

True Humility

2 Christ encourages you, and his love comforts you. God's Spirit unites you, *and you are concerned for others*. ²Now make me completely happy! Live in harmony by *showing love for each other*. Be united in what you think, as if you were only one person. ³Don't be jealous or proud, but be humble *and consider others more important than yourselves*. ⁴Care about them as much as you care about yourselves⁵ and think the same way that Christ Jesus thought:^[a]

⁶Christ was truly God.

But he did not try to remain equal with God.

⁷Instead he gave up everything and became a slave, when he became like one of us.

⁸Christ was humble.

He obeyed God and even died on a cross.

⁹Then God gave Christ the highest place and honoured his name above all others.

¹⁰So at the name of Jesus everyone will bow down, those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

¹¹And to the glory of God the Father everyone will openly agree, "Jesus Christ is Lord!"

Perhaps this should be the "mission statement" of Holy Trinity Sibford?

Honouring God, and caring for other people – recognising them and their needs as more important than ourselves and our own likes and dislikes.

The PCC, and some members of the congregation, have shared some thoughts about how we can use the lovely church building we are stewards of, more imaginatively, flexibly, and so that we can serve more people from the community, rather than only the Sunday morning worshippers, and those who come to church for Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals.

Any plans, dreams, schemes, or ideas about “what could we do to improve our church?” must start by

1. Identifying a NEED
2. Discussing fully with the congregation and listening to what they say.

So this is where we are right now. I believe we can identify some needs that we have, and some sensitive alterations to the church building might help us meet these needs.

This is NOT a fait accompli, this is not the Rector insisting that things are done his way, nor the PCC trying to impose its will on the congregation, but the start of a conversation in which you are invited to share.

There now follows a list of ideas which are not particularly in order of merit. Any one of them could be achieved without having to do all of them.

To help you as you look and wonder and think and discuss you will find at the back of church, copies of a book by Bishop Colin and Becky Payne, about how other congregations in Oxfordshire have made their churches more flexible and more in tune with community in the 21st century.

We would like to serve the large number of School Mums (and Dads) who wait outside the church every morning and evening during term time.

What about a “Starbucks at Sibford” sort of idea? Somewhere where coffee could be served, small children play in safety, and parents chat to one another, to people from the church, and slowly, little by little, come to recognise Holy Trinity as “their” church, and what it proclaims as important for their lives?

We could update the kitchen, providing better facilities, including a fridge and a microwave, some good cupboards etc, and easier water heating.

We could clear an area on the north (left hand) side of the church to match the children’s corner, so creating a bigger better space for refreshments and socialising.

We could create a serving hatch from the kitchen to this area, and we could sort out the floor levels so that the whole area, including Font area and children's corner, is all at one level.

This would also help with our work with older people. It would be good to offer "Tea and Chat" some afternoons in the better weather; somewhere where less mobile people can meet and remain part of the community.

This will also make serving refreshments to the regular congregation easier, give more space to move around, and because of regularised floor levels make the church safer and so more inviting.

We have identified the need for Youth Work, and already have a Youth Worker.

We need space for this work to happen.

We could transfer pews from the south (right hand) transept to the north, and take away the Choir Vestry (it is hardly ever used) and create a large space. This could be used for games, table tennis, all the sorts of activities appropriate to young people exploring their faith. We then do not have to pay for the use of other premises. Being in church would be a useful element for adults helping young people explore faith.

We have excellent links with our Primary School (NOT a church school) and need to develop these, and serve that school community.

The school comes to church regularly for Harvest, Christmas, Easter, and Leavers' services and produces lovely music and art work. However, the church building mitigates against their best efforts as there is nowhere for the children to stand and perform, the little one specially are invisible.

We could create a larger platform in the chancel/choir area; moving some pews back, putting the altar rails sideways on, and finding ourselves with a really useful area. Our altar table could go back against the east wall, be dressed in liturgical colours, as now and have the cross and candlesticks on it. We could use the Methodist Communion Table further forward, and place the two beautiful candelabra nearer it.

This would also give much more space for the priest and communion assistant to minister, and would allow those who like to kneel to do so at the sides, and those who have or wish to stand to do so at the front.

We need to improve our ministry of welcome and display of information and historical artefacts.

There are fascinating boards of historical and current information, all rather higgledy piggledy. There are two little tables and a bookcase for the hymn books and service orders – and these are not large enough. There are current notices displayed less than perfectly on a too-small notice board. There is a beautiful War Memorial board which the congregation sit with their back towards.

The first suggestion of improving the space and floor area at the door end of church would open up this space. The interesting boards could be better displayed together on one of the walls there. The War Memorial could go nearer the lovely war memorial stained glass window. We could have a really nice storage case for hymn books and service orders meaning that Welcomers can look at and smile at people arriving rather than fret about where to balance wobbly piles of books.

There could be a better display board for posters and current information.

We need toilet facilities.

People of a certain age, and visitors to the church, would find such facilities invaluable. We do have a key for the Village Hall (currently lost!) and providing a toilet is not without problems.

We could possibly create a toilet either as part of the existing kitchen area, or maybe as a separate building on the south side of the church.

We need to improve Access to the church for the less mobile, keeping the draughts out, and improving the visual ministry of the church.

It is difficult for "us" to understand that many people who are not regular church-goers find it very difficult to actually get through our lovely blue doors, which are not the most effective draught excluders, and also prevent passers-by from being attracted in to the church itself.

We could explore how to adjust the floor height in the porch, maybe creating a permanent wheelchair ramp outside, and hang the blue doors on the outside porch arch, opening outwards, and still able to be secured at night. On the existing inner arch where the blue doors currently hang we could put beautiful glass doors, engrave with images of the Holy Trinity. By also installing a simple spotlight focused on the rearranged chancel, altar and cross, we could draw peoples' eye inwards and remind them of our faith.

