

St. Mary's Church, Crosthwaite building development appeal

The PCC and congregation of St. Mary's Church have embarked upon a building programme to extend the front of the church to accommodate two toilets, one of which will be a disabled toilet, a new vestry and to upgrade the existing kitchen facilities.

At present the only toilet the Church has is a single WC housed in an out-building within the Church grounds. Whilst kept in good order it is fairly basic and does not have hot water or heating. As a consequence it is extremely vulnerable in winter to freezing up. Indeed during winter periods certain members of the congregation have not attended services because of the access difficulties and reliability of the toilet (if it is frozen).

The toilet is not accessible by the disabled. At certain services i.e. weddings and funerals when we can have congregations as large as almost 300, the inadequacy of this single toilet becomes very obvious with queues forming across the Churchyard at times.

In 2011 the archdeacon at the time felt that any proposals to upgrade the existing toilet block were not cost effective and encouraged us to explore the possibility of forming toilets within the Church or within an extension to the Church. There is no space within the Church and after considerable investigation (with co-operation from the Diocese) it was felt that the only answer was to dismantle the existing entrance porch to the church and rebuild it to a larger footprint to accommodate the extra toilet and vestry facilities. (In some ways this actually improves the detailing of the porch as there is clear evidence that the original porch was built on separately and is extremely shallow and out of scale with the Church as a whole.)

If we raise sufficient funds, then we may also be looking to re-carpet the church and place more comfortable cushions in many of the pews at the same time.

We have drawn up a programme of exciting fund-raising events for this development over the next 12 months and would like to encourage you to support them. The events also serve to bring our community together and the intention is to have some fun at the same time as raising significant money. Some have wondered if it is the right time to be raising funds for new developments when economic times are so hard. However, we feel that this is exactly the right time to be investing in our church building as we will be able to provide jobs and work for local people as the project unfolds (perhaps just when they need it). If we delay until economic times are better, we could be in for a long wait and building costs would meanwhile inevitably rise anyway.

You may know that the church does have financial reserves, but these are invested to provide a regular income which heavily subsidises the running costs of the church. If we did not have these reserves we would be continually fundraising to prevent the closure of the church. We will use some of our reserves, however, up to maximum of £35k. The total project is estimated to cost £70K. Our intention is to match fund the development project from our reserves, matching every pound raised; so we need to raise at least half the cost of this project.

We want to have a church which is welcoming and well used for worship and other appropriate events involving all in the locality. Although you may not see yourself as a regular church-attender, most people in our local community will benefit from these improvements as many parishioners end up attending christenings, weddings or funerals from time to time. We need to improve the facilities to broaden the church's appeal and usage and so commend this development project to everyone.

You can see a small display of our scheme at the back of St. Mary's church and we look forward to seeing many of you at the fundraising events over the coming year. Do look out for them.