

Report of the Parish Meeting on Building Renovation and the Impact of Church Closure

Sunday 31 May 2015

After the meeting was formally opened by chairwoman Mary Pirie, Deacon John McGarry led a prayer asking that the Holy Spirit would guide our discussions and decisions. Allison Kerr and John Hastings sent apologies as they were unable to attend.

Deacon John led the meeting through the information in the leaflet "Impact of Church Closure" dated May 2015, prepared by John Hastings. The leaflet is displayed on this board and extra copies are available to take home. Some points were discussed in more detail, as follows:

What would be the impact of holding Sunday services in St Andrew's and St Bride's High School?

- a) Cost: Councillor Alice Marie Mitchell provided the following information, based on 4 hours use (9am-1pm) on Sundays:

There are 2 elements to the cost: the hire rate for the premises, and the Facilities Management charge for janitorial services and cleaning

The Sunday hire rate for "Community" use would be £78.80 for 4 hours

The cost for Facilities Management would be £203.23

Total for 4 hours on a Sunday: £282.03

These costs would probably be covered by the savings in heating/lighting costs for the church.

Mrs Mitchell was asked to obtain costs for using the school on Saturday and Sunday evenings in addition to Sunday mornings.

- b) Setting up: Parishioners would have to help set up for Mass each week, although seating would be set out as part of the Facilities Management service. An altar table, cross and movable tabernacle would be needed, and whatever else would give the feeling of a place of worship.
- c) A team of "welcomers" or "greeters" would be needed to help people settle into the new venue.

Weekday Masses can be celebrated in the Hall, but Baptisms, Confirmations, First Communions, Weddings and Funerals all need a church, whether this is one of the other RC parishes in East Kilbride, or a church belonging to another denomination as has been suggested. Small groups such as SVDP can meet in the Chapel House or Guild Room or in the Parish Library if it's available.

Deacon John McGarry will investigate whether there will be a service to close and subsequently re-open the church, although the Parish Priest would have to make these decisions.

Deacon John also led the meeting through the Building Works update: *a separate document on this is displayed on this board and extra copies are available to take home.*

Fundraising Update – it was emphasized that, as a condition of receiving the Viridor award for the major works programme, an initial sum £102,000 must be raised from within the parish and not from any other source. This amount is due at the beginning of July 2015.

About £20,000 has been received in donations, but even taking into account other sources such as Parish Funds, Gift Aid, and the profit from the Sportsman's Dinner (for which about half of the available 120 tickets @ £30 have been sold), we still have to find around £30,000 before the beginning of July.

A Summary of the Question and Answer Session that followed these reports:

Q: Hall Capacity

Why is the capacity of the Hall only designated as 120? We can accommodate that number seated at tables, without the centre of the room being used. We were told in the past that we have enough fire exits to safely accommodate 180.

A: We have been given to understand that these are the numbers under Fire Regulations. Mrs Mitchell said that the Fire Service must be approached to get an absolute figure for the maximum number. However the Hall Keeper noted that (a) considerable revenue would be lost to the parish if weekend lets were discontinued, and (b) he would not be able to take on the job of opening and setting out the Hall for weekend Masses, parishioners would have to organise this for themselves.

John Hastings added subsequently that Father Ness has previously explained that it is not liturgically appropriate to celebrate mass as well as offering communion (under both species) within the confines of the Parish Centre when the hall is crowded (i.e. with as many as 120 parishioners which includes children).

Q: Do we need to have 4 Sunday Masses?

A: This is a question that would be decided by the Deanery and ultimately the Bishop.

Q: Re Fundraising – can we have up-to-date information on a weekly basis? It would be awful if our fundraising target was missed by a small amount, resulting in the loss of the major grant.

A: Yes, we will provide weekly updates.

Q: Where does the money go that is given in weekly collections? Why can't that go to the renovation fund?

A: This money is used for running costs (heating, lighting, etc) and other expenses such as the 20% Diocesan Levy.

Q: What is the 2nd collection used for? Could it be designated for the restoration fund, as was done to fund the previous roofing repairs and the Pastoral Centre?

A: There are 10 special collections scheduled throughout the year for non-parish causes. These would be taken up at the second collection. Deacon John will take forward the suggestion that the remaining second collections should be for the renovation fund. However it should be remembered that normal parish expenses still need to be covered.

A general discussion followed about the logistics of collecting for the Renovation Fund. Suggestions were:

- Make donation envelopes as well as forms readily available. (now done)
- Make information on the progress of the appeal more readily available (e.g. graphic in each week's bulletin)

Q: Does it make sense to be going ahead with the minor works just now, when the church is going to be closed?

A: These works are already started. John Hastings subsequently added: The minor works have their own funding (£91,000) and this covers designated work. We will lose this funding if it is not spent by 21 December 2015.

Q: Have Viridor been asked to extend the July deadline?

A: See response below from John Hastings after the meeting.

A comment from the floor was that deferring the date would only lead us into the holiday period. We need speedy decision making right now.

John Hastings subsequently stated that Viridor have made a large number of grants and have very specific requirements for their use. There are three major requirements which must be met: There must be a third party contribution (TPC) from the recipients (roughly 10% of the grant award), work must commence and money must initially be drawn down within 12 months of the grant award and the work to which the grant relates must be fully drawn within 24 months of the grant award. The award was made on 25 August 2014 and the TPC funds need to be cleared earlier than initial work commences. The parish needs to concentrate on finding the funding.

Q: Don't we have to accept that many people don't read the bulletin, and the message isn't getting through? Can't we have a weekly verbal update at Mass – eg while the second collection is being taken up?

A: John McGarry says he will give an update, or ask the celebrant to do so.

Q: Are there enough Committee members – should their names be published in the bulletin so the parish knows who they are?

A: There probably are enough Committee members, but it's true that everything they do must be transparent. Once the committee is established, the committee members will need support from other parishioners to do their work.

Q: Could the Fabric Committee consider asking the architects to make modifications to their plans to ensure the building is "Dementia Friendly", due to the elderly demographic of our community?

A: We would need to speak to the contractors. It may be that there are limitations due to the status of the building, but on the other hand modernisations need to be made, even in historic buildings, so the key is to keep Historic Scotland on-side.

Q: Why are we accepting a situation where over-runs of time are accepted/expected? Why are there no guarantees? What will the final bill be? Why can the church not be open at weekends, as was the case when it was re-roofed in 1988?

A: John McGarry will report to Bishop Toal that the issue has been raised publically by parishioners.

John Hastings subsequently wrote as follows:

In 1988, major works were carried out on the roof to resolve problems with leaks. A cover was applied over the existing roof. The current project is much more extensive, including strengthening of the walls, removal of the ceiling slats and lighting, major repairs to the roof bearing struts, replacing the entire roof stage by stage, renewing the lighting, replacing the refurbished ceiling slats and conducting major renovation of the brickwork. Scaffolding will be erected over the entire nave inside the church to provide a safe working environment for the contractors. All seating will be removed to allow this. The site will be sealed over the entire period of work for reasons of security and safety.

Initial delays arose from diocesan resource limitations across a large number of projects. John Hastings got involved to provide additional support to help to resolve this. The project is now proceeding as quickly as possible with regular project management meetings. Nevertheless, there are particular stakeholders - grant bodies, the Diocese, Historic Scotland – who are involved in major decisions that affect the pace at which the work can proceed. This has an impact on the tender content and when contractors can be appointed. There will be a main contractor appointed to the project who will be responsible for the success of the entire project and will be overall guarantor of the work. The project cost is £2.002 million. There is latitude within this number for the impact of cost inflation and contingencies. There is strict cost monitoring in place. Nevertheless, the full extent of damage to the roof and masonry in areas that are currently inaccessible will only be known after contractors commence work when the roofspace and walls are exposed. The project cost above does not include underfloor heating.

Finally, Councillor Mitchell, a life-long parishioner, reminded the meeting that in the 1950s the parish had to fundraise to buy a tabernacle for the stone church – then to fundraise to build the wooden church – then to build our present building.... But we always got there in the end.

First meeting of the new Parish Together Committee will be on Tuesday 9th June, time and venue to be announced in the bulletin, new members welcome.