

# St Mary's Church, Ferndown - BEACON PROJECT

*Building a Place of Belonging - Shining the Light of Christ*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

St Mary's is a Church of England church located in the heart of Ferndown in Dorset. For 80 years we have been at the centre of Ferndown life, providing a place of welcome and worship.

The present church building began in 1933 and has been steadily built to become a large cruciform place of worship. In 1982-1983 a hall with kitchen, side rooms, office and toilets was built next to the church and in 2002 the kitchen was modernised and extended. The latest addition was phase 1 of a design which included a proposed church lounge linking the front of the hall foyer to the north wall of the church. Since then a number of building project ideas have been researched.

## 2. WHY A BUILDING PROJECT IS NEEDED

St Mary's Church enjoys its central location in the town, and has the fourth largest church attendance and membership in Salisbury Diocese. Average Sunday attendance includes 330 adults and 60 children and teenagers. We presently have 470 adult members on our Church Electoral Roll. Due to our growing membership, in October 2013 we will launch a 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday congregation called "Breakfast Church", meeting at 9am in our hall.

The sheer number of people on Sunday alone necessitates breathing space for the flow of hundreds of people from one space to another as well as to provide welcome and hospitality. Part of the present hall is used on Sunday morning to offer coffee but this space can only accommodate 70 people comfortably, whereas we need to cater for 200-300 at any one time, across the whole site. Sunday School groups also meet in the hall and side rooms on Sunday morning.

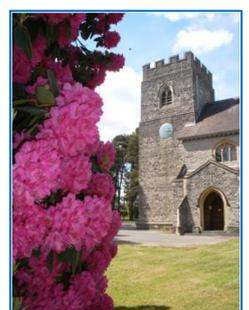
It is important to say that Sundays are just one small part of the thriving sense of community that exists every day of the week at St Mary's site. The church, hall, adjoining rooms and kitchen are extensively used by external hirers and community groups as well as by church members. All who book our premises like our location and the friendly welcome we offer to all. We often have to turn away regular bookings and events, and our own church events also become squeezed into a busy schedule.

Present and future demands on our facilities therefore exceed our current capacity. In addition, we long to engender a greater sense of community in Ferndown by offering top rate facilities in an attractive and welcoming setting. The concept of two large spaces joining the front of the present hall to the north wall of the church is simple. Primarily these flexible foyer spaces are needed to help service the requirements of the events that meet in the hall, rooms and church. These new spaces, together with enlarged meeting rooms and an improved church office, would help the whole site function more effectively and efficiently. The larger spaces (foyers) would also become unique meeting places in their own right, showing that the Church is there for all people, and demonstrating the love of God.

## 3. COMMUNITY AND CHURCH USES

Our desire in building The Beacon Project is to build a place of belonging and community within the heart of Ferndown. Buildings need to meet real needs, both present and future, and we have kept this in the forefront of our thinking from the start.

We would now like to explore the ways we are already meeting needs, how these needs might develop, and why the new spaces and facilities would be invaluable.





### A place for the young

We are dedicated to the vision that St Mary's is a place of belonging for everyone and as part of this we place a high importance on ensuring that children and young people feel valued, secure and encouraged. In order to do this we must provide an environment where young people will feel welcome, relaxed and free to express themselves.

- The number of children attending our **Sunday groups** is increasing steadily and the groups are out-growing the spaces currently available to them.
- Our monthly **Sparkles** group for parents and their young children is also very well attended but due to the other booking which takes place afterwards there is always a rush to tidy things away. Most importantly there is limited time and space for parents and church helpers to continue those vital, helpful conversations which always begin at the end of the main activity.
- We also run two **mid-week youth clubs** and two **groups for teenagers on Sundays** which would benefit greatly from the improved proposed facilities.
- We are conscious that there is very limited in-door **social space in Ferndown for young people** in particular and we are keen to open our doors to them to enjoy being together in a safe and relaxing environment.
- We also wish to build on our good **links with local schools** by providing facilities for both the children and staff. A head teacher from a Ferndown School has already expressed interest in bringing school children to the church foyer for drinks and cakes as a reward, which is something we would be delighted to accommodate.

### A place for the elderly

As Ferndown is a popular retirement residential area we are passionate about meeting the needs of the more mature members of our community. Our faith teaches us that we are all precious children of God, therefore we actively seek opportunities to provide friendship and enjoyment for these people whom society so often marginalizes.



- Every Monday we hold "**Open Doors**" where older people are welcomed with tea, coffee and biscuits before enjoying a short time of worship. Afterwards there is a soup lunch followed by tea and cakes, with plenty of friendly chat throughout.
- We also hold a monthly social gathering called "**The Lighthouse Club**" where the elderly meet together with helpers from the church for friendly chat over refreshments. Entertainment in the form of music, a talk or games is also provided.
- In addition we hire our hall buildings out weekly to **Brendoncare**; a charity which provides social gatherings for the elderly, and on a monthly basis to a **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Group, Nordoff Robbins** (providing music therapy for dementia sufferers) and to **PramaCare** who host carers meetings.

### A place for families

We are delighted to welcome families to our church and are excited about the launch of our **4th Sunday congregation** this October. This will be a new concept of church aimed at young families wanting to find out more about Christianity in an informal act of worship. In order to run this service alongside our other church services we really need the mingling space that the new hall and church foyers will provide.



The enhanced facilities will also provide opportunities to hold **marriage and parenting courses** as well as other activities promoting and celebrating family values in our community. **The Ferndown branch of Children's Social Services** hire our premises on a weekly basis for child contact meetings and also for

staff training. **The Incredible Years Parenting programme**, funded by the University Healthcare Trust, has also been run several times on our site. The Beacon Project would provide improved facilities and greater flexibility in order to accommodate more bookings with a family focus.

### A place for workers in Ferndown

There are very few places in Ferndown where anyone can go and just "be" without having to purchase a product or service. We would like to open St Mary's to all in Ferndown. Local business workers could come to the church foyer at lunch time and bring their sandwiches with a book or they could bring a laptop or tablet and use the free Wi-Fi made available. We would also like to offer our facilities as an informal meeting place for local workers to discuss work outside of an office setting.



### A place for community leaders and events

Ferndown is blessed with many community groups and we already have positive relationships with the **Town Council, local Police, Royal British Legion, Guides and Beavers, Twinning Association, Neighbourhood Watch** as well as **local schools**. The Beacon Project would enable us to accommodate more community bookings than we are currently able. At present we do not have a space which holds 20-50 people comfortably as our hall is too large and our side rooms are too small. We are confident that the design to extend our side rooms and to add a retractable partition will prove a practical solution.

### A place for those with pastoral needs

As a church we want to be there for all those with pastoral needs. The new foyers will serve as neutral meeting places where our trained pastoral care assistants can come alongside those in their hour of need to offer support and to assist them in accessing professional help if required.



### A place for everyone

St Mary's is privileged to be situated in the heart of Ferndown and our vision is for our church to be a place where anyone and everyone can come "just as they are" and experience a sense of welcome and belonging that is becoming so rare in our increasingly fragmented society.

## 4. RESOURCING THE BUILDING PROJECT

We are of course aware that we not only need to be able to fund the building of the Beacon Project but to resource the operation of the facilities for years to come. St Mary's is already blessed with a staff team consisting of a Rector, Associate Minister, Curate, a part-time Children's Pastor, a full-time Operations Manager and a paid admin team. We also have many dedicated teams of volunteers who serve the church in multiple ways. We are conscious that the extension of our buildings will necessitate the recruitment of a Facilities Manager to ensure the safe and efficient running of the centre plus teams of volunteers to provide reception cover and hospitality. We are currently running an internal discipleship course which is designed to inspire and motivate more of our church members to take on voluntary roles in the church.

We are aware of the additional running costs involved in the Beacon Project and are currently undertaking a utilities review to ensure that we can maintain the running of our new facilities within our means and in an environmentally responsible manner.

## 5. LINKED PROJECTS

As we seek to bless Ferndown we also plan to help others by linking our building project with Christian building projects and water projects aiding poor communities in Uganda and Croatia. As from our next financial appeal we will automatically allocate 10% of all new giving (unless specifically requested to do otherwise) to mission projects run by Mission Direct in Uganda and European Christian Mission in the Balkans.

## 6. FROM VISION TO REALITY

**Planning** - Since 2008, we have been through a number of pre-planning applications and our Beacon Project Team has been working hard with our architect, Mike Etchingham, to refine the designs. In July 2013 we were granted full planning permission by East Dorset District Council.

**Funding** - Thanks to the generosity of church members plus additional funds dedicated to the project from the sale of a piece of property, we have a total of approx £420,000 readily available. The project will be undertaken in three phases. In order to build the church foyer, which will include the servery and lounge space, in the most cost effective way possible we intend to build the hall foyer first.

**Phase 1** will see the extension of the hall to the front to create the new hall foyer. This phase will also include:

- the new youth room and office area
- the installation of a new boiler plant
- the undertaking of some external works
- the installation of a new fire exit in the church.

This phase will cost a total of approximately **£600,000** (inclusive of VAT fees, fixtures & fittings) which makes this first step very achievable.

Once Phase 1 is underway we can begin preparations for **Phase 2**, which will see the creation of the new church foyer / coffee lounge between the hall foyer and the church. We anticipate Phase 2 will cost in the region of £200,000.

Finally, **Phase 3** will cover the extension of the hall side rooms and the remaining grounds landscaping work. This phase is estimated to cost approximately £400,000.

The majority of funding will come through the following means:

- (a) One off or regular gifts from church members
- (b) Interest free loans from church members
- (c) Gifts from Christian trusts
- (d) The Landfill Trust
- (e) Gifts from local businesses or community groups that share in some or all of our vision
- (f) Money from a special fund that Salisbury Diocese manages for new projects.

## 7. CONCLUSION

I hope that this gives you a glimpse of what we are trying to achieve with The Beacon Project. We pray that you will give positive consideration to supporting this project which we strongly believe will be of great benefit to the Ferndown community as a whole.

If you would like more information or wish to make a donation please contact a member of our Office Team on 01202 897087 or e-mail [tnicholls@stmarys-ferndown.org.uk](mailto:tnicholls@stmarys-ferndown.org.uk)

Blessings