

Reimagining St Giles'

Fulfilling the Ely 2025 Strategy



The Consultation process so far

ely2025

Parishioners from St Giles' met in **August 2015** to establish a friends group in accordance with the Diocese of Ely 2025 strategy which advised churches to establish separate 'Friends' groups to assist with the upkeep and 're-imagining' of buildings (pp.14). The newly established Friends and the District Church Council made the decision that the Friends should assist in enhancing St Giles' and making it useful and sustainable in time for the churches 150th Anniversary in 2025 (and the completion of the Diocesan strategy).

Initial consultation **throughout 2016** showed that the St Giles' could increase its income and improve attendance figures by addressing the heating, lighting and storage issues in the church, alongside considering the creation of a separate West Room for hire, with up-to-date lavatory and kitchen facilities. The decision was made to employ Nigel Walter, from Archangel Architects, to assist, who already transformed St Augustine's in the parish.

In September 2017, comments were invited on some initial proposals, which were displayed in church and the vestry and announced in the parish magazine. A number of replies were received on paper and electronically. Based on these comments, the District Church Council and the Friends decided to focus on lighting, heating, accessibility, and

improved community facilities at the West End of the church. Other proposals, such as the installation of a dais in the Nave Altar area, were dropped because of lack of support.

In June 2018, a consultation was held on the architect's initial plans. The Bishop was invited to inspect them, as were key people from across the community, including the Member of Parliament, the High Sheriff and local councillors. There was widespread enthusiasm for improvements to the heating and lighting. The idea of a West Room was welcomed by many (but not all), and there were particular concerns about the size and the impact on the church. Feedback was also received from the Diocese and Church Buildings Council who were in favour of the creation of a West Room. The architect's plans and the booklet asking for comments went to the Parochial Church Council shortly afterwards.

Regular meetings with the architect, members of the congregation, District Church Council and the Diocesan Advisory Committee have been held throughout the past years. Most recently: **March 2019**. At this last meeting, the decision was made that the production of visuals would be the next step, which are presented here for discussion.

The entire fees for the architect and all professional consultancy was paid for by the Friends of St Giles' Church, Cambridge. 90% of the income of the Friends comes from individuals who are not on the electoral role of the Parish.

Please fill in a feedback form to let us know what you think. You can also email officeatcastle@btinternet.com or info@fosgc.org

A Project of
St Giles' Church

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Charity no. 1172822

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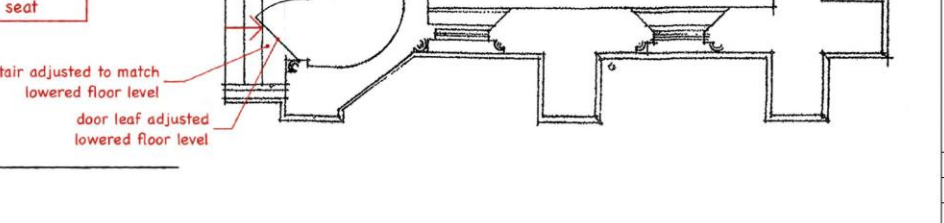
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The church is home to two main Anglican congregations, one meeting for a Saturday Vigil Eucharist (6pm) and the other for a Sunday Sung Eucharist (9am). The two congregations come together for social occasions, and both are represented on the District Church Council (DCC) and Parochial Church Council (PCC). There is also a midweek Eucharist, which draws people from

St Giles' has long been used for non-religious activities. St Giles' Hall on Pound Hill is now rented out to an IT company, providing a substantial income-stream for the PCC. The church itself was used as a brass rubbing centre for some years. The font was moved from the West End to the South Aisle to accommodate this. The church is now used for concerts, music rehearsals, speaker meetings, exhibitions and drama performances. Cambridgeshire County Council have used the West End for meetings, and the Cambridge Churches Homelessness Project are using the space as overnight accommodation.



St Giles' needs have changed considerably over recent years, as the building has come into greater use and liturgical patterns have changed. We need to be able to accommodate church and secular groups in reasonable comfort, while retaining the sense of 'sacred space' that is essential to the character and identity of the building and that is so important to church users.

Our list of needs has been compiled by members of the Friends of St Giles' Church in consultation with members of the DCC and congregation. It has been further refined following feedback from other church users and members of the wider public, following several consultations:

- The first asked for responses to initial proposals; most were retained, but the possibility of installing a dais in the nave altar area was discounted as unnecessary.
- The second asked for responses to the architect's outline plans, which received significant support.
- Finally, the plans and quantity surveyor's report were considered at an open meeting of the congregation in November 2018. At a subsequent meeting of the District Church Council, the members agreed unanimously which aspects of the scheme they wanted to pursue.

We are confident that the plans now under consideration will help us to address the following needs:

The east end of the nave needs to be a focus point

The main Sunday services and many concerts are focussed on the Nave Altar area, immediately in front of the chancel screen. This is presently one of the darkest areas of the church, and the lighting casts heavy shadows making it difficult to read service books or music. As the centre of the liturgy at most services,

the Nave Altar needs to be clearly visible.

The main seating area needs to be warm

The main seating area fills the central portion of the nave; heating levels are only just adequate, but the aisle heaters struggle to warm the nave at the level of the seating and users often complain about the cold. They are also very noisy. Because of the cold, events of longer than an hour are inadvisable in winter months.

The church needs to be used by multiple groups at the same time

At present, because there are no physical divisions between the west end, the main body of the nave, the lady chapel and the sanctuary, it is impossible to hold an event in one area without disturbance to the others.

This means that we cannot use our building for community activities and bookings while services are taking place, and we cannot provide a space for quiet prayer when group are using the west end. As a result, the church is not as well used as we would like, and potential rental income is lost.

The Parish of the Ascension has a particular commitment to ecumenism, and at St Giles' this is shown in the presence of a Romanian Orthodox congregation. On Sundays, it would be helpful to have at least two self-contained areas so that the different congregations could use different parts of the building before and after their services, without disturbance to acts of worship taking place in the sanctuary and nave.

We require better kitchen facilities

The small kitchenette within the North Aisle 'pod' does not have an oven, built in refrigeration, or hand-wash sink, which means that hot food cannot be prepared. There is an oven in the vestry, but as this doubles as the parish office access is restricted to church users. The fridge



and freezer outside the pod are small and unsightly; they are not in keeping with the church, and require extension leads with trailing wires.

We require better toilet facilities

There is one disabled lavatory in the 'pod'; the other lavatory is only accessible through the parish office. This is adequate for services and exhibitions, but not for concerts and talks where demand on the facilities peaks at certain times (for example, the interval). There are no baby-changing facilities.

We need better storage

The pressure on storage space – a consequence of housing three congregations and multiple secular groups – is significant. St Giles' is a large space, but there is nowhere to hide chairs, folding tables, or equipment without making it look cluttered. We need uniform, purpose-built cupboards and shelves, so that we can store necessary items without undermining the sense of beauty and space.

We need to be able to seat 200(+) people on certain occasions

The current arrangement of fixed and folding chairs allows us to seat 200. Although this is rarely required, there are a number of services and events each year where this amount of seating is required. It will be needed if we are to make the church available for larger performances or talks, and it is our clear ambition to make the building better used for such events.

We need to be more accessible

St Giles' is committed to welcoming everyone. There is already wheelchair access to the nave and an accessible toilet, but we would like to extend access to the Lady Chapel so that it can also be used for weekday services and quiet days.

We need to generate more income

St Giles' is expected to cover its own costs and pay one third of the combined parish share each year. This needs to be met from use of the

building and congregational giving (the rent of our hall is counted as a parish-wide income, and cannot be used by St Giles' for these purposes). Given that many congregation members are on low incomes (whether students, retired or on benefits), we need to generate as much income from the building as possible.

The building needs to withstand increased use

The softwood portions of the floor are easily marked and scuffed when furniture is moved or heavy musical instruments are placed upon it. The flooring needs to be more hard-wearing to reflect the greater demands upon it.

The building needs to meet the demands of the local community

If St Giles' is to be – as we profess – at the centre of the community, we need to have a building that the community will want to use. In addition to the basic facilities listed as requirements above, we need to be able to provide spaces for community use without preventing the building being used for its primary purpose: worship and private prayer.

Cambridge has many meeting spaces, but the prices are usually out of the reach of community users (see Appendix 2), and some community venues have recently closed (most locally, Castle End Mission). We are keen to draw community groups into our wider church family as part of our ministry of hospitality, as well as providing us with a new income-stream.

We would benefit from a well-equipped function room

The absence of any separate enclosed space within the church (besides the vestry, which already doubles as the parish office) constrains the life of the church and limits opportunities for rental income. We often receive speculative enquiries about room



hire, but do not have a suitable room and lose income as a result.

We are able to use the nave for speaker meetings and film nights, but projector equipment needs to be set up and cleared away every time, and long extension leads are required to connect the equipment (creating potential trip hazards). The communal life of the church is strengthened through shared meals, and with better facilities it would be possible to have such meals more regularly.

We would benefit from a place to exhibit heritage items

St Giles' owns a number of significant historic liturgical items, including metalware, books and textiles, which are currently hidden away from public view. As part of the church's

commitment to sharing its heritage, we need a secure space in which these can be displayed.

We would benefit from a more sympathetic heating and lighting system

The current heaters are ugly, ineffective, inefficient, obsolete and expensive to run and maintain. They take up a significant amount of wall space in the north and south aisles. The current lighting system is undimmable and energy hungry, and produces harsh, shadowy light. The architectural and artistic features of the building are invisible or look unattractive when there is no natural light. The system does not allow us to highlight certain areas (such as the Nave Altar during Eucharistic services).

Architect's Impressions of the Proposed West Room



Underfloor heating

The current heating system is not fit for purpose. We propose that it should be replaced with a hot-water based underfloor heating system. Because this would provide a heat source beneath users' feet, their sense of warmth would be substantially increased. The church could be used with comfort throughout the winter months for long periods of time (which, at present, it cannot).

We believe that this is a suitable system now that the church is in daily use. A more constant level of heat would protect the fabric and contents, especially musical instruments. Subject to detailed design, we anticipate that the system will need supplementary heat sources, which if required would be recessed into the floor.

New flooring

In general, underfloor heating works less well with softwood flooring, which is already unsuitable for our current needs. We therefore propose a new tiled, or tile and stone, floor; this is likely to require the removal of some of the existing floor construction, which is a mix of solid and suspended floor construction. The colours of the sanctuary's tiled floor (red, cream and black) could be reflected in the colours of this new floor surface, and we believe this would improve the feeling of the space as a whole.

New lighting

The current lighting system makes the church look drab and uninviting in the evenings. There is a clear mismatch between our message of hospitality and our current

appearance. A new LED system would be more controllable, more discrete, and would show the building to its full advantage – including the possibility of feature lighting to highlight the artistic and architectural merits of this building. The greater reliability of LED systems would greatly reduce the need to change bulbs at height.

New wall storage

The removal of the wall heaters opens up the possibility of neat, fitted storage that would allow us to store equipment and books and hide unused furniture.

West Room

The development of a new function room at the west end of the church would offer increased storage, better toilet and kitchen facilities, and a separate space that could be used by hirers and church groups. It would provide a community resource and generate income. Built-in display cabinets would allow secure exhibitions of heritage materials. The room would be equipped with built in audio-visual technology. Folding doors would allow the space to be connected to the main body of the church for larger events and services.

Access to Lady Chapel

At present there is a step into the Lady Chapel. By installing a ramp or lowering the floor, this space would become fully accessible. The DCC expressed a preference for lowering the floor; this would enable underfloor heating to be extended into the Lady Chapel, but it would also remove the need for a large ramp to be constructed under the medieval arch.





Underfloor heating

We cannot avoid replacing the current heating system as it is obsolete. It would be possible to install new gas heaters or radiators, but these would continue to take up wall space and detract from the north and south aisles. Individual gas heaters are extremely expensive to run and maintain, not to mention environmentally unfriendly. The gas heaters in the sanctuary area are an eyesore, and our experience has been that this type of heaters quickly become noisy in operation. Only underfloor heating is capable of creating a sense of warmth at ground level, and there is the possibility of attaching it to more environmentally friendly heat sources as technology develops.

New flooring

Underfloor heating necessitates a fresh look at the floor, but the softwood portions are already shabby and cannot take the wear and tear involved in using the church for different purposes.

New lighting

The current system of floodlights is ineffective and difficult to maintain. It leaves some of the most significant

areas in shadow, which is unhelpful in services and secular gatherings alike. It does not show the architecture or artwork to good effect, and replacement is the only sensible option.

New wall storage

We are chronically short of storage at St Giles', with the result that a lot of equipment and unused furniture is on full view. Neat wall cupboards will represent a significant improvement, and will enhance rather than detract from the sense of spaciousness.

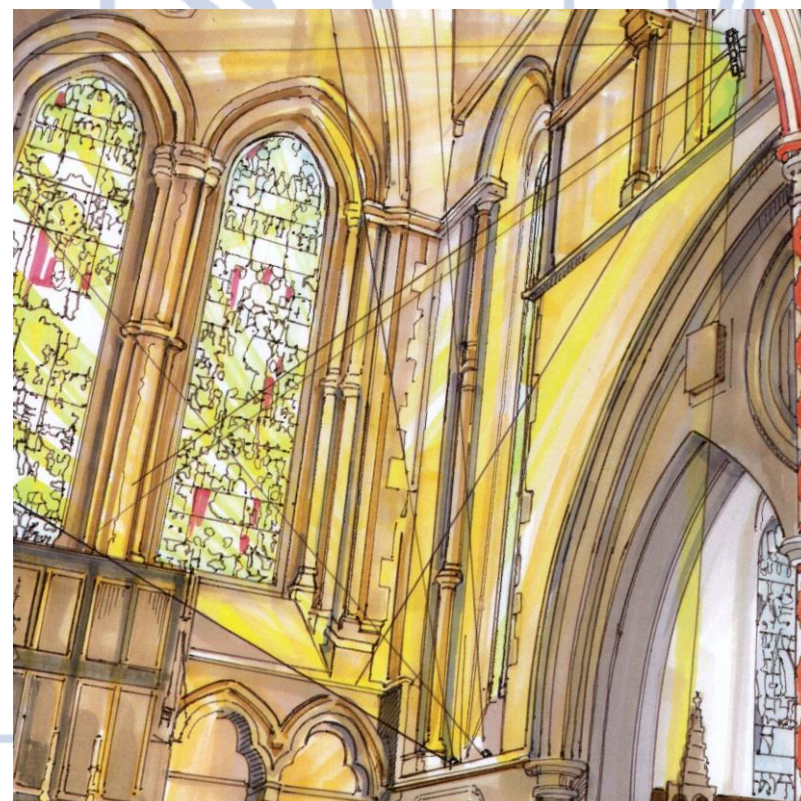
West Room

We cannot improve kitchen and lavatory facilities, or develop a separate function room, without building work. Rather than extend the church, it makes much more sense to take a relatively unloved and unfinished end of the church and develop it into something that is a tremendous asset to the parish and local community.

Access to Lady Chapel

Wheelchair access to the Lady Chapel is currently impossible, meaning that services and quiet days need to be moved out of this space when level access is required.

Lighting Designer's Impressions



We believe that the proposals represent a significant enhancement of the building. The architecture and art will be shown to greater effect, and the building will be more accessible and user-friendly. St Giles', as a pre-eminent example of Tractarian church design, should be more widely accessible, better used and better known, and we believe that the proposed works will help achieve that goal.

Besides these improvements, two areas of significance will be affected. The wooden floor finish in the nave will be replaced with tile or stone and tile; this will provide us with a hardwearing floor that works well with underfloor heating and will improve the dignity of the interior. We will choose materials that are in keeping with the rest of the building, and which might well have been installed as part of the original design had funds allowed.

Second, the Comper panelling at the west end of the church will need to be adapted or moved to accommodate a

West Room. This panelling was always an after-thought, as the west end would have originally provided access to the tower. It is not known to have been installed as a memorial; its purpose was decorative, but it speaks of a desire to convey 'holy gloom' rather than a warm welcome. We cannot retain it in its present form if we are to install the facilities so needed by church and community users.

Our proposals seek to meet our needs with minimum disruption to this historic and significant building, but will enable it to be preserved for the future by creating a space that is attractive to congregation members and hirers alike. The number of users of the building has grown significantly across every group in the past five years: Anglican worshippers, Romanian Orthodox worshippers, and hirers. Our proposals will ensure that this growth can continue, and will give us a building that can meet the requirements and expectations of the next generation.

Architect's Impressions of the Proposed West Room



APPENDIX I

Weekly Bookings

	Monday				Tuesday				Wednesday				Thursday				Friday				Saturday				Sunday			
	Vestry	Nave	Chapel	West End	Vestry	Nave	Chapel	West End	Vestry	Nave	Chapel	West End	Vestry	Nave	Chapel	West End	Vestry	Nave	Chapel	West End	Vestry	Nave	Chapel	West End	Vestry	Nave	Chapel	West End
08:00																									Prep			
09:00							MP							Prep											HC			
10:00														HC/tea														
11:00													Talk															
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22:00																												

Key:

Anglican use

RO use

General opening

Regular bookings

Note: Weekly evening bookings are for student orchestra rehearsals (in term time), held at the West End of the church. The church is also regularly booked for rehearsals, concerts and other events on Fridays and Sunday evenings, and is used for Anglican congregation events after the Saturday Vigil.

Further Bookings

- Cambridge Churches Homeless Project (fortnightly while operational, whole church, evening and overnight).
- Thirsty Pop-up Café (garden, three times per week while operational, afternoon and evening).
- School visits and school parties from Museum of Cambridge (frequently in summer months, church and garden, mostly afternoons).
- The Castle Hill Open Day and St Giles’ Fair (both yearly, whole church and garden, all day).
- Anglican and Romanian Orthodox Feasts, occasional offices and special services.
- Family events, including Easter Egg hunt and Christmas party.
- Other one-off performances, meetings and events.

APPENDIX 2

Nearby meeting spaces

Place	Rooms	Capacity	Price
St Augustine's	2	10-80	£11-£22 per hour (concessions £6.50-£14 per hour)
Castle St Methodist	3	25-110	£11-£22 per hour (concessions £8-£15 per hour)
St Luke's	2	10-100	£21.95-£40.10 per hour (concessions £7.35-£10.45 per hour)
Murray Edwards	Many	15+	From £150 per half day
Magdalene College	Many	18+	From £270 per half-day
Westminster College	5	18-60	From £40.50 per delegate, including lunch
Woolf Institute	3	6-75	From £40.50 per delegate, including lunch



APPENDIX 3

Chart of current and proposed facilities

Facility	Current	Proposal
Heating	Poor	Good
Lighting	Poor	Good
Hardwearing floor	No	Yes
Separate Spaces	Only vestry	2 more
Simultaneous users without disturbance	1	3
WCs	1	2+
Sink	Yes	Yes
Boiling water	Yes	Yes
Fridge	In church	Integrated
Freezer	In church	Integrated
Cooker	No	Yes
Handwash	No	Yes
Table storage	No	Yes
Chair storage	No	Yes
Flexible seating	No	Yes
Sound system	Yes	Yes
Hearing loop	Yes	Yes
Integrated AV	No	Yes
Accessible nave	Yes	Yes
Accessible chapel	No	Yes
Accessible sanctuary	No	No

The entire fees for the architect and all professional consultancy was paid for by the Friends of St Giles' Church, Cambridge. 90% of the income of the Friends comes from individuals who are not on the electoral role of the Parish.

Please fill in a feedback form to let us know what you think. You can also email officeatcastle@btinternet.com or info@fosgc.org

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