



# St Lawrence Church

LECHLADE-ON-THAMES



Lechlade St Lawrence PCC

Version 1

March 2023

## **Annex 1: The Need to support Worship and Mission**

*This paper sets out the worship and mission activities during 2022 to support the proposals in the Statement of Need and in particular the removal of pews to provide greater flexibility and space and the ease of making layout changes.*

### **Worship**

We continued with our three Sunday services during the year offering a range of services from the BCP at 8.00 am, family and choral communion services at 10.00 am and Evensong at 5pm. Support for the main 10.00am service continues to be strong with an average attendance of 103. Music is important with services accompanied by a full choir or exceptional music group.

### **Parish Mission**

In September we launched a Mission to the community which included a range of activities and meetings in the church and in other local venues. This was managed with support from Rev Roger Simpson. This was a week of events involving the church and the community.

### **Holiday Bible Club**

We were able to recommence the annual Holiday Bible Club in the church in August. We had 80 children enrol for the week's activities and many helpers to make the venture a success enjoyed by all.

### **Preparation for the Holiday Bible Club and Parish Mission**

Thanks to a one-off donation of £5000, we were able (with full permission from our Archdeacon) to pay for the pews to be removed and stored for one month. In their place, we had stacking chairs and fold-up round tables. We undertook this project to facilitate our Holiday Bible Club, and our Parish Mission week. It also served as a test to see how a more flexible space within our church building might be used.

The result was a huge vindication of the proposal to free up the space in the nave and side aisles. By removing all pews, we were able to create space for 80 children at the Holiday Bible Club. This is an astonishing number for a town of only 3000 people, in a context where many parish churches are having to accept that they no longer have a children's ministry at all. As we plan for a similar club in 2023, parents have begun to contact us to ask when the club will happen, so that they can plan their own holidays around it.





*Catching the vision: a flexible space for a month was immensely beneficial to our worship and ministry*

The dark red floor gives a shadowy appearance of the open area. With a proposed lighter coloured floor combined with the natural light from the large windows, this will provide a lighter and more welcoming space with less reliance on artificial lighting; this is consistent with the zero-carbon target.

We simply cannot run this kind of remarkably successful and repeatable children's and youth ministry in a space filled with pews. Retaining some pews in the building reduces the space available and means that we have to turn children away from church – surely something we should go to great lengths to avoid. Nor is storage outside the church a sustainable long-term option – it is simply too expensive, and not a wise investment, given that the same money could be used to add value to the church building.



*Moving the pews and bringing in individual chairs is incredibly tiring and expensive work*

*Our 2022 holiday club was very popular and fully utilised the opened-up space in the church*



Similarly, our Parish Mission week in September showed how valuable it is for our life and mission as a church to be able to set up the inside of the building in different ways.

For our Ladies' Breakfast, we were able to host people around tables, where they could eat together, listen to our invited Christian speaker, discuss and interact.

We used a similar set-up through the week for our sunflower café, a free drop-in for anyone in Lechlade to come in, rest, take refreshment, and be welcomed. In this case, chairs and tables were mixed with a play area, and spaces for prayer, our resident artist, and video testimonies. None of this would be possible with pews as we have them at the moment.

We were able to use the same kind of café feel for a concert which brought a large number of people who had not been inside the church before.



*Parish Mission: Set up for a Ladies' Breakfast (left) and a concert (below)*



It is also important to note that, without pews, we were able to change between configurations remarkably fast. A small number of people could move from a full Sunday service layout to café, or concert, or a mixture, in a matter of half an hour. There is simply no comparison between the ease of doing this, and the logistics of moving pews, whether within the building, or removing them to storage.

*Experimenting with different configurations for a Eucharist*



*Experimenting with different configurations for a piano concert*

**Summary**

The temporary removal of the pews has allowed us to use the church more effectively for core worship and mission activities.

Events such as the Holiday Bible Club and Parish Mission. are central to the ongoing life of a local church. This is true not only because, if we do not do these things, in a matter of one or two generations there will be no church community, and thus no-one here to look after the building at all. More fundamentally, outreach to the community and evangelism to those who have not yet found Christian faith, are core business for a Christian church.

In the twenty-first century, and looking to the future, a fixed, heavily Victorian-influenced space will not be adequate for the varied kinds of worship, fellowship, community, youth, children, social, musical, outreach and evangelistic activities that a local church must engage in or cease to exist altogether. We need to bring people into the church community – the current inflexible layout of the church building, and lack of proper facilities (for welcome, access, hospitality, and making those who come through our doors feel at home) are a physical and metaphorical barrier to the life and mission of St. Lawrence church.