

Minister's Letter - November 2009

November should turn out to be a wonderful month for The Church in Great Notley. This should be the month in which building work finally gets under way for our new church building. We have planned the ceremonial 'turf cutting' event for the afternoon of Monday 23rd November. This ceremony marks the beginning of the contractual relationship between the church and our building contractors, T J Evers. The building project should take 29 weeks which means that we anticipate taking possession of the finished building in the late summer of 2010.

2009 has been a busy year in the story of the building. Our fundraising was getting closer to its target figure. By September 2009 we estimated that we were only £50,000 away from the target price. We launched a final fundraising drive and within one month, more than the required £50,000 had been raised. It was an exceptional response from church members, and from the partner denominations, and from other local churches. A big 'Thank You' goes to everyone who responded. At about the same time we also produced the final details required to satisfy all the 'conditions' on the planning application and so we have also now received full planning permission. So by the end of the month of September we knew we were ready to proceed to sign the contract.

But, a word of caution should be exercised here. Because we have been working towards this outcome for 12 years now, a certain degree of final frustration had begun to creep into our thinking. 'It's now or never!' had become our unofficial motto in 2009. As a consequence of this new way of thinking, a final effort was made to strip the building project of all surplus costs. Whilst we will still take delivery in 2010 of the building we have wanted all along, in a number of relatively minor ways it will be incomplete or finished to a basic standard. For example, whilst we want the interior to be divided by two sets of folding partition screen walls for maximum flexibility of use, it is likely to be opened with only one set in place; modern kitchens in public buildings need to be finished to a very high standard, and we may not be able to afford all the kitchen units we would ideally like; we are not proposing buying hardly any new furniture at this stage, nor will there be much of a budget for new equipment.

I say all this to indicate that continued fundraising is, and will still be, a major concern for some years to come. Not only are there matters to do with the building that we would like to improve, but also we have taken out a sizeable loan to complete the fundraising. So, even though it is true that we can now afford to build the church, we still actually need to raise roughly another £100,000, partly to finish the building the way we want to, and partly to pay back the loan. So if anyone else can join in our final fundraising push, we would be delighted to hear from you. Not only did we raise £50,000 in the month of September, but money still continues to come in. If you are in a position to add a contribution to the flow of income, please let us know. You can either contact our church treasurer, Mrs M Ouwehand, or the treasurer of the Friends of the Church, Mrs B Barltrop. Contact details are on the web site's contact page.

But most importantly we are rejoicing in the good news that soon there will be a church building for the village of Great Notley - a spiritual home for Christians to worship in; a local place for weddings and funerals; and a suite of public spaces for community groups to meet in.

Thanks be to God. Revd Mike Shrubsole