



COUNCIL REPORT – November 2023 to January 2024

This is a report from your Council covering the period from November 2023 to January 2024. Council met twice during this period, on 20th November 2023 and 15th January 2024. In December Council came together for a social evening at our Chaplain's flat on 18th December, which gave the opportunity for more informal exchanges between Council members. We all enjoyed Daphne's warm and generous hospitality and it was a wonderful way to celebrate the year's work together.

Review of Council Priorities 2023

At our January meeting, led by Daphne we reviewed our progress against the four priority areas which we had identified at the beginning of 2023, Building Tomorrow, Vision & Strategy, Building Congregational Capacity and Strengthening our Ministry with Young People. We have much to celebrate. We can see the results of the Phase 1 renovation of the church all around us as we worship and visitors have expressed their admiration. There are still some issues which need resolution (see below under Building Tomorrow) which Council and the Building Tomorrow Committee will endeavour to bring to a speedy conclusion.

We now have a Vision & Strategy for the next three years (2024, 2025 and 2026), which focuses on four strategic areas; Worship, Building Congregational Capacity, Community and Social Outreach and the Environment. Objectives for each of these areas have been defined and will form the basis of our Council priorities for 2024 and the next couple of years. The Vision & Strategy was shared with you in October and I would encourage you to re-read, consider and pray about the Strategy prior to attending our AGM on 28th April. You can find our Vision & Strategy at the following link:

([Policy Documents – Holy Trinity Church Geneva \(holytrinitygeneva.org\)](https://www.holytrinitygeneva.org)).

In terms of Building Congregational Capacity some progress has been made and we rejoice in the six young people prepared for first communion and the nine adults and three young people confirmed by Bishop Robert in November. However, we still have a lot to do in nurturing Christian vocation and involving a wider range of people in supporting our worship and other areas of church life. At present there is pressure in supporting worship (finding sidespeople, readers, chalice bearers and intercessors) and our young people's ministry because of a lack of volunteers and leaders. Again an area where we encourage you to think prayerfully of where you can help. Any member of Council would be happy to have a chat with you to explore where you could perhaps contribute.

Council Priorities for 2024

Following on our review of our progress in 2023, we focused on our priorities for 2024. Our four priority areas will be; Worship, Building Congregational Capacity, Community and Social Outreach and the Environment. In each case our objectives align with our vision to “make God visible” here in Geneva, in our church. Achieving these objectives will entail commitment of time and skills, but also some investment in areas such as lay development, youth work and outreach. Council is working with our Treasurer, Michael Gunton, to ensure that our 2024 budget, as it will be presented to you at our AGM, reflects the resources we need to achieve our 2024 objectives. You can find the specific 2024 objectives in the Vision & Strategy document referenced above.

You may remember that in 2023, Council decided to focus on one of the priority areas at each Council meetings. Since then our experience has shown that it can be difficult to combine an in depth consideration of a long to medium term project with getting through business items and regular reports. We often ended up with meetings which overran and some business items getting rather short shrift late in the evening! We thus decided, at our November meeting, to experiment with a changed format for Council meetings. In 2024 we will have four Councils in the year which will be dedicated to our four priority areas. Business will be limited to quick urgent matters only at these meetings and there will be no regular reports. The remaining meetings will be business meetings with regular reports. Our first meeting in January was a business meeting and our February meeting will be dedicated to our objective to develop the richness of our Anglican Worship (both liturgy and music) to serve as wide a community as possible.

We are hoping that this change will enable us to work more effectively to both run the church on a day to day basis and enhance our spiritual mission here in Geneva.

Building Tomorrow

Those of you who read the previous Council Report, will know that we had planned on work on Phase 1 being completed by the end of December. Unfortunately there are still issues with both functionality and quality in the vestry and office. We have asked for a redesign of the vestry sink and handles for the cupboards. Anyone who has tried to either use the vestry sink or open the cupboards will know exactly why this is necessary! There are also significant problems with the front door which is out of operation at the time of writing this report. On Saturday 20th January, the Council had a special session with the members of the Building Tomorrow Committee to review the Phase 1 building project and document the lessons learnt. You may rest assured that under Mark Charles’s leadership, we will all work hard to iron out the outstanding issues. The “lessons learnt” document will be a precious support when we move into Phase 2 of the building plan.

During 2024, Council expects to start working on developing Phase 2 of our building plan. We currently have building permission to renovate the current hall, including a second outside access and digging down to provide a second basement area. However, given the length of time since the first cost estimates were made, our architects have up-dated the estimates. These were received in mid-January and are now being reviewed and analysed by our Building Tomorrow Committee. Council will then convene for a special session to consider the costing and funding options of Phase 2. We expect this to occur in spring and will keep you informed of progress and plans. It is now pretty certain that there will be no Phase 2 building activity in 2024, so we can fully enjoy our beautiful church and use our hall in its present configuration for at least the rest of this year.

Finance

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our Treasurer, Michael Gunton who keeps Council well informed of our financial situation. Building Tomorrow has significantly complicated his work, as in addition to our operational accounts he has to account for Building Tomorrow expenses and income (funding). At our November meeting, Michael presented the end of October 2023 accounts in a new format, which in addition to the monthly general fund/operating accounts gives a complete overview of the movements of church funds, including Building Tomorrow and the Development Fund. This has helped Council understand the full picture and will inform our financial decision making going forward.

At our January meeting, he presented the provisional 2023 accounts, which at the time of writing this report need to be finalized and then audited. It looks as though there may be a small surplus on the year. Our thanks go to you, the congregation, whose generosity has made this possible. This final result was helped by many of you remembering the church on your Christmas present list during the month of December. The excellent results of the Christmas Fare (around ten thousand francs) also made a big difference, as did the collection at the Cathedral (Nine Lessons and Carols Service) which at over six thousand francs (before costs), for the first time approached pre-covid levels.

Chaplain's Reports

Council receives regular reports from Daphne on the life of our Chaplaincy. This period saw the integration of our Curate, Glen Ruffle, into our Church life. He dedicates 3 days of his week to Holy Trinity and about the same time to his role as the Anglican Communion's representative to the United Nations Organization in Geneva. These two aspects of his work came together meaningfully on 10th December when he organized a special service to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at Holy Trinity, followed by a candle-lit vigil on the forecourt with speakers from the UN, WCC and other international agencies.

We also had a rich programme of worship and activities over Advent and Christmas, including a full programme for our children, with a nativity play, Christingle and crib service. The Christmas Trinity Tea was a greatly enjoyed by the not quite so young. Those less fortunate than ourselves were not forgotten. Three hundred Christmas "goodie bags" were prepared and delivered to the Jardin de Montbrillant on 21st December.

Churchwardens' Report

Our Churchwardens, Mary and Aylwin work very hard to keep our church operating safely and dealing with the myriad of practical problems which arise with any building and community. As mentioned in the last report, the problems caused by rough sleepers and the lack of lavatory facilities at the bus station have continued to be of concern. At our January meeting council voted unanimously in favour to go ahead with a plan to erect a temporary fence around our garden at a cost of CHF 7'700. This will not be a thing of beauty but will protect our garden and the church façade from misuse. In future years a more permanent solution will be found. We have also received a response from Madame Frédérique Perler to our letter of complaint concerning the state of the Place Dorcière (the bus station) and the

problems this causes us. She confirmed to us that work will be undertaken, starting this spring, to renovate the bus station itself and to provide adequate lavatory facilities on the site. Much the same information was provided by a letter to the Tribune de Genève from Madame Perler that appeared in early January in response to an article on the sad state of the Place Dorcière. So, we are hopeful that between the measures we are taking the temporary fence, and the actions of the “Ville de Genève”, the situation will improve in 2024.

Improving our sound system remains a priority for the Council and our Churchwardens. There have been some delays over the Christmas period but we hope that the independent expert chosen to assess our current system, Lemansio, will be visiting our church soon to advise us on the best course of action to make sure our sound system is fit for purpose.

Safeguarding

Amanda Dawson attended the November Council meeting to bring Council up-to-date with her work as our Safeguarding Officer. Sadly, she also informed us that she and her husband would be returning to the United Kingdom in the New Year, so she would have to resign from her position as Safeguarding Officer. Council expressed their gratitude to Amanda for the sterling work she has done in the short time she has been in office. At our January meeting, Council was glad to hear that Carol Brown has come forward to replace Amanda. Carol is already well versed in Safeguarding practices from her work as a Junior Church leader and we are most grateful to her for taking on this additional responsibility. Rawsette Whyte remains as the Assistant Safeguarding Officer. Rawsette is currently completing all the risk assessments which need to be done for all our activities which involve the young and vulnerable.

Council will be busy over the next couple of months preparing for our AGM on 28th April. We hope many of you will be able to attend.

Please feel free to feedback to me on whether this quarterly report gives you useful information on the Council's work and any suggestions for improvement. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have on the contents of this report.

Ursula McGregor

25th January 2024