

St Mary's Church, Pembridge

CROSSING
THE
THRESHOLD

Analysis of questionnaires following the
consultation day, 26th March 2010

Introduction

The present church dates from 1320 although there is clear evidence of an earlier church on the site. Indeed there are several re-used Roman roof tiles in the east wall suggesting occupation at a very early date.

The last time any major work was carried out was in 1908 when pews were removed. Pembridge was very far-sited in doing this at that time, making the building what it is today.

There is general concern across the country about the use of church buildings and particular concern in rural areas which have many churches and low populations.

A number of the members of Pembridge PCC attended the 'Crossing the Threshold' conference in Hereford and, as a result, decided that positive action needed to be taken to ensure the future of Pembridge church and maintain its role as the centre of the community.

Background to the survey

It has long been felt that the building itself needs to be better used and the facilities it offers brought up to modern standards. For example, the only water on the site is a cold tap on the outside wall of the south east corner of the chancel. Lavatory facilities comprise a single temporary Portaloo while the building itself is extremely cold (often called 'the fridge') and very expensive to heat (approx £50 per day at current prices). The number of services has also dwindled due to the increase in the number of parishes the Rector has in her care.

On the plus side it is a magnificent building, Grade I listed and with excellent acoustics and the largest meeting space in the area. The diocese is also more proactive in helping parishes undertake projects and Wendy Coombey, who was appointed by the diocese to help with such projects has been an invaluable source of help and advice.

The Pembridge Parish Plan identified a need for a Heritage Centre in the village and this was one particular area which the PCC felt the church could engage in. After looking at examples of how other churches had approached this challenge, particularly Almeley, Eardisley, Yarpole and Peterchurch, it was decided to carry out a formal investigation into what could be done to make the building safe for future generations, provide new uses and opportunities while always maintaining the integrity of the building and providing for the spiritual needs of the community.

A meeting with representatives of local groups – the Parish Council, Pembridge Amenity Trust, school staff and governors as well as individuals who are active in village life were invited to a meeting at the school to hear a presentation about the plans and to sound out their opinions.

This took place on the 18th February and, it was agreed by everyone that the project should be taken to the next stage.

Consultation Day 26th March 2010.

The 26th March was chosen for the consultation day when all were invited to come into the church, look at the building, see various displays, listen to presentations and then complete a questionnaire and comments form.

The building was emptied of furniture as far as possible and everyone was very impressed by the magnificent space this created. Two presentations, chaired by the Rector were given. The first at 13.30 with the Archdeacon, Rev Nick Read and ??? who stood in at the last minute for Wendy Coombey. The evening presentation took place at 19.00 when Roger Phillips, chairman of Herefordshire Council joined the speakers.

The presentations were well attended and people came throughout the day. There was a good cross section from the community and their ages ranged from primary school pupils to villages in their eighties. The displays were left up for some time afterwards and further comments and questionnaires were revived after the event. Copies of the questionnaires and the leaflet produced for the event are attached. A visiting coach party were also asked to make comments and their input makes an interesting and worthwhile addition to the results from a visitors perspective.

Presentation Pack

A pack was prepared for the day and handed out to people as they came in. It contained:

- A leaflet with details of the project.
- A questionnaire.
- A blank outline of the church interior for people to fill in their ideas.
- A pencil

These were presented in a cardboard folder.

The Results.

In total 59 questionnaires were returned of which 13 were from the coach party. Also seven drawings were submitted from the outline supplied in the pack. A summary of the detailed figures is attached.

Section one – Facilities

The two top items identified by almost everyone were heating and toilets. Locally heating was the top priority with 96% while the coach party, perhaps understandably, rated toilets as their top priority (92%).

Next highlighted was the need for flexible power and lighting (81%) closely followed by kitchen facilities with a small majority favouring a cold kitchen (80%) over hot (73%).

Flexible lighting and lighting the paths both generated a positive response (63%) while the lowest categories were storage and separate rooms (both 53%).

The largest 'No' result was for separate rooms with 15% being against the idea.

Section one individual comments

... seeing such a lovely open space in the church I think separate rooms would spoil it.

... high tech IT facilities, video + audio

... roof panels

... disabled access/handrails. At least some seating (comfortable) for elderly/disabled

... baby changing

... broadband connection, comfortable seating

... resource centre

... improved electrical power points in number and voltage. Screen or semi screen to screen off chancel partly if not fully. Screen for use in services and also possibly films/talks.

... Large car park. Broadband capability. First floor offices. First floor flat.

... More church activities. Study Groups. Daily service

Section two – uses

Page three of the questionnaire dealt with possible uses for the building and the top three identified are Performances, support for versatile use (both 85%) closely followed by the idea of a Heritage/Visitor Centre (83%).

Next were rated exhibitions (78%) and tourism info point (73%).

Highest response in the 'No' category were internet café (14%), library (12%) and café (10%). Several respondents also commented that day centre and youth centre should be available at the village hall rather than church.

Section two - individual comments

... Olde Steppes has registered as tourist info point & sign is on it's way. Youth centre – is someone prepared to run this?

... Flicks in the sticks. Post Office. Children's drop in area.

... Youth centre – would it be used?

.... Heritage visitor centre – XXXX

... Playgroup. Post Office

... Small business office units. Living accommodation.

... Internet café – security? Shop. Depends what happens to Olde Steppes

... Drop in centre for the elderly – is this at the village hall? Internet café – poss in a small way/ access point. Multi purpose room for Sunday school + smaller functions than the full body of the church.

... Community support and info centre ie. Carers, pensioners, travel and transportation advice & leaflets, local craft/art centre & sales.

... cinema. Exercise classes. Cooking classes/demos.

... Uses that are not offered or do not conflict with those of village hall.

... Co-operative community produce and craft shop. Tourist centre to include gift shop.

... Yes please – all of them.
 ... Information. Healing and well being. Alternative therapy (rent yielding).
 ... Cafe – may cause competition for local businesses
 ... Cafe – think about businesses already in village
 ... Carpet bowling. Farmers market.
 ... No catering. Conferences. Shop as you go out a la Alton Towers
 ... Youth Centre – that would need a lot of thought and enthusiasm. Library – particularly local interest books, walking guides, maps. Café – the village already now has a tea shop. Internet café – could the CAP computers be relocated here. The school doesn't seem to be the most sensible/accessible place because of holidays and other times when general public can't gain access to the school.
 ... Library – what sort? Courses U3A WEA?

Section three – help

The final section was an appeal for specialist help . General manual was, understandably, the largest with 20% offering their services, 14% were keen to assist with fund-raising with secretarial (10%) and publicity (7%) completed by one person who can help in the legal category.

Section three – individual comments

... Exhibitions – if compatible
 ... Exhibitions – in tandem with the gallery. Performance – perhaps contact music colleges, organise series of concerts and evening picnics. Practice areas for those studying music?
 ... Multi faith. Innovative practical IT/Education and broadcasting
 ... Photo Voltaics on roof. Sunday school area. Set up friends of the church to help raise money (past and present members of the church).
 ... Horticultural events/markets. Indoor games – carpet bowls. Flix in the sticks.
 ... Shop.
 ... Teaching music. Spiritual Centre. Band
 ... Drama club. Choir for community. Ceilidh. Wedding receptions. Kids parties. Holiday things for kids. Craft stalls & talks. Parents helping and older people
 ... Room available for yoga etc. Room to hire for parties.
 ... Seminars. Guest speakers.
 ... Badminton. Table tennis. Meeting room.
 ... Local craft fairs.
 ... Fund raising stall for church eg. Recycled cards, Christmas cards of nativity from church window, other views of villages + village merchandise.
 ... As long as the use is maintained for church services ODF all sizes + beauty + tranquillity + peace + spirituality of the space is maintained – commented on by parishioners and visitors.
 ... Flicks in the Sticks. Pilates. Yoga
 ... Pembridge already has:- village hall, shop and café... Farmers market. Post office
 ... Fantastic area for performances
 ... Moveable gymnasium equipment. Library book exchange.
 ... More church activities. Study groups. Daily services. Theatre groups. Choir, music, organ, talks, philosophy, special interest groups.
 ... Flicks in the Sticks. Fashion show (you have a good catwalk)
 ... Flicks in the Sticks

General comments

From the coach party.

... Church Hall in the village should provide these (drop in centre, youth centre, internet café)
... Lovely church - maybe glass sectioned gift shop/Christian book shop at the back of church.
... We have a similar set up, used for group activities and coffee mornings. Works very well.

From locals

... Excellent idea to use the church for the community. It would be nice to keep the church as much as currently is; eg pews etc.
... The church directly competes with the village hall. The key attraction is history and dramatic architecture. The church needs to be warmer then find a use in it's own right. Climbing wall, crèche, internet, something that allows you to relive history; set up interpretive exhibitions is Shropshire Hills Centre. These focus on drawing people in through activity and interaction. Marion Blockley is a nationally recognised expert who may be able to help. It really depends on what the objective is.
... Would like to see all the energy come from renewable sources. Other uses should be compatibly with the present use and not likely to cause damage. Please remember it will have to be looked after.
... Re fund-raising. There are too many very small churches. Close them – save on maintenance etc. - arrange transport to 'central' larger church (NB. I do not go to church!)
... It is important not to undermine businesses in the village but to work with them – eg. Gallery, artists could demonstrate work in progress in the church while exhibiting in the gallery.
... Collaboration is the key local/regional/national. World class centre of innovation and worship.
... much is possible.
... The church lends itself to a Heritage/Education/Information Centre. Also a performance centre – lack of a suitable site in north Herefordshire. The village is also crying out for a café esp. in the tourist season. It could act as a real hub for the village. Need to provide area good for peaceful worship eg; Sunday school, meditation, prayer, Taize, services, quiet area. Used to generate power and excellent idea
... Solar panels a good idea.
... I think this is a very exciting project. Although I don't know what specialist skills I can offer I would like to be involved and to help in any way I can.
... More enthusiasm has to be generated.
... Open to all ideas. Beautiful treasure of a building. Lets use it ...
... I have experience of involvement in a local youth club (9-13 yrs) – this has had to be closed (twice) due to bad behaviour. Very sad but hard to ignore. A co-operative shop for excess produce, home made crafts and other small items would be nice – and would tie in with prospective allotments!
... I have contacts with the council and PCT in areas of physical activity + healthy eating + would be very happy to help setting up exercise classes, cooking clubs, healthy lifestyle talks/demos.
... I think it is important to provide, within the church, things that the village lacks so not to tread on anyone's toes!!

... This beautiful building appreciated by parishioners, the people of Herefordshire and visitors worldwide must be preserved. It is our responsibility to hand it on with it's history and spirituality.

Alterations need to be sensitive to ensure light is maintained and the use of the body of the church for large services. The use of glass partitions and open higher floor at the back of the church may allow this eg. All Saints, Hereford. But access can be an issue. Double glazing of plain glass to prevent draughts, imaginative use of screens and improved heating etc and improved, comfortable seating.

... I wondered if it might be worth considering having the chairs on three sides of a square in the front half of the church, instead of people sitting at the back and leaving the vicar isolated at the front.

... I'm very interested in the future of the village shop as a co-operative village venture.

... Height of the building would allow some first floor installation for use as small business offices or living accommodation – either of which would generate income to help fund the church maintenance and community activities.

... The village is such a rich learning resource for the children with the black & white buildings, river & church. We are lucky as it is on our doorstep. An education room could promote the village as the perfect destination for school groups to visit. Pembridge schoolchildren could write information packs.

... Wedding service with reception in church after.

... Not local, so can't offer specific help. However, I have performed in community plays a village church and could certainly see the flexibility this church could present for similar undertakings.

... You need to be very sensitive to facilities that already exist in the village.

... Sorry I can't be much use as I'm in my eighties, but I think these ideas are excellent.

... 1. Not fair to be a café as Sally has one in the village already. 2. Olde Steppes are having an info centre to keep shop viable. 3. We have a village hall for youth activities.

... It all depends: is there a real need to be filled? Are there people keen enough to help over the long term?

Conclusion

The comments and statistics shown in this report clearly indicate a need for action in order to allow the church to continue its role as the centre of the community, as it has been for many hundreds of years.

There appears to be universal agreement that a new heating system, lavatories etc. are prerequisite in any project and, whatever work is carried out, must be done sympathetically and maintain the church's main role of caring for the spiritual wellbeing of the village - stated as a first priority in all presentations and leaflets. There were also a small number of comments regarding possible conflict with existing businesses and organisation. From the meetings I have attended it has always been stressed that any project will work with the community and add to services offered rather than detract from existing businesses.

Robert Anderson
July 2010

Statistics from questionnaires

26 March 2010

Total questionnaires general	46
Total questionnaires coach party	13
Total All	59

		general	coach	total%	general%	coach	% total
Page 2 heating	yes	44	11	55	96	85	93
	no	0	0	0	0	0	0
kitchen cold	yes	38	9	47	83	69	80
	no	2	0	2	4	0	3
kitchen hot	yes	34	9	43	74	69	73
	no	1	1	2	2	8	3
toilets	yes	41	12	53	89	92	90
	no	0	0	0	0	0	0
separate rooms	yes	29	2	31	63	6	53
	no	6	3	9	13	23	15
Power points lighting	yes	38	10	48	83	77	81
	no	1	0	1	2	0	2
flexible lighting	yes	31	6	37	67	46	63
	no	2	1	3	4	8	5
exterior path lights	yes	31	6	37	67	46	63
	no	3	0	3	7	0	5
storage	yes	30	1	31	65	8	53
	no			0	0	0	0
Page 3 day centre elderly	yes	30	9	39	65	69	66
	no	2	2	4	4	15	7
youth centre	yes	26	7	33	57	54	56
	no	3	1	4	7	8	7
tourism info point	yes	37	6	43	80	46	73
	no	2	2	4	4	15	7
heritage/vistor centre	yes	40	9	49	87	69	83
	no	0	0	0	0	0	0
library	yes	27	3	30	59	23	51
	no	5	2	7	11	15	12
cafe	yes	26	12	38	57	92	64
	no	5	1	6	11	8	10
internet café	yes	22	1	23	48	8	39
	no	4	4	8	9	31	14
education room	yes	24	4	28	52	31	47
	no	4	0	4	9	0	7
exhibitions	yes	38	8	46	83	62	78
	no	0	0	0	0	0	0
performances	yes	40	10	50	87	77	85
	no			0	0	0	0
support versatile use	yes	38	12	50	83	92	85
	no			0			0
Page 4 fundraising	yes	8		8	17	0	14
	no	4		4	9	0	7
publicity	yes	5		5	11	0	8
	no	4		4	9	0	7
legal	yes	1		1	2	0	2
	no	4		4	9	0	7
secretarial	yes	6		6	13	0	10
	no	4		4	9	0	7
general manual	yes	12		12	26	0	20
	no	4		4	9	0	7
architect	yes	0		0	0	0	0
	no	4		4	9	0	7
electrician	yes	0		0	0	0	0
	no	4		4	9	0	7
plumber	yes	0		0	0	0	0
	no	4		4	9	0	7
builder	yes	0		0	0	0	0
	no	4		4	9	0	7

Poster to
promote the
consultation day
26 March 2010

ST MARY'S Pembridge

Community Project - **Crossing the Threshold**

Friday 26th March from 12.30pm



The last time that anything major was done to the church building was in 1908 when the pews were removed.

Pembridge was very far-sighted in doing this at that time, making the building what it is today.

We feel that now is the right time to be looking again at the building.

We are taking all the furniture out of the church for the day so you can see the wonderful space.

The Church will be open from 12.30pm with a formal presentation by a four member panel at 1.30pm and again at 7.00pm

You can question the panel after the presentation and of any member of the PCC throughout the day.

Information and displays will be on show throughout the afternoon and we will be asking for your views in a variety of ways during the day.

Come and share your ideas.

Soup will be available from 12.30pm and further refreshments will be available throughout the day

We look forward to seeing you.

Bring your ideas for making the best use of the church in the future.

Survey form
produced
for the
consultation day
26 March 2010

Can you offer expertise and general help?

Fundraising	YES	NO
Publicity	YES	NO
Legal matters	YES	NO
Secretarial	YES	NO
General manual	YES	NO
Qualified - architect	YES	NO
- electrician	YES	NO
- plumber	YES	NO
- builder	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO

Additional comments

Name:

Contact Details:

Thank you very much for your response, which will help us to plan the project to cater for the needs of the village and secure funding support.

ST MARY'S Pembridge

Community Project

Crossing the Threshold

Consultation Day

Friday 26th March

from 12.30pm

Questionnaire

Your ideas and comments are important.

Please respond by 17th April 2010.

Return completed forms to the labelled boxes in the church.

St Mary's church is the largest community building in the parish of Pembridge, but it is only used for about one hour a week, mainly for Sunday services. It is not particularly well suited even for its current use, being very cold in winter, and having very few additional facilities. We are looking for ways to retain the church as a centre for worship as well as make the church more widely available for other community uses.

This is an opportunity for us all to help create an additional community facility within Pembrokeshire. Please complete this form, and include any extra comments in the space on the back. There is a separate sheet showing a plan of the church building, which you can use to sketch out your ideas as to how the space could be used.

Possible use of the new community facility
Please circle yes or no.

Add other suggestions in the blank spaces.

Facilities

Please circle answer

Improved heating	YES	NO
Kitchen suitable for cold meals	YES	NO
Kitchen suitable for hot meals	YES	NO
Toilets with disabled toilet	YES	NO
Separate room areas	YES	NO
Powerpoints for performance or exhibition lighting	YES	NO
Flexible lighting	YES	NO
Exterior pathway lighting	YES	NO
Storage	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO

Specific uses

Drop in centre for elderly	YES	NO
Youth centre	YES	NO
Tourism information point	YES	NO
Heritage/visitor centre	YES	NO
Library	YES	NO
Cafe	YES	NO
Internet cafe	YES	NO
Education room	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO

General

Exhibitions	YES	NO
Performance e.g. music, drama	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO
	YES	NO

Do you support the adaption of the church building to allow more versatile and wider use by the community?	YES	NO
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Leaflet produced
to promote the
consultation day
26 March 2010



The Vicar's Vestry

ST MARY'S Pembridge
Community Project
Crossing the Threshold
Consultation Day
Friday 26th March
from 12.30pm



View from the Flower Vestry door to the west

The last time that anything major was done to the church building was in 1908 when the pews were removed.

Pembridge was very far-sighted in doing this at that time, making the building what it is today.

We feel that now is the right time to be looking again at the building.



The "Lady Chapel" and beyond the organ and chancel



The Vicar's View!



The Diocese

There is general concern across the country about the use of church buildings. Maybe over the next 20 or 30 years churches already in a financially tricky situation will have to face questions about their future.

Some churches have in the past become residences as they have failed to face the situation in time.

Churches need to be used more. For example, in medieval times the market would have been held in the church. Beyond the rood screen was the domain of the priest while the nave belonged to the community.

There have been a number of successful projects both large and small in the diocese.

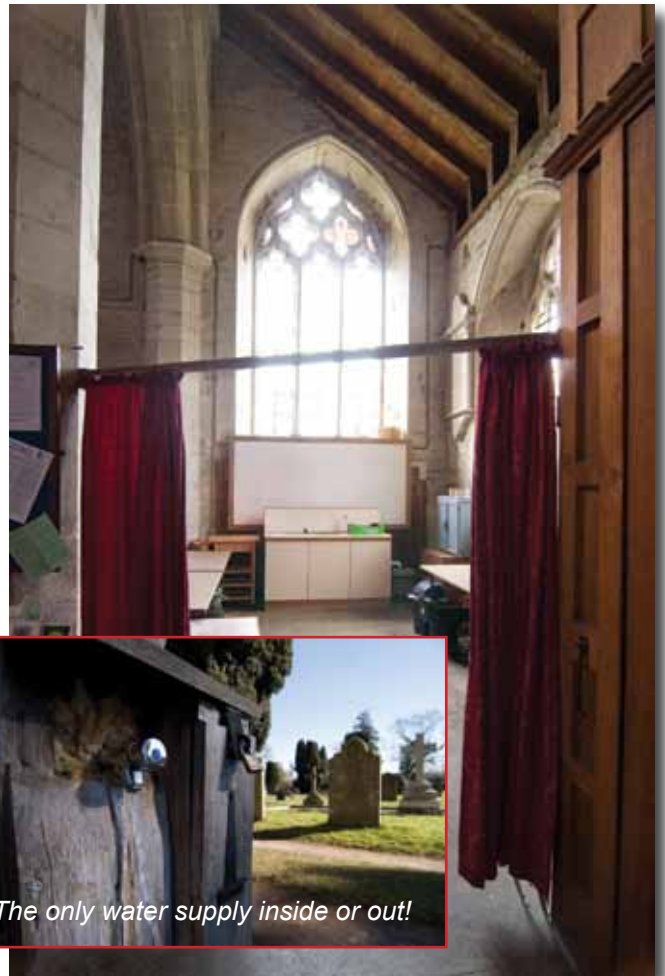
Almeley and Eardisley have completed smaller projects, while Yarpole and Peterchurch have completed larger ones. Of course probably the best known project is that of the café in All Saints, Hereford.

The diocese is now more proactive in helping parishes to undertake projects. 5 years ago,

Wendy Coombey was appointed by the Diocese to help with this and she is keen to give us a helping hand. She has already helped us access a grant of £2000 to go towards research and project development work.

There are grants available for projects in which the church and the community come together.

Crossing the Threshold – a major conference was held in Hereford and a number from the PCC attended.



The only water supply inside or out!

The "Kitchen" (water has to be brought in from a single cold tap outside at the back of the church).



The "Flower Vestry" behind the organ



View of the Chancel facing north



The last major work on the church was carried out in 1908/9



Evidence of the work carried out in 1908



Copy of engraving dated Oct 5th, 1843 in the vestry showing the church as it was with pews

What sparked us into action?

What sparked us in to action was the perceived need in the Parish Plan for Pembridge to have a Heritage Centre. We questioned whether we could engage in that need.

We feel that there is something that we can offer the community – something that doesn't duplicate, but compliment what we already have in the village.

Something that, hopefully, will encourage more visitors to Pembridge – a place to visit.



The "facilities!"

Our reaction

We are aware that we are custodians of a wonderful building.

Our first concern is to provide to the spiritual needs of the community and maintain the integrity of the building. At this time we do not have a fully furnished plan.

There are obviously basic needs in any community building – adequate kitchen and toilet facilities and adequate heating. Pembridge Church has been referred to as "The Fridge"!

We want to ask the local community what they feel their needs are.

We are having this Consultation Day on March 26th to open the church to the community and give everyone a chance to come up with ideas.

March 26th

The church has been cleared of most of the furniture to enable everyone to see the space. Everyone is being given an information pack, including a questionnaire, which will allow us to gather their comments and ideas in a structured way.

There are two formal presentations - 12.30pm & 7.00pm. This presentation will be given by a number of speakers, to include the Archdeacon, Rev Nick Read, and someone from a successfully completed project, as well as Roger Phillips. It will be chaired by Wendy Coombey.

There will be a Q&A session after each presentation when people will have the chance to raise questions with the speakers. Refreshments will be available during the day.



View of the font as you enter the church

Following on from the day.

A working party made up of some of the PCC and some of the local community will be formed to work through the information gathered from this consultation process and come up with a plan for the benefit of the community and the church.

We realise that initial reaction from all quarters will raise all sorts of questions. This is one of the reasons why we are holding this consultation day to allow a two way dialogue of ideas and opinions.

We feel that this could be an exciting project and set the church up for the next 100 years.

We thank you for taking part and for your contribution.



View from the Lady Chapel



The Lady Chapel

