

Parish Meeting – 7th October 2018

Mary Pirie (MP) chaired the meeting with Fr Rafal (RS) and John Hastings (JH) leading the discussion.

RS opened the meeting, hoping that it would generate discussion rather than argument and would be held in a polite atmosphere.

1. Heating the church

Gerry Toner (GT) made an immediate interjection that heating the church was not the most important issue rather that the meeting acknowledge that St Bride's was a cold church and the reasons for this be understood.

JH gave a summary of the current heating situation.

- There have been a series of heating solutions over the years to varying degrees of success. None have been perfect for a variety of reasons.
- It is acknowledged that St Bride's is, and always has been, a cold building, but that in tackling the ongoing issue with heating the church, the parish needs to be aware that there is a significant financial burden due to the 2016 renovation programmes. The parish debt is currently c.£420k and will take c.9 years to pay off at the current rate of £1k/week.
- The affordability of any solution is paramount, but some issues need to be addressed immediately.
- The radiant heaters in the church are of different vintages, with some no longer working or not operating efficiently.
- The manufacturers (SCHWANK) no longer make some of the heaters and spare parts are no longer available for older models (not manufactured since 1992). They are currently offering a discount for replacing older models.
- The last full maintenance review of the heaters was in 2010/11 and a full review is long overdue and needs to be carried out as a matter of urgency, especially since emissions regulations changed in 2015.
- There may be an opportunity, should the parish choose to upgrade the heaters, to investigate 'remote control' of heaters so that individual heaters can be switched on and off depending on the 'local' requirements.
- It is apparent that people's susceptibility to the cold varies wildly, and therefore it will be nigh on impossible to suit everyone.
- Combatting draughts could be achieved by installing air curtain heaters at the entrances to the church; this will help especially under the gallery where there is no heating at present.
- The practice of doors being opened by parishioners feeling they are being helpful contributes to more cold air entering the church and needs to be addressed through communication (particularly with passkeepers).
- During the renovation programme, the installation of underfloor heating was discussed.
- St Columbkille's in Rutherglen is often discussed as an example of when underfloor heating works. It has radiators as well as underfloor heating and large vestibules that are not aligned with the prevailing wind direction. It also has a new floor. So it is not necessarily a 'model' for St Bride's.
- RS/JH have had discussions with the Diocese regarding a large capital project such as installing underfloor heating. Due to the competition for funds it is not certain we will obtain grants or sufficient grants. Further, with the work required to prepare the paperwork, it is unlikely that a grant proposal will be submitted for approx. 3 years. So, we need to do something in the interim.

The floor was then opened to questions / comments.

Danny Martin asked whether the heaters were currently unsafe and whether the gas pipes, being accessible from the gallery constituted a Health & Safety (H&S) risk. JH replied that the heaters that were not working were switched off and isolated. The balcony is out of bounds (unless supervised) due to numerous H&S grounds.

Margaret Leitch asked why the issue with the heaters and the cold in the church had not been addressed years ago. JH replied that 2 heaters stopped working last winter and since the installation of underfloor heating has become a longer term proposition that priorities have changed and decisions need to be made sooner rather than later.

John Farrell commented that the doors are not draught-proofed, especially the main door to the Piazza. Remedying this must be a priority. RS commented that the vestibule off the Sacristy is also a cold spot. JH also commented that the movement of parishioners in the church (e.g. at communion) gave rise to the circulation of unheated cold air causing draughts deep inside the church.

Geralyn Walker asked whether shutting one of the access doors during winter and concentrating any local heating to the other might be an option. Closing the main door would still allow access to the church via the Plathorn Drive entrance (with accessible ramps) and also from Whitemoss Avenue (due to the single door beside the toilets). JH commented that this would require further consideration as we would need to consider a fire strategy and means of escape. It was commented from the floor that the closed door would not be locked (for these very reasons).

Linda Simi commented on the draughts coming down the light chimneys and whether anything could be done to remedy this. JH replied that this was due to cold air falling and it would be impossible to seal the bases of the light chimneys. Linda questioned whether they could be sealed to allow light to be transmitted but not cold air. JH said they are currently sealed this way.

Anne Marie McMillan asked whether gas heaters could be installed in the side chapel. JH replied that the gas heaters have more stringent safety considerations and it might be more efficient to incorporate electric fan heating. Issues with noise and directionality of air flow would have to be investigated. Our Lady of Lourdes has storage heaters, but they have very wide side aisles.

Iain O'Prey stated that it is misleading to compare St Bride's to St Columbkille's as their design and construction is totally different. He commented that the gas heaters are too high to be effective and that heating the vestibules was necessary. Iain also wondered whether a system of 4-inch hot water pipes circling the nave might be a simple solution.

RS commented that we needed to improve our existing system, seal the entrance doors from draughts and investigate adding air curtain heaters in the vestibules. The parish needed to be aware of the financial implications of any system, both in terms of installation and running costs. MP also referred to the fact that Historic Environment Scotland (HES) would require to be consulted over any changes that affected the fabric of the building.

Lynn Toner commented that 4 years ago, prior to the renovation, there wasn't a problem with cold in St Bride's and that HES, in her opinion, seem to be a source of many of our current problems. The additional vestibule off the main door should be re-instated. RS commented that the glass partitions at the side chapel did indeed cut down the draughts entering the church from the Sacristy entrance, but that during the renovation programme certain changes were implemented that were part of the architect's overall programme and might not have been universally popular. These changes were part of a larger funded programme of works.

Gerry Toner asked if HES had told the parish to take down the glass partitions. JH replied that they did not. He stated that the partitions separated people from the rest of the congregation in the nave and isolated them. The side chapel was not sound insulated and that part of the structure was beginning to show signs of sagging.

2. Windows in the Chapel House

RS commented that there were 170 external windows in the Chapel House / Sacristy complex. JH stated that repair / replacement was not an urgent matter, but needed to be raised. Since the Chapel House is part of a listed building the parish is duty bound to maintain the fabric of the building, but will not be able to leverage grants since the Chapel House is deemed a residence rather than a Place of Worship.

RS stated that double-glazing firm CR Smith had quoted c.£150k for the replacement of the windows. A quote from a Polish firm came in at c.£45k excluding VAT and various costs. At present there was no budget for addressing the issue of the windows.

There were no comments or questions from the floor.

3. Balcony

Danny Martin asked if the balcony could be removed if it was not a vital part of the building. Gerry Toner commented that repeating that the building was listed as an excuse for doing / not doing things was not helpful. JH stated that while he was not sure of the cost to take down the balcony, it would more likely be far in excess of the cost to do nothing and leave the balcony out of bounds. RS stated that the balcony funding should be kept in reserve for the time being.

4. Safety in the Church

MP stated that with some of the floor under the gallery being in a poor condition (damaged bricks) and ongoing complaints over the lack of handrails from the nave to the side chapel, HES would be consulted over work needing to be done to address these issues. Making the church dementia friendly was also referenced.

There were no comments or questions from the floor.

5. CCTV

RS stated that there have been several burglaries over the past few years, including one serious burglary within the past year, along with instances of broken windows. Police Scotland suggested installing CCTV to the church precinct. It has now been installed but is not yet operational. RS would like the church to be open during the day and asked whether CCTV should be installed in the church itself. RS would also like the exterior and interior of the parish hall to be covered by CCTV. There was general approval for this, though no vote was taken. Geralyn Walker asked if the CCTV feed was monitored. RS stated that the data would be stored on a local hard drive for an unspecified period (1 wk, 2 wks?) and JH commented that the feed would not be monitored and would not stop incidents occurring; it would however help with any police investigations.

6. Parish Centre Toilets

MP stated that there had been no upgrading to the toilets since the hall had opened approx. 20 years ago. JH commented that the reason for upgrading the facilities was that the hall was a revenue generator for the parish and we need to increase the value to the parish of the hall. He stated that bookings were already increasing and noted that with Paul Halligan's influence the bar facilities are better utilised (as well as the kitchen being upgraded during the remodelling). JH hoped that some of the less technical work could be done by parishioners themselves in an effort to save money. Linda Simi commented on the state of the guttering. JH said that ongoing preventative maintenance was required.

7. Lighting

MP stated that new LED lights were gradually being installed across the church precinct and were already recouping their costs. Using a spotlight to illuminate the cross has now been given permission by South Lanarkshire Council and the spotlight will now be purchased. RS stated that, with parishioners doing some of the maintenance work in their own time, patience about progress would be required.

There were no comments or questions from the floor.

8. Hot water provision in the Church

MP stated that there was no hot water in the Church utility room or the toilets. RS said that the quotes received for installation were high and that more quotes were being requested. There is also a blockage in the utility room drain. Lynn Toner asked whether the use of parishioners to do work in the parish was now allowed and whether any Diocesan rules had changed. RS stated that workers (including parishioners) have to meet certain minimum legal requirements (specified by the Diocese). JH stated that he would go further and request that the correct insurances / permissions were in place before any work was done by parishioners. The Diocese have indicated that if external contractors have to be brought in to ensure safe work is carried out then the higher costs must be borne. John Farrell asked what figures were being quoted. JH responded that quotes of £1600-£2000 had been obtained for what he considered to be relatively basic work.

9. Statues

MP stated that there was a proposal to place 2 or 3 new statues in the church. RS commented that the proposal had originated from RS himself and the Pastoral Planning Committee and that it was not being forced on the parish. RS added that he would fund a statue himself. The proposal was for one statue of St John Paul II, one of St Andrew and one of St Francis. GERALYN WALKER asked where the statues would be located and whether there were any H&S implications. She questioned whether we needed more statues and wondered whether the inherent spirituality of the church was enough. RS stated that he understood the aesthetics of the building and any H&S issues of adding more to the side chapel (where he imagined at least one the statues might go – beside the statue to St Anthony or beside the Lady Altar). He stated that it could either go beside the font or where the former stained glass window to St Joseph was located. A statement from the floor wondered whether this would interfere with the candleholders. John Farrell said that in his opinion the church would look cluttered and that statues were an ancient tradition and possibly not needed now. RS replied that in his judgement praying in the presence of statues of saints has always been an expression of our faith which we profess every Sunday. JH stated that another option could be to add icons to the Lady Altar as an alternative. RS stated that he was not in favour of icons since they don't exist anywhere else in St Bride's and that there was space in the area referred to as the mortuary chapel in the original plans (i.e. where the statue to St Anthony is located) for a wooden statue. Elizabeth McEntegart stated that it was a very generous gesture from Fr Rafal, but that perhaps only one statue was necessary. Catherine Bryceland presented the idea of having a statue that has a flat back, making it easier to attach to a wall. Margaret Farrell stated that while there were no icons in St Bride's they are a very effective and visible sign and have been sued for years. MP commented that the Andy MacMillan's widow (Andy designed St Bride's) was pleasantly surprised when she visited during Doors Open Day that the church was not overly cluttered.

10. Bookcase for hymn books

MP stated that the hymn books were being damaged at present and that a new bookcase was required; it would be placed on the wall behind the two confessionals. Lynn Toner stated that we had a bookcase previously. JH responded that it had fallen apart.

At the end of the formal items, RS returned to several items:

Heating

Iain O'Prey asked whether any decision had been reached at the meeting on a solution. JH stated that no decision had been reached and that nothing was off the table. Danny Martin stated that something needed to be done soon and hopefully a solution that could be adopted as part of a longer term solution. JH stated that he was concerned that underfloor heating would potentially destroy the floor and would take a while to implement, with no guarantee it would work. He commented that Iain O'Prey's suggestion, while not ruled out, would take up already valuable aisle space on the eastern wall. Moira McCudden asked whether the pews could be shortened to make the aisle wider. Alice Marie Mitchell stated that action was needed

immediately as the parish was losing parishioners. John Farrell stated that the current heaters are effective and RS stated that he was monitoring the temperature in the church during services.

If the external temperature drops below 5°C, it is not possible to warm the inside of the church to an acceptable level (15°C). Several comments were reiterated about addressing draughts as a matter of urgency. Gerry Toner stated that returning the church to the pre-renovation status would resolve the problem of a cold church. JH stated that the church has never had a systematic thermal analysis and that this was required; an analysis that was free from the pressures of a company trying to sell their own product as the solution. Lynn Toner asked if it was possible to 'un list' a building (see link at the end of the minutes), while Helen Biggins urged the parish to do something and also for more people to join the Fabric and Planning Committee, even temporarily, to help.

Statues

MP stated that in her opinion, the issue of the statues was a distraction from the more pressing issue of solving the problem of heating the church. Margaret Farrell agreed with this statement. Cathy MacDonald stated that since those present constituted a representative body of parishioners that a simple vote would aid any decision making. A vote was held with 16 for and 16 against adding statue(s) to St Bride's. RS refused to vote.

The decision noted was that one statue would be accepted by the parish as a very generous gift from Fr Rafal and that he would further investigate costs and potential designs.

Miscellaneous

John Farrell asked if there was a solution to the problem of the wall outside the Guild Room on Whitemoss Avenue. JH stated that the Diocesan Estates Manager (Guy Logan) was speaking to our insurers to identify whether the damage was covered. Since the wall is on a public footpath, a solution needs to be found.

Geralyn Walker asked why no agenda was made available prior to the meeting. MP apologised for this.

Tom Hendry asked if a parish finance report would be made available. RS stated that the Fabric & Planning Committee was still discussing some items and that a report would be available by the end of 2018.

Betty Purdie asked if gift aid envelopes could be made available for the second collection for those in the Covenant scheme. JH stated that a system had been trialled during Doors Open Day for gift aid envelopes and that these would be rolled out eventually. RS stated that the level of gift aid repayments in our parish is low when compared to other parishes in our diocese and that a further 'push' would be made to try and encourage more people to participate in the Covenant scheme. Cathie MacDonald asked whether the figure quoted in the bulletin for the weekly collection included the money raised from Standing Orders. JH stated that it did not.

Geralyn Walker commented that the average age of people at the meeting was 'high' and that more 40-somethings were need to volunteer within the parish. JH responded that, with the majority of groups or events within the parish, it was the same, very supportive, faces who stepped forward. Sadie Dickson stated that people don't want to commit when approached. RS stated that new fundraising efforts were required. Cathie MacDonald asked whether the second collection could be specifically for a new heating solution. RS again stated that the parish needed to investigate all options for fundraising and income generation.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to all who participated.

Historic Environment Scotland – listing advice

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/listed-buildings/propose-a-building-for-listing/>