



Church Hall Re-development Fund (Or *Mission Impossible Too?*)

The plan to re-develop the existing church hall is an exciting project for the church family. Many positive comments were received following our period of consultation in January and from time to time, people still approach the project team with enquiries about progress and further ideas for the project. It is, therefore, a project very much at the heart of the people and therefore vision for St John's at this time.

Remembering Bob's talk on a *Preferred Future for St John's*, the church hall will play a significant part in providing a greater range of facilities for outreach events and activities, not least by freeing the Church Family Centre for use too. This really is working out our strap line statement of "Experiencing and expressing the presence and love of God at the heart of the community." Used regularly nearly every night of the week, the hall is where we meet the community, (or should it be the community meets the church?). Rising to the challenge of providing a new Church Hall is essential to keep these contact opportunities.

The church hall, it should not be forgotten, is also a key facility in the life of the church, used as a venue for Get Real every Sunday morning. Its potential for further use should not be underestimated with the thriving Children's group, Stomp, and pre-school playgroup, Acorns. Both would benefit from more suitably appointed facilities, leaders particularly appreciating their 'own' space in terms of storage and display.

So much for reminding ourselves of the vision, now for the reality of providing the resources!

Faith.

Earlier in the year, praying about the church hall, it was felt the project should not be seen so much in terms of fund raising but rather as faith raising. Members of the church family who were around during the church extension project in the late eighties can well testify to this. People took small steps of faith to raise their regular giving commitments and found they were not wanting; people who felt they had nothing to give found prayers answered by a change in personal circumstances; the project treasurer, who had many sleepless nights thinking 'where is the money for this bill going to come from?' was blessed with gifts and donations that always seemed to cover the expenses on a day to day basis. The project, which in today's financial climate would represent a cost of over one million pounds, was in fact provided for mainly through the generous giving of the church family, then less than half our current numbers!

Prayer

Nurturing such faith came through prayer, prayer and more prayer! Our hall project should be the same and this week all are encouraged to spend time in prayer for it.

Set small amounts of time aside for prayer to seek God's will for you and your commitment to the project. Ask him to raise your faith levels to support the project whole-heartedly, in whatever way He calls. Read the book of Nehemiah and reflect on the role prayer, praise and worship had on the success of the wall building project there and be resolved to come before God as Nehemiah did for St John's.

Consider fasting for a mealtime or two (Nehemiah did!) It doesn't have to be a whole week of meals. However, specifically sacrificing even a small time to come before God in prayer concentrates the mind and brings us closer to God in our thoughts, prayers and in what we hear!

Join with others. As cell groups, we will be focusing on the project but it need not be the only time to pray for the hall. After the children are at school Mums can join for a coffee and prayer; commuters can unite on the train; anyone can get together with others in an evening - you don't have to be in a cell! More formally this week, join the St John's family at the church each day. Apart from a more extended time of prayer on Monday 22nd short but focused times of prayer will be led in church and everyone is welcome. Linking with others to pray really does help raise faith as together God's ways are discerned and realised. Times for prayer in the church this week are given below.

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| Monday 22 May @ 8.00 pm | Face to Face prayer meeting |
| Tuesday 23 May @ 10.00am | |
| Wednesday 24 May @ 1.00pm | |
| Thursday 25 May @ 7.00am | |
| Friday 26 May @ 7.00pm | |
| Saturday 27 May @ 8-10 am & 4-6 pm | Open church for private prayer and meditation |

Sacrificial Giving

Having faith for something is just a first step. It needs to grow. We only need mustard seed sized faith to start with (see Luke 17 v 5&6), but just like the real plant, it needs to be nurtured and fed. Faith must be followed by action. In the letter of James chapter 2 we read about dead faith, but to keep ours alive for this project and to release God's goodness to us, we have to exercise it! Small is good to start with if the intention is to grow! Cheerful and sacrificial giving is integral with this project. That is what we signed up for giving the go-ahead for this project in January. It is a journey that happened with the church extension before and it is a journey we can ride again together: one that will be blessed with a fine destination of a new hall to use. But, and perhaps more importantly, it will be a destination where fellow travellers have been energised by new found faith and vigour to work out a preferred vision for God's family here.

Giving opportunities can be realised in a variety of ways.

Direct Giving: One off donations can be given at any time, whether large or small, (Remember the widow's mite in Luke chapter 21?) Specific money for the building project must be in clearly marked envelopes identifying it as *Church Hall Giving*. As a tax payer, do not forget to Gift Aid any such donations as it enables the church to claim a further 28 pence for every one pound given.

Regular Giving: this is a good way for people without capital surplus to donate in a significant way. The project will have costs over a few years and a sustained finance source will be needed. Regular amounts can be given through standing orders with banks. Other ways may be organised if necessary, but it is important to know there is a reliable and sustained income, at least for the duration of the project and its associated costs. Of course, changes in circumstances are understandable and the setting up of any regular giving is able to be cancelled by you at any time. At the end of the project, the giving can again be reviewed.

Capital Loans: this compliments the regularly committed giving and provides funds to get the project underway in the near future. Through agreed arrangements, capital sums are loaned interest-free to the building project. The loan is repaid at a later date as building costs have been met and other income sources, such as regular giving, build a surplus over expenses. This type of giving cannot be Gift Aided. However, as happened with the church extension previously, if any loans were subsequently made gifts, in total or in part, then these portions may be eligible for tax claims. For any queries giving in this way, please speak to George Pilgrim, church treasurer, or Martin Pryke our Gift Aid Secretary. All information is treated in the strictest confidence.

Other Ways: the church extension previously encouraged children from the Sunday School groups to collect small change to fill smartie tubes. Other people have suggested using talents as an investment to give a return for the project, (hopefully, like the first servant gaining ten talents in all as found in Luke chapter 19!) Still another suggestion is having a good clear out and see what is of any worth but not of any continued use to you; a sort of mini *Flog it!* or similar as seen in a variety of TV programmes. All such ways may be valid and may be the way you feel you can respond to God's call of supporting the fund.

God certainly has the resources for the new hall, but they may only be released through us as individuals. That does not mean we all have to contribute the same, or in the same way. Nonetheless, we do all have to be open to giving sacrificially and perhaps in *new* ways. The current activity of the church must not be compromised and any giving to the general funds should not be switched. Indeed, with a thriving church community and lots of mission activities, current giving must not suffer, especially so with the Antioch fund that supports our overseas missionaries. Hence the emphasis on *new* giving.

In whatever way the Lord is leading you to give, there are response forms to indicate your giving to the Church Hall project. It is important to know levels of response so the project can be progressed accordingly. This is not a 'one-off' exercise. It is hoped as circumstances change and faith is raised

A church member shared an observation. There are about 350 people on our electoral roll and as such this represents quite accurately people who may support the project. For a project cost of £700,000 then, this represents about £2,000 per person. Admittedly, this may seem impossible for some, especially as two names on the roll may represent only one wage earner. However, God is a God of the impossible and with tax claims to increase the net worth of gifts, and loans to help spread the costs of the project, prayer, faith and sacrifice can see the job done.

Tithing

Tithing is the biblical principle of giving away the first ten percent of anything received. For example, the Israelites regularly gave portions of their harvest and livestock to the Priests and Levites at the temple as part of their sacrificial giving. This may well be a guide to our giving to the church and building project today. However, for many, many years it has also been a principle of the Parochial Church Council. At least ten percent of the church's income is redirected to other worthwhile, and generally Christian, causes.

In response to feedback given in January, a portion of the funds for the Hall project is likewise to be *tithed* to support an appropriate building project in a much less wealthy place in the world. The church extension project had a small surplus that helped support three building projects in Moldova. With the Hall Project it would be good to twin with at least one other project right from the outset. Not only will our community be blessed, but think what blessings may be shared with others less fortunate than ourselves!

Mission Impossible?

The church extension project back in the 1980's was called *Mission Impossible?* It had a picture on a brochure of a small mouse pulling an elephant along! However, far from being impossible, the church family have had the luxury of a fine multi-function building to worship and meet in for some eighteen years now. All thanks to a faithful God and the obedient brothers and sisters in Christ of the church family at that time. Our hall project could be called *Mission Impossible 2?* A worthy sequel! However, drawing on the example of the church family at that time, and of course the same, utterly dependable, God, it is to be called *Mission Impossible Too!* For with God *Nothing* is impossible.