

**Holy Cross Church Binsted**  
**Re-ordering Open Meeting held at the**  
**Wickham Institute in Binsted**  
**25.10.19 at 7.30p.m.**

**1. Welcome:** [a] Yann [Vicar] thanked the Wickham Institute for the venue and welcomed everyone to the open meeting to discuss Holy Cross Church's proposed Re-ordering project. He asked that everyone sign their name as a record of their attendance on the clipboard that was being passed around the room. Yann then said an opening prayer. A question was asked if the meeting was being minuted and Yann said it was.

[b] Yann introduced the Re-ordering Committee and PCC members, Andrew Hunter Johnston [Chairman] Kay Hunter Johnston, Nick Carter, Christopher Ogilvie Thompson, Kathy Ogilvie Thompson, Stella Croom-Johnson, Angela Dunne, Helen MacDonald, Sue Stephenson, Liz Carey, Cathie Weldon, Piers Wilson and Ron Neil. At this point Ron Neil described his credentials and experience with the Guildford Diocese and his involvement with Re-ordering projects. In addition, he stated that he is an advisor and qualified surveyor. Yann then introduced Antony Feltham-King who is the Architect involved in the Re-ordering project.

**2. Why Re-Order the Church?**

Yann gave an account of the reasons why the Re-ordering plans have been undertaken. He began by saying that he wanted the Church building "to make God known." He said that hospitality is very important as we need to be "good stewards" and provide a warm, welcoming and safe Church environment that is accessible to all. He emphasised that some of the proposed decisions made so far have been made with these values in mind, In addition the Church is not a flexible space at the moment and it is under used. He would like it to be "a hub for the community". In addition, he acknowledged the village audit that was done in conjunction with the Wickham Institute, the Church and the Cedars pub [now closed] in 2015? As a result, it was concluded that the Church building could become "more flexible and fit for purpose, enabling and engaging God in many different ways". He said that the way we could do this is very different today compared to 100, 50 and 20 years ago. He said it was important to leave a legacy to the next generation. Yann stated that the Church of England is in decline and it is in danger of "shutting down." There are no historical funds of money in the Winchester Diocese so it is important that we the use the resource of our Church building well now.

**3. Key Concerns and Questions** – Yann invited people to ask questions and concerns. He stated that these would be recorded, followed by a progress report presentation regarding the project from which some of the concerns and questions may be answered. These have been recorded in the order they were mentioned.....

[i] Underfloor heating

[ii] How do you propose to use the building in a different way than the Wickham is used? What about WIFI? Do we really need it in the Church? Isn't there an issue about car parking? [This questioner commented that since Holybourne Church has been re-ordered fewer people now attend.] How do you know that the Re-ordering will attract people rather than chase them away?

[iii] Disabled Access and Toilet

[iv] Raising the floor and loss of a country feel to the Church. A person commented that some of the proposals were more suited to an urban church and not a rural one.

[v] Seating in the Church and the removal of the pews.

[vi] What is the cost of the underfloor heating [percentage of the costs?] and how successful has it been in other Churches?

[vii] What stage is the project at?

[viii] Who else is looking into the points raised in the audit that took place 5 years ago?

[ix] What is the priority – the end goal? How do you propose to use the church more frequently on a daily basis?

[x] There needs to be a feeling of community inter-relating with the Wickham Institute. Be complementary not against each other. What can be done for the Church to work? Why not spend the money on the village hall instead?

[xi] We need souls, not a "hub" because the Church is such a special building. What about those people seeking a "quiet space" if other community things are going on in the church? The church should be kept as a "special place."

[xii] Is the Church not compliant as it stands? Is there anything that is amiss at the moment? Does it meet modern expectations? **Answer: The Church is a safe environment but there is always need for improvement. There is a quinquennial inspection every 5 years and the PCC is obliged to carry out the report's recommendations. There is always a new list of maintenance, but nothing is critical as repairs are in hand, including the work in the tower. However, if changes are made (e.g. to add toilets) legislation would require the church to take steps to comply with current regulations for disabled access etc.**

[xiii] An opinion was expressed that money should be used for people to be employed to help with mission for the future generations and not spent on buildings. Answer: Sam and Gemma are now working in the Benefice and engaging with young people in the Benefice. Yann said that other plans are being considered in the Mission Action Plan. He said that Re-ordering is not a magic wand to make people come to Church in the future. It will cost a lot of money. Approximately, £750,000

[xiii] Where is the money coming from? Answer: Church members, grants, Church bodies. There will be no loans. Yann stated that the potential changes could be done in stages.

[xv] A questioner commented that they knew of several Churches that had been re-ordered and that as a result there had been a drop in attendance and less money. St John the Baptist opened a coffee shop in 2012 and by 2014 it had closed. They said that there is already a weekly coffee shop held in the Wickham Institute. Answer: Yann replied that he has visited lots of Churches and some of the Re-ordering projects have been good and others not so good, but a Church needs to be welcoming with toilets, facilities for older people and visitors who come to the Church for weddings and funerals etc. Antony Feltham King added that many of the churches where he had been involved had had very positive outcomes.

[xvi] How will decisions be made for the changes? Answer: There is a formal process for church buildings. Yann stated that he has the Freehold of the Church but final decisions on the proposals will be made by the Diocese. Proposals and plans are put forward to the Diocese – DAC [via the application for a Faculty] by Yann and the PCC.

[xvii] How will people have an influence? Answer: there is a consultation process. Yann said he receives emails, letters and is available to discuss the plans with people. He said that he knows people have strong feelings about the Church but he also gets guidance from the Bishop of Winchester.

[xviii] What will you be doing to create an income? Answer: Yann stated that any changes would be for the benefit of the community and there is no plan to introduce money-making activities. We will not be “making money out of God”.

[xix] Is any of the funding coming from selling land, i.e. the Vicar’s plot? Answer: It is Diocese land. It is a large plot and the proposals might prompt development on the site.

[xx] If there is an increase in the footfall and usage of the Church where are the people going to park? Answer: Parking is definitely an issue. It has been discussed and explored many times by the Parish Council but no clear solution has been found so far. Some events will have an effect on the parking problem.

[xxi] Will the cost of the project be beneficial, especially the expensive underfloor heating. Will it make a difference to the use of the Church? What proportion of the overall project cost was going to be spent on the flooring and heating?

[xxii] “We have a beautiful Church. The joy is how it is now, old fashioned. The children love the Church, Why change it?”

[xxiii] A suggestion was made to have a more limited Re-ordering – more like the one Froyle Church undertook.

4. Progress Report – Andrew Hunter Johnston [AHJ] gave a slide presentation (attached) summarising the history of the Church and outlining some of the options under consideration. However, as Andrew was giving his presentation, people intervened with numerous questions and comments, so it was not possible to have a full and reasoned discussion of all these.
5. The principal points raised are listed below.

[a] What happens if things are discovered when the work is undertaken. Reassurances were given by Antony (architect) that the correct procedures would be followed i.e. photographs taken and proper records kept.

[b] Alternative plans were given to Andrew regarding the location of new toilet facilities. Andrew said that the suggested location had been considered and the advantages and disadvantages set out in the Options Analysis. The alternative plans would be considered and studied by the architect and the committee.

[c] A question was made regarding how stable new modern pews would be. There was a view expressed that new pews would “change the essence” of the building. There were also misgivings regarding any proposed use of chairs as replacements to the existing pews. Various options for pews were still under consideration and Andrew showed examples, including at churches where existing pews had been retained but adapted so they could be moved when desired. No design for modern pews has been selected. It is currently proposed that moveable pews will be permanently situated in the main body of the Church. Chairs will be used only for larger services and events. Most of the time the chairs will be stacked in purpose-built cupboards.

[d] A comment was made that the Wickham Institute was built for the use of the Church.

[e] A person commented on the cost of the Architect used so far.

[f] During Andrew’s explanation of the reasons for considering moving moving and/or replacing the organ he was asked why not have a choir? Andrew asked for volunteers to join a future choir but no one came forward. A comment was made later on regarding the organ that Wilfred Cooper left money in a restricted fund to be used for the improvement of the organ. This will be investigated.

[g] Several people present were not in agreement regarding a proposed move of the existing Victorian font. Yann stated that it was policy now not to have private Baptisms but for Christenings to take place during a service so that the child/person could be “Welcomed into the family of the Church.” In addition he said that the existing font was quite dangerous due to it being positioned on top of a plinth and the area was cramped.

[h] A comment was made that Sir Arthur Bonfield designed the font. He was also responsible for designing electrical pylons. It was suggested that he could be acknowledged as well as Wickham Ogilvie in the Church in the Re-ordering project. Agreed ACTION

[i] In a discussion about the front door, concern was expressed about the swallows in the Church porch. AHJ said that churches with glass doors usually had these engraved with attractive designs so birds were not at risk of flying into them, ,

[j] Yann stated that the report from the Victorian society had come to his attention only this week via a school governor.

[k] How far have we got? Plans have been put on Church of England faculty web site.

[l] How much will it cost? The cost will depend on what is chosen to be done. It is proposed to do the changes in stages. The total cost could be in the region of £750,000.

[m] It was proposed that further open meetings be held in the near future to enable all the options under consideration to be properly explained and discussed. ACTION

[n] How much has the project cost so far? £25,000 half of that has been from donations.

[o] The view was expressed that there is a “wedge” in the Church community, disagreeing with the proposals as well as lots of people in the village community. This is a difficult situation and mirrors the difference in opinion in the country regarding Brexit. Yann acknowledged that communication was a problem and help was needed to overcome this. Apart from Ron, the rest of the committee are from the Church family, however he wanted to hold the meeting tonight in response to the concerns from the Church and village community that came to light during the Summer months. Another opinion was expressed from the floor that the article in the May Parish magazine gave the false impression that the proposals were a “done deal”. Reply: Yann said that this was a misunderstanding; communication is difficult and he would seek to improve this in the future with help. He welcomed people’s views and concerns from the meeting tonight. He stated that there is currently a draft Option Analysis Report available for people to read. He also asked for offers of help from the community in the area of communication.

[p] It was highlighted from the floor that gas boilers are now being phased out and in the near future [2025] no new house building will be fitted with them, therefore consideration should be made if it is possible to install heating that uses a Ground Source Heat Pump [GSHP] as a fuel source. ACTION to be further investigated.

[q] Another comment from the floor stated that, “people wanted to be listened to and not be talked to and the local knowledge is significant.” Yann said he wants the Church to thrive and encouraged people to keep talking, but “please do not do things in an underhand way”. He said that if people were unhappy with conversations with someone on the committee they should move on and talk to someone else and himself.

[q] People wanted to be sure that they could still pray when there was a community event in the Church.

[s] A firm request from the floor asked that the minutes from this meeting and the Re-ordering minutes are put on the Church web site and this will help with communication, **Agreed:**

**ACTION**

## **5. How can you help?**

[i] Read and comment on the draft Option Analysis Report

[ii] Be involved and communicate

[iii] Pray

[iv] Keep Talking

Kay Hunter Johnston spoke about the draft Option Analysis Report that was recently completed and how it took a long time to do. In addition, she commented that she had compiled a 67 page Conservation Management Plan and submitted this to the Diocese. This was a huge undertaking. This highlights the preparation that has been going on over the past three years. Kay said that she wants to “leave a legacy not a liability” and work in the Westcote Chapel needs to be done. **She acknowledged that the underfloor heating options need further consideration. ACTION**

Ron Neil stated that the Church is a Grade 1 listed building and the various Church bodies will not allow anything of importance to be destroyed. He suggested that people can study the draft option analysis report and write their comments.

The Architect was asked to comment and he said that he had “enjoyed listening to people’s views and comments.”

## **6. Next Steps**

[a] Due to time constraints Andrew said that there is a lot more to discuss and that another **open meeting will be held in the near future.**

Yann thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and he closed it with a prayer.