

The Future of Saint Nicolas' Place

As you will know, the Parochial Church Council (the PCC) recently came to the very sad conclusion that it cannot afford to offer further financial support to Saint Nicolas' Place. This is made all the sadder by the serious commitment the current staff team and volunteers have given to it.

What lies behind the decision?

Saint Nicolas' Place has been operating at a financial loss every year for the last ten years so that the PCC has put in over half a million pounds of subsidy. Losses have continued this year and, by the end of August, they had reached nearly £60,000. We estimate that the costs for the full year will be around £72,000.

Simply put, the PCC does not have that kind of money. St Nicolas' Church is beginning to show signs of deterioration: just keeping the scaffolding up to stop the roof damage from getting worse costs us £1,000 every month. We have some urgent repairs to the spire to make that will cost us about £12,000, and so on.

In addition, the PCC is not making its full contribution to the costs of the Diocese's Common Fund because we are making a loss. It has few choices as a charity and has had to take action to address this very serious financial position.

What are we doing?

We have started to look for new owners for Saint Nicolas' Place who can offer it a future.

We have agreed to set up a 'Friends of St Nicolas' Church' charity to assist the PCC in its work of maintaining the church and its mission. The PCC decided that it has to give priority to the church building but it will also maintain the Old Grammar School and the churchyard. Hawkesley and Immanuel Churches will continue to be vital parts of what we do.

We have to raise additional income for St Nicolas' Church. We have the beginnings of a programme of more activities starting with 'Flicks at St Nick's' and a series of concerts, open church events, and so on. We also welcome any other ideas and offers of support.

We are getting lots of good advice from the Diocese to support our efforts to preserve St Nicolas' Church and are making sure that we are well prepared for the hard work of applying for grants.

The PCC has been helped by an increase in regular giving for which we thank everyone. We will shortly be looking at the fees we charge. Watch out for the new card reader to allow cashless payment in church.

Where can I find out more?

We will shortly put the full report from the PCC on the website and some paper copies at the back of church. The Churchwardens and clergy team will answer any questions you wish to ask.

Finally...

We really do appreciate the efforts that many people have put into Saint Nicolas' Place and the generosity that has been shown throughout ten years when so much has been tried to make things work.

The PCC is made up of volunteers who agree to give their time and skills to guide the running of the church and its mission. We are all aware of the heavy requirements that go with charity governance. Your support for those affected by the decision, those saddened by it and those who have had to take it will be welcome.

Peter Hay and Julie Hill

*Churchwardens
on behalf of the PCC*