

A photograph of a Gothic-style church window with pink cherry blossoms in the foreground. The window is tall and narrow, featuring a diamond-patterned leaded glass design. The surrounding brickwork is dark and textured. The cherry blossoms are in full bloom, with delicate pink petals and dark brown branches. The overall scene is a low-angle shot looking up at the church facade.

ST PETER

DE BEAUVOIR TOWN

PARISH PROFILE

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ST PETER DE BEAUVOIR TOWN IN ITS CONTEXT

St Peter De Beauvoir Town Parish Church is located in the Borough of Hackney, within the Episcopal Area of Stepney. In 1640, Richard de Beauvoir bought the Balmes Estate, which remained in agricultural use until the Regent's Canal was cut. During the late 1830s, Richard Benyon de Beauvoir laid out a more spacious estate and in 1841, commissioned the building of St Peter's Church within the Parish of West Hackney at his own expense. thebenyonestate.com/about/history.

In 1869 St Peter's became a parish in its own right, bounded by Southgate Road to the west, the Balls Pond Road to the north, Kingsland High Road to the east and Regent's Canal to the south. The core of the parish has always been residential with some light industry until recently. A host of shops, pubs and restaurants line the major boundary roads.

According to the Church Urban Fund - cuf.org.uk/parish/230095 - the parish of St Peter De Beauvoir Town is among the most deprived in the country, with child poverty at 25.5% and pensioner poverty at 32.5%. Of its 8485 residents, 34.3% live in social housing, 34.4% in lone-parent households and 32.9% on their own. There are currently two hostels and a third set for construction on an adjacent site. The large De Beauvoir Estate lines the canal and hosts the Rose Lipman Community Centre, which has been home to a local playgroup for nearly two generations.

In recent years there has been some private development, which has altered parish demographics. More significant is the greatly improved public transport, particularly the nearby Haggerston Overground station, which opened in 2010 and completely transformed accessibility, combined with De Beauvoir's proximity to the City.



Arguably the parish's greatest asset is its diversity; 55.5% come from ethnically diverse backgrounds, a statistic similar to the church's electoral roll. The range of activities based at St Peter's give humanity and meaning to these statistics. Regular Crypt users include various support groups, plus De Beauvoir Gardeners, Hackney Playbus, Happy Babies, Women's Institute and Woven Gold Choir. The community also benefits from the very active De Beauvoir Association, which organises events and publishes a weekly email newsletter to around 1200 addresses.

There are no Church of England schools within the parish. Families have the choice of two local primary schools with nurseries - De Beauvoir (local authority) and Our Lady and St Joseph (voluntary aided) - plus Hackney New Primary (academy trust) - and one secondary - Hackney New School (academy trust). Provisions for the elderly in the parish are limited to some sheltered accommodation.

The one public green space of note in the parish is De Beauvoir Square. The smaller Ufton Gardens is being redeveloped by residents, and the canal features specially designed 'water plots' to enhance its biodiversity. Several major thoroughfares within the parish are lined with London Plane trees, and the smaller streets of De Beauvoir - many of which have been closed to through traffic - offer extraordinary displays of flowering trees and shrubs from early Spring through Autumn's changing colours. Even Winter in De Beauvoir has its own distinctive beauty.



OUR STORY IN OUR OWN WORDS

As we began the process of compiling this profile, we invited people to respond to a questionnaire that began with first impressions and ended with future hopes. As we were still in lockdown and not yet worshipping together again at that time, we used every means available to reach as many people as possible, from teens to vulnerable elderly, from PCC teams to community organisations. Their responses go a long way to addressing the qualities of St Peter's vitality and health.

'I am just going to think of words that come to mind immediately: warmth... community... care... contact... love... togetherness.... support in difficult times... stability... rootedness... continuation...'

- Almost everyone included Carol Services and Petertide celebrations.
- Some recounted memories of leading and attending Brownies in the 1980s and others hoped we could offer this again.
- There was praise for the World War I De Beauvoir Memorial Book and centenary Remembrance Sunday service.
- Many longed for the return of local flower and produce shows, outings to the sea, Christingle and Nativity services and the Christmas Fair.
- Several commented on the spirituality of Advent and Lent courses and services, and in particular the marking of Holy Week.
- Also, of course, weddings, baptisms, funerals and other life ceremonies across generations and throughout the community feature highly in people's connections with St Peter De Beauvoir Town.



‘When I think about St Peter’s I think of family and families. The families that have found an identity at St Peters. Families that come together on a Sunday to pray, sing and worship together - if those words can be separated. I came to St Peter’s as an infant child under the direction of praying parents. They walked ahead of me and I just had to follow in their footsteps... St. Peter’s has truly accompanied me on all my life’s journeys: baptism, confirmation, and marriage.’

‘A busy spiritual and social hub at the heart of De Beauvoir for which the whole local community feels a sense of ownership (not just worshippers).’

‘It’s a beautiful and joyful church where worship and praise are God-centred and Christ-centred. The presence of St Peter’s church - a reminder of tranquillity, of the Lord, a haven of peace, my spirituality, where you can have the time and space to be yourself, pray and eventually find your feet, where you will find healing, support, warmth, some fun and a good exchange of real-life experiences!’

‘The church building itself is almost tangibly a place of prayer. I have been alone, or in a silent group and have felt a real sense of the people who have prayed there over the decades... Quite simply: St Peter’s has been like another family to me. Sometimes we have differences but always St Peter’s is there for me and I am so grateful for this.’

‘Very much like the diversity in the congregation, all kinds of people of different ages, with roots all over the world but drawn together from the area.’

‘At the heart of the community. Inclusive of both congregation and non-church goers. Beautiful warm, welcoming crypt, much-loved by community groups. The East room is safe and womb-like. Both the church and the crypt feel full of a higher peace and spirituality.’



‘I think of it as a compass (morally, socially and in terms of belief), a foundation, an obligation (spiritually) and where I feel most at home in God’s presence and as part of a community. I have learned so much about God, love and myself from St. Peter’s.’

‘Community. Place to gather together for all sorts of activities. Peace. Lovely church (and some lovely people).’

‘St Peter’s is very much the centre of my life and my community... It is a place where I always feel welcome even though I don’t worship in the church.’

‘I LOVE the special music. I like to hear what’s happening in the parish during the notices.’

‘Petertide and Harvest used to be staggering feasts in the garden of the vicarage and crypt, drawing extensively on African and Caribbean traditions; baptisms are beautifully integrated into the services and communicate community spirit. Most of all, our ordinary time services have remained recognisable over more than 25 years, recognisable for us and for outsiders from other churches within the UK or from abroad.’

‘An important (vital?) part of the area/community in which I have lived for 38 years. Personally, a source of strength and continuity and spiritual open-minded nurture.’

‘The thoughts and prayers they have always offered to me and my family and I want that to continue.’



OUR DOUBTS AND HOPES IN OUR OWN WORDS

While responses among 42 completed questionnaires reveal that we are energised by faith, seek to find out what God wants, make room for all, and offer our prayers and attention with an outward-looking focus, we struggle to face the cost of change and growth, do not always operate as a community, making room for all and grapple with doing a few things and doing them well.

‘There will always be change; one cannot stop it.’

‘Changes to the demographics of the local area have affected the congregation of the church and also crypt users. There are far more people living in flats... and renting in the area who are less likely to have an attachment to the community (more likely to be attached to their workplace, colleagues and friends spread around other communities).’

‘After nearly 40 years... the very existence of the building itself does not seem to have lost its power to act as a focus to the community, and something to be valued. We could build on this.’

‘The demographic of the parish has changed a lot in the 30 years we have been coming to St Peter’s. In the early days services included many more families with young children but the core church goers are now increasingly elderly. However many younger people, while not necessarily church goers, do get involved with the community activities in the Crypt.’



‘I think St. Peter’s outreach to the community has been amazing, though I doubt it introduces many people to the congregation who want to join the teams that keep the church itself running. It’s been wonderful to see how much the church means to the De Beauvoir community and the incredible work with disadvantaged people, especially refugee mothers and people without food or friends going on in the Crypt [when it was open].’

‘Frustrated that reduction in practical volunteering has not been replaced by income to pay contractors or staff to do the same practical things.’

‘I believe too much rests on the shoulders of too few (increasingly frail) people. The expansion has been a wonderful thing that has translated the congregation’s social justice emphasis into community related activities. It would be great if we could retain and attract more young people (including teenagers)... I believe that we are all going to have to work very hard indeed, and prayerfully, to re-establish a vibrant believing community.’

‘I’m very concerned that we offer something for our young people as we make it difficult for younger people to engage with worship. This was different from my experience as a young person in church. I hope we continue to work with local churches on a joint response.’

‘Generally positive but disappointed about lack of youth work apart from very young children (Noisy Church) which is good.

‘That the church can continue to maintain the same traditions while keeping up to date with the world, so that younger people do not feel excluded.’

‘If the energy could be found to involve the church more in wider activities in the area, this would be good in itself and could also lead to growth of congregation and resources available (people’s time and money) including greater financial support from the fringe congregation. This could also increase the feeling of togetherness amongst the congregation (and local community) which we seem to lack at present because we don’t do enough things together or in smaller groups apart from gathering on Sundays.’

‘Despite the relatively small number of people doing far too much work to keep things running, I think St. Peter’s is just as strong if not stronger as a community than it was when [the previous vicar] was appointed. This is an exciting moment.’

'[Do] more to resolve (or, at least, mitigate) homelessness and loneliness in the local area.'

'I think of St Peter's as a mixed liberal Anglo-Catholic environment, where all are welcome, and where there is a real sense of warmth. There are times, however, when I believe the wide views of a mixed congregation mean that those who make decisions risk settling for things with too much compromise...'

'[I hope for] the chance to be together to discuss scripture in smaller groups occasionally when it's possible again. Meeting for Lent groups was always memorable and a great way of getting to know and hear other people in the congregation.'

'I hope we continue to be a broad church that attracts people of all kinds who love God in their own quiet, very deep ways and produces an incredible sense of fellowship and service. I hope that members of the congregation continue to be central to the church service and mission. I hope that we will continue to learn from that person in the pulpit rather than be made to feel either collectively comfortable or evangelised. I hope the social mission to De Beauvoir and Hackney remains focussed on diversity of needs, and especially the most needy in terms of the use of crypt and the church space. I hope that more young or younger people will find time in their incredibly busy lives to take on leadership and the humdrum helping roles. The older people are just hard to live up to.'

'I hope St Peter's continues to flourish and build on what we have had. With the continuation of the community light to keep shining with renewing hope and the new generation being encouraged to tap into their hearts and minds and spiritual growth we may have a chance to grow.'



PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The PCC is organised into teams in line with our Mission Action Plan. Current membership is 19, including our Licenced Lay Minister, Church Wardens plus two of our three Parish Representatives who were not PCC members but who've been co-opted during the interregnum. We have agreed to move to staggered three-year terms and are looking to streamline reporting so that meetings can be focused on strategic thinking and oversight.

Attendance at monthly meetings (on Zoom for the foreseeable future) since the incumbent's departure in January 2021 has been excellent. In addition several PCC members have participated in diocesan training on Church Growth and Unconscious Bias and reported their learnings to the PCC. Our safeguarding procedures and policies have been reviewed and approved, and we are also in the process of ensuring that all members have up-to-date statutory training and certificates for their roles, e.g. safeguarding, health & safety, fire, DBS checks.

Our top three priorities for the future are:

- Increased presence of children and young people in all aspects of church life;
- Strengthened stewardship and financial management for sustainability;
- Church growth through renewed commitment to our Mission Action Plan.



MISSION ACTION PLAN 2019-22

‘Putting St Peter’s at the Heart of the Community’

The PCC has reflected on the Mission Action Plan (MAP) 2019-22 and reaffirmed our commitment to it while addressing points for reappraisal as a necessary response to the pandemic. We have restructured some of our teams and encouraged regular meeting and reporting to help achieve our MAP aims. We are also working towards budget-setting for each team, though this has proved challenging.

During the interregnum we will continue to focus on the areas of growth named in the Mission Action Plan:

- Broaden our appeal by exploring additional forms of worship;
- Forge new community partnerships and make best use of church and crypt;
- Ensure financial viability and make best use of our resources;
- Enhance our welcome and pastoral care;
- Focus more on our children and young people;
- Broaden the impact of our communications;
- Develop our building and infrastructure;
- Look after God’s world.

The teams responsible for the implementation of the Mission Action Plan have opened out each area over the next pages of our profile.



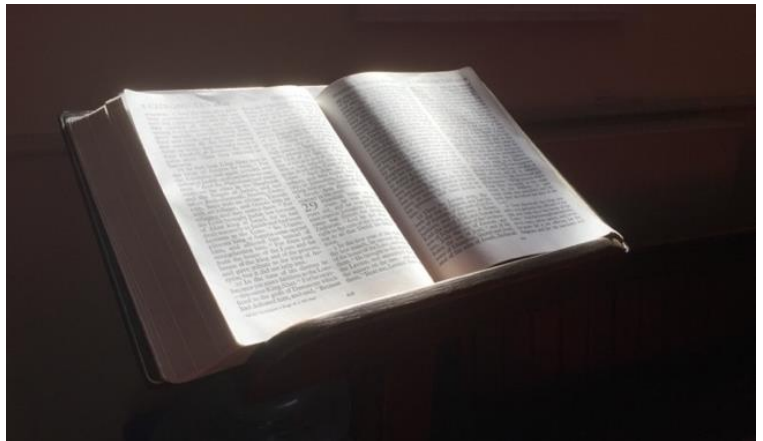
WORSHIP

St Peter's proclaims a long tradition of liberal catholic worship. Until the first suspension of services in March 2020, we celebrated weekly eucharist according to seasonal patterns. In their form and content, these reflected choices of prayers and words that, with minor changes by the hand of the Worship Team, went back to the introduction of Common Worship in 2000 and beyond.

Those crafting these orders of service have been consistently concerned to maintain continuity with earlier traditions at St Peter's and to provide a form of worship that is recognisable to newcomers from different denominational and cultural backgrounds. Similarly, the Worship Team has at times perceived its work and the role of St Peter's as deliberately counter-cultural in a society that is characterised by change and demands of adaptability.

The primary intention of the Worship Team is therefore to guard our theological and liturgical principles, while ensuring that our services are inclusive and outward facing. People witness this mission-in-action when a young female crucifer leads a procession that could include an NHS manager and retired civil servant as candle bearers and a 13-year-old thurifer. As the congregation focuses their attention on the chancel, they see lay people from varying walks of life and generations, racial and cultural heritages, and social and economic experiences leading them as equals in scripture, prayer, reflection and musical praise.

Our key aims are to broaden our reach, deepen our faith and introduce people to the world of faith, spirituality and prayer in ways that are inspiring and relevant. With this in mind, the team discerned an opportunity within the crisis forced upon us by the pandemic. We are reviewing provision and relevance of service booklets and other printed material in this prolonged interim situation, encouraging the digitally savvy to download the service sheet before coming to church and emailing weekly audio files of readings, intercessions and sermons to the 'digitally connected' who are shielding, while at the same time posting hard copies to the 'digitally marginalised'.



Facing the dramatic reduction in social interactions among parishioners and, consequently, the very real threat of alienation, we decided to draw on lay leaders from within the congregation alongside generous help from two familiar, local priests. This follows naturally from our previous vicar's practice of 'growing' leaders (young and old) and at times offering the sermon as an opportunity for individual stories and curated conversations on theological themes, spiritual journeys, historical witness and social engagement.

Currently these contributions from the pew are held within a 'Service of the Word', while the presence of our two visiting priests means we can reintroduce at least a monthly eucharist following our traditional format but without singing and chalice. We look forward to weekly (at least) celebration of the Eucharist and the constant exegesis and proclamation of the scripture at the end of the interregnum and pandemic restrictions.

St Peter's is privileged to count a licensed lay minister (LLM) among its communicants. Our LLM was admitted by the Bishop of London in 2019, and has a licence that runs until 2023. She sits as an observer on the PCC, preaches regularly, and plays a key role in worship, especially during the interregnum.

Music shapes our liturgy in partnership with word and sacrament. Without the possibility of sharing the cup of salvation and singing our praises, and aware of the dismal situation of free-lance musicians during the pandemic, we invited local professional musicians to contribute to our worship. The congregation has made clear the extent to which they value the spiritual dimension that music adds through their generous ongoing contributions to the 'Save the Music' fund.

While we look forward to the return of congregational hymnody and choral anthems, the solo voices of trumpet and cello, flute and piano have woven themselves into the fabric of our worship. While we look forward to re-starting other, home-grown musical enterprises, such as sung mass, regular psalm singing and choral activities, we hope that something permanent may grow out of our recent music programme.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

St Peter's Crypt is a well-used and loved community hub in De Beauvoir, which hosts a wide variety of activities and whose development was funded by grants and local fundraising. As well as being available for the whole community, it is also the space for parish team meetings, congregational socials and Sunday morning Noisy Church.

The Community Partnership Team (CPT) leads St Peter's community development and outreach work and manages the use of the Crypt as our greatest asset for this work. The team benefits from both congregational and community volunteers and operates with the vicar's guidance to ensure our activities sit comfortably within an ethos of welcome, hospitality, respect and kindness. The Operations Manager handles administration, such as financial management and bookings for both crypt and the church spaces.

The vicar is one of the most important heads of our community, drawing us all together in a non-judgemental way: embracing those of other faiths or no faith; communicating with all organisations; providing a listening ear to anyone who needs it; engaging in community and charitable initiatives.

De Beauvoir Resident

While bookings are accepted from most people/organisations, with the exception of political parties, the current focus is on health and well-being (e.g. the long-established De Beauvoir Clinic with affordable acupuncture, osteopathy, nutrition and massage) and babies and young children and their parents/carers (such as Happy Babies for trafficked women and Hackney Playbus). Bookings are such that we are able to offer free or greatly reduced rents to a few community and other support groups.

Two major regular users have been the weekly Islington Churches' Winter Night Shelter and the Friday Café for the De Beauvoir Community. The only activity actually organised by St Peter's is Souper Tuesday (with free soup provided by a local catering firm for Hackney Playbus and any other comers).



On a personal level I have helped host Macmillan coffee mornings, danced Bollywood with the WI, joined in 90th birthdays, sold and shopped at the Christmas fair, cooked for the Night Shelter, collected vegetables from Growing Communities, sung carols at Christmas, eaten in the café, sorted books, attended events and made so many friends. All this as someone who is not part of the congregation - but who feels incredibly thankful that St Peter de Beauvoir is there to embrace us all.

De Beauvoir Gardener

Until March 2020, crypt bookings were consistently at or close to capacity, with parties and life events for De Beauvoir residents, other one-off bookings, meetings for local groups (Women's Institute, gardeners' club, Woven Gold Choir, recognised support groups, De Beauvoir Association) and popular annual events such as the De Beauvoir Flower and Produce Show and the Christmas Market.

We did trial 'Open Crypt' as a complement to Open Church, and for a while employed a part-time community development worker to set this up. After about 18 months we decided that it did not really work, in part because it lacked any real focus.

At one time St Peter's supported two charities a year - one overseas and one in the UK - and although this no longer happens, collections from the extremely well-attended Advent carol service and Christmas and Harvest services always go to charity, for example the local community sponsorship of a Syrian refugee family.

Links with the wider community are good, as so many local people benefit from the Crypt in one way or another. Users publicise their activities well with posters, email and social media; the De Beauvoir Association weekly e-newsletter carries a short summary of things concerning St Peter's. These, combined with the St Peter's website and church newsletters, are the CPT's primary methods of communication.

By contrast, our relationship with the congregation has not been as satisfactory. With the exception of a number of Night Shelter volunteers and a handful involved in the Friday Community Cafe, we have not engaged the congregation's interest and involvement in community development and outreach, which we aim to rectify.



My parents have always been church goers. That's my background but not a path I chose to follow. I know from experience that not all church communities are particularly welcoming to others or treat them as equals. The previous vicar said to me words to the affect that she didn't mind that I'm not a church goer/believer, that I am very welcome in the church whenever! Her attitude gave me the confidence to put myself forward to be on the church flower rota. De Beauvoir Women's Institute

With the notable exception of the combined Islington churches' winter night shelter, our links with other local churches and community organisations in terms of development and outreach have not been very strong, and we hope to look for opportunities to develop these. In compiling information on help available during the current pandemic for visitors to the Church and the De Beauvoir Association, it became very clear that, while most local churches were providing active support, St Peter's role has been a passive one, contributing to other initiatives in small, ad hoc ways such as collecting food for a neighbouring church's food bank. There is potentially great opportunity for development here.

We are confident that our basic aims as outlined in the MAP will continue to be met once restrictions are lifted. Our task now is the stewardship of the Crypt, to return to and build upon 2019 levels of rental income while seeking to develop appropriate areas of social action and community outreach with purposeful and renewed action.



FINANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

St Peter's has for many years been fortunate to be able to think of itself as a well-endowed church, with few serious financial problems. But like many other parishes, these days are gone or going and we work to rethink our position in a constantly changing world, surrounded by shifting priorities.

But neither are we a poor church! Generous voluntary financial contributions for the church come from our congregation, past as well as present, and local people with other connections to the church. As a result of the major refurbishment of the Crypt to allow for its wider use as a community centre, a second significant source of income is hire of the Crypt facilities (and occasionally the church itself). We also benefit from interest on endowment investments dating back many years, and income from rental of the curate's house, as its managing trustees.

Gift Aid is recovered where possible and we have just introduced a scannable QR code to enable visitors to the church to donate through our website.

During the pandemic, voluntary contributions by standing order have been largely maintained, which is heartening. Crypt hire income has fallen dramatically due to Covid, but is now beginning to recover.

Stewardship - i.e. regular pledged giving of time and money - at St Peter's reflects the changing size and profile of the congregation as well as the demographics of the surrounding community. The traditional givers, who have never questioned their duty and devotion to contributing according to their means on a regular basis, belong largely to the older generation. Young professional couples in the parish are drawn to the beauty of the church for their weddings, though few come back. Local families continue to have their babies baptised though not many choose to raise their children in the church.

The stewardship campaign in 2018 was not as successful as had been hoped. A pressing challenge will be to look again at our approach to stewardship and to educate both congregation and community on the full cost of sustaining St Peter's at the heart of the community.

We have recently formed a Finance Team to support the treasurer in reporting clearly and in a timely manner to the PCC. Of greater value is the team's role in raising key questions concerning budget setting, balancing the books, fund raising, and the ethos of our fiscal decision-making, which rests with the PCC.



A part-time, salaried, Operations Manager does the bookkeeping and also manages bookings for and general administration of the church and crypt. The Treasurer, Stewardship Officer and those who count cash collections are volunteers.

The largest item of expenditure has been our contribution to the Common Fund, which pays for the church's mission and ministry across the Diocese of London and allows for the placement of a vicar in nearly every parish.

In recent years, we were over ambitious, drawing on reserves to enable this, and have now had to reduce the level of contribution. This will be reviewed again by the Finance Team.

Annual published accounts are available; financial trends are shown in an appendix for information.



PASTORAL CARE

Our aim is to meet the needs of the congregation and community who approach St Peter's for practical, emotional and spiritual support. In Spring 2018, six members of the congregation took part in the Hackney Deanery Training course, 'Who Cares?'. All six currently offer their skills and understanding within the extended pastoral network, initiated in response to new needs and concerns posed by the pandemic. The network ensures that everyone in the congregation has a named person to contact for support in times of need, a prayer request or simple conversation. In addition, one of these six is currently training as a pastoral assistant and others are actively involved in seeing us through the interregnum.

Some highlights of the Pastoral Team's outreach in consultation with the vicar and collaboration with members of the community and congregation have been:

- Parish Cycle of Prayer, circulating monthly reminders to the Pastoral Network and prayer cards to the congregation;
- Freedom Club, gathering in church for prayer, then crypt for Souper Tuesday and finally a local pub's banqueting room for activities;
- Hospital and Home Visits/Communion to the frail and elderly housebound;
- Preparation for baptism, first communion and confirmation;
- Advent and Lent study groups and guided reflection;
- Planning and Delivering Events to celebrate Petertide, Harvest and Christmas, to name but a few, in collaboration with other teams;
- Parish Outings and Retreats, organising visits to the seaside and programmes for time away from city and work-day life;
- Community Workshops, integrating arts and spirituality across all generations and walks of life and enhancing the space for Sunday worship;
- Rotas for chalice, cleaning, drivers, readers and intercessors, refreshment and welcome



In recent years, St Peter's has practised a daily, unstaffed Open Church policy. After months of closure we made the decision to re-open the doors and introduce a rota of volunteers to ensure Covid guidelines are observed. Those who now 'hold the space' bear witness and contribute to the role the church continues to play as a sacred space of wonder and reverence, silence and communication as well as outreach and pastoral care.

The interregnum combined with the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on all aspects of our shared well-being pose challenges and also opportunities for our team to fulfil our role in the Mission Action Plan. In particular, we want to ensure new church attendees feel more welcome so that we can grow as a communion in community. We are once again offering baptisms, which provide a wonderful means of connecting and nurturing new relationships. In collaboration with the Communications Team, a new welcome pack could be produced alongside training for Sunday welcomers and Open Church volunteers.

We look forward to leadership and guidance from the new vicar on other key actions, such as achieving a balance between reactive and proactive care offered by St Peter's and agreeing a policy to manage expectations around practical and financial support for those in need. Other actions - arts workshops, spiritual support, study groups - could develop naturally in tandem with other PCC Teams and members of the congregation and community as we come together again after so long apart.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Of all areas of our Mission Action Plan, we have fallen far short in our commitment to the children and young people of our community over successive lock-downs. As restrictions have eased and we returned to collective worship at the beginning of March 2021, children and young people have been coming to church with family and returning to their roles as servers and readers.

Before doors were shut in March 2020, children - and carers for babies and toddlers - met in the Crypt for their own Noisy Mass. Their 'Order of Service' included lectionary-linked prayer, scripture and song. In this way, children could share their impressions and thoughts on the same gospel the congregation would have heard. The activity was seasonally and/or scripturally linked and always adaptable for the abilities and appreciations of all ages from nursery through infants to juniors.

Young teens at times joined Noisy Church as companions to younger siblings or as ad hoc helpers. Noisy Church regularly shared their learnings during the notices and displayed their work in one of the alcoves at the back of church. Both children and young people contributed to the intercessions on a regular basis during term-time.

Their voices were also heard as readers throughout the year and for the annual Carol Service. For many the highlight of their role in the life of St Peter De Beauvoir came during the 4th Sunday of Advent with their enactment and narration of the nativity story. Christingle also drew in many children from the community.

In 2012, St Peter's lowered the minimum age for servers to eight years so as to give children the possibility of an active role in our worship and to integrate them visibly into the fabric of our services. At this time we also introduced a scheme of First Communion, by which children are prepared for admission to communion when they are ready, though not before the age of eight. This preparation takes place over four sessions, led by the Pastoral Team. Their admission has usually been celebrated at Pentecost and/or the feast of Christ the King.

St Peter's has yet to rediscover a way to offer the attention and appreciation required for pre-teens and young people. While several offer their time and talents as servers, readers, intercessors and choral or instrumental musicians, as a Team we are keenly aware that we are not meeting them where they are and would welcome sustainable commitment to this from the new vicar.

For a while we partnered with St Anne's Hoxton, whose staff included a dedicated youth worker, and were able offer a few joint events. We piloted a 'Growing Young Leaders' programme, modelled on the highly successful 'Growing Leaders' course (2017-18), which did not gain traction. Youth work needs a champion, someone to promote, encourage and take responsibility.

These next months of transition provide an opportunity to reflect and also to listen to the children and young people in our midst and see where we are. While our provision depends on new families and young people choosing regular worship at St Peter's and on people within the congregation stepping forward as imaginative and reliable volunteers and leaders, we cannot simply sit back and wait.

COMMUNICATIONS

Our mission is to ensure that the substance and form of all St Peter's communications reveal who we are in faith and in the diversity and integrity of all God's creation.

We work together to ensure our message is shared across all potential platforms and that the people with whom we seek to connect will recognise a place for themselves. On a practical level, we want to make sure that people who visit our website or pick up a leaflet from Open Church find the information they need, whether their questions relate to hiring our spaces, ritual and sacramental rites of passage, individual pastoral needs or spiritual journeys.

The Communications Team operates in collaboration with the operations manager, vicar and other teams to ensure that there is clarity and consistency in how we present ourselves to our congregation and the community of De Beauvoir Town, in print and online, in words and images. Developing and promoting our Mission Action Plan provided an opportunity to review our profile, and we worked with a design consultant to establish a look and style that we encourage all teams and individuals to put into practice from daily correspondence through orders of service to pamphlets, posters and this parish profile.

We believe digital space can be sacred space, and our online communications seek to follow this vision. St Peter's currently sends out a MailChimp newsletter every Saturday to 242 households within congregation and community. Since the start of the pandemic, we've published worship material online every Saturday.

The website, professionally designed in 2015 using WordPress, is updated once a week. With full details about St Peter's (history, worship, life services, Mission Action Plan, etc), the website - www.stpeterdebeauvoir.org.uk - also offers a bespoke calendar for publicising church and crypt events, a St Peter's blog, a church donations link and links to Facebook and Twitter to keep St Peter's alive for the whole parish of De Beauvoir Town. The website is connected to Google analytics, and monitoring traffic in the future would be very useful.



During Rogation, we publicised a prayer walk within the bounds. For Petertide, we posted images and words of hope from congregation and community on the doors of the church for all to see. More recently, we published updates on the Crypt and its users and wrote an article on the interregnum for the De Beauvoir Association's weekly e-newsletter. Our FaceBook page is updated to include - when possible - photos of events and services in the Crypt and Church.

Since we reopened for regular worship in March 2021 and look forward to widening access to the Crypt, we've begun to think more broadly about communications. Are there practices that cropped up in ad hoc ways during lockdown that we could develop cohesively as a team?

For example, an informal WhatsApp group grew into a forum for sharing news and daily prayers, including weekly meetings to reflect on scripture and questions of faith. We filmed our Advent Lessons and Carols in compliance with Covid-related guidelines and posted it on Vimeo. The link was shared well beyond congregation and De Beauvoir residents to include former parishioners along with far-flung family and friends.

How can we learn from and adapt good practice in other churches and community organisations to connect with people - young and elderly, digitally savvy and less so - in meaningful and sustainable ways? These are questions we are addressing now and will continue to explore in the coming months.



CHURCH BUILDING

St Peter's is a Grade II-listed early Gothic Revival church located within the De Beauvoir Conservation area of the London Borough of Hackney. The church is raised above a basement known - though not strictly speaking accurately - as the Crypt. It has a pinnacle West Tower complete with much-loved working clock, wound weekly. When it suddenly stopped and needed repairs, funds appeared by appeal to De Beauvoir residents.

Designed by the Victorian architect W C Lockner 'to embrace the character and add lustre to the new estate' of De Beauvoir, the 1841 construction is of stock bricks with stone dressing and a slate roof. In 1884, the building was extended to the east by a raised chancel, with a two manual and pedal pipe organ installed in a chamber on its south side.

Internally the church has a three-sided timber gallery on thin iron columns, with the roof supported by an arcade over the gallery fronts. The interior is spacious and well-proportioned, with all its original pews still in use and its windows undamaged and unchanged.

Major restoration to the stonework and East end window was carried out in celebration of the church's 150th birthday in 1991, with a new red carpet! In 2014, an updated sound system with radio microphones and an induction loop were installed and included the facility for sound from the church to be heard in the crypt. It usually works quite well...!

ORGAN

2015-16 saw serious works begun to improve and restore the organ; built by J W Walkers of London in 1884. It represents a lovely example of the mid-Victorian church organ and was awarded an Historic Organ Certificate Grade II in 2009. At over 130 years old, and despite restoration attempts in the 1970s, it needed assistance.



With thanks to a most generous legacy from a long-serving member of the congregation, we were able to commission a programme of conservation that recognised the value of this historic instrument. A brief was agreed to overhaul the mechanical action and restore the manuals and pedals, while retaining the original Walker features - a complicated task, thankfully completed in 2018.

Our organist writes, 'The organ is now sounding its best - much as it would have sounded 130 years ago'. St Peter's is grateful for help received from Lord Gill, organist and ex-chair of the Council of the Royal School of Church Music, who described what he found as 'a beautifully voiced, and warm-toned romantic organ'.

GROUNDS

The church grounds are much reduced in size from the original plan, but remain green and leafy, and well cared for by its volunteer gardener and occasional helpers. A Quinquennial Tree Report was commissioned in 2018, and the planes and limes inspected/doctored appropriately in conjunction with a Hackney Tree Preservation Order. The West front to the building was redesigned around new access ramps with the generous help of a local landscape architect. The brick boundary walls with wrought iron fencing and gates are Grade II-listed.

CRYPT

The Crypt has been a valuable asset ever since the church was built. With its large hall and smaller rooms, it has accommodated a community school, a refugee centre, a night shelter, and numerous social action projects.

By the early 2000s it became obvious that the amenity was shabby and no longer fit for purpose. In 2003, a Building Development Group (BDG) was formed to initiate first steps, bearing in mind the sensitivities surrounding such a historic building. In compliance with Disability Discrimination Act requirements, ramps were installed both up to the main entrance of the church and down to the Crypt entrance at the side of the building.

Enabling access for all to the Crypt created a new problem - Access to what? Why would people want to spend time in such an unwelcoming and dilapidated space? The BDG worked to put together an ambitious £650,000 plan for full refurbishment of the Crypt interior. This was carried out over a period of three years as funds were raised - our biggest donor being The Big Lottery. We remain delighted that we met our target of raising 10% of this huge sum from local and individual efforts!

The entire interior, apart from supporting walls, was stripped out for the installation of new heating, windows and flooring. The building was knocked through on the south side to give access to a secure and sunny terrace. A state-of-the-art kitchen was built, together with individual offices and consulting rooms, as well as a fully accessible shower room for use by our Night Shelter guests. The sound system allows for relay

from room to room, and provides a projector in the hall for presentations and films. The Crypt was reopened in 2013 to much rejoicing!

Up until the outbreak of the pandemic, St Peter's Crypt was a hive of activity every day of the week. As well as hosting a wide range of activities and services, it has become the natural 'go to' space for the local community to hold regular meetings, annual events and special celebrations. Following a spate of incidents, we thought it prudent to install modest CCTV in 2019.

CURATE'S HOUSE

St Peter's owns a house on De Beauvoir Road that has been home to curates and diocesan interns, amongst others, over the past several years. It is now rented commercially, with the generous management support of the Benyon Estate. It has four bedrooms and was partially refurbished in preparation for new tenants in February 2021.

VICARAGE

The Old Vicarage in Mortimer Road was sold in the 1960s, and a modest family home was built within the church grounds, preserving some of the original garden. This area is large enough to host annual Petertide celebrations (English weather and pandemic guidelines permitting).

The current vicarage, a five-bedroom two-storey brick construction, has received a thorough inspection and required works have begun in anticipation of welcoming a new vicar. The ground floor arrangement includes a 'vicar's study' (with direct access to the garden) and 'guest WC' off the main entry hall, with a separate door leading to private communal areas.



CARING FOR OUR PHYSICAL ASSETS AND PRESERVING THEIR HISTORY

Overall the fabric of the building is in good shape, and has been well looked after over the years. All the various elements making up full statutory compliance are revisited annually. The last Quinquennial Inspection was carried out in 2016; the next is scheduled for early autumn 2021. For more visual details, please visit -

<http://www.stpeterdebeauvoir.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/MEMORY-THEATRE.pdf>.

A PCC Building Team was set up in 2019 as an integral part of St Peter's new Mission Action Plan. In keeping with the importance of the building to the community and its Grade II-listed status, this team includes local volunteers alongside those from the congregation.

St. Peter's is fortunate to have had professional support from the Benyon Estate, local landlords dating from the mid 19th century, in putting together a 5-10 year Planned Preventative Maintenance schedule (PPM) 2018-2027. This costed programme of works has allowed us to identify priorities for the next twelve months and beyond, ranging from 'urgent remediation' to 'enhancement to improve'. No matters rated as 'urgent' or 'essential to prevent deterioration' remain unaddressed. Work to repair the boundary walls is the agreed priority for 2021.

In 2019, a new updated Building Log was put together and work done to improve the storage of our archived material. When more normal times return, we hope to set up systems to share secure online access to all church records; a big task but important as we move from paper to electronic files.



ENVIRONMENT

An urgent and crucial call for us Christians is to look after God's world. The sole aim of the Environment Team is to 'raise awareness of and make our contribution to caring for our environment'. What this means in practice is examining our use of 'housekeeping' resources, initially with a view to reducing consumption of water, gas and electricity and production of non-recyclable and non-compostable waste.

Once the Crypt is fully open and operational we will encourage environmentally friendly behaviour as a fresh start in our terms of engagement. We are already working with the worship committee to reduce paper waste, which increased during the pandemic due to 'single use' recommendations and guidelines.

Environmental stewardship belongs in the leadership and discernment of each of the seven other areas within the Mission Action Plan. This form of stewardship could also open the door to collaboration and connection with other local churches, which has been identified as an area of growth and an opportunity for sharing valuable resources in every sense, connecting spiritual and environmental ecology.

The local environment has changed since March 2020. De Beauvoir is busy from dawn until dusk with dog walkers, runners, cyclists and residents working-from-home out for local exercise. Some of these new patterns of behaviour will most likely continue, which could influence our thinking and future planning about how and when we open the space, to whom and for what events.

Honouring the integrity of all creation and valuing the natural resources within our parish bounds begins with prayer and our spiritual attention to God's gifts to us in trust. The time will come soon enough for examining the nitty-gritty and feasibility of putting our ambitions into practice as an organisation. First, we need to practice joined-up thinking, as a team within the PCC, as congregation and community.

Our discernment in this area also relates to issues of food poverty and homelessness, connecting us to the work of the Community Partnership Team. For years St Peter's has been a collection point for Growing Communities, to which several church members subscribe. Prior to the pandemic, we handled food donations to boost the offerings of Souper Tuesday and Friday Community Lunch. We are currently working in partnership with St Anne's Hoxton, collecting for the local food bank.

We look forward to further integration of environmental concerns in our stewardship, worship, outreach and communications in shared discernment and leadership with our new vicar.



OUR REFLECTIONS ON A NEW VICAR

We began our quest for a new vicar to join our journey of faith with diocesan workshops and listening to each other. Our profile gathers a range of experiences and voices. We pray together for a leader of clarity and purpose, a vicar who will encourage our stewardship and promote meaningful and sustainable work that unites and serves the whole of St Peter's Mission Action Plan.

We are looking for a leader who will, in the words of those who've contributed to this profile:

-
- *value our liturgical traditions and commitment to integrating visual arts and music while introducing new ideas around worship;*
 - *support the spiritual growth and leadership potential of children and young people and encourages their role in the life of the church;*
 - *encourage stewardship in every sense to include spiritual devotion, volunteering time and talents, and regular financial giving;*
 - *promote a strong sense of community, connecting scripture with contemporary life from the pulpit and engaging in secular dialogue and community action.*
-

We are praying for a vicar who displays these leadership skills and styles:

-
- *Collaborative - involves laity in planning and leading worship and setting and delivering our Mission Action Plan;*
 - *Communicative - skilled and versatile across platforms, communities, partners and stakeholders;*
 - *Courageous - recognises the importance of sound management; addresses complex issues with honesty and integrity;*
 - *Compassionate - meets people where they are without judgement or prejudice;*

- *Decisive - counsels wisely through difficult decisions in all aspects of church and community life;*
 - *Encouraging - listens with attention and appreciation to the diverse gifts within all members of the congregation and community;*
 - *Enthusiastic - promotes the role of the church in the wider community, especially as an advocate for climate care and social justice;*
 - *Inclusive - clear and transparent decision-making, which embodies deep respect for difference and equality;*
 - *Joyful - celebrates human rites of passage and the pleasures of life in community and communion;*
 - *Welcoming - values the specific role St Peter's plays within the full and varied community life of De Beauvoir Town.*
-



CLOSING THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

As PCC, Parish Reps and Church Wardens, these are some of our hopes for the future life and community of St Peter De Beauvoir Town.

- Welcome new faces and intensify our relationship with the community. To see, hear and feel positivity, laughter, happiness, food, music, flowers.
- Children, sausages, sunshine, drink, laughter in the vicarage garden. The smell of BBQ and everyone enjoying each other.
- New faces and familiar faces. Smiles and happiness, celebrating and worshiping together. Togetherness - the need to be and not be fake.
- Some positive discussion about involving young people.
- Help create a world we all want to live in. Think more about ecological futures and local solutions.
- Help establish a strong PCC. We are getting there; great team and amazing, talented people, taking initiative and working well together.
- Really listen to others, rather than thinking I know what they're thinking.
- Encourage prayer within the cycle of the church for us to be aware of God's love for our community.

As we journey through the interregnum. these are some of the questions we are asking ourselves and look forward to addressing more fully with our new vicar.

- How do we recover from the many losses we've experienced during the pandemic and sustain our Mission Action Plan?
- How do we remove barriers to participation in the whole life of St Peter's as one community - church and crypt?
- How do we train ourselves to welcome and work with the most vulnerable in our community?
- How could a new vicar lead us towards stewardship and sustainability for future generations?
- How do we encourage and sustain newcomers to our communion?

May the collective story we have gathered here encourage and invite a wonderful new vicar with all the qualities to move St Peter's to the next level. Let us go forward together in love and prayer, devotion and compassion. Amen.

ELECTORAL ROLL & ATTENDANCE

Electoral Roll

- 2018 - 192
- 2019 - 163
- 2020 - 163

Attendance

In 2019, the average weekly attendance was 60 adults and 20 young people under 16 years. At Easter Day that year there were 180 people attending; combined attendance for the Christmas Eve and Day services was 220 people. Over 300 attended the Carol Service in 2019.

St Peter's closed in March 2020 and when we reopened between August and October 2020, in-church worshipers reached a peak of 50 people with an average 40 people each Sunday.

Although we were able to open again briefly in December 2020, we posted an audio recording with still images in place of the Carol Service on the 4th Sunday of Advent and cancelled the Christmas Eve service, in response to rising health concerns. The Christmas morning and Epiphany services went ahead, with 46 adults and three under 16s on Christmas Day.

In response to the spike in new cases and related deaths, St Peter's closed again in January 2021, and returned to circulating materials for Home Worship. We reopened on the last Sunday of Lent and held services during Holy Week. Attendance on Easter Day 2021 was 60 adults and nine under-16s. Attendance since reopening has been climbing steadily, reaching 55 adults and seven under 16s on the 6th Sunday of Easter.

During 2019, there were 14 baptisms and seven marriages. There were three funerals in church, four services at the crematorium and one committal.

Since reopening in March 2021, we have held three funerals and have received requests for 12 baptisms.

STAFFING

The PCC employs two part-time regular and also casual stewards who are present for certain specific activities in church and crypt, e.g. weddings, funerals and special events, to ensure everything runs smoothly and that our policies and procedures are followed.

Salaried employees are the Operations Manager (20 hours per week) and the Housekeeper/Handyman (10 hours per week). On occasion, extra hours are mutually agreed due to deadlines and emergencies.

The Operations Manager is a member of the Community Partnership Team (CPT) and is managed by the Operations Officer, a voluntary PCC role, with input on some financial matters from the PCC Treasurer. The key roles and responsibilities are as follows (in no set order):

- Manage hiring of the church and crypt within guidelines set by the CPT, e.g. secure deposits and payments, engage casual stewards as appropriate, allocate storage space, avoid clashes and ensure ‘turn-around’ time, check maintenance and upkeep;
- Research and implement Covid-related policies and procedures;
- Communications (including via ChurchSuite) for church and crypt
- Update website when necessary;
- Manage the multitude of day-to-day aspects of keeping church and crypt running smoothly;
- Contribute to CPT discussions and policies, as well as reporting on hiring and housekeeping/maintenance issues;
- Handling payroll, approved invoices and book-keeping for all finances; working with the Stewardship Officer on records of donations;
- Complete the diocesan quarterly returns and gift aid claims;
- Assist Treasurer with the preparation of accounts and financial reports to CPT and PCC;
- First point of contact for baptisms, weddings and funerals;
- Day-to-day building management and liaison with the Buildings Team, and others as necessary;
- Ensure contract cleaners, pest control, etc. are aware of specific needs;
- Work with Health and Safety consultants and ensure their recommendations are carried out and/or communicated to others;

- Manage the Housekeeper/Handyman and set priorities of tasks to be completed.

In addition to these tasks and areas of oversight, there is also a pastoral aspect to the role. Often, people (some vulnerable) come to the crypt looking for help and assistance. When it is deemed safe to do so, the Operations Manager will help directly or advise where assistance may be found.

The Housekeeper/Handyman role requires a wide range of practical skills which are applied to a range of jobs from replacing a toilet cistern and painting/decorating to putting up an outdoor Christmas tree complete with lights. There is a pastoral aspect to this role, as well.

FINANCIAL TRENDS 2018-20

| Income | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | £ | £ | £ |
| Voluntary giving receipts | 75,363 | 60,344 | 51,320 |
| Gift aid recovered | 12,371 | 8,502 | 10,490 |
| Income from crypt and church hire | 53,181 | 64,208 | 24,434 |
| Income from rental of curate's house | 20,400 | 20,800 | 12,700 |
| Income from investments | 14,369 | 15,182 | 14,225 |
| Other income or accruals | 3,174 | 6,041 | 4,738 |
| Total | 178,858 | 175,077 | 117,907 |

| Expenditure | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | £ | £ | £ |
| Common fund contribution | 80,600 | 80,600 | 40,600 |
| All other expenses (including crypt, church, curate's house and governance) | 135,051 | 121,875 | 114,207 |
| Total | 215,651 | 202,475 | 154,807 |

| Funds | On 31/12/18 | On 31/12/19 | On 31/12/20 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | £ | £ | £ |
| Total unrestricted funds | 180,513 | 152,673 | 120,337 |
| Total endowment funds including curate's house. (Note: this capital is not available for spending but use of income from these funds is not restricted.) | 607,063 | 670,154 | 673,603 |