

**The Parish Church of St Mary, Shortlands**

**Future Generations project**

*St. Mary’s Church endeavours to bring the love of God into the everyday lives of the people of Shortlands*

**Our vision**

The Future Generations project aims to upgrade the St Mary’s church building with improved heating and flexible seating, enabling it to be used for a far wider range of community and church activities and benefiting the people of Shortlands for generations to come. This will also help us to provide space for local groups during a future development of the church halls.

Flexible seating will enable our beautiful church to be used for different kinds of worship services. We will be able to host community activities in the church during the week for children and family groups, events of all kinds and special occasions.

Underfloor heating will improve the efficiency and warmth in the church and replace an ageing heating system which is corroded and likely to need further repair. The existing boiler is not as efficient as we will need in the future, especially in meeting new environmental targets.

A well-used church building will enhance our ability to provide practical, pastoral and spiritual support to the wider community in Shortlands.

**Why now?**

We believe that that the church is well located to provide support within the community of Shortlands. Our church is the biggest but least used of the complex of buildings on our site: until 2020 it was being used for less than four hours a week.

Our Hall needs to be refurbished/replaced (the Scout Hut will also need to be replaced soon). Because of the Hall layout, only one group can use it at a time, and there are several times in the week where we have two or three groups who want to use it at the same time. Whilst we do the necessary work to the hall, we will need to use the church to house some of the hall’s activities.

We recently installed a fully functioning kitchen at the back of the church and upgraded the electrics*,* enabling us to open the Community Cafe. The Baby and Toddler group, the Mobility Class and the Bromley Musical Theatre Group, also now meet in church. The success of the Community Café (on average 45 people attend every week), and the positive response to moving the other activities into church has been immense.

Currently our ability to use the church flexibly for a wider variety of activity is limited by the fixed pews and the ageing heating system. Some of the heating pipes have already failed and have had to be repaired and it is likely that we would have to spend more on repairing the system at some point in the future.

**What’s the plan?**

We sought professional advice from experienced church architects who recommended replacing the heating with under-floor heating to achieve a more efficient and effective solution. We have seen this approach being successfully used in a number of other churches where their new heating is not only more comfortable, but also costs less to run than their old systems.

It will be most efficient, practical and cost effective to lay the heating on the existing floor and cover it with ceramic or vinyl tiles. If we do not replace the heating, we will still have the six large, fixed blower cabinets in the Nave which will severely limit how the space could be used.

To replace the heating and relay the floor, we would need to remove the fixed pews. They are fixed because they are heavy and unstable. It would be very difficult to refix the pews without damaging the under-floor heating. Therefore, it is proposed that we replace the pews with moveable seating (including options with and without arms, and with provision for books to be stored). This will allow both traditional seating arrangements and flexible options, whilst providing enhanced comfort and accessibility.

We are consulting on these proposals with our congregation, and we are keen to hear the views of the local community through our Open Day on 9th October. On 24th November 2021 St Mary’s Parochial Church Council will consider a proposal to replace the existing heating and seating with underfloor heating, covered by ceramic or vinyl tiles and to purchase a combination of seating that will allow traditional seating arrangements and flexible options.

**How to get involved?**

If you’d like to get involved in any of St Mary’s activities, do speak to someone at the Open Day, or contact the Parish Office.

We estimate that the works in the church building will cost up to £500,000. We can do some of the work ourselves which will bring the costs down by up to £100,000 and we are making applications to charities that fund similar projects. We have raised over £120,000 to date.

If you would like to make a donation to the Future Generations Project you can do it:

* by bank transfer: Lloyds Bank, sort code 30-84-51, account number 47608468. Please put reference ‘FGP’ on the payment;
* by cheque: make the cheque payable to St Marys Shortlands PCC and write ‘FGP’ on the back;
* or pop into the Church office in normal opening hours and pay by credit/debit card.

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Parish Office: 020 8460 5682

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