



## **Purpose of Document**

To consider the potential for reordering parts of the church to become more accessible, useable and flexible, following development of the Mission Plan agreed by the PCC in November 2013, and our Mission Statement 2016.

## **History**

St Mary's has been in a state of evolution and change ever since it was first built, when no central pews even existed! Various developments have taken place in recent decades, and several discussions and meetings in the last 5 years under the PCC's instruction:

- 9<sup>th</sup> June 2014. Meeting of the Standing Committee with Lord Derby, at which a number of potential changes were discussed, but then put on hold for 3 years until roof repairs were completed following major lead thefts from the roof.
- 2016. St Jude's were seeking requests for reuse of around 100 chairs as they moved towards sale of their building. Investigations were made regarding the viability of any flooring beneath our pews – but there is none! And furthermore, nowhere could be found to temporarily store this number of chairs, so no further action taken.
- 11<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Meeting with the DAC, after waiting 18 months, to discuss the potential reordering of the back of church and relocation of the font. The possible resurrection of the large organ was also discussed with diocesan consultants on site, but we still await their report 15 months later.
- 2018. Receipt of 2 large bequests have allowed the PCC to consider whether God's plans may be bigger than initially envisaged. We have asked the congregation to pray for us through the second part of 2018 in this regard, that we may begin to know God's will over any potential reordering.
- 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018. Quinquennial Inspection by new architect Martyn Wilshaw of the Finlayson Partnership, and subsequent meeting with Standing Committee 6<sup>th</sup> July. Whilst talking over possibilities, the architect mentioned that we have a perfect existing floor for any new chairs – all that's needed is to bridge over the aisles at the same level, yielding more efficient underfloor heating and cabling.
- 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019. This has led us to a special meeting of the PCC at which we are now considering a wider scope of potential works – for the sole reasons of making the building more accessible to all, more useable for 'normal' services, and flexible for an increasing number of ways in which the church building could be used.
- So please pray for wisdom, insight, boldness, clarity, purpose and unity for us all!

## Background and Current Situation

It has become increasingly clear to many that the church in its current arrangement is not fit for purpose, in terms of access, restricted space, and a layout of furniture and fittings which presents huge problems for occasional offices and weekly worship:

- Over a third of the building is currently either not used or hardly ever used (organ space, Derby Chapel and chancel area).
- The two steps between the pulpit and lectern prevent easy access for the less ambulant, both to this area and to the Maud Chapel, and then another step prevents access to the Chancel, wonderful mosaics and the Derby Chapel.
- The central pews, narrow side aisles and lack of a central aisle have put off many brides from marrying at St Mary's and frequently present awkward moments during funeral services.
- The pews are on a raised platform which makes access difficult for the less able, and in some cases, impossible. This is embarrassing for us, but above all unacceptable for those affected.
- The raised nature of the pews also considerably reduces visibility from the rear of church during large services and other occasions.
- The increasing number of private cushions show how uncomfortable they are to many members of the congregation.
- On arrival, the internal solid front doors present a formidable barrier to those who may be new to church (as usually closed to prevent heat loss)
- The location of the Font, whilst symbolically central on arrival to church, presents a significant restriction in how the space at the rear of church is utilised
- The 3 types of tiles surrounding the font are in very poor state, and some in the side aisles are unstable. And the whole rear carpeted area at the rear of church is uneven and untidy – prompting our earlier proposal for reordering just the back of church.
- The Space at the rear of church is currently the only useable open space for medium sized services and events in church. We have attempted a dozen of these over recent years but the current layout presented huge problems on each occasion.
- Kitchen. There is definite scope for improvement!
- Vestry. There is no space in the vestry where 2 or 3 can sit comfortably to meet or count money etc, so reordering this space would yield huge benefits.
- Another specific need has become increasingly evident: a multi-media system, possibly with updated sound system, to replace the current computer /laptop/ screen/ connections which the vicar currently has to assemble between services.
- Repairs to the large organ. We are still awaiting reports and advice, but this space could used to great effect as an office, counselling room, small group room etc

## Proposals

Listening to comments from many in the PCC and the congregation through the last year, and the timing of the 2 recent legacies, we feel God is prompting us to consider each of these issues, realising that many of them are inter-connected, and to carry out a Feasibility Study into existing obstacles, potential opportunities, options and funding.

We realise that some of these are emotive issues, but it is also important to remember that the history of St Mary's over 175 years has been one of continual change to adapt the building for the particular needs of each successive generation.

So maybe this is God's timing, giving us an opportunity to reorder St Mary's to meet current legislation, achieve free access for all, utilise the whole building, and also create greater flexibility for both traditional and contemporary worship and ministry.

## PCC's Commitment

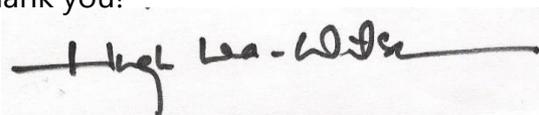
The PCC recognises that any potential reordering raises all kinds of emotive issues for different users and interested parties. But it also realises that this doesn't mean we just do nothing! Our commitment from the very outset is therefore to communicate directly and openly with the congregation at every stage (and third parties as appropriate). This document is duly copied for consideration by every member of the congregation on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> January, in advance of our PCC meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

## PCC's Invitation

We invite you to simply do 3 things.

1. Pray – "Thy will be done, Thy kingdom come"
2. Read – please read this document and all forthcoming documents and be informed. Please keep an open mind and don't jump to preformed conclusions
3. Visit other churches – to see what is happening elsewhere as churches are being transformed to meet their community and congregational needs

Thank you!



**Rev Hugh Lea-Wilson**

Team Vicar, 4Saints Team (Huyton Deanery) on behalf of St Mary's Knowsley Village PCC  
8<sup>th</sup> January 2019