33 of whom are non-resident in the parish. There are several people who have attended over the years but have not attended regularly enough in recent months to qualify for the roll, but still consider themselves to be members of St James Church. If this is due to ill-health, then they qualify to have their names added and a couple of names have been added in this category. Several members of Wednesday Night Church, who do not attend Sunday services at St James, have been able to add their names to the roll, as Wednesday Night Church is now considered to be a Fresh Expression of St James church.

Marian Greenwood

### **2.2 PCC Proceedings**

### **2.2.1 Report of the St Anne, Bermondsey PCC meetings**

The PCC of St Anne, Bermondsey met six times in 2024, two joint meetings with St James PCC and four times as a separate PCC. We had three additional joint PCC meetings which focused on mission. Our Annual Meeting of Parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meeting was held in May 2024 with our new vicar for the United Benefice, Revd. Katie Kelly. The following items were discussed: the reimbursement of the Diocesan Loan; encouraging giving and approving a Legacy policy; choosing an inspecting architect for the Quinquennial; Paul and Mandy Warren's leaving service; the induction and institution service of Revd. Katie Kelly; inviting the charity Transforming Lives for Good to speak at the church; annual rent review; the approval of the St Anne accounts for 2023; increase in the Administrator's wages; a fire detection system; updating the St Anne's Vicar board; mutual expectations from the Vicar and PCC members; the election of officers and other roles; the clearing of the gutters; removal of the church hall curtains; safeguarding training; an open-air service in September with a community clean-up day; missional joint PCC meetings; the parish support fund pledge for 2025; the Quinquennial Report; new church hall blinds; the future building project; feedback for the September 8th Community Day; mission giving 2023 and 2024; the EICR inspection; the 2024 Christmas Fair; new Christmas cards and Christmas events; advertising for an Associate Vicar in 2025 and the resignation of the United Benefice Administrator.

Ruth Reid

PCC Secretary for St Anne, Bermondsey

### **2.2.2 Report of the St James, Bermondsey PCC meetings**

The PCC of St James, Bermondsey met six times in 2024, two joint meetings with St Anne PCC and four times as a separate PCC. We had three additional joint PCC meetings which focused on mission. Our Annual Meeting of Parishioners and Annual Parochial Church Meeting was held in May 2024 with our new vicar for the United Benefice, Revd. Katie Kelly. The following items were discussed: Christmas card delivery feedback; list of electoral roll for the parish; a grant for a defibrillator; St James's school foundation governors; church events dates; future service with the Salmon Youth Centre; the London Marathon planning group; making connections with the charity Transforming Lives for Good; welcome packs for new residents; encouraging giving and approving a Legacy policy; the approval and application of a faculty to add a handrail for the main doors; smoke detectors in the crypt; the application for the Cleaner, Greener, Safer grant; the St James' youth group and funding; Paul and Mandy Warren's leaving service; the induction and institution service of Revd. Katie Kelly; the St James accounts for 2023; the proposal for the crypt income to be allocated to the building fund; the increase of the Administrator's wages; the Quinquennial Inspection; the North Aisle gallery; safeguarding online training; the Flourish worker pilot scheme; school governors vacancies; Fire Risk Assessment; mutual expectations from the Vicar and PCC members; election of officers and other roles; food bank; outreach; future events including morning service; parish support fund pledge; clear up Saturdays and the clearing of the top galleries; mission giving; the Brown's fund; new laptops for the church and the office; new

locks for the entrance door; Bermondsey Street Festival and Bermondsey Carnival; newly designed Christmas cards; update from Revd. Katie since arriving; the Quinquennial Inspection Report; the revamping and extension of the current ramp; Alfred and Ada Salter Lounge; Christmas events and Christmas cards distribution; advertising for an Associate Vicar in 2025; the resignation of the United Benefice Administrator and rent increase in January 2025.

Ruth Reid

PCC Secretary for St James, Bermondsey

## **2.3 Treasurers' Reports**

### **2.3.1 St Anne's 2024**

St Anne's finances for 2024 did rather echo that of 2023 regarding income and expenditure, with a few highlights that made a noticeable difference. As ever, through the hard work of the team at St Anne's, the hall continues to generate the bulk of our income and we are blessed that new people and groups have joined over the course of 2024, with a rental increase of just under £4,000.00 on 2023.

We managed to increase our diocesan contribution by just over 11% by adding £1,500 for 2024 and we were happy to give our tithe as mission giving in equal amounts to Church Army, Church Mission Society and Tear Fund.

Debbie B continues to do a great job at reclaiming our gift-aided tax rebate and due to more people giving regularly and allowing us to claim it, this was increased by just under £1,000.

Our utility bills stayed constant in 2024 as I managed to get a better fixed deal on both our gas and electricity bills before they went crazy!

We put much needed new blinds in the church hall and Rev Katie and I are currently looking to secure a grant in 2025 to carry our repairs to the gutters on the north elevation and to deal with the leaking flat roof section above the hall lobby area.

As a church family we are very grateful to all the people who continue to regularly give to St Anne's and the long-term tenants who rent our spaces.

Graham Russell

Treasurer

### **2.3.2 St James 2024**

Please see appendix 5.2

Claire Mayne-Constantinou

Treasurer

## **2.4 Churchwardens' Fabric Reports**

### **2.4.1 St Anne's**

The church wardens are pleased to report that the fabric of the church continues to remain in a good state of repair and would like to thank everyone who has given their time to help support the upkeep and running of the church.

The building has remained in a stable state in the last year; praise be to God. Following the disappointing withdrawal from our redevelopment project by the developers we are now exploring options with a new Christian developer. The quinquennial inspection highlighted an extensive list of works and Graham Russell and Katie are applying for 'stitch in time' funding to prevent any further water ingress into walls. Our electrical safety certificate was obtained thanks to Graham's diligence and so the building is fundamentally safe and sound for meeting. The old curtains in the hall were replaced with attractive blinds which has improved the environment. This is an important asset to us and the community.

In September we organised a 'Love Thorburn Square' event and the community came to clear weeds, plant bulbs, and clear the area in front of the church. This was an opportunity to clear some guttering and start work on rotting decking, which was then completed by Graham. We are looking through the initial disappointment and trust in God's timing for His house. All the items listed on the inventory have been checked and we can assure the PCC that all items of value are where they should be and in good condition.

Suzanne Adofo and Yvonne Lubwama - Church Wardens 2024

### **2.4.2 St James**

It was great when Cath Squelch and I were nominated as church wardens in May 2024. We have worked together well. This is my final year after 25 years so it's time to step down and hopefully get other younger people involved.

**Galleries:** The galleries have been kept clean and haven't gathered more unwanted items.

**Information boards and church noticeboards:** The noticeboards have continued to be updated with new notices going on when necessary. The photo boards are constantly being updated. These noticeboards need to be kept up to date.

**Ramp:** The main door ramp has been replaced with a much better one with handles, although it is a two-person job to lift.

**The two copper lanterns** still remain to be assembled and fitted.

**Crypt hire:** Following our last inspection, we have taken on board the damp problems and it is now only used for storage. We have quite a few bays in use.

**Fire Detection:** Red Care fire systems have been working well, however in the crypt, once it gets damp, water runs into the circuit and has caused a few problems with call outs. RM suggested a plastic cover to go over the top of the circuit, so the water runs off. This will be sorted in the near future.

**Nursery (German Kindergarten):** The German Kindergarten is waiting for its new lease which has been ongoing with the solicitors; they are very keen to carry on renting the parish room.

**Maintenance Plan:** We had our Quinquennial report and have listed items which we can do within the building committee and the items that need further work and will include getting in outside agencies for specific repairs and restoration works and urgent work. From this report we will also be able to develop further our Maintenance Plan.



**Annual Inspections/Fire Detection:** The annual lightning conductor test continues to take place as well as the regular testing of fire detection and firefighting equipment and PAT testing all due in March 2025.

**Accessibility from the churchyard into the building:** The ramp at the southwest corner has received short-term repair to reduce its slipperiness. There has been no further progress on the development of a more permanent solution.

**Churchyard bollards:** The bollards are now in place on either side with the gates locked shut. It is a much easier replacement and is working well.

**Memorial Garden:** We have been in constant touch with the Friends of the Churchyard and Southwark Council. The person who had been working with us has been moved to another site. Some members of church have been clearing out the reeds and debris and trying to get it into some sort of respectable place of quiet.

Pat O'Connor – Churchwarden 2024

Cath Squelch – Churchwarden 2024

## **2.5 Deanery Synod proceedings**

The Deanery Synod of Bermondsey and Rotherhithe met three times in 2024. The first meeting was in March with special guest Will Cookson who spoke about the Southwark Vision 2024-2031 and being Christ centred and outward focused. We also discussed the following; Thy Kingdom Come season of prayer and the resources available from the Diocese; election of the Deanery Leadership Team; elections for Diocesan Synod 2024-2027 with two vacancies from House of Clergy and two vacancies from House of Laity; annual review of the new electoral roll in 2025; reports from General and Diocesan Synod; deanery training; the induction, institution and installation of Revd Katie Kelly (St Anne & St James) and news from the parishes.

The second meeting was held in June with special guest Carol Coslett who spoke about enabling lay ministries to flourish; the 2024 Deanery confirmation service with the newly appointed Bishop of Woolwich Alastair Cutting; annual pledges for the Parish Support Fund; administration support for parishes; the ordination service for Revd Ivan Ibuno (curate at St Philips) and Revd Peter Welby (curate at St Mary Magdalen); the Woolwich Area Conference in 2025 and the retirement of Paul Warren, Urban Missioner for St Anne & St James.

The last meeting was held in October with guest speaker Gary Jenkins who spoke on enabling lay ministries on estates to flourish and grow and members from the Magnify course gave input on the course. We discussed working towards a vision mission statement for the Deanery; having a presence at local events such as the Bermondsey Carnival and the Bermondsey Street Festival; a new initiative such as carol singing in local pubs at Christmas; the by-election for the casual vacancy in the House of Laity at Diocesan Synod; the appointment of two Deanery Lay Champions with a focus on affirmed ministry and news from the parishes.

Ruth Reid Deanery Lay Chair

### **3.0 Parish Groups & Activities during 2024**

#### **3.1 Urban Missioner's Report**

Because I was still serving in the United Benefice for the first few months that this annual report covers Katie has asked me to write a few words reflecting on that time.

To sum up in one word I would say 'change.'

Change is something that we all face from time to time. Some of us embrace it, some of us are unsettled by it. Whatever your particular standpoint is doesn't alter the fact that things are going to be different going forward.

Even though it was some time ago that Gary moved on and the process of appointing a new vicar was drawn out, St James and St Anne's have continued to be churches with a heart for the community and the fellowship.

I was particularly touched by the love and support I received at the start of the year when my mum died. Along with that, as I was preparing to move onto the next chapter of my life both fellowships were amazing in helping me to negotiate what was really another bereavement.

Coupled with that there was also lots to do in preparation for the arrival of Katie. Lots of people worked hard to make sure that happened in the best possible way.

I am very grateful to the wardens, deputy wardens, PCCs, all who served on rotas and anyone else who isn't covered by those titles for all that you did during the first few months of 2024. Your contribution has helped in the way the churches have adapted to the changes.

Love it or hate it change happens. But one thing that doesn't change is the God that we all serve.

He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end and everything in between.

As the plaque underneath the big picture of the Ascension at the front of St James reminds us. "Low, I am with you alway".

Hold firm to that rock no matter what your feelings are about changing times.

Captain Paul Warren

#### **3.2 Reader's Report**

Like any year, 2024 had its ups and downs. We began with the tragic and sudden loss of Veronica and David's daughter and Vida's sister Bryanna. Shock and sympathy in equal measure. At the same time Val Foster was in hospital and deteriorated rapidly, so another hole in the church family. Paul Warren lost his mother in Weymouth, and then in March we heard of Stan Catton's death. What a sad start to our year, even though they are all four now with their Lord and at peace. Thanks be to God for their lives.

Meanwhile church life continued with all our normal activities. My involvement as a Reader (with Permission to Officiate) was in Sunday services, Wednesday Night Church, School Assemblies and School Services in church, as well as the various committees associated with both church and school.

As May approached, excitement mounted as we planned and prepared for the arrival of our long-awaited new Vicar. Ascension Day finally dawned when we welcomed Katie to St James and St Anne's in a glorious evening service packed with people from our own churches, the local community, the deanery and many of her family and friends.

Just ten days later St Anne's hosted Paul and Mandy's farewell service as their time in Bermondsey came to an end and they prepared to go "home" to Portland, Dorset, for their retirement. We miss them both, and are hugely grateful, especially for the way Paul helped us through the interregnum.



Since then, we've had the joy of getting to know Katie and Julian and helping them get to know us and all that people at St James and St Anne's are involved with. I was absolutely delighted to hand over Chairmanship of the PCCs to Katie, and it's been great having some "Mission and Vision" discussions and regular prayer meetings as Katie helps us discern the way forward for our two churches.

On a personal note, I'd like to thank those of you who continue to support my selling of fair-trade chocolate "Real" Easter Eggs and Advent Calendars, using them to spread the real meaning of our Christian festivals. And I'm pleased to have been able to continue encouraging regular reading of the Bible through daily notes. All in all, it's been a full and busy year, and I feel privileged to have been part of the Ministry Team here in the United Benefice of St James and St Anne Bermondsey. There is an exciting future ahead, and I pray that with God's guidance, Jesus' example of great love, and the fire of the Holy Spirit, we will help build God's Kingdom here in this place.

Penny Molyneux

### **3.3 St James Children's Worship Report 2024**

Over the past year our Children's Worship group has flourished, providing a nurturing and faithful environment where our youngest congregation members can grow in their relationship with God, have fun and make friends. In group children have gathered for age-appropriate worship, Bible stories, singing, prayer, and hands-on games and craft.

Despite a sometimes transient congregation and some challenges with volunteer support, we have seen heartwarming spiritual growth in our children. Special highlights included their Advent performance of 'It Was On a Starry Night,' and our Candlemas service, where the children shared Christian customs from around the world with creativity and enthusiasm.

We are deeply grateful to the families, leaders, and children who make this ministry possible and look forward to another year of curiosity, laughter, and joy in Christ.

Rosie Reynolds

### **3.4 St James 11+ Group**

The 11+ group continues to bond and our relationships are growing. This has enabled honest and frank discussions in our Sunday morning sessions currently exploring the subject of prayer. The group has been involved with leading all age worship and is growing in confidence in doing so while also connecting with the wider members of the church. In October half term we had great fun bowling and had fifteen young people attend. We had a wonderful Ice-skating trip at Christmas with eighteen young people attending including some of our members who had moved away. Afterwards, we went back to the church for hot chocolate and games- another great bonding experience for them. This year we have successfully implemented the Friday night social once a month which has been a great success. Once again, the young people are beginning to make this their own offering to cook

and lead games. This would not have been able to happen without a great answer to prayer for volunteer helpers. We have been blessed by the commitment of Tolu and Daniel who regularly support and help with this. Tolu is increasingly leading the Sunday sessions and growing in confidence to do so. Overall, our attendance varies- we always have around the same amount of young people attending our Sunday morning sessions and Friday night socials but they are a different group each time! Having said that, we do have a committed core of around seven young people who I would consider regular attenders. We still have a varied engagement with the R1 event hosted at the Salmon Centre but none of the young people can give specific reasons why they don't attend. I continue to pray into this as I feel this

relationship could be so fruitful. A group of young people will be redecorating the youth room during the Easter break, and we will be organising various social events beyond our Friday night social over the next few months. We will be going away in the summer again with the Salmon Centre to the Satellites festival (6/8/25-10/8/25). I continue to be incredibly encouraged by the young people. They are so keen to know more of Christ, and it is both an honour and pleasure to work with them.

Becky Hilton

### **3.5 Women's Bible Study Group**

The joint St James and St Anne's Women's Bible Study Group continues to meet regularly in the St James South Aisle on Tuesday mornings, although we do have a break during holiday periods. There are currently 10 people, not all members of St James and St Anne's, who aim to come from time to time, although the size of the group actually meeting together is generally about six people. Some of us are feeling our age and getting rather creaky so we do frequently miss people due to hospital appointments.

We've recently been studying the Nicene Creed, as it has been the 1700th anniversary of it being written in 325AD, as an extension of the earlier Apostle's Creed. We all found it very useful to look closely at the statement of belief that we quite often make together in a morning service. The final part where we say "I believe in the Holy Spirit..." has led us on to several weeks looking at the place and work of the Holy Spirit throughout the Bible and in our everyday lives. We always start our meetings with coffee and chat and end with prayer for each other, our families and the needs of our local community and the wider world. We enjoy our time together and are very welcoming to any ladies who would like to join us.

Marian Greenwood

### **3.6 Wednesday Night Church**

Wednesday Night Church is a Fresh Expression of church based at St James which offers a fellowship meal, bible study, worship and prayer. Over the year we have studied Mark's gospel, using a video-based resource called Lumo, followed a prayer course and also looked at the scripture passage from the previous Sunday together. It has been a place to celebrate birthdays and other life events, pray for the sick and many other issues, and to sing songs of worship with gusto! All are welcome. We would love to grow the team and have more cooks so do consider whether this is something you could ever help with.

Katie Kelly

### **3.7 Bermondsey Brew**

Bermondsey Brew started in February 2017 so it's now into its eighth year and some of the very first "guests" still regularly attend. The group seems to have been a source of friendship for some people, and it's been good to see how people show concern for others when they are missing or in hospital. Numbers have been lower recently, and when it was so cold we met in the South Aisle instead of on the carpet area but it's good to have the main part of the building open and welcoming for visitors. Nearly every week, there will be

one or two people who come in, maybe tourists walking down the river from Tower Bridge or local people who say “I walk by on my way to work but the doors are always closed and I’ve never been inside before.”

Barbara Mann has decided to hang up her apron after being a regular helper since the very start. We thank her for her years of faithful service and keeping us all in order in the kitchen. Lizzie from the youth group came to help in the early part of the year, and we miss her now that she is away at Uni. Manisha also came to help for a number of months as she was needing to gain some volunteer experience but she is now working full time. So the team currently comprises Manuela, Adrian and myself, with Miriam and Joan usually coming from about 3pm. Paul often comes to set up tables and chairs and is very helpful looking out for Dial-a-Ride bringing and collecting our oldest member.

Many of the people who now attend Wednesday Night Church/Alpha first made their way into the building and church community through Bermondsey Brew. When I feel disheartened about lower numbers, lack of new people or difficulties between guests there is always something to give encouragement and it was great that three of the members attended the recent church prayer meeting. Please continue to pray for Bermondsey Brew. Thank you.

Marian Greenwood

## **4.0 Additional Reports**

### **4.1 Report of proceedings of Southwark Diocesan Synod and General Synod**

#### **4.1.1 Diocesan Synod**

1. 2024 was the year for elections to a new Synod; these take place every 3 years. I was elected to represent the Deanery Bermondsey & Rotherhithe Deanery, along with Yvonne Kigundu of St. Anne, Rev. Ivan Ibuno of St. Philip and Rev. Peter Welby of St. Mary Magdalen. Our term of office runs until 31 July 2027. In follow-on elections from Diocesan Synod, I was elected to the Diocesan Council of Trustees (DCT), again for a three - year term. DCT is the collective name for 3 bodies with identical memberships – the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) – the Trustee body; Bishop’s Council (BC) – the executive Committee of Synod, and the Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee (DMP&C) – a statutory body set up under the Mission & Pastoral Measure 2011. In November 2024, I stepped down as Chair of the House of Laity of Diocesan Synod after 18 years in the role. Following this, Bishop Christopher appointed me to the role of Lay Chaplain and Mentor to the Synod.
2. Highlights at Diocesan Synod in 2024 included the continued embedding of the new Southwark Vision 2024 – 2035, the delivery of which will be strengthened by a substantial award of funds from the national church over nine years, known as the Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP). This makes funding available for, among other things, Hub & Resource churches and work with children & young people, all with a view to help congregations grow in discipleship as followers of Jesus and in numbers and mission.
3. There were regular reviews of progress with Net Zero Carbon (NZC) and the Diocesan Anti - Racism Charter. Financially, 99.7% of the amount pledged by parishes was paid in 2024 and a budget of approx. £29m was approved for 2025, recognising, among other things, final divestment by the DBF from fossil fuel businesses by April 2025.

#### **4.1.2 General Synod**

1. General Synod proved a lot more challenging. The two meetings in February and July 2024 were dominated by two multi-faceted issues – Safeguarding and Prayers of Love & Faith. Although the headlines on Safeguarding remain bad, good progress is being made by the Synod in dealing with safeguarding policy and legislation. Building on the responses to numerous reports, including Makin, Jay, Wilkinson and Scolding and mindful of the Charity Commission’s intervention in January 2025 to the effect that Trustees (including PCC members) remain responsible for safeguarding in their organisations, a decision in principle was taken by Synod in February 2025 to establish a new independent oversight and scrutiny body into which the National Safeguarding Team (but not the Diocesan Teams) would be transferred. Also, in February 2025 the new Clergy Conduct Measure received its final approval – this will introduce better processes for dealing with clergy accused of varying levels of wrongdoing, including relating to abuse and safeguarding. And the Abuse Redress Measure establishing a new independent system for processing claims for compensation for church-based abuse should receive its final approval in July 2025. In addition, various Codes of Practice and Safeguarding Rules and Regulations were reviewed and updated.
2. Progress with the Prayers of Love & Faith, prayers of blessing for those in same sex relationships, was much slower. The challenge is that the House of Bishops has repeatedly stated that it has no intention of seeking to change the historic doctrine of marriage based on scripture, tradition and reason as set out in Canon B30 (and this change would require a two thirds majority in each of the 3 Houses of Synod) but it is seeking to move forward with actions which would be seen by many as being inconsistent with that doctrine– such as ‘bespoke’/standalone services of blessing and permitting clergy in same sex civil partnerships to marry in a Registry Office using civil law.
3. My own approach to this major issue is to view it through the theological conviction of the doctrine of Christian marriage (see above) and the sexual ethics which flow from that, which were seen in the lives of Mary & Joseph and which are based on the teaching of Jesus in Matthew ch. 19 – the whole of it – as well as the whole narrative of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.
4. As the Common Worship Service of Marriage states in the Preface – ‘marriage is a gift of God in creation through which husband and wife may know the grace of God’ – a gift which most experience and evidence demonstrate (although marriage is no panacea) brings good to the husband and wife, to their children and to society as a whole. With marriage rates (especially in families with less disposable income) and birth rates declining in our society and the percentage of fatherless households rising, the Church should be proclaiming the good news of Christian marriage more than ever, although, clearly, marriage is not for everyone.

5. The stage that Synod has now reached is that the House of Bishops has commissioned (belatedly in my view) further theological work in the hope that a credible and sustainable way forward can be presented to Synod in February 2026. Please pray and keep praying for 'grace & truth' for all involved and for compassionate orthodoxy to prevail.

6. Meanwhile, a substantial programme of legislative business continues including the National Church Governance Measure and a new Mission & Pastoral Measure.

7. I am happy to answer any questions on the above or any other aspect of the work of Diocesan & General Synod.

Adrian Greenwood

#### **4.2 Safeguarding Officer's Report**

Although I was elected Safeguarding Officer for both churches Yvonne Lubwama took up the post in 2024 and is now the Safeguarding Officer at St Anne.

We at St James' follow the policies provided by the Diocese and the new revised 'Safe Church' which is in the Vestry at St James. It is a very useful guide and available to all.

Safeguarding is a regular item on every PCC agenda.

In March 2019, the PCC agreed that the new arrangement for serious safeguarding incidents will be reported to the Charity Commission.

We are committed to the safeguarding, care, and nurture of everyone within our community. This continues to be the agreement.

The Church of England will:

- Promote a safer environment and culture
- Safely recruit and support all those with any responsibility related to children and vulnerable adults within the Church
- Respond promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation
- Care pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons
- Care pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons
- Respond to those who may pose a present risk to others
- These policy commitments are based on our five foundations: Gospel, Human rights and the law; Core principles; Good safeguarding practice and Learning from the past.

Everybody who works with or is involved with children or vulnerable adults should make sure that:

1. They have a DBS (for Church) This includes sides persons, Sunday group leaders/helpers, and anyone who is involved with vulnerable adults or children.
2. If you don't have one or need one, please speak to me before or after the Sunday service or send an email to the office on [stjamesandstannes@gmail.com](mailto:stjamesandstannes@gmail.com).

Patricia O'Connor- Parish Safeguarding Officer

### 4.3 St James CofE Primary School

St James' School continued to thrive and to "shine brightly" during 2024 under the highly effective and committed leadership of the Head and Senior Leadership Team. Falling rolls have been a concern in many parts of central London, but ours has remained fairly constant, with around 400 children, including those in the Nursery. There are still high levels of need, but the personalised support provided by our skilled and dedicated staff yield very good results. At the end of the summer term we were inspected by Ofsted (an ungraded inspection) which was very positive, particularly praising the support given to those with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, and the general attitudes and social intelligence of all pupils. A major change to the staff team was the retirement of Debbie Plows as School Business Manager after 39 years serving the school. A new SBM was appointed in good time for a thorough handover.

The governing body has experienced significant changes, with two new parent governors elected, Katie joining ex officio as Vicar of St James, Penny serving as Acting Chair of Governors after Gary's resignation, and several other new governors joining the team. Finally, we have just recruited a very experienced governor, Paul Raikes, appointed as a Diocesan Foundation Governor from 1 st January 2025, who will be elected to take over as Chair at our first Full Governors meeting in 2025.

The school continues to have strong links with the church, with the PCC nominating 6 of the 9 foundation governors, and the church team leading Collective Worship in school (both sites) weekly, as well as services for the whole school in church at least nine times each year.

Penny Molyneux, Acting Chair of Governors

### 4.5 Salmon Youth Centre

Salmon Youth Centre is one of the largest youth centres in the UK and is a model of youth work excellence.



Thanks to the support of our six full- time, five part-time and five sessional staff, our apprentices, trainees, and over 75 volunteers, we ran 803 sessions in 2024/25 and log over 43,000 contact hours with 1,254 young people.

Salmon provides an outstanding recreational facility where young people have fun, form healthy friendships and develop their interests and skills. Salmon is a welcoming, safe and encouraging environment where young people develop their self-worth, their communication skills and their interpersonal relationships. This transforms their prospects when they transition from primary to secondary education and from there to college or work.

Accessible to everyone aged 6-19 for a nominal contribution of just 50p on each visit, members enjoy a wide variety of activities, starting with a free hot meal, which is a vital help to many families struggling with the cost- of- living crisis. Healthy food is followed by healthy exercise. Salmon has facilities for badminton, basketball, boxing, climbing, dance, football, gymnastics, trampolining and volleyball. These take place in our four-court sports hall, our well-equipped exercise gym and on our 30-metre climbing wall.

In everything, we encourage young people to realise and develop their gifts and talents, to develop their sense of self-worth and self-respect and to develop their interpersonal skills. Our aim is to inspire belief in their own potential and agency. We aim to promote and improve their health and wellbeing; improve their prospects in their education and work and encourage them to engage positively with their community.

### **Our Vision**

We aim to inspire all young people to fulfil their potential and contribute to their community within a framework of Christian values.

### **Our Mission**

We seek to:

- improve young people's physical and mental health and wellbeing by encouraging healthy diets and active lifestyles;
- prepare young people for further education and work by improving their educational attainment, providing access to training and supporting their transition into further education or employment, and
- involve young people in community engagement by encouraging volunteering and boosting political and spiritual awareness, so increasing their ability to relate to others.

### **Our Method**

- We are open to all: we welcome all young people and their families.
- We provide open-access, targeted and specialised activities which are enjoyable, educational, challenging, and safe.
- We build relationships which inspire young people to develop their ambition to achieve a fulfilling life by discovering and developing their talents and increasing their enthusiasm for learning and training.

Jamie Anglesea (Director)

## **4.6 Mission giving: Who did we support in 2024?**

St James gave to the following charities:

- The Salmon Youth Centre
- Friends of Kagando
- City Hope Foodbank

St Anne gave to the following charities:

- Church Mission Society
- Safer Families
- Open Doors