

31st May 2009

Celebrating the Opening of our Chapter House.

It has been a long road, but we are almost there! On the 21st of June we will celebrate the opening of the Chapter House and dedicate it to the building of God's Kingdom. This marks the end of the first phase of our buildings redevelopment and it is always good to look back and see how good God has been to us.

Six years ago we began to explore how we could improve our buildings to better suit our purpose. We investigated many possibilities including selling the hall and building a large church complex in the church-yard, purchasing the adjoining nursery land and even connecting Church End to the Church. We knew we needed to:

- make the church more welcoming by building toilets and better disabled access;
- help new families with infants worship with us for they were finding it difficult to leave their children in a crèche in Church End;
- renovate and redevelop our hall to better serve our mission and community;
- improve our sound system to be significantly more reliable and capable of supporting new styles of worship; and
- create more flexibility and better visibility for those leading from the Chancel.

Five years ago we held a gift day to help us accomplish these things. I am deeply grateful to God and overwhelmed by his people's generosity that over the years we have given over £350,000 to implement these changes. They have already delivered significant benefits to our church's life. During this same period we also gave away around £150,000 to our outside mission partner charities.

Southover is a thriving church and God has significantly added to our number. We are also a fallible church which could do many things better. However, we are warm and welcoming and we clearly see God's primary call for us to go into the world and make disciples.

Our vision is to help people find God and for them to be so overwhelmed by his love that they become wholehearted followers. This is the passion of our leadership, for we know that there is no greater purpose in life and nothing more satisfying. This is the thing that we would gladly spend our life on.

So we are coming to the end of the first phase of our church's journey with me as Rector. There are many exciting possibilities ahead of us, and for 2009 we shall be asking God "where are you leading us next?". But for now it is good to celebrate all that he has done for us, in us and through us.

So on Saturday the 20th we will

- celebrate with flowers the life of the church;
- open the Tower for people climb and see the great views; and
- serve tea and coffee and welcome the community to look around the decorated Church and the Chapter House.

On Sunday the 21st we will

- invite Rev Peter Markby (our previous Rector who first had the vision to do what we have done) to dedicate the Chapter House in a special Morning Praise;
- have a BBQ in Church and Church End for all the Church family; and
- hold a Thanksgiving Gift Day for the Chapter House.

In our services we will take a collection to say to God, "thank you for your love for our church family, for the privilege of serving in your mission to the world, and for your goodness to us". This collection will be used to furnish the Chapter House.

I can't wait to see it finished and I look forward to seeing you there!

with warmest Christian love,



Steve Daughtery