



To the church family of Bluntisham Baptist Church

Dear friend

A new chapter in the life of our church buildings – The next steps

As you will hopefully be aware, the Special Church Meeting on Sunday 18th November 2018 voted overwhelmingly to proceed with seeking to obtain all the relevant planning permissions for the rebuilding and revitalisation of the church building, based on the concept drawings. Please see the Next Steps section of the church website for more information.

Our architects, Jefferson Sheard, will now lead the process to seek to obtain the necessary permissions from Huntingdonshire District Council and through the Baptist Union Listed Buildings Advisory Committee. Jefferson Sheard will of course be working closely with our Next Steps Group throughout.

As a church we now have to consider how the project will be financed.

At the special church meeting on 14th October, we presented the initial estimates of the project costs as being approximately £500,000. These costings were based on the figures provided by our quantity surveyors for the estimated costs of the building works together with our estimates of professional fees, over and above the £25,000 that we have already committed to pay.

This total estimated cost can be broken down into the following broad categories:

Building costs (including contingency)	360,000
Remaining professional fees	30,000
Decoration and furniture	27,000
VAT	83,000

We plan to reduce the building costs by carrying out certain works ourselves, particularly in the rear rooms, and hopefully to remove the organ at no cost to ourselves. These savings could reduce the total building costs by approximately £15,000

As the church is a listed building, we **hope** to be able to reclaim much of the £83,000 VAT at a later date. We will however have to budget to pay the VAT and then seek to recover it later. If we are able to do this then it will help to repay any loans that we have at that time.

At this point in the process, it is appropriate to focus on the most prudent estimate of costs – the £500,000 (including VAT and professional fees). In terms of funding, there are a number of possible sources that may be available to us.



Grants

We have had a team looking at possible grant sources for a number of months and we have been able to identify specific providers that fund projects like ours. At the appropriate time, we will submit applications to these providers, but we are fully aware that it is very difficult to gain funding as there are so many worthwhile projects competing for the same funding. We therefore believe that it would be prudent not to include grant receipts in the budget, but rather to treat any such receipts as a bonus which can be used to reduce any loans.

Loan – Baptist Union Corporation (BUC)

We expect to make a significant application to the BUC. From our initial research we know that the BUC conditions specify that total external borrowing, whether from the BUC or other external lenders must not exceed 70% of the total project cost. Therefore, we need to raise at least £150,000 (30% of £500,000) for us to have any prospect of being able to borrow the balance of £350,000 from the BUC. Clearly if we can raise more than the £150,000 then that will reduce how much we need to borrow.

We would probably apply for a loan to be repaid over 10 years in which case the likely monthly repayments would be approximately £3,500 per month.

We currently have approximately £70,000 in the form of cash and investments that could be used to fund the initial £150,000.

Loans – Church family

If anyone feels willing and able to offer the church an interest-free loan this would reduce the amount that we would need to borrow from the BUC. Please speak to me if this is something that you may be able to offer.

Fundraising

Engaging in fund raising activities can not only help us reach the initial target of £150,000 and over time help to repay any loans, but will also help in the growth and unity of our whole church family. These activities can, and should, be another opportunity to reach out into the local community, so that they too engage with what we are doing.

We encourage anyone who has the heart, the ideas and the energy to help raise money in this way to speak to me so that we can co-ordinate what we are doing and when events take place.



Gifts from friends of the church

We will be setting up a facility through the church website to allow friends and visitors to make on-line donations to the building fund.

Gifts and regular contributions from church family

The most significant proportion of the project costs will be, of course, paid for by the church family in funding the initial £150,000 and then repaying any loans. As always, if you are able to gift-aid your giving then that will allow us to reclaim up to 25% of what you give from HMRC.

At this point, we are looking to establish the level of financial support from the whole church family (members and non-members) in terms of lump sum gifts and regular, ongoing contributions. We are doing this now so that we can establish whether we can afford to finance this work. You can be assured that the Next Steps Finance Group, the Next Steps Group and the Deacons will not recommend commencement of the work until such time as they are confident that we can meet all of the necessary financial commitments.

A pledge form is attached and we ask you to prayerfully consider what you are able to give to support this work to revitalise our church building. Any pledge that you are willing and able to make at this stage should represent your intention to contribute to the funding of the building work over and above any regular giving you currently make to support the running of the church. Please note, however, that any pledge you make is not legally binding on you.

To help our planning, I would be grateful if you would return your pledge form to me by 13th January 2019. It would, however, be very helpful to have as many replies as possible by the end of the year.

For married couples, two forms have been enclosed so that you have the choice of providing a joint pledge or two separate pledges as you prefer.

To respect people's privacy, these pledge forms will only be seen by me, as Treasurer and Deacon for Finance. Only the total amounts for the whole church family will ever be communicated to anyone else without your express permission. This may be necessary, for example, if we need to list donors when seeking grants or loans.

The total estimated project costs of £500,000 will seem a daunting prospect to many and will undoubtedly require sacrifices by us all. We recognise that some people may not be in a position to make a significant financial pledge at this time. However, please do not be put off from making a contribution, donation or a pledge, just because you think that it is small. Not only will all contributions help us achieve our financial target, but the number of individual contributions, as well as the total promised, is important for many grant-making bodies and for the BUC as a possible lender.

Bluntisham



People can also contribute in non-financial ways, for example, by organising or helping with fund-raising activities or by providing practical help with the building work to help reduce the overall cost.

It is important for the success of this building project that we go forward as a united church family. To that end, all contributions are important and will help us to achieve our plans to grow God's Kingdom here at Bluntisham Baptist Church.

At this stage we do not need you to give any money that you pledge, although if you would like to make a donation at any time this would be most welcome. Please see the MyDonate link on the website. Any other donations can be passed directly to me or you can make transfers directly into the building fund bank account. I can email you instructions on setting up regular giving if requested.

Just as our church has been looking to the Lord for faith and guidance during the vision and design stages of this project, it is vital that we continue to look to the Lord during this financial planning stage. As responsible stewards under God we are called to recognise that everything we are and have comes from His hand. Whether we offer time, talents or money we can honour God by giving willingly, generously and in proportion to what He has given to us.

In 1 Chronicles chapter 29, scripture records the response of King David and the people of Israel following the call to provide the necessary resources for the building of the temple in Jerusalem. As you consider your own response to our own building project, I would like to encourage you to reflect on verses 10-14 in this chapter, which includes the following words;

“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”

Thank you.

With every blessing

Peter

Peter Thatcher
On behalf of the Next Steps Finance Group
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Bluntisham Baptist Church
Next Steps Building Project
Pledge Form

Lump sum pledge

I/we* intend to contribute £..... to the Next Steps Building Project

I/we* would like the church to reclaim gift aid on this donation when it is made.*

Ongoing contributions pledge

I/we* intend to make regular contributions of £..... monthly/annually* to the Next Steps Building Project.

I/we* would like the church to reclaim gift aid on this donation when it is made.*

If you are already giving to the Building Fund through regular monthly donations, please note above how much you might wish to give **in addition** to the amounts you already donate.

* Please delete as appropriate

Name(s).....

Address.....

.....Post code.....

Telephone.....

Please hand your completed form to me, leave it in the church office for my attention, or post it to me at the church.

Thank you for your support

Peter Thatcher
On behalf of the Next Steps Finance Group