

Nick's reflection on the Church Project.

Firstly, thank you again to Jeff for taking time out of his holiday to visit the churches in Cockermouth and Keswick. Also, for all the work he did in preparation for our last meeting. It has really made me reassess the approach we were taking on the project.

I am also grateful for Sue and Stacy's reflections- they have also made me think about the way forward. Both emphasised that the space needs to be welcoming and warm and secondly the Church needs to use its building to be sustainable in financial terms.

I think what Stacy said about different ideas and perspectives is very important. In this whole exercise we do need to embed an environment where no idea/perspective is a bad one and encourage people to tell us what they really feel.

Stacy's comments on how worship-theology-building link really struck a chord with me, and I have definitely had the same experiences of worshipping in different places. Both Sue and Stacy have referred to how comfortable being in Church feels and how welcoming it is as being important elements. Both are not great when you are cold, so heating and interior are key elements. The photos of both churches Jeff visited show the use of softer and more colourful chairs and I am in no doubt that gives a much more welcoming feel than rigid wooden pews. I know not everyone will share that viewpoint.

Sue makes an excellent point about Holy Trinity not just serving the parish of Hartshill, but a large number of our church members come from outside the parish of Hartshill to worship at Holy Trinity and consider it as their church. We are one body and if the Church serves people outside the parish that is good. We know of people in the parish who worship at other churches because that is what suits them. Different theological approaches are fine as long as people feel comfortable in their worship to God because it means their worship is more joyful and effective.

I was impressed with the approach Keswick took to planning their project. In particular looking at the Church's position and future through a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.)

Nick and I have with Andy Duncan's help come up with a vision statement which has been considered by the PCC.

Although I see that as a useful starting point, I now see a proper SWOT exercise as essential on the Church as a whole rather than just on what happens to the building.

If that is accepted as the first step, then the Project Team could have a go and then present something to the PCC to consider and develop. Or the

PCC could do it in a single item meeting. Or we could attempt to do it with the whole church congregation in a special service.

This work would fit in with previous work done by the Church on the 8 qualities of a Church (I cannot remember what they all were! Or the outcomes!).

I think a fundamental difference between us, and Keswick is our relationship with the community centre and Parish Council who run it.

The other aspect that needs to be explored is the needs of the community we serve before we develop plans for the church building. I believe there are many people who live in the parish who hardly ever come to Church who would say it is their church. There would be a massive outcry if we tried to close it and sell it. People see it as an important place for the important stages of life- birth (baptisms), weddings and funerals. But a bit like pubs closing how much does the community want it to ensure its survival.

The two exercises (SWOT and Community Needs) would inform what Jeff put on one of his slides which are the options that faced the decision of Keswick Methodist Church.

Stay as you are.

Growth.

End of Life.

Sue is right it is a beautiful church building in beautiful grounds, and we have duty to try and give it a sustainable future whatever of the three options above that is chosen.

Now briefly to some specifics raised by Jeff's presentation.

1. Cockermonth's tent- I was sceptical when Jeff first introduced the idea but when I saw the photos of the Church with it up, I thought it gave a cosy feel. I was interested that Keswick said that the older members were initially against it but now are the biggest fans. Comfort probably outweighs aesthetics for most people. It might only be needed between October to March. It will definitely help reduce our carbon footprint which must be a priority not just because of the cost of heating our Church. I am impressed with the work Jeff has done on applying Cockermonth's solution to our church building.
2. Windows- I was impressed with Keswick's use of secondary glazing on the inside of existing windows and polycarbonate external protection. If this solution could stabilise our windows and mean that we would not have to take them out and repair them then I

think, although expensive, it will be a much cheaper solution and definitely result in less heat loss and reduce our carbon footprint.

3. Community use of the building- I share Sue's concerns on how far we can go with this.

Mainly because regular users such as a nursery would conflict with our ability to have funerals.

The big feature of our church is its size and ability to accommodate large numbers of people as we see at Remembrance Day and Christingle. That does lend itself to one off concerts such as those by Atherstone Choral Society and Shows put on by local schools and drama clubs. There is no other building of this size in Hartshill- even the School Halls do not have the capacity we have.

The one-off event is doable in terms of car parking (a constraint for us given its joint use with the community centre) because of the availability of school grounds to help provide sufficient temporary car parking facilities.

My concerns are firstly will there be enough one-off events to give us sufficient income to become sustainable especially as such a large building requires a lot of long-term maintenance. Secondly how do we find resources to manage it.

A huge challenge to us is the same one as Keswick faced which is we have an aging congregation, and the vast majority of church members are retired. It has the advantage that recently retired people have the energy and time to get involved as Nick and I did in helping to establish our community centre. However, as I am finding that reduces as you get older.

I am with Sue – getting volunteers to manage community uses in our building will be challenging- it is to even get people to help with refreshments and blitz days- it is always the same small pool of church members. The same is true if we try to mount an appeal. But a solution could be if the community were on board and non-church members might be prepared to get involved.

4. Solar Panels- If we were to get consent to put them on our south facing steep roof I think even if we did not use what was generated it would give us a good income in putting it into the national grid. A big factor will be the cost versus the payback period, but grants may help with this.

5. Heating – I am now even more convinced following Jeff's presentation that the heating system depends on how we see the church being used and how many hours it is in use.

6. Short term solutions to current heating issue- I agree with Sue if church is too cold then having services in the hall is an alternative. This certainly happened in Laurie's time.

Personally, I am not that comfortable about worshipping in the Hall and this goes back to Stacy's well put together comments on the relationship of the type of space to how you feel. The tent idea if accepted could quickly be implemented.