



Here at St. John's we are excited to be celebrating our 150th Anniversary. Though relatively young by Church of England standards, we count it an honour and privilege to serve this parish as it has grown from a rural village and farmland on the edges of both Dorking and the Holmwood Common to an eclectic combination of farmland and housing estates including Bentsbrook, Goodwyns, Rough Rew, Chart Downs, and more. As we celebrate 150 years, we also have an eye on the future and the hopes of a 200th anniversary. To that end, we are resolved to be *a Flourishing Church for the Generations*.

This means three things. First, it means we want to flourish and are not content with maintenance. With all the talk in recent years about "Save the Parish," parishes won't be saved through conservation. Rather it is as they flourish that they will remain. Secondly, for that flourishing to take place, it must be intergenerational. Any parish that wishes to flourish cannot be a parish simply of "younger" or "older" people, locked into generational preferences. It must have firm roots in the past that stretch into reaching branches of the present and future, each nourishing and in need of each other. This allows the third thing to be possible: to flourish beyond the past and present and be a blessing for generations to come. It is in these three senses, and more besides, that we are resolved to be *a Flourishing Church for the Generations*.

How might the property, buildings and fabric of the Church be optimised to this end? We value and cherish our Church building, Community Building, Garden of Remembrance, and grounds, and their meaning to our whole community. How might we ensure that they remain maximally useful today and beyond tomorrow? These are the questions the PCC has been wrestling with for over a year, and have resolved a course of action toward, which will be outlined here. The broad and overlapping concerns of accessibility, aesthetics, hospitality, flexibility, and useability will be addressed under the headings of The Church Building, The Community Building, and Outdoor Space.



Outdoor Space:

To be a *Flourishing Church for the Generations*, our outdoor space must welcome and accommodate all generations. This means:

- **Creating level entry into the front door of the Church.** No one in or with a wheelchair, walker, pram, or push chair should have to find it a struggle to gain access into their Parish Church. Rather, they should be hospitably welcomed and accommodated as far as is reasonably possible. Level entry will remove the obstacle of steps in order to give front door accessibility to all who enter it.
- **Refreshing the Garden of Remembrance.** It would be difficult to estimate the number of people who visit and remember their loved ones whose remains have been interred in the Garden. It is only right to honour our lost loved ones, those who remember them, and the legacy that first beautified the Garden by keeping it well.
- **Play area.** We want children and their families to know they are welcome on our property. Giving them a suitable, safe, and aesthetically pleasing area in which to play is a simple way to demonstrate that our Church property is for everyone in the Parish – even children. This means simple play equipment on the property and reasonable enclosure around the patio of the Community Building.
- **Fencing.** The fencing is not only in need of repair, but a reordering making access to the Church property easier and more inviting.

The Community Building:

Thanks to the generous and sacrificial financial gifts from members of the Church and surrounding community, as well as various grants, our beautiful and functional Community Building was built. In it, various community and support groups meet and private hirers book, regularly. Our desire is to maximise the Community Building's potential for continued and flourishing benefit to and for our community. This means:

- **Acoustic treatments.** Our lovely Community Building does have challenges related to its acoustics. It can be difficult to hear others when multiple conversations are taking place at once in the gathering of a group. This can be particularly difficult for people with hearing loss or hearing aids. Additionally, children's voices and enthusiastic exclamations, can echo painfully through the hall. Our desire through suitable acoustic treatments is for our Community Building to be an even greater blessing to all generations.
- **Improvements to the Church Building.** The use of the Community Building by hirers and groups in and for our community should not need to be in competition with the

worship, mission, and ministry calendar and needs of the Church. Through modest, but significant improvement to the Church Building, both buildings' use may be maximised to the benefit of the whole community for the generations now and to come.

The Church Building:

Few things serve as the preserve of English history and culture like a Parish Church Building. Yet even more profoundly, few things serve to nourish the spiritual life of a community like its Parish Church Building. As such, any discussion about the Parish Church Building is met with strength of feeling and passionately held views as diverse as those who hold them. English history and culture is a story of change over time that carries forward the best of the past, gathers the most virtuous of the present, and presses on creating a better future. This is notably observed in our Parish Church Buildings which are often repositories of eclectic, sentimental and spiritual treasures that tell this story of change over time, reminding us of our roots and that adaptability and change are a part of our English cultural inheritance.

With this in mind, the PCC has resolved to pursue improvements to our Church Building that will maximise its potential to support the worshipping life, mission and ministry of the Church, that will tell our bit of the story of the life of our community, will embrace our cultural inheritance of adaptability and change (that our Victorian forebearers who built our building were particularly astute at), and will be something to hand on to those who will follow on after us to then hand on to the next, and to be *a Flourishing Church for the Generations*. This means:

- **Lighting.** The lovely, clean, and energy efficient LED lighting in the Chancel will be extended into the whole of the Nave, replacing the yellow/orange sodium and fluorescent tube lighting.
- **Heating.** The current Infrared Bar Heaters which glow red when on will be replaced by similar energy efficient Infrared Bar Heaters which do not glow. These also will be repositioned for better and more consistent delivery of heat in the Nave. Under-pew heating may also be installed in the Chancel.
- **Storage.** Storage cupboards will be installed in the back of the Nave, alleviating clutter in the vestry and accommodating broader storage solutions for both the Church and Community Buildings. Panels from the pulpit will be used as inlays in the cupboard doors, carrying our heritage with us into the future. Storage solutions will also be installed in the Vestry along with critical work to existing and deteriorating cupboards, sink, and worktops.



- **Entry.** From the level entry provided outdoors, level entry through the porch and into the Church building will be provided. This allows easy access to all members of the community irrespective of age or mobility. Additionally, glass doors are to be installed to mitigate against the risks associated with not knowing what exists on the other side of the doors while they are closed to keep the cold/wind out and retain a warmer interior.
- **Extended carpeted area in the back of the Nave.** This along with a few pieces of comfortable furniture accommodate two things. One is the ability for those for whom rigid wooden seating is problematic to have a comfortable place to sit. This could be a parent with a small child or someone recovering from a medical procedure. It also provides a comfortable meeting space during the week for pastoral care without compromising the availability of the Community Building. Lastly a larger carpeted area opens the possibility for ministries like a Toddler Group or some similar activity without impinging on the availability of the Community Building.
- **Seating.** Our fixed, second-hand, and deteriorating pews are no longer fit for purpose. These pews will be replaced with suitable wooden and flexible seating such as chairs and/or benches as are used in many Cathedrals. This flexible seating will allow us to expand our worship, mission, and ministry capacity, without compromising our ability to support traditional and inherited forms in the unchanged Chancel, or competing with community hirers and groups making use of the Community Building. Flexible seating also allows us to welcome all people into the main body of the Church, regardless of ability. Being in a wheelchair, pram, push chair, or zimmer frame will no longer relegate a person to the back of the Church, segregated from the rest of the congregation. Some wood from the existing pews will be repurposed to form the new level entry floor of the porch. This will remind us that we enter in with those from the past who have soaked our Church Building with their prayers and worship over the generations.
- **Flooring and walls.** As the pews have deteriorated, similar deterioration of the plastering on the walls is made apparent as well as the need for the parquet flooring to be repaired and refinished. In addition, gullies along the walls will be formed to secure A/V cabling, for a cleaner and tidier aesthetic.
- **Audio/Visual.** In addition to tidying our A/V with cable gullies along the walls in the Nave, other A/V solutions will be installed to support the worshipping life, mission, and ministry of the Church as well as maintain a suitable aesthetic in support of both traditional and newer forms of worship.



Next Steps:

The PCC has resolved to pursue this course of action to maximise our property's ability to support the worshipping life, mission, and ministry of our Church as *a Flourishing Church for the Generations*. However, there are many steps along the way. Faculties need to be approved, funds raised, and bids tendered to name just a few. These are not forgone conclusions, and the objectives might not be met. We ask you to prayerfully consider this plan of works as well.

Do you also think this effort might be effective to supporting *a Flourishing Church for the Generations*? If so, please do contact our Treasurer, Andrew Philipson, at PCCTreasurer@stjnh.org.uk to find out how to give financially, or Revd Dr Peter Nevins, our Vicar, at vicar@stjnh.org.uk to find out how to otherwise practically help. And lastly, whether you already do or not, come join us for worship! Our 8am Book of Common Prayer service on Sunday is a beautiful and quiet time of peace in the middle of the weekend. Our 10am Family Eucharist each Sunday morning is a welcoming and blended form of worship that you may come to as you are. And our Midweek Worship at 9am each Wednesday is well suited for those desiring a quiet space of worship for whom Sunday morning is a difficult time. This is your Church. You are welcome here. We aim to ensure it flourishes for the generations.

