

Welcome to

# re:news

issue 3

Involving the church family in transforming our building for a new season of growth

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## Making a difference to me

Hi, I'm **Becky Williams** and I work part time in the admin office at **Linden Gate**. I share the role of **Administration Manager** with **Tiffany Carter**.

Having the church office in Linden Gate is familiar to those of us at Christ Church but we find that those contacting the church for the first time, maybe to arrange a wedding or funeral, or to speak to one of us about a pastoral matter, struggle to find where we are. We also find that couriers often try to deliver to the church, even when the address is clear.

Moving the staff team into the church building as part of **RENEWCHRISTCHURCH** would make the church staff much more accessible to casual visitors and those needing help. It would also make the myriad of little jobs I need to do (getting to the safe, checking details at the InfoHub and so on) so much easier as I won't need to make a special trip. We will also be able to better support the activities running in the building such as Toddlers and Community Centre.

Above all, I'm excited about the possibility of creating a greater link between the work of the office and the wider church and making the building much more open and accessible to our local community.



## A God who is always doing new things

**Many churches across the UK are looking to see how they can be more welcoming and open. Churches are feeling led to work in their communities in new ways.**

Church Care runs a website that supports churches to do this and gives case studies to help others.

The organisation aims to 'initiate and encourage wider, more imaginative and more strategic use of the Church of England's 16,000 buildings'.

The examples they give are varied and exciting. Take a look at [churchcare.org.uk](http://churchcare.org.uk) in the section Open and Sustainable, then select Case Studies to see what other churches are doing.

### Examples include:

**St John's, Hackney**, where the church has trebled in size since they began opening the church building during the week, including setting up a cafe in the church.

**St Mary's, Chelmsford**, where they have a cafe that gives direct access into the church. '...we have seen many people who came in for coffee becoming involved with the church and making a commitment to God or re-finding their faith.'

**St James, West Hampstead**, where they have a cafe, a children's play area and host the Post Office. 'We are returning to the medieval model of the church when it was absolutely the centre of the community.'

# How churches have approached development

Over the next few months, we hope to take a look at some building projects in other churches. Every church will have a different set of needs and different resources. We are not making a direct comparison with Christ Church but there is still much to inspire and learn from when looking at other schemes. In this issue:

## The church cafe run by St Michael's, Stoke Gifford

The Old School Rooms Coffee Shop in Stoke Gifford opened in 2004, in response to what the church saw as a local need for a place to meet. Young mums chatting over buggies on the green had nowhere to go. In fact, residents generally had nowhere to meet apart from the local pub. The church felt the village lacked a recognisable heart and wanted to respond. So began the Heart of the Community Project; a major development to provide community facilities and strengthen the local community.



The Old School Rooms were identified as an ideal site for a cafe. Plans were also drawn up to develop the buildings behind the School Rooms at a later date to accommodate the growing church.

Even though the cafe started small, opening only a few hours a week to serve drinks and cakes, the project required investment from the church from the very beginning to refurbish and equip it and to employ a part-time member of staff to run it. The rest of the staffing came from church volunteers.

As the cafe became better known, opening hours were gradually increased. By 2007 the cafe was opening 9.30am-2.00pm five days a week, employed a chef and had added light lunches to its menu. The church also employed a full-time manager, Ann Cooke.

*"The cafe was always seen as a ministry by the church,"* said Ann, *"and because of this the church was prepared to invest in it. We didn't start to cover our costs until 2015 but the church was committed to the cafe as a way of serving local people."*

Now the cafe opens until 4pm on weekdays and for two hours on a Saturday.

*"We are now talking about the possibility of more paid staff,"* said Ann. *"We have some wonderful, very hard working volunteers but volunteers aren't always able to commit their hours in the same way that paid staff are required to - and yet we have to run a reliable business. We've found that consistency of opening is very important to keeping our customer base. If people don't know when the cafe is open, they won't make plans to meet there. We've also found that it pays to advertise the cafe with leaflets and if we print our opening hours, we have to know that we can keep to these."*



Although the church has a clear vision of the cafe as one of the ministries of the church, they are also clear that they do not want it to be seen as an overtly 'church cafe'. There is no church literature on display, there are no Bibles, unless one has been left by mistake, and no members of the church start conversations about God with customers, but they are very willing to talk if asked.

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*"We want to see joy in the building. We want it to be a happy place to be and to serve the community,"* said Ann.

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Judging by the numbers of people who choose to use the cafe regularly - local people, church members and business people looking for a hospitable meeting place near Parkway Station - the cafe is achieving its aims.

# Your Questions



In the last edition of re:news, we published answers to some of the questions and comments made by members of the church family about the proposal for a cafe. In this edition, we look at the queries raised about the proposed Village Hall

rooms, the stage and the kitchens. More questions and answers will be published in next edition of re:news.

We would like people to be able to recognise their own questions, so we have used the actual words and numbered the questions as they appear in the full document. This will be available after publication in re:news on the website, [www.renewchristchurch.org](http://www.renewchristchurch.org), or from the church office.

## Village Hall (Q 21-31)

*21 - What is the seating capacity of the new community hall e.g. if configured sitting around tables. It doesn't appear to be a very large space on the drawings but that may be deceptive.*

The designers tell us that if used as one room, the space would seat 100 theatre style, if split into two rooms, each would seat 50 theatre style. If sitting people around tables, obviously fewer than this could be seated but how many would depend on the size of tables used and the layout.

*22 - In what respects will this space and its uses differ from that currently available locally elsewhere eg at Clifton Cathedral, Clifton College and the local hotels?*

We're not comparing like with like if we look at commercial venues - our aim in this is evangelistic, serving and blessing our local community.

*23 - Do we plan to undercut the alternatives in price or charge market rates?*

This is not a 'for-profit' but an evangelistic enterprise - prices will be set once research into other church venues has been conducted.

*24 - Village Hall - we assume that the wall facing into church will be a glass wall. Will this wall be removable or is it envisaged that for bigger services like carol services, people could sit there and feel part of the congregation?*

The plans provide for an opening wall so that when we need extra capacity this upstairs area will indeed be available to use for additional seating.

*25 - What limitations will there be on the use of the 'community hall' at the same time as activities in the main church eg funerals, concerts or a loud youth service? eg how soundproof in both directions?*

This will be a matter of common sense and practical building management - a funeral would demand sole use of the building (we have no more than half a dozen a year).

*26 - The first question posed on the response form is regarding the needs of the church. My initial question is whose needs aren't being met?*

The consultation forms suggest the need for more space for existing activities e.g. Internationals, 20s & 30s, and Toddler Groups are all struggling to manage numbers in our present spaces. That's before we consider the more visionary suggestions from some church family members about providing additional attractive space and activities that attract non-Christians to come into the building.

*27 - Will there be a demand to rent the Village Hall?*

Conversations with the local community suggests there is significant demand. For example, the local library were very encouraging, explaining that they could rent their one, much smaller room, several times over.

*28 - I know there are a lot of issues with the Crypt and the users of it and I am very sympathetic to improvements there but I am not clear on the upstairs of the building. How many people have used the area on a frequent or regular basis that we have already cleared of pews, apart from Sunday worship and Alpha? My question is do we need the village hall area at the moment? Whom would you see using it and how often?*

We tend to approach our building through our own particular lenses, e.g. what brings me to the building, what do I see when I am there. The reality is that our current site is already at and beyond capacity on many days - the upstairs is not used that frequently at present precisely because of the inadequacies that the **RENEWCHRISTCHURCH** Project is designed to address.

*(continued overleaf)*



29 - Recent legislation and case precedent have created a vicious "equality" minefield for Christians to negotiate. Are we willing to allow just anybody to book the "Village Hall" space and for whatever purpose? It remains part of the church building after all - essentially it is a church hall rather than a village hall. Surely we cannot permit uses that run counter to the gospel or promote what God hates; but it would be very tricky to legally exclude offensive uses and still make it available for uses deemed acceptable. Are we kidding ourselves over this? I also think it extremely unlikely that the church would make significant contacts with the community simply by making a meeting space available for its use. Would people even recognise that the church was serving the community or would they assume a right to use it?

Churches up and down the country navigate this issue with little difficulty - there is no reason why we cannot do the same. Charity Law backs our right to restrict the use of any church building to activities which are 'not inimicable' to our core values.

Experience elsewhere suggests that communities respond mainly with gratitude and goodwill to any church that seeks to serve and bless it.

30 - Will hiring out a "village hall" be a problem? I fear it will be a white elephant.

31 - I question the viability of a "Village Hall" and I doubt its value in promoting the Kingdom of God.

Time will tell, but the team is confident that this addition to our available and usable space will be a huge improvement, and a blessing to both our church family and the wider community.

## Stage (Q 32-33)

32 - Are we sure that there is enough space for the choir and musicians at Christmas with things being pushed back towards the East end as they are?

33 - If the choir is pushed too far back, all the sound will get lost in the apse, especially if they are well behind the screen. Despite being 'miked', there is still much sound which will not reach the congregation and it makes it difficult for one part of the choir to hear another! Or are they going to be sited elsewhere?

One of the problems of the current stage is that it was designed almost exclusively for that use - so we live 52 weeks of the year with a stage whose full size (almost one third of the floor space of the whole church!) is used for less than 4. This is a very poor use of space - modern stage design will enable us to have a permanent stage more suitable for our weekly needs, with better expandability for special events, including enough space for the choir at Christmas so that they do not have to be positioned as far back as the apse.

## Kitchens (Q 34-41)

In response to the various questions that have been raised about the viability of the current kitchen layout designs, the Team has

- asked the design team to revisit this whole area of the Project
- decided that, once we are at a stage to proceed to more detailed plans, regular kitchen users will be invited to join our architect, design team and any kitchen design specialists brought in.

## Volunteer help needed

The Renew Team would like to gather comments from the wider community about **RENEWCHRISTCHURCH**. This involves contacting local groups and communities, setting up exhibitions and recording responses. If you are able to volunteer to help with this work, please email [renew@ccweb.org.uk](mailto:renew@ccweb.org.uk)

[www.renewchristchurch.org](http://www.renewchristchurch.org)



Get in touch...

If you would like to find out more or if you'd like to get involved please get in touch with the church office on 0117 973 6524 or email [office@ccweb.org.uk](mailto:office@ccweb.org.uk) or [renew@ccweb.org.uk](mailto:renew@ccweb.org.uk)

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