

From the Rectory

The autumn at St Mary's has been dominated by the enhancements to the building that have taken place as well as the Appeal we have launched.

The work on the building has gone exceptionally well. The alterations to the chancel have brought exactly what was envisaged – a greater sense of openness and light together with a longed for flexibility. The old heavy choir stalls have been sold and the new oak benches have an impressive dignity to them as well as being much more comfortable. I was very glad to discover that the under-floor heating did work when I switched it on(!) so the newly laid stone floor did not have to come up. The handrail (which looks as if it has always been there) is proving its worth at the chancel steps and opening the North Door has come in useful just as was intended. The aumbry, pictured on the front of the November magazine, is even more beautiful in stone than the original drawings suggested and the new lighting is due to be installed at the beginning of December.

But having opened up the chancel area and put new, lighter furniture there it has become clear that the old altar rails do need to be replaced to complete the enhancement of that area of the church – so we shall pursue our original intention to replace the altar rails with newly designed, de-mountable ones. And having opened up the North Door we can now complete the enhancement of the baptistry area with a new font cover, a new noticeboard and an improved area for selling postcards, guides and leaflets together with displaying and distributing materials. Finally the new stained glass window that we would like to commission from Roger Wagner has received enthusiastic support from the Parochial Church Council, the congregation, the wider public and the Diocesan Advisory Committee (the planning committee) – so we are going forward to complete the planned enhancements.

While the work to the building has been going on and consultations taking place, donations to the Appeal have been extremely generous – thank you to everyone involved so far. The Friends of St Mary's began the Appeal by contributing £15,000 to pay for the new lighting. All the individual items were donated within a few weeks of launching the Appeal. The Critchley Charitable Trust has said that it would like to donate the stained glass window designed by Roger Wagner. Of the £48,000 needing to be raised from individual donors, just £6,745 is still needed – and perhaps you can help us with that?

I believe we will have achieved what we set out to do – enhance the wonderful church building that we have inherited and which means so much to us all.

Andrew McKearney