

CHURCH HALL OPTIONS APPRAISAL

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I would like to talk to you about St. Bartholomew's Church Hall, its current state and some thoughts about its future, and at the end of this brief announcement we would like to make a request for your thoughts about what you have heard and the process for collating those thoughts.

The Church Hall was built in 1910. It replaced the old Parish Room thanks to the then Vicar, Rev William Lutyens, who asked his famous architect brother Sir Edwin Lutyens to help in drawing up the plans. (The design is believed to have come from his studio rather than being personally designed by Sir Edwin.) It is situated at the front of the village car park and has the Millennium Mosaic along the street side. The Hall was actively used by our congregation up until 2007. It was at that point that the Church Centre, that adjoins us, was developed and the Church Centre continues to play a vital part in our fellowship and worship.

Since that time, we (the congregation) hardly use the Church Hall. Instead, it is used by various village clubs and societies and for private functions. Although the Hall is used by the village it is not self-supporting - a point I shall come back to.

This presents us with a challenge. For the church has an asset which may be needed by the village but is not used by the church. This challenge is made even more acute because time has taken its toll on the fabric of the building.

It will soon need a substantial sum of money spent on it. The identified items are the roof, the guttering, the windows and the brickwork. The PCC recognised the issue a couple of years ago and had an estimate of £30,000 to fix those problems but, as I say, that was a while ago and it was before any consideration of what to do with the interior.

So, we could be faced with a potential project bill three times that amount. (As many of you will recognise, building costs on even the smallest alteration to one's home tends to be more expensive than one originally budgeted for.) The problem for the church is that we do not have that sum of money; the use of the building doesn't cover itself and as such there isn't any margin for maintenance.

Therefore, the PCC have been thinking about what to do with this challenge.

The Trust document gives us a clear steer as to its usage. To quote from that document, it is to be used 'for any work or purpose of a religious, charitable, educational, social or recreational character ...which the Vicar may feel appropriate'.

This is a very wide remit and therefore affords us a variety of options. But before embarking on that course the PCC thought it would be best to have some guiding principles:

- fulfilment of our mission to the village as shown in the original charter – here we are referencing that quote;
- in line with the values of St Bartholomew's Church;
- and paying proper attention to the fabric and significance of the building in the village.

Here are some possible scenarios:

1. Maintain the building. This would require raising money either through sponsorship or through donations.
2. Change the use for commercial purposes. Maybe an IT firm or an architects' practice might be interested.
3. Change of use for private apartments, recognising that housing is of key interest to the village as raised in the recent neighbourhood plan.
4. Another change of use - this time to convert the property into sheltered housing or as a modern day almshouse run by a housing association.

Some of these ideas are more attractive than others, but before anything is decided the PCC would like to hear from you. They would like to hear the wisdom of the congregation as to your vision for the building.

The only boundary is to bear in mind the financial constraints of any such project.

The Process

With that in mind we would like to run a consultation period of 40 days. It feels appropriate to have that period. This will run from Sunday 24th June to Friday 3rd August.

To help formulate your thoughts some of you may wish to view the interior of the hall and we have set aside a couple of dates for this:

Saturday 14th July 10am -12 noon.

Monday 23rd July 2pm-4pm, 6pm-8pm.

To communicate your thoughts:

- i) we have set up email account churchhallconsultation@otford.net;
- ii) or fill in the form in the church website (www.StBartholomews.co.uk)
- iii) or you may place your remarks in a suggestion box which will be located in the Church Centre.

The next step after 3rd August is that we will collate all the ideas into themes and make a recommendation for the next step. There will be an open morning in the Church Centre on Saturday 1st September from 10 am to 12 noon when the findings will be on display.

Please see the church website for further details or the notice board in the Church Centre.

Conclusion

So, to conclude, we would like to hear your thoughts and opinions on the future of the Church Hall, hence today's request. We shall of course be talking to the users about the possible changes in the next couple of weeks, but we thought it was important that the congregation was first to hear this.

Thank you, and if you wish to have further information please contact the Wardens, the Vicar, members of the PCC, or myself.

Nick Slater
Chairman, Church Hall Options Appraisal Team
24th June 2018