

Newsletter No1

As you may be aware in 2005 our Congregational Committee agreed to the formation of a Church Property Review Team and to fund a detailed condition survey of the church building; this was followed by an exercise to provide a range of options to renovate or re-build the church. These tasks were carried out by the architectural firm of Kennedy Fitzgerald. These options were reviewed by the Review Team but the process stopped at the time of the PMS crisis.

At the June 2010 meeting of the Congregational Committee it was agreed that the work of the Review Team be re-visited with a remit to:-

“to review the structure, function and future use of the church building and its use in conjunction with the other church property.”

A Church Property Review Team has been re-formed with some new and some original members. Two exploratory meetings were held over the summer. Details of the team members are given on the back page.

One of the actions agreed by the team is that we keep the congregation updated as the review progresses. We will initially do this by using this Newsletter format and at some time in the future hold information evenings. We also intend to seek comments and opinions from the organisations within the church as well as the congregation.

Our church was completed in 1837 with various types of maintenance over the years. It has stood the test of time well but is now over 170 years old. Superficially, it appears in good condition with no major defects. However, the Kennedy Fitzgerald report highlighted and confirmed a number of issues which must be addressed within the next number of years if we are to maintain a sanctuary fit for modern worship into the next century. We as a congregation owe it to our younger generation not to be lumbered with a crumbling building which would be prohibitively expensive to repair. The next section of this newsletter will summarise the aspects of the building which must be addressed.

Condition of the church

Roof covering

The concrete tiled roof is in reasonable condition and will require re-roofing in about 10-15 years.

Roof structure

There is evidence of woodworm in the roof trusses and rafters. These were last treated about 50 years ago.

Rainwater gutters

These are in need of replacement as they are badly rusted and defective thus allowing water access into the walls.

Parapets and upstands at roof level

Currently in reasonable condition but remedial work is recommended to protect the building in future.

External walls

A number of significant cracks are visible but are more of an issue for water penetration than structural failure. Most of the walls do not have damp proof courses.

Basement

Dampness is visible in the walls; there is no fire protection to the underside of the floor of the main church.

Gallery floor

This is suffering from a significant attack of dry rot and although safe at present there will be a need within the next few years for major structural work to be carried out.

Electrical

The electrical circuitry was recently tested and found to be safe but the overall electrical installation is over 30 years old and approaching the end of its serviceable life. The church has no emergency lighting (legal requirement in public buildings) or fire alarm system.

Heating system

This currently heats the church to an acceptable level but is expensive to run and not easily controlled.

Sound system

This is beyond its serviceable life and needs replacing.

Disability access

The church is well outside the legal requirements for disabled access requirements to a public building. A historical church such as 1st Antrim cannot be easily upgraded physically to meet the needs of the disabled without major alterations.

Other Aspects

In addition to the physical condition of the church the review team will also look at the situation more holistically so that we can recommend to the congregational committee and the congregation a church which will provide for a more modern relaxed form of worship with modern audio visual facilities and more flexible space within the church; a church that is welcoming, modern and gives greater comfort and quality.

It will be challenging to provide these attributes and facilities within the boundaries of our property and with a Grade A listed façade. We look forward to this challenge, to receiving your support, your constructive criticisms

and your prayers as we the people of First Antrim start the process of creating a sanctuary which will glorify our heavenly Father and maintain His witness in Antrim for many years to come.

The Church Property Review Team.

Your House and Your Kingdom shall endure forever before me and...

2 Samuel 7 v2