



# **St Paul's Church Grove Park**



## **Annual Report 2023**

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**The Parish Church of St Paul, Grove Park,  
Chiswick,  
London W4 3SB**

**Annual Report and Financial Statements  
Of the Parochial Church Council  
For the year ended 31 December 2023**

**Charity Registration Number 1154 70**

**1 Aims and Purposes**

The Parochial Church Council of the St Paul's shares with the incumbent responsibility for promoting the mission of the church within the parish. It has responsibilities for the fabric and contents of the church building, parish finances and management of all church activities.

**2 Objectives and Activities**

The Church Council has been working to promote the mission of the parish with Sunday worship and activities, and a weekday service throughout the year. Due to the church's circumstances, awaiting the arrival of the new incumbent appointed in January 2023, the church has been closed during the week in 2023, except for specific activities and planned worship. This has affected independent access to the quiet space of the church.

### **3 Achievements and Performance**

There have been 2 weddings and 15 baptisms this year. Although our new incumbent, Reverend Caroline Halmshaw, was appointed in January she was not able to join us until 6 September as there was no suitable accommodation for her and her family. The PCC managed to find suitable celebrants for the weddings and baptisms that took place from January to August, calling on a wide range of local and retired clergy from the Dioceses of Kensington and Southwark, and some very supportive retired clergy from further afield.

Our Hounslow Refugee Welcome group, still run by a small group of parishioners, has continued to operate, using donations from parishioners to make a small weekly cash payment to refugee women and children in a hostel in Hounslow. The group has continued to support these women and children with advice and help on dealing with paperwork they receive and by organising trips out to build their confidence and experience of their new environment.

The PCC has taken bookings and facilitated concerts from a wide range of local orchestras and amateur musicians. In March the church was used by a visiting American high school choir for a workshop with the singing teacher Hilary Campbell; they produced work of the very highest quality and the PCC regretted that it had not booked a concert from the youngsters.

Other local music groups include the Hounslow Symphony Orchestra who have given two concerts in the church, the Kew

Sinfonia, and a newcomer to the church, the Richmond Light Orchestra. Kew Sinfonia have worked closely with the Hounslow Refugee Welcome group and donated the proceeds from their concert to the group to support the women and children of the hostel.

The church choir itself has given two concerts in the church this year. At Easter they joined with the choir of our neighbouring church, St Michael's Elmwood Road, to sing Stainer's Crucifixion. On 21 December the choir, joined again by singers from St Michael's Elmwood Road and St Nicholas Chiswick, and supported by some professional singers and a brass quintet, gave a very successful Christmas concert. One visitor from Newcastle characterised it as "the best church Christmas concert" she had ever been to.

With our new incumbent in place our church congregation continues to grow, both in the regular Sunday service and on special occasions. By the end of the year our attendance on Sunday averaged between 45 and 50, bringing with it a much needed improvement in regular giving. This is a considerable development on our average attendance of 35 at most services at the beginning of the year. Our Christmas services were very well attended, with 195 people, of whom 75 were children, at the Christmas Crib service on Christmas Eve and 71 at Midnight Mass. A new service, a Longest Night service, offered a quiet reflective service for those for whom the hubbub and excitement of other Christmas services may be painful or uncomfortable, and was much appreciated by those who

attended. We hope that this service will grow in importance over the next few years.

We have continued to donate to charities, and this year gave our Christmas donation to the charity Embrace the Middle East. We have given to this charity before but in view of the current war felt it was particularly important to support them in their work with the needy and vulnerable.

We have continued to develop our relationship with the local school in the parish, Strand on the Green Schools, and the Reception and Nursery classes have made Easter and Christmas visits to the church. Since Rev'd Caroline Halmshaw joined us in September she has visited the school for a talk and follow up activities in the Infant school.

### **Church Groups**

The Stay and Play group continues to operate weekly during school term time, and is run by Shelagh Allsop, who has current enhanced DBS clearance. There is a risk assessment, revised in September 2023, in place for this group.

The Friday morning Coffee Club continues to run successfully, led by the churchwarden Sara Hodson. Weekly sessions are run by a volunteer from the congregation, most of whom have a DBS clearance. It is followed at 12 midday by a Morning Prayer service led by either our Lay Reader, Simon Surtees, or by Sheila White, our Sacristan. There is a risk assessment in place for this group as well.

Our online Poetry Group continues to operate very successfully and still offers interest and companionship to many parishioners. They have not given a performance this year but plan one for 2024.

### **Electoral Roll**

The Electoral Roll was updated in April 2023. Currently there are 178 people on the roll. 19 individuals were removed and 12 were added at the April count.

We are reporting a total of 178 individuals on the Electoral Roll, representing 104 families.

103 people live within the parish (58%)

75 people live outside the parish (42%)

Gender split- 60% Female 40% Male

### **Safeguarding**

Our Safeguarding Officer continues to ensure that members of the PCC undertake the required training and obtain DBS clearance. Eleven members of the twelve members of the PCC have completed the Basic Safeguarding training. The churchwardens have also undertaken Domestic Violence Awareness training and applied for enhanced Safeguarding training. (See appendices.)

## **4 The Church Building Maintenance**

There have been no major repair projects to the fabric of the church this year, although the roof of the organ loft has begun to leak and should be repaired soon. However, the church has had its electrical circuits and systems inspected and updated

where necessary and awaits the issue of a certificate confirming that it now conforms to current norms. The insurers were informed of this work and will be sent a copy of the certificate when it arrives. This work revealed that the oven in the Isis Room kitchen no longer functions and needs to be replaced. (This had passed unnoticed due to the lack of activity during and after the covid pandemic.)

The halogen bulbs in the church's high-level lighting, noted in last year's report as needing replacement, have not been changed. This is largely because the project will be very expensive due to the difficulties of access. The lamps are only accessible safely by a cherry-picker type platform.

There has been another considerable cutback of the vegetation surrounding the church. This was part of the refurbishment of the Vicarage by the Diocese and its preparation for our new incumbent. The overgrown bushes on the north side of the church have been very severely cut back or removed and this has dried out and opened up the north-east corner of the church, which is very beneficial to the stonework and the gutters.

The churchwardens have continued to organise minor repairs to the church. Some floorboards in the Isis Room have been repaired, although this will be an ongoing project with its new use by the Stay and Play group. Plumbers have repaired both the basins and the WCs in the church lavatories. An engineer has dealt with a blocked drain from these in the garden and the churchwardens have followed his advice and ensured that poorer quality toilet paper is used.



The church garden continues to be an ongoing project. A successful meeting with Hounslow Council and local councillors in May confirmed that the Council would be happy to support the development of a community garden, shared by locals and the church, with a grant. However, the project has not advanced much due to the pressure on the responsible churchwarden's time with the arrival of a new incumbent and the re-opening of the church.

### **Inventory and Terrier**

The inventory should be updated annually, but after a major revision in 2022, it has not been revised in 2023. This will be completed in 2024. The Inventory and Terrier are stored in St Paul's Dropbox files.

## **5 Finance and Stewardship**

### **Banking and Card Readers**

The church's new Community Plus bank account, opened at the end of 2023, has continued to ease routine payments of bills and invoices and to allow the PCC to access financial information more accurately.

The church installed a new wall-mounted card reader by the door out of the church in December. This proved very quick and efficient both for donations to the church and for taking money for tickets and refreshments at our concerts. With our hand-held card reader we are moving towards reducing the amount of cash in the church and towards a more modern way of calculating gift aid in 2024.

## **Income**

Expenditure exceeded income by £20,425 (Expenditure exceeded income in 2022 by £49,957) and year-end total net assets, as shown in the Balance Sheet, were £694,699 (£810,124 in 2022). The difference between the Balance Sheet figures this year and the previous year is largely due to the valuation put on St Paul's Hall, Pyrmont Road as at December 31 2023, which was £95,000 less than as at the last day of 2022. The 2023 Income of £102,714 was higher than the £93,050 income of 2022. Both Plate Collections and Planned Giving were up by around £2,500 in 2023 on the previous year, with a consequent rise in Gift Aid refund. Excluding what was raised by the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2022, fund-raising income was increased in 2023 by approx. £1,600. Rental income from lettings of the Church and Isis Rooms was £14,733 in 2023, an increase of £5,767 on the 2022 figure.

## **Expenditure**

Total expenditure in 2023, though £20,425 more than income in 2023, was £123,129 which was actually less than the 2022 figure of £143,344 by £20,205. Expenditure was noticeably lower than last year on building and garden costs. The total contributions to the Common Fund decreased in 2023 to £62,000, as opposed to £66,000 in 2022. Utility charges in 2023 at £9,319, were decreased from the 2022 figure by £130. There were professional fees of £6,570 in 2023 relating to both the valuation of the Pyrmont Road building at the start of 2023 and the completion of the lease with Toddlers World later in the year. As mentioned in last year's report, general costs have again increased across the board.

## **Stewardship**

Jackie Rayer has continued as our Stewardship Secretary, details of the figures are given in the Stewardship Appendix. There has been some change in the parishioners giving via planned giving this year as the change of bank account at the end of 2022 meant that many people reassessed their payments. However, these payments and the Gift Aid returned from HMRC have continued to provide vital income for the church.

## **Reserves Policy**

It is PCC policy to maintain a minimum balance on unrestricted funds which equates to at least six months' running costs. This figure remained at the level recommended in 2020 of £12,500. It is held to smooth out fluctuations in cash flow, and to meet emergencies. Our current unrestricted fund healthily exceeds this figure.

## **6 Structure, Governance and Management**

The Parochial Church Council of St Paul's Church, Grove Park, has been working to promote the mission of the church in our area. The year has seen a major change in the arrival of a new incumbent, the Reverend Caroline Halmshaw, in September. After more than half a year, from January 2023 to August 2023, organising the services and pastoral care of the church during the interregnum mentioned in 2022's report, the churchwardens were able to hand this over to Caroline Halmshaw and take up their more usual role of supporting the parish priest in her work. Our LLM, or licensed lay minister, Simon Surtees, has continued to take a midday service of prayer on Fridays and to take Morning Prayer on Sundays if Rev'd Caroline is absent. The

Sacristan, Sheila White, has continued to run a Meditation Service on Monday evenings but this has moved back to the church and Rev'd Caroline joins if she is able.

### **Administrative Information**

St Paul's Church is part of the Diocese of London, within the Deanery of Hounslow. The current correspondence address is that of the Vicar: Rev'd Caroline Halmshaw, 64 Grove Park Road, Chiswick, London W4 3SB.

Charity Registration Number      1154708

### **Parochial Church Council members have been:**

*Incumbent*                                      The Rev'd Caroline Halmshaw  
(Institution 24 July, in Parish 6 Sept 23)

*Churchwardens*                                Cassandra Barker  
Sara Hodson

*Elected Representatives*                    Shelagh Allsop  
Carolyn Ashford-Russell  
Claire Carter  
Catherine Jessop  
Timothy Makower  
Catherine Morgan  
Simon Surtees  
Robert-John van Exter (from April 2023)  
Anusha Rajiyah (from April 2023)

*Co-opted Secretary*                            Cecilia Thwaites

*Safeguarding Officer*                        Shelagh Allsop

*Stewardship Secretary*                     Jackie Rayer (volunteer for position)

*Electoral Roll Officer*                        Liz Abbot (volunteer for position)

PCC members are invited to join or volunteer at the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

The PCC operates through the Standing Committee and several groups, and forms working groups to plan specific events. The Standing Committee transacts the business of the church between Council meetings and oversees the finances and fabric. It includes the Vicar, the Churchwardens, the Treasurer and the Secretary.

The role of Treasurer of St Paul's is currently a paid position occupied by Sally-Ann Feldman, Brian Feldman & Associates, 18 Sycamore Lodge, 1 Gypsy Lane, London SW15 5RH

The Pastoral Group is led by Sue Hearn, a parishioner, and operates largely by WhatsApp as a group called *St Paul's Helpers*. The group works on supporting the isolated with friendship and supporting those in need with clothes and baby equipment. It offers considerable support to Hounslow Refugee Welcome group, mentioned above.

The Communications Group is concerned with promoting the life of St Paul's through the website, a weekly email newsletter and poster information in the church. Cecilia Thwaites is responsible for the newsletter and Catherine Jessop for the website.

### **CHURCHWARDENS' REPORT 2023**

There have been no major projects in the church this year. There have not been the funds to support any roof works,

although these continue to be necessary at various locations in the church, the Organ Loft, above a window at the west end of the church and in the Isis Room.

The biggest project has been the completion of the electrical safety survey of the church's equipment and circuits and any repairs and updates that have emerged from the survey. The final part of the project was the repairs and improvements to the outside lighting of the church. New brighter and more efficient LED lights have replaced the old bulkhead lights in a swan necked pattern to match the light over the west door. These were fitted in time for the round of concerts that took place in the church during December, ensuring visitors could get in safely. The two motion sensitive lights over the two locked doors to the church were also updated to LED. The work was completed by Andrew Szulga of Brighthouse Electrics, a local company.

We have continued with minor repairs to door handles, floorboards and light bulbs carried out largely by a local handyman called David Rust. He also fitted a new fixed wall-mounted card reader at the back of the church for donations and ticket payments. It is called a CollectIn and should ultimately help us streamline our parish giving and gift aid collection.

In December our church chandler showed us how to repair the candlesticks on the high altar which had been broken by a visiting infant. There was no charge for this which was much appreciated.

In May the churchwardens met with local councillors and interest groups to talk about the possibility of a grant from London Borough of Hounslow to help turn the garden into a community garden. Both the Councillors and the representatives from Hounslow were very supportive of this idea, but it has been very difficult to find the time to complete the application.

The greatest cost to the church continues to be the price of utilities, specifically gas for the heating of the church. Gas cost over £1000 in December as the church was heated for a series of performances and events. The PCC will be considering income versus expenditure for these events at its next meeting.

*Cassandra Barker and Sara Hodson, January 2024*

### **Deanery Synod Report 2023**

Deanery Synod Elected Representatives: Simon Surtees and Carolyn Ashford-Russell

The Deanery Synod met three times during the year. Amongst the issues discussed were working with Asylum Seekers where we were joined by Shelagh Allsop from, who had a lot to contribute to a good discussion. It was nice to hear the work being done appreciated.

The October meeting was the first of the new Triennia. Simon and Carolyn were re-elected as Parish Representatives. The Triennia began with a Eucharist led by Bishop Emma and Area Dean, Martine Osborne. Simon was also re-elected as Lay Chair.

The Deanery Synod meetings continue to be valuable opportunities for fellowship with representatives from all the churches in the Hounslow Deanery and a way of generating ideas and inspiration for work within our local communities.

*Simon Surtees, January 2024*

### **SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2023**

Over the past year we have made considerable efforts to catch up and comply with developing diocesan safeguarding guidance and protocols. This is a work in progress with which we are persevering; entailing DBS checks and several training sessions for each PCC member on various safeguarding topics.

We held a discussion group after the Safeguarding Sunday Service in November. It was well attended by congregants and feedback was enthusiastic. We will add an interactive session to our next Safeguarding Sunday arrangements as well.

We are aiming to ensure that Safeguarding has a visible and high profile presence within our community, and that everyone is clear about how to respond to concerns.

Several safeguarding issues have arisen over the past year and were satisfactorily resolved.

*Shelagh Allsop, Safeguarding Officer, January 2024*

### **Stewardship Report 2023**

The total amount given as gift aided donations from individuals for the year 2023 was £34,521.72. This does not include donations via the internet for one off events.



25 people gave donations by standing orders (£22,952.00, that is 66.5% of the total giving). The rest was by yellow envelopes.

In addition to personal gifts we have claimed on anonymous gifts made in the church building. This is the GASDS scheme. We claimed £1,860.17 from plate collections and donations in the church in 2023.

Using online claiming I have been able to make claims quarterly. We received refunds of tax from HMRC during 2023 for these claims:

	Gift Aid	GASDS
01.10.2022-31.12.2022	£2023.00	£188.40
01.01.2023-05.04.2023	£2125.41	£186.50
06.04.2023-30.06.2023	£1594.56	£140.70
01.07.2023-30.09.2023	£1990.75	£ 95.31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£7733.72</b>	<b>£610.91</b>

*Jackie Rayer, Stewardship Secretary, January 2024*

## **REPORTS FROM WORKING/ACTIVITY GROUPS**

### **Music Report 2023**

Music at St. Pauls continues to play an important part in sustaining our liturgy and sustaining our energy as a congregation. We are fortunate that our Director of Music, Tom Torley, continues with us and has played a crucial part in the variety of musical offerings we have had this year.

We are lucky to have a regular group of singers who sing during Communion and this forms the basis of our regular contributions to Sunday services. However, during the Interregnum, we were joined by singers from our neighbouring churches for special events and services. In March the Choir of St. Michaels Sutton Court joined us for a Passion Sunday performance of Stainer's "Crucifixion". They also joined us for the Induction Service in July and again for the All Souls Service in October.

A welcome addition to our music year was The Advent Carol Service at the beginning of December. This was very well attended and enhanced by the support of choirs from St. Michael's Sutton Court and St. Nicholas'.

At Christmas we had a Carol Concert, devised by Tom, including a Brass Quintet. Again, this was well attended and added significantly to the Christmas spirit in the Community.

Finally, it worth noting that the Church remains a popular for local Amateur Orchestras. This year has seen concerts by Kew Sinfonia, Hounslow Symphony Orchestra, the Richmond Light Orchestra and the West London Chorus. The West London Chorus also use the church for rehearsals each term.

We are busy planning for 2024 and look forward to another varied year of music making.

*Simon Surtees and Tom Torley, February 2024*

## **SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE**

Sunday morning coffee goes from strength to strength. More of the congregation stay for coffee ensuring the church offers a welcoming and hospitable vibe. This has been commented on by visitors who have come for the couple of christenings we have had over the past few months. More parishioners are helping with the coffee which is fantastic. I am very grateful for everyone who has volunteered this year. Samantha Van Exter has set up a WhatsApp church coffee group so we can communicate with each other if someone is unable to do their slot at the last moment.

*Cathy Morgan January 2024*

## **ST PAUL'S REFUGEE FUND – REPORT 2023**

Many thanks to those members of the congregation who covenant money regularly to support a small group of women living in an asylum hostel in Hounslow. Several of the women have been stranded in the asylum system, some for over ten years. They feel isolated and forgotten. Thankfully, the Home Office seems to be making progress at last and things are moving. Eight-year-old Hamrawit, who has spent her whole life so far living with her mother in one room in the hostel, has a reasonable chance of celebrating her ninth birthday in a home of her own.

The families we support continue to be very grateful for the money they get each week. It is a symbol of hope and good will from their host society, as well as financial assistance. The WiFi we pay for helps everyone, but especially the school children who need it for their homework. Life on a very limited income

can be very depressing. They love the occasions when they can join with other families from Refugees Welcome Hounslow for social events, such as the coach trip to the seaside in the summer and the lunch at Brentford Football Club with entertainment by Magical Sam in the autumn. They are also grateful for support in dealing with authorities, whether it be over getting a bank account or fighting their landlord over damp rooms.

The situation is changing and we are in a unique position to observe where new needs are arising. Trust is in short supply in the asylum system. People are afraid to complain in case it affects the outcome of their claim. They are also afraid even to share good news of progress on their case for fear of a setback or of arousing jealousy. Refugee status brings a new wave of problems too: getting a bank account, a National Insurance number, work and somewhere to live.

Our project is very small, but the continuity and close relationships we have built up enable us to see how the refugee situation is changing and inform other projects. We benefit from the work of REAP, we continue to work closely with the Catholic charity Caritas, and we have been able to inform and support the launch of the Hounslow Public Health Report on the Mental Health of Asylum Seekers Living in Hotels.

Hounslow has more hotel dwellers than any borough in Britain except Hillingdon. There are moves afoot for churches to cooperate with the borough to set up a night shelter for single people who find themselves street homeless when they receive refugee status.

*Stephanie White – January 2023*

## **ST PAUL'S POETRY GROUP - REPORT 2023**

The group met weekly, online, throughout the year. In any week there were usually 11-14 attendees from a core group of 16 (anyone is welcome, whether they wish to read a piece or just join for company and a chat!).

The week's theme was followed as 'religiously' as available poetry or personal preference determined. 'Poetry' is also defined very loosely, with content often including prose, song lyrics and video pieces. Some content is deeply thought provoking and moving, and some is lighthearted - often extremely funny. This provides lots of variety and fun and facilitates a good deal of anecdote sharing between the pieces. We set a time limit of 3-4 mins for each person's contribution, including introductions etc with the aim of keeping each session to an hour, though often we run over slightly.

We produce an anthology following each session containing all the pieces that were selected. This is circulated to all regular group members plus others who have requested inclusion -24 people in total. The publication usually generates further online banter and chat through the week. We also produced a moving anthology of all the wonderful poetry pieces that Nan Owen had chosen – 45 pages worth!

We didn't hold a church Poetry Evening in 2023, but plan one in April 24. Thanks to everyone who has contributed in any way.

*Sue Hearn, January 2024*

## **St Paul's Stay and Play Report 2023**

The Stay and Play group meets on Friday mornings in the Isis Room. Adults and babies and toddlers drop in for coffee and biscuits. The children play and the adults relax and chat with a cup of coffee. The Isis Room is safe and contained so supervision of the children is undemanding. The church garden is a beautiful and safe play space and is well used when the weather is clement.

We have an average of 10 family groups attending, and often join the coffee group meeting in the church to share our songs and rhymes with them.

Before Christmas, Musical Mark came and entertained the children and visitors to the coffee morning. It was such a joy to see the enchantment on the faces of all ages.

*Shelagh Allsop, January 2024*

## **FRIDAY MORNING COFFEE CLUB**

The St. Paul's Friday morning Coffee Club has continued to flourish over the last 12 months. We meet on a Friday in the Church from 10.45 am to 12 noon and this is followed by a short Morning Prayer led by Simon Surtees, our LLM.

Whilst numbers vary, we have a core of regular visitors, mostly worshippers from St. Paul's but with a small number of individuals from the local community, joining for coffee, cake and a good chat. St. Paul's congregation members volunteer as host each week, supported by the Church Wardens. These volunteers – Hillie McLaren, Jane Theakston, Catherine Jessop, Margaret Harvey, Carolyn Ashford-Russell, Claire Carter, Anusha

Rajiyah, and Rick Leaback, are vital to the success of this outreach activity and to them, many thanks.

One of our regulars, Pat from Wilmington Avenue, writes, “I look forward to the Coffee Club on Fridays. There is always a warm welcome and varied conversations, as well as the cup of coffee and a delicious cake.”

Towards the end of each session, the Coffee Club is ‘entertained’ by the Stay and Play children to relive such classics as The Wheels on the Bus, Old MacDonald and Incey Wincey Spider – a joyous experience – so why not come and join us on a Friday morning in future?

*Sara Hodson, January 2024*

## **APPENDICES**

Churchwardens’ Report

Deanery Synod Report

Safeguarding Report

Stewardship Report

Music Report

Sunday Morning Coffee Report

St Paul’s Refugee Fund Report

St Paul’s Poetry Group Report

St Paul’s Stay and Play Group Report

Friday Morning Coffee Group Report