

Redevelopment Plans – Issue 3

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30 years. That's how long ago it was when St. Matthias church family took the bold, forward looking and generous step of building the Church Centre and Larkin Hall. What an incredible blessing that has been to the church and community!

It was also about 30 years between when the church was first built and the existing chancel was created, and it was only 9 years after that that the entire church was extended to its present size.

The redevelopment plans that we are now preparing are not about making life simpler or more comfortable for us now, but are a bold and forward looking step to make the church building suitable to meet the needs for worship of the church community, and use by the wider community for the next 30 years too.

So we are now in a valuable time of preparation for the next stage of the work God has in store for us. The great news is the first major step has just been agreed – the 'Friends of St Mathias' have agreed to pay for a new audiovisual system for the church (much of the existing system is over 30 years old!), using some of a very generous bequest. We hope to have most of this up and running by later spring.

Unfortunately, the rest of the work is going to take many more months of refining the specific details. We are unlikely to get planning permission agreed before the end of 2016. We have to consult many agencies along the way.

At one level these all feel quite burdensome. But the challenges made by other groups are actually helping us to discern exactly what we believe we need. A specialist historian is to look at the way that the church furniture and building have evolved over time in relation to the local and church community since it was first built. The journey that we have been on as a church community with the church building is clearly linked to our identity – who we are as Jesus' family in this place. And even if we might prefer that the quality and beauty of the building do not shape that identity, in the public's eyes, they do.

Even so, the quality of each of our inner lives with Jesus remains the key.

So, this Lent, please use the 40 days well - to pray about those next steps for the next 30 years for us as a worshipping, serving and witnessing community in this place – and pray about your role in shaping that too.

Redevelopment Timeline March 2016

The PCC has known a remarkable degree of unity over the plans so far, which give us confidence that going along the route that God has in store for us.

Winter 2014/15 A PCC 'Building Group' met with 3 architects to find the right one to work with us. We're delighted so far with the work of Alex Coppock of Communion Designs www.communionarchitects.com

June 2015 Provisional plans reviewed at a PCC Away Day.

September 2015 A visit from the DAC (the Diocesan Advisory Committee – the Church's 'planning permission' advisors) who gave informal advice about plans, including the requirement to employ a historian to advise on the 'significance' of the items of furniture that we may seek to move about.

November 2015 The PCC gained approval to temporarily remove a few pews to make more circulation space at the back of church. (This should go ahead in Feb 16).

December 2015 The PCC agreed to proceed with plans to replace ageing elements and upgrade other parts of the audiovisual system in the church – which the 'Friends of St. Matthias' have agreed to pay for from one of their large bequests. Also plans made to improve the audio in the Larkin Hall and to show and hear what is going on in the church on a small screen in the Hall and Lounge.

January 2016 The Building Group and others from the PCC met the architect and historian, Jane Root, to brief her on the plans. Her report should be ready by Easter.

May/June 2016 We hope to revise plans sufficiently in the light of advice as to what is possible, to be able to distribute them for comment to the DAC again, and also the Local Authority, Victorian Society, Historic England (previously English Heritage), and of course, the church family!

Late Autumn 2016 We hope to be in a position to formally seek planning permission, which by then should have any contentious issues worked through.