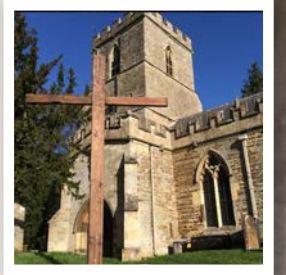


**St Peter and St Paul**  
Steeple Aston

***Shaping a Community***



## Meet the Church

Steeple Aston is an active village of just over one thousand residents, with many sports and arts clubs as well as an excellent pub and shop. The church is one of the major focal points and stands alongside the village hall and church primary school.

Weekly Sunday worship follows a pattern that encompasses traditional prayer book communion, family services and common worship eucharists. The church has several excellent organists and a small music group to lead music, as well as large 'scratch' choirs at festival times, often made up of members of the village choral society. Sunday morning congregations are steady around the 30 mark, though this rises significantly at major community moments such as Remembrance or Harvest or the major liturgical Festivals. The church also has a midweek service of communion with prayers for healing, with a smaller congregation. The electoral roll numbers are in the mid-fifties.

The re-introduction of the family service has stretched the age range of the congregation considerably, and there are now young families along with singles, some middle aged folk and the usual weighting to the more senior end in attendance. The church run a children's church (Sunday School) once a month in addition to the Family Service and get up to ten children coming along. There is also a Lent Course for children which also runs as preparation for those who wish to receive communion before confirmation.

Links with the schools are significant: the village Pre-School and Church Primary School both use the church for lessons and services. Dr Radcliffe's School in particular often fill the church, and their support recently helped obtain a grant for a new piano.

The church is open throughout the week, though simply because the heating is ancient and the building has neither space nor facilities, it is not as well used beyond Sunday worship by the church or wider community as it could be. Occasional coffee mornings take place at the back, in the lady chapel or better in the church yard when the weather is good; the bell ringers are a weekly feature of village life; concerts and choir rehearsals make the best of it, especially as the front-to-back pews give precious little performance or hospitality space. Ongoing prayer groups, Bible studies, PCC meetings and other regular activities all have to find space elsewhere.

## The Need for Change

A church building is a place of joy, of celebration, of quiet and of hope. It is a place where everyone may gather together to sing, to pray, to enjoy life and to be still. A church building is a precious gift to a whole community. Like any precious gift, it is right that we all treasure it. One of the ways we do this is to ensure that we always make the most of the gift given to us. A church congregation must, from time to time, stop and ask itself what it hopes to achieve within its wider community in terms of sharing God's love through worship, word and works of love and care. The answers to these questions help us to see if we are making the most of our wonderful building too. Put simply - does the way we use our building help us serve and shape our whole village?

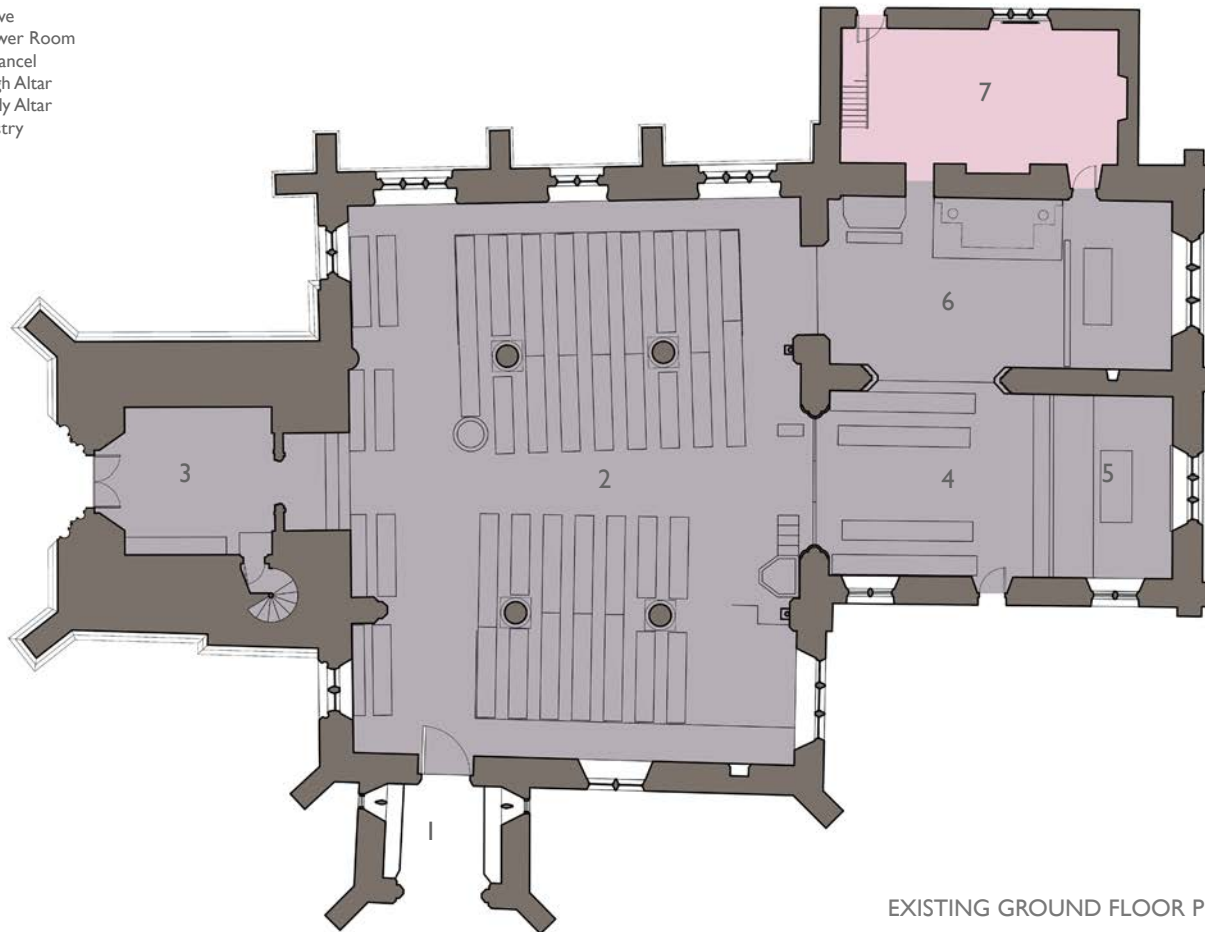
This principle has certainly been applied to St Peter and St Paul's Church many times over the years. Every generation has made its own contribution to the physical appearance of the church, both inside and out, as they have sought better to share God's love in their community in their day. Now it's our turn.

Over the last year, the Parochial Church Council has brought together the discussions of the last two decades, seeking to find a clearer vision. We have decided that now is the time for us to make the most of the precious gift which is our church building. We have held consultations and conversations, met for hours and hours of deliberation, and we have been constant in prayer. All of this is brought together in a formal document called the Statement of Need, which goes into detail about our proposals and what lies behind them. Essentially, we have found six areas where we would like to work within the church building:

- Better Heating
- Better Access
- Flexibility for different liturgical and community usage
- At least one toilet
- Basic kitchen facilities
- Space for children

The preliminary design proposals put forward in this booklet seek to provide solutions in each of these six areas. The solutions, when put together, form a comprehensive plan that will enable the building of St Peter and St Paul's to help the congregation of St Peter and St Paul's serve and shape the community of Steeple Aston and Middle Aston with God's love for many years to come.

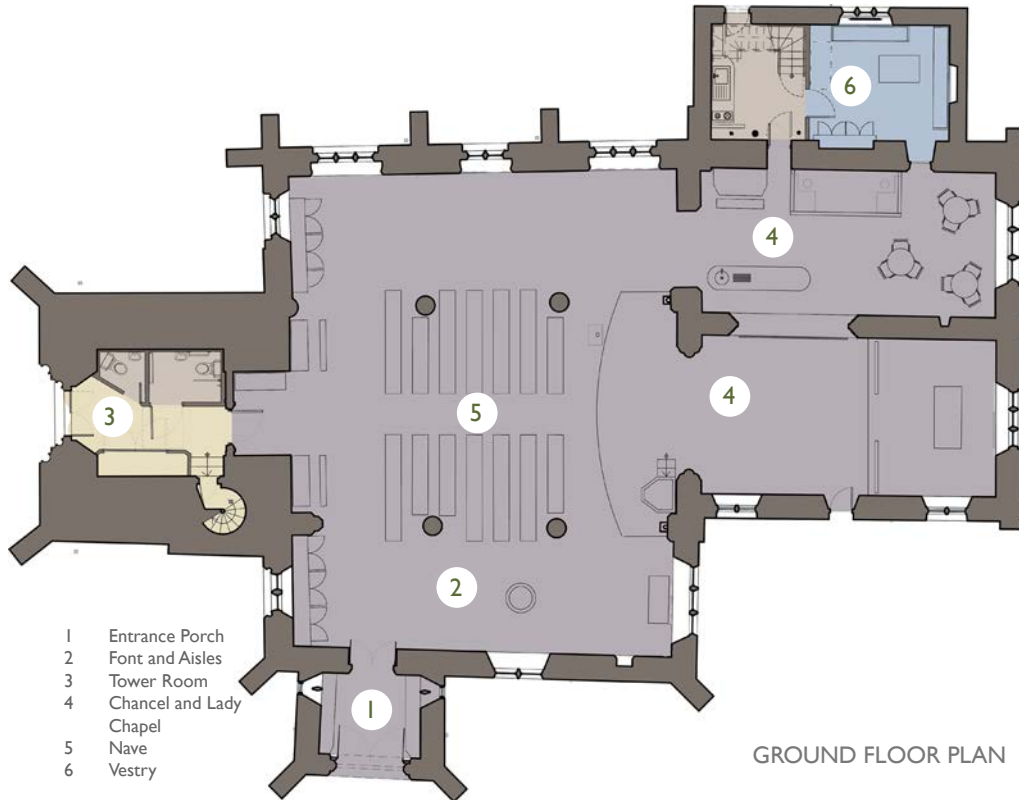
- 1 Entrance Porch
- 2 Nave
- 3 Tower Room
- 4 Chancel
- 5 High Altar
- 6 Lady Altar
- 7 Vestry



EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN

# Concept Proposals: Meeting all our Needs

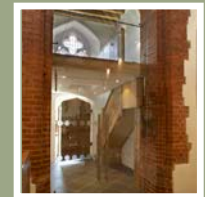
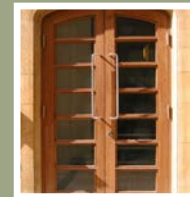
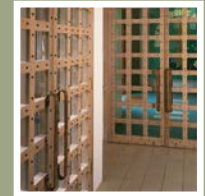
The proposals illustrated below are conceptual in nature; they are not a fait accompli but show possibilities for improving the adaptability and enhancing the beauty of this fine Grade II\* listed church building in the heart of Steeple Aston.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

## I SOUTH PORCH

The current entrance to the church involves a heavy wooden door and a stone step. Beautiful and secure new glazed doors open straight onto a new floor level without a step, and will bring light into the church, creating easier access for all. Extra glazed doors (such as those below) where the bird cages are now will keep drafts out and enable a wonderfully clear view into the church at all times.



## MOVING THE FONT

2

Every family that has had a christening in Steeple knows how hard it is to squeeze in around the font. Moving it to the south aisle will enable parents and godparents to gather around the font with ease, whilst also allowing the whole congregation to feel much more a part of every baptism. Another added benefit will be the space we gain at the back of church as people arrive.



## NEW TOILETS

3



Every public building should have decent toilets. We propose one fully compliant accessible toilet and another, wishing to be practically mindful of the needs of everyone in our community from youngest to oldest.

4

## CHANCEL AND LADY CHAPEL

The Chancel Screen is to be re-located in the arch separating Chancel and lady chapel for liturgical reasons: it is our desire that our building draws all people into God's presence without barriers. The space and light we gain from this change will be part of emphasising the one-ness and beauty of our whole building. We will also help to provide better sight-lines in leading worship with a new dais at the Chancel step.



The lady chapel will formally become what it most often already is for us - a place of hospitality - as we place a servery here. Fellowship is a key part of worship (and of the many other concerts and events we host); we look forward to enjoying much more of this together!

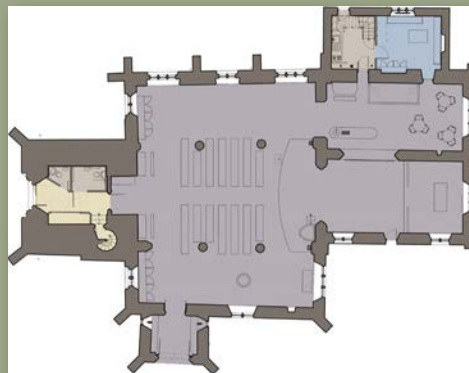


## 5

## ORGANISING THE NAVE SPACE

Making the whole church accessible for everyone is very important to us. In order to provide a level surface across almost all of the church, a new floor faced with stone tiles is proposed. Alongside this, installing a new underfloor heating system throughout the church would be a huge advantage. Underfloor heating is very efficient at heating large spaces, providing a constant low level of heat. Providing all of this will involve taking up and re-siting the pews - always a sensitive topic! Our pews are very fine Victorian pews with notable bench ends, most of which incorporate panelling from previous Tudor pews. We are very proud of our heritage at Steeple Aston and wish to retain the pews in the centre of the nave, shortening them and making use of all the bench ends. This will keep the traditional appearance of the church and celebrate our church's story. It will also allow the north and south aisles to become free, creating flexible space within the church for all sorts of occasions.

Having shorter pews will enable the bench ends to be more clearly seen than at present. Also, some bench ends will (with skilled conservationist help) be restored back to their original place as panelling in the pews at the rear of church, forming a vital feature in our new design.



Option 1

Adapting our pews allows for flexibility of seating options. As shown, Option 1 shows what might be the 'normal' seating option, as for a regular Sunday service. Option 2 enables the pews to be moved to the aisles, allowing the centre of the nave to become free.

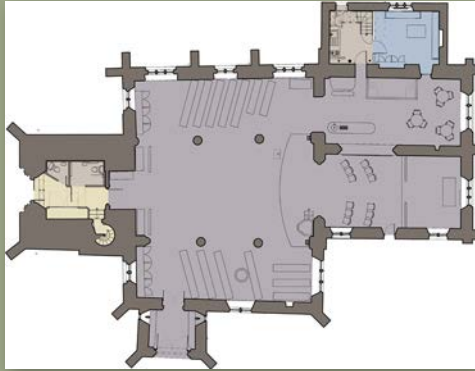
This might be how Dr Radcliffe's would use the church for a large school event, with children sitting comfortably on the heated floor in the middle and all parents and friends being able to see everything. Option 3 envisages a large-scale village event, with seating for over 200 people. The pews are in the centre of the nave, and chairs are available everywhere else.

## 6

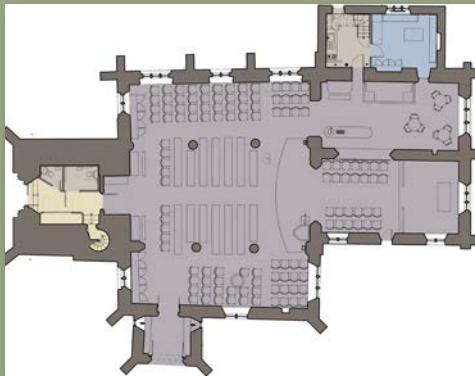
## SEATING OPTIONS



## SPACE FOR CHILDREN



Option 2

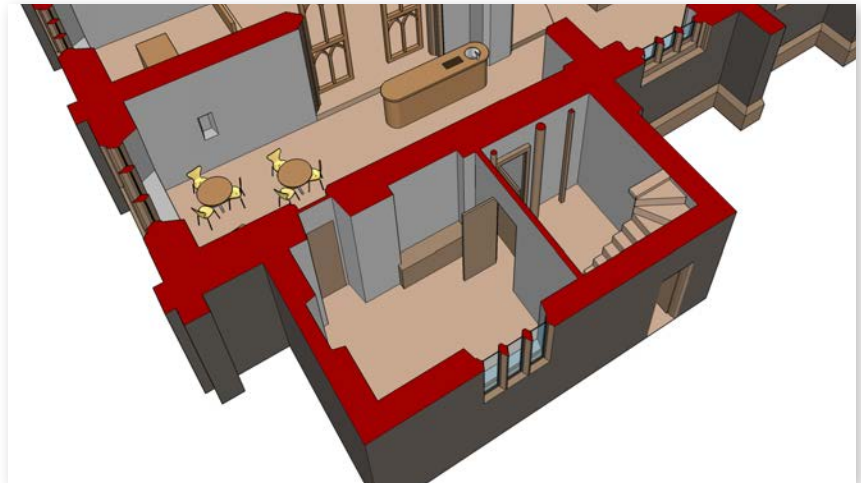


Option 3

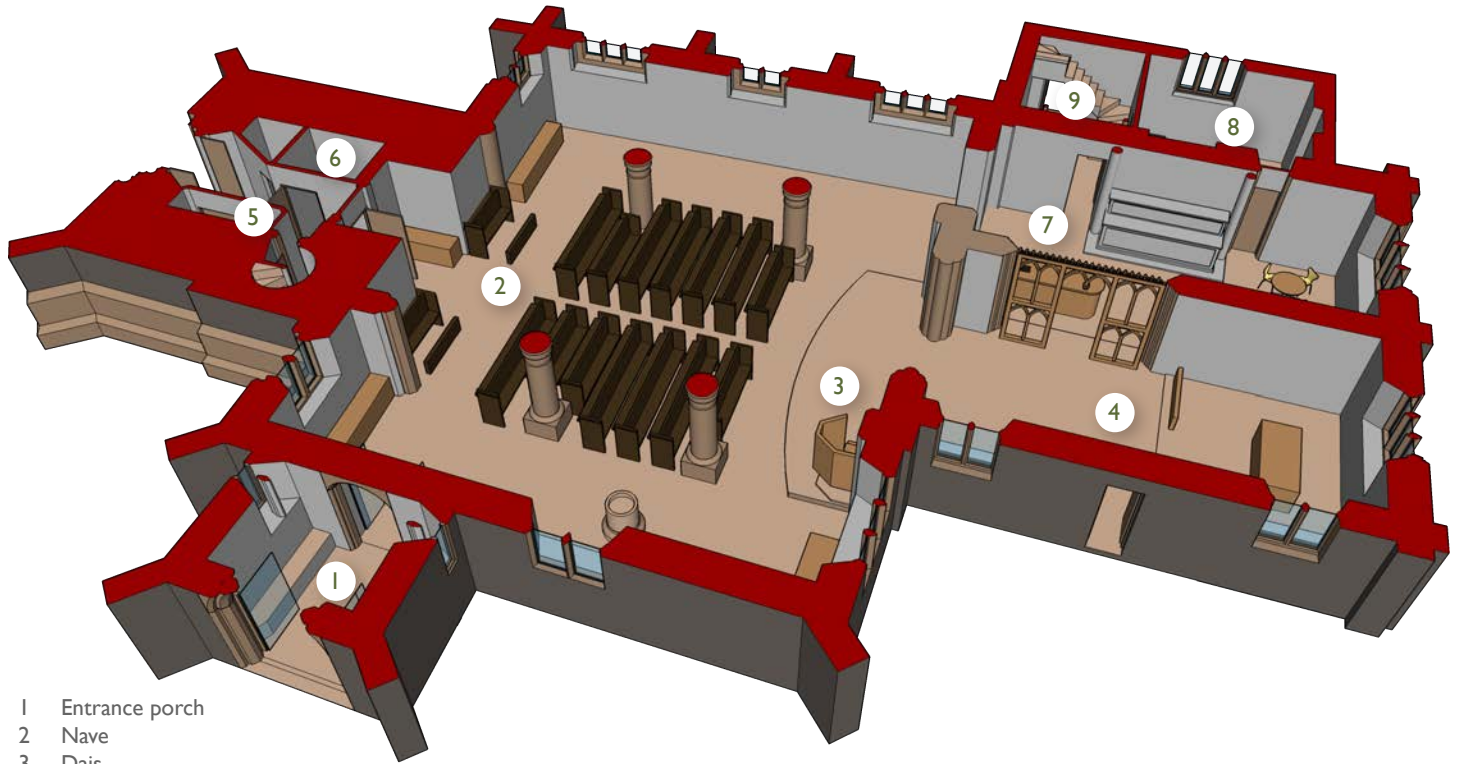
The vestry will be re-organised, creating two new equal and sound-proofed rooms, upstairs and downstairs, with new safe stairs connecting them. There will be furnishings and space for around a dozen children to use one of these rooms, creating a place in the building for our Children's Church. The rector will use the other as the vestry. Downstairs there will also be a separate lobby area including space for flower arranging, the altar brasses, and with a sink, fridge, and hot plate for simple cooking.



Existing Vestry Space



Remodelled Vestry Area



- 1 Entrance porch
- 2 Nave
- 3 Dais
- 4 Chancel
- 5 Chair Store
- 6 Toilets
- 7 Lady Chapel and servery
- 8 Sunday School/Vestry
- 9 Kitchen/Stairs

The 3D model illustrates the overall use of space in the reordering. The numbers show the zones that have specific areas of change.

## Summary

The suggestions put forward within this document are in response to the prayerful deliberations of the 21st century worshipping community of St Peter and St Paul's, Steeple Aston. As an Anglican congregation in the Diocese of Oxford, we are committed to a Living Faith, and seek to develop our common worship and mission so as to serve and shape the spiritual and physical needs of our whole parish.

The Rector and Parochial Church Council are committed to offering God's love to every member of our community, from youngest to oldest. It is the heart's desire of all of us to treasure the gift we have in our precious church building as we do this.

The last major re-ordering of our church was nearly two hundred years ago. It falls to us to be the next generation to carry the story of the people and the building forward so that our generation, and those who follow us, may carry the story of God's purposes forward in this place.

The current scheme is necessarily far-reaching. We believe it respects the historic fabric of the building whilst crucially enabling the continuing growth of God's people in Steeple Aston today and in the future.

From retaining Victorian pews and Tudor bench ends to new V&A Display Boards about the Steeple Aston Cope, the remembering of the story of our church to date is a key part of this new chapter.

But it is a new chapter. There will undoubtedly be significant changes.

We have thought, prayed, debated and lost sleep over many years, and now we want to celebrate our past and discover our future together.

## ST PETER & ST PAUL'S

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