

Property report for Annual Church Meeting Sunday 21st May 2023

Property

This has been quite a year for Property Matters! Clearly, it has also been an expensive year because we have been faced with several large repair works, mostly due to the age of our buildings – the new bits as well as the original Victorian buildings. This situation does not seem like changing as we are currently having several repairs/improvements carried out, some of which are either exposing further problems as they are undertaken or that have knock-on effects, like the leaking gutter causing plasterwork damage to walls inside the Sanctuary. The full extent of this type of problem will not become clear until after the dampness has fully dried, most likely after this Summer. Beside the gutter, which has been problematic way outside the size of the actual problem, we have had to carry out repair works to the Sanctuary windows, with more work likely to be needed over the next few years; the Octagon Roof Lights, again a job far bigger than the simple repair and replacement of leaking fixings and we are grateful that the wooden structure of our 'lantern' was not damaged to the extent that even more work was needed. Our main entrance doors, together with the double doors to the Octagon and the Sanctuary are also giving us cause for concern and their 'unusual' design makes them very difficult to work on, let alone repair! At least the front wall has been repaired and rebuilt! Add to all this the routine work: there is a constant repair and upkeep needed as the structures and fittings suffer wear and tear and accidental damage, all of which need attention and carry a cost to their restoration; our programme of changing our light fittings to LED type bulbs has already reduced our electricity demand by over 4kW in our two most-used rooms – the Sanctuary and the Octagon! We are currently having the electrical wiring undergo its 5-year programmed examination/safety assessment for the Church Insurance and the infamous, 'Quinquennial' Inspection of the whole property is overdue (Covid set back the whole Circuit on this!) so we have a full programme set out for several years to come. On top of that, we have recently had an incident with our plumbing – the main supply pipe sprang a substantial leak, just on our side of the line where Anglian Water would have been responsible for it! Fortunately, once spotted and the water supply being turned off (making us all aware how much we miss these essential services when they aren't there) we were able to work on them – first stopping the main leak and then finding at least two smaller ones and fixing them. We are indebted to Tonie and Cornelia Badenhorst's Son-in-Law, Maurizio who stepped in at very short notice one evening to finish the repair properly!

This all sounds – and sometimes feels quite daunting. We need to do some serious thinking about how we can maintain our future here.

Lettings

These are continuing to decline as many groups feel the pressure of financial and leadership challenges / difficulties, but we have a core of regular bookings that contribute considerably to our income. Potential hirers can see when rooms are available and what they look like, know what they cost per hour and fill in a booking request form - all from our website, or they can contact me direct. Guided tours can also be arranged!

Safety

The challenges of keeping the premises safe are a constant problem – some things we notice and tackle before they become a problem, some are discovered when something goes wrong. If anyone notices anything that they feel may be a problem or hazard, please let me – or any other Church Official, know. The sooner we check things out and respond to them, the better it is for all of us. Please never be afraid of asking what may seem 'silly questions' – I have found that more often than not, they lead to uncovering a problem we didn't know existed – and if they do turn out to be nothing to worry about, we can all relax and if necessary, enjoy a laugh that usually comes from relief!

Thankyou for all your help and support.

Michael Porter