

Your rector's letter

Dear friends,

Building for you

A bit of history

In the 1980s several alterations to St Mary's were carried out in order to adapt to the needs of our church: two toilets, a sink, tea making facilities, storage and a serving area. The church was able to raise its profile by making it much easier to invite everyone to worship, functions and community events. In the north and central aisles pews were detached, some were made movable, others sold and replaced by chairs. It was thanks to the vision for the future of our church by one of my predecessors, Canon Stephen Hardie, and with the support of the congregation and PCC that this transformation to the church took place.

Building on the past for the future

Almost 40 year after the latest transformation of the church and 160 year after the substantial rebuilding of the church in the Victorian age the need for further improvements to our building became apparent in the last decades. A survey was made, consultations were carried out among the congregation, the local community and the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee). The initial proposal to create a space for meetings by small groups in the North East corner separated by a glass wall from the rest of the church was rejected by the DAC and Historic England (then English Heritage).

A statement of need illustrated that St Mary's needed more space and better facilities. It was seen as exceptional that a church of this importance, size, community involvement and attendance did not have a separate meeting room. The annexe project was born and the building committee was asked to take the project forward. The original committee consisted in Graham Wadley, Sue Jones, Eric Jakens, Maureen Reynolds, Sylvia Usher and myself. Later Peter Terry and more recently Douglas McCormick joined. Sadly, last year Sylvia passed away.

The Annexe

The proposed annexe includes a meeting room for our groups and for use by the community, combined with a small kitchen, new toilets (one for wheelchair users), a lobby and level access entrance. The Carolyn garden will be landscaped and transformed into an enjoyable area which also will create a safe access to the church from the south of the building (East street). Last summer, after years of working on the plans and designs, we received planning permission from Colchester Borough Council.

Transformation

The building of the annexe is part of the transformation of the church. As you may know we already made a start with the upgrading of our building with the installation of new heating and sound system. But there is more to come: new lighting, reordering and redecoration.

Appeal

In order to raise the necessary funds for the project, the Appeal Team was founded and Peter Hill was approached to become the Chair. The appeal team consists of members with very different backgrounds and they all have a warm and generous heart for the church and the Wivenhoe community. This is now the moment after several preparatory meetings that the Appeal team will launch the fundraising. In the last few years updates about the annexe and transformation project were given at several occasions: church services, annual parish church meetings, PCC meetings, Vision Days, community consultation days, leaflets for St Mary's neighbours, Tidings, and recently in the emergency appeal letter to electoral roll members. One had to live on another planet to not have come across the annexe and transformation project.

Prelaunch on Sunday 22 April

Unfortunately my last presentation on a Sunday in December was overshadowed – literally – by clouds of snow. In icy conditions still 37 people made their way to the church for the presentation. But no worries for those who missed it, an update and a pre-launch talk will be given on Sunday morning 22 April. The presentation has the purpose to inform church people and members of the electoral roll about the appeal before the 'official' and public launch on Saturday afternoon 5 May. Do come along on both dates.

Invitation leaflet

A leaflet is included and I would like to ask you to take the time to read it. We are not primarily talking about bricks and mortar, though the design of the annexe looks magnificent and the further transformation plans exciting, but above all we present to you a project that will secure the future of St Mary's church as the community hub for worship, fellowship, education, support to groups, cultural and social events.

Pray for your church

Those who came to All Together Church on Sunday 4 March received a symbolic door key and were invited to hold it. The children prayed this prayer, which could also be your prayer for the annexe and transformation project:

Lord Jesus, each time I feel the door key, I will remember that you are in the middle of the life of this church. Please help me to unlock the door of the church and let you in as our Lord, guide and friend.

Huge thanks for your support.

Erwin