

No. 9: The re-ordering project 1994-5

This week I was at a site meeting with the contractors and architect discussing the progress of our current project to repair the south-side roofs and stonework. At the end of the meeting we inspected the work on the clerestory windows and observed their removal for restoration from the high-level scaffolding inside church. I was reminded of the reordering project in 1994-5 and so I thought this month's blog would retell that story, making use of the regular updates written by the then Vicar Ed Roberts and photographs.



Figure 1 - Site meeting July 25th 2017

In April 1994, in the first update, Ed wrote that he believed '*God is making us a **growing** church and a **family** church numbers are increasing as a result we have become an **over-crowded** church. The building ... no longer meets the needs of our present membership, regardless of catering for future growth or serving the community more effectively. Hence the need for some alterations to our premises ... we now [also] meet in a **cold** church ... [as] the heating system is [now] obsolete ... [we must take action] or we shall have an **unusable** church.*'



Figure 2
Ed and I with the architect's model

The demise of the heating system was the trigger for action. The PCC decided that this was far more than simply a chance to improve the heating, but rather a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to totally redesign the interior of the church to make it fit for service in the twenty-first century. There were very limited facilities for catering, meetings and children, just a single wc and yet vast potential space to redevelop. Plans had started being drawn up the previous autumn, once the situation with the heating had become clear. A design competition had been organised and the PCC had already adopted the plans drawn up by architects Peter Wright and Martyn Phelps.

Unusually the plans passed very smoothly through the Diocesan Advisory Committee, whose job it is to scrutinise them in the same way as local councils grant planning permission. In a previously unprecedented manner, they immediately offered their full support and broke into a spontaneous round of applause at the end of the architect's presentation. The whole process was

remarkably rapid with the faculty application presented on July 1st, tenders for the work returned by October 3rd, work commencing on November 1st with a planned completion date in April 1995, just prior to a series of pre-booked weddings.

A full prayer programme was launched to underpin the whole project. A team was established to organise the removal and storage of all the church contents and to

continue the life of the church at the Parish Hall in Marsh. The hall was redecorated by the congregation in preparation of moving the service and all other activities from the church building.



Figure 3 – redecorating the hall was a family affair



Figure 4 - a removal team to out-class Pickfords!



Figure 6-8 - everything had to be removed from church!



When the faculty was granted, the Diocesan Chancellor stated he was 'very envious' of our plans and wished a similar scheme could be carried out at his own church in York. The appeal for the cost of the works was launched on the last Sunday in church, October 23rd 1994.

Then the contractors moved in. The balconies and pews were all removed. Much of the best carved wood panelling was preserved for reuse in the re-ordered interior. The rest of the stripped out woodwork was salvaged.

The defunct, unsafe and unrepairable hot-air heating system was replaced by underfloor heating and radiators. The new balcony, meeting rooms and welcome



Figure 9 - the Parish Hall was made ready for our exile!

area were constructed and the church was rewired and redecorated. The church was a forest of scaffolding and often there were over 30 contractors on site at any one time.



Figure 10 - the interior is completely stripped out



Figure 11 - new steelwork goes in to support the balcony



Figure 12 - construction of the kitchen and meeting rooms begins



Figure 13 - the church begins to fill with scaffolding

By April 1995, an amazing £312,000 had been raised, largely by the congregation, in the form of gifts and loans. This left a short-fall of just over £100,000 which was largely to pay for furniture, carpeting and the tithe.

The reopening service was held on May 14th 1995 and the building and congregation were rededicated by the Bishop of Shrewsbury, the Rt Rev David Hallatt, former Archdeacon of Halifax.

Ed finished the last update before we moved back into church with the following words: *'The alterations have to be seen to be believed. Within a few weeks we shall have premises practically tailor-made for our purposes. How we use them and what God will do with us through them, is a story that has yet to unfold – but what a story it's going to be!'*

The reordering project was a story of God's provision, faithfulness and timing. It was an important chapter in the life of Holy Trinity, marking both the beginning of the new as well as the passing of the old, hence the significance of the Alpha and Omega imagery in the east window. God continues to want to do new works in us, and we can learn much of his ways from his faithfulness in the past.

Andy Barber
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Figure 14 - you could have another whole church up there!

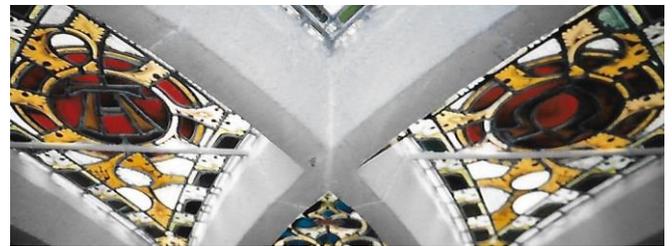


Figure 15 - view of the east window from the scaffolding April 1995