

St Paul's Bow Common Parish Profile



Welcome to the parish profile for St Paul's Bow Common in the East End of London. We are a small but lively congregation in the liberal catholic tradition, and we are looking for a new vicar – a woman or a man – who will help us to grow as Christians, and to build up our church in this rapidly changing, multi-cultural area.

in the parish. This includes many facilities such as a skate park, graffiti wall, go karting, bike track and playgrounds aimed at young children and teenagers. We are also within walking distance of the Olympic Park.

There is a petrol station right opposite the church and there are some local shops – a parade of shops along Burdett Road and another parade beneath flats on St Paul’s Way. There are a couple of cafes near the church and we are very close to all the shops and restaurants of Canary Wharf.

Tower Hamlets schools are amongst the best urban schools in the world, according to Prof David Woods, Prof Chris Husbands and Dr Chris Brown, in their 2013 report, *Transforming Education for All: the Tower Hamlets Story*.



Go-karting with the church behind

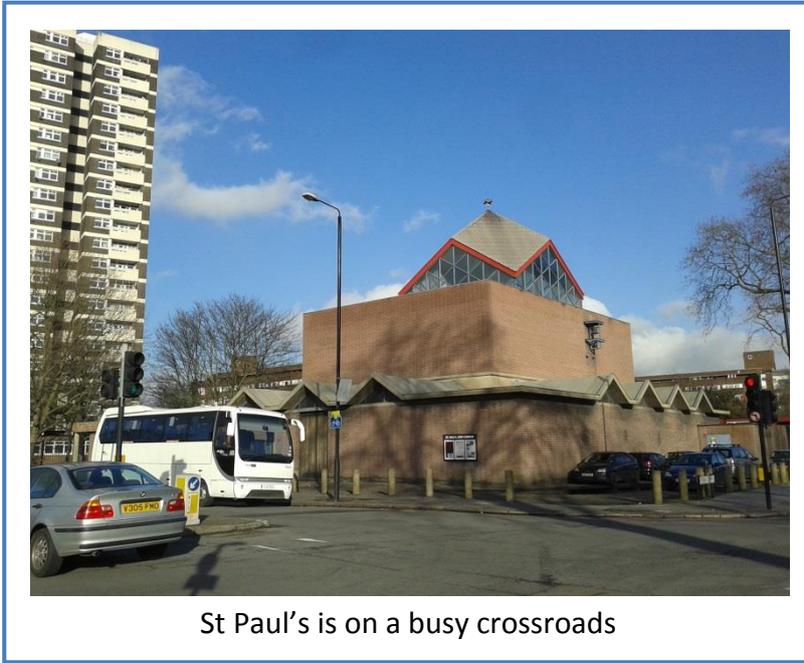
There are two primary schools and a secondary school in the parish: St Paul’s with St Luke’s and Stebon primaries and St Paul’s Way Trust secondary school. We have close links with St Paul’s with St Luke’s which is our Church of England School.

The busy Mile End Stadium and Leisure Centre is within the parish (on the site of the original St Luke’s church) and we also have a museum – the Ragged School Museum – which is a museum of a Victorian School.

This part of the East End is rich in history. The Second World War had a huge impact as the area was heavily bombed. This led to the destruction of the parish’s two Victorian churches, St Luke’s and St Paul’s, and ultimately the uniting of the two parishes and the rebuilding of St Paul’s church.

Developments in the area

There is a programme to increase the density of housing within the borough which affects the parish. New blocks are being built in many little gaps between the post war flats and three new blocks close to the church were named in honour of the two architects



St Paul's is on a busy crossroads

who built the church and the artist who created the lettering over the porch. The population of the borough is expected to increase from around 200,000 in 2001 to 300,000 by 2026 due to a combination of natural population growth and the effect of the various

regeneration schemes. This is far faster than the average population growth rate for London.

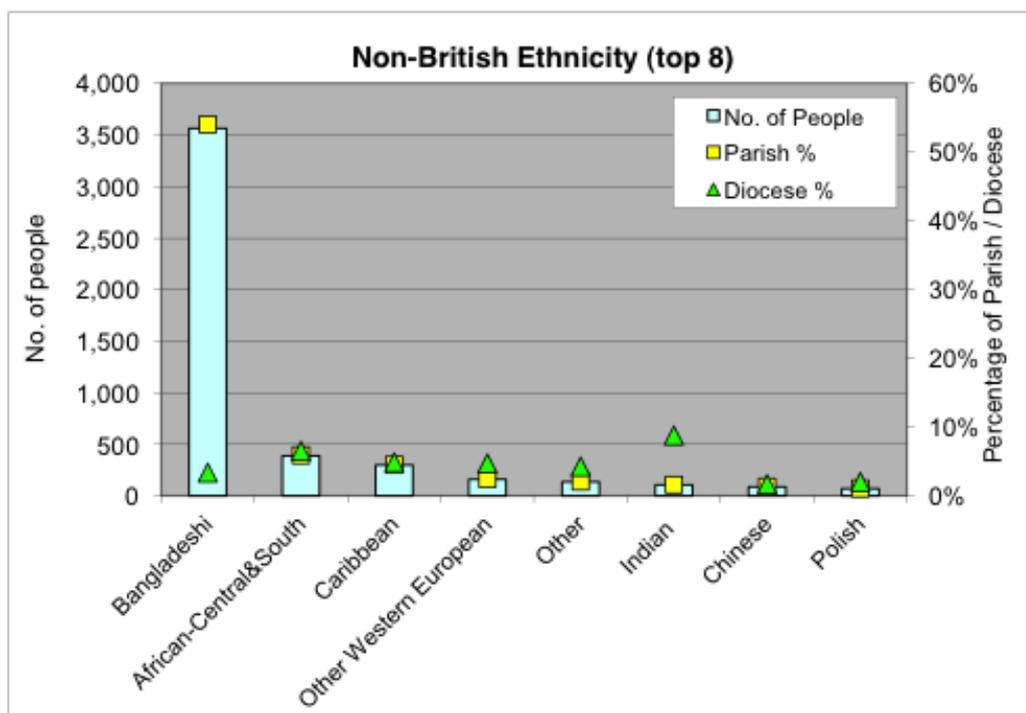
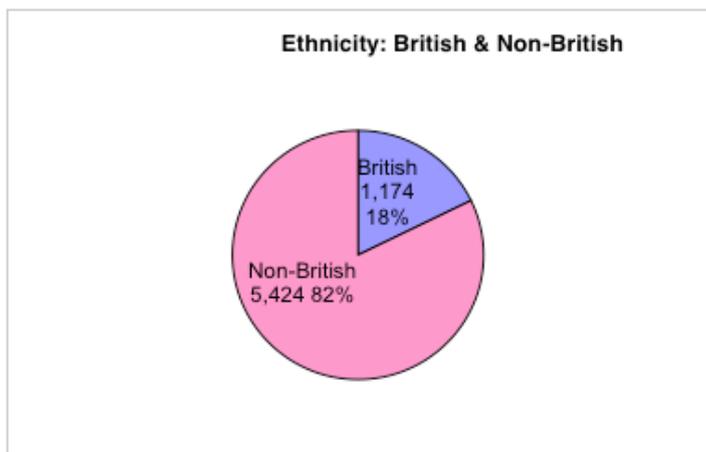
In 2013 over 700 new homes were completed in the parish and we welcomed the inhabitants with a leaflet.

The people who live here

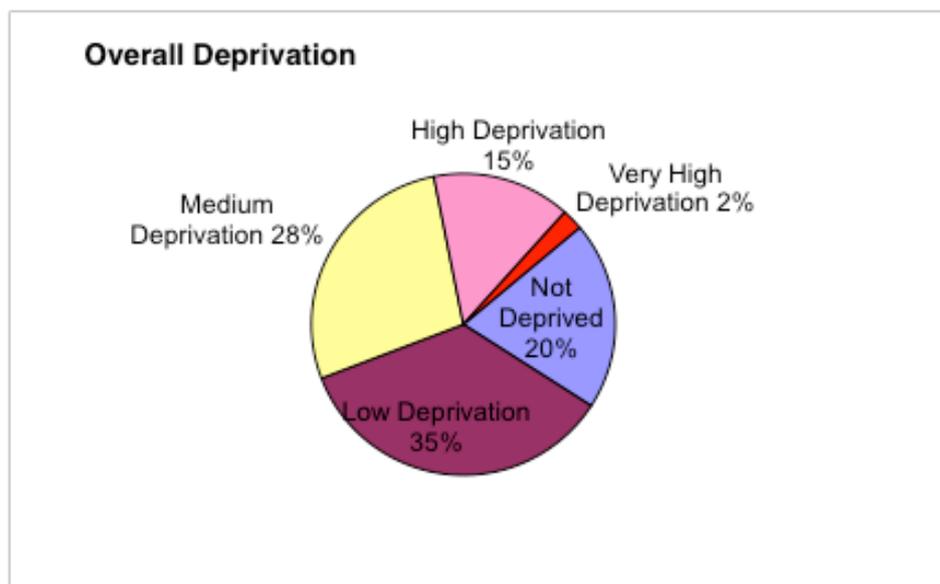
According to the 2011 census, the parish has a population of 5598, of whom 33% are children – twice as high a proportion of children as the average London Diocese parish.

The biggest religious group locally is Muslim, with 54% of the local population describing themselves as Muslim and 20% as Christian.

82% of the local population described themselves as non-British, with 51% being of Bangladeshi origin. After the 18% describing themselves as British, the next biggest groups in the parish are African (Central and South) (8%), Caribbean (6%) and Other Western Europe (3%).



The parish has a high unemployment rate - 9% – and the level of deprivation is also well above average.



The ups and downs of living here

We conducted a survey of the community in 2009, as part of a wider parish audit, and in preparation for our last MAP. We sent out questionnaires to people in the local community (e.g. the school, the shops and an ESOL group) and interviewed passers-by in St Paul's Way. 74% liked living round here. We asked what they liked about the area and the most popular answers were: the community, the public transport, the shops, and the park and leisure facilities. Their least favourite things were crime and litter.

The church and congregation

The church has a long-standing liberal catholic tradition. We have an outlook that is welcoming to all. We have vestments, servers at the altar (usually), incense and quite a lot of candles. We use Hymns Old and New and most of our music is led from the organ. Normally one song is led by guitar and a music group joined by the Sunday School on percussion. Our worship has developed and changed over time according to who is here and at the moment the worship committee is taking a lead on organising services.



The music group in action



Gathering round the altar to receive Communion

One special feature is that the altar is in the middle of the church. This has a big influence on the liturgy and it also means that the clergy sit with the congregation during the service.

The PCC strongly supports the admission of the women to the episcopate and is excited and positive about the legislation under discussion enabling this. We support the full equality of LGBT people in all aspects of the Church's life and hierarchy, including their marriage, on the same basis as straight people

The congregation

There are 69 people on the electoral roll, of whom about half live in the parish and most live close by.

The congregation is very mixed in terms of age (1 to eighty-something), social background, sexual orientation, marital status, ethnic background and country of birth. We asked everybody to mark on a map where they were born – see photos. A significant number of members have been in the East End all their lives, and others have moved here from far afield. We even have a few members who were involved in the church before it this building was built.

The majority of the congregation lives in the parish or in a neighbouring parish. A few who have moved house travel further.



How others describe us:

In November 2012, Jason John Paul Haskins (Texas) who explores Ecclesiastical Architecture from the perspective of liturgy and worship said, after attending a service “Speaking to a few parishioners afterwards about

that particular local worship and its informal formality. They settled on the description “chaotic high church.” This is wonderfully accurate and in many ways the best of all possible worlds. The celebration is full high church “bells and smells”: generous incense, worthy vestments, intoned prayers, combined with hymns from the richness of English hymnody. At the same time, there was a casual coming and going, reminiscent of a family gathering more than anything else.”

Leadership and staff

Other than the vicar, the parish has no paid staff. We are supported by Rev Sister Elizabeth CSF, who attends each week and presides and/or preaches each month. During the vacancy, we have also had a good deal of help and support from Rev Colin Midlane, who has led our worship twice a month. He is well known to us as he helped us during our previous vicar's sabbatical and holidays.

Our PCC has 14 members and usually meets every second month. During the vacancy it is meeting monthly. Normally the only sub committee is the standing committee, but for the vacancy several other committees and working groups have been set up to take a lead on various areas such as worship, the buildings, the hall hire, work with children and so on. We have two very competent and active churchwardens but they both have families and work full time, so it is important to spread the work across the PCC and share it with others in the congregation. Much of this is temporary while we are without a vicar and we are looking for someone who will enable and lead us. During the vacancy, various people have taken on the administration and, again, we look for the new vicar to help and lead on the admin.

Lay people are involved in ministry through setting out the church, leading intercessions, reading, serving, administering communion and leading the music. We have a tradition where, during Lent, members of the congregation speak in place of the sermon on a given topic relating to the year's Lent theme. Lay people also organised a Seder in Holy Week last year, taking this on from the vicar who had organised it previously.

Some of the people licensed to administer communion have just been trained by Fr Colin to take communion to the housebound. They are looking forward to having the chance to offer this to someone soon.

How people are encouraged and trained

Over the past few years, several members of the congregation have taken part in the New Step course, which is a course for fairly new Christians, and subsequently one person has been ordained. The churchwardens, treasurer and some Sunday School leaders have taken part in diocesan training.

In September 2013, we had a workshop in church, facilitated by a member of the congregation, to think about how we could renew our MAP. We did this to make sure we would not lose momentum during our vacancy.



Procession on Palm Sunday

We asked the question, “Nurturing Our Own Faith: What do we do now that is good and what is good about it?” The answers recorded included:

- Laughing, singing, inclusive, community feeling - breaks down barriers, gets rid of prejudices
- Young people taking part in services
- Reading, Serving, Chalice, Intercessing, Music Group, ringing the bell
- Lent Group, Advent Group
- Ministry of Sides People

This is an area we would like to develop.

The Life of the Church

Our main service is Parish Mass at 10.00am on Sunday. During the vacancy, on an average Sunday, we are seeing between 25 and 40 people in church, which will include about 5 - 7 teenagers and 2 - 5 smaller children. In the year up to the 2013 APCM, before the vacancy, the average attendance was 42 including 10 under-



Tea or coffee after the service

16s. For part of the service, the children go out to take part in Sunday School in two groups – primary and secondary.

At certain festivals (Mothering Sunday, Easter, Pentecost and Harvest) we have an all-age Eucharist presented largely by the children and young people.

During the year, there are not usually any additional weekly services. We celebrate Ash Wednesday, Ascension Day and All Hallows as well as the Easter Services and we have Prayer Round the Cross each Friday in Lent. We have also had Lent Groups and Advent Groups.

In the year up to October 2013, seven people were confirmed. Also in the year, a further eight were baptised. There were no weddings, but one blessing of a marriage, one funeral and one memorial service.

We enjoy social events together, including an annual trip to the seaside and quiz nights with our neighbouring churches. We always have a cup of tea or coffee after the Sunday service and this can turn into a celebration of a birthday or an anniversary.

We are a Fairtrade church and have a Traidcraft stall once a month.

The Church in the Community

People who worship in church on a Sundays are very connected in the community and our connection to the local community is very important to us.

St Paul's Way regeneration

At present we are very solidly engaged with the major St. Paul's Way Transformation Project as one of the community partners. Two PCC members attend the regular meetings. The Project is led by Lord Andrew Mawson and the partners include Tower Hamlets Council, Poplar HARCA, NHS Tower Hamlets, Leaside Regeneration, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, the Diocese of London and Andrew Mawson Partnerships. Local schools, health centres, family support organizations, social housing groups, faith groups, universities and businesses are all involved.

The project's mission is to create a memorable, safe and inspiring St. Paul's Way where people feel proud to live, learn and worship, where entrepreneurial businesses can thrive within a community and where people are happy to live and work alongside each other. Great progress has already been made and is showing many signs of fruition.

Since 2006 the project has re-built St Paul's Way Trust School (which is thriving and growing stronger), a new health centre, new and upgraded housing and provided a safer, cleaner and much more attractive streetscape. Read more about the story so far on the project website (www.stpaulsway.com) in the "Building the Road" report (in 'downloads').

We are looking for a vicar who will be keen to engage and lead in the transformation, as attention turns to our end of the street, which is thought of as the western gateway. As Lord Mawson says, "The re-development of both the church and the school site is in the view of the Transformation Project partners now essential ... This development task needs in our view to be a key leadership task for the new vicar ... This is a very exciting opportunity".

Further community involvement

Every Tuesday the church runs a sale to engage with the community and to raise funds. This is run by some of our longest-standing members, along with some stalwart supporters who are rarely seen on Sunday.

We also have an annual Christmas Fair and sometimes a Summer Fair, when the church is transformed and buzzing.

We have a keen connection with art. One of our favourite memories is the period in 2004 when the side of the church was adorned with the artist, Rose Finn-Kelcey's award-winning mural, Angel, which shimmered in the breeze.



Angel by Rose Finn-Kelcey



Outraged Christ by Charles Lutyens

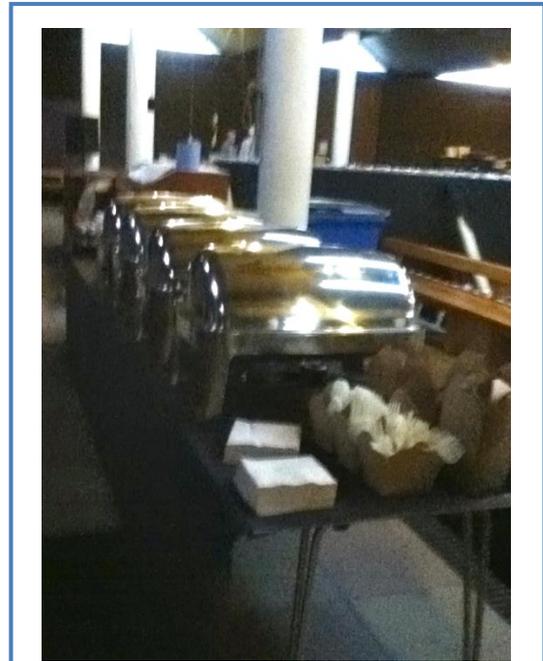
In 2011 we hosted a retrospective of the work of Charles Lutyens. We are delighted now still to have his 15ft crucifix "Outraged Christ" while it awaits a permanent home.

We are connected with Stitches in Time, a local sewing and community engagement project. Their work has been displayed in the church building on several occasions and a PCC member is a trustee, taking on the role from the former incumbent.

We have good connections with the local housing association, and another PCC member is chair of the tenants' association.

Development of the church hall

Following the successful Mission Action Plan undertaken in 2009 and its identification of community needs, our church hall was refurbished in partnership with Poplar HARCA (Housing and Regeneration Community Association), social landlords, who are very active in the local community. Subsequently the church hall has been used as a regular venue for many community uses. During weekdays an organisation called Blue Skies (who work with young adults with learning disabilities) use it daily for their activities. It has also hosted quiz evenings, Zumba classes, the MP's surgery, Leaders in Community (LiC) and much more. On Sunday afternoons it is used by Forward in Faith Ministries International (a Pentecostal congregation) to worship in. The Baha'i Community used it for a while to offer a Friday night session for young Muslim men who were out and about on the streets at late hours. Our church youth club meet there once per month.



Setting up for the food bank
Christmas party

For three months this winter the hall was used as a homeless shelter on Friday's nights and provided 15-17 beds per week. We were also glad to welcome the Tower Hamlets Food Bank into the church and hall for their Christmas party for the first time in December 2013.

We host all this to encourage and support community development and for outreach. We are trying to enhance our existing community facilities to be of more and better use to the local community and are looking to expand our facilities in the future as part of Phase II of the buildings plan (mentioned below).

The church school

St Paul's with St Luke's primary school is next to the church, separated only by an alley, three of our PCC members are currently on the school's governing body and the vicar is a member ex-officio. As well as welcoming the incumbent at assemblies, the school makes regular use of the church building. The school recently had a project to make huge dragons from wicker and paper, and used the church space for the project.

Many of our congregation, past and present, have attended the school.

We asked the headteacher about her hopes for the new vicar and she said she would like the new priest to offer this:

- offer special services for the school to go to in the church e.g. Easter, end of year, Christmas...**
- take a weekly assembly at the school**
- come to coffee mornings at the school and meet the parents.**
- help contribute towards the religious education lessons (maybe lead some) at the school**
- meet with the school council**
- sit on the school governors body**
- have interfaith links**
- have community links e.g. with resident committees such as the Leopold Estate.**
- have links with other housing associations that are close by e.g. East End Homes/HARCA.**
- invite the school to have visits around the church, have lessons in the church**
- offer to take them to other worship places e.g. the East London Mosque.**

We are looking for a vicar who will have a vision for engaging with the school and building this relationship.

Plans were developed for the full integration of the church and the school. These did not come to fruition, but we would still like to develop closer links in other ways and to be very involved in any redevelopment of the school.

The Buildings

The church building – St Paul’s, Bow Common

Before the present iconic church was built, its previous incarnation had stood on the same spot from 1858 until its destruction by wartime bombing in 1941.

The modern church was built in 1960 by Architect Robert Maguire and Designer Keith Murray (RIP 2005). It is a listed Grade II* building. They and the vicar of the time, Fr Gresham Kirkby, had a vision for a radical new church design. In Robert Maguire’s words they “created a space in which the congregation could come to perceive that they were one Body, the Mystical Body of Christ.”

The lettering on the porch was carved by Ralph Beyer and reads 'Truly this is none other but the house of God This is the Gate of Heaven' (Genesis 28:17).



The porch

Inside you will see Charles Lutyens’s mosaic mural of “Angels of the Heavenly Host” in St. Paul’s, Bow Common. It comprises ten ‘Angels’ and representations of the four elements of earth, fire, air and water.

St. Paul's, Bow Common was

hugely influential for church architecture and a signpost for future Anglican liturgy. It has been described as the 'most significant church built after the 2nd World War in Britain'.

In October 2010 St Paul’s, Bow Common was chosen by the BBC to represent the whole of modern 20th Century church

architecture in its 6 part series 'Churches: How to Read Them' by Dr. Richard Smith and shown on BBC4.

In November 2013 St Paul's, Bow Common became the first prize winner of the National Churches Trust Diamond Jubilee award for the best post-1953 church in Britain. Over 200 nominations were received. The competition was run by the National Churches Trust to celebrate their 60th anniversary, in association with the Twentieth Century Society and the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association (EASA).

The building was described by the judges as the 'embodiment of the ground swell of ideas about Christian worship' and a 'hugely influential signpost for future Anglican liturgy'.

Here is the video produced by the National Churches Trust:

http://www.c20society.org.uk/news/best-modern-churches-winners-announced/?utm_source=hootsuite&utm_campaign=hootsuite

"It is wonderful the church was selected, and I want people to know the real reason for its being 'the best' - the people of the parish"
Robert Maguire, Architect of St Paul's, Bow Common (9th Jan, 2014).

The timing of this prestigious award has come at a time when national

and international recognition of this building is urgently needed in order to raise funds for its repair.

The architecture of our church influences the way we worship. The altar is central, raised only a little from the congregation, breaking down the barriers between congregation and priest, there is a pathway subtly marked around the church for processions, and all the pews are moveable, making an endlessly flexible space. For instance, for our Prayer Round the Cross in Lent, we are able to move the pews so that we gather round Charles Lutyens's huge crucifix.

Challenges of the building

In the summer of 2013 there was an unexpected fall of internal roofing slabs which sit in the church's landmark glass 'lantern'.

Life in the church continued the very next day after the fall with a major service of Baptism and Confirmation, re-located to the vicarage garden with the Bishop of Stepney presiding and over 200 people present.



Getting ready for the confirmation

Currently, the area of the church underneath the lantern is cordoned off to prevent access, but we are pleased to say the church is still in full use and the whole area can still be seen.

We currently conduct services towards the west end of the church

and we can still accommodate perhaps up to 200 people seated. The congregation and visitors still get the sense of soaring space and of this being a 'place of light'.

Currently investigations are under way with our church architect, Kelley Christ, the British Research Establishment and English Heritage.

We have launched an appeal to raise funds for a significant programme of repairs – not only the roof, but also the electrics, all gutters and drains, the heating and other elements of this 50-year-old building that are showing their age.

We have engaged a fundraiser, Nicolas Morgan, since September 2013. Nicolas is assisting us with making bids, project managing and fundraising, and he reports to the building committee and the PCC.

Nicolas has submitted two big funding applications for the immediate repair work – for £230,000 to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and for £110,000 to the Tower Hamlets Mayor’s Fund (THMF). Initial applications are asking for funding to fix the lantern roof, repair all the low level roofs, fix the down pipes and re-wire the church. We estimate this may cost around £450,000. Nicholas is reasonably confident of raising this amount.

The HLF also have a larger scheme which we can apply to in future, as we look at improvements we would like to make for lighting, heating, the way the building looks from outside, including landscaping and for exciting lighting of the exterior. There needs to be more thinking about what we want to do – and we anticipate the new Vicar will be involved in shaping ideas.

We plan to have community engagement as a key part of the fundraising and planning for the future.

The church does not have responsibility or use of any other buildings in the Parish.

The PCC and congregation feel passionate about this building’s future and believe the developments provide an opportunity for it to play a really significant role in the life of the parish and St Paul’s Way.

Involvement with other local churches and places of worship

Church of England

We are part of the Bow Group of churches which is an informal network made of five neighbouring and contrasting Church of England parishes:

- St Mary and Holy Trinity, Bow,
- St Paul with St Mark, Old Ford
- St Barnabas, Bethnal Green
- All Hallow's Bromley-by-Bow
- Our own parish.

There has been quite a lot of change in the clergy in this group, with two of the incumbents quite new and one of the other churches in vacancy at the moment.

Clergy and lay representatives from each parish share news, offer informal support and discuss topics of interest. We also share events across the group, such as quiz nights or inviting the other youth groups to visit.

Ecumenical relations

We have very friendly relations with a Zimbabwean church which rents the church hall three Sundays in the month. This winter the night shelter has also offered the opportunity to get to know people in local churches of other denominations who have helped out as volunteers. There is a Roman Catholic church in St Paul's Way and our previous incumbent did have some contact with the priest there, but the relationship between the two churches is not well developed.

The multi faith context

Within the parish, there are several small mosques. Our previous incumbent met the imams through some of his work with community groups such as Poplar Harca and the St Paul's Way regeneration group.

The church and the wider world

The Diocese of London is twinned with Mozambique and Angola. We have an Angola London Mozambique Association (ALMA) representative and have attended some services. This is an area that we would like to develop. Similarly, we have an informal link with St Monica's parish in Mobutu, Mozambique, but with our incumbent leaving and theirs very sadly having died, we are in danger of losing momentum on this. We have raised money for them in the past and would be likely to do so again in Lent but we know that there is much more that can be done to offer mutual support.

The Church's Vision

In 2007 – 09 we went through a very detailed process of developing a parish audit in preparation for creating our new Mission Action Plan at that time. Some of the very positive outcomes from the 2009 MAP have been

- **The development of our relationships with the local housing association, Poplar Harca, and their help in refurbishing our hall**
- **The much more regular use of our hall by community groups such as a project for young adults with learning difficulties**
- **The refreshing of our notice board and its better use.**

An area we have really been trying to pay attention to over the last few years has been how we keep teenagers in the church. In the past we have very often lost them soon after their confirmation. We have a group of around 10 now whom we might see on a Sunday and a slightly larger group who come to the monthly youth group “SPBC”.



Updating the MAP September 2013

In the September 2013 MAP refresher session, we reflected on how we are doing and what we can develop further. We came up with a long list, not all of which we can do.

Our priorities we have identified are

- **The building – repairs and making it appear more welcoming**
- **Building the congregation in terms of number and in terms of growth as Christians**
- **Young people**
- **Finance**
- **Our engagement with the local community**

The Diocese of London launched Capital Vision 2020 last year, and this gives us a new context for our own vision.



Children draw their vision of the future

We would like our new vicar to lead us in developing our vision for the future, building on the priorities we have identified and others that become apparent, and integrating it with Capital Vision 2020.

Finance and Administration

Finance and admin duties are carried out by the churchwardens and treasurer, supported/overseen by the PCC.

Income and expenditure fit together very neatly at St Paul's Bow Common. See the balance sheet in appendix 1.

We operate an envelope system whilst also encouraging the congregation to give through standing orders. Fifteen families give regularly through gift aid. Stewardship is an area to be developed.

The annual income and expenditure both equal around £50,000.

In 2014, the common fund contribution is £26,500.

Restricted and unrestricted savings total around £80,000. This is used for match funding and as a reserve.

The church's capital assets and liabilities are the church itself and the hall.

We pay clergy expenses in full.

The Vicarage

This is an unusual modern vicarage built at the same time as the church, to which it is linked. Like the church it is also a Listed Grade II* building.

It is mostly single storey, with a large room on the first floor. It is centrally heated.

The vicarage meets standard requirements. Three of the four bedrooms look into the fairly large garden, which is on the south of the house and adjoins the Church and Church Hall.



The vicarage viewed from the garden

To the north of the vicarage there is a block of council flats with a secure and recently landscaped green.

All the roofs are flat, covered with asphalt.

The house is structurally sound, and the diocese will be carrying out a refurbishment during the vacancy. The PCC will assist the new incumbent with redecoration.

See also the plan in appendix 2.

The person specification

We are looking for someone who will be able to lead and support on several fronts. With our iconic building and our committed core of members we feel, with the right person's leadership, we can further develop our mission in this part of London. We are looking for someone who:

- **can lead us in developing our vision and strategy for the future, helping us grow in number and encouraging lay leadership and discipleship**
- **will have a vision for engaging with the school and building this relationship**
- **can engage children and teenagers in church**
- **has an affinity for, and preferably experience of, the inner city and a love of people of all the variety found in the neighbourhood**
- **has an awareness of the heritage issues and needs of this significant modern building and is ready to work with us, our fundraiser and our architect to resolve its issues and develop its future**
- **will have the skills to engage and lead in the St Paul's Way transformation and can develop a strategy for furthering our community engagement**
- **is engaging, passionate, ready for a challenge and resilient**
- **has a vision for ministry in an area where a minority identify themselves as Christian**
- **has good organisational skills and can make effective use of resources**
- **believes in and strives for the full inclusion of all people in the church regardless of social status, gender, mental health, physical ability, race or sexuality.**

Appendix 1

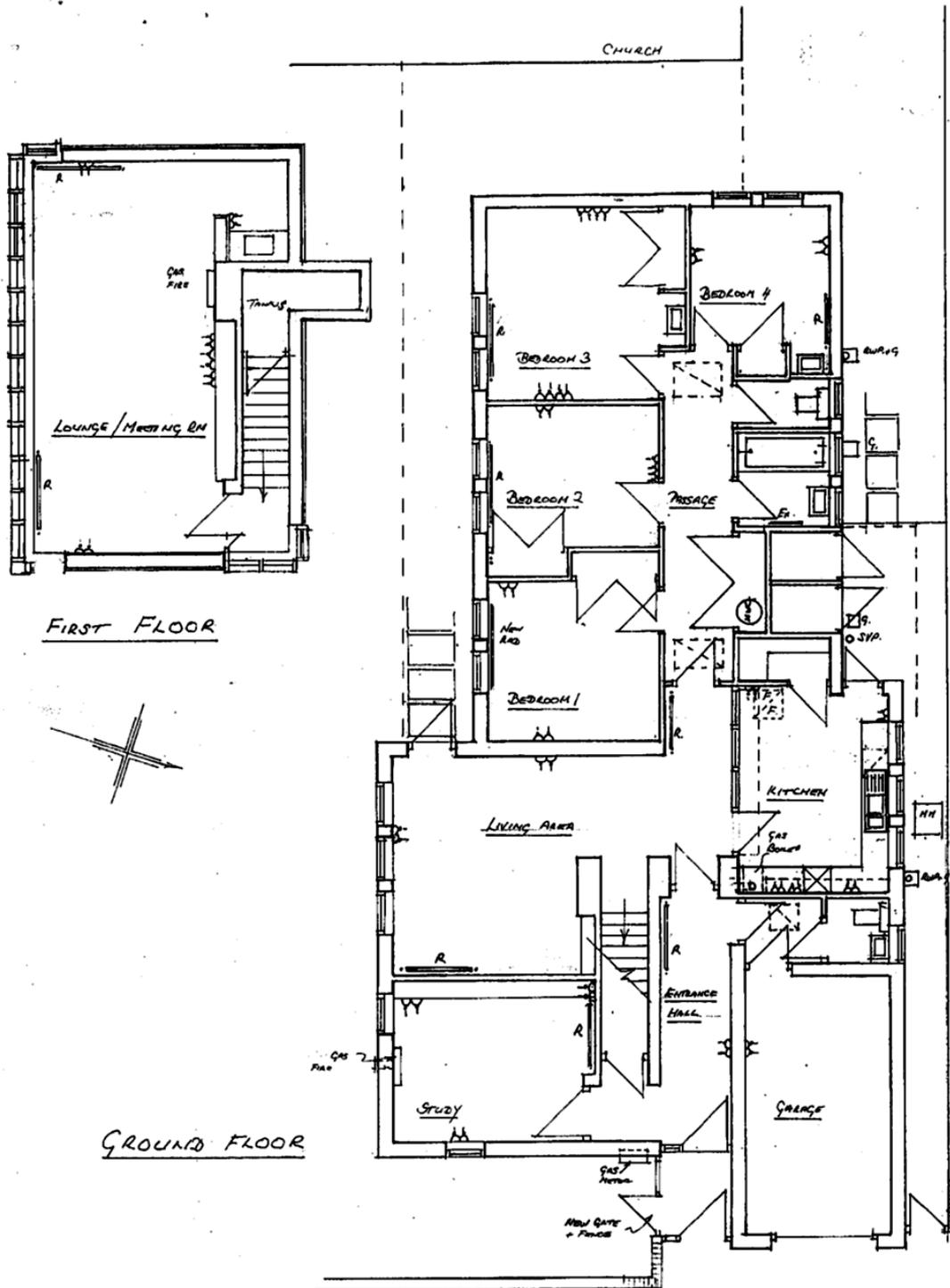
Statement of financial activities for the year ending 31 December 2012

	2012 £	2011 £
Receipts		
Incoming resources from donors	28,459	18,264
Other voluntary incoming resources	4,027	835
Income from activities to further the work of the church	3,827	22,094
Income from operating activities to generate funds	12,763	11,794
Other income	2,035	7,748
Total	51,110	60,735
Payments		
Cost of generating funds	384	367
Church activities	41,496	49,974
Donations	2,569	890
Admin	1,864	2,102
Total	46,313	53,332
Net surplus/deficit	4,797	7,403

Balance sheet as at 31 December 2012

	General fund (unrestricted) £	Building Funds (restricted) £
Monetary assets		
Current account	24,071	
Buildings current a/c		60
CBF deposit fund	9,876	
CBF investment fund	22,768	
CBF deposit building fund		51,221
Total	56,715	51,281
Liabilities	326	
Total current assets	57,042	51,281

Appendix 2:
Plan of the vicarage



1999 QUINGENNIAL WORKS

<p>ST PAULS VICARAGE BOW COMMON LEOPOLD STREET E3 4LA REF: 7/212 SCALE 1:100</p>	<p>Peter Whittaker Chartered Architect The Studio 249 Lewisham Way London SE4 1XF Tel: 081-894-9081</p>
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