

Growing Our Futures

A New Way Forward for Horstead Church

On the 13th July we held an open meeting to discuss a vision for our beautiful medieval church that makes it sustainable and useful for the future. The meeting at Horstead church included representatives from the Parish Council, Tithe Barn Committee, Horstead Trust and other village groups.

It is important to point out that the church building, is not the Church. For Christians, the 'Church' means the people who meet together for worship and this can take place in other places than the church building. For instance, at present Horstead church meet in the Tithe Barn in the colder months as it is easier to heat. The meeting was to discuss the future of our ancient and beautiful medieval church building.

The Reverend Joanna Haywood and Churchwarden Lucy Care spoke briefly outlining possible changes for the church and the need, in the long term to make it self sufficient and sustainable. Major repairs are needed to the tower and roof in particular. The most obvious change to make the church more usable by the wider community is to build a kitchen and toilet. It is also suggested that solar energy panels be installed to make it more affordable to heat the church. Small changes are already in the pipeline. Some pews in store or surplus to requirements and the wooden platform are under review already. But in order to keep this building with access for all and versatile enough to make a public place for the community to use more needs to be done.

We need more space inside the building, as at present room for many of our activities, especially with children, is sparse. Reverend Joanna pointed out that when the church was built, there were no pews at all. Our needs have changed in the 21st century and she challenged us to think widely about what the future could hold for this beautiful, historic building. She asked us to consider what we wanted the church building to be in 20 years time.

Answers were challenging and encouraging. *'A place with a bustle of activity – not only worship services. Happy children's voices and a place for young people to meet.'*

'To be an open comfortable, welcoming place where all of the community feel they can come – for any reason and to meet with God.'

'Still a place for quiet reflection and worship'.

This vision of the church as centre of village life for locals and visitors, as well as a place to meet with God, was central to most of the comments.

'It's the historic centre of the village' said one and *'we value the building and the churchyard for the connection to our past'.* *'We want prayer to continue here'.*



'It would be good if the Horstead Centre, Tithe Barn and church could work together'

Over the past few years the PCC have held many community events organised by our History and Environment group and usually in partnership with the Horstead Centre. These include school events for local schools and visitors to the Horstead Centre, concerts, talks and exhibitions and our popular Community Activity Days. We would like to do more but the church needs repairs and we will need to plan for grant funding to achieve what we want.

All Saints will always be a place of worship. There is huge potential to develop both this and its use as the centre of village life as well as a focal point for visitors. Both the building and the churchyard are greatly loved and in constant use. (The church is open every day from 9am – 5pm). The PCC has had drawn up some planning ideas for repairing and altering the church and these were on display. None of them fits all our ideas as yet but it is a start.

We also have a duty to conserve our wonderful churchyard and the river, so close behind the church. Many visitors marvel at the chalk stream, a rare habitat, surrounded by the wood and fields. We can take it for granted but here, in Horstead we have a perfect place to celebrate the beauty of our area and to teach the next generation about it.

In order to move forward, we would like to develop a planning group which would include people from across all aspects of village life, as well as those who worship at the church. There is a need for a full feasibility study, which would include developing a comprehensive vision for the church building..... A place of worship where everyone is welcome. A place for the whole community to explore, history, music and the arts. Where children and schools can learn about their own locality, its environment and its history. A place where the church building proudly represents our local community past and present and has a vision for a sustainable future.

If you have a couple of hours to spare, every month or so, we would be very pleased to hear from you. Please contact: Rev. Joanna Haywood rector.coltgroup@gmail.com

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