

Bishopswood – The Facts

Background

Around thirty years ago Bishopswood was a thriving church. Today it is struggling with numbers of attendees and finances. The covid-19 pandemic has brought to a head underlying issues which we need to acknowledge and address.

This document will attempt to set out the many issues that we face:

Our current situation

- **Attendance** – until recently we have had two services a month; 9.30am service with attendance at 2-3 people (if you include the priest and the organist) and the 11am service with 4-8 people. Consequently, we now only have the 11am service once a month.
- **Occasional Offices** – they have been relatively few in recent years:

Occasional Offices	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Baptism	1				2		1
Marriage							2
Funerals	2	1		4	1	4	2
Burial of Ashes	3						

- **Festival Services** – we see a reasonable turnout at festival services ... but even these are gradually going down in the last 12 years:

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	Average per year
Easter	14	15	C	12	13	15	20	30	21	19	26	18	22	20
Summer Service	33			26										
Harvest	26	29	C	10	21	?	30	26	?	35	48	28	?	27
Remembrance	23	25	C	20	35	?	18	21	?	27	30	?	26	25
Carol Concert	C	43	C	52	60	30	75	55	52	56	99	50	?	52-57
Christmas	13	15	C	14	12	15	14	14	12	20	14	16	10	14

C - Cancelled

	Attendance is above average.
	Attendance is below average.

- **Church Officers** – The Church Officers (Church Warden, Treasurer, Secretary etc) all resigned in August 2020, and since then the role of the PCC has sat under the oversight of the incumbent.
- **Helping the church for services** – A small team is required to help set up and run the services with the priest. A small team came together, and we ran a rota for around six months. At this point the whole team – all for good reasons – were unable to continue. This means that there is no one working with the priests to set up for services. [I would note that Barry & Carol have worked so hard for so long to maintain this, but it isn't fair that all this has fallen on two people for so long].
- **Finances** – We have run a deficit budget consecutively for eight years. This has depleted our reserves by £17,550.91. We are looking like having a deficit of around £4,125 for 2023 as well. This means that the church will be bankrupt within 3.5 years. This is broken down as follows:

Bishopswood Account Summary

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Income	20976.09	12807.56	10677.38	13408.32		8283.26	6787.88	10729.73	6580	90250.22
Expenditure	17456.64	15500.62	14860.19	16000.57		9871.76	6806.47	13080.43	10705	104281.68
Difference	3519.45	-2693.06	-4182.81	-2592.25	0	-1588.5	-18.59	-2350.7	-4125	-14031.46
Reserves										
Deposit Fund									2727	
Churchyard A/C									3500	
Maintenance A/C Restricted									683	
Improvement Fund Restricted									188	
Shareholding A/C									10000	
									17098	We have around 3.5 years before we are broke!

- Parish Share** – Each church in the Church of England should contribute to their Diocese for the cost the clergy and running the church. The average contribution for a church in Hereford Diocese is around £7,500. We have been paying £3,600. This year we are attempting to pay £5,000 to show that we want to ‘playball’.
- Maintenance** – In preparation for this, we asked if we could have a QIR (Quinquennial Inspection Report). This showed us that the costs of putting right all the things the report identified would be in the order of £22,000.

A	Urgent requiring immediate attention	Approval	Cost
i	Electrical installation – Periodic inspection and certification. PAT on plug in items.	-	250
ii	Fire risk and Health & Safety assessments – Review and record	-	-
iii	Rainwater goods, roofs and gables– Debris/vegetation clearance, checking crosses and coping stones and running repairs [already planned using cherry picker]	-	500+
iv	External walls – Repointing/repairs to Vestry NE corner [already planned]. Prevention of water run off from fencing rails. Assess and repair NW corner	B	1,000+
v	Drainage – Gullies to be checked/cleared of debris [identify any blocked drains]	-	-
vi	Vestry steps – Remove vegetation	-	-
	Total cost band		1

B	Requires attention within 12 months	Approval	Cost
i	Ivy regrowth [building and yew tree] – Sever/remove.	-	-
ii	Drainage – Investigate any blocked drains and repair	-/B	tbc
iii	Windows – Obtain quotations from a specialist and prioritise/plan repairs as needed [especially the Vestry east window].	-	-
iv	North Side of Church and East Return Banking – Cut back plant growth and assess repairs needed	-	-
v	Paths – Clear moss and debris.	-	-
	Total cost band		1

C	Requires attention within 2 years	Approval	Cost
i	High level – Further maintenance and minor repairs to roofs, rainwater goods, abutments and check of concealed areas. Including vegetation/debris removal, re-dressing disturbed flashings and make good open joints and voids especially to copings [including using a cherry picker].	B	1,000+
ii	Vestry east window – Repairs [including to lintel]	B	500+
	Total cost band		1

D	Requires attention within the quinquennial period	Approval	Cost
i	External Metal Vents – Rust treat and decorate.	B	50
ii	External walls – Monitor crack locations [after repointing with lime mortar]	B	150
iii	External joinery [including notice board, doors and window boarding] – Minor repairs and redecoration	B	250+

iv	Windows – Repairs as necessary, including metalwork refurbishment [as funding available].	B	2,000+
v	Nave Roof Void – Inspection of condition.	-	500
vi	Suspended Timber Flooring – Investigate areas of bounce and drop. Schedule repairs.	-/B	150/500+
vii	External Walls – Repoint open joints and voids with lime mortar [including repair damaged stonework at boiler pipe positions].	B	750+
viii	Bells and Bell Frame – High level inspection, maintenance and repair if required [use of cherry picker on site for roofs and gutters].	-	50+
ix	North Side of Church and East Return Banking – Stonework repairs	-	1,000+
Total cost band			2

E	A deferred repair or desirable improvement	Approval	Cost
i	Building Perimeter – Create breathing strip between hard paving and the walls.	B	2,000
ii	Windows – Further phases of repairs and re-leading. Provision of background ventilation [eg Vestry].	B	5,000+
iii	Vestry and Bellcote External Doors – Provide handrails to steps.	F	300
iv	Sanctuary Ceiling – New roof hatch to allow inspection of timber structure over.	F	500+
v	Internal walls – Redecoration with breathable paint after repairs [eg Vestry]	B	2,000+
vi	Shed - Replacement	B	300
vii	Boiler casing – Redecoration.	B	50
viii	West Boundary Wall – Repairs where needed [eg area of collapse at NW corner (and small section of collapse two thirds of the way along)].	B	500+
ix	Yew tree adjacent to SE corner of church – Trimming back of branches	-	250+
x	Gates and Railings – Redecoration.	B	250+
Total cost band			3

What has been done about this

In October 2020, a consultation was held with the village about the future role of the church. It was convened by Penny Powdrill (designate Associate Vicar), Mark Johnson (Rural Dean) and Derek Chedzey (Archdeacon). The list of those who attended was not passed to Rev Tim and is deemed lost.

They asked those who attended if they wanted to see the church close.¹ The majority view was that they didn't want this to happen. However, a small number of people offered but this doesn't seem to have been progressed.

A review meeting was set to follow this meeting, but this was not progressed.

¹ Attended by around 30 people in the Village Hall.

What next

Sadly, All Saints Bishopswood is fast approaching a crunch point. As, has been said, within four years the church will become bankrupt and will not be able to function at this point. Therefore, action needs to be taken at this point should we wish to save the church and to continue to worship in the building.

There are limited options available to us. But we can:

- **Close the church** – *this takes about 2/3 years to go through a formal process when the church would be closed and handed over to Hereford Diocese Board of Finance as the custodian owner. Services would cease at this point. However, the churchyard would remain open and need to be transferred to another parish for legal care and upkeep.*
- **The Church merges with another church** – *we ask a nearby church to take on the church and to cover its running costs and upkeep. In essence, All Saints Church would become a ‘chapel of ease’ of another parish. Obviously, another church isn’t going to be keen taking on a church without financial security.*
- **The Church community merges with another parish** – *the church closes, another parish takes over the churchyard and their parish PCC allows worship to continue in Bishopswood in, say, the village hall. If the new parish PCC doesn’t allow worship to continue in Bishopswood, worship would transfer to the new church.²*
- **Keep Bishopswood church building** – *a viable plan is put in place that ensures enough resources (people, finances, PCC, fundraising) to ensure that All Saints can ‘function effectively’ for the next 10 years. To ensure our future we need to be looking at an increase of giving of around £10-12k per year to avoid a deficit budget; we are paying a reasonable parish offer (of around £7.5k a year) and we look to save around £5k a year for ongoing maintenance to the church.³ If we are unable to do this, we are potentially only delaying the inevitable.*

Conclusion

All Saint’s church is beautiful and has a place in the village and is dear to many. While it is extremely sad that we have reached this point, we need to be honest, and a defined plan, and commitment of resources (people and finances) is required to secure its future.

Regrettably, the clock is now ticking.

Rev Tim Starling
Vicar – Wye Reaches Benefice

² Permission would be needed from the Bishop of Hereford.

³ Obviously, these are rounded up guesstimate figures.