



April 2021

Consolidating our building resources

It is my view that the time has come for us to consolidate our resources by reducing the number of buildings we own and manage so that we can properly invest in ministry for the future of St Anne's in the next decade and beyond.

Investing in the future

1. Re-order St Anne's church	£800,000
2. Re-furbish church hall	£250,000
3. Three year part time funding for Families & Children's Worker	£50,000

TOTAL for Future Foundations project £1.1 m

1. Finances

Currently, we own and manage three buildings - the church, the church hall, and St Francis. We cream off any profits from hiring out the two halls (this is about £15k a year from both buildings) to pay towards the running costs of the church. There is no contingency money set aside for investment into either of our halls. We run the halls in a 'crisis management' style - just paying for urgent repairs with the minimum of outlay. We ensure that our legal obligations are met (fire extinguishers, electrical safety, licenses for Public Performing Rights, food hygiene, insurance etc). And we have considerable utility bills to pay and contracts to negotiate for all three buildings. Last summer, the roof of St Francis had issues and we received two quotations both in the region of £10,000. We have not gone ahead with this work. St Francis was built in the 1960s; there are several areas of the building that contain asbestos which makes working on or repairing these areas extremely expensive and problematic. One of these areas is the roof. We sorted the leak on the foyer roof and have cleared drains and replaced downspouts. St Anne's church hall is badly in need of major investment. It needs a new heating system, the windows all need replacing, the toilet block needs improving as does the entrance door which does not meet guidelines on disability access. We badly need a parish office to provide administrative support to our clergy and our ministry - a central place where all records are safely stored and from which volunteers and staff can work with decent office facilities (desks, phone and internet access and computers). We have asked the architect to draw up plans for major improvements to save this Victorian building for future benefit to the community and make better use of the grounds for children from our church school. Estimates for this work are in the region of £250,000.

We have managed to weather the Coronavirus storm financially when it comes to **every day expenses** - we are just about keeping our heads above water paying our regular bills. But we do not have enough money set aside to fund works to the two halls and the church building. **The truth is that we cannot afford to own and run three buildings.** We do not make enough money

to look after them properly now and we will not be able to meet the new legislation requirements coming soon (see Environmental issues).

2. People resources

Looking after three buildings takes a lot of people's time. While you have been shielding at home since March 2020, our hard working church wardens have visited each building every week to check on them. I have met with the wardens and hall managers Vicky Gilbert and Lynda Ronan several times to go through the Coronavirus Risk Assessments policies for each of our buildings. This is time consuming work and a heavy responsibility because people's lives are at stake. We must get this right; we have a legal obligation. ***Do not underestimate the workload that running three buildings takes. It takes hours of our time.*** The bulk of my weekly meeting with the church wardens is discussing building matters. Because of the pressure on our finances, recently we have all been working hard re-negotiating our energy contracts in all three buildings in an effort to save the parish money. We have set up online accounts and challenged inaccurate bills. We have saved St Anne's several thousand pounds but it takes time and energy. Few volunteers from church are willing to devote time to this work. I am very grateful to the work of our wardens; hall managers Vicky and Lynda, and our church treasurer. We all do our best to save the parish money. The workload on us is considerable. When so much of my time is invested in running buildings, I am not available to support the growth of people's faith and offer them the support and resources they deserve.

3. Ministry or hospitality?

I am aware of the history of St Francis and the desire to meet the needs of people at this end of the parish. Many years have been spent building up Christian worship and ministry in this place with mixed results. Because numbers dwindled, regular Sunday worship stopped at St Francis some years ago. In the thinking and understanding of some people, hanging on to St Francis and keeping it open provides some hope that Christian worship will one day return. This is not my belief. As Einstein famously quoted, the definition of stupidity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result. This parish has invested heavily into St Francis over many years and yet independent worship and ministry is not apparent. It is time to acknowledge this and move on.

Two important food poverty projects currently use St Francis - a food bank and food waste reduction scheme. The food bank is managed by Trafford South Food bank - it has five centres in the area and people come from all over to collect vouchers and food. The number of people using the food bank at St Francis currently each week is about 12. We would happily offer to host the food bank in our church hall.

The Bread and Butter Project did continue to run through out last year even when community buildings such as St Francis were closed. Food was distributed from their van.

Neither of these projects makes a contribution to the running costs of St Francis.

We have no control over the running of either of these projects - as we learnt when the food bank closed for the bulk of 2020. We are not stakeholders in either the Food Bank or The Bread and Butter Thing. They are both independent charities. So we cannot build a theology of caring for human need from St Francis based on projects that could move off site, relocate, or close at a moment's notice without any reference to us. ***These are wonderful projects but they are not our projects.***

Food items donated for the food bank and left at St Anne's Church do not go to St Francis; they are taken to the Trafford South depot for distribution to the five projects in our area.

Instead of trying to sustain a whole building which is mostly used for social events (children's parties) and activities such as line dancing and karate, it would be a far more effective use of our time and people resources to consider launching Christian worship or outreach in other local buildings. For instance, we could launch an after school Messy Church at Lime Tree School or an Alpha Course (a Christian basics course) in a local pub or cafe. **Ministry does not have to stop if we don't have a building.** There are plenty of good examples of this style of outreach by churches across the country. It frees us up to focus on the important things.

4. Families & Children's Worker

The PCC has accepted in principle the employment of a part time Families & Children's Worker at St Anne's to develop our work with children and their carers. The person employed in this post would support our Sunday worship for children; develop relationships with families coming to us for Christenings; and strengthen connections with our church school. If we could fund more than a part time post, our Families & Children's Worker could also work with our church toddler group and youth groups helping to make meaningful connections between these groups and faith development and church attendance.

Many churches in our deanery employ a Families & Children's Worker (St Mary's Magdalene Ashton, St Mary's Bowdon, St Peter's Hale, St Alban's, Broadheath, All Saint's, Hale Barns) because it is recognised that specialised skills are required to make connections with families and build faith in ways relevant to this age group.

We are blessed with a church school. ***I know we could do so much more than we are at present to work with the children at our church school and their parents to deepen faith.***

But we need the funds to start this project - we could allocate £50k from the sale of St Francis to fund an initial three years of this post. The expectation would be that as this work expanded, so would the giving to enable us to fund this in the longer term. You have heard me discuss being stakeholders in other charities (or not as above regards food poverty projects at St Francis): our church school is an example of where we are a stakeholder. We have a clearly defined legal responsibility to our church school to provide foundation governors and support the Christian values of education at St Anne's C of E Primary School. I want to do everything I can to fulfil this obligation.

5. Environmental issues

You will have heard that the government wants all of us to reduce our carbon footprint and the Church of England is taking this seriously. It has pledged to be carbon zero by 2030. This means we need to move away from gas heating in all our buildings. It means we need to vastly improve the insulation in our buildings so they do not waste so much heat energy and it means we need to install LED lighting to also cut down on energy consumption. All of these things are part of our care for God's creation (see Marks of Mission below).

This work is crucial because energy costs make up the bulk of our utility bills.

Obviously investing in more energy efficient heating and lighting systems and reducing energy loss (for instance, through single pane windows) will cost money.

Did you know that there is a 7 degree difference in the heating temperature between the floor level and roof level in the church hall? All the heat generated rises into the huge roof space leaving the floor level cold.

We hope to explore installing solar panels on the south facing roof of the church and/or consider geothermal heating as an energy source across both the hall and church.

Wouldn't it be good if we put climate change higher on our agenda, cut down on the number of buildings we own, and make much better use of the ones we retain investing in decent, efficient energy systems so that we practise what we preach?

During lockdown, we have all been made aware how vital fresh air is, how much we all need access to the outdoors and the calming and healing properties of being in and working with nature. Surely we could improve the landscaping of the church field, and involve our school in this, so that this resource better serves us and our community?

6. Our Victorian church hall

The other Victorian buildings on the site of the church field have been pulled down because they deteriorated so much. We do not want this to happen to this much loved building. The hall and the church field are much appreciated by children and parents from our church school as well as others in our local community and of course church members. The wardens, Lynda who manages the hall, and our architect believe it is worth saving and could be even more useful to us with wise investment.

We are considering the future of the hall at the same time as we plan the re-ordering of the church interior so that we can consider how we use both buildings and how this might change and develop in the future.

QUESTIONS:

- 1. How will we fund investment in our three buildings and not just urgent repairs if we do not scale down the number of buildings in our care?**
- 2. Churches need to grow just to stand still numerically. Where will the people resources come from to grow Christian ministry at St Anne's if we do not invest in a Families & Children's Worker? Who is going to connect with young people and help grow their faith?**
- 3. The bulk of the use of St Francis (over 85%) is for social and sporting activities. Is it our role to provide a hospitality venue for instance for children's parties, line dancing and karate classes?**

Timescale

We will share thoughts and pray, consult and discuss openly our reactions and opinions about this proposal. The PCC will vote on it at its July meeting. Please let them know your thoughts on the matter (and please answer the questions above as clearly as you can). The PCC has a duty to act always in the best interests of St Anne's Church. This is made clear in the Charity Commission guidelines. The timing of this decision is important - if we sell the entire plot we purchased in 1961, we will get a much better return than if we sell one plot now (the site of the former scout hall) and the St Francis Centre in several years time for instance.

If the PCC does approve the sale of St Francis, nothing will happen on site for at least a year. The hall will remain open and used by groups and they will be given plenty of notice of our

intention to sell so that they can relocate as necessary. It will take us more than 12 months to negotiate a sale (not before September 2022) with or without planning permission.

Dates of key decisions:

Saturday 22 May - meet the architect; put your questions to the team about funding the Future Foundations project

July PCC meeting - vote on proposal

End of July - take back possession of entire site; tell Trafford Council of our intention to sell. Invite their response as per covenant (Trafford has one month to reply).

September 2021: Begin process of getting outline planning permission for whole site; negotiate with developers to sell site (this process is likely to take 18 months).

January 2023: Work starts re-ordering church interior (earliest this could happen). We move out of the church for a least six months to allow the builders to work; worship will take place in our hall.

2024/2025: Work starts re-ordering the hall.

Conclusion:

The Church of England has issued a report called 'Coming Home' encouraging parishes to look for opportunities to release land for housing to solve the country's housing crisis. It is my belief that this is what we should do with the whole site at St Francis.

I have wrestled with the question of how to fund re-ordering and refurbishment for more than a year. **Doing nothing is not an option.** Buildings deteriorate. It is my prayerful view that we must care properly for the buildings and resource on our main site (the church, the hall and church field); invest in a Families & Children's Worker to grow our ministry to children; and reflect a care for God's creation by taking seriously the impact of climate change and reduce our energy consumption.

The Revd Canon Alison Cox
Vicar of St Anne's, Sale

Notes:

The Five Marks of Mission:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the kingdom.
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human needs by loving service.
4. To transform unjust structures of society.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation.