

Building Re-ordering Consultation Update & Survey Results

Grounded in faith...Growing to serve



Lent 2017

We are being called to change.

It's nothing new for us at St Matthias – here are a few changes we've been through:

- The church was extended only eight years after being built
- All of the pews were taken out in 1884 (and then replaced)
- In 1980 and 2000 we had completely new service books
- The Church Centre was built in 1985
- The Pine Room and associated Preschool in 1992

Jesus, of course, is always leading us into change as we follow Him. Without change, we cannot grow.

At St Matthias, let's remember, we are here to do three main things:

- to **Worship God**
- to **Make Disciples** of Jesus so more may know his 'life to the full'
- and to **Transform Communities** to make them more 'Kingdom' shaped – i.e. where our family, local and church communities become more the places God wants them to be.

As a Parish church, we want to provide a range of styles of worship to serve our community - in buildings that we all feel at home in, and that help our worship and enable us to keep growing. We also want the church to be available for others in the community to enjoy.

**Thank God,
we've grown
by 25% in 4 years!**

The Challenge

In Spring 2014 when one hundred of us met in the Larkin Hall to review the **'Everybody Welcome Course'** we realised that we needed to make changes to the church building to make it more welcoming:

Do you realise how unwelcoming the church looks as you walk by it?

The church looks 'closed' to anyone passing by. Many of the furnishings are pretty tatty and our sound system has needed updating for some time.



We've known for many years that we were reaching the capacity of the Larkin Hall with the Prayzone informal service. Without more space this service cannot grow.

Now, we find that we have outgrown the Larkin Hall for Prayzone, the new Breakfastzone and Messy Church.

Research shows that "**A worship service will tend to stop growing** when 80 percent of the desirable seats are occupied on a regular basis"

We simply have to move these flourishing services into a larger space if we are to continue to be true to Jesus 'Great Commission' to reach more people with the Good News of God's love.



Did you know?

Breakfastzone now averages over 80 people sat around tables for breakfast. In November, over 40 were children! It only began in 2015.

What are our options?

Enlarge the Larkin Hall? Re-order the church?...
...to provide the flexibility of seating we need
to allow the informal services to keep growing
and to cater for the more formal ones that
happen in the church now.

**Did you know?
The average number
of children each
week in church has
nearly doubled in
the last 3 years!**

St. Matthias' decision-making body, the Parochial Church Council (PCC), have considered enlarging the hall. It would be costly and enlarging it beyond the current centre footprint may not get planning permission.

The alternative, to refurbish the church, is the route that we have chosen to pursue. Mainly because extending the hall and keeping informal services there would also mean that the (largely younger) worshippers in the Hall would gradually cease to identify with the worshipping community using the church *and* its building. In time, the church would be more likely to fall into disrepair – and the church furnishings already need renewing now!

Refurbishing the church will also be expensive - around £850 000 - though a significant legacy to the 'Friends of St Matthias' can go towards this.

This way allows us

- to remain a united church community,
- improves the facilities of the church for the present,
- and ensures it will remain an appropriate place for worship for the next generation.

The PCC's Response

If you've read any of the previous four church magazines (also on the church website) you'll know about this already: **Since early 2015 we have worked with the national award-winning architect Alex Coppock of 'Communion Designs' from Hereford.**

The PCC and a smaller subgroup have looked at many different proposals. We have employed furniture historians. The Diocesan advisors have visited three times and we have adapted the plans significantly in response to advice given.

It is a complex process. For any changes to a Grade 2* building we have to demonstrate that our need to change things is greater than the historical significance of anything that might be altered.

While we have not yet gained permission for any of the changes we are sharing, we believe we are close to getting agreement for them. So we can now share where we have got to with church and wider community.

The PCC of over 20 people (elected representatives from the church community) **are unanimous in their support for the scheme as outlined. We believe that God is calling us once again to invest in change to St. Matthias to create a suitable and beautiful place of welcome and worship for the next generation.**

There are six main elements to the scheme:

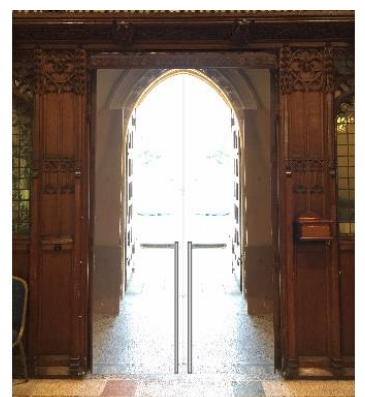
The first has been to **Renew the Audio visual system** in church: a wall mounted projector, automatic screen, new sound desk, equipment and speakers to replace the existing rather ancient ones. Thanks to a large legacy to the 'Friends of St Matthias', this has now been completed.

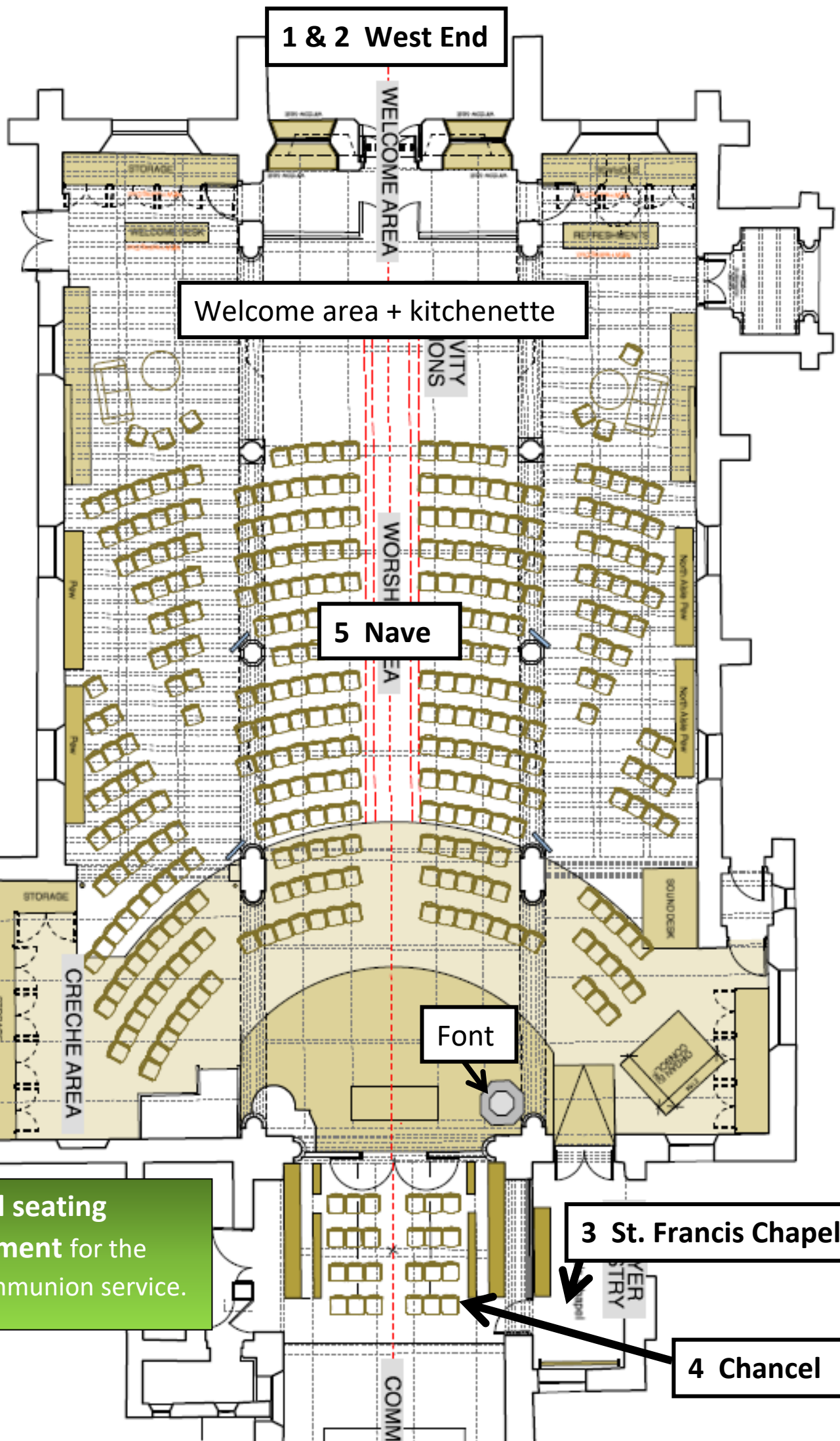
The remaining five are:

- 1 Remodel the outside of the West end of the church** to improve the welcome. A new raised plaza with fewer, easier steps leading to glass doors. We need new notice boards, and plan to retain the north porch entrance for level access.
- 2 Redevelop the inside of the west end** to provide a larger welcome area at the back of church with space for people to meet informally (moving the font to opposite the pulpit). The addition of a hospitality area with kitchenette allows this space to be an extra facility for groups to use midweek.



**Can you spot the font?
We want to move it so
more people can see a
baptism happening**





1 & 2 West End

Welcome area + kitchenette

5 Nave

Font

3 St. Francis Chapel

4 Chancel

A typical seating arrangement for the 1030 Communion service.

3 Restore the St. Francis Chapel as a place of quiet prayer and sound proof this space.

4 Recover the use of the beautiful chancel area once again for smaller services by rearranging or remodeling the choir pews to make them more comfortable, hopefully creating more space for chairs to be used too. We are still working on ways this can be sympathetically done.

5 Re-order the nave space to make it flexible for the multiple uses our worship services need. The PCC have been on a long and difficult journey of discernment to reach their unanimous conclusion about what could be the most contentious part of the plans.

We have visited more than 7 churches to consider

- replacing the existing pews with new ones that stack?
- putting pews onto castors?
- shortening them or replacing only some of them?

None of these solve the basic problem that even movable pews only work for a few types of service.

Even though some people are understandably attached to pews, the conclusion is that we need to replace them with well-designed, comfortable, durable, stackable wooden chairs (that can have cushions added). Chairs like these at St Joseph's Teignmouth are also used successfully in many cathedrals.



This is the only way to achieve the flexibility of seating that we need, while also giving the overall uniform look that the pews provide. The church planners agree and do not support a part pew/part chair solution.

Flexible seating would also enable more community groups to enjoy using the building. For example, orchestras, choirs, schools, and for exhibitions.

In November 2016, over 120 people completed a Questionnaire about these changes. The **summary of the results** below demonstrate significant support for the proposals, such that, with support from the Diocesan planning authority for the major changes too, we are in a good position to continue progressing the plans.

Yes		<i>This seems a great idea</i>
Yes with ?		<i>But I have these concerns or suggestions...</i>
Don't mind		<i>I am happy to accept the decision of the PCC</i>
No		<i>I really wouldn't want this to happen because...</i>

	Yes	Yes with ?	Don't mind	No
<i>West end redevelopment</i>	102	12	8	1
<i>Glaze in chapel</i>	109	4	10	0
<i>Recover chancel use</i>	103	10	9	1
<i>Replace pew with chair</i>	92	12	11	7

To proceed with this major redevelopment will inevitably need us to make some changes. We're likely to move towards having two main services of differing styles most Sunday mornings. We don't know exactly how that will work yet. But we hope to grow and nurture faith in **both** our more formal and informal worship. It is not one against the other. Both are valuable.

Since most of us find change difficult, the process will test our love for one another. But we need to provide an environment for worship that works for more people than it does at present to enable St Matthias church building to continue to serve the community's needs for the next generation – and to pursue God's call upon us to '*share the Good News of Jesus with everyone*'.

Please read the Lent 2017 Redevelopment Appeal leaflet too.

Thank you very much.

Revd John Beckett, Sylvia Barratt & Phil Miles (churchwardens) and the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Matthias.

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