

Church Rooms Development Project

Background

Many of you who have been part of St Mary's for some time will realise that when the church was reordered in 2011, this was always intended to be Phase 1 of a two-phase project, with Phase 2 being a complete redevelopment of the Church Rooms. Back then, 'Vision 2020' imagined what the church and halls could look like if they were entirely fit for purpose, modernised ready for the next phase of church life.

For the last nine years we have enjoyed the benefits of worshipping in our warm, welcoming, reordered church, but in contrast our Church Rooms

continue to show
signs of age,
and are



increasingly hindering the growing ministry at St Mary's.

Over the last few years, Peter Robottom and others have worked tirelessly to formulate plans for Phase 2 of 'Vision 2020'. Progress has been fairly slow, and the change of Vicar during 2019 inevitably delayed things, but we now have received planning permission from the City Council and favourable support from the Advisory Committee of Bristol Diocese.

2020 has arrived, and the time has come for the church family to make a decision about the work on the Church Rooms we are willing to undertake.

The vision of 'Phase 2'

The Church Rooms are a significant asset for our church, and have been given by previous generations of church members. We have a responsibility for stewarding the resource of these rooms and using that resource to further God's work in Stoke Bishop. There are three main components of the vision, all of which are clearly aligned with our mission as a church.

Welcome for all

Currently our Church Rooms are not easily accessible for those who are less able-bodied. In particular, the access to the building is difficult for those with impaired mobility or people using wheelchairs or buggies and we do not have an accessible toilet in the main hall. In addition, access between the church and the halls is highly problematic for those in wheelchairs and involves having to go outside the building and along Mariners Drive where there is no continuous footway, whatever the weather! At the heart of our mission is a desire for St Mary's to be a church that is welcoming to everyone. Currently, our building layout hampers this aspect of our mission.



Going for growth

Another equally important aspect of our church mission is to pursue growth. We long to be a church where new people are regularly joining us and coming to faith in Jesus. The encouraging growth which has taken place over the last few years has meant that we have increased the size of our staff team, added new regular activities to the suite of what we offer, and the groups which use the Church Rooms are growing in size. In addition the number of requests received from community groups to use the Church Rooms is increasing, and we are often unable to accommodate the demand.

Good stewardship

The Church Rooms were built in the 1960s and extended in the 1980s, but have had little adaptation or significant maintenance since then. The church community is responsible for the care of our buildings, and at the very least there is repair work which needs to be urgently undertaken simply to ensure that the buildings are water-tight and able to be safely used.



Scope of the project

With those visionary aspirations in mind, the time has come for us to commit to this project. The plans which have been drawn up and approved by the Council and Diocese would meet all of our current needs and would 'future-proof' the Church Rooms for decades of growth ahead. The plans are available for people to look at in church. **This scheme is estimated to cost £600,000 and will include all of the alterations and improvements listed below.** These alterations have been grouped carefully and are listed by cost, with the most expensive aspects of the project at the top and the less expensive features nearer the bottom.

Welcome, access and connectivity

Those using wheelchairs and pushchairs would be able to access the foyer of the Church Rooms via a new ramp (at a lower 1:20 gradient than the current ramp to the Hulbert Room, which is much steeper than regulations now require). A lift between the church and the

Church Rooms would be installed to allow for easy access for all between the two spaces. A newly configured entrance to the Church Rooms leading into an attractive, light, airy, welcoming foyer will significantly improve the external aesthetics of the building.



Access to the Church Rooms from the street, and from the foyer to the church is currently difficult for those with reduced mobility, and parents with buggies or pushchairs

Additional meeting room

An Upper Room located above the current toilets and office will provide a self-contained space (with a servery and accessible toilet) that can be accessed by all (via stairs or the lift). This room could be used for meetings, crèche on Sundays, Film Focus and by external community groups, and would allow for growth amongst the church family. The addition of this Upper Room is dependent on the costly alterations above being included in the final plan.

Kitchen

The kitchen would be substantially enlarged and fitted out to standards required by Environmental Health. This would enable the church family (and external caterers) to prepare hot meals for larger numbers of people.



The existing kitchen is cramped and outdated

Improved office space

Our employed and volunteer staff team (whom we have a particular responsibility to care for) will all be able to have space to work without distraction under the new configuration of the office space, improving communication and providing better reception facilities. Storage space throughout the Church Rooms will also be improved.



Our staff team are regularly 'hot desking' due to lack of space. Inadequate storage provision exacerbates the problem.

Toilets

All the toilets in the Church Rooms will be upgraded, bringing them up to modern standards, improving accessibility and baby changing facilities.



The toilets do not come up to modern standards

Security, eco-considerations and essential repairs

The main entrance doors to the Church Rooms will be replaced with modern doors which are more secure and retain heat. The windows in



Ill-fitting entrance doors are a security risk and let heat out

the Church Rooms will be replaced reducing energy loss and heating costs. The main hall, Hulbert Room

and Evans Room will be redecorated as necessary and essential improvements made, including a replacement external door to the Hulbert Room to allow those rooms to be used by groups independently of the other areas of the Church Rooms. The low-pitched roof over the main hall and flat roof over the foyer and offices (which usually has a 10-15 year life span) has not been replaced since construction in the 1960s. This project includes the recovering and improved insulation of the hall roof, again saving energy.



External access to the Hulbert Room, new windows, recovering of the roof and other essential repairs and are all included in the plan

An invitation to the church family

Church of England churches are almost entirely funded by members of the congregation, with the exception being any grant funding that may be received for special projects, but this represents a tiny percentage of the total income. Giving from members of the church family enables us to contribute to diocesan funds (which enable us to enjoy ordained leadership), employ other staff, maintain and improve our buildings, support local and overseas mission, and be a blessing to our community in Stoke Bishop and beyond.

This means that as a church family we have the primary responsibility to fund any improvements which we would like to see on our Church Rooms.

The PCC (those responsible alongside the Vicar for the leadership of the church) has agreed that the appropriate course of action is to invite the congregation to prayerfully decide what could be pledged towards this project. We hope that

pledges or actual gifts will be made over the next few weeks so that by Sunday 3 May 2020 we would have a substantial figure pledged which will inform our decisions about the next steps for this project.

The level of giving from the church family will determine the scope of 'Phase 2' and may mean that we have to make decisions about which aspects of the project we cannot afford to pursue.

The PCC is in agreement that the level of congregational giving should be in the region of 50% of the total project cost. This means, for example, that if the church family are able to give i.r.o £100,000 then the total project will be scaled back to a project that will cost i.r.o of £200,000. A project of this size would still enable us to do some of the proposed improvements, but there would inevitably be many things which would have to be left out, and it would be up to the PCC to decide on the scope of the final project.

Where will the rest of the money come from?

If in the region of 50% of the total funding were to come from gifts or pledges made by the church family over the next few weeks, we would then need to turn to the task of finding the remaining 50% of the funds. This is likely to happen in the following ways:

✦ **We will apply for grant-funding.**

This is unlikely to be a major funding stream but there are a few trusts and bodies that we can apply to which may look favourably on this project.

✦ **We will approach the Stoke Bishop residents and those who use the Church Rooms regularly.**

There may be some people living locally who feel minded to support this project but

we should be careful not to assume that many people would be able to give significant amounts.

✦ **We will use the funds previously given by church members.**

We have around £70,000 in the Development and Building Funds which can be legitimately spent on this project.

✦ **If there is still a shortfall, we will explore other options.**

As Vicar I feel strongly that loans or mortgages should only be considered as an absolute last resort. I am also concerned that we do not allow this building project to distract us from our core purpose as a church – following Jesus and making Him known. Therefore, whilst I am not entirely against using events to raise funds, for example by having retiring collections at activities that naturally occur in the course of a normal year, I am not willing to endorse a series of large-scale fundraising events for this phase of the project.

Digging deep

There's no doubt that the current plans are ambitious. £600,000 is a lot of money to raise, especially when this needs to be in addition to the ways that the church family already gives to make worship and ministry possible. That said, we have a God who has moved His people to give on countless occasions and amazing things have been achieved as a result. We can be confident that if God wants the full project to be completed, the money required won't be an obstacle.

There is so much in the Bible about the importance of generous, sacrificial giving. The primary thing to remember is that it is a blessing to give. Somehow, in God's Kingdom economy, when we give sacrificially (regardless of what the actual amount is) we will experience joy, and our trust in the One who is able to provide for our needs will increase. When reflecting on giving I am often drawn to **Exodus 35**, the account of the Israelites providing the materials needed to construct the Tabernacle (their place of worship where God's presence dwelt in a powerful way). This is a beautiful picture of sacrificial giving – those whose spirit was moved to do so brought what they could. Everyone brought different things and in different amounts, but what was given was enough to create something beautiful and honouring to God.

Another familiar but helpful story is found in **Luke 21:1-4** where Jesus commends the woman who put a tiny amount, just two copper coins, into the Temple offering. What matters to Jesus is not the quantity, but the generosity with which it is given.

Finally, it might be helpful to reflect on **2 Corinthians 8-9** where Paul encourages the wealthy Christians in Corinth to remember the believers in Jerusalem who are struggling due to famine and persecution. I am keenly aware that in inviting the St Mary's Church family to give to this project, there is a risk that people's giving will be directed towards this, and away from giving to our church more generally, or to support our Mission Partners. Please can I urge you to ensure that this is not the case. I would only encourage people to give to the Building Project if they are able to do so *in addition to their current giving*.

We need to ensure that our mission and responsibility as God's people in Stoke Bishop is not compromised in any way as we pursue this project.



When will we hear more?

The PCC will meet on 6 May and will be informed as to the amount pledged by the church family. **This amount will then guide the PCC to make a decision as regards the total cost of the project and to begin conversations about what parts of the project might need to be foregone, should the church family pledges**

total less than £300,000. At the APCM on Sunday 17 May we will update the church family as to the scope of the project based on the pledges received, and give some early indications as to which of the alterations will be included in the final plan.

What do I need to do now?

- ♦ **Pray and ask God to help you 'dig deep'** as you consider how you can support this project in addition to any financial support you already give to the church.
- ♦ **Have a look at the plans** on display at the back of church. Walk around the Church Rooms and imagine what could be done.
- ♦ **Agree as an individual/couple/family how much you are able to pledge** (at this stage, pledges are fine, but you are welcome to actually make the donation if you prefer).
- ♦ **Complete the tear off pledge form and return it in an envelope to the church office by Sunday 3 May 2020.** All gifts will remain anonymous, except to Tony Hughes our Stewardship Officer. If you prefer, you can email your pledge amount to hallproject@stmarysb.org.uk and Tony Hughes will receive this.
- ♦ Arrange to have a chat with Jema if you would like to.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this.
Let's all play our part as we respond and take the next steps.**

Revd Jema Ball, March 2020



NORTH WEST ELEVATION



stMary's

STOKE BISHOP



Pledge towards the Church Rooms Development Project

Name(s):

Contact email (or phone number if not on email):

Pledge amount:

Please indicate whether you are able to donate this as a lump sum, or whether you intend to spread the gift over several instalments. The development period will be from June 2020 - June 2022; gifts could be spread over that two year period as monthly (or less frequent) instalments.

Please tear off this form and return it in an envelope to the Church Office by Sunday 3 May 2020. Alternatively you can email your pledge amount to hallproject@stmarysb.org.uk and Tony Hughes will receive this.

By giving us this information you are consenting for St Mary's to contact you in due course to invite you to turn your pledge into an actual gift.

Gifts can be made in instalments over the intended development period or as a lump sum.