

Saturday 23 May 2015
Christ Church 9.30 – 12.00 noon

Attended:

Dave Godfrey, Revd. Simon Stevenette, Simon Cox, Jenny Fraher, Judith Hawkins
Revd Norma McKemey, James Purvis, Christine Senior, Mike Ranstead, Ailsa Palmer
Celia Lee, Caroline Pitt, Mel Clark, Revd John Stevenette, Mike Palmer
Sarah Bowden, Anne Macmillan, Cynthia Desmond, Margaret Piper, Martin Lee, Daniel Pitt

Apologies

Revd David Howell, Revd Daphne Hardwick, Stephen Grosvenor

1. Welcome

Daniel Pitt welcomed those who had come, and thanked Ailsa Palmer for organising the teas and coffees beforehand. He thanked Revd Canon Simon Stevenette and Mike Palmer for their presentations.

2. Prayer

Revd Canon Simon Stevenette opened the meeting in prayer. In the prayers, Simon remembered our new mayor, Andrew Bennett, taking office, and the work of the new Community Centre @ Christ Church development manager, Chris Smith, and the opportunities the new Centre provides.

3. Introduction, purpose of meeting and the agenda

Daniel Pitt introduced the present Congregational Update as following on from the January Congregational Update (Ref. 1) from developments in thinking as identified the documents listed below, and in line with the policy in the Annual Report.

References

1. Congregational Update on 25 January 2015
2. Standing Committee paper "Mission to the Wider Community". 9 March 2015
3. Buildings and Site Development Committee response. 11 March 2015
4. Minutes of 30 March PCC
5. Congregational Easter Letter. Revd Simon Stevenette on behalf of Christ Church PCC. Issued Easter Sunday, 5 April 2015.
6. Christ Church with St Mary's Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2014
7. Minutes of APCM, 26 April 2015
8. Architects visit on 28 April 2015

The purpose of the present (May 23) Congregational Update was to review the further development in thinking for the interior since the January 25 Update, in particular the present proposal to have a new flat floor across the whole church (excluding the area at the west end of the building, under the tower). The new proposal would now necessitate the temporary lifting and reinstatement of all the main nave pews, and would include provision for up to the first four pews at the front to be removable (see Refs. 2, 3 and 4). Issues discussed include points recorded in the 2015 APCM (Ref. 7).

Recognising the importance of feedback and updates, the object of the Congregational Update was to foster communication with all interested parties, especially the worshipping community, with respect to what is being proposed, why, and progress, so as to create positive ideas and enthusiasm, and to receive questions.

Daniel outlined the planned structure of the Congregational Update, in three parts –

- Part 1 Interior Projects Update, followed by questions (notes as Section 4 below)
- Part 2 Mission in the wider context – including questions. Revd Simon Stevenette. (As Section 5)
- Part 3 Discussion Sessions in groups, with feedback presented (as Section 6)

Daniel also stated that taking into account any feedback from this event, it was intended that further similar events would be run at appropriate times – recognising that the format of this event is a bit experimental. He stated that the agenda had been planned to allow a reasonable amount of time for discussions, but that the intention was not to over-run the planned finish time of 12.00 noon.

Daniel outlined the recognition that the building is in need of an overhaul, with the provision for more flexibility, and recognising the need for longer term sustainability (i.e. financial and human resource).

Daniel emphasised that relevant information is kept on our website which is subject to constant update.

4. Interior projects update, and questions on that. Mike Palmer

Mike Palmer summarised the development of the set of projects under consideration.

Mike outlined the development of thinking since the congregational update on 25 January (Ref. 1). A quotation had been received for the provision of a new hardwood floor in the north and south transepts and the centre, and the side aisles. On reviewing this quote, there was logic in considering doing the whole floor. This would necessitate the temporary lifting and replacement of the main nave pews. The main nave pews would need to be replaced so that they would be stable.

The main proposals were summarised, in turn, as follows:

1. A new, efficient, gas fired heating system with radiators and a modern, flexible control system.
2. New LED lighting which will improve overall light levels, be more controllable and will cost less to run and maintain than our current system.
3. A new flat floor throughout the church which will improve accessibility. The logic for having a complete new floor was to ensure a uniform floor, to avoid a “patchwork” appearance.
4. Re-instate the original pews in the nave with an option for up to the first four pews at the front to be removable, to create a more flexible worship space.
 - It was acknowledged that the reinstated pews would need to be made stable. This issue is being addressed and there are methods to ensure the stability of the pews.
5. Remove the remaining pews in the side aisles.
 - Where pews are removed permanently, it was recognised that the seating capacity of the pews would need to be maintained by the purchase of new chairs.
6. Take steps to improve the welcome area at the rear of the church including removal of the half pews and relocation of the sound console

7. Upgrades to the AV system, including screen
8. Replace the existing dais with a modular version which could be extended or removed altogether to provide a large area of level floor.
9. Clean some of the stained stonework.
10. Reduce draughts by installing new, draught proof, automatic doors at the West & SW doors.
 - It was confirmed that the idea of having an internal porch has been dropped.
11. Improve storage capability to reduce clutter around the church.
12. Investigate options for a new clergy meeting room near the community centre.
 - The proposal to screen in the Canon Thomas Corner has been dropped.
13. Investigate options to clean & restore some of the stained glass.
 - Need also more storage in the church – probably in the north transept.

Next steps – need to gather the more specific “whys?” for all the jobs.

Need to consider carefully the phasing the work, so as to minimise any time the building would need to be shut.

Our architect has been engaged to produce plans for a level floor. (Ref. 8).

Questions following interior update proposals

Jenny Fraher - Pointed out that a new level floor would require ramps to allow the S transept fire door to open, and ramps at the west end tiled area to accommodate height changes. It was confirmed that this would be addressed by the architect.

Simon Cox - Suggested that an acoustic survey should be carried out.

Sarah Bowden - Level floor is a good idea, but we will need to take care with the pews fixings. Sarah recommended we look at what has been done at Cirencester Parish Church, where the side aisles are free of pews and look good.

Anne Macmillan - Parking can be a problem.

David Morse - Sought clarification as to the plan with respect to the main nave pews. (As Item 4, p. 2).

Mel Clark - Referred to Bristol Cathedral where there is a stone floor and where seating is by chairs. However, she pointed out that seats, to replace pews, can cost up to £160 each.

Norma - Need to progress the heating.

Judith Hawkins - Emphasised the need to think through carefully the practical aspects of chairs management – e.g. moving, rearranging, storage etc.

5. Mission in the wider context. Revd Canon Simon Stevenette

Simon placed the proposals for the development of the interior of Christ Church into the present societal context.

- The present challenge is to recognise that people do not have the background knowledge of the Bible and Christianity that they used to.
- There is still a need for the experience of God.
- Our Community Centre is a pioneering opportunity – the use of the building has snowballed.
- In complement with the CC@CC, the church building could also be used for community activities and prayer every day. The columns are the only part of the building that can't be changed!
- It costs at least £25/hour to keep the church open.
- A new service is planned at St Mary's, to start Sundays 4 pm, beginning in July. It is planned that the service would subsequently relocate to Christ Church.
- Worship and community are all about relationships.
- The old ways are not working.
- We are living in challenging times. The Gospel is for everybody.
- Ambience in a building matters. Also the warmth of welcome.
- We need to do all we can to share the Parish Church to all people in Old Town.

Questions following Mission in the wider context

Judith Hawkins – Looking for provision to be made to include the less formal.

Cynthia Desmond – We do need more people. Cynthia commented on how her daughter values the reverential aspect of worship.

Simon Stevenette commented how there is much competition on Sundays.

Simon Cox mentioned the benefits of chapel at school.

Sarah Bowden observed on how if you make something beautiful, it has an effect. The building does have potential – cleaning the walls and de-cluttering would be of great benefit.

6. Discussion groups

Daniel Pitt asked those attending to form themselves into groups of 4 or 5 and to sit with those whom they didn't know. Daniel asked the groups to develop their ideas and priorities over a period of 20 minutes, and then for one member of each group to give a short feedback to the meeting.

The following groups formed

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| Group 1 | Simon Stevenette, Simon Cox, Dave Godfrey, Jenny Fraher, Judith Hawkins |
| Group 2 | James Purvis, Norma McKemey, Christine Senior, Mike Ranstead, Ailsa Palmer |
| Group 3 | Caroline Pitt, Mel Clark, John Stevenette, Celia Lee, Mike Palmer |
| Group 4 | Anne Macmillan, Cynthia Desmond, Margaret Piper, Sarah Bowden, Martin Lee, Daniel Pitt |

Feedback – (in reverse order of the group numbering):

Group 4 – Sarah Bowden

We should consider carrying out an acoustic survey.

OK with the removal of the side aisle pews.

Removal of too many of the main nave pews could upset the balance.

A level floor would enhance the interior.

The advantages of underfloor heating were identified as including the avoidance of the clutter of radiators.

Agreed with the removal of the rearmost short pews.

The walls should be cleaned.

Consider screening the Lady Chapel

Group 3 – Celia Lee

Agrees with Sarah Bowden.

Were happy with the proposals as at January.

Disabled loo, but need to recognise sensitivities with respect to visibility and noises.

Projector screen a good idea.

Improved disabled access needs to be included in any remodelling of the interior space.

Group 2 – Norma McKemey

Toilet a good idea

Small kitchenette

Flexibility of use of the space.

Draught-proofing the doors an excellent idea.

Group 1 – Dave Godfrey

Agree with the proposals for lighting, heating, walls.

Support idea of flat floor over the full floor, and flexibility at the dais.

There was not a consensus on seating arrangements.

7. Conclusions

1. The Congregational Update was initiated in recognition of the need to keep the congregation informed of recent developments to the interior proposals (Refs. 2, 3, 4, 5) following the January Update (as Ref. 1). The significant development of thinking is the proposal to adopt a flat floor across the whole church, which would necessitate the temporary lifting of all the nave pews and their reinstatement, with the option to make provision for up to the first four pews at the front to be removable. This would be to create a more flexible space in the church, for worship, and to make provision for increased use by the wider community.
2. With respect to the development of the recommendations adopted by the PCC (i.e. Refs. 3 and 4) the May Congregational Update was in broad agreement, including the benefits of a level floor, but there remain concerns over the overall issues of seating arrangements. Whilst there is a clear consensus about the removal of the side aisle pews, there remain concerns over the nave pews and also concerns with respect to chair management – e.g. storage, management of stacking and moving, cost of high quality chairs, transfers of memorial plaques, etc.
3. To enable the further detailed development of the final plans and the faculty application process, it was recognized that further work is needed on the identification of specific “whys?” for the integrated set of proposed jobs.

4. It is recommended that proposed changes be subject to an acoustic survey/analysis, particularly with respect to any effect that any new floor surfaces would have on the sound of the organ.
5. Further Congregational Updates (and or exhibitions) should be given as soon as further significant developments and relevant information/plans are available.
6. For any future work at Christ Church, the provision of a disabled loo and of a kitchenette should be considered.

References

1. Christ Church Development Plan – Congregational Update, Sunday 25 January 2015. Handout. F D Pitt 24 January 2015.
2. Standing Committee paper “Mission to the Wider Community”. 9 March 2015
3. Minutes of the Buildings and Site Development Committee meeting 11 March 2015. Includes 3-page note “Buildings Committee response to the Mission to the Wider Community Paper”.
4. Minutes of 30 March PCC. (In which it is recorded that PCC accepted the recommendations of the B&SD committee - as Ref. 2.)
5. Mission to the Wider Community
A congregational Easter letter from Revd Canon Simon Stevenette on behalf of Christ Church PCC. Issued Easter Sunday, 5 April 2015.
6. Christ Church with St Mary’s Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2014
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