

St Laurence Catford Annual Report 2023-2024

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Vicar's Report, 2023–4

Like people, different churches have different characters and different callings. It's difficult to define what makes the character of St Laurence's so special – perhaps it's the unique atmosphere of the building, perhaps it's the diversity of the community who worship in it. There are two characteristics that I think we're known for currently. One is something we've been doing for a long time, the other relatively new.

Ever since our present church was built in 1968 (and probably well before that), we have had a ministry of welcome. Through the power of the Spirit, we have always prized our mission to offer an openness to all who live or work locally, whether they come to church to worship, to pray, or just to light a candle when they're passing by; or whether they come to use our community facilities, which are run for the benefit of local people. In this open welcome, we seek to build up, in our part of London, the earthly city we inhabit, as a foretaste of the heavenly city that is the goal of the Christian faith. In almost the last chapter of the Bible, St John the Divine sees the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven as a bride. That City of God is the inspiration and the ultimate goal of all we do here, as we seek to play our part in building up the earthly city that is its reflection.

One assumes that the City of God is probably zero-carbon, and unpolluted

by nitrous oxide. If they drive cars in heavenly city, I imagine they are battery powered. The second of our major goals here at St Laurence's has been the drive towards becoming a zero-carbon building and church. We still have a very long way to go, but our Air Source Heat Pumps are certainly helping us along the way; and we are currently planning to install solar panels on the Centre roof, which, aided by large batteries, will help to power the heat pumps as well as provide electricity for our lighting, cooking, hot water, IT equipment, and everything else.

We are getting quite a bit of recognition for our work in this area. St Laurence's is now well-known across the Diocese and beyond for our air source heat pumps (we are only the second church to have installed them). When the Mayor of London was looking for a place from which to hold a launch event for the expansion of the ULEZ zone beyond the South Circular Road on August 29th, out of all the possible venues in London he chose St Laurence's. Regrettably, we were not able to capitalise on this event as we would have liked, as the unexpectedly controversial nature of the expansion, even though it had been mandated by a Conservative government when Boris Johnson was Mayor of London, meant that the event had to be kept secret until afterwards, and we were not permitted to invite members of the congregation and community as we had hoped. The Press and TV coverage was rather muted: we appeared for about a minute on ITV news and ten seconds on BBC, unrecognisably outside the flats. Even so, it was very good that St Laurence's was chosen for this event, and most affirming to get recognition from the Mayor of London.



Sadiq Khan (left)) Mayor of London inspects Air Source Heat Pumps

Inevitably, any work on the fabric of the building involves acquiring many sets of surveys, permissions and weeks of design work before even beginning fund-raising, and proceeds at a snail's pace; it's exhausting, meticulous work, occupying many hours of my time and that of the Centre team. But we aim to demonstrate that it is possible for a church and community centre like St Laurence's not only to foster environmental awareness among local people who might not necessarily be committed to it, but to do so as a Christian community, as a direct consequence of our Christian faith. We believe that God gives humanity stewardship of the creation, not ownership of it, and like good stewards we must try to leave the

earth more flourishing when we leave than we found it when we arrived. And hopefully, by the time I'm writing this report next year, we will have two gleaming arrays of solar panels generating kilowatts of energy even on the dullest day.

But most important than the building is what does on inside it. Liturgically, we have enjoyed our usual rich fare over the year. For most of the year, Elspeth Willey, our interim Director of Music during Jocelyn Freeman's absence on maternity leave, took charge of the choir and gave us much lovely music, as well as giving lots of encouragement to young and old alike. Thanks to her direction, Holy Week saw musical offerings from Mairéad Sheerin's 'Cats Chorus' and the Amalie Trio (Mezzo, Viola and Piano). Corpus Christi was celebrated with a meditation in words and music, in which a solo soprano saxophone led a procession round the church, its plangent tones blending beautifully with the concrete architecture; the service finished with Benediction, with the congregation kneeling around the altar, which many found very moving (many thanks to Ian Shaw for curating this striking and original liturgy). Our pewter monstrance, hand crafted by Victoria Rance in 2019, beautifully encapsulates the spirituality of our extraordinary building. It's also in use every week; most Wednesdays, we have exposition before mass.

On July 2nd our family mass was accompanied not by the organ but the harp played by Anne Denholm, a former royal harpist. Many people enjoyed the change of timbre this gave to the liturgy. At the same eucharist, Fr Kayode was licensed to the parish by Alastair Cutting, Archdeacon of Lewisham – it was good finally to have Fr Kayode officially on board, although he had been with us since October. And on August 6th, we celebrated a spectacular Sunday morning mass to celebrate the people and islands of the Caribbean especially of Jamaica, whose national day it was – and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the arrival of the Windrush. (Which, apparently, is also going to be the new name of our local Overground line, once the network is all renamed). This was followed by a grand Caribbean style lunch. The whole day was extremely well attended, and all thanks to Fr Andrew and his team who organised it all.

October 1st, Nigeria Day, happened to be a Sunday, and so we had planned a great celebration of Nigeria, both at mass and at a meal afterwards, around our Nigerian bishop, Bishop Karowei. Very sadly, Bishop Karowei died in King's College hospital on September 8th. Although he had been ill for a while, this came as a shock to all of us, and he will be much missed. It also meant that we had to find another Nigerian bishop to celebrate Nigeria Day. Fortunately, Bishop Precious Omuku, special advisor to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had

previously officiated at a confirmation service here during Covid, graciously agreed to step in, and we were delighted to welcome him and his wife. They were both very happy to stay on for the most enjoyable lunch afterwards. Our thanks to Fr Kayode, who was the mastermind behind the whole event.

October 8th saw our Harvest Festival, another well-attended family mass that included many members of our newly acquired Scout group (formerly at Holy Cross). Attendance at mass was as high as usual for Harvest Festival, with several families of the Scouts also attending. The same evening, our choir were invited to sing evensong at St Paul's, Herne Hill as part of the Herne Hill festival, which provided a taste of a more traditional service. The choir sang beautifully. The Scouts were also with us for Remembrance Sunday, a liturgy with a very different feel to Harvest, and so it was good that the young people were able to participate in a more serious style of liturgy.

The Advent Carol service was particularly good this year; Elspeth had taught the choir some interesting and engaging music, and as usual, we were blessed with the presence of Fr Antony from Holy Cross church and several of his parishioners. One of the pieces sung, 'O nata lux' by Jamie Hall, had been made available as a fundraiser for Macmillan Cancer Support, and several people donated. For the Christmas Carol service, we were delighted to welcome back

Jocelyn Freeman, at the end of her maternity leave, as well as our usual guests, 'Cats Chorus', who sang Mendelssohn's 'Lift thine eyes to the mountains'. Additionally, we were also pleased to welcome for the firsttime members of Lewisham choral society who sang Rachmaninov's 'Bogoróditse Dyévo', and the 'Rushey Green Superstars', who sang a setting by Ian Shaw of an old Gascon carol, 'Wind through the Olive Trees'. This group of children are members of an after-school singing club that Elspeth had pioneered at our neighbouring Rushey Green Primary School in conjunction with their new music teacher, Louise Ravayeh. It was very good to be able to welcome a dozen of these young people and their parents to St Laurence's, and we hope it will be the beginning of a good period of cooperation between church and school.

Christmas Day itself was on a Monday, which posed logistical problems that Kofi Hagan, our sacristan, successfully overcame. The New Year's eve Watchnight Service was well attended, with many of those who came belonging to other churches and parishes. And on Candlemass, Fr Andrew conducted a most successful family mass, accompanied by Jocelyn on the piano, which began with a candlelight procession from the church hall.

Lent came very early this year, with Ash Wednesday on St Valentine's Day, February 14th, and as usual, we gave up the organ for Lent, using an unaccompanied mass setting by Ian Shaw for a second year, which has proved popular, and relatively easy to sing. For our Lenten series of preachers this year, we invited a series of speakers from different charities, to encourage us to give generously in the spirit of Lent, and also to tell us about the work of their particular charity. We were rewarded with an excellent series of sermons; and in the church hall, over coffee, the various speakers talked interestingly at greater length. On Lent 1, Bandi Mbubi, director of the Manna Society, talked to us about their work with the homeless in the London Bridge area, and the many difficulties homeless people face in London, especially in finding accommodation when they are ready for it, something that is becoming almost impossible. Lent 2 brought us Joseph Vambe of Christian Aid, who turned out to live at Elephant & Castle and is also a local councillor for Southwark. Lent 3 saw Brendan Metcalfe telling us about the work of Friends of the Holy Land in bringing aid to the Christian people who live in Palestine, Gaza and the West Bank of Israel. In the light of the current conflict, it was fascinating to hear of the reality of the situation on the ground, which is just as terrible as the media make out. Finally, on Lent 5 Grace Blyth talked to us about the work of the Children's Society during her sermon, while in the Church Hall afterwards, Hannah Ryan-Leah, the Communications Manager at Action for Conservation, told us about the work of this charity which works with secondary school children to try to

motivate young people to care for their natural environment. After each service, a special collection was held for the work of each charity, raising on average £150 a Sunday. We raised much more for charity than we had since Covid, making grants to Sense, St Christopher's Hospice, Lewisham Churches' Care, Melqosh International, Friends of the Holy Land and Smile Train, collecting for the Children's Society through collection boxes, and donating coats to 'Wrap up London'. At St Laurence's, a beautiful new pyx was donated in memory of Mercy Nwajiobi by her family.

Finally, Mothering Sunday saw a well-attended family mass with a good crowd of present and previous St Laurence people who all went home carrying bunches of daffodils, as well as another appearance by the Rushey Green Superstars, who sang beautifully. Their performance of the Sanctus of Schubert's *Deutchemesse*, with the St Laurence Choir humming in the background, was unforgettable.

Other visiting preachers included Canon Andrew Nunn, the soon-to-retire Dean of Southwark cathedral, who has been a huge support to the parish over many years; Deborah Colvin, of St James Piccadilly, who presented us with our A Rocha Silver Eco church award; a former curate, Fr Paul Newman, who preached a memorable sermon; and Elaine Dando, who, like Fr Paul, used to attend St Laurence's in the 1970s.

Fr Kayode continued to organise Community Hymn Singing evenings, as an alternative form of liturgy, based on a format very popular in Nigeria. Numbers have varied greatly, but we will persevere with the idea, and I am sure that eventually it will catch on. And we moved our healing masses from Tuesday evenings to Wednesday mornings, where they seem to attract better numbers, and are perhaps more accessible to more people. We continued to hold monthly Bible studies after the Sunday mass, looking at the readings for the following Sunday. We prepared a number of young people for First Communion, with another class continuing at present, along with two sets of people being prepared for confirmation; the first set, consisting of students, are largely learning on-line! Other happy events included the wedding of Kofi Hagan and Mojisola Ope, a great event that took place on September 2nd, and John and Beverley Lashley who celebrated their wedding anniversary in church.

Our church was the location of a number of wonderful concerts organised mainly by Songeasel, a charity devoted to raising the profile of song in south-east London, the brainchild of Jocelyn Freeman, our director of music. They included all five of the Benjamin Britten 'Canticles', one of which featured a harpist.

Our interfaith events were rather muted, thanks to the October 11th attack on Israel by Hamas, and Israel's equally bloody reprisals. However, in October Shakeel Begg, the Imam, Bryan Weisz, the Rabbi of Catford Synagogue, and I managed to agree a joint form of words on behalf of the local interfaith forum: 'The Lewisham Interfaith Forum celebrates the mutual respect and religious tolerance enjoyed by Lewisham's diverse religious communities, built up over many years. We recognise with immense sadness the suffering experienced by innocent people in the Holy Land & Gaza, and we pray for God's peace. We affirm the respect for the sanctity of life and rules of war offered by the three Abrahamic faiths, and we utterly condemn all civilian deaths that have occurred and continue to occur. We call upon God to bring reconciliation to his warring servants, and to inspire his people to find a just solution to the cycle of suffering that has beset the Holy Land for decades without end.' It was good that both Jewish and Muslim leaders felt able to agree a statement at a time when local interfaith work has been put under huge strain by events in the Holy Land. In the rather easier time before the war, the usual local interfaith walk took place on Trinity Sunday, starting this time at the Allerford Road memorial gardens, commemorating Lewisham residents (of all faiths) who died in the First World War and subsequently.

Almost as important as what we do in church is what we do in the church hall. We've been fortunate enough to have enjoyed several parish lunches over the year with different flavours.

On the Sunday of the annual meeting, we all shared a lunch especially cooked for us by Cool Breeze. On August 6th, we enjoyed a Caribbean meal, in honour of our Caribbean/Windrush Sunday. On October 1st, we enjoyed a Nigerian meal, in honour of Nigeria Day. And on October 15th, to raise funds for Christian Aid, we had a meal with a more American theme: Burgers and Hot Dogs, cooked for us by the son-inlaw of Ray Williams, a former churchwarden, which all sold out. In addition, our Coronation tea party on May 13th was very well attended, with the hall suitably decorated; while a sold-out dinner and dance on December 2nd made the most money of any social event at St Laurence's for many years.



Raising a glass for The King!

We have restarted providing coffee for the congregation after mass on a Wednesday morning, and a good number of sponsors for Sunday morning coffee continue to enable us to serve refreshments free of charge on Sunday mornings, while also celebrating parishioners' birthdays or other happy events. We are all most grateful to the various catering teams who enabled us to share these lovely meals together, which are at the heart of enabling the diverse communities of those for whom St Laurence is home to enjoy each other's company as well as each other's food.

Other fund-raising events included our Advent Fair on December 10th. Fr Andrew hosted a coffee morning in aid of the Sickle Cell research. On October 7th, a Community Fair raised £860 while also providing a platform for many other local community groups to raise money or awareness of their work locally. It was a good reminder that we are here as much for the general community of Catford as for those who come to church here. While God may be explicitly present in the celebration of the eucharist in church, he is no less present implicitly wherever a group of people work together for the common good, and we are proud to have the facilities to host the many communities of Catford. The one is as much part of our mission as the other. During the coronation weekend, the new King had requested that everyone give up an hour to undertake voluntary work; in response, Richard Swann, our parish manager, opened up the Centre on May 8th, and the Big Helpout welcomed a large number of people from the local community, who spent varying lengths of time engaged in

cleaning, decorating or repairing the Centre, or doing gardening.



The Big Help Out!

Lewisham Choral Society, south-east London's largest choral society, continue to meet weekly in church, and some of their members are becoming increasingly involved in the life of the choir and parish also.

One unusual social event was a parish visit to the National Gallery on June 9th in conjunction with All Saints, Blackheath, to see their St Francis exhibition. This was a fascinating collection of pictures devoted to person of St Francis curated by no less a person than the Director of the National Gallery himself, Gabriele Finaldi, also a Catford resident. Susan Jones, the sister of former churchwarden Julia, got sponsorship to bring a group of young dancers from Grenada over to the UK. Amongst other venues, they performed for us here at St Laurence's on August 20th. Our 'knit and natter' group, under the direction of Joyce Turpin, continue to meet weekly to improve both their knitting skills and

to discuss how to make the world a better place.

Other social events included enjoyable occasions organised by Bring me Sunshine; while a number of parishioners and almost all the clergy are involved in local charities for older people, including Ageing Well in Lewisham (Lewisham Churches' Care) and Lewisham Elders' Forum. Indeed, in recognition of her wonderful cooking for the former, Ijeoma Nwajiobi, our SPA, was given a community achievement award by Community Links Bromley.

People are unlikely to turn up to events unless they know about them, and so a fair amount of time and energy goes into communicating with the parish and local community, a task much easier today than it was thirty years ago, when one had to make endless phone calls to get the message out. I send out a parish eNewsletter almost every Saturday evening with news of Sunday's services and the week's events. If you don't already subscribe, please do, by going onto the parish website (stlaurencecatford.org.uk), and clicking in the appropriate link. And we have a regular feed on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram thanks to Daisy Langridge, our social media manager. And most importantly of all, Lesley Ihekuna and her team livestream all our important Sunday and occasional liturgies on Facebook and YouTube. This is enormously appreciated by many of our housebound parishioners, or those who cannot make it to church, or are on holiday, or live too far away (our most distant viewer is a former Catford resident who now lives in Australia). And we published our usual Christmas Card greetings booklet, in which parishioners could greet each other sustainably, and raise money for charity at the same time.

Over the year, very sadly we lost a number of parishioners. Pam Jones, for an entire generation (or two) of young people was an immensely inspiring Beaver leader; Charles and Loveness Gasa lost their baby, Tevin; Joe Smart, once a regular member here; Frances Satchell, a quiet and loyal friend of the parish; Goldwyn Johnson, whose fiftieth wedding anniversary we had celebrated ten years previously; Chantelle Scott, (Norma Scott's granddaughter) and Ashley Gregory, (Beverley Chin's brother) who died relatively young; Alvin McCorkle, who died at a great old age; Verna Cox, whose funeral was the best attended for many years; Ernie Brown, after a long illness; and Sheila Cameron, who was originally ordained through St Laurence's and, as a non-stipendiary priest, went on to assist almost every parish in East and West Lewisham deaneries until almost the day before her death, aged 89. She had a very affectionate funeral mass, which she had planned in some detail, at St Mary's Church where she had been baptised a lifetime previously. Fr Iain Farquhar was not forgotten: we dedicated a bench given in his memory on April 30th, and on Sunday

afternoon July 9th held a memorial service for him at which the preacher was fellow Scot, Fr Lindsay McKenna. Finally, Bishop Karowei's death on September 8th shocked everyone here. May they all rest in peace and rise in glory.

It just remains to say a huge thank you to all those who take part in sustaining the community of St Laurence's, of whom we are blessed with a huge number, so apologies if I have accidentally omitted anyone. They range from Corinne Browne-Marke, who organises the lesson reading rota, to Helen who organises the coffee rota and their teams of volunteers; our sidespeople; our flower arrangers, ably led by Sybil Bair, who spend much of their Saturdays making the church look stunning; our sacristy team, ably headed up by Kofi Hagan, assisted by Kevin Counihan, Robert Green and Ijeoma Nwajiobi, and to the eight people who are on the chalice rota, faithfully providing this essential ministry week after week; to Elspeth Wyllie, a wonderful interim Director of Music, and Jocelyn Freeman, now happily returned from her maternity leave, and to all the members of our church choir, who rehearse every week to provide the lovely singing that makes our liturgy so special especially the younger singers who

have to juggle choir with homework and afterschool activities, and are an inspiration to us all; to Lan Vi, our parish finance officer, Mark Gayfer, honorary accountant; and to our safeguarding team, Lesley Ihekuna and Fiona Tyrell-Jackson; to Richard Swann, our indefatigable parish manager, who manages our growing team of caretakers - to whom we are also most grateful for their competence and dedication - and cheerfully sustains the life of both Centre and Parish in a remarkable way, and on whose skills we have all come increasingly to depend; to the two wonderful churchwardens, Joan Baker, approaching the end of her three years, and Marva Mayne, about to embark on her second; and finally to my colleagues in the ministry team, Ijeoma Nwajiobi, our Pastoral Auxiliary, Grace Blyth, our reader, and Fr Kayode, Fr Anthony and Fr Andrew, but for whom we could not even begin to sustain the kind of ministry that is enjoyed here at St. Laurence's.

It has been a good year; we pray now for an even better one ahead, as we seek to continue to grow the very distinctive Church and Community that God has granted us all to serve.

Fr Charles.

The Churchwarden's Report

As we reflect on the challenges of the past year, it's heartening to witness our congregation's resilience and growth, reclaiming a sense of normality post-COVID. We are delighted to welcome new faces into our community, with several individuals transitioning from attendees to members of St. Laurence's. We started out with the introduction of boat girls where initially we had 3. We have now been reduced to one, Ariyah, who takes her role seriously and is also very committed.

Our spiritual journey continues with momentum. The Bible Study group remains an anchor, and continues to have consistent attendance and deep discussions. Similarly, the Knit and Natter group is still thriving as a hub of creativity, where laughter and humour intertwines with the click of knitting needles and crochet hooks. We have also seen an increase in numbers to the group. A special thank you to Joyce and Olive for their invaluable guidance. The success of our stall at the advent fair in December, which not only showcased handmade crafts but also showed the spirit of community support, where over £100.00 was raised

We have marked significant milestones this year; the licensing of Father Kayode to the parish by Father Alistair Cutting our archdeacon and the memorial service honouring Father Iain's first anniversary which was well attended and a bench donated in his honour.

Embracing diversity we celebrated Caribbean Day which also included Jamaica's 62 years of independence with a special service and Julia Jones giving an inspirational sermon. After which a delicious lunch was served in the main hall.



The Rt' Rev'd Precious Omuku

Nigeria Day was celebrated on 1st October where we had Bishop Precious Omuku, who is the archbishop of Canterbury's special advisor on sub-Saharan Africa. He is a preacher who inspired us with a Nigerian flavoured gospel. This was followed by a Nigerian lunch in the main hall. We had the sad news of Bishop Karowei's passing which brought a sombre note to our community. We were represented at the funeral by Father Kayode in September. We also bid farewell to cherish members like Francis Satchell, Joe Smart, Alvin McCorkle and most recently Verna Cox and Ernie Brown. May their souls continue to rest in peace.

Community engagement remains a cornerstone of our mission. Last October we had a Community Festival and Car Boot fundraising event where we had a variety of stalls including hand crafted jewellery, clothing, books and a whole range of other items. We raised a total of £860.00. A big thank you to Richard Swann, our Parish Manager, Beverley Chin and other members of the congregation who made this a success. The festive spirit continued with a delightful dinner and dance social event on 2nd



The Late Bishop of Woolwich, Rt Rev. Karowei Dorgu

December. This was expertly organised by Beverley Chin along with the team and raised £1,600.00 this also rekindled the joy of community gatherings after the prolonged break enforced by Covid.

We have had various visiting preachers for Advent, Father Paul Newman who was curate at St Laurence's from 1967-1981 who then went on to be a prison chaplain. Mother Elaine Dando whose husband Stephen (also a priest) who was also a churchwarden around the same time as Father Newman was

curate. She was a very inspirational preacher.

We also had visitors from different charities and organisations who preached for us over the Lenten period, we hope you found these interesting.

At the time of writing this report our annual inspection is due to be carried out on the 22nd March. This will be overseen by Father Michael Bailey from St Stephen's in Lewisham. The preparation for the visit can be tense, as all valuables, registry books, insurance and silver items are thoroughly checked to confirm that they are in order. It goes without saying that we hope to pass the inspection.

Throughout these endeavours we have been guided by the steady hand of Father Charles, whose unwavering support, wisdom and leadership have been instrumental in navigating the challenges and opportunities that have defined our journey so far. We heartily thank him.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the members of the congregation who have supported and encouraged us throughout the year.

I (Marva), would personally like to sincerely thank Joan my fellow warden for her support, encouragement and guidance over the past eight months. This year as she steps down from her role as churchwarden, I know I can continue to count on her support if ever I need it and will be on hand to serve St Laurence if required. I also very much look forward to working alongside the newly appointed churchwarden.

Joan Baker and Marva Mayne Churchwardens

From the PCC Secretary

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

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

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

Current members of the PCC are listed below:

Canon Charles Pickstone, Fr. Kayode, Ray Williams (Centre Chairman), Joyce Turpin (Secretary), Grace Blyth (Reader), Beverley Chin (Treasurer), Joan Baker (Church Warden), Marva Mayne (Church Warden), Lesley Ihekuna (Safeguarding Officer), Victor Obasogie, Daniel Sackey (Resigned), Bridgit Sam-Bailey (Resigned), Florence Browne-Marke, Jennifer Thorne, Elaine Dixon, Corinne Browne-Marke, Alice Prince-Gilbert, Leanne Harvey-Thompson and Paul Omondiale.

Charities

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

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

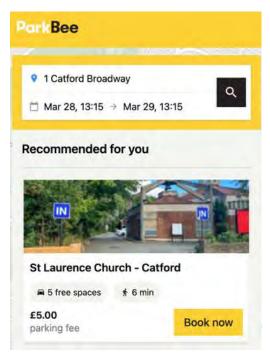
Joyce Turpin, PCC Secretary.

Chairman of the Centre

Again, the St Laurence Centre has had a very good year. Although current times are very challenging, our Manager Richard Swann with the support of the Centre Management Committee has done a fantastic job of keeping our heads above water. Our committee has changed a bit with Beverly Chin moving from Church Warden to Treasurer. Fortunately for us she remains on the Centre Management Committee. Beverley was replaced by Marva Mayne who has done a great job in her first year. We have had two new people on the Committee, Elaine Dixon and Bylinda Lundie, both have settled in well.

The Committee have renegotiated Community Group rates for our regular hirers. With costs continually rising there was little option but to do this.

Elaine joined the committee as a second health and safety representative. In doing so she joined Robert Green in this role. Both are working very well together. Because of this two lots of important training have taken place, First Aid and Fire Warden training.



Jeanne Mynette has been recognised as St Laurence Eco champion. She tirelessly pursues matters important to the environment including all types of recycling, preventing heat loss and energy savings.

The ladies' toilets at the far end of the Centre main corridor are currently being refurbished and are nearly completed.

The Committee continue to be generous with discounts given to the local community and our own congregation.

ParkBee parking app interface.

A scheme was agreed with a parking company known as Park Bee. This allowed some spare parking spaces to be rented out, raising important funds for the church.

In August St Laurence was honoured to have the Mayor of London visit us. This was for a speech regarding the Ultra-Low Emission Zone. For security reasons we were not allowed to advertise this. Nonetheless, it was a good advertisement for St

Laurence Church. There have been extended discussions with our local Montessori Nursery.

The Committee have experienced a range of difficulties in managing this. Reluctantly, it was decided in the end with the support of the PCC that the arrangement should be concluded. We are currently looking for ways to achieve this.

A new design for lighting in the Main Hall has been achieved. We still need to fund this, so is an ongoing project. Our caretaking pool is looking very healthy. Currently we have Calum, Johannes, Joy, Joel, Darini, Eghosa and Fred. If anyone is missing being recently hired, please forgive me.

Our energy costs for the Church and Centre make a huge dent in our budget. Subsequently, we have renegotiated these costs for the next 3 years.

I would like to thank the Centre Management Committee for their efforts in helping to maintain the high standards which have been achieved. I would also like to thank the staff who help run the place.

Especially Richard, who I would not be able to cope without.

Raymond Williams
Centre Management Chair.

From the Director of Music

Thank you for your ongoing support of the choir. The last year has seen some rewarding results for the St Laurence Music Department, and it has been encouraging to return to a well-run department following strong leadership from Elspeth during my year of Maternity leave. Our choir continues to demonstrate good ensemble skills and beautiful. voices, many of whom have been a stable of our choir for many years, or are emerging as young adults with outstanding skills having been in the group since childhood.

CHOIR

The number of regular adult choir members has been stable over the last year, and we are also seeing a significant increase in the number of Catford Cathedra (semi-regular ad hoc singers) members joining us at semiregular intervals. This will be most noticeable in the deeper, richer sound coming from the choir stalls, and are happy to see one of our original choral scholars, Johannes Gerges still in our ranks. It is an honour to continue to nurture him on his musical journey, which is becoming more and more distinguished. We are also delighted to be nurturing and empowering new junior choir members too, continuing MiniChoir with the expert guidance of Mairéad, and looking to train several apprentices to shadow her, and replicate her guidance in her absence.

ORGANISTS

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

TRIPS



St Mark's Church, Kennington

We are looking forward to performing Fauré's remarkable Requiem next month for SongEasel on the composer's birthday weekend (May 11th), at St Mark's Church by Oval Station. It will be a highlight of the musical year for us, collaborating with some phenomenal soloists, other

singers and a small professional orchestra. I hope many of you will be able to join us for what promises to be a thrilling occasion. More details to follow soon, but tickets are now available

at https://Faure100Requiem.eventbrite.com and congregation members can use code 'CATFORD' for free or heavily discounted tickets.

RUSHEY GREEN SONGSTARS

During my maternity leave Elspeth introduced an initiative to sing with children at Rushey Green School, just down the road. It has been a privilege to continue her good work, and we have heard these pupils shine through singing on several occasions - at the Christmas Carol Service and on Mothering Sunday. We are working closely with the school, and looking for further ways to build this connection, and our goal is to bring them together with our choir more frequently.

OTHER MUSIC ACTIVITIES

Our partner, SongEasel, continues to bring wonderful song to the area, including a memorable song masterclass from Roderick Williams OBE in March. We can look forward to several further inspiring events here across the spring and early summer: a Fauré listening club featuring Johannes Gerges on 21st April; a Fauré song masterclass on 28th April; a performance of all Fauré's songs on 12th May; and the stunning Nigerian-American soprano Francesca Chiejina singing Shakespeare songs on 16th June. Look out for posters with full

details and tell your friends - we want these free events to be attended by as many people as possible!

RESOURCES

We are pleased that the church budget is in place and is able to grant us funds to develop the music here further.

Recent purchases include extra singers, and the purchase of sheet music for the Saturday Easter Vigil from talented young composer, Emily Hazrati. We look forward to using these important contributions to enhance the musical life at St Laurence, helping us to elevate our praises to God at special moments during the liturgical year.

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

With love,

Jocelyn

Safeguarding Report

The Safeguarding team are Fiona Tyrell-Jackson (Lead) and Lesley Ihekuna (Training), and in the last 12 months Safeguarding training has been ongoing in all the different aspects of church, if anyone has any safeguarding concerns, then Fiona and Lesley are the ones to contact. Details can be found on posters dotted around Church.



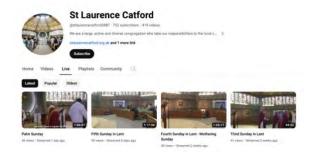
Thanking you for your support, Fiona & Lesley.

Digital Ministry

Live streaming on a Sunday is a lifeline for many parishioners who cannot attend Church in person and still want to be part of the St Laurence Church family. In the last 12 months, viewing numbers have increased from 15 to 20, which also includes parishioners in Australia, Nigeria and the Caribbean. Currently we stream across 3 platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Twitch), and are looking to add streaming platform Instagram (so watch this space!)

Throughout the Church year, we have also streamed funerals, weddings, celebration services, community hymn singing, carol services, Holy Week, Easter Eve, Easter Day (Mass of the Dawn) to name a few.

Unfortunately, we have had three instances when we could not live stream on a Sunday due to problems with the internet (broadband provider issue), but instead we filmed the service via the camera and then this was uploaded to the streaming platform. Two of these instances occurred recently, in Lent 2 the system was totally down for the full service and in Lent 3, where the internet did not comeback until during the sermon (Guest Preacher from Friends of the Holy Land), which turned out to be a faulty router that has now been replaced.



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

The St Laurence Catford YouTube page.

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

Deanery Report

The main topics addressed at Deanery Synod meetings during last year included:

- -The presence of representatives from the Church in Health Care Settings and Hospitals.
- -The support offered to Schools.
- -Identity of The Anglican Communion

The presence of representatives from the Church in Health Care Settings and Hospitals. At one of the meetings a number of speakers gave an insight into the work of Chaplains in hospitals from their experience. The fact that Chaplains worked not only with patients who were Christian, but also with any who needed their ministry. Their role also includes Ministering to members of staff. This had been particularly important during the extra difficult circumstances caused by the Pandemic. A local doctor drew the parallel of work in both Health Care and Christian Ministry, being Vocations.

The support offered to Schools. There were the obvious connections between Churches and Church Schools, but many Churches are active in developing links with schools in general in their Parishes. It was seen as mutually beneficial.

Identity of The Anglican Communion. There was discussion on what do we understand to be the Anglican Communion. Many felt that it was the familiarity of Church and its ministry. Offering an opportunity to 'go to church at home' when in different countries.



Providing familiarity, at its most basic, it's a gathering of 80 million Anglicans worldwide, across more than 165 countries.

Grace Blyth

The Treasurer

This is my first year in the role of Treasurer. As with all sorts of finance these are also anxious and worrying times.

As we leave Covid behind and things are coming back to normal our main asset the main hall and meeting rooms are beginning to bring in regular income.

Our contribution to the diocese this year was £71,000. To our congregation and donors with their regular giving these funds allow us to help the other churches who are not as fortunate as ourself. We have gifted this year £3,000 to six charities, £500 each. These were three international charities, Friends of the Holy Land, Smile Train, Melquosh International and three UK based charities; St Christopher's Hospice, Sense and Lewisham Churches Care.

From the PCC, and Father Charles we thank each member for their contribution.

This year we are left with a small deficit which we hope will clear itself as we move into 2024.

We have done remarkably well this year with our fund-raising events with a total of over £6750.72

I personally would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to all the

volunteers who have worked extremely hard and to those who attended the various events Afternoon Tea, the Boot Sale and Harvest Festival Sale, the Advent Fair and a special mention to a new group the Knit and Natter team who not only raised funds for us but some was donated to a local charity St. Christopher's.

Our final event for the year was the Dinner and Dance in December which raised a substantial amount of £1650.

A large amount of this year's events monies have been invested in our new toilets which desperately needed to be refurbished.

Although a year with its challenges we have also had success especially in our fundraising efforts and increase in the letting of the centre.

My thanks also go to our finance administrator Lan Vi, who keeps a keen eye on the day-to-day financial operations of the church and centre.

We look forward to 2024 with a positive outlook and to see St Laurence grow with more financial opportunities and greater success with our finances.

Beverley Chin. Hon. Treasurer.

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

I report on the accounts of the church for the year ended 31 December 2023 which are set out on the subsequent pages, which show that expenditure exceeds income by £4,572. The net assets are valued at £329,781.

Respective Responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

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

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

Basis of Independent Examiner's report

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

Independent examiner's statement

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

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

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

March, 2024
Gavin Ellis
Accountant
34 London Road
Hailsham
East Sussex
BN27 3BW

Parochial Church Council of St Laurence, Catford

Statement of Financial Position at 31 December 2023

			2023	2022
		Notes	£	£
FIXED ASSE	TS			
		_		
	Investments	5	108,061	95 <i>,</i> 925
	Computer equipment		1,207	2,415
	Boiler		186,589	196,410
			295,858	294,749
CURRENT A	SSETS			
	Debtors and prepayments	6a	25,696	57,695
	Short-term deposits	6b	5,500	12,570
	Cash at bank and in hand		49,780	15,989
			80,976	86,254
LIABILITIES				
	Creditors – due within 1 year	7	47,052	46,651
NET CURRE	NT ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)		33,924	39,603
			-	
TOTAL ASSI	ETS		329,781	334,353
PARISH FU				
Unrestricte				
	General funds	9	139,925	131,170
	Designated funds	9	12,023	12,023
Restricted		8	13,439	18,113
	Boiler reserve	8	164,394	173,047
			329,781	334,353

The notes on the succeeding pages form part of these accounts

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 20th March 2024 and signed on its behalf by

The Rev'd Canon Charles Pickstone (PCC Chair)

Parochial Church Council of St Laurence, Catford

Statement of Financial Activities

for the year ended 31 December 2023

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

	Restricted	funds		
Unrestricted funds	Boiler	Other	Total funds	Total funds
2023	2023	2023	2023	2022
£	£	£	£	£
58,765			58,765	238,083
72,902			72,902	64,348
2,902			2,902	2,941
183,564			183,564	168,008
318,132	-	-	318,132	473,380
326,686		4,674	331,360	306,114
578			578	862
327,264	-	4,674	331,938	306,977
(2.422)		(4.47.4)	(42.224)	
(9,132)	-	(4,674)	(13,806)	166,404
9,234			9,234	(13,512)
9,234			9,234	(173,047)
			-	(173,047)
102	_	(4,674)	(4,572)	(20,155)
8,652	(8,652)	(-, - , -,	-	(==,===)
143,193	173,047	18,113	334,353	354,508
	-,-	-,	, , , , , , ,	
151,947	164,395	13,439	329,781	334,353

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST LAURENCE, CATFORD

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2023

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The PCC is a public benefit entity within the meaning of FRS102. The financial statements have been prepared under the Charities Act 2011 and in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 governing the individual accounts of PCCs, and with the Regulations' 'true and fair view' provision. They have

been prepared under FRS102 (2016) as the applicable accounting standards and the 2016 version of the Statement of Recommended Practice, Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP(FRS102)).

ASSETS

Consecrated and benefice property

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

Moveable church furnishings

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

Tangible fixed assets for use by the charity

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

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

Land: nil

Boilers, fixtures and fittings: 20 years

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

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

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

Investments

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

Short term deposits

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

FUNDS

Unrestricted Funds

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

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

Restricted Funds

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

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2. INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS

			Unrestricted			
			funds	Restricted funds	TOTAL 2023	TOTAL 2022
			£	£	£	£
2(a)	Voluntary in	come				
	Planned givin	ng: Gift Aid donations	31,618		31,618	30,783
		Tax recoverable	9,784		9,784	8,355
		Other planned giving	7,298		7,298	7,819
	Collections	(open plate)	7,626		7,626	6,939
	Grants			(1,813)	(1,813)	174,889
	Donations, ap	opeals, etc	2,725	1,527	4,252	9,299
			59,050	(286)	58,765	238,083
2(b)	Activities for	generating funds				
	Fundraising		6,968		6,968	2,848
	Rent-tempor	ary let of clergy flats	65,934		65,934	61,500
			72,902	-	72,902	64,348
2(c)	Income from	investments				
	Dividends on	CCLA Investment Fund	2,902		2,902	2,941
			2,902	-	2,902	2,941

2(d) Income from church activities Fees for weddings and funerals 3,235 3,235 4,461 Church Centre lettings-local community use 177,795 177,795 162,885 Other Income 2,534 2,534 663 183,564 168,008 183,564 **Total income** (286) 473,380 318,418 318,132

3. **EXPENDITURE**

		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds £	TOTAL 2023	TOTAL 2022 £
3(a)	Church Activities				
	Missionary & charitable giving, (note 11)	3,167		3,167	1,183
	Ministry: diocesan parish quota	71,000		71,000	70,000
	Other ministry cost	2,469		2,469	2,347
	Church running & maintenance	132,997		132,997	113,203
	Major repairs	29,440		29,440	29,090
	Printing, postage & stationery	3,626		3,626	3,106
	Bank charges	1,409		1,409	1,555
	Director of music, organist, tuning	19,882		19,882	17,888
	Caretaking	65,036		65,036	52,197
	Events	1,286	1,048	2,334	15,545
		330,312	1,048	331,360	306,114
3(b)	Raising funds				
	Costs of refreshments	578		578	862
		578	-	578	862
TOTAL R	ESOURCES EXPENDED	330,890	1,048	331,938	306,977
4. STAFF	COSTS				
Wages &	salaries			2023 f 114,398	2022 £ 97,857

No. of permanent employees

10

7

There were no employee benefits to key management personnel in the previous or current years.

During the year, the PCC employed a Parish Manager, Director of Music, a Finance Officer and a number of caretakers.

5. FIXED ASSETS

Investments	2023	2022
Amounts invested with CCLA	£	£
Amounts held in trust by CCLA through The South London Church Fund and		
the Southwark Diocesan Board of Finance in respect of monies in connection with:		
Sale of 34 Canadian Avenue (1987)	36,811	36,811
Miss Hilda May Augusta Marsh & Miss Pansie Beatrice Edney bequests (1989)	3,180	5,648
	39,991	42,459
These funds are principally invested in units of the CBF Church of England Investment Fund		
Market value of 4,646.20 units at 01 January 2023 (2022:5,408.89)	95,925	126,496
Sale of 0 units during 2023 (2022:899.16)	-	(20,000)
Cost of 134.14 additional units purchased during 2023 (2022:136.47)	2,902	2,941
Increase/(Decrease) in Market Value during the year	9,234	(13,512)
Market value of 4780.34 units at 31 Dec 2023 (2022:4,646.20)	108,061	95,925

		Units	Value (£)
Cost of additional units	34 Canadian Avenue	113.54	2,456
	Marsh & Edney	20.60	446
		134.14	2,902
Units at Dec 31st, 2023	34 Canadian Avenue	4,046.46	91,471
	Marsh & Edney	733.88	16,590
		4,780.34	108,061

6. CURRENT ASSETS

6(a) Debtors and prepayments

	2023	2022
	£	£
Prepayments	-	-
Accrued income	8,000	15,500
Debtors	16,588	42,195
	24,588	57,695
6(b) Short term deposits		
Deposits with Nat West Bank	100	7,170
Deposit protection scheme	5,400	5,400
	5,500	12,570
7. LIABILITIES	2023	2022
	£	£
Amounts held on behalf of others		
Vicar's Discretionary fund	2,194	2,194
Women's fellowship	1,649	1,849
Choir holiday fund	268	268
Choir Bursary fund	2,247	2,247
Minichoir fund	337	337
Choir Concerts Fund	55	511
Benevolent Fund	200	200
Toilet Twinning	-	-
Other	260	583
	7,211	8,189
Flat deposits held	5,400	5,400
Other creditors and accruals	34,155	33,062
	46,765	46,651

8. RESTRICTED FUNDS

The restricted funds have evolved as follows:

	Balance	Donations	Expenditure	Transfer	Balance
	31/12/2022	2023	2023	2023	31/12/2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Church Lighting Fund	18,113	-	4,674	-	13,439
Green Boiler Fund	173,047	-	-	(8,652)	164,394
	191,160	-	4,674	(8,652)	177,834

9. SUMMARY OF UNRESTRICTED FUND MOVEMENTS	2023 £	2022 £
Designated unrestricted funds		
Church maintenance fund		
Balance 1 January	7,679	7,679
Transfers during the year		-
Balance 31 December	7,679	7,679
Centre maintenance fund		
Balance 1 January	4,344	4,344
Transfers during the year		-
Balance 31 December	4,344	4,344
Total designated funds	12,023	12,023
Unrestricted and undesignated funds		
Balance 1 January	131,169	141,325
Surplus and transfers during the year	8,754	(10,156)
Balance 31 December	139,924	131,169

	Restricted Designa		Unrestricted & undesignated	Total
	£	£	£	£
Total reserves at 31st December 2023	177,834	12,023	139,924	329,781

10. SUMMARY OF ASSETS BY FUND	unrestricted funds	restricted funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
	£	£	£	£
Investments & other fixed assets	131,463	164,394	295,858	294,749
Debtors & prepayments	25,696	-	25,696	57,695
Short term deposits	5,500	-	5,500	12,570
Cash at bank and in hand	36,341	13,439	49,780	15,989
less creditors due within one year	(47,052)	-	(47,052)	(46,651)
	151,948	177,834	329,781	334,353

11. CHARITABLE DONATIONS	2023	2022
	£	£
London Hearts		752
Lewisham Refugee Migrant Network		431
Lewisham Churches Care	500	
St Christopher's Hospice	500	
Sense	500	
Smile Train	500	
Melqosh Mission	500	
Friends of the Holy Land	500	
A Rocher UK	125	
Royal British Legion	42	
	3,167	1,183

12. SUMMARY OF GRANTS RECEIVED

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

	2023	2022
	£	£
Kirby Laing Trust (eco boiler)		5,000
London borough of Lewisham (eco boiler)		20,000
Greater London Authority (eco boiler)		50,000
Viridor (eco boiler)		50,000
HLF (gyratory project)		5,750
London borough of Lewisham (gyratory project)		4,500
London Borough of Lewisham (restart grant)		4,000
The SLCF and SDBF (school singing project)	925	i
London borough of Lewisham (The Big Help Out)	50	1

