

## **The Church of St Cuthbert in the Parish of Amble.**

### **Judgement re Faculty Application of 14 August 2014.**

1. This is an application for a faculty by the priest in charge Rev. Diane Ruth Westmorland and the churchwardens, Thomas Malcolm Hetherington and Lesley Young in the following terms: –

To create an open floor space at the back of the church by removing 10 x pews, levelling the floor and fitting a suitable floor covering; installing retractable projection screen and wiring for portable projector; replace wooden panels in internal porch doors with clear safety glass panels etched with St. Cuthbert's cross; install additional electrical sockets; install PID sensors in nave and chancel; introduce x 25 stacking chairs; build ramp from gateway to enlarged top step at main door; replace wooden flagpole with fibreglass flagpole, relocated within the grounds; replace noticeboard with name board and aluminium poster case, repainting main door to match colour; all in accordance with the document "Faculty Application" of May 2014 and with the letter and enclosures of Mr. M. Dixon of 20 May 2014.

2. The short history of this matter is that in the summer of 2012 a Mission Action Plan began to be considered by the PCC. Those considerations included discussions about a possible re-ordering of parts of the church. At least as long ago as early 2013 that possibility was discussed by the PCC and members of the regular congregation on an informal basis. Following those discussions and the involvement of the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne, at a meeting of the PCC on 13 May 2013, a unanimous decision was taken to seek to obtain a licence from the Archdeacon for the temporary reordering of the church by the removal of up to 10 pews at the rear of the church in order to create the opportunity for the Parish to experiment with the more creative and welcoming use of the space created.
3. Prior to the obtaining of the Archdeacon's licence a pamphlet dated 31 May 2013 and entitled "Helping our Church to grow - some news from the PCC"

was distributed to members of the congregation outlining the plans to remove the pews and the reasoning behind those plans. On 2 June 2013 Rev. Westmorland preached on the matter at the service at which the pamphlet was distributed. On 14 June 2013 the Archdeacon granted a licence for the temporary reordering of the church by the removal of the pews, on condition that they could be removed easily and without damage to the floor and that they be stored in such a manner that they could be reinstated in their original positions, should a faculty not be granted at the end of the licence period. On 23 June 2013 Mrs Vivienne Dalgliesh wrote to the secretary of the PCC, a copy of her letter being annexed hereto as Annex A. On 7 July 2013 a presentation was held at the main Sunday service in relation to the proposals and the congregation split into groups to discuss the best use of the space provided. On 27 June 2013 Mrs Dalgliesh's letter was discussed by the PCC and a reply dated 5 August 2013 (Annex B) was sent to her.

4. In the latter half of 2013 experimentation with the use of the space created and discussions in relation to it continued and there was wide ranging consultation with the parishioners who used the church. In early 2014 a pamphlet (Annex C) was distributed to all upon the electoral roll and to those who gave directly to the church. I am satisfied that during the period from June 2013 to July 2014 there was overwhelming support to make the removal of the pews permanent and to utilise the space created in a variety of ways, as illustrated in the pamphlet Annex C.
5. On 16 July 2014 Mrs Dalgliesh wrote to the Diocesan Registrar objecting to the removal of the pews, in the terms annexed at Annex D. Following receipt of the petition for the faculty the Registrar wrote, on 27 August 2014, to Mrs Dalgliesh inviting her either simply to allow me to take her letter into account or, should she so wish, to become a party opponent and explaining the procedures. No response having been received from Mrs Dalgliesh I treat that as her having opted to have her views taken into account by me when considering whether or not to grant a faculty.

6. The petitioners were supplied with a copy of Mrs Dalglish's letter of 16 July 2014 and responded to it by writing to the Registrar on 23 September 2014. In their response the petitioners explain the process of consultation that was gone through with all of the members of the congregation and point out that, since the pews were removed on a temporary basis, Mrs Dalglish has not attended church and, accordingly, has not experienced what has happened since or had the opportunity to see what the effect of the removal of the pews and the consequential use of the space has been. Mrs Dalglish's own letter confirms that she has ceased attending church. All of the concerns that Mrs Dalglish raises in her two letters have been addressed by the petitioners in their responses.
  
7. I am satisfied on all of the material before me that there has been a wide consultation with members of the congregation in relation to making the removal of the pews permanent and in relation to the other consequential works. I am further satisfied that there is wide agreement that the use of the space that has been provided by the removal of the pews has enhanced and will continue to enhance the ministry of the Church in Amble. I find that it is wholly appropriate to grant the faculty that is sought. Whilst I have no doubt of the sincerity of Mrs Dalglish's views I equally have no doubt that her concerns are misplaced and that the proposed works are appropriate and beneficial.
  
8. I express the hope that efforts will be made to encourage Mrs Dalglish to return to regular worship at St Cuthbert's Church and that she will be welcomed back into the fellowship of the church of which she has been a faithful member for many years prior to her ceasing to attend at the time of the temporary removal of the pews.

Euan Duff  
Chancellor  
30 October 2014

## ANNEX A

8, West Crescent,  
Amble,  
Morpeth,  
Northumberland.  
NE650PB

Tel 01665712764

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2013

Dear PCC Secretary,

Don't try to kid me that taking the pews out of the back of church will be a temporary measure. Taking them out will leave an ugly space, the first thing you would see as you come in the door. In order to make it aesthetically pleasing, practical and compliant with health and safety regulations it will need money spent on it. I am thinking particularly about the floor. To do a proper job it would not be economical if it was only temporary.

I would like to know what plans you have for the space and what provision would be made for services when the church would be full, i.e. funerals of well-known local characters.

Finally I would like to know what all this is going to cost me, the pensioner in the pew, we already have a fundraising scheme in progress that has not yet reached its target.

I would like to see all these points addressed before I give this plan my blessing.

Yours sincerely,

Vivienne Dalgliesh.

ANNEX B

5t Cuthbert's  
Parish Church  
Amble

Togston Barns Farmhouse  
Amble  
MORPETH  
NE650HS

01670-760007

5 August 2013

Mrs V. Dalgliesh  
8 West Crescent  
Amble  
MORPETH  
NE650PB

Dear Mrs Dalgliesh,

I read your letter of 27th June to the PCC last Monday and they have asked me to reply to you on their behalf.

First of all we want to thank you for taking the trouble to write to us. We are always glad to receive parishioners' views directly, and we will be mindful of your concerns.

We hope that at least some of the concerns you raised were covered in the sermon slot at the 9:30 service on 7th July. I myself gave a presentation at that service, and I enclose a copy of the slides that I used. Some of the principal points I made were: -

1. The church has not always looked as it does now. The original plans show that there were two more rows of pews at the front as well as pews to the west side of the main door. Also when the church was built there was no porch, so the main door opened directly into the church. Furthermore there was no choir vestry.
2. Now that we have done the work, the remaining pews afford sufficient seating for 182 people, which is somewhere around three times the normal Sunday morning congregation. We accept that there are a small number of very large funerals (normally one or two per year) where the congregation might exceed this number, but we take the view that on such occasions people realise that they may have to stand if they are not early at church. There have previously been occasions when people have had to stand outside the church, and the removal of the pews that we have done releases space for more people to stand than could have sat on those pews when they were in place.
3. The removal of the pews creates a flexible space that can be used for small prayer groups, school visits, baptism welcomes, meditation space, coffee after church, etc.
4. Our overall aim is to make the church more approachable and welcoming, and hopefully therefore attract new people to join us. I made the point that when Meg and I joined the church, 20 years ago, there were quite a lot of people in our age group. Most of us are still here, but 20 years older, i.e. in our 60s - there are very few people now in their 40s in the present congregation. If this trend continues then the future of our church looks very uncertain indeed.

The current removal of the pews is under the authority of a Form 7 (Rule 6) "Permission for temporary re-ordering" which was granted to us by the Archdeacon of Lindisfarne. If the PCC does decide that the change should be made permanent then a faculty will be applied for at which time a copy of the application will be publicly displayed at the church for not less than 28 days, and there will be a formal process for making representations.

You raised a specific question about the floor. At present we have applied hazard tape to the floor edges to highlight the trip hazard. This is not an ideal solution, but it is all we are permitted to do under the terms of the permission for temporary re-ordering. If we apply for a faculty then we will also seek permission to make appropriate adjustments to the floor at that time.

Finally, we would like to reassure you that because of the temporary nature of the current permission the work has been done at minimal cost.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Dixon,  
PCC Secretary.



**What do our congregation and visitors think about the changes that have been made so far?**

"Brilliant!"

"I was completely against removing pews, I wanted the church to stay the same as it always had been but now when I see it, I realize how attractive it is. Much better."

"Now the entrance is much more welcoming, less confrontational."

"It's great to see the flowers, as I go through the door."

"It's much more interesting now. There's always something to look at."

"It's nice to be able to take my time getting in."

There's plenty of room for others to get round me."

"So many more stay for coffee after the service. It's more friendly and those who couldn't negotiate steps easily now feel included."

An occasional visitor found the meditative prayer walk inspirational. "I shall come again."

## What are our next steps?

- Develop the spiritual life of the congregation, starting with the introduction of a new booklet, 'St Cuthbert's At Prayer' in Spring 2014.
- The reintroduction of Refreshing Faith, and the start of Exploring Prayer and other courses, from May 2014.
- Appoint an architect, to guide, advise and help us with our vision for the future of our buildings.
- Make a faculty application (church planning permission) to make the floor safe and install better electrics at the west end of the church.
- Talk with the wider community of Amble, to gather their views on what they need and expect from their own parish church.
- In the longer term, work towards some much needed basic facilities for the church building, like toilet facilities, a servery and proper disabled access.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*Connecting with God, engaging with all*

We are working hard to be a vital and vibrant Christian presence in our community. We aim to be generous in our sharing and engaged with our town, with hearts open to the love of Christ, minds open to the challenge of change, and buildings that are open and welcoming to all.

We want to live out the prayer that we say, week by week...

May we who share Christ's body live his risen life, we who drink his cup bring life to others, we whom the Spirit lights, give light to the world





### The Vicar writes

The Parish Church has been part of the life in Amble since 1870. It is here to serve the whole of the community, and it should develop to be fit for the needs of the 21st century. Our Church Council has been asking the question “How can St Cuttbert’s best serve the community now and ensure that the Church remains a vibrant part of the town?” This is not just a question of how we use our buildings, but it is about the whole of our life as part of God’s people.

To answer that question Mission Action Plan (MAP) teams (subgroups from the PCC) have been working hard on several ideas and making links with other people who can help us – like inspired North East. We are working with the full support of our Archdeacon. This leaflet aims to show you where we have got to, and invites you to contribute your ideas. Please continue to pray for God’s leading and inspiration.

At the end of July 2013 we removed some pews at the back of church, initially on a temporary basis, to see how we could use a more flexible space.

Before any of the pews were removed, we asked the congregation for their suggestions as to how the extra space could be used.



### What you said you wanted and what has happened in the last six months

- Serving coffee in a place where people with mobility problems can easily join in. (Many more people stay for coffee after church nowadays!)
- Extra space to meet and greet people before a service.
- Welcome meetings for families preparing for a Christening.
- Café church – informal services of more appeal to children but great for adults too!
- A prayer corner with varying meditative themes and a meditative walk round the church.

### In addition, the space has been used for many more purposes, for example

- Class visits from schools to explore the church Heritage.
- PCC meetings.
- ‘Intercessors’ training.
- ‘Lindisfarne Legacy’ exhibition.
- Standing room for large funerals. (This now accommodates more people than the pews used to.)
- Displays of general interest (e.g. “In Review” monthly Diocesan news sheet.)
- Spring Fayre.
- Freed up space in the Choir Vestry and allowed us to treat the damp problems there.

The picture below shows everyone making fancy bread rolls at the Harvest Café Church.





ANNEX D

8, West Crescent,  
Amble,  
Morpeth,  
Northumberland.  
NE650PB

Tel 01665 712764

16 July 2014

Dear Sir,

I wish to formally object to the removal of the pews from the back of St. Cuthbert's Church, Amble.

The congregation was never consulted about this this action, only told it was happening. I enclose a copy of the letter I sent to the PCC when this plan was announced. I would therefore also like to object to the process that has brought us to this position, because the pews are already removed.

My name is on the Electoral Roll and I have been a committed member of the congregation in excess of 50 years, being baptised, confirmed and married in this church. I have attended the Sunday School, the Bible Class, Confirmation Class and been a member of A.Y.P.A; have served as a Sunday School teacher, sung in the choir, served on the PCC and the Deanery Synod in my time. I regard our church as a place as worship, a sacred space, and do not want to see it used for spring fayres etc. We have a very adequate church hall for this purpose.

I have seen the plans but no one has given me any indication of the cost or where the funds will come from. In the meantime we have to put up with what I consider to be an act of vandalism.

I have stopped attending the church in protest at the removal of the pews, and will not support financially any effort to fund this change. Seeing what has been done to the building vexes me and I go to church for spiritual refreshment, not to be vexed.

Yours sincerely,



Vivienne Dalgliesh. (Mrs.)