

Re-ordering and other progress



Rob McLaren

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It has been an honour to be the vicar of Poynton Parish Church in one of the more notable years of recent times. As we sought to '*promote in the ecclesiastical parish of Poynton St George with St Martin the whole mission of the church*', we reached the climax of the church re-ordering Phase Two, at the same time as making progress in several other important areas.

It is worth re-telling **the story of St George's internal re-ordering** in order that it is lodged well in our common memory and in order to learn lessons. I understand that Bob Lewis was the first vicar to attempt replacing some pews in order to provide a welcome area at the back of church. We still have six sample blue chairs but, for whatever reason, the plans did not come to fruition.

It was left to John Thompstone to help our St George's buildings become more radically fit for purpose. Before seeking to replace the church hall, he wisely insisted on doing something to the church first. The Phase One proposals to re-order the chancel and the south entrance were not universally popular, but they were important in order to provide momentum for future phases, so that St George's interior could jump from the 19th into the 21st century.



Phase One set the scene for important decisions which followed in Phase Two. The wood was to be quality oak, the cushion colour St George's red, the floor covering carpet where possible and the main achievement flexibility. In 1998 the work of Phase One was completed and the seeds planted for Phase Two.



This and the church hall project demanded much of John and once the hall was successfully finished, he was close to retirement and left Phase Two to his successor. When I arrived in 2005, my first PCC meeting showed me there was widespread enthusiasm to get on

with the re-ordering. An away day in 2005 showed us there was large agreement about the ingredients of Phase Two, and for the next eighteen months the PCC spent time clarifying our preferences for seating, flooring, heating, audio/visual and lighting. Different PCC members went off to see churches and test examples of the type of seating we preferred.



We patiently received advice from diocesan advisors and then just as we wished to make progress towards setting up a team and applying for a faculty, we hit a snag: the faculty paperwork for Phase One was not complete. John Briggs served us well in putting the paperwork in order and advising us in our dealings with English Heritage and the Victorian Society. The officers changed at Diocesan House and we found ourselves at the bottom of their in-tray, but we formed a team and started to consider who might be our architect.

The team included myself, churchwardens Dave McClelland and Joyce Corlett, then-PCC secretary and treasurer Victoria Prosser and Chris Trueman, plus Julie Briggs who was our link with Irish Contract Seating). David Myers offered to oversee our giving/fundraising and Nicola Paxton started to help us think about colours of paint



and fittings. However the team would have been insufficient for task if we had been without the energy and expertise of three people who were relatively new to the church. Darren Allcock dealt so well with the issues of lighting and audio/visuals (AV), Paul Mills brought much needed expertise in Quantity



Surveying, organizing agendas and dealing with professionals and contractors, Eric Sanderson patiently enabled the heating/electricals to be as good as they are and has been an extraordinarily good problem chaser. My considered opinion is that

without this expertise, we would have been foolish to include so many aspects of work in the same project. I would advise less fortunate parishes to do one thing at a time.

We were given a shortlist of diocesan approved architects and took the helpful advice of Matthew Burl.

We chose Ian Lucas of Byrom Clark Roberts. Ian and his chosen engineers and surveyors produced a feasibility study over several months, which proved a helpful time to try and explain our vision and preferences.



It was important to have an architect whose main focus was not conservation but who had experience of providing 21st Century facilities in keeping with a 19th Century context. Even so, he seemed rather one dimensional in his guidance with regard to lighting and AV. So Darren and I went to the Christian Resources Exhibition to make contacts and see new possibilities in the field of lighting and AV. We were glad to meet Gerry of Lighting Dynamics and representatives of B & H.

The faculty application was prepared and Chester Diocesan Advisory Committee dealt with it helpfully and speedily, having already considered our main ideas. The architect sent the tender documents to five firms and the best price plus reputation pointed us to Paul Smith & Co. of Rochdale. The price came in higher than hoped, so we took AV out of the appeal budget of £275,000, and the PCC agreed to fund AV from our general annual giving. Despite the Christmas rush and the continuing Poynton roadworks, we agreed a start date for 9th January and allocated the first week of the New Year to clear the church. Thanks to the amazing organization of Dave McClelland and Joyce, we took the bulk of our furniture and fittings to a storage warehouse over one weekend. The organ was properly wrapped up and the last of the Christmas straw was cleared. We sold £1600 worth of small pews, mainly to church members, and some of the wood of the large pews was saved for future use by Nigel, our expert woodworker.



With an admirable site foreman called Jugger, Paul Smith & Co. did a pretty good job through the cold weeks of January and February. Our services worked well in the church hall, with the very helpful addition of coffee and children's group facilities at the British Legion Club. In late March, A.J. Electricians fitted the lighting according to Lighting Dynamics



specification, and in early April, Calco finished the flooring and fitted the carpet. B & H had visited several times and were finishing off as ICS delivered the seating in time to re-open for



our St George's Day service. Nigel Vogler's joinery completed some marvellous finishing touches.

All is not perfect but many aspects have worked out well and the many good things are good. To date the appeal has brought in about £200,000 in pledges and gifts from members of the congregations of the church, plus about £20,000 from





Fundraising events. We hope to continue the appeal and already there are some seed ideas for a Phase Three involving servery, toilets, and some sort of sound proofed room for crèche etc.

God has been good to us and it has been an inspiration to be with his people in the progress of this once-in-a-lifetime project.

Other progress: We have also made strides in **Evangelism** (a new better Christianity Explored Course with more people training to lead it), Discipleship (a good increase of home group leaders and a significant increase in membership of **home groups** following the 'Try a home group for Lent' initiative, overall numbers now totalling over 150), **Leadership** (Paul Cumming joined us as curate, Pippa Douglas joined us as part-time youth worker, Lesley Cummins was recommended for ordination to follow a one year course at St John's Nottingham, David Capener is recommended as Reader when he has completed his final two years of training), **Pastoral Care** has evolved a different approach for those aren't cared for within their home group, **St Martin's** has enjoyed an expanded run of special guest services/events,

and the people of Poynton Parish Church seem to be in good heart.

Thank you for your part in our work and witness to Jesus Christ. Thank you to everyone who has given their time, talents and money to enable us to be a gospel-bearing, caring, growing church. This year we must revisit our vision for the future and seek the Lord's guidance as we make plans to serve the community of Poynton and beyond, and to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ in different corners of the globe. We are well-placed to go forward and we must pray that God will grant us the increase in holy, loving people who are committed members of the family of Jesus Christ and ready to reach the needy and influence society for good. To Him be the glory.

Yours in Christ

Rob McHaver

VICAR





*Praise God
From Whom
All Blessings Flow*

