

## Statement of Needs

### “A transformed space for a growing city”

“To fashion an open, beautiful and functional St Mary’s”

To create a building which is flexible and appropriate for current and future requirements; open and functional for church and community events seven days and evenings each week.

### Introduction

Our vision mirrors the Ely Diocesan Vision, as set out in the *People Fully Alive: Ely 2025* strategy document which says: *“Over the years church buildings have been extended, adapted, reshaped and re-imagined. This process continues today with the introduction of kitchens, toilets and other facilities designed to make them suitable for contemporary use, as well as internal reordering to give greater flexibility. Projects like these are not only about opening up our buildings for greater use, they are also about maintaining them as ‘thin places’ – places of encounter, with one another and with the divine. Our strategy recognises the importance of helping parishes to develop and modernise their buildings, working in partnership with ecumenical friends and other community bodies.”*

We pray that we will become visible and generous people of God, fulfilling our mission to ‘engage: grow: deepen’: engage with our community, grow new disciples of Jesus Christ and deepen our relationship with God. Although the vision of the church is largely about people, the building could play a vital part in all three.

The transformed building will enable us to engage and grow new disciples more effectively, welcoming those on our fringe and those in the wider Ely community. The transformation of the building is vital to the accomplishment of the vision and mission we feel called into.

### Section 1. General information

This should provide an overview of the parish and the current use of the building

St Mary’s Church hosts three services each week: a Sunday Communion attended by 70 people on average, a Sunday Family Service attended by an average of 138 people and a Thursday (Market Day) Communion attended by an average of 30 people. We have experimented with a fortnightly Sunday evening service attracting an average of 28 people. We hold four, weekly, prayer meetings. In 2017 there were 8 weddings, 40 funerals, 37 baptisms and thanksgivings and about 10 other events. However, apart from these gatherings, the church building lies completely unused. We believe a vibrant building – attracting visitors, gatherings and events for most of the available time during the week will secure its future for community and congregation for generations to come.

The church rooms on the other hand are used the majority of the time – morning, afternoon and evening, most days each week. We are regularly turning away potential partners and groups who would like to run sessions and events in the rooms due to lack of time slots. Many of these should be accommodated in a re-imagined St Mary's building.

There are 264 people on the St Mary's Electoral Roll, the church is gently growing, and the age profile is becoming younger. People in their twenties and thirties are beginning to become officers of the church.

During the week we have two parent and toddler groups and are looking to enhance our special needs provision around the sessions we host for two special schools on Thursday mornings where they join our Thursday congregation and visitors for coffee. About 70 children are coming through these weekday activities every week.

Financially, St Mary's roughly breaks even each year. Our turnover is approximately £210,000 per annum. We pay our parish share in full. There are very limited reserves designed to cover staff salaries for three months. We have unlocked two historic legacies which qualify for use in funding the reordering and which have enabled us to "prime the pump" for the transformation project. We have appointed a Building Transformation Project Team, a subset of which is responsible for grant applications and encouraging giving to the project. We held a congregational pledging day for the project which resulted in an overall total allocated to the transformation project of about £561,000 so far.

The last Quinquennial report was in 2016, and we are following its recommendations. Some significant work is being undertaken to seven clerestory windows on the south of the nave. Maintenance is monitored bi-monthly by the PCC and we have a team that manages the work.

## Section 2. What do you need?

Briefly explain your needs (not your proposals). Append any brief for your architect.

- ✚ Improved accessibility for wheelchair users, sight and hearing impaired, those with invisible disabilities and those with special needs
  - So that everyone can participate and contribute fully
- ✚ A fully flexible space in the nave and the chancel
  - To enable the building to be used 16 hours/day rather than the current 7 hours/week. To support worship, congregational use and community use.
- ✚ Additional spaces for groups and meetings
  - To support the increase and variety of use outlined elsewhere
- ✚ Hospitality facilities in the main church
  - To enhance our welcome and ministry effectiveness
- ✚ Replacement heating and lighting systems
  - To minimise our energy footprint and increase comfort and support additional use
- ✚ Increased office space
  - To support the current and future workload of the Ely Team and St Mary's stakeholders.
- ✚ Improved toilet facilities
  - For hygiene and to support the additional use
- ✚ Increased storage capacity

- To support current and new uses

### Section 3. The proposals

Set out what you are proposing to do in order to meet the needs set out in section 2

#### Phase one -In the main church:

- + Removal of the fixed and other furniture installed during the most recent reordering of the main church in 1876 – including the pews, pulpit, stone pulpit base, choir stalls.
- + Installation of a stone floor in the main church to create a level floor surface throughout the estate
  - Installation of an underfloor heating system
  - Refurbishment of all electrics, lighting and existing heating system
- + The introduction of chairs and other movable furniture in the main church to support the current and future worship and community use of the building
- + Relocation of the organ and font
- + Creation of an enhanced crèche and meeting space, with toilet facilities, accessible directly from the main body of the church.
  - Refurbishment of the ground floor tower room
  - Installation of glass partition to extend the tower room into the main church
  - Installation of a simple gallery and stairs to add capacity above the extension
- + Creation of simple hospitality facilities in the west end of the south aisle and nave for refreshments
- + Creation of new vestry and storage facility in the East end (the chancel)
- + Refurbishment of the current vestry to create a meeting room
- + Provision of CCTV between the main church and the office
- + Provision of solar panels on the South Roof

#### Phase two - In the 1980s halls and in the link between halls and main church

- + Creation of larger and enhanced office facilities
- + Creation of additional meeting and breakout rooms
- + Creation of a new suite of restroom facilities
- + Creation of a reception space alongside the new hall and covered walkway to the church

### Section 4. Why do you need it and why do you need it now?

Justify your proposals by explaining why you can't meet your needs without making changes. Also include anything which may have prompted the proposals.

#### Overview

We feel that the project is required to allow the building's splendour to be re-presented, so that its historic shape and space can be explored and so that it can, in turn, shape our faith. An uncluttered St Mary's, spacious and often quiet, will become easier and safer to navigate for

visitors and congregations alike – whilst the new furniture will complement the beauty and utility of St Mary's.

The transformed building, will be open to hundreds of visitors and tourists - all day, every day – subject to the requirements of the organisations that will be gathering there. With background heating and refreshment available we will be able to offer better hospitality.

### *Intergenerational worship*

One of the key trends in society is the movement towards intergenerational activity. This trend is occurring because as pressure on the family mounts – parents' time with children becomes scarcer and so when families arrive at church the parents prefer to be with their children in worship – rather than apart (via Sunday School). This trend towards intergenerational worship has been observed across the church in the UK - and we are certainly finding this to be the case, for many families here in Ely. The main church building with fixed pews, is entirely unsuitable for intergenerational worship – which involves movement, discussion, sharing, and experimentation in prayer.

Interestingly - our two fastest growing congregations are both intergenerational all of the time – one is already in a separate location. These are:

**Christchurch**, set in a primary school, which has grown to become a church family of fifty people of all ages – with teenagers and children taking part in leadership - which we expect to grow to 250 people in the coming 5 years as the Housing Development in North Ely, which it serves, takes off.

**FEAST** – which currently meets monthly in the church rooms – and which we hope will become a weekly congregation. FEAST (50 people, and growing, attending at the time of writing) is growing to a point where, in 2019, we expect to relocate it to another local junior school, until the main building is transformed and can welcome it back in.

It is so important that we can transform the building so that it remains a centre for our young families to meet and worship for generations to come.

### *Creche*

The intergenerational trend is also one of the reasons that we would like to create a larger, more comfortable Creche in the back of the church – with a glass front - offering two advantages. Firstly that we will be able to provide worship activities for babies and parents to undertake together in the creche itself – enhancing the experience of church for young families – and also so that we can allow parents to take part in the service, baby in arms, from behind the glass if they would find that more comfortable than being in the main body of the congregation.

### *Sunday Worship*

On an ordinary Sunday, with our two rows of pillars situated quite close together – the most valuable place for placing seating is currently configured permanently as an aisle. This significantly reduces the number of seats with direct visibility to the leaders and preachers, and by definition pushes the seating towards the sides, behind the pillars, and creates very narrow corridors either side of the church for movement.

The removal of the pews and provision of chairs will enable us to configure the space differently for each service as required – sometimes traditionally in rows – sometimes more creatively. The increase in wheel-chair users at 10:30 for example is a wonderful development – but we are embarrassed by our inability to provide for our less able users without fuss.

We will also be able to configure certain services to make it easier for those bringing buggies and push-chairs – we know anecdotally that our inability to flex in these circumstances makes it much less attractive for young parents to attend – and people have chosen to go to more accessible venues because of this.

Elsewhere I have described the trip hazards around the church – which are many – these will be eliminated and those services which require movement – such as the Eucharist – which is currently particularly hazardous for our more elderly members, will become safer.

Configuring wider side aisles and greater space means we will be able to offer hospitality and refreshments in the church, without the need for newcomers to take the intimidating step through the corridor into the church rooms. In any event at our 10:30 service there currently isn't enough capacity to serve refreshments safely and comfortably to everyone in the church rooms – so the new hospitality facilities will offer a solution.

The new expanded creche area will as a side benefit offer a level ceiling at mezzanine level above the creche for soundproofing reasons. Rather than allowing the ceiling to become an inaccessible area that gathers dust we will take the opportunity to create a balcony with additional seating for twenty people – thus replacing some of the capacity lost during the project. This seating will have better sightlines than the seating it replaces underneath. This balcony will also give us much better and safer access to the ringing chamber – which is currently only reachable via a relatively hazardous stone spiral staircase in the tower itself.

### *Accessibility*

We believe the transformed building, including the provision of ramp access to the chancel, will allow our less physically able members and visitors to feel more welcome, enabling them to move around the building more easily and to take part more fully. The current fixed nature of the seating and the narrowness of the side aisles make this very difficult and our less-able members often feel conspicuous and feel that they are causing trouble.

The new entirely level floor will remove the trip hazards in a number of significant places, especially in the main church building. Communion is particularly hazardous for our elderly members and some people are preferring to sit in their pews and have the bread and wine brought to them – thus excluding themselves from the corporate nature of the sacrament.

The project will thus significantly improve accessibility and safety. It will also enable us to experiment with new types of gatherings suitable for those with invisible disabilities. Consulting with one of our members with autism has offered us insight into their world – and we could do much to make the environment welcoming, safe and less intimidating. At the moment their only options lie in our gatherings held in other locations.

### *Work with children and teenagers*

The project will fulfil our need to host at least seven separate children and young people's groups during our 10:30 service (crèche, four Sunday School groups, Pathfinder group and teenager group) in their own dedicated spaces.

Our current Sunday morning children's and young people's work, has about sixty on roll in seven groups and is accommodated in very unsatisfactory spaces. Two groups (including the crèche) are meeting in ageing and cluttered vestries, one group often meets in the Vicarage office, and four Sunday School groups are meeting in the two church rooms. This is an urgent issue.

### *Schools Work*

We have excellent and growing relationships with four schools in the City; at the moment our partnership work has to take place largely in the school premises rather than in church.

The infant teachers are reluctant to bring the children into a building which in its current permanent layout makes it very difficult to keep an eye on the children for much of the time – as they are often hidden behind and within the pews. When you add the trip hazards – the risk assessment becomes difficult to satisfy and too many staff are required.

Teachers at our partner Church of England Junior School, St Mary's, tell us that the pews say to the children "sit and listen" whereas the new building will say "come and discover." Schools have adapted to a broader range of learning styles and we as a church must do so too.

We long for St Mary's to become a place of faith discovery – and have started scaling up to offer education activities to the schools which support faith understanding within the wider curriculum – we recently hosted our first attempt - "CSI Easter" – which combined faith with Science, Maths and Reasoning – hosting 10 classes from three schools over a whole week - but our set up was seriously curtailed by the presence of the fixed furniture – and the risk assessment suggests we might not be able to repeat the exercise. – even though the schools would love to take part – and we have insufficient resources otherwise.

The revised configuration would also enable the church building to be used as a venue during school holidays for holiday clubs and festival events for young people and teenagers. At present we are not able to run such groups.

### *Daily Worship in the Chancel*

Our hope is to create a modern, clean and prayerful space in a transformed west end of the dais and chancel. We would use the new beautiful, holy, functional space for acts of prayer and worship. This will support our desire to encourage a daily rule of life (Way of Life) as modelled by Archbishop Justin.

### *Baptisms and confirmations*

At the moment we are often full on a Sunday afternoon with up to four families at a time bringing their children for baptism. This means that what should be an intimate service, involving everyone, leaves two of the 'parties' sitting in the back half of the church, distanced from the ceremony. The flexibility of a transformed building would enable us to hold these baptism services "in the round" with no-one feeling excluded or far away from the drama. Connection, participation, visibility and inclusiveness will be significantly improved.

Similarly, Bishop Stephen has expressed a hope for conducting confirmations for the Parish, the Team and the Deanery, in the round from the centre of the church with similar benefits for inclusion, participation and visibility.

### *CAP and other pastoral services*

The project will offer a dedicated office / counselling room for the CAP Debt Centre team and also for CRUSE counsellors during their working days. We will also have better accommodation for the other therapists and counsellors who operate 'pro bono' from the church on behalf of St Mary's.

### *Office*

An office with covered access and CCTV visibility to the main church building will enable us to offer appropriate welcome and hospitality for visitors. Our current office is cramped, holding three workstations, a photocopier, storage and filing cabinets. For some time, it has been clear that it is really only suitable for two people to work in. We will be able to offer desk space to accommodate additional staff including our recently recruited Families Missioner.

### *Welcome Area*

The layout of a building shapes the culture. One of the key missing elements in the current building is a space for welcome. The building with its unglazed main north doors, its lack of hospitality space, and its lack of informal waiting areas is not as encouraging to visitors as we would like to be - we want the building to say: "we welcome you in the name of God."

The proposed remodelling of the church will enable us to provide welcome and hospitality at the west end.

### *Faith based conferences and functions*

Ely Diocese is increasingly looking to market towns to become healthy centres of church and faith to serve their surrounding villages, and it has recently invested significantly in this programme. We want to model what it is to be a vibrant Church of England church, generously engaging with its community and resourcing surrounding parishes. We believe the building transformation will help us to do this in several ways.

This proposal will create the opportunity for us to function as a high specification conference venue, enabling us to fulfil Bishop Stephen's request that we become a resource church and hub for development and training across the region for worship, discipleship and children's work. We will also be able to offer lettings to national Christian organisations such as the Mother's Union and New Wine for their regional leadership summits and conferences.

The transformed church building will enable us to offer life skills classes (relationships, work, parenting for example) for larger groups than is currently possible. We have been fully subscribed recently in our current venue, (Costa on the High Street), which has a capacity of 35 people per course. The local primary schools have requested that we run parenting classes, relationships classes (for parents) and other classes such as money management. We could also offer larger scale Alpha and Emmaus courses.

### *Conferences and functions*

We partner with the mayor, the city council, the tourist office, four of the schools, the Poet's House Hotel and several Ely businesses including Toppings booksellers. We have also spoken to



some of the local Cambridgeshire based conference organisers. All these organisations have described a growing demand for facilities in Ely, fuelled by the growing Tech, Pharma and Science bubble in Cambridge. Currently, event organisers are unable to choose Ely because of its lack of a medium sized conference space – such as the one we would create. Ely has bedrooms, catering and commercial facilities but is without a 150-200 capacity space of a high enough specification. The new building will provide such a space for civic, commercial and social events, wedding receptions and other celebrations.

### *Tourism and Hospitality for Tourists*

When we open the church doors we see a steady stream of visitors, local, national and international and we believe the building transformation will enable us to develop this aspect of our ministry.

We have held the first in a series of planning sessions to discuss the building transformation with Tracy Harding, Manager of the Visit Ely, the Ely Tourist Centre, (which is based in Oliver Cromwell's house, next door to the church), to explore ways of ensuring the church is part of every tourist's itinerary. We already partner with the Cathedral and make sure we benefit from some of the key events in its calendar – such as the flower festival – when we attract tourists for lunches and visits to the church itself. We will be able to develop these type of opportunities further.

On days when the church is not in use by the congregations or for community gatherings, we will open the church fully for tourism – with items of significance signed and guided with a blend of theological, historical and outreach content – and informed by the church calendar.

The work will greatly accentuate the presentation of the building and the accessibility of its key features of historic significance to visitors – and will declutter the entire space. We will create a new font space at the front of the church, under the reredos in the open chapel area to the south of the platform and north of the Lady Chapel, opening up both of these features for the first time to proper viewing, free from the musical instruments which can be relocated for Sunday worship. We would be able to bring the font back into use at the front for Sunday morning baptisms in our main services.

The Sedilia and Piscina in the chancel, and the Piscina in the Lady Chapel will both be available to view in a way that they are not at the moment. Space in the Lady Chapel will be under less pressure as we will be able to hold small prayer meetings and services in the newly flexible chancel space, and Thursday communion services in the newly flexible nave, freeing up space around the Piscina, and the Book of Remembrance for viewing. The Sedilia and Piscina in the chancel will be easier to access – the new vestry door will be open during tourist days and there will be fewer trip hazards to get to them. Interestingly we can imagine bringing the Piscina in the chancel back into regular use as it would be in the new vestry and convenient to do so.

The new lighting will show the ceiling off to its Victorian splendour, along with many of the medieval features in the church such as the reredos and the font in its new position.

The new stone floor will incorporate all the memorial stones of historic significance that are present in the current floor and will offer a pattern of flooring which accentuates the historic layout of different parts of the nave. In parts of the church the diagonal patterned red and black Staffordshire Tiles will be re-presented.



The project adds options for hospitality in the main body of the church for tourists and visitors. This will greatly enhance the tourist experience, make it more likely that they will stay and engage with the building and hopefully benefit the church with additional income from the visit – which can then be used for future maintenance of the fabric.

Additionally, the lettings will partly defray the cost of employing a full-time vergers / caretaker, who in turn will be key to enable us to welcome tourists to the church during the day and evenings.

### *Rest Rooms*

We need to create rest room facilities which meet the highest expectations of visitors, church users and those holding events in the church buildings. The current ones are seriously sub-standard.

### *Music*

At certain seasons of the year - Christmas, for example – a transformed building will enable us to better accommodate the larger local choirs and orchestras. At the moment their use of St Mary's is sporadic at best – and they cite logistical difficulties due to the set-up restrictions. Our members are also embedded in a network of other musical and dramatic societies who would be able to use a transformed St Mary's.

### *Storage*

The lack of clean, accessible and secure storage is a real problem for St Mary's. The transformed building will give the church sufficient, well-ordered storage, facilitating the presentation of the building in a manner sympathetic to its history and significance.

The plans add a screen up to the string course level in the Chancel, which would conceal a new storage area and vestry without affecting views of the east window from the body of the church. The design of the screen would include an appropriate backdrop (a very simple reredos) for the communion table.

The storage in the new space and the new vestry will include robes, equipment for services, chairs, tables, tourist information and signage boards, flower arranging kit, music band equipment, stands etc, props and visual aids for worship services and will generally help us to declutter the church.

It will also offer an easier and safer storage solution as opposed to the current use of the hall loft which is both very inconvenient and potentially hazardous.

### *Energy footprint*

The addition of an underfloor heating system, and the possibility of locating solar panels on the largely unseen south aisle roof, should enable us to create a significantly reduced carbon footprint per hour of use. We are also advised that improved background heating will have a long-term positive impact on the health of the building and reduce maintenance needs going forward.

*Example weekly timetable and furniture layout:*

	AM	PM	EVE
SUN	<p>9:00 SERVICE</p> <p>Front Half in gentle semi-circular rows Rear half unused</p> <p>10:30 SERVICE</p> <p>Front half in gentle semi-circular rows Rear half around tables Lady Chapel Clear for '10 minute party' afterwards (welcome event for newcomers)</p>	<p>BAPTISM</p> <p>In the round one family in each of four segments. Portable font in the centre.</p>	<p>EVENING SERVICE</p> <p>Church laid out "in the round" for evening worship.</p>
MON	<p>TEAM WORSHIP</p> <p>In the chancel in the round.</p>	<p>CREATIVE MINDS</p> <p>Front of church set to round tables – rear chairs in circles for hospitality</p>	<p>DIOCESAN TRAINING EVENT</p> <p>Circular tables throughout and hospitality at the rear</p>
TUE	<p>REFRESH</p> <p>Some tables and small tables with chairs and small chairs at front. Rear clear for activity.</p> <p>REFUEL</p> <p>Immediately after Refresh – Lady Chapel set up for a Bible Study and Prayers</p>	<p>FUNERAL</p> <p>Front laid out with extra wide aisle and angled chairs for funeral. Rear laid out with circular tables to host the wake.</p>	<p>GOSPEL CHOIR PRACTICE</p> <p>Laid out with seats facing the back of the church and conductor's platform</p>
WED	<p>TOURISM</p> <p>Church cleared and signed for tourists. Where coach parties are booked we will work with tourist office to offer circular tables for hospitality.</p>	<p>TOURISM</p> <p>Church cleared and signed for tourists. Where coach parties are booked we will work with tourist office to offer circular tables for hospitality.</p>	<p>TOPPINGS 'MEET THE AUTHOR'</p> <p>Gentle semicircles at front and hospitality at the rear</p>

THU	<p>MARKET DAY COMMUNION &amp; COFFEE</p> <p>Communion in Lady Chapel but as it grows will move to front of church. Rear of church set for coffee around tables</p>	<p>SCHOOL VISIT</p> <p>Laid out in free form throughout / Labyrinth style / Stations with Bases comprising one circular table and chairs</p>	<p>PARENTING / MARRIAGE / RELATIONSHIPS / ALPHA COURSE</p> <p>Circular tables throughout and hospitality at the rear</p>
FRI	<p>TOURISM</p> <p>Church cleared and signed for tourists. Where coach parties are booked we will work with tourist office to offer circular tables for hospitality.</p>	<p>TOURISM</p> <p>Church cleared and signed for tourists. Where coach parties are booked we will work with tourist office to offer circular tables for hospitality.</p>	<p>PATHFINDERS</p> <p>Laid out free form. Pathfinders will have food in the halls and then activities in the main church.</p>
SAT	<p>FEAST</p> <p>Front half – around tables Rear half clear for activities and hospitality.</p>	<p>WEDDING</p> <p>Rowed seating between the pillars, Angled seating in Lady Chapel</p>	<p>WEDDING RECEPTION</p> <p>Circular tables throughout</p>

## Section 5. Justification

If the proposals are likely to harm the significance outlined in the Statement of significance, explain how the proposals would result in public benefits which outweigh such harm (public benefits include matters such as liturgical freedom, pastoral wellbeing and putting the church to viable uses that are consistent with its role as a place of worship and mission)

### Overview

As we have described above there is a very pressing need to transform the building. The current configuration is mismatched to the needs and vision of St Mary's and the Diocese. The need for change is urgent and we pray that we can meet this challenge.

These reasons alone would be enough to justify a project which is designed to value the 800-year history of St Mary's, but which releases the building from some of the more recent work which took place in the 1800s and which reflects a style of learning and approach to society specific to the Victorians, no longer appropriate to current or future needs.

### *Population*

In addition, Ely Parish is forecast to grow from 20,256 to 30,000 people in the coming decade. We are experiencing significant growth in some of our congregations in any event, and with the new housing this will create the need for an additional number and variety of congregations. We expect to add one or two weekly congregations with new formats, as we seek to respond to Bishop Stephen's request for a 50:50 blended economy – which in practice means 300 Fresh Expressions of Church in the Diocese by 2025.

### *Hub and Resource Church*

At the time of the Rector's appointment Bishop Stephen invited St Mary's to become a generous regional hub and resource, not just for the market towns of the Ely Diocese, but for Deaneries in West Norfolk and Suffolk as well. We are taking this seriously and the building transformation will enable us to increase the quality of our development work and events. We want to be able to support the Diocese more adequately as soon as we can.

St Mary's recently became the centre of the six-parish Ely Team and the newly flexible space will help us fulfil our development obligations to our sister parishes.

### *The Crisis in Family Life*

With family life in all its shapes and sizes, increasingly under threat in Ely and the surrounding villages, the schools are increasingly looking to partner with us to offer training for parents. We believe the building transformation will place us in a much better position to serve the toddlers, children, teenagers and parents in our community, encouraging their life skills, leadership, discipleship, creativity, music and many other areas. This is a key driver for us.

### *The Demand*

The church rooms are at full capacity during the week and well over capacity on Sunday mornings. New requests to use the church rooms continue to come in regularly, and we are positive there is a latent demand for additional community capacity and its associated facilities. We know there is commercial demand for conference facilities in the fast growing, high tech bubble of Cambridge and Ely.

### *The Options*

We have reflected on a number of options and have looked at these through a number of lenses, including the Statement of Significance. As the present congregation we are simply the latest in a long tradition of worship in this place whose history stretches back through many centuries. Our role has to be to ensure that the congregations continue in growth and health, so we can afford to maintain the building and pass it on to the next generation in a better and more viable condition than we found it.

We have considered doing nothing except routine maintenance, but this would feel like a dereliction of duty. To continue to leave the church with its inflexible furniture would mean it would remain under-used and that it will continue to need to send out its new, faster-growing, intergenerational worshipping communities to meet in schools and other public buildings. The church should be transformed so that it retains its central place for Anglican worship in the City and so that it is open and available for use every day.

## Significance

On the basis of earlier discussions with the DAC and CBC in 2015 and 2017, when representatives of each group visited the church, we believe we can undertake the entirety of the works without harming the significance of St Mary's and, with the exception of the floor, everything would be reversible by future generations).

## Conclusion

What we have described above is a project of limited scope but with a clear focus. This scheme will create a building that is glorifying to God and fit for purpose for a confident Church of England in the 21st century; a church which is inclusive, welcoming and which encourages the whole city to take the purposes of God seriously.

It is important that we make steady progress with this project now. Each year that goes by is a year of lost opportunity and we have a duty to enhance and open up the space to serve God's kingdom, the Church of England and our community.

## Appendix 1: Learning from Others

In our planning we have consulted with those who have undertaken this kind of work before us and those who are currently shaping the understanding of the way church buildings are reimagined for the common good.

The Church of England is experiencing steady decline across the country, including in this Deanery. In order to reverse this decline, in addition to constant prayer, the Church now needs to structure its leadership and its plant and assets behind a vision for growth. Such a vision is one in which we expect congregations to increase significantly in numbers and in the quality of discipleship, one where congregations become significantly younger on average, and one where the church can be open, generous and visible. Currently the St Mary's church building is woefully inadequate for these needs. Its layout is completely inflexible, and its general appearance is tired and scruffy. We are not able to undertake the generous role that the Diocesan Vision would have us play.

We have consulted and surveyed the congregations about the vision and have consulted local users and stakeholders, discussing the proposals with individual groups and receiving feedback. Each time we have invited comment we have reflected on that feedback and absorbed it into the design in an iterative process. Encouraged by this we will be undertaking fuller surveys with a broader range of people over the coming months.

We have also looked at other Diocese and projects and were interested in Chancellor June Rodger's views that churches must change in order to stay relevant – and that sensible re-ordering is necessary to keep them in use, accommodate growing congregations and for them not to become redundant. This is true from our own experience - we have had to move events, gatherings and even whole congregations into school halls and other more flexible large spaces in order for them to flourish - which is a shame.

Dr John Inge, the Bishop of Worcester, and a minister here in Ely in the past recently said that parishes should avoid becoming "mausoleums" which were no longer at the centre of communities. There is a danger that churches become increasingly marginal to the life of the communities they exist to serve; that they should strive to be at the heart of the communities in

which they stand, in both a human and geographical sense – reminding us that in the medieval period much of what we would now term secular activity would have taken place within churches and cathedrals.

He said that "Over the years, particularly during Victorian periods, a piety crept in which tended to exclude everything but public worship from them, all other activities being transferred to other places, halls and community centres."

## Appendix 2: Lessons from the Monastic Tradition\*

Finally, in this process we have reflected as a church on lessons about community and buildings from the monastic tradition, observing the way monasteries and Christian communities have tended to organise their buildings. George Lings\* identifies seven sacred spaces that have been essential to such forms of Christian community: cell, chapel, chapter, cloister, garden, refectory and scriptorium.

For centuries the Church has tended to give more time, energy and importance to Sunday services than to any other activity, but in the monastic community this 'chapel' is just one of the seven important spaces in which the Christian community functions. Growing and sustaining a Christian community requires much more than simply meeting regularly for worship. The church can no longer be a place set aside solely for worship; it must be a building that offers different spaces for other important community activities.

The thinking we are adopting is heavily influenced by Archbishop Justin's encouragement that we adopt a Rule of Life. This is a way of living out our Christian lives in community, taking its example from a range of traditions: from Franciscan monasteries, Holy Trinity Brompton, Lambeth Palace and everything in between.

When people are in Christ, and living in community as they should be, then we see people more fully alive. The seven spaces that communal monasticism has learnt to inhabit express the way we need to live more fully and closely if we are to embody the gospel of Jesus. The dynamics of the seven places offer comment on how the church is to be when she is living fully and at her best. That is what we are looking to model.

### Cell

Cell is a dedicated quiet area; a daily occupied, familiar, private space. It can be provided in the transformed chancel and the new quiet rooms, offering private space for retreat and meeting. The cell has long been seen as foundational for confronting oneself and one's 'demons' and thereby growing in dependence on God and in the grace of the spiritual disciplines.

### Chapel

The chapel would be primarily the nave, the transformed chancel and the Lady Chapel. These would be open for daily usage following the transformation. If cell is private, then chapel is generally public. Chapel is about 'The communal worship and collective prayer which unify'.\*

## Chapter

The chapter is mostly about how decisions are made in community, about communication, corporate discussion, debate and disagreement and intentional accountability. It is a social and governmental function. In chapter houses, such as the one reconstructed in Cîteaux, there is a large lectern from which either a chapter of the Rule or a chapter of the Bible is read. In both cases the “deciders” themselves thus sit under a higher authority and the decision-making itself must be in the spirit enjoined by those texts. Following the transformation of our building, holding leadership, PCC and APCM meetings in church would be helpful and possible.

## Cloister

In our case the cloister is currently the corridor surrounded by the toilets – a place of rest between moments and events and a shelter between our two buildings. The new design upgrades this area to create a welcome space with limited seating, circulation space, and conference-quality rest room facilities. It will hold a special role as the place of unplanned meetings, encouraging the building and restoring of community; a place to change gear, a place between the tones of the other different places, between the buzz of Refectory and the stillness of chapel.

## Garden

We would open up the door of the Lady Chapel into the church gardens and memorial garden, hopefully with a glass door, creating a welcoming and calming experience. The garden embodies work as prayer. Doing something practical can open the mind to God; when hands and feet are occupied in the garden the mind is free.' The garden itself is a gift of God; an open space with colours, air, birds, creatures that speak of God, which grows by itself as he intended.' \*

## Refectory

Although our current hall / kitchen would continue to serve this function, at times the nave itself will also become refectory: a place for conversation, storytelling and hospitality, with echoes of the Eucharist. This place will be vital to the informal socialisation of new members as we offer coffee to those who visit the newly opened church. This can be an oasis from the marketplace outside in Ely.

It would also offer us the chance to reconnect better with the original domestic context of the Eucharist, offering a homely balance too often complicated, ritualised and sanitised. If we start with the dynamics of Refectory we shall be in a far better state to offer relational and authentic missional hospitality. Serving and catering is shared by all, in order to serve all: 'if we do not serve we are, at best, a collection of people who live alone together (Chittiser).

## Scriptorium

The office and meeting rooms will be the beating heart of the church during the week, well placed to offer welcome and caretaking, a place of creativity, learning, art and communication.

The traditional monastery points us towards an integration of worship and rule of life which we can begin to offer and support within the campus of a transformed St Mary's Church.

Chris Hill, Rector, St Mary's Church

\*Informed by *Encounters on the Edge* – George Lings



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