

St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Walton-on-Thames

August 2014 – Development Project Special



Welcome to this update from the Development Committee. Because of the summer break, there's quite a gap between the regular editions of the St Andrew's Newsletter. So with the blessing of the Editor and Elders, we thought we would keep you posted on what has been going on and take the opportunity to set out in more detail the path that the project will follow and the decision points along the way. We have also included some Questions & Answers in respect of points that some of you have raised with us.

We hope that you find this mini-newsletter informative and helpful. Do let us know what you think!

The Development Committee: Holms Carlile, Alan Crawford, Anna Crawford, Jan de Kok, Carol Lee, Romilly Micklem and Paula Walsh.

What's happening at the moment?

As you already know, our Church Meeting on 22nd June unanimously agreed that we should proceed to the next stage of our proposed Development Project. This is the exact wording of the resolution that was passed:

“This Church Meeting resolves to proceed to the Design Stage of the project to redevelop the toilet accommodation and the vestibule. Church Meeting therefore approves the professional fees of £6,000 associated with the Design Stage, in accordance with the architect's estimate.”

So what exactly does the Design Stage involve? It takes us from initial ideas and preliminary floor plans to the point where we have:

- an agreed design;
- fully developed scale drawings;
- a much more accurate budget figure for the project cost;
- any necessary planning permissions; and
- a building specification which is ready to go out to tender.

To get the ball rolling on all this, the Development Committee had a meeting on 23rd July with our architects, Ralph and Scott Allen, and our Synod Property Officer, Nicola Werro. We told Ralph and Scott about the congregation's comments and conversations arising from the initial design proposal and the sketches. The architects made copious notes and have gone away to come up with detailed options reflecting the feedback we have given them, in particular for making the new vestibule area larger, and for having more glazing in the dividing wall.

We also discussed timescales. Ralph and Scott will prepare some new sketches and floor plans for us by September, in time for inclusion in our application to the Wessex Synod Trust (see pages 3 and 4). These new sketches and plans are best thought of as revised versions of the ones which you have already seen.

In September and October the architects will then work on the detailed design and costings, so that these can be reviewed and discussed within the congregation later in the autumn. But we won't be idle meanwhile: there's some fundraising to be done!

What about the things we've already achieved?

I – The Garden Room

A few of you may not yet have seen the transformation of the old storage room into the Garden Room, pictured here freshly refurbished but before the new carpet is laid. Our thanks go again to Johnston Simpson, who last summer project-managed the installation and commissioning of the storage wall in the Main Hall, as well as the new shed for the Flower Club and the Contact Centre. And a big thank you also to Alan and Anna Crawford, who took the rather tired-looking empty room and turned it into such an attractive space.



Many of you have asked what plans there are for using this new room. We have had several expressions of interest from local charities and community groups, as well as existing users of our premises — but for the moment no decision is being taken. That is because during the redevelopment of the WC facilities, there will be no access to the Hersham Room, and we will need the Garden Room to accommodate Hersham Room users. Meanwhile, the Garden Room is being hired out like any of our other rooms, but on a rolling three-month basis.

What about the things we've already achieved?

II – The Organ Move

The organ was moved on 16th June with remarkable speed and very little fuss. (It took far longer to get rid of the mechanical hoist afterwards.) Many of you will have already seen it in its new home — but neither it nor the choir are finally settled. Assuming the work on the vestibule goes ahead, we will reconfigure the pews to have a central aisle, at which point we will need to decide exactly where the organ should sit, and we will also need to do some work to raise the choir seating slightly. This drawing gives an idea of the aisle — but you will have to imagine the organ and choir!



What about money?

Whichever way you look at it, it will cost a lot of money to replace the toilet accommodation and make the changes to the vestibule. The best estimate we have from the architect at the moment is that we should budget for £300,000. But as we explained at the Church Meeting in June, we are blessed with already having substantial reserves. The Elders and the Development Committee believe that we can commit £150,000 to this project from those reserves and still leave ourselves with a prudent reserve fund. At the end of June St Andrew's had £229,500 in hand, with more owed to us in tax rebates and hall hire charges.

We are applying to the Wessex Synod Trust for permission to do this project and also for a substantial grant towards the cost. We hope to get smaller but still significant grants from other charitable trusts in Elmbridge, as well as contributions from our local authorities. But our funding plans still require the members, adherents, friends and associates of St Andrew's to raise a very large amount of money.

That is a daunting prospect — but we have some very encouraging news to share with you. ***Even before we have 'officially' started fundraising, five households within our membership have already made very substantial pledges. We extend our deepest and most heartfelt gratitude for their vision, commitment and generosity.*** Another £15,000 will take us past our target for fundraising within the wider fellowship of St Andrew's.

What can I do to help?

Yes, you guessed: there is an obvious answer to that question. If you would like to pledge† your financial support for the development project, we would love to hear from you! You will be hearing from us more formally in the autumn — but there's no need to wait...

† A pledge is a commitment to give a certain amount of money if (and only if) the church decides to go ahead with this project. If you are a UK taxpayer and sign a Gift Aid declaration, the church will be able to claim a tax refund worth an extra 25p for every £1 given.

What else?

However, this project isn't just about money. It needs the wholehearted support of everyone in the congregation. We'll be asking you to show that support at our Church Meeting on 14th September, when we present the application to the Wessex Synod Trust to be formally approved by St Andrew's. To be clear: that's not a final decision to go ahead. It's an indication of our *intention* as a congregation to pursue this project, subject to having raised enough money and agreed a design.

If we go ahead, what will the new Vestibule be used for?

At the Church Conversation, the strong view that emerged was that the enlarged vestibule should provide an entry point or a means of "crossing the threshold" for people who are seeking for faith, but who are shy of coming to worship on a Sunday. This suggests we might use the space for example

- for 'mums and tots' to come along for 40 minutes for a singsong, or some "Godly play" (for example, learning bible stories by playing with a Noah's ark);
- for a midweek service;
- for a prayer group or bible study;
- for meetings of action groups to discuss local issues/campaigns that we might want to support as part of our Christian witness; or
- to manage a foodbank.

The space could be used for an art exhibition, or to showcase some ArtPeace work, or woven hangings. We could have a bookstall with modern Christian books and posters/publicity to say what we're doing... We could have different activities on different days of the week. And we could invest in some low-cost energy-efficient lighting so that the vestibule space was lit as a witness even on dark days/evenings.

These are just some ideas – but let's make a good list. So please give your suggestions to the Development Committee.

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