

Questions Asked in Advance of the 2024 Annual Meeting

1. Question from Ruth Somerville:

There are clearly a lot of students and 18-30s attached to our church, which is great, but it concerns me that the emphasis currently seems to be on this age group to the exclusion of others. I have heard from several families recently who have teenage children who have made the difficult decision to leave our church, as they no longer feel included, as the parents outgrow the 18-30s age group and the youngsters have no congregation to which they can easily relate. How can we improve the attractiveness of what we offer to these families or should we accept as a church that we are not well placed to serve families with older children and actively encourage them to join their local church if there is good provision there?

Answer from Andy Baker, Priest in Charge:

I would say that we unashamedly use resources to support our 18-30s work with two staff members and an active ministry. This is one of the main missing generations in the national church and so focussing on this age demographic is important for us to be doing. We are aware that the 40-60s demographic is our own 'missing demographic' and so we are working on ways in which we can improve our provision here. We have recently seen an increase in people in this age group joining the church and so are trying to get them involved in Belfrey Groups and ministries, for example the Women's Ministry is a great opportunity for women of all ages to engage. We are also working on youth provision to ensure we keep the youth that we do currently have. I would also say that whilst we want to make sure that these age groups feel welcome, if people feel that God is calling them to join a local church, then we are very happy to bless them as they go there. As a resource church, it is part of our mandate to resource and support other churches in our area.

2. Question from Ruth Somerville:

It is clear from the accounts (note 18 on page 28 labelled Giving Away Day) that we still have not spent the £6,500 given before 2017 for our church to support a curate to train contextually with St Barnabas College (as it was then) while staying at The Belfrey. When I questioned why this had not been spent in advance of the APCM in 2021, Matthew replied that he hoped it would be used within the following couple of years, but agreed that if it wasn't the money should be reallocated. I would like to suggest that the time has come to re-allocate this money, unless there is still the realistic intention of using it for the purpose for which it was given.

Answer from Andy Baker, Priest in Charge, and Melissa Bryan, Finance Manager:

In the past 6 months there has been progress with the diocese around having ordinands on contextual training placed in our church and so there are some plans in place to use this money this year or next year.

3. Question from Ruth Somerville:

I can't see anything in the reports or accounts that explains what the £15,000 restricted grant from the Holyrood Sisters was given for. Please can you enlighten me?

Answer from Melissa Bryan, Finance Manager:

We applied for a grant towards the student worker's salary for 1 year and we were awarded £15,000 of which £5,000 was spent in 2023. The remaining £10,000 will be divided over 8 months salary Jan-Aug 2024. They have said we can apply again for another year which we will do in summer 2024.

4. Question from Ruth Somerville:

It would appear that we have £800 for SOZO in a restricted fund. Unless SOZO is about to resurface, could this money legitimately be diverted to another aspect of prayer or pastoral ministry?

Answer from Melissa Bryan, Finance Manager:

This had already been investigated and as the money was given with a restriction of SOZO, we went back to the donor to see if we could use it for another purpose. The answer was no, so the money was returned to the donor in Mar 2024. We are, however, looking at a way to relaunch Sozo or something similar.

5. Question from Ruth Somerville:

I wonder why our annual donation to YoYo has decreased from £3,000 to £1,000, when other local charities are still receiving the same amount as in previous years (note 8 on page 24).

Answer from Melissa Bryan, Finance Manager:

When putting the 2023 budget together we had a deficit and so the PCC looked for savings in every area of the budget. We looked at not only our financial giving but also at our giving in kind to local mission partners (and their giving to us), resulting in a different balance of donations. For example YoYo has used the De Grey Rooms as a base for 'It's your city' project for both 2023 and 2024. We want to establish a local missions group to develop a strategy for giving locally and so our giving will be fully reviewed in 2025.

6. Question from Richard Horton:

Last year's minutes recorded a number of new roles. Are those continuing?

Answer from Andy Baker, Priest in Charge:

The roles last year were : CAP Debt Centre Manager (funded by the PPF), - This role is funded for about another 18 months and we are looking at ways to further fund this role for the future Impact Fundraiser (funded by Impact), - The role has been extended to August 24 and now includes a day a week for funding for the Belfrey's general budget Assistant Worship Leader (funded) - The role is still active G2 created and filled the role of Administrator. - The role is still active

7. Question from Richard Horton:

Last year's minutes recorded (concerning a question about "other areas of church life to report to the PCC? eg Youth, Children and Families, Students, 18-30s, music, technical, leadership and evangelism") that "the question raises the important issue of whether PCC reporting from such ministries/groups could be improved, and on reflection, I think it could, through a more regular Vicar's/VLT Report. I will leave this suggestion to my successor." Has this happened?

Answer from Andy Baker, Priest in Charge:

The PCC initiated a process whereby each ministry fills in a Ministry Specific Vision Document which the PCC gets to see. From May 2024 each ministry will be asked to provide a report for the PCC on a regular basis

8. Question from Barney Barnett:

This year, for many understandable reasons, the Belfrey was not able to host a sunrise service on Easter Sunday. Is it possible to plan to have the sunrise service over the next few Easters whilst we are in the De Grey rooms? Options may include a suitable city centre place or new venue, use of battery operated sound systems etc. I think lots of people enjoyed the sunrise service - it was very well attended so it would be great if we could have this back next year.

Answer from Amber Boydell, Operations Manager:

We are hoping to bring the Easter Sunrise Service back next year if possible, and will be exploring options.

9. Question from Paula Horton:

What is being done to make the use of the stage safer in services? It is very distracting to watch people weave their way around music stands and microphones at various points in the service, with equipment and people tottering on a regular basis. Also, last time I descended the steps rather quickly and they shifted underneath me, which doesn't seem good. It is only a matter of time before somebody falls off the stage or trips on the steps. When will you add handrails to the steps? / At points where the congregation is seated eg for the sermon and the reading of the lesson, use of the stage doesn't seem necessary and it would be a lot safer if this part of the service was conducted from the floor. Could you consider that as the standard please?

Answer from Amber Boydell, Operations Manager:

The Production and Worship Teams are always doing their best to improve this and will continue to, in terms of items on the stage and also the stability of it, as for financial reasons we need to make do with what we have. The Operations Team and SLT researched and discussed the requirement for a handrail in Autumn 2023 and concluded that we would not purchase this. We are more than happy for service leaders, preachers and others to choose to lead from the floor when they would prefer to, and to communicate this to the Production Team on the day.

10. Question from Paula Horton:

Do you need a Health and Safety professional who doesn't normally attend our church to review the risks in this building which is new to us and different from a regular church?

Answer from Amber Boydell, Operations Manager:

When we moved into the De Grey Rooms and during the first few months here the Operations Team worked together with the Wardens, particularly Daniel Brookes to make sure the building was safe. It was particularly beneficial that our Facilities Manager, John Hanna, joined the team in October so was effectively bringing "fresh eyes" - he did immediately start making improvements. We have kept a close eye on safety since the move in August 2023, and while external professionals are often very beneficial we currently do not feel that this would be necessary due to the in-house knowledge and the way this is being implemented. Should this become required we would of course pursue it.