

Reordering All Saints

A vision Document for the Church in our Village



“All Saints: Church in our community; community in our church”

Our Vision: A welcoming, open and inclusive church which is energised by faith, open to change, especially in worship & liturgy, and attended by people of all ages who are actively involved in all aspects of a successful and joyful church.

Our Values: Growing, Joyful, Open, Caring and Prayerful

Our Aims: To worship God, to care for each other and to serve our community.

All Saint's Church has existed for over 800 years but regularly throughout that time work has been completed to improve and modernise the building and its decoration. Very little of what you see, both inside and outside would have been visible when it first opened and what you can see today is a real patchwork of additions and building works carried out at the times they were completed to make that aspect of the building more suitable for the life and worship of the congregation at that time.

Most recently these changes have included constructing some disabled access and adding a mezzanine floor in the Vicar's Vestry. These made life a little easier but has not really prepared us to move forward into the rest of this century and beyond. We want to be much better able to offer welcome, worship and wider community use of our building into the future.



Our predecessors adapted the building to meet the needs of their time. We believe that it is right for us to do the same today, in hope and faith for the future. We have discerned a vision for All Saints: God invites us to be a growing, inclusive church of all ages, sharing our faith, welcoming and serving the community.

*Fr. James McDonald
February 2021*

At All Saints we value traditional, yet 'down to earth' worship. The current layout of the church interior means that we have been unable to follow some of the recent developments in worship over recent decades. Modern families have a need for informality and involvement, alongside spirituality and symbol. Historic fittings such as the pulpit and the Longman Screen, block sightlines and create divisions among the worshippers. The space under the chancel arch is the natural place to lead services, as well as to welcome the congregation, give out notices, have more informal interactions with the children, and make presentations. However, it is cramped by the pews, the lectern, pulpit and the choir stalls. The pews themselves are not only plain and unattractive but uncomfortable, as are the front rows of the choir stalls.

Processions are a joyful feature of our worship, but the circulation space this requires is restricted. Similarly, gathering the congregation in the chancel for the Eucharistic prayer and seating the choir in the Royal Chapel means they have to contend with the familiar barriers already described!

Finally, there is no dedicated space for children to remain in church and engage in their own activities and 'godly play' within the service. Not all children want to go out to Sunday school and some Sundays we have 'All Age worship' when the children remain in church.

At present, little happens in the church building throughout the week yet we have a vision for activity. The only regular church activity outside of Services is Tiny Tots (currently suspended due to Covid-19). We would like to think that the internal space inside the building could be used for meetings, lectures, school visits, training courses, social activities such as our Christmas Tree Festival, concerts, fund raising events and many more by all members of the community but the current layout of church furniture makes these activities difficult. Our building also holds a great deal of history and heritage but it is poorly displayed and badly documented for any visitor to enjoy. On top of all of this we have flaking, peeling, grimy décor, narrow aisles, uneven flooring and historic fittings which are unattractive to look at.

Having a good welcome experience is crucial for those who visit the church. Although we give a warm and effective personal welcome at our Sundays services, the physical welcome experience undermines this.

First, the church is approached by an uneven paved path. On arrival at the porch, you encounter two steep stone steps. We want to be inclusive and give ease of access to everyone equally as they visit the building.

Next, you are faced with an outer door which, despite the clear panels, is not particularly welcoming. Inside the porch the effect is compounded by the forbidding wooden internal door, the damp, the drab carpet and the uninspiring noticeboard.

Once inside, there is no circulation space for welcome to take place because of the pews and the collection of furniture, which also create an overwhelming sense of barriers and clutter. This character is completed by the haphazard array of memorials and tablets and the state of the decoration, which was last attended to over 40 years ago. It does not inspire people to say, 'How awesome is this place!'



We know that many people come to visit All Saints to see the tomb of Edmund de Langley and other historic features. We believe that we can improve their experience with better interpretation and display of many of the artefacts.

We believe the building should be our key asset for conveying our warm and inclusive welcome, and for sharing the welcome of God – but that is not currently the case.

(Rigid barriers define a single-use space)

All Saints aims to educate about both the Christian faith and the building in which we worship. The church building is one of our biggest assets for teaching the faith. It is also the key asset in Kings Langley for understanding the history of our community and Kings Langley's place in the history of our nation.

All Saints has an increasing number of children and young families within its membership. We also want to develop our links with local schools, including school visits, as mentioned above, and village youth groups (Sports, Cultural, Creative and Scout groups). As a church family we aim to teach the Christian faith and inspire young people about the heritage of the church and the village. This is already done through practical interaction with children and families in the building, but a church building which is inviting, easy to navigate, comfortable and has a renewed display and interpretation of our spiritual and historical heritage would greatly facilitate this work. We have an opportunity to inspire young people by enabling the church building to better tell its spiritual, historical and community story.

As well as being there for community events and for Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals, the building and grounds are a peaceful haven with both historical and current interests. At present we don't enable people to make the most of the potential to learn about and reflect on the spiritual and historical importance of elements of the building. A reordered church building, with better presentation of key features and more accessible, clearer sightlines and access, would help members of the community to engage with and learn about this heritage. In addition, a reordered church building could offer an alternative and inspiring place for meetings and day conferences, with the facilities available in the adjacent Hall. All Saints could therefore facilitate training for community groups and village workplaces, helping the community to become stronger, more focused together and more resilient.

All Saints is visited by people from all over the world, as attested to by our visitors' book. It is also frequently visited by members of the local community, who often say how much they appreciate that it is open. We would like visitors to see that the building is not a museum but the home of a living community to be used not looked at.

Since 1877 the north chapel has housed the Royal Tomb (originally designed for Richard II) of the First Duke of York, Edmund de Langley (1355-1402) and his wife Isabel of Castile. A reordering project offers us a long overdue opportunity to preserve, maintain and, above all, enhance and update the effective presentation of this, our own unique slice of royal history. The reordering presents an opportunity to mark out the Royal Chapel as a place of special significance. The Royal Chapel also boasts medieval floor tiles, originally from the priory on Langley Hill. These are presently covered with a breathable mat. We would like to explore ways to better display these so that they can be seen and appreciated.



Our key heritage asset, with exciting potential to realise!

So, what do we wish to do in our reordering project?

We have an initial outline of potential improvements to address the needs detailed above. We would like to be able to develop these with the benefit of the views of local community groups and businesses. Please read through our proposals and give your views by completing and returning the survey that follows.

Areas of the church to be updated or 'reordered' include:

Removal of pews and platforms including those in the north and south aisles, to create a more flexible space for worship and wider use. Flexible seating would be installed in the form of chairs or benches or a combination. A flexible space would allow us to create different areas for different activities.

There is the possibility of creating moveable choir stalls, formed from the current front choir stalls, which are more ornately carved and could be retained. No changes are proposed to the High Altar, other than to improve the stonework to the façade of the step, which is in poor repair in the centre, and to repair the reredos where crockets and finials have been broken off.

New flooring would be required on removal of pews and platforms. The current proposal is to install a stone floor on a new sub-base throughout the church, all at the same level, excluding the raised High Altar sanctuary area and the raised north and south chapel sanctuaries. Ledger stones in the floor would either be retained or relocated for display where practicable. A further possibility is for wooden flooring.

Renewal of the heating system is proposed. The expected life of the current church boiler is around 5 years, as indicated in a recent heating report by mechanical engineering consultant, J. Sheehan. This is also an opportunity to move to a low-carbon system, a priority of The Church of England. We would like to help enhance Kings Langley by becoming carbon 'net zero' by 2030.

We propose to relocate the pulpit so that it addresses the restriction of views and enables the pulpit to be used in worship with direct access from a new space under the chancel arch. The pulpit has been relocated before and so is not in its original position.

Relocation of the font to the tower area or nave adjacent is proposed, a more practical location for baptisms. It is a matter of record that the font is not the original.

The historical significance of the Langley Tomb is proposed to be enhanced by its relocation to a more prominent position. We envisage thorough and expert refurbishment and overhaul of the tomb and other associated artefacts in the Royal Chapel, including the Royal Standard.

The Verney Tomb is proposed to be relocated internally. Noting the tomb currently abuts the north wall, two locations being considered are, further west on the north wall just outside the existing Longman Screen, or against the same screen (if that is retained in situ).

The intent is to improve the presentation of the historical significance of the Langley Tomb, and its links to the royal palace and priory, by enhancing the Royal Chapel and the approach to it via the north aisle with information displays, interpretation and interactive panels. We also intend to help people connect with the Christian story through this medium.

The wooden Longman Screen itself could be relocated elsewhere in the building or removed. Alternatively, retaining and/or adapting the screen are options for delineating the Royal Chapel. The screen has previously been moved, originally having been further east in the Royal Chapel at the sanctuary step. A further option being considered is using the design of the floor to delineate the chapels.

The Encaustic floor tiles in that area which were originally from the priory could be lifted and displayed on a wall, taking expert advice on their conservation and need to breathe.

Accessible access for all via the main entrance is a key requirement. It is proposed to achieve this by re-routing the access path to the main door to allow a gradient down to the lower church floor level. The two stone steps would be removed and the existing damp problem in the porch would be addressed with the access work. A commodious, well-drained, paved area is proposed outside the porch for Wedding and Baptism parties to congregate.

Provision of glazed inner and outer doors to the north porch entrance are also considered essential. Possibly retaining the main door to the church, and adding a secondary glazed door.

Redecoration of the north porch area and the dark roof beams would brighten the entrance.

Removal of the pews and platform of the north aisle to create a larger welcome area inside the church.

Relocation of the noticeboard, photos, memorial tablets, decorations and furniture, on and adjacent to the walls, to create a clearer, brighter welcome space.

There is need for redecoration throughout the interior of the church, this last being undertaken some 46 years ago. Redecoration to be in conjunction with any other works, for ease of access.

The following images were taken in St Mary's church Wendover, which has been successfully reordered. They are for illustrative purposes, to help give an idea of how some of the proposed changes might look.



Obscured doors or inviting welcome to inside?



Flexible seating



Simple layout – easy to change



Even, warm and smooth floors

What Next?

If you are reading this document then hopefully you attended the reordering exhibition in September and were able to provide your feedback.

The Reordering Committee will then take into account the feedback from the congregation and wider community before sharing more worked up plans later in the year. We will continue to consult with the community and congregation as plans are finalised.

Thank you for your interest and support.