

An article was published in the April edition of the Parish magazine, outlining the purpose of the For Future Generations project and progress to date. This is reproduced below:

Proposal for Changes to Parish Church Unveiled

At a series of meetings with church members, the Parish Church has unveiled an early concept for how the interior of the Church could be remodelled. The plans aim to make the building a more valuable community resource and suitable for Christian worship well into the 22nd century. Introducing the results of a feasibility study to members of the congregation, vicar Geoff Lanham explains,

“Looking back, we can see that every 125 – 150 years, our church has been adapted to meet the needs of a changing social context. It’s been a living building, changing to serve its community and proclaim more effectively the good news of Jesus Christ. Following in the footsteps of our forebears, we now have plans to ensure our building supports the work and mission of the church into the future, whilst enhancing the architectural beauty of its historic interior. As we see the village grow and many new people moving into the area, our vibrant church will continue to support the local community and provide a welcoming and attractive space for a wide range of village activities.”

The plans, which are at an early concept stage, have been prepared by specialist conservation architects BHB from Lichfield following extensive consultations with the congregation, local schools and other organisations. They are the basis for starting discussions with the church, heritage bodies and local authorities who will need to approve the changes, and other local groups.

The key changes outlined in the plans are building a small extension on the north side of the building to create an additional accessible entrance, replacing the Victorian pews with modern seats and restoring and relocating the medieval rood screen to the western end of the nave. The entrance through the base of the tower will be improved and the floor in the eastern end of the building will be levelled to create a more usable space.

Project Director, Nick Brown, explains,
‘The current pews, installed in the 1860s, are machine-made, quite uncomfortable and fix the layout of the church in a way that prevents many uses. Individual chairs will make the space more adaptable as well as being much more accessible to young families with buggies and those who need mobility aids. We will also be making much needed changes to the Victorian heating system, ensuring a more efficient and sustainable building in line with its increased use.’

The extension to the north, accessible by reopening and enlarging the original 15th century entrance to the church, will provide an entrance lobby, informal seating and will include accessible toilets and much needed storage space. The relocation of the medieval rood screen will have both a spiritual significance and a physical benefit, removing the division between the nave, where parishioners were traditionally allowed, and the chancel, which was reserved for clergy and choir. It also allows an unobstructed view of the majestic eastern window from the main seating areas of the building.

The works are estimated to cost in excess of £3.5m. Geoff Lanham says,

“It is a major investment in the building and faith adventure for us. The majority of the funds will have to come from the congregation, although we will be talking to a number of local and national organisations that may provide grants for some elements of the work. Our vision is for a building with a more adaptable and usable interior which actually enriches the majesty of this ancient building and keeps the church and the message of Christ at the heart of the village for many more generations.”

We will be sharing updates with you at appropriate future dates as the process unfolds.

