

Reasons for the Proposed Changes

Increased flexibility

Many of us actively involved in the life of the church have seen how we might use the space available to us, and particularly the nave of the church, more effectively. A more flexible space would allow us to do some of the things we already do much better, and certainly allow us to dream dreams about what new activities might be possible.

Improved accessibility

Whether talking about those with disabilities, or simply any who find access through to the kitchen, toilets and Church Room inadequate, this project is about making the church and its facilities more accessible to all.

Physical evidence

A phrase I have borrowed from my marketing days, 'physical evidence' speaks of the statement the church makes to any who come into the building. Our desire is for a church that speaks of both the big story (the Christian story) of which we are part, our rich history here in Great Bookham, and a living vibrant Christian community which is seeking to proclaim the gospel in new and relevant ways today.

The PCC decision

As a PCC we thought very carefully about the proposals, the responses made to the consultations and the likely reactions to them. When it came to the decisions, except for one abstention we were unanimous that both phases should go ahead. We therefore intend to take them forward, recognising that a lot of detail has yet to be worked out and the permission of the *Diocesan Advisory Committee* needs to be obtained. In the case of Phase 2, progress is also dependent on funding being in place.

As we go from here...

As a PCC, we were very aware that whatever decision we made, it was going to be impossible to satisfy everyone. In fact, it felt a bit like the famous meeting of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, where those who met were painfully aware that whatever decision they made, some were bound to be troubled by the outcome. And so we want to acknowledge that for some of us, this is not going to be a comfortable decision. I confess, there is no easy way to square the circle here. However, perhaps I might encourage you to take the opportunity to talk over how you are feeling with any member of the PCC, and to rest assured that even though you may have preferred a different outcome, those of us entrusted with making the decision have sought to do so prayerfully and with the best of intentions, not least a desire to see the mission of God furthered through our ministry at St Nicolas. And if I may, one further practical suggestion – why not visit a few churches in the local area which have made changes to the fabric of their buildings in recent years? For myself, it is in visiting other such churches that I have become convinced that one can very much retain the beauty of all that is wonderful about our historic church buildings whilst allowing them to be what they need to be in order to take forward God's mission today.

My grateful thanks to any who have participated in this project so far, whether it be those who are part of the small BftF steering group, those who organised the Listening Circles last autumn, any who have taken time over the last sixteen months to express a view, those who have sifted and ordered the responses received so that they were available for the PCC to consider, and any who have prayed. Thank you again and please do keep praying, for those entrusted with taking things forward, for our church fellowship and unity, and for the Lord to bring growth to his church.

In Christian love,

Alan Jenkins
Rector, St Nicolas