



ST THOMAS **CHURCH LANCASTER** SHARING GOD'S LOVE FROM THE HEART OF THE CITY

Vision Sunday, 27th January 2019: Building Project Update

As a church, we have embarked on a substantial building project as part of our 2020 Vision. Our Heart of the City Project has a fourfold vision to grow the ministry of the church through developing our site, by:

- Building to grow
- Building to sustain
- Building for those in need
- Building for the community

Thanks to the incredible generosity of church members, £1,841,645 (inc Gift Aid) has been pledged across two pledge days (January 2017, November 2018). With nearly 200 households having pledged, this represents a very substantial commitment from the church membership to the project. This has enabled us to carry out Phase 1 of the project, including works to the spire, the west end of church, pre-school, and a successful planning application for the new centre, all for a total cost of approximately £260,000.

But after two pledge days, and with £1.5 million still to be found for the proposed £3 million new centre, the PCC felt it was right to pause the work of the design team in November, in order to call the church to pause and pray for two months, to ask God to guide and provide for the building project.

During this 'Pause and Pray' period, we held a church-wide day of prayer on 2nd December, and an Open Forum on 11th December. As a result, 3 main options have emerged, which were discussed at length in the extra PCC and building team meetings in December and January.

- Retain and re-order the existing centre
- Continue towards the proposed £3 million new centre
- Design a new centre on a budget closer to the pledged total (£2 million).

After much prayer and discussion, the PCC has opted to design a new centre for an 'all-inclusive' budget of £2 million, with up to 10% contingency.

Why have we opted for a new £2 million centre?

There were a number of contributory reasons for this decision, including:

- The existing centre looks set to be an expensive option for what it gives us, with structural repairs required to retain the shell of the building, and with all works subject to VAT. Many church members have also indicated that they have given

sacrificially to this project in order to see a newly built centre enable new opportunities for ministry and mission.

- Although many suggestions have been made for closing the funding gap on the £3 million new centre (grant trusts, external benefactors, a new business model for room bookings, loans, and prolonged pledges by church members), none of them look likely to be sufficiently successful to bring the £3 million project within reach. In fact, during this period of prayerful consultation, the forecast for the likely amount of money we could raise through trust funds has been reduced from an optimistic £500,000 to something closer to £150,000.
- The buildings team have reviewed the design brief, and found some significant cost-savings that could be made if the centre was newly designed, including:
 - Reducing the office space, as most of the staff are now part-time and could 'hot-desk' in an open-plan office;
 - If two 11am junior church groups continued to meet in the pre-school, we could reduce the number of large/mid-sized rooms needed in the centre from 7 to 5, while still greatly increasing our capacity for ministry to the city from current levels.
 - It may be possible to make the ground floor spaces more multi-functional – e.g. by partitioning off the foyer/social space area so that it could serve as one of the mid-sized spaces, thus enabling a centre with a reduced footprint to 'work harder' for us.
 - It will be a key requirement that any design is 'future-proofed' with the capacity to be extended upwards or outwards, if needed by a future generation.
- Dan Brown, our architect, believes that a newly designed centre with reduced footprint would be likely to be approved at planning, as the principle has already been established with our first application. He has also drawn up a timetable that could enable work to begin on-site in the autumn of 2019, with a completion date in the autumn of 2020.
- This means that a new £2 million centre is much more likely to be built by 2020 than the larger more expensive £3 million centre, for which finance remains out of reach. This would fit with the church's expressed desire 'to get on with it' while still delivering the full vision for the project.

Are we still living by faith? A vicar's perspective

We as a church have embarked on an incredible faith journey since we launched the building project in January 2017. Hundreds of church members have joined in, with many families pledging sacrificially, and many living by faith in their personal family finance, particularly during this period of 'double-pledge' in 2019. As we as a church have 'paused to pray', many church members have been genuinely asking God for guidance, and sharing their views. I believe that this faith journey is part of God's purposes to build us as a church, as well as for us to build a building.

Throughout this period set aside to pause and pray, I have been asking God to make it clear if he wants us to 'hold out' for the £3 million centre. We know that God can make a way

where there is no way. During this time, I have fasted and prayed, and talked to church members, and although church members have not all agreed with one another, I have listened and weighed everything that has been shared with us.

But as this period to 'pause and pray' comes to an end, my clear sense is that God is saying to us that he has already guided us by what he has provided us. I believe that we are already living in a miracle – with £1.8 million pledged so far. And though I believe that he is calling us to continue to stretch beyond our current provision, and continue to live in faith for more, nevertheless, I believe he is asking us to design a new centre that is more in line with what has been pledged so far, namely a £2 million centre.

I believe this makes good practical sense, as I believe that a refined brief for a re-designed, new centre which 'works harder for us' will deliver the full vision for the project with its four strategic pillars, but in a more cost effective way. I believe this combines faith with wise stewardship, and I am excited that this should enable us to press on and build a new centre by 2020.

Thank you so much to everyone who has taken time to pray, and share their thoughts with the project team, as well as everyone who has pledged to support the project. There is still plenty to do to raise the money to deliver the £2 million project, so new pledges are still very welcome! Pledge forms can be collected from the welcome desk in the church foyer, or downloaded from the Building Project page on our church website, www.st.tees.org.uk.

2019 Church Ministry Cost Update

As a church, we are already involved in a number of great ministries which reach out to people in our city, including:

- Police Lunches
- Ark meal for the homeless
- Reaching 300 under-18's every month
- Groups like STAG, women's groups, book club, walking group, sports groups
- Life Groups
- 3rd Age groups like Extra Time and Lyrics and Lunch

This year, we have the opportunity to invest in two exciting initiatives for growth:

- **Student and Young Adults Minister** – over the past 5 years, our student ministry has grown considerably. As Michael Hutchinson who has been leading the student team will be leaving us to be ordained in the summer, we face a choice about how we develop this growing ministry. The PCC would like to appoint a full-time student and young adults minister to work with the 18-30's generation from September.
- **Family Life Centre** – the PCC would like to begin the proposed work of the Family Life Centre to support families under pressure in our community. The full report on the Family Life Centre to the PCC can be downloaded from the front page of the church website.

Before these two initiatives can begin, however, we need to tackle the shortfall that has opened out in our general fund which supports the regular mission and ministry of the church. For the past two years, we have not asked for an increase in giving to the regular ministry of the church, in order to prioritise the building project.

However, giving to the regular ministry of the church has now softened to the extent that we face a projected shortfall of £32,000 this year if we are to cover the costs of our existing ministry - even if we do nothing new. If we invest in the new initiatives we believe God is calling us to, this will add a further £22,000 to our budget, thereby taking us to a projected shortfall of £54,000 in 2019. With church reserves totalling £70,000, this is not a sustainable situation.

The PCC has worked carefully through the church accounts, looking to make savings wherever possible, and staff have been asked to minimise their budget spending. The PCC will be monitoring the church's finances closely this year, and will not make the proposed new appointments unless the financial picture improves.



However, I am encouraged that with 370 electoral roll members in the church, an increase of £2.83 per adult per week would not only cover the entire shortfall, but also enable all of these new ministries to get started too. In other words, we could respond to everything we believe God is calling us to do by increasing our giving **by the cost of a coffee a week.**

Could you consider increasing your giving to the regular ministry of the church by £3 a week per adult, or £5 a week per couple?

Or if you are not yet giving to the regular ministry of the church, perhaps you would like to consider starting. As an illustration of how your gift could be spent:

- £7 a week would provide Messy Church for a whole year;
- £8 a week would pay for the Alpha Course;
- £16 a week would cover the cost of police lunches;
- £35 a week would pay for the hire of Diggles café for the older youth to use on Sunday mornings;
- £60 a week would cover the cost of the church's contribution to the Christians Against Poverty Debt Centre.

Although we face financial challenges at the start of 2019, I am confident that God has given us all that we need to do what He's called us to, if we respond to meet this need together. Please do prayerfully consider contributing to the costs of the church's ministry this year, so that we can press ahead to reach new people in our city for Christ.

Jon Scamman, Vicar