

The plans for St Laurence Ludlow

Frequently asked questions

The following Questions and Answers have been developed to help respond to the understandably high level of interest in the plans for the future of St Laurence Ludlow.

They are not exhaustive, and if you can help expand them by identifying additional questions that have not been answered, please e-mail your suggestions to vision@stlaurences.org.uk

First a bit of historical background to the role of a Parish Church over the centuries.

Change and adaptation have been on-going features in the 800 year history of St Laurence's.

In the Middle Ages the chancel was a holy place, where mass was celebrated by clergy and choristers. The rest of the building, at various times, accommodated the grammar school, meeting places for trade guilds, and chantry chapels endowed by benefactors

After the Reformation preaching replaced the altar as the main focus of worship, and box pews and galleries were inserted. Peripheral spaces were variously used: the chancel for tombs of dignitaries, St John's Chapel for church courts, and the Lady Chapel or the Borough's fire appliances. In 1764 the new Snetzler Organ, positioned centrally, high-lighted the nave as a concert venue.

In 1859–60 the church interior was reshaped following liturgical trends. By relocating the organ in the north transept attention was now drawn to the high altar, in the much restored chancel; the nave and aisles became a single auditorium; while religious roles were restored to the side chapels.

In recent years a nave altar has been provided, and pews have been removed to provide space for baptisms and for fellowship, while a bookstall, a toilet and a small kitchen, reflect widening community uses.

GENERAL

What is all this about?

St Laurence's church building is a sacred and historic space. Its origins date from a time when the parish church played a central role in all the various aspects of the lives of the people in and around Ludlow, be it religious, business, legal, social or entertainment.

St Laurence's has served the needs of the town and area of Ludlow for many centuries. We want St Laurence's to retain its role as a holy place, its visual impact, its sense of history and architecture. We want to develop its potential as a place for the wider community and rediscover something of the medieval intention for the church building in the parish.

We are aware that St Laurence's lacks many of the “creature comforts” of 21st century venues, and those that it has, are ineffective and inefficient.

Now, we want to develop and implement plans to ensure that St Laurence's can continue to play a pivotal role in the life of the community for the future. The driver for doing this at this moment is that we are faced with having to undertake significant work on the church building (flooring, heating, lighting) in the next few years, to make the space a place where people want to come – to worship, and for other reasons.

Our vision is that St Laurence's should be a beacon of excellence in everything it does, and in everything it represents – a holy and sacred place, a place with an outstanding musical tradition, a world-class architectural experience, and a venue of choice for many forms of events. In short, a place that serves the community in a diverse range of ways, and a place which the community regards as its own.

Why should we do anything?

A church building is like any other. Without maintenance and repair it decays. When St Laurence's was built it was of the latest design with the most up to date technology available at the time. We need to bring some aspects of the building up to date. We therefore need to undertake improvements to the building over the next few years. We could simply replace, repair and renovate what we have, but this would miss the opportunity to consider whether the church needs to be adapted to its 21st century role in Ludlow. Our church was last remodelled by the Victorians; the current needs are very different from then.

Today, however, we are facing a series of big projects: new floor (to replace the current crumbling one), new energy efficient lighting and new heating to replace our 150 year-old system. This work will require clearing the church of all of its furniture (including pews). The question is; what do we put back and in what form?

Why is change necessary?

We are motivated by three main pressures:

- a) The need to ensure that St Laurence's can fulfil an effective role in the 21st Century and beyond, and is a space “fit for purpose”
- b) The need to replace flooring, heating and lighting, which will involve a total clearance of the church, and give us a “blank canvas” to determine what should be the shapes and form of the interior space for the future
- c) The opportunity which this will also give us to offer the church as a venue for a wider range of events, and so increase the revenues of the church at a time when most churches are under extreme financial pressure. We need to ensure the long term sustainability of the building. It needs to earn its keep as we cannot rely on external funding. We therefore need to consider its future uses, and make sure it is fit for those purposes.

Will St Laurence's remain at the heart of the Christian community?

St Laurence Ludlow is a very special place, with a rich religious, architectural and musical heritage. Over the centuries it has been adapted by successive generations to reflect the needs of the religious and secular communities of Ludlow. Our firm commitment is that St Laurence's will remain at the heart of the Christian community in South Shropshire, providing witness and service to the community

What about the people who are not part of the Christian community?

In addition to being a place of worship, an historic function of a Parish church building is to provide a meeting place for 'all sorts of conditions of people' (a slightly amended form of words from The Book of Common Prayer). The parish church is not just the preserve of the Anglican Christian community, nor is the place limited to the Christian community for that matter. It is for all people and as such the Church community is responsible for providing an all-embracing community resource.

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THE PLAN

What will happen next?

This is a fairly long-term project. The PCC has already formed a Project Team, that Team is in the process of forming a Steering Group to help guide and shape its work. The Steering Group will be drawn as widely as possible, to allow a wide range of interests to be represented. During the early part of 2009 we will be planning how we will consult as widely as possible in the Ludlow area, and will gather views on the role St Laurence's should play in this century. As we receive the input, we will then work towards a finite number of "key questions" on which we will then seek further input. By the end of 2009, we hope that we will have the shape of our plans firmed up, and will move into detailed planning and the very necessary fund-raising process. Work on site will probably begin later in 2012.

How can I have my say?

Consultation with all interested parties is the first major part of our plan. We are developing a structured plan to engage with everyone who wants to have their say on the future direction. We want to hear from anyone who has something to contribute, and this will help us shape and develop our plans. This phase of the project will be implemented during 2009 in a number of stages. During the year, we will be inviting input from anyone who wants to contribute. We will explain in early 2009 how you can contribute to shaping the plans for St Laurence's.

What about St John's?

This project is about St Laurence, Ludlow. However, we will be considering the role of St John's, as part of the review of options. Our objective is to create church-based facilities in Ludlow fit for, and relevant to, the 21st Century. It is intended that a representative of St John's will be part of the Steering Group.

Who will run this project?

The Project Team appointed by the PCC is made up of the following:

Preb Dr Brian Curnew *Team Rector*

Ewart Carson *Churchwarden*

Anna Branston *Churchwarden*

Shaun Ward *Clerk of Works*

Don Beattie *PCC Treasurer*

Jeffry Wilcox *Ludlow Town Council*

Andrew Mottram *Ecclesiastical Property Solutions (EPS) - Consultant to the Project Team*

The Steering Group (which will help guide and shape the work of the Project Team) is drawn as widely as possible, to allow a wide range of interests to be represented.

Who are EPS and who is paying for their involvement?

Ecclesiastical Property Solutions (EPS) is a small consultancy with a track record of enabling Churches to make things happen. EPS is acting as Project Facilitator providing the Project Team with direction and advice during the stages of scoping the project and developing the plans. Their costs are being funded out of the budget for phase 1 of the project, which has been set aside by the PCC

You say you want to make the church suitable for events, but aren't there already alternative venues in Ludlow?

St Laurence's is the largest venue in Ludlow. Of course there are others, and each is best suited to particular types of event. We are not seeking to take business from the existing venues, but rather to offer a facility that complements what already exists. St Laurence's is already used by a significant number of organisations, but in truth fails to offer 21st century facilities, both for secular and liturgical use.

How will the St Laurence role fit alongside, e.g., the Assembly Rooms?

Our aim is that the various venues in Ludlow should be complementary to each other. Indeed we can learn from the Assembly Rooms and other such providers to see what will compliment what they are doing. We are aware that running the Assembly Rooms demands a lot from the staff and volunteers and we do not want in anyway to threaten the success of that venue. Fortunately St Laurence's is such a very different space from the Assembly Room that we think it will be possible for both organisations to work together and cooperate in the provision of different spaces for use by the community.

What if someone leaves or retires from the Project Team?

The Project Team, together with a Steering Group has been set up to ensure that no one person is key to making things happen and that there is a system in place for succession and changes in personnel.

Why don't you involve children and young people?

This will be part of the consultation process.

How will you communicate news and developments?

We plan to publish a Newsletter from time to time, and also will be carrying the latest news on our website – www.stlaurences.org.uk/developing-a-vision-future

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St Laurence's has served the needs of the town and area of Ludlow for many centuries. We want St Laurence's to retain its role as a holy place, its visual impact, its sense of history and architecture. We want to develop its potential as a place for the wider community and rediscover something of the medieval intention for the church building in the parish.

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If you don't put back the pews, how do we kneel?

Kneeling is not necessarily inhibited if there are no pews. Some chairs have the facility to carry hassocks. It is a fact that in many churches where chairs have been introduced, some of the people attending worship have given up kneeling. But it is interesting to note that many people already do not kneel in churches where there are pews. We will ensure this issue is addressed through the consultation process. However it is too early to consider the detail of issues like this.

What sort of purposes do you have in mind for the church that cannot be handled today?

Without being exhaustive, the following are simply not practical with the current configuration of the church:

Drama "in the round"

Exhibitions

Large orchestral concerts

Art expositions

Group activities (using different parts of the church for different simultaneous activities)

Any activity which requires a large open area

THE PLAN

What will happen next?

This is a fairly long-term project. The PCC has already formed a Project Team, that Team is in the process of forming a Steering Group to help guide and shape its work. The Steering Group will be drawn as widely as possible, to allow a wide range of interests to be represented. During the early part of 2009 we will be planning how we will consult as widely as possible in the Ludlow area, and will gather views on the role St Laurence's should play in this century. As we receive the input, we will then work towards a finite number of "key questions" on which we will then seek further input. By the end of 2009, we hope that we will have the shape of our plans firmed up, and will move into detailed planning and the very necessary fund-raising process. Work on site will probably begin later in 2012.

How can I have my say?

Consultation with all interested parties is the first major part of our plan. We are developing a structured plan to engage with everyone who wants to have their say on the future direction. We want to hear from anyone who has something to contribute, and this will help us shape and develop our plans. This phase of the project will be implemented during 2009 in a number of stages. During the year, we will be inviting input from anyone who wants to contribute. We will explain in early 2009 how you can contribute to shaping the plans for St Laurence's.

What about St John's?

This project is about St Laurence, Ludlow. However, we will be considering the role of St John's, as part of the review of options. Our objective is to create church-based facilities in Ludlow fit for, and relevant to, the 21st Century. It is intended that a representative of St John's will be part of the Steering Group.

Who will run this project?

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Within the scope of the project, we envisage including a more efficient heating system, better lighting (at lower power consumption) and possibly the use of some form of renewable energy. Again, it is too early to be specific but we expect the carbon footprint to reduce significantly as a result of the works.

If you don't put back the pews, how do we kneel?

Kneeling is not necessarily inhibited if there are no pews. Some chairs have the facility to carry hassocks. It is a fact that in many churches where chairs have been introduced, some of the people attending worship have given up kneeling. But it is interesting to note that many people already do not kneel in churches where there are pews. We will ensure this issue is addressed through the consultation process. However it is too early to consider the detail of issues like this.

What sort of purposes do you have in mind for the church that cannot be handled today?

Without being exhaustive, the following are simply not practical with the current configuration of the church:

Drama "in the round"

Exhibitions

Large orchestral concerts

Art expositions

Group activities (using different parts of the church for different simultaneous activities)

Any activity which requires a large open area

THE PLAN

What will happen next?

This is a fairly long-term project. The PCC has already formed a Project Team, that Team is in the process of forming a Steering Group to help guide and shape its work. The Steering Group will be drawn as widely as possible, to allow a wide range of interests to be represented. During the early part of 2009 we will be planning how we will consult as widely as possible in the Ludlow area, and will gather views on the role St Laurence's should play in this century. As we receive the input, we will then work towards a finite number of "key questions" on which we will then seek further input. By the end of 2009, we hope that we will have the shape of our plans firmed up, and will move into detailed planning and the very necessary fund-raising process. Work on site will probably begin later in 2012.

How can I have my say?

Consultation with all interested parties is the first major part of our plan. We are developing a structured plan to engage with everyone who wants to have their say on the future direction. We want to hear from anyone who has something to contribute, and this will help us shape and develop our plans. This phase of the project will be implemented during 2009 in a number of stages. During the year, we will be inviting input from anyone who wants to contribute. We will explain in early 2009 how you can contribute to shaping the plans for St Laurence's.

What about St John's?

This project is about St Laurence, Ludlow. However, we will be considering the role of St John's, as part of the review of options. Our objective is to create church-based facilities in Ludlow fit for, and relevant to, the 21st Century. It is intended that a representative of St John's will be part of the Steering Group.

Who will run this project?

The Project Team appointed by the PCC is made up of the following:

Preb Dr Brian Curnew *Team Rector*

Ewart Carson *Churchwarden*

Anna Branston *Churchwarden*

Shaun Ward *Clerk of Works*

Don Beattie *PCC Treasurer*

Jeffrey Wilcox *Ludlow Town Council*

Andrew Mottram *Ecclesiastical Property Solutions (EPS) - Consultant to the Project Team*

The Steering Group (which will help guide and shape the work of the Project Team) is drawn as widely as possible, to allow a wide range of interests to be represented.

Who are EPS and who is paying for their involvement?

Ecclesiastical Property Solutions (EPS) is a small consultancy with a track record of enabling Churches to make things happen. EPS is acting as Project Facilitator providing the Project Team with direction and advice during the stages of scoping the project and developing the plans. Their costs are being funded out of the budget for phase 1 of the project, which has been set aside by the PCC

You say you want to make the church suitable for events, but aren't there already alternative venues in Ludlow?

St Laurence's is the largest venue in Ludlow. Of course there are others, and each is best suited to particular types of event. We are not seeking to take business from the existing venues, but rather to offer a facility that complements what already exists. St Laurence's is already used by a significant number of organisations, but in truth fails to offer 21st century facilities, both for secular and liturgical use.

How will the St Laurence role fit alongside, e.g., the Assembly Rooms?

Our aim is that the various venues in Ludlow should be complementary to each other. Indeed we can learn from the Assembly Rooms and other such providers to see what will compliment what they are doing. We are aware that running the Assembly Rooms demands a lot from the staff and volunteers and we do not want in anyway to threaten the success of that venue. Fortunately St Laurence's is such a very different space from the Assembly Room that we think it will be possible for both organisations to work together and cooperate in the provision of different spaces for use by the community.

What if someone leaves or retires from the Project Team?

The Project Team, together with a Steering Group has been set up to ensure that no one person is key to making things happen and that there is a system in place for succession and changes in personnel.

Why don't you involve children and young people?

This will be part of the consultation process.

How will you communicate news and developments?

We plan to publish a Newsletter from time to time, and also will be carrying the latest news on our website – www.stlaurences.org.uk/developing-a-vision-future