



Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Monday 28th April 2025



Reports for the year ending
December 31st, 2024

Agenda

Presentation and Adoption of the 2024 Financial Report and Accounts *(separate document)*

Parish Reports:

The Vicar – Rev. Caroline Halmshaw

The Parochial Church Council – Rev. Caroline Halmshaw

Churchwarden – Charlotte Wellburn

Acting Treasurer – Sally-Ann Feldman

Stewardship – Patricia Mann

Electoral Roll – Cecilia Thwaites

Safeguarding – Shelagh Allsop

Deanery Synod – Simon Surtees

Reports from working/activity groups

- Friday Coffee Club – Sara Surtees
- Fundraising and Events – Cecilia Thwaites
- Garden Club – Cassandra Barker
- Meditation Group – Sheila White
- Music – Simon Surtees
- Poetry Group – Sue Hearn
- Refugees Support – Stephanie White
- Stay and Play – Shelagh Allsop
- Sunday Coffee – Cathy Morgan
- Website – Catherine Jessop
- Youth Group – Bea Vickers

Report from the Vicar, Reverend Caroline Halmshaw

I have now been vicar of St Paul's for 18 months. I am very grateful for the large team of people who play a part in the flourishing life of this church; thank-you for all your support as I continue to settle into life in the parish. Thank-you to my ministry colleagues, Simon Surtees our Lay Minister, and Ann O'Neil who joined us in November 2024 as an Ordinand. Thank-you to the PCC and newly set up Standing Committee. And particular thanks to Charlotte Wellburn, who a year ago became Churchwarden. This is a role she currently carries out on her own (traditionally we have had two churchwardens) and she is a joy to work with. The role of treasurer has also been vacant during the last year, and I'm very grateful that Julian Tanner is now standing to be Church Treasurer in 2025.

Over the last 12 months we have held a series of consultations and agreed our priorities for the next three years. These are set out in our Mission Action Plan, and are:

1. Children and young people

We want local children and young people to receive from us the nurture and care they need to grow in faith and love

2. Spiritual growth

We want to provide opportunities to explore faith and grow in confidence as Christian disciples

3. Caring for the community

We want to ensure that those who are vulnerable among us, both close at hand and in the wider world, are noticed and supported

4. For the Grove Park Rooms, and the Church, to be the go-to place for community life and events

5. To be financially self-supporting – see our fundraising programme

We made a start back in March 2024 when we set up a new Youth Group. Thank-you to Bea Vickers and the other leaders who volunteer for this group, including Lucas Tanner and Sophia Cook. We hope Youth Group will flourish over the years ahead.

It's been good to hold joint services with St Nicholas' and St Michael's; we are keen to do more of this. This past year, we have held a joint Advent Carol Service and a Walk of Witness on Good Friday. I hope we will continue to expand our collaboration with other churches north of the A4, and other denominations.

We have successfully modernised our administration and regular giving systems, introducing a shared drive and the Parish Giving Scheme. Both of these reduce our administrative burden and ensure that we are efficient in how we support regular giving. I'm also grateful that we have a Parish Administrator, Annabel Hughes-Parkinson, who is employed for six hours a week.

The members of our congregation have generously given their time, talents and enthusiasm during 2024, and they have also demonstrated this generosity in their financial giving. Overall our income was significantly up on last year; the main reason was that planned giving increased by 32%. We estimate that in 2025 we are likely to see an increase of 55% over 2023. This is very good news and in the light of this we have increased our giving to the Common Fund. However, we are still not self-sufficient and require supplementary funds to cover our costs. Over the coming years we will need to raise an additional £30,000 per year in order not to require supplementing.

As always, our building is both our delight and our challenge. I am very grateful that we received a grant from the Fidelity Foundation, initiated by a local businessman. This has enabled us to refurbish the parish hall, formerly known as the Isis Rooms, now known as the Grove Park Rooms.

The highlight of my week is when we gather on Sunday mornings for worship. Every Sunday, except on rare occasions, we celebrate the Eucharist, alongside our preaching, which is also a central part of our worship. We are open to learning from the breadth of the Anglican Communion and the wealth of knowledge and experience across the theological spectrum of the Church. I'm delighted that our numbers have been increasing over the last 18 months. Our average regular attendance is now around 50 people on a Sunday.

My ambition is that through the skills and gifts of our people and through our buildings, we will give back as much as we can, within and beyond the church, and the wider surrounding community. May all who come to know us at St Paul's see something of the love of God made known in Jesus Christ.

Parochial Church Council

The Parochial Church Council of St Paul's shares with the incumbent the 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 the strategic decisions of the church. The PCC has been working to promote the mission of the parish, with Sunday worship and activities and following a discussion, agreed to keep the current pattern of weekly services, alongside introducing new special services throughout the year. In March 2024, we undertook a Mission Action Planning process, supported by the Rev. Jonathan Rust, Area Director of Mission Development, as outlined above.

PCC members in 2024:

<i>Incumbent</i>	Rev. Caroline Halmshaw
<i>Churchwarden</i>	Charlotte Wellburn
<i>Elected Representatives</i>	Shelagh Allsop
	Marian Armitage (from April 2024)
	Carolyn Ashford-Russell
	Claire Carter
	Sara Hodson

	Timothy Makower
	Anusha Rajiyah (from April 2023)
	Simon Surtees (Lay Minister)
	Jane Theakston (from April 2024)
	Robert-John van Exter (from April 2023)
	Bea Vickers (from April 2024)
<i>Co-opted Secretary</i>	Cecilia Thwaites
<i>Safeguarding Officer</i>	Shelagh Allsop
<i>Stewardship Secretary</i>	Patricia Mann (volunteer for position)
<i>Electoral Roll Officer</i>	Cecilia Thwaites (volunteer for position)

Churchwarden's Report

Charlotte Wellburn

At last year's APCM, Sara Surtees resigned as churchwarden having finished covering our interregnum and settling in our new Vicar, Caroline Halmshaw. Cassandra Barker also resigned as churchwarden in April having served for five years. I'd like to thank them both as they have continued to be extremely helpful answering my many queries and assisting in myriad other ways this year.

The churchwarden is responsible for maintaining the fabric of the buildings and the church grounds, and it has been a busy year:

Church: MDRA, the architects who have advised and conducted Quinquennial Inspections on the structural aspects of the church, have retired after many years. A new architect will be approved by the PCC in 2025. Daily opening and closing of the church began in March 2024, operated by a team of 12 volunteers. A risk assessment was completed and is reviewed regularly and training given to all volunteers.

A Visitation by our area Dean, Martine Osborne, was made in June. The outcome was GOOD on the whole. A couple of safeguarding and finance points were cause for concern. These have been rectified and were approved by the PCC in November.

A drone survey (S4G Drone Services) was made of the church roof in August. It highlighted some areas in need of repair over the Isis Rooms, the organ chamber roof and the west end of the church. There has been water penetration in these areas. John Levis (roofer) is quoting for repair work to the church roof as identified. A quote to upgrade the lighting in the church has been approved by the PCC. The existing lightbulbs will be replaced with LEDs. The work will commence early 2025. (Efficient Maintenance Ltd). Grease stains appeared on the stone benches in the South Porch in October. Advice on removal of stains has been sought from MRDA architects.

Grove Park Rooms (formerly known as the Isis Rooms): Major refurbishment of the Lower Grove Park Room, kitchen and toilets happened in November/December - see separate report. Roof repairs (JL Roofing Southall) were made in December to stop water penetration into the Upper Grove Park Room. This included rebedding the ridge tiles, replacing soakers and fitting lead cover flashings, replacing missing or slipped tiles and sealing joints at roof lights and soil stacks. A quotation has been requested from the building contractor (Phil Robinson) to make good and decorate where there has been water penetration into the room.

Garden: There has been a significant improvement in the grounds surrounding the church. Two working parties from the church and the community have kept both gardens and verges looking tidy and well cared for throughout the year. This continues to be enjoyed by families and children in the local community. The Garden Group met with the London Borough of Hounslow to discuss the possibility of receiving a grant to make St Paul's gardens into a Community Garden. Hounslow is keen and the application for a healthy grant is nearing completion. Two new and very striking church noticeboards were erected in December - one facing the Grove park shops and the other facing Hartington Court. Each provides current information and has space to promote forthcoming events.

Treasurer's Report

Sally-Ann Feldman, Acting Treasurer

Income

Total income in 2024 was £145,127, 41% higher than in 2023 (£102,714). Service Collections and Planned Giving combined were 23% higher in 2024, totalling £40,078, compared with £32,573 in 2023. This in turn led to a corresponding increase in Gift Aid recovered from HMRC.

Income exceeded expenditure by £10,459 in 2024. This was a welcome reverse of 2023, when expenditure exceeded income by £20,425.

Year-end total net assets, as shown in the Balance Sheet, were £680,158 (£694,699 in 2023). The decrease in net assets is partly due to the valuation of St Paul's Hall, Pyrmont Road as at December 31 2024, which was £25,000 less than as at the end of 2023.

Fundraising income was £15,472 in 2024, an increase of approximately £10,500 on the previous year.

Rental income from lettings of the church and Grove Park Rooms (formerly Isis Rooms) was £11,845 in 2024, a decrease of £2,888 on the 2023 figure.

A generous donation of £20,000 was received in 2024, which was restricted to refurbishing the Lower Grove Park Room.

Expenditure

Total expenditure in 2024 was £134,668 (£123,139 in 2023). When the expenditure relating to the £20,000 donation mentioned above is taken into account, expenditure was lower than last year by £8,451.

Contributions to the Common Fund decreased in 2024 to £60,000, from £62,000 in 2023. Utilities charges in 2024 were £5,306, compared with £9,319 in 2023. However, this decrease was unfortunately due to a faulty meter and there will be an extra charge in 2025 to make up for this. The parish employed an Administrative Assistant from January 2024, at a total cost for the year of £4,762. Cleaning and gardening costs were lower, as were printing and computer costs, but costs of generating fundraising income were higher as there was considerably more fundraising activity in 2024 than in 2023.

Stewardship Report

Patricia Mann

During the year the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) was introduced to church members as an alternative to bank standing orders. The PGS is a charity run by the Church of England Central Services and funded by the Archbishop's Council. It enables individuals to set up a direct debit payable to St Paul's Church with Gift Aid added and claimed by the PGS. The scheme has an optional annual reminder to donors to update their donations in line with inflation. It also enables one-off donations by mobile phone from a QR code. The first donations via this scheme were received in June and this form of planned giving has been growing ever since. A stewardship campaign was held in October focusing on increasing our income to meet costs.

Total donations to the General Fund were £43,570, excluding unidentifiable bank transfers without a declaration and anonymous donations outside the scope of the small donations scheme (GASDS). This exceeds the donations for 2023 by £7,855, an increase of 22%. There were 14 people who gave regular donations by bank standing order and 20 via PGS direct debit by the end of the year. These donations, classified as planned giving, totalled £27,135, exceeding those for 2023 by £6,675, an increase of 32%.

Planned giving for 2025 is estimated at £31,820 assuming current levels of giving, an increase of 55% over 2023.

Donations for 2024 comprised:

Bank SO	21,190
PGS DD	5,945
Total planned giving	27,135

PGS one-off	235
CollecTin card reader	3,150

Loose plate	2,211
Gift Aid envelopes	8,899
Bank transfers	1,940
Total unplanned giving	16,435

Total unrestricted giving	43,570
Total restricted giving	3,435
Total donations	47,005.

Gift Aid claimed by St Paul's	9,708 (includes 3,048 for 2023 donations)
GASDS claimed by St Paul's	1,176 (includes 545 for 2023 donations)
Gift Aid claimed by PGS	1,447
Total Gift Aid + GASDS	12,331

Gift Aid claimed by St Paul's in 2025 for 2024 donations	2,456
GASDS claimed by St Paul's in 2025 for 2024 donations	461
Total claimed by St Paul's in 2025 for 2024 donations	2,918

Note: The Gift Aid and GASDS claimed in 2024 included donations via the CollecTin card reader.

Electoral Roll

Cecilia Thwaites, Electoral Roll Officer

In 2024 there were 178 people on our Electoral Roll, representing 104 households. Our thanks go to Liz Abbott who stepped down as our Electoral Roll Officer in 2024 after many years. We are grateful to Cecilia Thwaites who has taken on this important role, particularly as 2025 is the year when we renew our Electoral Roll. This happens every six years and is a significant task as all current members of the congregation are required to fill out forms in order to rejoin the roll. We started this process in February and completed it at the beginning of April. Thanks to everyone who helped gather the new information and to Angela Collins for administrative support with this task.

These are the numbers for the 2025 Electoral Roll:

Total number of individuals is 121, representing 78 families.

70 live in the parish (58%)

51 live outside of the Parish (42%)

The gender split is F 76, M 45

Inevitably the number of people on the roll has fallen in 2025 compared to 2024, as the previous roll included some people who had moved away or no longer attend St Paul's. We expect numbers to increase again as we grow our congregation.

Safeguarding report

Shelagh Allsop, Safeguarding Officer

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 training sessions for each PCC member on various safeguarding topics. We wish 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 potential safeguarding issues have arisen over the past year and were appropriately considered and satisfactorily resolved.

Deanery Synod Report

Simon Surtees

Current Representatives: Simon Surtees, Carolyn Ashford Russell, 1 Vacancy

Area Dean: Martine Osborne

Chair of Laity: Simon Surtees

During the 2024 we had three Deanery Synod Meetings. We were addressed by Archdeacon Richard Franks on the importance of Volunteering to build activity in parishes across the Hounslow Dioceses. We were able to share different ways of recruiting and encouraging volunteers across our parishes, especially in areas like Youth Work and Parochial Church Councils. Much was made of the active work of parishes across areas like supporting Refugees and within Hounslow Friends of Faith.

The Deanery is actively considering an initiative involving parishes across the Deanery to run GROW courses. These are courses which promote and encourage parishes in extending their church membership and work in the local community.

Reports from Working/Activity Groups

Friday Coffee Club

Sara Surtees

The St. Paul's Coffee Club ran throughout the year on Friday mornings between 10.45am and 12 noon. It is held in the church where a host will provide a delicious cake and serve coffee and the occasional tea. Towards the end of our session, Shelagh brings in the Stay and Play children and their carers and the children entertain us with their action songs, which is always joyous.

We have a small number of regular guests, primarily members of the congregation and a couple of non-church members, with occasional visitors who are walking past or who have a reason to visit the church. During the cold winter months we had fewer guests, but as the weather improved over the summer and autumn, we welcomed more people.

We would like to encourage more people to join our rota of hosts and also to ask our congregation to consider coming from time to time and bringing a friend or a neighbour to enjoy the refreshments and the disparate conversations. I should like to thank all the hosts - Cassandra, Carolyn, Catherine J, Hillie, Jane, Margaret and Rick - you have done a wonderful job throughout 2024 and our coffee club guests enjoy their welcome.

Fundraising and Community Events

Cecilia Thwaites

2024 saw a mixture of our old favourites and some new ideas, which we hope will become regular dates in the diary in the months and years to come.

- **Quiz night** – Whether or not we stretched our brains to rise to the intellectual challenges posed by our quiz masters, it was a fun social occasion. As it always is! A great way to open the year.
- **Bingo Afternoon** – A new venture for us. A great success, and we look forward to repeating it.
- **Poetry Evening** – Our Poetry Group shared their creative ideas and love of poetry with the rest of us.
- **Wine Tasting Evening** – A new venture - fun, successful and fruitful... another event to repeat in 2025.
- **Plant Sales and Bring & Buy Produce Sales** – We held a number of these throughout the year. They are an enjoyable way to bring our congregation together, and practical fundraising events that provide delicious produce and wonderful plants.

- **Car Boot Sales** – Another new initiative that raised significant funds. We attended the Chiswick Car Boot Sale in October and November.
- **Concerts and musical events** – we held a number of concerts and cultural events including the sell-out *Evening with Mike Reed* in November. We closed 2024 with a marvellous Christmas Concert devised by our organist Tom Torley.

Fundraising revenue leapt from around £5,000 in 2023 to an impressive £15,422 in 2024. Our thanks, as ever, to all those who worked so hard to make these enjoyable and successful events happen.

Garden Club

Cassandra Barker

2024 was a busy year for the improvement of the East End Garden, the former Playgroup garden. Particular thanks go to Isabelle Marks, who has worked very hard on improving the state of the beds and the grass. Isabelle has tidied up the shrubs and bushes and put in some new ones near the gate and dustbins. She has liaised with other gardeners and the local Horticultural Society to obtain for more plants and bulbs for the garden and she has also resown grass on some of the balder patches of the lawn and tended it carefully, hugely improving the appearance of the garden.

In addition to all this practical work a team is preparing an application for a grant to make the garden more obviously a community garden. The London Borough of Hounslow has approved this in principle and the team has worked hard to obtain the necessary plans and quotes for submission early in 2025. We plan to install new play equipment for the under-5s, and a new access gate and path to improve circulation for visitors, as well as improving the planting and creating a more scented sensory environment.

Our thanks go to Isabelle Marks, Gwen Wilde, Cassandra Barker and Shelagh Allsop.

Meditation Group

Sheila White

The group meets on Monday evenings at 7pm. There is usually around 10 of us and during the cold weather we have met in either the Grove Park Rooms, the Vicarage, or Sheila and Bill's home. In warmer times of year we meet in the Church. Sue Shorter kindly provides us with her gentle music, after which we have a short reading to help us to centre in our time of silence and stillness. After our meditation of about half an hour, we have a short convivial social time for those who are able to stay with us before we go home with, we hope, a little extra spiritual preparation for the week. Not all of us are members of our church but all attend St Paul's either regularly or occasionally. Anyone who wants to join is welcome, just mention it to the Vicar or to Sheila White.

Music

Simon Surtees

Music at St. Paul's has continued under the leadership of Tom Torley our Organist and Director of Music. We have been lucky to retain a permanent group of singers who join together as a small choir during Eucharist services on Sundays. Their singing adds to the spiritual atmosphere while Communion is shared and forms an important part of the character of the church. In addition, the choir takes part in special services like All Souls, for example.

A feature of the year has been the opportunity to join with other churches for services like Choral Evensong. We inaugurated a Carol Service for Advent in December 2023 at St Paul's and were joined by St Michael's Sutton Court, and St. Nicholas'. The service was hosted by St. Nicholas' in 2024 and was another successful collaboration. We hope to continue the tradition at St. Michael's in December 2025.

We are always on the look-out for anyone who would like to sing with us on Sunday mornings. Just come up and have a word with Tom Torley or Simon Surtees.

Poetry Group

Sue Hearn

The Poetry Group continued to meet, weekly, through the year. A theme is chosen for each session and attendees select a piece to share. Meetings are online which make it easy to attend and we have a loyal following who value the stimulus, friendship and community. New members, or occasional visitors to the group, are most welcome.

Refugee Support

Stephanie White

During COVID, a group of us set up a fund to support women and children living in an asylum hostel in Hounslow. We remain closely connected to both past and present residents. They continue to receive access to Wi-Fi, a regular payment of £5 per week, and various emergency payments, such as grants for school uniforms, travel to RWH events and to hospital. Three women received resettlement grants this year, to help them access private rented accommodation when they were given refugee status.

Emotional support continues to be important because the Home Office policy has been inscrutable. Hostel numbers have dropped, single women have been moved away and women of school-aged children have been warned to expect rehousing at short notice. We try to support women with their own particular problems, such as the lady from the Lebanon who has lost four close family members in the bombing; the mother with a two-year old

undergoing treatment for cancer; and the mother of a toddler who had to leave her four older children behind when she came to the UK.

Over the last 12 months we have encouraged the women to take part in social events and visits such as to Kew Gardens and a summer trip to the seaside. As well as providing money to attend these events, we have supported the women by helping them plan their independent travel. We also see the outings as a chance to further our own friendship with the women and children. We hope that in the coming year they will feel welcome at events at St Paul's and we look forward to spending time together.

Stay and Play Group

Shelagh Allsop

Stay and Play meets on Friday mornings in the Lower Grove Park Room. We have an average of 10 family groups attending – a large and happy group of parents, grandparents, carers, babies and toddlers. The children play and the adults relax and chat with a cup of coffee. The 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 often join the coffee group meeting in the church to share our songs and rhymes with them.

Two of the adults - one a mother of three and a registered childminder with enhanced DBS clearance and the other a registered childminder also with enhanced DBS clearance - have started to open the room on Tuesday afternoons as well and this is being well used with an average of six or seven family groups attending. Families pay £1 per session and both groups are self-supporting.

Sunday Coffee

Cathy Morgan

Coffee after the service on a Sunday morning goes from strength to strength and is an integral part of our worship. It is wonderful to see so many congregants chatting together; there is a real buzz and sense of community. Thank you to everyone who serves the coffee - without my trusted band of helpers it would not be so successful! We have several new members on the list which is great. Additionally the coffee gatherings make a regular contribution to the church's finances and they are a great way to welcome visitors, whether people have come for a special occasion such as a Christening or are trying out St Paul's as a potential regular church for them. However, I think it is also important to acknowledge the importance of Sunday coffee to our regular parishioners, some of whom may be experiencing difficulties in their home lives with illness, bereavement or other issues. The world situation is in flux at the moment and I believe at such times having a drink with good friends for support is essential. Thank-you to everyone who helps make it such a happy and enriching time.

Website

Catherine Jessop

The St Paul's church website can be found at www.stpaulsgrove.park.com. I feel the purpose of the website is to reflect the values, mission and ethos of our church as well as providing easy-to-find, accurate and up to date information about our services; and I believe the website achieves these aims.

It is hosted by IONOS who are one of the largest hosting platforms for small businesses, charities and churches; they have 6.2 million customers worldwide. The annual cost is £162 (inc VAT) or £13.50 a month which breaks down as:

- A monthly charge of £4.80 for the Website Builder software
- An annual charge (which they call a Basic Fee) of £86.40 which is paid in February
- An annual charge of £18 for the Domain Name, which is paid in May

This cost is extremely competitive. In comparison, Hubb Church starts at £19 a month, and the more comparable Starter Plan is £35 a month. Wix is £25 a month, Squarespace is £17 a month. These prices are for the Basic Fee; we would pay more once we added in domain names, VAT etc. (It is possible to have a free website but not if we want to have our own domain name, look professional and stay free of adverts!)

The IONOS design template is simple, but user-friendly and the feedback from users is positive. The main advantages (in addition to the cost) are:

- We can add more pages if we want to
- We can include as many photos and as much text as we like
- It is simple for me to update as it uses a WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) drag-and-drop interface which many other popular platforms such as Word Press do not.

I update the website to add or change information on a regular basis, at least once a week. Rev. Caroline and Parish Administrator Annabel Hughes-Parkinson give me any new information to be added, often following their own comms meeting. I pay IONOS, and then St Paul's reimburses me. I'm happy with this system and it means I can access the IONOS help desk for support if necessary, which I wouldn't be able to if I weren't the account holder.

The Welcome/Home page always includes a seasonal message from Caroline as well as all the events and services for the following two months. I add information and photographs to the other pages as required. The pages on the website are:

WELCOME
SERVICES
2025 CALENDAR
SAFEGUARDING
CONTACT US

VENUE HIRE
WEDDINGS
BAPTISM
FUNERALS
GIVING
PEOPLE
CHILDREN
YOUTH GROUP
COFFEE CLUB
POETRY GROUP
EVENTS GALLERY
150 FESTIVAL
CHARITIES
HISTORY
MISSION AND DATA PROTECTION INFO

The church website gets between 1,200 and 1,500 visitors a month. Unsurprisingly, the numbers go up before occasions like Christmas, or an event like a concert or quiz night. The most visited page by quite some margin is the WELCOME home page and most people only visit this page. This tells me that 90% of visitors can get all the information they require from this page, which is good. The next most popular pages are CONTACT US and VENUE HIRE and then the EVENTS GALLERY.

Our website contains a link via a DONATE button to the CofE's Parish Giving website. This means that people can donate to St Paul's online in just a couple of clicks. There are also links within the website to other organisations and charities, as well as videos on YouTube of past events. The VENUE HIRE page includes an electronic enquiry form, which is submitted to the administrator@stpaulsgrovepark.com email address, managed by Annabel. We could include a link to a church Google Calendar or other administrative platforms such as Dropbox if required.

I am very happy to add photos to the website on request; additional written information should be approved by Rev'd Caroline first. I can also quickly correct mistakes – but only if people tell me about them! The best way to send me photos is on WhatsApp. Videos can be included if they are uploaded to YouTube or another sharing platform first. This year I intend to improve the WEDDINGS page, adding more photos and information, in order to make St Paul's an even more attractive option for couples. As and when the St Paul's Mission statement has been revised, this page will be updated, as may other pages such as CHILDREN, if our activities in these areas increase.

Youth Group

Bea Vickers

St Paul's Youth Group was started in September 2012, to bridge the gap between Children's Church and the Sunday morning worship, which was primarily aimed at adults. The remit of the group is to encourage young people to think honestly about the teachings of Jesus and to participate in worship and the life of the church. All teenagers aged between 12-18 are welcome, whether they are committed Christians or whether they are thoughtful, curious atheists who are searching for moral answers to life's big questions.

We meet between 4.30-6pm on a Sunday during term time and every group has roughly the same format:

- A time of informal chat, snacks and games including indoor games, craft activities, baking or outdoor sports in warm weather;
- A Bible reading or an excerpt from the Netflix series *The Chosen*, which narrates the life of Jesus in a very accessible and vivid way, followed by a debate on a relevant, ideally controversial topic;
- A short time of prayer.

In terms of safeguarding, there are always two adults on the premises during Youth Group, and we have all completed our mandatory Safeguarding training and hold role-specific CRB clearance. Any concerns about any safeguarding issues with a young person would be discussed with Shelagh Allsop, Designated Safeguarding Officer.

After 10 years of meeting more or less every month, the St Paul's Youth Group stopped meeting in autumn 2022 as most of the longstanding members left Chiswick to go to university.

Spring and Summer Terms 2024

With Caroline's enthusiasm, St Paul's Youth Group was re-launched by Caroline and Bea in March 2024. As in previous years, we met on the last Sunday of the month in March, April, May, June and July 2024. These meetings were kindly hosted by Caroline in the vicarage and attracted quite a large number of teenagers aged between 14-16; between 6-13 young people each month. We benefitted from the use of the vicarage garden and had a range of outdoor sports including table tennis, badminton, football and rounder's. Many of the attendees were friends of Caroline's son and were in Year 11 (GCSE Year) at Christ's school in Richmond or other local state or independent schools. In August 2024 Caroline recruited two more youth leaders: Sophia Cook and Lucas Tanner, who have brought a wealth of new ideas and energy to the group.

Autumn Term 2024

The four leaders put together a detailed plan from September to December, following the same format as before. Following the enthusiasm and success of the previous term and by popular demand we decided to meet fortnightly. The theme for the term was *Friendship* and the topics we planned included:

- What are the signs of a good friend and what sort of friend am I?
- Who were Jesus' friends?
- What does it mean to "love your enemies?" (this linked with Remembrance Sunday)
- Friendship with Jesus, guilt and forgiveness
- Living relationship with Jesus.

Unfortunately, the attendance at Youth Group during the term was much lower than before, usually fewer than five people and sometimes none at all. Most of the 16-year-olds had moved schools and some had left the area, so the age range also tended to be younger, around 10-14 years old.

Spring Term 2025 and the future

All four leaders remain committed to providing a Youth Group at St Paul's and the theme for this term is *Miracles and Reality*. We would be extremely happy to meet new young people wishing to join, and also to meet any parents, older teenagers or people who would like to contribute or have ideas of how we can make more people aware of the group. Ideas to increase our numbers and/or interest include meeting young people's church groups from other denominations or indeed to have an exchange with young people from one of the other Great Faiths. It is a very enriching experience to be part of young people's journey in ethical maturity and faith. Any people interested in being future leaders or members should contact Bea or Caroline via the church office.