

A Vision for the Future

Summary of Consultation Meetings together with subsequent correspondence and emails received following the meetings.

Meeting 1: Thursday 21 January 2016 in Parish Centre, Cavehill Road

Subject: Potential use of St Therese Presbytery

Chairman: Martin Bradley

Secretary: Catherine Gillespie

Martin Bradley welcomed all to the meeting and Canon Murray led the opening prayer. Aideen D'Arcy gave a presentation outlining progress to date in relation to the Option Appraisal [5K Pledge; Current Debt; Pastoral Centre on the market for sale; evaluation of the Options in monetary and non-monetary terms; outline of next stages in the process] and summarised the limitations and opportunities open to listed buildings to initiate the discussion.

Points raised from floor:

1.1 [?] In relation to the house being used by the schools it was noted that amalgamation will not happen in the immediate future if at all. We need to focus on the upkeep of property in the parish. Would another building be allowed to fall into disrepair?

1.2 [SG] – Need a social space and a decision cannot be made in isolation i.e. it will depend on whether there is a presence on the Cavehill Rd

1.3 [MH] – Queried the implications of the listed status. Flax Trust could possibly be approached. It could be used as a social enterprise or sheltered accommodation for the elderly.

1.4 [MF] – Fix the building and put on the open market, to be bought/used by a religious order.

1.5 [?] Worthy of restoration

1.6 [?] What is the cost of restoration? We need to have income generated from use to justify cost.

1.7 [?] With parish debt as it stands make it 'fit' and see if property developers would be interested.

1.8 [?] Refugees could use it once habitable.

1.9 [?] Reaction of Somerton Rd residents if refugees/social housing was considered

1.10 [NM] – Desperately need a place for hospitality. Basement could be used for Columbarium. Perhaps a museum to house the parish's artefacts.

1.11 [?] Lack of hospitality. Suggestion for PC to visit Orangefield Presbyterian Church where there is a restaurant facility used by all residents in the area. Also have a facility to train disabled people who can gain qualifications and opportunities to enter the workplace

1.12 [AL] – could it be 'delisted'? Aideen explained that 'listed' status may not be as big a barrier as one would think.

1.13 [?] Was roof secure? – Yes

1.14 [PP] - Retirement home for priests, a training centre, basement used as Columbarium. With parish debt as it stands could we consider a Public Private Partnership arrangement – someone build and we rent? Ireland Fund?

1.15 [?] Parish Centre could be cheaper to restore. Decide about Cavehill Rd site then St Therese.

1.16 [BD] Buildings/assets/debts are not the important things.

1.17 [DH] – 6th form centre, approach Dept. of Education

1.18 [Fr P Morely] Don't sell. Must be used only for church purposes. Need a gathering space

1.19 [SMcC] – What are the parish's exact needs? Costs/timescale for the Whitehouse cited in presentation would be useful.

The meeting ended at 8.30.

Meeting 2: Thursday 28 January 2016 in Parish Centre, Cavehill Road

Subject: Potential to develop a Columbarium in the Parish

Chairman: Catherine Gillespie

Secretary: Ann D'Arcy

Catherine Gillespie welcomed everyone to the meeting and Father Paul led the opening prayer. Aideen D'Arcy gave a presentation outlining progress to date in relation to the Option Appraisal, [5K Pledge; Current Debt; Pastoral Centre on the market for sale; evaluation of the Options in monetary and non-monetary terms; outline of next stages in the process] and illustrated some examples and issues in relation to the development of a Columbarium including history, development, purpose, functionality, spiritual and practical issues, advantages, examples of indoor and outdoor / local, European and American models

Approximately 60 parishioners were in attendance

Points raised during discussion:

2.1 [?] The reassurance of having secured a final resting place for a loved one's remains, in advance of their passing, removes a lot of stress at the time of death.

The contract in respect of leasing a space in a Columbarium is very comprehensive

2.2 [AR] Future generations may not continue the tradition of visiting/tidying graves, therefore a Columbarium is an excellent idea as it is virtually maintenance free

A suggested location could be Our Lady's Chapel in Holy Family Church

2.3 [GL] Concern was expressed about the length of a lease for space in a Columbarium, currently 70 – 90 years, and what would happen to the deceased's remains at the end of the lease.

2.4 [?] Reassured the gathering that the Church has a responsibility to move the remains to another sacred space. This information was provided at the time of purchasing a space in the Columbarium in St Patrick's Church, Donegall Street.

2.5 [?] It was consoling and comforting that parishioners and e.g. Rosary Groups could enter the Columbarium in St Patrick's Church and pray for all the dead

2.6 [PP and MJ] The cost of a traditional burial compared with the cost of space in a Columbarium was raised

2.7 [JMcC] Disability access to a Columbarium, opening hours of the Church [indoor]/ Church Grounds [outdoor] for visiting and praying should be considered

2.8 [?] In the event of a Church that houses a Columbarium being closed down at a future point in time, what would happen to the Columbarium? It is the responsibility of the Church to ensure that the remains are moved to a sacred space and ashes will most definitely not be scattered.

Summary:

The principle of our parish having a Columbarium was very well supported. If a decision is taken to provide a Columbarium in Holy Family Parish, the details can be worked out and further consultation with parishioners will take place.

Meeting 3: Wednesday 3 February 2016 in Parish Centre, Cavehill Road

Subject: The Parish Centre – Use and Suitability

Chairman: Garry McKenna

Secretary: Martin Bradley

Garry McKenna welcomed everyone to the meeting and Father Paul led the opening prayer. Aideen D'Arcy gave a presentation outlining progress to date in relation to the Option Appraisal, [5K Pledge; Current Debt; Pastoral Centre on the market for sale; evaluation of the Options in monetary and non-monetary terms; outline of next stages in the process] and summarised the activities currently taking place in the Parish Centre.

3.1 [BF] Given that the hall is next to the church can we truly discuss its future use without considering the future of the church, If the church were to be knocked down and/or the ground sold it would have an impact on the future of the hall.

3.2 [PC] There is a fracture in the Parish – particularly over how the church was closed and the people treated. Scant regard of the people at the Cavehill end of the parish.

Could a Mass be said in the hall – a mark of respect and acknowledgement to the community?

“I now go to another parish”

Bishop Walsh promised there would be a “presence” on the site.

3.3 [AH] As a business man I wouldn't put the hall behind the church – make it more visible – need for a more open and welcoming presence.

3.4 [DM] The dereliction of the church is unacceptable – slates on the pathways. Do any of the groups using the hall contribute to its upkeep?

3.5 [PC] A local resident – problem of vandalism and unruly elements. Difficulty in finding out what is going on in the hall.

3.6 [AC] Speaker set out the range of activities she was involved in – Bowls and Bridge and indicated that they paid for the use of the hall.

3.7 [MC] Essential that needs of young people who live near the hall have their needs catered for.

The Methodist Church Hall is in regular use and there appears to be very little trouble.

Need for better fencing around the site.

The problems are getting worse and we have a duty of care.

The nursery is being affected by the vandalism – not fair on the staff who have to clean up/shield the children.

Use of the Church as a columbarium for North Belfast – open to other belief groups.

3.8 [AR] Attends local Community Policing Meetings – the problem of vandalism and anti-social behaviour around the site is a regular item at the meetings.

3.9 [C?] Helps run the nursery –“children are our future and we need to keep the nursery where it is”. Vandalism is a problem.

Need for a Youth Club at this end of the parish.

3.10 [Geoff of Geoff's Yoga] Not from the Parish but involved in local activities for the last 25 years. People will come from further afield if there are the right activities. “You don't look enough outside the Parish”.

Have cleared out one of the storerooms to create a space for activities.

“Never underestimate the power of indecision!”

3.11 [BD] Member of the parish for over 20 years.

Church should be at the centre of our considerations.

“We are losing the centrality of our faith – people are departing the church but not leaving – they are not meeting their spiritual needs”

Pastoral Councils need to have a new conversation – need to talk about our faith in a new way.

3.12 [SM] The hall could be made more adaptable by the use of screens to accommodate a range of activities including keep fit, badminton etc.

3.13 [AL] Concerned about the structural stability and cost of maintaining the building

3.14 [?] Have we investigated what other parishes have done?

3.15 [DH] Set up a committee to oversee the running of the hall and market the activities.

3.16 [CC] Wanted to hold a birthday celebration but couldn't get permission. Followed up later by Bernard McGuinness who had held a birthday celebration in the hall.

3.17 [MW] Failure of Church – unsafe site & vandalism

3.18 [CP] Why no meeting to talk about the church – young people going to other parishes.

3.19 [AC] “When the Pastoral Centre is sold – will there be more activities in the hall?”

3.20 [?] Who will make the decision about the site – Parish or Bishop?
Why nothing religious on the site?

3.21 [BK] Cannot see the Church being used again – Congregation dispersed
Would like to see a better distribution of Masses in the parish with up to two masses at the weekend in the hall.

3.22 [CP] "Will we be consulted before decisions are finalised and action taken?"

Summary:

There were three main themes to emerge from the meeting. First is the on-going sense of hurt over the closure of the Church of the Resurrection. The second relates to the current dereliction of the Church on the Cavehill Road and the problems for local residents due to anti-social behaviour on the site.

The third theme was the current and future use of the Parish Centre. A range of activities was identified and there was significant support for the further development of the range of uses that the Centre could be put to. There were suggestions that a Committee could be established to oversee the running and marketing of the facility. It was also suggested that the Parish needed to be more visionary in looking beyond the parish and attract people from outside the parish to use or attend events at the hall.

All meetings commenced at 7.00pm with refreshments provided by the Hospitality Team served from 7.00pm – 7.30pm

4.0 Verbal / Written / Email Submissions:

4.1 Email from MS

Unfortunately I do not think it would be possible to make the meetings you have planned in relation to your vision for the future. However, I thought that I might email through my thoughts on the matter.

St Therese Presbytery - Potential Use

Obviously this is a listed building and has cost implications. A long time ago one of the parish priests suggested building some accommodation for the elderly. However, I am unsure if it is possible to knock down the building so this may not be an option.

I am also conscious that there are many tradesmen in the parish and wonder if some of them would be in a position to donate some of their time to assist with the renovation of it if the parish purchased the materials. I would imagine that if everyone chipped in that it would not take up too much of their time.

This might mean that the presbytery could be used to generate an income e.g. as a training venue, classes, retreats etc. It may also be worthwhile considering charging a fee to do teas/coffees/sandwiches/ cakes after funerals. People in the parish may be willing to do this or you could contract with an outside agency to provide these services. I think that there is a lot to be learnt from people from other faiths and how they do things. This appears to work well in other Churches. It may also be possible to do something one or two evenings per week for specific groups of people e.g. young people/youth/elderly etc. Again food could be provided.

Columbarium in the Parish

St Patrick's has something similar in place and bearing in mind that there is a shortage of graves it is a great idea. I purchased a niche a few years back for this very reason.

You could use one of the parish buildings that you are talking about for this. They could maybe be converted into a small adoration chapel and if you did not have space for the Columbarium in the Chapel then the niches could be placed beside the adoration Chapel.

The Parish Centre

I am conscious that this is a large piece of land and am not really sure how often the centre is being used.

If it is not being used frequently you may be able to work in partnership with a housing association and build some social housing.

4.2 Email from EF

I am unable to attend the meeting but I would like the following answered. Would it be possible to sell St Therese Presbytery, with planning permission and in keeping with surroundings and bylaws, for conversion to two or three apartments? I hope the meeting is productive. Thank you.

4.3 Email from LD

Hi. I can't make tonight's meeting on the proposed uses for the presbytery, but here are my suggestions:

Homework club in the afternoon for little Flower, St Patrick's and Dominican College pupils from 3.30pm to 5.30pm [staffed by teachers/volunteers] with a coffee dock available for the pupils / Youth club / Library / Crèche from 10am to 5pm / Coffee shop and small café

4.4 Email from PC

Hello, I gave my apologies for being unable to attend one of the meetings.

4.4.1 St Therese Presbytery – Potential use. I would like to see this lovely Parish building renovated and restored as a small but important, new additional Parish hall. I believe that we can't rule it out and should consider its close proximity and walking distance for all parishioners.

4.4.2 A Columbarium. Yes I believe this would be a great idea.

4.4.3 The Parish Centre, Cavehill Road. Unfortunately I believe that our Parish needs to sell this building and concentrate on the excellent valuable buildings that exist. There is Holy Family Gathering Space, the Youth Club and not forgetting St Therese Presbytery, on completion of restoration.

With thanks.

4.5 Email from AR

As I have a class on Wednesday 3 February I am unable to attend the meeting regarding the use of the Parish Centre. I have been teaching the Adult Irish Dance class in the Parish Centre on Tuesdays from 8.30 – 10.00pm for a number of years now and have built up a class which is very popular in the area. The main hall that I use in the Centre is very suitable for my class, especially the Ceili dancing and I sincerely hope that it continues to be available to me in the future.

If you have any concerns or wish to discuss it with me further please don't hesitate to contact me either by email or by phone.

4.6 Email from A McC

Unfortunately I cannot be present for some of the meetings.

Some of my thoughts may already have been considered but here goes anyway.

The site at Cavehill Road is large and probably very valuable, and could be of interest to developers for housing etc, but will not be any use while the Parish Centre is still standing on the site.

If there is enough space around the Presbytery at Somerton Road, could it be developed to provide a new Parish Centre while preserving the old building, which I believe, is listed.

The provision of a columbarium is a much needed facility, as graveyard space becomes more difficult to find.

A possible way of raising some income, could be selling space for memorial name plaques to be put on church pews. This has been done in both Churches in Sacred Heart Parish and is a lovely way to remember those who have died when you see a name on the pew in front of you, even if you do not know them.

4.7 Call to office from RJ who fully endorses the idea of a Columbarium believing that it makes access to loved ones much easier, and sees comfort in keeping them in their own parish.

4.8 Email from SL

Following on from last week's meeting, after much thought, my thoughts are:

4.8.1 Carry out an audit of all spaces available in the centre that could be reasonably used for various purposes.

4.8.2 Look at the different rates paid for various rooms by the groups using the centre at present.

4.8.3 Do a comparison with other Parish Centres or Community Centres locally

4.8.4 Realign price so that they're still affordable and competitive, but comparable to other centres.

The Parish Centre can't be a further drain on already difficult finances.

- 4.8.5 Advertise space for rent accordingly using website, the Bulletin, other parish bulletins, social media and by directly targeting groups who use such venues – eg. stmaryschurch-shenfield.org.uk have an excellent system for booking out their spaces on their website.
- 4.8.6 Look at alternative ways of breaking up the main hall as suggested by Sean Maguire on the night *[of the meeting]*. Could temporary, sound –proof dividers be sourced? This way the space could be broken up, if required, for use by smaller groups, but could remain it's current size, if needed, by existing groups.
- 4.8.7 A direct mail campaign to groups who might use space – Scouts, Guides, Brownies, other Yoga group, Tai Chi, Pilates, Dance Schools, Sports Groups, Craft businesses [eg. Groups offering Lego workshops for children or Minecraft ones, Craft fare organisers, Training bodies, Antrim Road traders, and similar groups etc...]
- 4.8.8 Look at renting out chairs, tables, crockery, glasses etc. that the Centre already owns, at competitive rates. Again look at other places who do similar things and cost and price accordingly e.g. Sainsbury's rent out glasses for parties. If successful, consider expanding this service by purchasing more.
- 4.8.9 Start a new Youth Club for kids from this part of the parish, especially 11-16. This would also help prevent some of the anti social behaviour, as kids don't have anything constructive to do in this part of the parish. It's a fact of life that some parents don't want their kids having to go down to Holy Family to participate in youth groups, so there is no point in ignoring this fact. Investigate grant aid and funding opportunities, for same.
- 4.8.10 Run alcohol-free discos – weekly, fortnightly or monthly, to help alleviate the anti –social behaviour and give kids something to do. Perhaps for 1-16 or 16-18s.
- 4.8.11 Look at making GIFT or something similar an all year round activity for those important age groups.
- 4.8.12 Tea dances for the elderly again on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. This would help make the older residents of this part of the parish, who feel disenfranchised from it, to feel wanted, needed and important.
- 4.8.13 Run regular dance classes – hip hop, traditional, ceilidhs, etc.. There are many new dance schools who do after school activities in our schools already. Useful contacts can be made through them.
- 4.8.14 Run an after school club. There may be childcare providers in the parish who would be keen to do this.
- 4.8.15 Homework clubs – primary and / or secondary level. Again, there are lots of private tutors and teachers in the parish who could be interested in running these.
- 4.8.16 Numeracy clubs [as 4.8.15]
- 4.8.17 Literacy clubs [as 4.8.15]
- 4.8.18 Transfer Test preparation classes [as 4.8.15]
- 4.8.19 Room hire for private tutors, music lessons, coaching etc..
- 4.8.20 Knitting, crochet or other craft / art classes.
- 4.8.21 Mark out courts on hall floor which looks like it needs resealed before it gets irreparably damaged. Market to sports clubs and societies.
- 4.8.22 Bingo, again giving the elderly more choice of activity and promoting their important role in our parish.
- 4.8.23 Run talent shows e.g. resurrection / Holy Family's got Talent etc..
- 4.8.24 Organise cooking demos, e.g. Chinese, Indian, Polish etc., helping to foster and improve community relations.
- 4.8.25 More kids activities e.g. Mr Tumble, Baby Yoga, etc.. There's already a target audience within the parish of mother and baby club attendees, but we could advertise on Netmums, etc.. for wider appeal.
- 4.8.26 Summer schemes, including all school holidays, e.g. Easter, Halloween. Some private companies use venues like St Gerard's, St Peter's Church and BMC, Chichester Ave currently.
- 4.8.27 Sports coaching – groups or individuals e.g. groups like Henry Sports currently use St Gerard's.
- 4.8.28 Cheerleading classes. Empower our young girls who aren't interested in traditional sports.
- 4.8.29 Cake sales or other home-made produce sales.
- 4.8.30 Open a coffee shop in the Presbytery to attract and encourage more people onto the site.

- 4.8.31 Offer board room facilities for meetings to other groups, businesses and organisations.
4.8.32 Start a parish drama group or society. Shows would be a good earner.
4.8.33 Market the Centre on the basis of: Off street parking / a range of flexible spaces / served by local buses.

As a parent of 3 girls [aged 11, 12 and 13], who lives facing the site, I can see it needs lots of work but also that it could be something wonderful to help heal our parish and bring us all back together. Rename the centre [run a competition to do it] and make people feel involved. The name Resurrection will always carry the negativity of the past for the people here. Even though the Centre has been known as the Parish Centre, people always refer to it as “the one behind Resurrection”, or “the one behind the closed church. Call it something powerful and appropriate to help e.g. the Bridge Parish Centre, New beginnings Parish Centre, for example.

I and I'm sure, many other parishioners, with young families in the parish, would gladly help the Pastoral and Finance Committees towards achieving these ideas.

4.9 Email from HM

My mother was telling me about the 'Vision for the Future - Consultation Meetings'. I don't know if fundraising is on the horizon but I wanted to let you know about a foundation that supports capital fundraising. It's called the Garfield Weston Foundation www.garfieldweston.org/ and they are crying out to support projects in NI. They are definitely worth contacting if fundraising is required. Their annual report details what they have supported in good detail. Hopefully this is of some use.

4.10 Letter from SG

On the Columbarium, I think it's an excellent idea but where and when would depend on what is decided about the Cavehill site – the elephant in the room?

Building needs of parish - to serve large population with range of needs for young, old etc...
'Social Space' at either end of parish to provide for meetings, coffee mornings, after Mass refreshments etc..

A Parish Centre – with halls, plus kitchen, suitable for parish functions, concerts, plays, sports etc. Also to be let out for other purposes eg. Dancing, yoga classes etc..

Meeting Rooms – for use by parish committees, organisations etc.. either in parish centre or social spaces.

Sites:–

Holy Family has the Gathering Space used for range of social functions.
Rooms for meetings in Parochial House building.

Cavehill Road - Has the Parish Centre [however inadequate] with halls, kitchen and other spaces, large parking area. Midway within parish. Disused Church in ruinous state.

Somerton Road – Nothing at present except listed house with potential for development at year. Some parking space which could be extended.

Conclusion:

Somerton area is most in need of facilities. No decisions can be made re. development of this site until decisions are made about Cavehill Road. If it is to go, the Somerton site would have to incorporate some form of Parish Centre with facilities similar to present one.

If Cavehill site is to be re-developed for the parish, this will impact on what is done with Somerton.

'Outside the Box' – Could the Diocesan building be used to provide facilities at Somerton Road? It is unlikely that all rooms are fully used all the time. Would it be possible [in the interim] for St Therese to have use of 1 or 2 rooms for social events - eg. Refreshments after Mass, coffee mornings etc. Possibly a small payment could be made for use of these facilities.