



St Laurence Catford  
Annual Report  
2019-21



**ST LAURENCE CHURCH CATFORD  
ANNUAL PAROCHIAL MEETING – SUNDAY 28 APRIL 2019  
ST LAURENCE CHURCH HALL**

**PRAYERS** – The meeting was opened with Father Charles welcoming those present and saying prayers.

**APOLOGIES** – No apologies

**MINUTES OF THE APM 2018** – The minutes were read as published in the attachment.

**ELECTORAL ROLL OFFICER'S REPORT** – It was reported that there was 196 members on the official electoral roll.

**ELECTIONS:**

Church Wardens – Beverley Chin and Sybil Bair

PCC honorary secretary – Joyce Turpin

Centre Manager – Kay Lanston

Honorary Treasurer – Non

Auditor – Gavin Ellis FCCA

Deanery Synod Reps – Jeni Griffith, Robert Green, Ken Agumadu

Members of the PCC – Florence Browne-Marke, Joseph Smart

Bridgit Sam-Bailey, Victor Obasogie, Gabriel Nwogbo,

Henry Otoo, Onyeka Chuk Iloanya,

Antoinette Ojiako (Junior Church Rep)

Margaret Greaves (Mothers Union Rep)

**VICAR'S REPORT** – Read as published in attachment.

**CHURCH WARDENS REPORT** – Read as published in attachment

**TREASURER'S REPORT** – Read and fully explained as published in the attachment. The accounts were accepted. Gavin Ellis FCCA was elected as auditor,

**PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT** – Read as published in the attachment.

**CENTRE MANAGEMENT REPORT** – Read as published in the attachment.

**DIRECTOR OF MUSIC REPORT** – Read as published in the attachment.

**SACRISTY REPORT** – Read as published in the attachment.

**SAFEGUARDING REPORT** – Read as published in the attachment

**JUNIOR CHURCH REPORT** – Read as published in the attachment.

**DEANERY SYNOD REPORT** – Read as published in the attachment.

**MOTHERS UNION REPORT** – Read as published in the attachment.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS** – Sue Dearie thanked all the readers and intercessors for their work and made a request for more volunteers. Father Charles informed the meeting that we still did not have a treasurer and that the main work being done by Andy McGuire our paid book-keeper.

The meeting was closed with Fr. Charles saying a prayer.

**St. Laurence Church, Catford**  
**PCC members 2020/21**

**Churchwardens**

**Sibyl Bair**

**Beverley Chin**

**Elected members**

**Florence Browne-Marke**

**Onyeka Iloanya**

**Dele Muji**

**Gabriel Nwogbo**

**Victor Obasogie**

**Antoinette Ojiako**

**Bridgit Sam-Bailey**

**Ex-officio members**

**Kay Lanston, chair centre management committee**

**PCC treasurer (vacant)**

**Margaret Greaves, Mothers Union enrolling member**

**Jocelyn Freeman, director of music**

**Joyce Turpin, PCC secretary**

**Deanery synod reps**

**Kenneth Agumadu**

**Grace Blyth**

**Robert Green**

**Jeni Griffith**

**Clergy & Readers**

**Fr Charles Pickstone**

**Fr Iain Farquhar**

**(Grace Blyth)**

**Peter Charles**

## 2019 Report and Accounts for the Parochial Church Council of St Laurence Church, Catford

### **Aim and purposes**

St Laurence's Parochial Church Council (PCC) has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent, the Reverend Canon Charles Pickstone, in promoting in the ecclesiastical parish, the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. The PCC is also specifically responsible for the maintenance of St Laurence Centre.

### **Objectives and activities**

The mission of the parish, as expressed in the parish mission statement, is 'to offer, on behalf of a place that God loves, namely Catford, the praise that it has largely forgotten to express'. The PCC is committed to inviting as many people as possible to worship God, and if they feel so called to become part of the parish community at St Laurence's. The PCC maintains an overview of worship throughout the parish and makes suggestions on how our services can involve the many groups that live within our parish. Our services and worship put faith into practice through prayer and scripture, music and sacrament. Concomitantly, we invite local people to express their worship of God in altruistic service to their local community.

When planning our activities for the year, we have considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the supplementary guidance on charities for the advancement of religion. In particular, we try to enable ordinary people to live out their faith as part of our parish community through:

- Worship and prayer; learning about the gospel; developing their knowledge and trust in Jesus especially as expressed through the sacraments
  - Provision of pastoral care for people living in the parish
  - Missionary and outreach work.

To facilitate this work, we regard the maintenance of the fabric of the church of St Laurence and St Laurence Centre as of great importance.

### **Achievements and performance:**

#### **Worship and prayer**

The PCC is keen to offer a range of services during the week and over the course of the year that our community find both beneficial and spiritually fulfilling. The congregation is remarkable for its diversity, and the liturgy seeks to reflect this diversity while also maintaining its integrity.

This year our customary very wide range of liturgical expression continued in all its richness.

All are welcome to attend our regular services. At present there are 173 parishioners on the church electoral roll (roll renewed this year), and there are some 250 names of adults and children on the parish prayer list. The average weekly attendance, counted during November, was 140 adults, 25 children.

As well as our regular services, we enable our community to celebrate and thank God at the milestones of the journey through life. Through baptism we thank God for the gift of life; in marriage public vows are exchanged with God's blessing; through funeral services friends and family express their grief and give thanks for the life which is now complete in this world, and commend the person into God's keeping. We have celebrated 7 baptisms and 1 wedding, and conducted 28 funerals (of which 15 in this church – the highest for many years). The latter continues to be an important area of growth for the parish.

#### **The Church**

We have the church open to our community for private prayer during daylight hours, Monday to Friday, and it is well used, a valuable resource for local people of all denominations and none, where they can find a quiet space for their thoughts or prayers. An A-board outside the church advertises when it is open and invites members of the public to use the space for prayer or contemplation. The Church is also used for some secular purposes, notably as a rehearsal venue for the largest choral society in south-east London.

#### **The Community Centre**

The Community Centre, St Laurence Centre, is open to the public 8am–11pm Monday–Sunday. It is a much-used resource for local people and hosts a very wide range of activities for young and old, from a toddlers' group to Pensioners' clubs, to martial arts classes and the local Townswomen's Guild. It is used for

community meetings (the Catford South local assembly regularly meet in the Centre), residents' association functions, annual general meetings, funeral and wedding receptions, concerts, the Catford Film Festival and religious services for all faiths, including funerals for the local Hindu community. Over the year, the management of the Centre was completely restructured. Previously run by a volunteer centre manager and full-time residential caretaker, the resignation of the latter gave the management committee the chance to appoint a part-time professional manager to run the Centre; the management committee chair now becomes the link between the Centre and the Church Council, of which she is an ex-officio members. We have a roster of part-time caretakers, who are brought in as required if they are available, an arrangement that suits both them and us. We pay the London Living Wage as a minimum to all our employees. Making these changes has been expensive over the first year (see accounts: our deficit before investment income is entirely due to this restructuring), but gives us the flexibility to take on a wide range of additional users as well as better to maintain the plant and do some essential maintenance work in-house.

### **Fundraising**

It will be noted that the parish engaged in its own fundraising activities – notably a barbecue and a parish dance – as well as receiving a number of individual donations from parishioners, to whom we are particularly grateful.

### **Pastoral care**

Some members of our parish are unable to attend church due to sickness or age. The parish's ministry team (comprising the vicar, three retired clergy, two licensed readers, one licensed Pastoral Auxiliary and the parish manager – herself a priest) regularly visit all church members who ask for a visit, offering holy communion when requested. Absent members are also posted a copy of the Sunday pewsheets.

### **Mission and evangelism**

Helping those in need is a demonstration of our faith. The PCC and parish organised fund-raising activities and made a number of generous grants in favour of a number of other charities at home and abroad. The weekly pewsheets is an important source of information about activities and events in the church, in the local neighbourhood, and locally and nationally.

### **Celebrating diversity**

The PCC is particularly concerned to celebrate the diversity of those who live and worship in Catford. This happens in a number of ways, notable this year in the diversity of those attending the social events organised by the parish.

### **Ecumenical and interfaith relationships**

The church holds regular joint services with its Roman Catholic neighbours, Holy Cross Church, and joint events with Catford & Bromley Synagogue and Lewisham Islamic Centre, which are at the two ends of the parish. The Vicar attended LIC's 'Eid in the Park', and was formally welcomed by the Imam, Shakeel Begg, to this assembly of some four thousand Muslim worshippers; and in addition has been invited to speak at the local Islamic Centre during Ramadan. The Imam has been invited to speak to the congregation at St Laurence's. The three faith groups regularly hold joint events in areas of interest to their congregations.

### **Financial review**

Total receipts on unrestricted funds were £257,620 of which £34,156 was unrestricted planned voluntary donations, and a further £7,580 was from Gift Aid. Restricted grants and donations of £18,007 were also received, structural investigations and roofing repairs, and details are shown in the financial statements. The three flats at 33, 35 and 35a Bromley Road continue to be let, while the former caretaker's flat has now also been let, to provide income for spending on his replacements. The flats provided a gross income of £55,600 (£18,552 net), while the church hall provided a gross income of £134,762 (£10,790 net after restructuring costs).

The planned giving through envelopes and banker's orders increased by 11% and loose collections decreased by 9%. Total income, excluding legacies and exceptional income for structural repairs, remained more or less static compared with previous years.

£221,764 was spent from unrestricted funds to provide the Christian ministry from St Laurence Church, including the contribution to the diocesan parish share that largely provides the stipends and housing for the clergy. The sum that the diocese have to find is shared between its churches, and is based on what

parishes are able to afford. Having offered a much reduced amount to the Diocese in 2017, because of the scheme of major structural repairs that had been completed that year, St Laurence's raised its contribution to the diocese to £66,244 in 2018 and this year to £67,207.

Net movement in funds on our restricted investment funds was an increase of £16,414. Our total funds decreased by £2,878 due the costs of restructuring the Centre.

#### Reserves policy

It is PCC policy to try to maintain a balance on free reserves (net current assets) which equates to at least six months' unrestricted payments. This is equivalent to £115,000. It is held to smooth out fluctuations in cash flow, to meet emergencies and to protect members of staff in the case of failure. The balance of our reserves at the year end was £114,708 which is exactly on target.

The balance of £12,023 in the fabric fund is retained towards meeting the upkeep of the Church Hall, while the £18,113 restricted fund is money that has been given specifically to renew the church lighting.

It is our policy to invest the short term investment fund balances with the CCLA Church of England Deposit Fund, and the remainder in the CCLA Church of England Investment Fund.

#### Volunteers

We would like to thank all the volunteers who work so hard to make our church the lively and vibrant community that it is. In particular, we want to mention our churchwardens Ms Bair and Ms Chin, who have worked so tirelessly on our behalf. We have an estimated 50 volunteers who contribute time and energy to the running of the Church and Community Centre, and the entire community of congregation and Centre users are extremely grateful to them.

#### Structure, governance and management

The Parochial Church Council is a corporate body established by the Church of England. The PCC operates under the Parochial Church Council Powers Measure. The PCC is a Registered Charity, no 1131092.

The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. At St Laurence's, the membership of the PCC consists of the incumbent (our vicar) and other licensed clergy, churchwardens, the Chair of the Centre Management Committee, the enrolling member of the Mothers' Union, the readers and members elected by those members of the congregation who are on the electoral roll of the church. The Director of Music is required to be in attendance when invited. All those who attend our services/members of the congregation are encouraged to register on the electoral roll and stand for election to the PCC.

The PCC members are responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the parish, including deciding on how the funds of the PCC are to be spent.

The full PCC met six times during the year with an average level of attendance of 70%. Given its responsibility for managing St Laurence Centre, the PCC has a Centre Management committee dealing with the running of the Centre. This committee is responsible to the PCC and reports back to it regularly, minutes of their decisions being received by the full PCC and discussed as necessary.

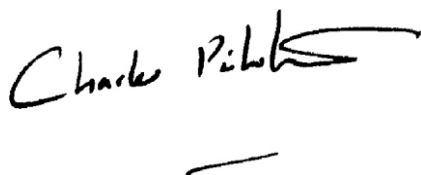
Approved by the PCC on 18th March 2019 and signed on their behalf by the Reverend Canon Charles Pickstone (PCC Chairman)

Parochial Church Council of St Laurence, Catford **Statement of Financial Position at 31 December 2019**

	Notes	2019 £	2018 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Investments	5	<u>130,558</u>	<u>114,144</u>
		<u>130,558</u>	<u>114,144</u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors and prepayments	6a	20,333	26,281
Short-term deposits	6b	6,600	5,153
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>26,438</u>	<u>30,058</u>
		<u>53,371</u>	<u>61,492</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
Creditors – due within 1 year	7	<u>51,108</u>	<u>39,937</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)</b>		<b>2,263</b>	<b>21,555</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<u><u>132,821</u></u>	<u><u>135,699</u></u>
<b>PARISH FUNDS</b>			
Unrestricted	9	114,708	117,586
Restricted	8	<u>18,113</u>	<u>18,113</u>
		<u>132,821</u>	<u>135,699</u>

The notes on the succeeding pages form part of these accounts

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on 18th March 2020, and signed on its behalf by:



The Rev'd Canon Charles Pickstone (PCC Chair)



**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the year ended 31 December 2019**

**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**

There 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 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

Fixtures and fittings: 20 years

Computers: 3 years

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 CCLA 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.

2. INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	TOTAL 2019	TOTAL 2018
	£	£	£	£
2(a) Voluntary income				
Planned giving: Gift Aid donations	25,971		25,971	23,306
Tax recoverable	7,580		7,580	8,280
Other planned giving	8,185		8,185	7,297
Collections (open plate)	10,920		10,920	11,916
Gift days			0	0
Grants		4,558	4,558	9,900
Donations, appeals, etc	4,214	13,449	17,663	19,085
Legacies			0	0
	<u>56,870</u>	<u>18,007</u>	<u>74,877</u>	<u>79,784</u>
2(b) Activities for generating funds			0	
Summer & Advent Fairs, events	1,878		1,878	7,778
Fundraising			0	0
Rent-temporary let of clergy flats	55,600		55,600	41,950
	<u>57,478</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>57,478</u>	<u>49,728</u>
			0	
2(c) Income from investments			0	
Dividends on CCLA Investment Fund	3,930		3,930	3,778
Bank & CCLA Deposit Fund Interest	5		5	5
	<u>3,935</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3,935</u>	<u>3,783</u>
2(d) Income from church activities				
Fees for weddings and funerals	4,575		4,575	4,204
Church Centre lettings-local community use	134,762		134,762	107,975
	<u>139,337</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>139,337</u>	<u>112,179</u>
Total income	<u>257,620</u>	<u>18,007</u>	<u>275,627</u>	<u>245,474</u>

3. EXPENDITURE

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	TOTAL 2019	TOTAL 2018
	£	£	£	£
3(a) Church Activities				
Missionary & charitable giving, (note 11)	2,700		2,700	4,893
Ministry: diocesan parish quota	67,207		67,207	48,579
Other ministry cost	16,291	13,449	29,740	6,804
Church running & maintenance	105,157	4,558	109,715	91,725
Major repairs: roof	21,679		21,679	30,226
Staff & volunteer training	92		92	1,000
Printing & stationery	2,258		2,258	1,726
Bank charges	1,130		1,130	1,657
Youth work	164		164	4,413
Director of music, organist, tuning	14,890		14,890	15,823
Caretaking	49,929		49,929	24,274
	<u>281,497</u>	<u>18,007</u>	<u>299,504</u>	<u>231,120</u>
3(b) Raising funds				
Costs of refreshments	485		485	634
	<u>485</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>485</u>	<u>634</u>
TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED	<u>281,982</u>	<u>18,007</u>	<u>299,989</u>	<u>231,754</u>

#### 4. STAFF COSTS

	2019	2018
Wages & salaries	£ 89,199	43,952

No. of permanent employees 4 2

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

During the year, the PCC employed a parish manager, a full-time resident caretaker, Director of Music, a cleaner, and a number of relief caretakers.

#### 5. FIXED ASSETS

Investments	2019	2018
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)	54,942	54,942
Miss Hilda May Augusta Marsh & Miss Pansie Beatrice Edney bequests (198	<u>10,034</u>	<u>10,034</u>
	<u>64,976</u>	<u>64,976</u>

These funds are principally invested in units of the CBF Church of England Investment Fund

Market value of 7085.49 units at 01 January 2019 (2018: 6863.50 units) 114,144 112,244

Sale of 475.41 units during 2019 (none in 2018) -9,000

Cost of 216.23 additional units purchased during 2019 (2018: 221.99) 3,929 3,777

Increase (decrease) in Market Value during the year 21,484 -1,878 Market

value of 7,085.49 units at 31 December 2019 (2018: 6863.50 un 130,557 114,143

		Units	Value (£)
Cost of additional units	34 Canadian Avenue	160.22	1,016
	Marsh & Edney	<u>56.01</u>	<u>2,913</u>
		<u>216.23</u>	<u>3,929</u>

Units at December 31st, 2019	34 Canadian Avenue	5,327.14	101,887
	Marsh & Edney	<u>1,499.07</u>	<u>28,671</u>
		<u>6,826.21</u>	<u>130,558</u>

#### 6. CURRENT ASSETS

##### 6(a) Debtors and prepayments

	2019	2018
	£	£
Debtors (Unrestricted funds)		
Prepayments	2,322	1,429
Debtors	18,011	24,852
	<u>20,333</u>	<u>26,281</u>

##### 6(b) Short term deposits

Deposits with CCLA	0	1,053
Deposit protection scheme	<u>6,600</u>	<u>4,100</u>
	<u>6,600</u>	<u>5,153</u>

#### 7. LIABILITIES

	2019	2018
	£	£
Amounts held on behalf of others		
Vicar's Discretionary fund	2,625	2,700
Women's fellowship	1,849	2,249
Choir holiday fund	268	0
Choir Bursary fund	3,479	1,244
Minichoir fund	310	280
Benevolent fund	200	200
Sunbeam Tots	0	2,577
Toilet Twinning	267	0
Other	<u>2,174</u>	<u>2,526</u>
	11,172	11,776
Flat deposits held	6,600	4,100
Other creditors and accruals	<u>33,336</u>	<u>24,061</u>
	<u>51,108</u>	<u>39,937</u>

8. RESTRICTED FUNDS	2019	2018
The restricted funds comprise money donated for the church lighting project.	£18,113	19,742
		<u>0</u> -1629
	<u>£18,113</u>	<u>18,113</u>

9. SUMMARY OF UNRESTRICTED FUND MOVEMENTS	2019	2018
	£	£

Designated unrestricted funds

Church maintenance fund

Balance 1 January	12,000	12,000
Transfers during the year	<u>-4,321</u>	<u>0</u>
Balance 31 December	<u>7,679</u>	<u>12,000</u> Centre

maintenance fund

Balance 1 January	5,344	5,344
Transfers during the year	<u>-1,000</u>	<u>0</u>
Balance 31 December	<u>4,344</u>	<u>5,344</u>

Total designated funds	<u>12,023</u>	<u>17,344</u>
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Unrestricted and undesignated funds

Balance 1 January	100,242	110,078
Transfers during the year	<u>2,443</u>	<u>-9,836</u>
Balance 31 December	<u>102,685</u>	<u>100,242</u>

Totals	Restricted	Designated	Unrestricted & undesignated	Total
	£	£	£	£
18,113	12,023	102,685		132,821

10. SUMMARY OF ASSETS BY FUND

	unrestricted	restricted	total	2019 funds	funds
	£	£	£		
Investments		130,558			130,558
Debtors & prepayments		20,333			20,333
Short term deposits		6,600			6,600
Cash at bank and in hand		8,325	18,113		26,438
less creditors due within one year		<u>(51,108)</u>			<u>(51,108)</u>
		<u>114,708</u>	<u>18,113</u>		<u>132,821</u>

11. CHARITABLE DONATIONS

	£	£
	2019	2018
Children's Ambulance	500	
African Child Trust	500	
Ageing Well in Lewisham	500	
Cancer Research	500	
Farm Africa	500	
Mampong Orphanage	200	
Calais project	0	170
Choir Bursaries	0	206
Lewisham Parochial	0	230
St Christopher's hospice	<u>0</u>	<u>200</u>
	<u>2,700</u>	<u>806</u>

## Vicar's Report, 2019/20

I am writing this annual report in the midst of lock-down necessitated by the Covid-19 outbreak. In these extraordinary circumstances, with the annual meeting postponed (and possibly cancelled), writing a report that possibly no-one will read is a surreal business. Nonetheless, it is important to record the achievements of the last year, and so, as usual, I'll try to summarise the past twelve months as best I can.

After all the activity of 2018, when we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of the church with all panache, 2019 has been a much quieter year, with our Sunday and weekday masses following their now familiar pattern. One change we did make was to the timing of the weekday masses, several of which were not well attended, and so the Friday mass was moved from 6.30pm to 9.30am, and the Tuesday mass from 7.30pm to 1.10pm to suit the needs of office workers, for example from Laurence House (of whom we did at first welcome quite a selection) – unless it is the first Tuesday of the month when we have an additional 7.30pm mass of healing with laying on of hands and anointing. I am particularly grateful for the support of my colleagues in keeping up this cycle; few churches are able to offer a daily mass, and two masses a day is even rarer!

Otherwise, we enjoyed our usual rich cycle of liturgy – Eastertide, Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, Dedication, the long cycle of summer Sundays in Ordinary Time, Harvest Festival, Christ the King, Advent, Christmas, New Year's eve, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Lent and back to Easter – all celebrated in style with good music and good serving. A major change this year came with Jocelyn Freeman, our director of music, taking time off to have her first baby, and we were delighted to appoint Joe Tobin, a student in choral conducting at the Royal Academy of Music, as her interim replacement, who has made a significant impact on the life of the choir in his short time with us, and whom we have much enjoyed having with us. However, we have still been unable to appoint a permanent organist, but have been very pleased to welcome some excellent Sunday organists including Cliodna Shanahan, Stephen Robinson, Andrew Jones and our mainstay when he is not touring with an opera company, Ian Shaw. Once a month we have continued with 'Invite a Friend' Sundays, when members of the congregation are encouraged to bring someone with them and we have easy-to-follow service booklets (which are

always popular); on these occasions the liturgy also tends to be a little more relaxed, often with our young people performing a sketch or play.

Notable Sundays included our Harvest Festival with a speaker from Christian Aid, Peggy Amoako, who talked to us in the hall afterwards about Christian Aid's latest projects, followed by a parish lunch. Other parish lunches included a bring & share lunch after the annual meeting, a birthday lunch kindly provided Eula Nicholas in June, and a fund-raising lunch in connection with the Summer Fair in July and the Advent Fair in December. And on February 2nd, for the Feast of Candlemass, this year on a Sunday, we had a Sunday morning healing mass with laying on of hands and anointing, where the preacher was the Rev'd Christine Bainbridge, a neighbour of Fr Andrew's at Bromley College. We had a total of 6 clergy to anoint the congregation; it all went very smoothly, as almost the entire congregation came up for anointing, and seemed to have been much appreciated. We will plan another for later in the year.

The Advent Carol Service was particularly good this year and Fr Anthony, my new colleague from Holy Cross Church, Sangley Road, read the Gospel of the Annunciation, while our Christmas Carol Service featured Cat's Chorus who brought with them a good number of supporters and friends. The New Year's Eve liturgy, ably celebrated by Mtr Sue, with Peter Charles preaching, was well attended as usual, with its usual large number of guests.

We ran quiet mornings in Advent ('The Way to the Manger') and Lent ('Praying with St Ignatius'); but decided after Christmas to pause Evening Prayer on Sunday evenings. On March 13th, the choir sang compline in the Lady Chapel, which was beautiful. Another innovation, made possible by the gift by a member of the congregation of a most beautiful modern monstrance created specially for us out of pewter by Victoria Rance, is adoration before the sacrament for 30 minutes every Friday morning before mass. This is much appreciated, and in the already special atmosphere of the Lady Chapel, a time of deep prayer and devotion. Other gifts to the church this year include a set of five purple concelebration stoles and two tailor-made linen altar cloths. And another innovation, we now have gluten-free wafers available for those who need them.

Socially, the year has been rather lower-key compared with the previous year. Nonetheless, in addition to the lunches mentioned above, we

had a well-attended parish barbecue on August 24th, and a parish dance on October 26th, which raised nearly £520. The MU ran a very successful trip to Windsor. And Sunday morning post-mass celebrations go from strength to strength – for many of the congregation, it is the social event of their week; the convivial atmosphere is greatly appreciated by all sections of the congregation, and the diversity of those enjoying coffee and other refreshments together is one of its most attractive elements.

There were a number other specifically fund-raising events over the year; we had a ‘big breakfast’ for Christian Aid in May, and special harvest collection; the Summer Fair raised £515, and the Cox family raise £990 for Cancer Research by walking 26 miles. Beverley Willacey raised money for the Macmillan Coffee Morning on September 27th; Jeanne Mynett raised money for Sri Lanka by selling cards from that country; the Christmas Card booklet, organised by Peter Charles raised money for Toilet Twinning (enough for several toilets); Joyce Turpin organised a Remembrance Tree and raised £51, and the Choir raised money by carol singing round Catford precinct and several pubs. The PCC voted to make substantial donations to Cancer Research, the London Air Ambulance, the African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust, the Africa Child Trust, and a ‘Sand Dams’ charity.

It was a good year for concerts. Jocelyn Freeman and Mairéad Thomas between them organised two outstanding series of concerts by professional musicians; Jocelyn’s ‘Soundeasel’ series, sponsored by (amongst others) the Arts Council, was a series of concerts by young professional musicians after the mass on Sundays, with titles such ‘Vienna, City of Dreams’ and ‘Summer Nights’. Mairéad organised three series of concerts by tutors from the Blackheath Conservatoire, ranging from classical piano duets, and an oboe recital to trumpet and ’cello recitals. Additionally, we had concerts to raise money for medical research into Norrie’s Disease and Refugee Action, and Natalia Loesch gave us a stunning piano recital after mass featuring César Franck’s ‘Prelude, Chorale and Fugue’ played with both technical accuracy and passion.

As well as our quiet mornings, there have been a good number of teaching sessions aimed at different sections of the congregation. Antoinette Ojiako once again led six months’ of training leading up to first communion. Peter and Sue Charles ran a number of film nights, showing Christian-inspired films and leading discussion

on them. We had a training session for new members of the Church Council (of whom there were quite a few this year). And we had several series of Christian Basics courses, courtesy of Fr Andrew, beginning with a (not-well attended) supper – an overview of the Bible (ending with the journeys of St Paul) and an introduction to church history, which included a much-valued session on the origins of the Church of England and the rise of other denominations. We also planned a series of Lent study groups based on a Christian Aid booklet (see below), which had to be cancelled after the first two sessions due to the lock-down.

Visiting preachers this year included Mtr Sarah Simpson, curate of Good Shepherd Lee, Canon Mandy Ford, the canon chancellor, and Fr Christopher Rogers, curate of St John’s Church, Downham, all during Advent. Given the richness of Christian experience of our own ministry team, we had decided to preach Lent this year ourselves, basing our sermon series on a small Christian Aid booklet ‘Count your Blessings’, which looks at the effects of climate change through the eyes of farmers in East Africa, and what can be done to ameliorate their predicament; and then after mass, a series of invited speakers were planned to talk to us in the church hall over coffee. We enjoyed presentations from Matthew Shaw, speaking about the role of Healthwatch Lewisham, and Ashraf Dabous, assistant imam from the Lewisham Islamic Centre, Shakeel Begg’s number two, who gave a very articulate talk about the nature of Islam, and the work of the Centre with young people at risk of violence. The other two planned speakers, the Mayor of Lewisham, Damien Egan, and Rossy Kissi-Debra, a local (and now international) campaigner for clean air, whose daughter died of asthma possibly linked to road pollution, sadly had to be postponed due to the lock-down that closed the church the Sunday before Mothering Sunday.

Our important work with our young people continues apace. The choir lay on regular training events for their young singers; Junior Church is run by Matthew & Mairéad Thomas and Antoinette Ojiako; and Antoinette also ran a very successful first communion course for your people. Junior Church staged an impressive number of dramas over the course of the year at our family masses, and also produced an alternative Advent calendar for the weekly sheet. And on May 12th, Precious Igbineweka, Aaron Lapite, Faith Moore, Victoria Obasogie,

Alan Thomas were duly admitted to communion after a six month course. Antoinette began a new course in the autumn, sadly cut short by the Covid lock-down just as the children were approaching the final stages. We are all hugely grateful to all who help out with Junior Church and with the choir, building up the next generation of Christian. In addition, we sold quite a few DVDs of our 'Catford 1968' performance – we still have some left, should anyone want one; we have now reduced the price considerably. And Ruby Fox took part in an artistic event aimed at drawing attention to the imminence of the climate change crisis, 'Sounding Twelve Years', ringing a bell in church to alert people to the dangers ahead; her performance featured in a broadcast on the subject by a German Radio station.

St Laurence's continues to be invested as deeply as possible in the local community, offering its resources to the people of Catford. We hosted an evening for the Catford Free Film Festival, with a showing of 'The Other Side of Hope' by Aki Kaurismäki, a well-known Finnish director, a film about an unlikely relationship between a Finnish businessman and an asylum seeker. We hosted the Catford South local assembly, and the annual clergy study day for all clergy in the Woolwich episcopal area, which was based on the theme of access. Fortunately, the recent improvements to our access as a church meant that we were well placed to host this, although we did have to purchase ramps to deal with the two steps of the altar platform. Our Peace & Justice Group was refounded by Jean Mynett and John Strange, and for One World Week they invited the congregation to complete a questionnaire that had first been used in 1990. The differences in people's answers were striking, especially with regard to climate change. Our Harvest Festival gifts went, as in previous years, to Lewcas, the local church's group supporting Asylum Seekers. And on July 6th, I officiated (for the first time!) at the Borough's annual service of remembrance at the crematorium.

Also on the theme of community involvement, in May we were privileged to host a most remarkable community event. In response to the terrorist attack on a two mosques in Christ Church, New Zealand on March 15th, where 51 people died, the local mosque here in Catford had received many letters and phone calls of support and condolence; then, on Easter Sunday, terrorists attacked three churches in Sri Lanka

(as well as three hotels), killing 259 people. Shakeel Begg suggested organising a joint memorial event for the Christians of Sri Lanka, to be held at St Laurence's. Shakeel and I went to visit Fr Antony Megalan, the parish priest of Holy Cross, himself from South India, and between us on May 5th we laid on a sequence of talks and readings by members of different faith communities across Lewisham, with civic representatives also. It was well attended, and afterwards refreshments were provided by 'A piece of cake', an interfaith group who often provide refreshments at community events. An event like this is the fruit of many years of quiet and patient work by leaders of the different faith communities, which can be quickly focussed at times like these. St Laurence's is truly privileged to be at the heart of a Borough so rich in faith and community groups, who are able to work so closely with each other, and with the support of the local authority. This year, I attended a Hannukah event and 'The Great Lewisham Salaam' – celebrations respectively of Judaism and Islam – both hosted by the Mayor of Lewisham in the Civic Suite.

On a lighter note, our annual interfaith cricket match was this year transformed into an interfaith football match. The St Laurence team, playing together for the first time, played hard, but were defeated 3–1 by a younger and fitter team.

Over the year, we organised, in conjunction with All Saints, Blackheath, not one but two pilgrimages to Italy – first, a glorious week in Paestum, south of Naples, where we stayed in a comfortable monastery with a lovely sea view, and visited the Greek temples at Paestum itself as well as Naples, Herculaneum, Salerno and had a celebratory day sailing along the Amalfi coast shared with Italian bank holiday crowds. And in late October, we went to stay in the Diocesan Retreat House in Cannaregio, in Venice. We were fortunate to enjoy clear, sunny weather and vast number of churches, including celebrating a memorable mass in the ancient church of Santa Fosca, on the island of Torcello.

The fabric of the church still proves time-consuming to maintain, although with every year that passes, I become more aware of quite how stunning a space it is that the interior of the church provides. As homes and flats become smaller and smaller, to be stewards of so magnificent an open space takes on increasing importance not only for ourselves but for the locality. On a sunny day, the light-filled

interior of the church always raises the spirits as the sun stream in through the glazing. It is a truly beautiful space, and worth all the work that goes into maintaining it.

At the end of last year, I reported that Jonathan Louth, the church architect, had discovered some alarming cracks in the concrete, and that we had had some structural engineers in to look at them and at the condition of the structure of the church generally. Their report came back some months ago, fortunately giving us a clean bill of health. There are some local concrete repairs to have done, but basically the building is in good shape. We can now get on with raising the funds for the concrete repairs, and some essential work to the box gutters at the base of the dome, which urgently need relining. At time of writing, we have been promised a grant of £13,000 from the National Churches Trust, and £2,000 from the Rochester Bridge Trust (fortunately, we are in the ancient county of Kent), and have some £11,000 still to raise towards these works. And, the icing on the cake, Ijeoma Nwajiobi co-ordinated the redecoration of the church sacristy, something on our to-do list for about 20 years, and the sacristy, now transformed, is looking great. The other achievement finally realised is the replacement of the Church noticeboard after a number of years of increasing invisibility.

I also reported at the end of last year that Mtr Sue Charles had been appointed parish manager, upon the departure of Marek Nowakowski. Sue has taken the Centre by storm, completely reorganising every aspect of its running. At the end of May, Nick Chapman, our residential caretaker for many years, handed in his notice. The Church Council approved the management committee's decision no longer to have a resident full-time caretaker, and to rent out the caretaker's flat in order to use the income to pay for a number of different caretakers who could be brought in as required. This change has taken considerable work to bring about, but has increased the flexibility and availability of our space. Thus on a Sunday, for example, we now host half a dozen different churches and religious groups. Considerable investment has also been made in necessary repairs and improvements in order to increase the Centre's lettable, and we look forward to seeing the fruits of this next year. The whole congregation owes a huge debt of thanks to Sue, and to the Centre Management Team, Kay Lanston (the chair), Joyce Turpin, Robert Green, Ray Williams, Jeanne Mynett and the churchwardens.

Over the year, as well as Nick Chapman, we also said good-bye to our organ scholar, William Campbell, going on to be organ scholar at Guildford Cathedral, to Nicholas Mannoukas, our organist, who left to go freelance, a temporary farewell to Jocelyn Freeman, who left on maternity leave after the summer term and gave birth to Iker in the autumn, and hello to Joe Tobin, her interim replacement. Fr Martin Preston, who was on the staff here in the early 2000s, moved back into the parish, taking up residence at Oakcroft Nursing home, where he is one of the most visited residents.

A number of parishioners lost close family members – Margaret Greaves lost her mother Marva in early September, as did Victor Obasogie (Rosaline) and Cheryl Boyce (Caroline). Grace Blyth lost her brother John, Frances Satchell her husband Wentworth, and Elvena Oliver her husband John, and former parishioners Lesley Medgett, Ellie Jefferies, John Oliver and Clementine Stonebanks, and former Bishop, Roy Williamson, also died. Orelth Robinson, who for many years used to pop into services very briefly, rarely staying more than a couple of minutes, died in February, as did Aston Lloyd, a familiar figure in the back row of the Sunday congregation. Fr Geoffrey Kirk, vicar for many years of St Stephen's, Lewisham, died in March. We had two particularly tragic deaths: Esme Francis' daughter Donna, a much-loved and energetic school teacher, died suddenly in November at the prime of life; and Fr Ian Thompson, beloved husband of Leanne, died after a brief illness in December. Donna's ninth-night, held in a Youth Club in New Cross, was the largest I have ever attended; while Bishop Christopher himself presided at Ian's funeral, with many of his prison chaplain colleagues also present. Our heart-felt condolences to Esme and Leanne. But we also have things to give thanks for: Perpetua and Ken Agumadu had a baby, Isobel, and Matthew Airende and Helen Ehioghae were joyfully married.

It only remains to give thanks to all those not named above who have happily devoted their time and attention to the good running of the parish. I have been blessed with two exceptionally competent churchwardens, Sybil Bair and Beverley Chin, and am most grateful to them for their support and leadership over the year. With various changes of occupancy at the flats, they have had their work cut out, making sure that all our tenants are content with their lodgings. The ministry team, Fr Iain, Fr Anthony, Fr Andrew, Peter and Mtr Sue Charles, Grace Blyth



and Ijeoma Nwajiobi, have worked incredibly hard over the year, saying masses, conducting funerals, running teaching sessions, preaching and doing a huge amount of pastoral work and giving support to parishioners in need. Thanks to Kofi Hagan, our sacristan, who is here every Saturday preparing the church for the Sunday services, and to Kevin Counihan, who looks after the Lady Chapel. Thank you to the safeguarding team – Peter Charles, aided by Lesley Ihekuna and Esme Alexander – who have had a busy year with various changes of procedure and practice, and some difficult issues to sort out. Thank you to Robert Green, unflagging in his efforts to raise the profile of Christian Aid among the congregation, and to raise funds too, and to Margaret Greaves for running the MU. Thanks too to Debbie Watson, who writes the parish registers, and who has had a relatively easy year with only one wedding and 7 baptisms – rather low numbers of both – and to Sue Dearie, who is brilliant at persuading people to read lessons in church. Some of the young people she has persuaded to do a reading over the last months have read exceptionally well. Marva Phillips and Eleisea Durant reliably staff the Welcome Table every Sunday morning. A final thank you to Andy, our long-suffering finance worker, who has successfully transferred our rather complex accounts into Quickbooks, ensuring their transparency and (relative) ease of use, and to Mark Gayfer, a retired accountant living locally who, without formally even being PCC treasurer has put much time into the preparation of our annual accounts, and giving financial advice generally.

The list could go on – but that will suffice for now, and apologies to anyone I have accidentally omitted. One of the great features of St Laurence's is the very large number of people who are prepared to help out, whether in big

ways or small; without which, our church would certainly not be the diverse, engaged and vibrant community it is today.

Fr Charles

#### *Postscript*

Since the period this report largely relates to, the church has been closed on advice from the archbishop, and our services are now conducted solely on line, broadcast from the Vicarage, supplemented by a colour-printed weekly newsletter posted out to all those who do not have access to email or a tablet.

Rather than following the example of some of my colleagues, who try to reproduce a full Sunday service in all its pomp and glory, I have been concerned to try to stream domestically appropriate liturgy – an example of how to celebrate the presence of God and the love of Christ in one's own home.

Particular thanks at this point to Peter Charles, who, together with my colleagues on the ministry team, has risen to the challenge of taking the parish on-line, and become our minister for Facebook, Whatsapp, and much else, alongside everything else that he does for the parish.

Even so, an incarnational religion such as Christianity, that is founded above all on God's embodiment in human flesh, is never going to sit entirely comfortably with the virtual representation of God's very physical love and care for this world on a tablet or phone screen. Few people are called to be hermits in the wilderness for long. Even Jesus, after saying his prayers, came down from the mountain ready for the market place.

And so we look forward to the day – hopefully now not too far away – when we shall be restored to our church, and can worship God with our customary full-bodied praise!

## **PCC SECRETARY'S REPORT 2019/2020**

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 Chairwoman 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 PCC are listed below:**

Canon Charles Pickstone, Fr Iain Farquhar, Kay Lanston (Centre Chairwoman), Joyce Turpin (Secretary), Grace Blyth (Reader), Peter Charles (Reader), Robert Green (Deanery Synod Rep), Victor Obasogie, Antoinette Ojiako (Junior Church Rep), Onyeka Chuka Iloanya, Gabriel Nwogbo, Henry Otoo, Jospeh Smart, Ken Agumandu(Deanery Synod Rep), Sybil Bair (Church Warden), Dele Muji Beverley Chin (Church Warden), Margaret Greaves (MU), and Jeni Griffiths (Deanery Synod Rep), Bridgit Sam-Bailey, Florence Brown-Marke. Unfortunately Henry Otoo and Joseph Smart did not take up their place on the committee.

### **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 five charities were chosen to receive £500 each, they were Cancer Research, London Air Ambulance, African Caribbean Leukemia Trust, Africa Child Trust and Sandams.

Also a large amount of money has been raised for other charities this year including Mampong Childrens Home and The Bishops Robe Appeal.



**Treasurers Report 2020**

**Accounts and Budget**

This has been a financially challenging year – perhaps our most challenging ever. With no regular services in church for many months due to the various lockdowns, and no income from the Centre for the same reason, our usual sources of revenue were dramatically reduced. Sunday morning collections plummeted from nearly £11,000 in 2019 to £2,993 in 2020, and Centre income from just under £135,000 to £70,616 (of which £47,027 was furlough payments from the government to our staff on furlough). However, many members of the congregation showed truly remarkable generosity, and giving through the bank increased by 40% compared with 2019. This increased level of giving showed a really reassuring confidence in the work carried out by St Laurence’s, and certainly enabled our financial survival. It also meant that we could continue to pay our contributions to the Diocese, which also go to help poorer churches not so well endowed with a community centre and clergy flats.

Other factors over the year included a steady income from the flats, and two major grants – a grant from Lewisham Borough of £25,000, and a grant from the National Lottery Communities’ Fund of £8,985. The latter was spent on reducing our prices (which had had to be dramatically increased to cover the cost of the deep cleaning now required between sessions) in the period between lockdowns when the Centre was able partially to reopen; the former, despite ambitious plans, had largely to be kept in reserve when the October lockdown prevented them being realised.

The year end saw a surplus of £23,312 (before investment income) – which represents the unspent portion of the Lewisham grant, which will be carried forward to 2021. We will use it in 2021 in order to keep our prices low once we are able to reopen, and to undertake ambitious improvements to make the facilities better able to welcome the many diverse community groups that we are proud to accommodate. Although technically unrestricted income, this surplus has been assigned to a designated ‘Lockdown Restart Fund’.

Investment income, despite the hit to the economy caused by the pandemic, was £9,233. This sum has been assigned to a flats maintenance fund – the flats are all in need of a major upgrade, and given how much we rely upon the income they produce when times are bad, it seems sensible to invest a good sum from our limited reserves to their improvement.

**Income:**

**• Grants**

We received a number of grants. The Church council would like to record publicly its gratitude to our various donors in this difficult year.

London Borough of Lewisham restart fund:	£25,000
Allchurches Trust: grant for digital ministry:	£3,800
Woolwich Area mission team grant for digital camera:	£500
National Churches Trust – roof & concrete repairs:	£12,824
Rochester Bridge Trust – roof repairs:	£2,000
Swire family trust – roof repairs:	£5,000
Woolwich area mission team – heating survey:	£1,605
National Lottery Communities Fund – restart project:	£8,985

**• Furlough**

We received a total of £47,027 from HMRC to pay furlough wages to our Centre Manager and caretaking staff. But for this sum, many of the caretaking team would have had to have been laid off.

## **Expenditure**

Looking at significant areas of expenditure,	
the diocesan quota was	£69,000
church maintenance	£75,157
Choir and Music costs	£12,369
Charitable donations	£2,500

(reflecting our reduced income because of the pandemic).

All areas of expenditure were very tightly controlled over the year, with only essential repairs and maintenance being carried out, to make the most of our uncertain income. The parish manager and the bookkeeper were compelled to abandon the budget set for the year and instead produce a monthly cash-flow forecast, which kept the operation out of trouble, although at times there were anxious moments.

## **Bank Account**

After having difficulties with the bank (NatWest) (they were very unsupportive over the pandemic, offering us a free overdraft facility which they then refused), the expense of maintaining the account, and the difficulty of satisfactorily starting on-line banking in a secure manner, the decision was taken to move the church bank account to CAF bank, a much cheaper bank that offers a better service, and specialises in charities. The move finally took place in the 2021 financial year.

## **Bookkeeper**

In November, we were sorry to say good-bye to our finance worker, Andrew McGuire, who had carried out our book-keeping for several years. During his time, Andy computerised our accounts, initially running a vastly complex spreadsheet devised by a former hon. treasurer, Richard Sutton, which had worked well for many years, but had become rather inflexible. Andy first moved us to an accounting software package designed for small charities called 'Beancounter', and then latterly we moved to Quickbooks. We are grateful to him for his work for us. Thanks to his work, we are now able to do the book-keeping in house.

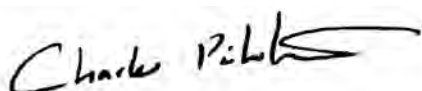
Parochial Church Council of St Laurence, Catford  
**Statement of Financial Position at 31 December 2020**

	Notes	2020 £	2019 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Investments	5	143,753	130,558
		<u>143,753</u>	<u>130,558</u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors and prepayments	6a	12,166	20,333
Short-term deposits	6b	7,789	6,600
Cash at bank and in hand		37,796	26,438
		<u>57,751</u>	<u>53,371</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
Creditors – due within 1 year	7	36,138	51,108
NET CURRENT ASSETS/(LIABILITIES)		21,613	2,263
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>165,366</u>	<u>132,821</u>
<b>PARISH FUNDS</b>			
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>			
General funds		103,877	102,685
Designated funds	9	43,376	12,023
<b>Restricted</b>	8	18,113	18,113
		<u>165,366</u>	<u>132,821</u>

The notes on the succeeding pages form part of these accounts

Approved by the Parochial Church Council on May 19th, 2020 and signed on its

behalf by:



The Rev'd Canon Charles Pickstone (PCC Chair)

**Statement of Financial Activities**

for the year ended 31 December 2020

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2020 £	Restricted funds 2020 £	Total funds 2020 £	Total funds 2019 £
<b>Incoming resources</b>					
Voluntary income	2(a)	81,324	34,117	115,441	74,877
Activities for generating funds	2(b)	67,676	0	67,676	57,478
Income from investments	2(c)	3,962	0	3,962	3,935
Church activities	2(d)	73,382	0	73,382	139,337
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>226,344</b>	<b>34,117</b>	<b>260,461</b>	<b>275,627</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Church activities	3(a)	202,789	34,117	236,906	299,504
Raising funds	3(b)	243	0	243	485
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>203,032</b>	<b>34,117</b>	<b>237,149</b>	<b>299,989</b>
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) BEFORE INVESTMENT GAINS AND LOSSES		<b>23,312</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23,312</b>	<b>(24,362)</b>
NET GAINS (LOSSES) ON INVESTMENTS	5	9,233	0	9,233	21,484
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		<b>32,545</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>32,545</b>	<b>(2,878)</b>
Total funds brought forward		0	18,113	18,113	135,699
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<b>32,545</b>	<b>18,113</b>	<b>50,658</b>	<b>132,821</b>

## **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**

There 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 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

Fixtures and fittings: 20 years

Computers: 3 years

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.



## 2. INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	TOTAL 2020	TOTAL 2019
	£	£	£	£
<b>2(a) Voluntary income</b>				
Planned giving: Gift Aid donations	36,201		36,201	25,971
Tax recoverable	10,185		10,185	7,580
Other planned giving	3,655		3,655	8,185
Collections (open plate)	2,993		2,993	10,920
Gift days	0		0	0
Grants (note 12)	25,000	34,117	59,117	4,558
Donations, appeals, etc	3,290		3,290	17,663
	<u>81,324</u>	<u>34,117</u>	<u>115,441</u>	<u>74,877</u>
<b>2(b) Activities for generating funds</b>			0	
Summer & Advent Fairs, events	0		0	1,878
Fundraising	3,076		3,076	0
Rent-temporary let of clergy flats	64,600		64,600	55,600
	<u>67,676</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>67,676</u>	<u>57,478</u>
<b>2(c) Income from investments</b>				
Dividends on CCLA Investment Fund	3,962		3,962	3,930
Bank & CCLA Deposit Fund Interest	9,233		9,233	5
	<u>13,195</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>13,195</u>	<u>3,935</u>
<b>2(d) Income from church activities</b>				
Fees for weddings and funerals	2,766		4,575	4,575
Church Centre lettings-local community use	70,616		134,762	134,762
	<u>73,382</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>139,337</u>	<u>139,337</u>
<b>Total income</b>	<b><u>235,577</u></b>	<b><u>34,117</u></b>	<b><u>335,649</u></b>	<b><u>275,627</u></b>

## 3. EXPENDITURE

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	TOTAL 2020	TOTAL 2019
	£	£	£	£
<b>3(a) Church Activities</b>				
Missionary & charitable giving, (note 11)	2,500		2,500	2,700
Ministry: diocesan parish quota	69,000		69,000	67,207
Other ministry cost	6,725	8,985	15,710	29,740
Church running & maintenance	75,157		75,157	109,715
Major repairs	0	25,132	25,132	21,679
Staff & volunteer training	0		0	92
Printing, postage & stationery	2,643		2,643	2,258
Bank charges	719		719	1,130
Youth work	0		0	164
Director of music, organist, tuning	12,369		12,369	14,890
Caretaking	33,676		33,676	49,929
	<u>202,789</u>	<u>34,117</u>	<u>236,906</u>	<u>299,504</u>
<b>3(b) Raising funds</b>				
Costs of refreshments	243		243	485
	<u>243</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>243</u>	<u>485</u>
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>	<b><u>203,032</u></b>	<b><u>34,117</u></b>	<b><u>237,149</u></b>	<b><u>299,989</u></b>

#### 4. STAFF COSTS

	2020	2019
Wages & salaries	£ 97,450	£ 89,199
HMRC Job Retention Grant received	£ 47,027	NIL
No. of permanent employees	7	4

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, and a number of caretakers.

#### 5. FIXED ASSETS

<b>Investments</b>	2020	2019
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)	54,942	54,942
Miss Hilda May Augusta Marsh & Miss Pansie Beatrice Edney bequests (1989)	10,034	10,034
	<u>64,976</u>	<u>64,976</u>

These funds are principally invested in units of the CBF Church of England Investment Fund		
Market value of 7085.49 units at 01 January 2020 (2019: 7085.49 units)	130,557	114,144
Sale of 475.41 units during 2019 (none in 2020)	0	-9000
Cost of 204.41 additional units purchased during 2020 (2019: 216.23)	3,962	3,929
Increase (decrease) in Market Value during the year	9,234	21,484
Market value of 7030.62 units at 31 December 2020 (2019: 6863.50 units)	<u>143,753</u>	<u>130,557</u>

		Units	Value (£)
Cost of additional units	34 Canadian Avenue	159.52	3,092
	Marsh & Edney	44.89	870
		<u>204.41</u>	<u>3,962</u>
Units at December 31st, 2020	34 Canadian Avenue	5,486.66	112,184
	Marsh & Edney	1,543.96	31,569
		<u>7,030.62</u>	<u>143,753</u>

#### 6. CURRENT ASSETS

##### 6(a) Debtors and prepayments

	2020	2019
	£	£
<b>Debtors (Unrestricted funds)</b>		
Prepayments and accrued income	8,030	2,322
Debtors	4,136	18,011
	<u>12,166</u>	<u>20,333</u>

##### 6(b) Short term deposits

Deposits with Nat West Bank	2,389	0
Deposit protection scheme	5,400	6,600
	<u>7,789</u>	<u>6,600</u>

#### 7. LIABILITIES

	2020	2019
	£	£
<b>Amounts held on behalf of others</b>		
Vicar's Discretionary fund	2,625	2,625
Women's fellowship	1,849	1,849
Choir holiday fund	268	268
Choir Bursary fund	3,479	3,479
Minichoir fund	310	310
Choir Concerts Fund	1,120	200
Benevolent Fund	200	200
Toilet Twinning	0	267
Other	1,054	2,174
	<u>10,905</u>	<u>11,372</u>
Flat deposits held	5,400	6,600
Other creditors and accruals	19833	33,336
	<u>36,138</u>	<u>51,308</u>

**8. RESTRICTED FUNDS**

The restricted funds comprises money donated for the church lighting project

	2020	2019
	18,113	18113
	<u>18,113</u>	<u>18,113</u>

**9. SUMMARY OF UNRESTRICTED FUND MOVEMENTS**

	2020	2019
	£	£

## Designated unrestricted funds

## Church maintenance fund

Balance 1 January	7,679	12,000
Transfers during the year	0	(4,321)
Balance 31 December	<u>7,679</u>	<u>7,679</u>

## Centre maintenance fund

Balance 1 January	4,344	5,344
Transfers during the year	0	(1,000)
Balance 31 December	<u>4,344</u>	<u>4,344</u>

## Flats maintenance fund

Balance 1 January	0	0
Transfers during the year	13,195	0
Balance 31 December	<u>13,195</u>	<u>0</u>

## Lockdown Restart Fund (London Borough of Lewisham)

Balance 1 January	25,000	0
Transfers during the year	(6,868)	0
Balance 31 December	<u>18,132</u>	<u>0</u>

## Total designated funds

	<u>43,350</u>	<u>12,023</u>
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## Unrestricted and undesignated funds

Balance 1 January	102,685	100,242
Surplus and transfers during the year	1,192	2,443
Balance 31 December	<u>103,877</u>	<u>102,685</u>

<b>Totals</b>	Restricted	Designated	Unrestricted & undesignated	Total
	£	£	£	£
	18,113	43,350	103,877	165,340

**10. SUMMARY OF ASSETS BY FUND**

	unrestricted funds	restricted funds	total 2020
	£	£	£
Investments	143,753		143,753
Debtors & prepayments	12,166		12,166
Short term deposits	7,789		7,789
Cash at bank and in hand	19,683	18,113	37,796
less creditors due within one year	(36,138)		(36,138)
	<u>147,253</u>	<u>18,113</u>	<u>165,366</u>

**11. CHARITABLE DONATIONS**

	£	£
	2020	2019
London Air Ambulance	500	500
Cancer Research	500	
Excellent Development	500	
African Child Trust	500	
ACLT	500	
Children's Ambulance		500
African Child Trust		500
Ageing Well in Lewisham		500
Farm Africa		500
Mampong Orphanage		200
	<u>2,500</u>	<u>2,700</u>

## **Vicar's Report, 2020/21**

Last year's Vicar's Report was written just as the Church had been closed at the beginning of lockdown on March 22nd 2020. It ended with the rather pious hope that 'we look forward to the day – hopefully now not too far away – when we shall be restored to our church, and can worship God with our customary full-bodied praise.' Little did we know that it would be a full year before the church would be fully reopened on March 14th, 2021, and even then congregational singing would still be a long way off. It has been the most extraordinary year. In Biblical terms, we have experienced a sort of sabbatical. The whole world has experienced a break from its usual way of doing things, a disruption of usual patterns, an enforced pause. It will be interesting to discover what sort of radical changes in attitude, values or habit – if any – emerge from the pandemic.

For the church community, the last year has brought about very different ways of doing things. We have discovered that things previously held to be unchanging can be done in different ways. Perhaps we have discovered a more authentic Christianity – a sense of what is really important to us as Christians.

Thanks to our already strong sense of community, I believe St Laurence's has coped well with the various closures of the church and disruption to our usual patterns of worship. Inevitably, we have lost touch with some members of the congregation, but by and large we have held together better than could have been imagined, or than I feared at the outset. Members of the congregation have been looking out for each other, ringing each other up, contributing to our social media, and keeping each other's spirits up. I very much hope that the whole experience of lockdown will have led to growth of St Laurence's as a community.

### **The story of St Laurence's Covid year**

And so the year began with the announcement on the Feast of the Annunciation 2020, of all days, that all Anglican Churches should be closed – and that not even clergy would be permitted to enter them. It was a move that has been widely criticised, and even now it is not clear what was the motive behind it. Sadly, it had the effect of making the Anglican church feel redundant from the very beginning of the crisis – clergy (even on their own) were not allowed to go to church to pray for their people or ring the church bell. The silent church bells

reflected what felt at the time like the muzzling of Anglican clergy. (Other denominations did not impose the same restrictions).

And so we took to our kitchens to stream church services to our parishioners and anyone else who cared to watch. It was a time of experiment. At St Laurence's, we made the decision to 'stream' the first Sunday service of lockdown only on the previous day, after comparing a number of local church offerings. ('Streaming' was a new word for us, representing a whole new way of doing things). Using a trusty iPad, we transmitted a Facebook-style eucharist from a kitchen counter. Despite its imperfections, it seemed to work well enough.

As importantly, we also made a number of decisions to try to keep the congregation together during the pandemic: we started a Saturday evening eNewsletter, sent off to the 150 members of the congregation who had given us permission to use their email address, and posted out a printed newsletter to everyone not on email. (Some fifty people). The first issue had a picture of a candle burning in the window of the Thomas family, as we had all been encouraged to do every evening, as a sign of hope. We started a church Whatsapp group, a Facebook page, a Youtube channel, and reactivated the parish Vimeo account. The ministry team divided up the congregation between us, and we began trying to keep in touch with the more elderly or isolated members of the congregation by phone. And we systematically began to broadcast, with increasing sophistication, a wide range of mainly home-made liturgical and devotional material.

In all of this, Peter Charles deserves particular credit for almost single-handedly developing what has turned into a rather sophisticated digital ministry to the congregation (and the wider world) using the very minimal resources available to him. As the pandemic wore on, we did receive a grant from the Diocese to buy a proper camera, and later Peter secured a large grant from the Allchurches Trust to buy new computers and streaming equipment. But much of it was trial and error with some notable disasters – such as the time we turned on a noise filter in our broadcasting software, which appeared to believe that the organ was simply noise, and did its best to block the sound of the organ whenever it played – as well as some golden moments (the Easter dawn eucharist in the Vicarage garden comes to mind, or Jocelyn Freeman's singing of the 'Sanctus' a year later).

We have all learnt a huge amount, and we have received much appreciative comment, some from people who were housebound in any case, and for the first time for a long time felt able to be included in their church's worship, and some from people who lived outside the parish, or worshipped elsewhere but tuned into our output.

Indeed, some 500 people briefly tuned into that Easter morning dawn mass as it took place in the vicarage garden with a lighting of the new fire that produced a great plume of flame fifteen feet high; while the following week, Low Sunday, traditionally a slack time for Christianity, our Facebook eucharist received 895 views! (Sadly, this figure was never repeated). But Peter Charles is always warning us about the folly of making too much these vanity statistics, and for our more usual figures you must read his report later in this booklet.

Holy Week 2020 was certainly a time of experiment. On Palm Sunday, we left a box of Palm Crosses in the church doorway, for people to collect during their permitted exercise period. Maundy Thursday saw an 'Agape' broadcast from the Vicarage dining room. Good Friday saw a stations of the Cross led by Peter Charles and a meditation by Grace Blyth. And on Easter Day, after the Dawn Mass referred to above and a more conventional eucharist celebrated for the whole St Laurence community in exile, we left a large box of Easter eggs in the shade of the choir vestry entrance for any young people and their parents who came over to church (and some walked from Forest Hill!)

As the year continued, we tried continually to explore more ways of connecting people. We posted a video of members of the congregation doing amusing things; we encouraged people to record themselves reading lessons, singing anthems (Savannah has been a particular star) or just saying 'hello' to the congregation (the prize here goes to the Agumadu family). During the Ascension to Pentecost season, Mtr Sue broadcast daily a noon meditation and morning & evening prayer, much appreciated by those who found the regular cycle of her praying the office extremely helpful. We had Bible studies on Zoom, and developed a Thursday evening meditation, led in turn by different members of the ministry team, which is still popular today.

Finally, on May 10th, clergy were allowed to re-enter their churches, to pray and to ring the Angelus at 8am and 6pm. This we did at St Laurence's (despite, sadly, complaints from a neighbour) right up until the summer holidays.

Many people found the sound of the church bell ringing again strangely comforting, even though they could not participate yet in church services. The following Thursday, Ascension Day, there was fittingly a mass in the vicarage garden. A couple of Sundays later, we celebrated the Feast of Corpus Christi, which was very strange when no-one could receive the holy communion for which we were giving thanks.

And then on June 15th, three months after the beginning of lockdown, churches were permitted to open for private prayer. At St Laurence's, we were among the first churches in the area to reopen. This necessitated a huge amount of work to develop risk assessments and to work out how to make the church safe. All credit here to our churchwardens, Sybil Bair and Beverley Chin, and to the PCC Standing Committee, especially Joyce Turpin, PCC secretary, who spent a long time cleaning the church, putting out signs, marking out pews and preparing stands of flowers to welcome back the congregation in a safe way. In these early days, many members of the congregation took advantage of the open church, and came to say their prayers and light a candle.

On July 5th we were back in church for Sunday services, (along with the re-opening of pubs and hairdressers). More risk assessments and anxious preparation took place, to work out how we could lay on a Sunday service without putting anyone at risk. A number of restrictions were developed with this aim in mind – a one-way system through the church, asking the congregation to wait to be seated, asking the servers to robe in the Lady Chapel, printing out lists for contact tracing... and in particular, after discussing whether to make seats bookable in advance to avoid having to turn people away, deciding to go for two Sunday services rather than one. To start with, we split the congregation into two, alphabetically, but this quickly proved to be unnecessary, and was soon dropped. Perhaps the restriction that had the most impact was the lack of singing, which was now forbidden as it had been discovered to be a potent source of transmission of the virus. Many people found that not being able to sing meant that the Sunday service failed to move them to prayer as they always hoped.

One thing we did seek to do was to create the effect of a sung mass without singing by asking our organist to supply a wide range of good organ music. We based this on the French tradition of Organ Masses (in France, the organ

has often been used as a substitute for singing at mass), and Ian Shaw rose to the occasion, working hard every Sunday to provide the appropriate music for our particular organ and our particular mass. There was a richness here that could feed the weary soul.

And on July 8th, we restarted our mid-week mass on a Wednesday as usual, but in the main church, which was used by some people as a way of coming back to church. Strangely, something I had forgotten until consulting my notes, it was only on July 26th that face coverings in church became mandatory.

All this time, we had been preparing the Centre for reopening. Sue Charles came back off furlough on July 1st, and we quickly did our best to open up St Laurence Centre as safely as we could (many more risk assessments and long discussions ensued). All credit here to Sue and her husband Peter – who by this time, as well as being an expert on social media, had gained a detailed knowledge of government rules and regulations regarding Covid precautions as they changed almost from day to day. Peter and Sue worked incredibly hard to discover how to make the Centre available to the local community while keeping it safe.

This was helped by being awarded grants of £25,000 from Lewisham and £8,985 from the National Lottery Communities Fund to help us with our preparations for reopening, which was essential to its success. Covid restrictions meant that any room in the Centre that was used had to be extensively cleaned before and afterwards, while the WC's needed cleaning at least every two hours. The cost of caretaking would have made reopening impossible but for these grants, which we used to subsidise the hire charges we would otherwise have had to have made, and bring back staff from furlough. Any number of groups were able to take advantage of our facilities through the summer and early autumn, and we were happy to be able to play our part in the opening up of this part of the Borough (little knowing that more restrictions were to come).

At the end of the summer holidays, which in my case had an unwelcome two-week extension thanks to my holiday destination being declared a quarantine zone while I was away, we were all looking forward to continuing the opening up process over the autumn (despite a worrying increase in infections) and even got as far as organising refreshments outside the church hall between the two Sunday masses on September

13th. Thanks to lovely sunshine, they were much appreciated – but then on September 20th the government introduced the Rule of 6, and that was the end of that. A month later on October 18th, London was placed in Tier 2 of restrictions, and three weeks later, on November 5th, lockdown restarted. Churches remained open for private prayer, but not for public worship. Sunday services had to be broadcast from the Lady Chapel with a couple of helpers only, until December 6th, the second Sunday of Advent, when we were all back in church for the usual two masses.

Even so, over the autumn, several events took. From September 13th, small choirs were once more permitted to sing (although not the congregation), and so every Sunday from September 13th until lockdown two, Jocelyn Freeman conducted separate choirs – the adult choir sang for the 9.30am mass, and the children's choir the 11am. Although hard work, this worked really well, and was beginning to attract different congregations to the two services. We celebrated Harvest Festival, and gave the congregation's generous donations of mainly tinned food to LEWCAS, the local churches' charity for asylum seekers; we also had a visit from Rushey Green School, whose year 1 celebrated a mini-harvest festival here. In mid-October, we were privileged to host the annual service of the Company of Nurses, usually in a church in the heart of the City of London; we restarted our Confirmation and First Communion Classes – abandoned in the Spring – and we just had time to celebrate the great feast of All Saints and the memorial of All Souls before lockdown restarted, fittingly almost the day after All Souls. But the church was still open for private prayer, and at the Archbishop's request, we rang the church bell every evening at 6pm, as a sign of hope.

On December 6th, the Second Sunday of Advent, we were back in church for 9.30 and 11am masses, sung by the (now) usual two choirs. A good number of congregation turned up, despite a total breakdown of the heating system. And the following Friday we had a special Advent service. Unable to hold an Advent Carol service, Ian Shaw, our wonderful acting organist, who has been an extraordinary support all through lockdown and beyond, devised an Advent meditation for sung and spoken voices, with organ and piano. Tony Morton and Ani Nelson performed the readings, Mairéad Sheerin and the choirs sang, and Ian and Jocelyn accompanied. It was deeply moving, challenging,

and highly original: one of the good things to come out of the pandemic year.

For Christmas, we took advantage of the new permission for outdoor singing – and organised a Christmas carol service on December 20th that began out of doors, with congregational singing (at last!) in the kick-about area, before we processed (socially distanced) back to church. (The same day, London went into Tier 4, but this didn't affect Church services). And on Christmas eve, we started the service by singing carols together outside the church. We were also able to organise our usual Christmas Greetings booklet, which was posted out to all members of the congregation.

Almost immediately after the New Year, the inevitable happened (many people had been arguing it should have happened weeks previously) and on January 5th we went into lockdown three. And so on Sunday January 10th we were back in the vicarage kitchen for mass, and then on January 17th broadcasting from church – but without a congregation. For many people, this was the toughest part of the whole pandemic. The first lockdown, although long, had been accompanied by beautiful Spring weather – the finest Spring for several years – and had the energy of novelty as we all became accustomed to working from home, and got to know every park within an hour of our locality. The second lockdown was only a month, and Christmas had been on the horizon. But this third lockdown took place in the dullest, gloomiest part of the year; infection rates in London were soaring, thanks to the Kent variant; energy levels were really low.

Against this background we resolved to make the Sunday service as life-giving as possible. In this we were helped by Jocelyn's beautiful singing of hymns and mass settings, Ian's magnificent playing, and some excellent sermons by my colleagues on the ministry team. Also our technology had evolved to the point where we were able to add the words of the hymns to our broadcasts, to enable viewers to sing the Sunday hymns alongside Jocelyn, albeit at home. We also encouraged people to interact with the service by making Facebook comments, so that they were participating in the service rather than just being passive observers. This worked well, and we often had many more interactions than other places of worship. And so for nine long Sundays, from Jan 10th to March 7th, this pattern continued. On February 1st, we held a minute's silence to commemorate the 100,000 UK deaths from Covid.

And we kept on innovating. In mid-February, we introduced 'The Word', a ten-minute version of the Sunday service for those who found watching a full service too hard; and we created 'Zoom coffee' – after the service, Fr Anthony invited the whole congregation to join him on Zoom for 45 minutes to share a drink and a conversation. It was successful, and we wished we had thought of it earlier.

As soon as permitted, we opened the church back up to the congregation. March 14th, Mothering Sunday, seemed an appropriate day to restart. Sybil and her daughter Anneka prepared bunches of daffodils and we welcomed back a significant proportion of the usual congregation to the two masses – the first mass sung by Jocelyn, the second sung by our choir, but in recording. The following day, the church was open during the day for private prayer, Wednesday masses restarted; and on March 23rd we held a minute's silence at noon, as part of the national Day of Reflection, followed by a ringing of the church bell at 12.01.

Life was still tough, even if very slowly getting back to normal. One particular aspect of this was our funeral ministry. While some churches were running food-banks or mental health support groups, our pastoral work was mainly directed to funerals – and not only Christian ones. The Centre was regularly in use, at this point, for Hindu funerals – we were the only place in south-east London open for them at the time – and Mtr Sue spent a good deal of time assisting bereaved families. And in church, we were having a record number: 8 in church in March alone (we'd had 9 funerals in church for the whole of 2020), and a total of 19 funerals in the first three months of the year. Each funeral requires often hours of pastoral work with the bereaved families, support that is gladly given, but can leave little energy for other things. Many bereaved families were very upset not only at the small numbers permitted at funerals, but also at the absence of singing. Fortunately, through Ian Shaw we have been able to recruit a first-class opera tenor, originally from Trinidad, Ronald Samm, who is able to provide the emotional release that mourners can find in well-sung hymns. We have also been able to stream funerals at the mourners' request, which has to some extent compensated for the small numbers.

And so onto Holy Week. Palm Sunday was a little subdued compared to our usual, but at least people could be given Palm Crosses. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday we celebrated

the eucharist with addresses; Maundy Thursday could not include footwashing or be followed by a watch, but was even so rather moving, especially the stripping of the altars. On Good Friday, Ian again devised for us a meditation in words and music; Tony Morton and Tanya Muchanyuka read for us a demanding series of readings and poems very beautifully; Jocelyn and Mairéad sang, Ian and Jocelyn accompanied. It was sad and beautiful, and led into the liturgy of Good Friday without a break.

On Easter Eve, at last, after a year's delay, the confirmation service took place, celebrated by Bishop Precious Omuku (sadly Bishop Karowe was still shielding); four members of the congregation (Roy Brown, Eghosa Osagie, Neale Ridding and Samuel Akinoshun) were confirmed. And the following morning at 11am, 6 young people were admitted to communion in a joyful Easter celebration (Godson Amaechi Ibekwe, Faustino Enobakhare, Gabriella Offei Quansan, Ellie Anumba, Holly Anumba and Jaheim Anumba). Thus ended an extraordinary year.

### **Thank you**

In all of this a number of people have been key to our survival during lockdown and successful reopening. Our Churchwardens, Sybil Bair and Beverley Chin, have been indispensable at every stage, checking through risk assessments, making sure the church is safe for worship, befriending isolated members of the congregation, dealing with the finances, and welcoming and seating the congregation on a Sunday morning and at our many funeral services in church. In addition Sybil has largely looked after the floral displays in church almost single-handedly, while between them they have sorted out the management and repairs of our church flats, now beginning to show their age. It has been quite a year for our churchwardens, and we owe them both a huge vote of thanks for their time, dedication and commitment to St Laurence's across the whole course of the pandemic.

The whole PCC standing committee (the Churchwardens, Chair of the Centre Management Committee, PCC secretary and Victor Obasogie) has met at regular intervals through the pandemic to approve the various openings and closings of the church, agree risk assessments, and to develop our survival strategy. Particular thanks, too, to Mark Gayfer, who acts as honorary parish accountant, who provided valuable financial advice through the difficult days of lockdown, when income from the

Centre was at zero, and when in the absence of church services there was no collection.

We had some really difficult moments, financially, in late Spring. To save money and to enable us to do all our banking on-line (particularly important during the pandemic), we took the decision to change bank accounts, from NatWest bank who were becoming increasingly expensive, and rather unsupportive during lockdown, to CAF Bank, a specialist bank for charities who had good on-line facilities and were much cheaper.

We also asked the congregation for help. The response was quite remarkable. Giving by the congregation increased noticeably, as those who could afford to do so increased their giving, sometimes dramatically. The parish is hugely in the debt of the generosity of many parishioners who gave sacrificially through the dark days of lockdown to enable the church to continue to pay its way, and to continue its ministry especially to vulnerable members of the parish and community.

The ministry team (Fr Iain, Fr Andrew, Fr Anthony, Peter and Sue Charles, Grace Blyth, Ijeoma Nwajiobi and myself) have met on Zoom almost every week throughout the long year, discussing how best to offer pastoral support for our parishioners and planning our rapidly changing opportunities for liturgy and teaching. Fr Anthony has had to shield for the year, but thanks to Zoom has still been able to play a full part in the life of the parish. It's a tremendous team, and St Laurence's should be hugely grateful for the ministry team's dedication and commitment to the parish. Peter Charles has worked tirelessly to develop our "digital ministry"; while Sue Charles, our parish manager, has pretty well dedicated her life over the year to the successful reopening of the centre and the pastoral support of all our users and staff.

The music staff have also been hugely important, once the church was allowed to reopen. In the absence of any meaningful congregational participation, music has taken on greater importance than ever on Sunday mornings; and we have been blessed with a remarkably fine organist, able to play the most complex works of Messiaen or Langlais at the drop of a hat, and a Director of Music with a lovely voice, able to provide beautiful singing for our Sunday services whether on her own, or with our adult and junior choirs, with the welcome assistance of Mairéad Sheerin. During the year, we also said an inevitably quiet farewell to Joe Tobin, acting director of music during Jocelyn's



maternity leave, as he went on to be Director of Music at St Thomas of Canterbury, Brentwood. We hope, after the pandemic, to be able to invite him back for proper good-bye.

Kofi Hagan and Kevin Counihan have both provided hours of quiet work behind the scenes, preparing the church for worship; Kofi has managed to create a prayerful liturgy for us every Sunday out of lockdown by persuading servers to come in to assist – we most grateful to the whole team. Sue Dearie continues to persuade people to read lessons in church (always a difficult task at St Laurence's). And – new this year! – Lesley Ihekuna and Paul Edwards have managed to achieve an almost professional standard in their streaming of the Sunday eucharist to Facebook and Youtube from a standing start.

Speaking of personnel, we were also able to welcome Dominic Toms, an ordinand from St Peter's Church, Brockley, who came to us on placement in September for two months, to get experience of liberal catholic worship. Sadly, Covid restrictions meant that apart from attending Sunday worship, he was not able to play much of a role in the life of the parish.

In November, Andy McGuire, our part-time book-keeper, took the decision to move to Norfolk, and so resigned from his post here, and his work has been taken on by the Centre Manager. And October, Kay Lanston took the decision to retire from being Chair of the Centre Management Committee. As chair, and previously as Centre Manager, over her 23 years in post Kay transformed the Centre from being an ordinary church hall into the thriving community centre that the Centre is today. As a congregation we have huge cause to be grateful to her for her work and dedication – and all of it entirely voluntary. The Centre is now the focus of our mission to the community of Catford, welcoming (in normal times) thousands of people a year, who come here for parties and social events, wakes and celebrations, groups, training sessions, classes, badminton and keep fit, language and cultural associations, self-help and blood donations, filming and singing – you name it, people probably meet here to do it. The Centre plays a key role in building up community life in Catford, in providing employment and sustaining the fabric of local society. And Kay has been behind this hugely important role that St Laurence's plays locally for nearly a generation. When restrictions lift, we shall have a chance to say a fitting thank you.

## **Church Fabric**

In terms of the fabric of the church, during the year, we completed work on the box gutters and a large number of essential concrete repairs; our thanks to the Rochester Bridge Trust (£2000), the Swire Charitable Trust (£5000) and the National Churches Trust (£12,824) for their generous donations that made this work possible. I was able to hitch a ride in the cherry picker that came to repair the concrete, and was rewarded with an angel's eye view of the church roof. We also resubmitted a grant application for new boilers for the church: this time, we are applying for a much greater sum, to enable us to install eco-friendly air source gas pumps. We commissioned a report from Steensen Varming, an internationally known heating specialist, partly paid for by a £1605 grant from the diocese, who subsequently designed an appropriate scheme and put it out to tender; and so we have a contractor waiting in the wings, should we be successful in raising the £200,000 we will need. Other improvements have taken place to the Centre, which Sue Charles lists in her report.

Over the year, we were also given the money by an anonymous donor to have a pair of candlesticks commissioned from the same artist who created our beautiful monstrance, Victoria Rance. So now we have the set of monstrance and candlesticks. Sadly, due to lockdown, we have been unable to use them much since their arrival. We pray that we may continue to be able to do so soon, especially in the Lady Chapel who space they suit beautifully.

## **Hail and Farewell**

Over the year, we were delighted to welcome Fr Hugo and Jocelyn Adan-Freeman's new son, Iker, Katie Farquhar's baby Hamish, and Divine Ibekwe, a daughter for Onyinye and Godson.

Jeremy Ruffer married Alestir Waller in a hugely joyful celebration in July, almost the first Saturday that weddings were once more permitted, attended by members of both families and a few close friends. And then, in perhaps the most tragic of the many funerals that took place in church over the year, we conducted Alestir's funeral after her untimely death six months later. Our hearts go out to Jeremy at what has been the most difficult time for him, and for all of us who know him and Alestir, a truly affectionate couple who seemed made for each other, and whose love was so sadly cut short.

Thelma Corbin lost her sister, Beatrice, and Marva Mayne her mother Hermine and sister Clarissa. Linda & Theresa O'Mallo lost their

mother Sheila on Easter Day. Beverley Martin, Sandra and Shirleen's mother, died after a very long illness; and Lindon Philander lost his brother Richard, in New York. Grace Blyth's brother Gerry and her sister in law Dot both died during the year, and we lost a dear member of the congregation, possibly our oldest, Rubell Chong, in June. Chika Anumba lost her mother Clarice, and Anita Greenidge her grand-daughter Tanya, tragically murdered in Barbados. John Cutts, a former regular, died in Halifax in September, aged 95. Myrna Perkins lost her cousin Roy, and Des Lewis, a former caretaker here, also died in September. Fr Martin Preston, a previous colleague here at St Laurence's and still remember fondly by many members of the parish who have cause to be grateful for his pastoral skills and loving concern for worshippers here, died in December after a long illness. Vesta Williams died in March, quite unexpectedly, and a huge shock to many; Doreen Sutton, the

wife of Richard Sutton – our previous treasurer died in January, as did Peggy White, a long-standing member of the parish who had been housebound for many, many years. We also lost Rennie Simms, Hilma's husband, Joyce Gates from Stannard Court, Lionel Barnet, who was preparing for confirmation at Easter, Michael Worrell, husband to June, and Joyce Baptiste, wife to Greg. My own mother, Pat, died in January, aged 95. It has been quite a year, and our thoughts and prayers go out to all those who have suffered bereavement over the last twelve months.

We pray for better times to come, with the end of lockdown and, hopefully, the avoidance of another wave of the pandemic. But whatever may happen, there is no doubt that the community here at St Laurence's will by the grace of God continue strong and supportive of each other and of our neighbourhood.

Fr Charles



## Church Warden's Report

Being a Church Warden is a rewarding and satisfying role. It is gratifying to have so many members of church who are willing and incredibly happy to help when called upon more so at short notice. The post-holders at the back of church are very much the forefront of the church service. The hard work they contribute ensures procedures run well and in a structured manner.

Various changes were made last year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic we had to put in place several changes i.e. 2 meter distance rule, Hand Sanitizer, enforcing an exit were implemented to make sure safety is maintained in order to have a safe church. Many thanks to Peter Charles for carrying out the risk assessment and safeguarding, which was put in place to protect the vulnerable members and all concerned. Live streaming was also in place for those who were unable to attend Mass.

It is pleasing to see that Sunday mass attendance has been increasing gradually as the weeks go by. The seating in church is divided into 1s 2s 3s for safe distant plus seating for larger families, overall seating within the church is a maximum total of 80. Metre rules are always in place, signs are posted and displayed with reference to exiting the church. We have two services, every Sunday the 09.30 which is Live-streamed, and at 11am.

For track and trace all church members names and telephone numbers are noted. After each service both church wardens along with the help of Paul, Lesley, and Francis clean and disinfect the seating areas.

The church noticeboard outside has been replaced. Many thanks Fr Iain for your gardening expertise in keeping the foliage trim in the Memorial garden and keeping it respectably tidy not forgetting, the church front garden area making the noticeboard much more prominent.

As this is the end of my three years of being a Church warden, I am grateful I had the opportunity. And as I pass the baton on, I would like to wish every blessing to the incoming church wardens.

Sybil Bair

With the country in COVID-19 pandemic the past year we have seen highs and lows at St Laurence.

COVID-19 came with government restrictions and guidelines which was compulsory for the church to adapt to. We had to put in place:

- ~ Hand sanitisers at the 2 entrances and exits.
- ~ Implementation of the track and trace - ticking off names on the register.
- ~ Designated entrance and exit with signage. Floor markings with arrow were placed at 2 metre distance this allows easy flow around the church.
- ~ Escorting member to the appropriate seat. Seats having previously been marked for singles, doubles, triples and larger family groups.

During times of lockdown when we were not able to be in church the services were live streamed some from the vicarage kitchen or the garden. When members were able to return to church after lockdown, the new seating arrangement was now at 50% of the church's normal capacity. It was decided to have 2 Sunday services which gave a total of 80 people for each

service. The times decided were 9.30 and 11 am so that members who were unable to attend service physically could be included the 9.30 service was live streamed. This continues to date.

A new role for the church warden was to clean the seats and the backs of the pews with bacterial sprays and wipes. This was done after the 9.30 service ready for the 11am. This was important to reassure members they were coming to a safe and clean environment. With the help of volunteers at various times this cleaning practise is now "down to a T". Special thanks to Lesley, Paul and recently Frances who is now a part of the "clean dream team".

#### Events During the year

- ~ The Christmas carol service took place outside by candlelight as we could not sing inside.
- ~ On Palm Sunday 2021 the ministry team were able to have a mini procession into church with palm as we could not have our usual procession from Holy Cross.
- ~ During the Good Friday service the Cross was placed against the alter rather than be held by a server, even with restriction we were able to adapt the service.
- ~ Mothering Sunday 2021 was the first day back to church after lockdown. During the service the daffodil bundles were placed at the back of the church to be taken rather than be handed out in the usual way. This was to maintain social distance.
- ~ Members were missing the social side of meeting for tea and coffee. We only managed to have one Sunday morning session in the church grounds maintaining social distance. This was very successful.
- ~ Singing is now back during Sunday service performed by Jocelyn and the choir only.

On Saturday 11th April 2021 we had the baptism and confirmation of 4 new members and was presided over by Bishop Precious. New ways of performing these ceremonies were used with plenty of cotton balls and no touching when pouring the water for the baptism. This was a great celebration especially as it was cancelled last year due to the lockdown. The following day Easter Sunday service saw the first communion for 6 children. Their family also attended

Over the past few months 14 funeral services have taken place at St Laurence. Sadly 5 of those were regular church, or their family members. These were overseen by the church wardens. The numbers of attendees were limited by government guidelines. The loss of the congregation members is a sadness to all of us at St Laurence. The letters of encouragement and words of support are greatly appreciated.

The Churchwardens manages all aspects of the flats and the grounds. At present all four flats are occupied with tenants. During lockdown and the restrictions only emergency repairs were possible. There have been ongoing issues with damp and condensation in two of the flat. Jonathan Louth the architect was call in to advise us on some of the problems that were occurring.

Following his recommendation improvement of the electric and replacing windows will be starting in the next week. Remaining issues should be completed by the end of the summer.

Although we maintained government restrictions and guidelines, we were able to celebrate significant occasions and enjoy worshiping together however limited. Overall, it was a productive year. I would like to express thanks to the members for their patience and understanding especially with the new seating arrangement.

Beverley Chin

## **PCC SECRETARY APM REPORT 2020/2021**

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 Chairwoman 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. Unfortunately, due to COVID we have been in lockdown most of the year so we have only had two PCC meetings although the Standing Committee has met regularly to discuss and make decisions on emergency matters that have arisen. The PCC committee has then ratified these decisions. The Standing Committee is made up of Canon Charles Pickstone, Joyce Turpin, Beverley Chin, Sybil Bair, Victor Obasogie and Ray Williams (Centre Chairman).

### **Current members of the PCC are listed below:**

Canon Charles Pickstone, Fr Iain Farquhar, Kay Lanston (Centre Chairwoman), Joyce Turpin (Secretary), Grace Blyth (Reader), Peter Charles (Reader), Victor Obasogie, Antoinette Ojiako (Junior Church Rep), Onyeka Chuka Iloanya, Gabriel Nwogbo, Ken Agumandu (Deanery Synod Rep), Sybil Bair (Church Warden), Dele Muji Beverley Chin (Church Warden), Margaret Greaves (MU), and Jeni Griffiths (Deanery Synod Rep), Bridgit Sam-Bailey, Florence Brown-Marke.

## **St Laurence Centre Report**

At the beginning of the year, with increased use of the Centre, the plan was to undertake many of the tasks that have been 'pencilled in' for a while. However, COVID put a stop to that!

The Centre has remained open as much as possible during the pandemic, working within the regulations. We have been able to offer a space for many Hindu funerals, Churches and Blood Donation. From 12 April, we have been able to re-commence children's activities within the Centre.

We have been blessed to have received grants from both the National Lottery and London Borough of Lewisham, which have allowed us to buy new chairs (which are wipe clean), pay for acid-cleaning all the Centre floors (except the Main Hall), and do some work on the toilets. The National Lottery Grant was specifically for reducing our prices, so that we would be able to offer our spaces to those in need, who might not be able to afford our usual prices. Thank you, Fr Charles, for working so hard on the grant.

The decision to charge by the hour, instead of for sessions (which lasted 4 hours), was taken at the beginning of re-opening, as it is more flexible and allows more groups to access the Centre. We hope that, once we are back to 'normal', this decision will prove profitable for us, both monetarily and for our profile in the community. Once restrictions are lifted, we are going to maintain 50% capacity in the Main Hall (80 people) until the end of the year, as a continuing COVID measure.

When the restrictions start to lift later in May and June (hopefully), we will have a strong client base, with quite a few hirers coming every week. In addition to returning regulars, we have managed to secure some additional contracts with a children's dance school, a baby massage & yoga group, a line-dancing class, baby sensory play group and a children's singing group. We have several other groups requesting use of the Centre on a weekly basis, but this cannot be taken forward until we are sure about the regular hirers' return.

Many thanks to Peter Charles for his help during the pandemic. He has been integral in opening the Centre as soon as possible, and ensuring that we remain COVID-safe, giving advice and direction throughout the pandemic (including a full risk-assessment and a COVID-specific Contract).

The Quinquennial Audit in 2021 may raise additional tasks to be undertaken to keep St Laurence as a clean, safe and welcoming place for our hirers and the congregation. We have raised our profile by having a new Twitter account.

Our Health and Safety advisor Robert Green is concerned regarding our supervision of children on Sundays after Service. Particularly in reference to lack of attention whilst they are playing on the stage. It would be best if it wasn't treated as a play area. None of us would like to witness an accident.

I'd like to add that I'm here doing this job as my predecessor Kay Lanston has decided to step back from this role. I worked with Kay for a number of years and her leadership qualities and good nature shone through. I hope to continue working with Kay in whatever capacity. Thank you very much.

I would particularly like to thank Sue Charles for the excellent work she has done in keeping the Centre functioning during this COVID period.

Ray Williams - Acting Centre Chairperson

Dear brothers and sisters,

I hope this finds you staying safe and well in these uncertain times.

Since my last report for you, two years ago, the music department here at St Laurence has faced unprecedented challenges. I am delighted that the choir have continued to lead worship through their musical contributions, inspiring new leaders among us and encouraging discipleship by developing their musical skills. Initially, when I returned from my maternity leave just under a year ago, we divided into two groups, Adult Choir and Junior Choir, with each group singing at one of the two services each Sunday morning. The adults still pursue a more traditional, solemn style of music, whilst the children have been presenting items that are more modern. They enjoyed being able to sing together over Christmas, carefully socially-distanced, and have also undergone several extended periods of time executing their musical activities online. This involved meeting weekly on Zoom, and choristers then recorded themselves singing individually, and send it to me... more about that below!

Due to the challenges of working online musically, combined with the lack of direct spiritual guidance we have been able to offer the group, our Junior Choir has been lucky to benefit from several clergy members performing choir supervisor duties at the junior choir rehearsals, and offering spiritual guidance. Inevitably, we have not been able to minister to our whole membership at this time, as lockdown has placed significant strains on individuals as well as restrictions on numbers singing together, and our dear brother Jeremy lost his wife in January. We have begun recruiting several new adult members recently, and they especially enjoyed singing with us in person over Christmas. As you might know, most non-religious singing groups haven't been able to meet for nearly a year now. I plan to actively reach out to the local community to recruit new choir members very shortly, once restrictions on singing together have been lifted, and this recruitment drive will be a big part of my focus over the coming months. I am following guidance from the Royal Schools of Church Music, as they release standardised recommendations in line with government guidance.

We have been very lucky to secure the services of organist Ian Shaw on an ongoing basis, and I'm sure we all enjoy his beautiful playing each Sunday morning. Personally, I am delighted that we have been able to offer him extra work: recording backing tracks for the choir and playing at extra services. Most musicians have seen a significant drop in their income, with many now working for Amazon/supermarkets due to the lack of live performing work. He has also been very generous with his time, devising beautiful meditations for Advent and Good Friday. The Director of Music's duties have changed significantly over this time too, but I am very glad to be able to practice my skills, learn new ones and contribute to the community here as my role adapts to suit the times. It have not sung to performed publicly for some time, and the first service I sung at was quite emotional. Thank you for this opportunity. In contrast, my role has demanded many more computer skills than before, and I have edited each digital choir contribution together before it is played on a Sunday morning.

The space and instruments continue to be of great potential, and I frequently recommend it to musicians for a small fee. We have enjoyed several live-streamed concerts in the space recently, thank you to all who listened, participated and supported us.

With best wishes,

Jocelyn

## EAST LEWISHAM DEANERY SYNOD REPORT 2020-21

A very short report as like all other Church activities, meetings of the East Lewisham Deanery Synod meetings were drastically effected. A few meetings did go ahead but via Zoom.

The business of the Deanery was covered. Fr. Steve Hall welcomed members to the sessions. Election of Officers took place including election to the post of Lay Chair of Jennifer Henry, and Laurie Roberts to the post of Secretary.

The new Deanery Synod Constitution was considered and approved and during discussions areas of priority were identified. Mental Health and Poverty, particularly food Poverty were shared concerns of members.

Agendas across the year covered 'Areas and opportunities for collaboration', Living in Love and Faith and Environmental Issues. There was discussion in 'breakout rooms' about what steps individual churches were considering to reduce their Carbon Footprints and how ideas might be shared with other churches.

### WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

On the 5<sup>th</sup> March this year, Catford Churches came together through Zoom for the Annual World Day of Prayer. Service booklets had been distributed between participating churches and the Service, prepared this year by the Women of Vanuatu went ahead. Their theme this year was 'Build on a Strong Foundation. Vanuatu is an archipelago made up of 80 islands in the South Pacific tropical cyclone zone and is an area very much affected and often devastated by the extremes of weather accentuated by the effects of Global Warming.

It was good that through the wonders of modern technology, Catford Churches were able to hold this Annual Service in tribute to the resilience of people of faith across the world.

The World Day of Prayer Motto is 'informed prayer, prayerful action'.

### Sacristy Report

As you all know, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities of the church have been limited and this has affected the serving team as well.

However, I must mention the few dedicated servers who have continued to help serve whenever needed. They are Vitalis, Ijoema, Titi, Temi, Kenneth, Kevin and recently Tina.

We hope to be back to normality soon, whereby we shall have regular services, as before, and hopefully a full rota with more servers joining.

Meanwhile I wish to thank all the servers for their help at services before the pandemic and hope to see you all again soon.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Kofi (Sacristan)



## Safeguarding report

Safeguarding took on a whole new role in 2020. With the reduction in church-based activities the focus switched from the safeguarding of young people attending our church to the safeguarding of vulnerable people using the church and community centre through the interpretation and implementation of Government and Church of England COVID security regulations. This has not been the easiest of tasks as the guidance documents, as with much government generated paperwork are expansive, and in some places frankly contradictory. Nether the less we have been able to come up with a COVID security plan that has meant that we have been able to keep both church and community centre open for the permitted activities at any time. This has taken the combined work of several people both in setting up the systems and in implementing them and my thanks go to Fr Charles, Mthr Sue, the Churchwardens and the Caretaking staff for their work in making this successful.

It should be noted that most community facilities in this area have decided not to go down this route and have taken the option to close their doors during the pandemic, but the work of our team has enabled us to continue to allow the meeting of other churches, as well as ourselves, provide a venue for blood donations sessions, young people's activities and for funerals for other faith groups displaced from their normal facilities. This is an effort of which I think St Laurence should be justly proud.

Peter Charles

### Digital Ministry report 2020-2021

Little did I imagine what I was letting myself in for when at the end of 2019 I agreed to take responsibility for the online and digital ministry at St Laurence. None of us in our wildest dreams could have envisaged the situation we would find ourselves in six months later with advent of the Coronavirus pandemic. Our online presence till then had been limited to a Facebook group and a twitter feed, both of which had remained dormant for some time after their originators had moved on from our church. Fr Charles and I drew up a plan to gradually bring them back to life and once that was done to review where we would go from there in developing our internet presence. And then the pandemic hit. It has been a very steep learning curve for us all as we have gone from our dormant presence to now running to a Facebook Group and page, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and a YouTube channel. We rapidly went over to live-streaming masses on the internet first from the vicarage kitchen and latterly from the church, with or without a congregation. Now we are back in our building again, and hopefully on our way to a more normal time, we are continuing to stream one Sunday service, one midweek service and an online reflection each week for those who are still not able to get to church.

One big plus over the past year has been becoming involved in a growing number of people and churches involved in digital ministry. This has been especially useful as we have all learnt from others about our successes and failures, as the church as a whole has rapidly adapted to this new form of ministry which until then had been confined to a small number of churches. One early meeting still sticks in my mind and truth be told has shaped my approach to this new ministry. It was a meeting with ministers and others involved in Digital ministry from across the Church in this country. The theme of the meeting was inclusivity. It would be true to say that not only were my eyes were opened by the stories that I heard, but it challenged me to re-think my concept of digital ministry. In the conversations that I heard during the meeting I saw a new aspect of the lockdown. One lady described the lockdown as a 'Spiritual Pentecost' because as a result her local church had begun to put it services on the internet for the first time. So, for the

first time in the last ten years, she has been able to participate in worship with the rest of her community. Another woman told us that despite regular visits from members of the church she had still felt isolated, no longer able to participate in the weekly central gathering. Lockdown has changed that too. Many housebound and isolated people we heard have rejoiced in the reconnection to their church communities that the pandemic had brought them.

We are now back in church, meeting together as fellowships once again. What now? It could be so easy for us, in our joy at being back, to forget those who are still not with us. Those who are housebound, those whose domestic situations do not allow them to be here at the time of our services, those who are working and of course, those who are still shielding because of the pandemic. Perhaps the most sobering thing that came out of a survey of housebound church members across the UK we heard was the fear that now church congregations are back physically worshipping together in churches, churches will start to shut down online ministry, to go back to how it was before the pandemic, a fear that the doors that lockdown had opened would once again begin to close.

In all our digital audience is now around 500 - 600 people, although not all at the same time. Facebook remains our biggest audience group, followed by Twitter, YouTube and then smaller groups on WhatsApp and Instagram. Our Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp audience are composed of individuals, whereas the audience on YouTube is composed of both individuals and other churches. Our Twitter audience consists mainly of community and church organisations. We are developing a different strategy for posts on Twitter to the other outlets because of this.

Our online ministry addresses several different audiences. The first is those who are sick or isolating due to the pandemic. This is likely to be mostly a temporary audience as many are likely to return to attending church eventually. Secondly, there is a local audience who use the broadcast as a way of seeing what goes on in our church, without the risk of attending. Some of these may decide to attend in person but some may feel happier remaining as digital members. However, there are other audiences that have been tuning into our broadcasts too. There are those who are housebound and unable to attend in person. We need to do more work in this area once we can visit again to help more of them to access our broadcasts. Also, an audience from beyond Catford. During the last year I know people from Africa, USA, the Caribbean, Australia and India as well as other parts of the UK have shared with us digitally, some of these ex-members of St Laurence. A final audience group we have identified are those people who do normally attend church but are unable to do so on a particular Sunday, maybe for work or other reasons. Now instead of missing church that week they can catch up at a time more convenient to them.

At St Laurence, we have made a clear commitment to continuing to bring our worship and faith to those unable to be with us on a Sunday morning. Through this commitment we have connected not only with our own congregation, but with ex-members who have moved away and with others from around the world who have joined us to share in our worship and faith.

But this could not have happened without the hard work of dedicated people within our congregation. We must acknowledge the contributions of the Woolwich area of the diocese, the company of nurses and particularly All Churches Trust, who over the year have funded us to improve the equipment used to broadcast our services.

But even more than this I would like to thank Fr Charles for his support and his invaluable technical help in setting up our systems. A big thank you to Lesley and Paul for their regular stints in bringing the broadcasts to the congregation and to Susanna, James and Mother Sue who have all helped with broadcasts during the year. Thank you also to my colleagues on the ministry team for producing the content which have been broadcast and for all those who have had to put up with me going on about camera angles and sight lines.

Our aim is to provide for those who cannot attend an experience as near to being in church as is humanly possible. If we do this, then others will see us and through us experience that love and grace of God.

And Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15)

Peter Charles