

Statement of Need to Support faculty application – October 2015

Central to our vision to put Christ Church at the centre of the local community is our desire to create a greater sense of local ownership and responsibility for the church building. To do this we recognise that the church needs to be seen as a cherished, welcoming, accessible local resource, available, not just for worship, but as a valuable venue for local gatherings such as civic events, concerts, markets, Christmas fairs, charity events, public debates and festivals.

We have completed the first part of the plan by building a community centre on the church site and this continues to bring large numbers of people from across the community who otherwise might not come our way. The church itself however, is looking tired and does not easily lend itself to more flexible uses as the fixed pew platforms reduce the circulation space within the church and are a barrier to wheelchair and pushchair access for the old and young.

It is also a cold, dark and poorly lit space which does not present a welcoming face to those who are perhaps already reticent to enter it.

Our proposals seek to remedy a number of these issues.

- 1) To create a more welcoming, flexible and inclusive church we propose to install a new flat wood block floor extending from the rear across the main body of the church building, to a level which runs through to the Lady Chapel in the south eastern corner of the building and across the transepts. This will give level access to all parts of the church.
 - a) The fixed 1970's carpeted dais presents a barrier to free movement around the front of the church and crossing. To maximise the advantages of the new flat floor, we propose to replace it with a modular stage which, when required, could be dismantled and stored out of the way. This will be extendable to accommodate concerts and other performances and will incorporate a ramp to enable disabled access to the chancel. This will create a significant space at the front of the church and will enable more creative and inclusive styles of worship to be tried out as well as providing more flexibility for other events in the church.
 - b) We intend to restore the existing pews to the centre of the church but engineer the capability to add further flexibility by enabling some of the front pews to be movable for temporary relocation on occasions when additional floor space is required for particular purposes.

- c) To accommodate additional storage for chairs and the staging when required, we also propose to build large storage cupboards at the end of the North Transept. These will be designed by our architect Antony Feltham King. This will enable us to reduce the clutter around the church and maximise the opportunities afforded by the new open spaces created in the crossing and transepts.
 - d) By completing the removal of the N&S aisle pews (begun many years ago when new radiators were fitted around the walls) and levelling the floor, we will not only create new, potentially more flexible, spaces but will improve access and circulation space for both worship and non-worship events. On occasions where maximum seating is required, the aisle spaces can be filled with chairs.
 - e) We have decided not to proceed with our initial plans to restore the West porch believing instead that simple maintenance improvements to the doors will be a more cost effective solution to reduce drafts. The removal of 3 small pews on each side at the rear will create a generous welcome area, and a significantly improved space for circulation and processions. It will also allow us to relocate our audio visual control desk to a better position. This will greatly improve our internal communications giving a better line of sight to the altar, pulpit and lectern.
- 2) Probably the biggest impact will be achieved through the replacement of our out-dated high-level lighting, which is expensive to operate and maintain, with new LED based spotlight arrays. The proposed new system will allow us greater control over the lighting and we believe will give more cost effective and more efficiently distributed light across the church. Our lighting designer has made a survey of our existing light provision and has provided a cost comparison with the proposed scheme and this shows a significant operational cost saving as well as reduction of maintenance and replacement costs. The success of our lighting trial in the Lady Chapel and our visits to other churches in the Diocese has clearly demonstrated the great potential for this change of technology
- 3) There is increasing demand for the use of audio visual materials during worship and in meetings and presentations given in the church building. An upgrade of our projection capabilities will enable significant improvements to be made to the delivery of presentations, films and text. These upgrades will enable a less disruptive and more seamless and professional experience to be offered to all users of the church building by avoiding the need to man-handle screens onto and off the dais during worship. A permanently installed and integrated system will also remove the need to connect complex and unsightly cabling each time the AV is required to be connected into the sound system. This will significantly reduce the time and effort needed to prepare the church for services or events

requiring audio visual input. At the same time we are aiming to de-skill the job of audio visual control by applying modern scene setting control systems to our newly integrated systems.

- 4) We have conducted a comprehensive heating survey which concluded that our current gas heaters are not up to the task of heating the church building efficiently. The wall mounted heaters are ugly, rusting and obtrusive and are operated via a simple time clock system which is unable to take account of prevailing weather conditions and temperatures. Having researched various forms of heating we have decided that a gas fired wet radiator system with modern environmental controls will provide us with additional flexibility and more cost efficient and effective heating during the winter months.

- 5) We have decided not to proceed with the proposal to create a self-contained quiet area in the NW corner of the church favouring instead a new self contained small office in the grounds of the community centre. The design will complement that of the new community centre and the specification will be energy efficient. This represents a substantially better investment in terms of value for money both for initial build cost and subsequent operational costs as well as providing better security for lone workers. Plans for this will be submitted to the local planning department.

- 6) Finally, in order to provide more professional and effective information to visitors to our site, we would like to install a new lockable, notice board adjacent to the West door. This will enable us to remove unsightly and difficult to read notices from the church door and porch.

Our intention is to present a thoughtful, practical and coherent plan which balances continuity with utility and which preserves and enhances the beauty of the church whilst improving its accessibility and usability.

The proposed changes taken together will, we believe, help us present our much loved building as a working, relevant, useful and valued resource for our local community.