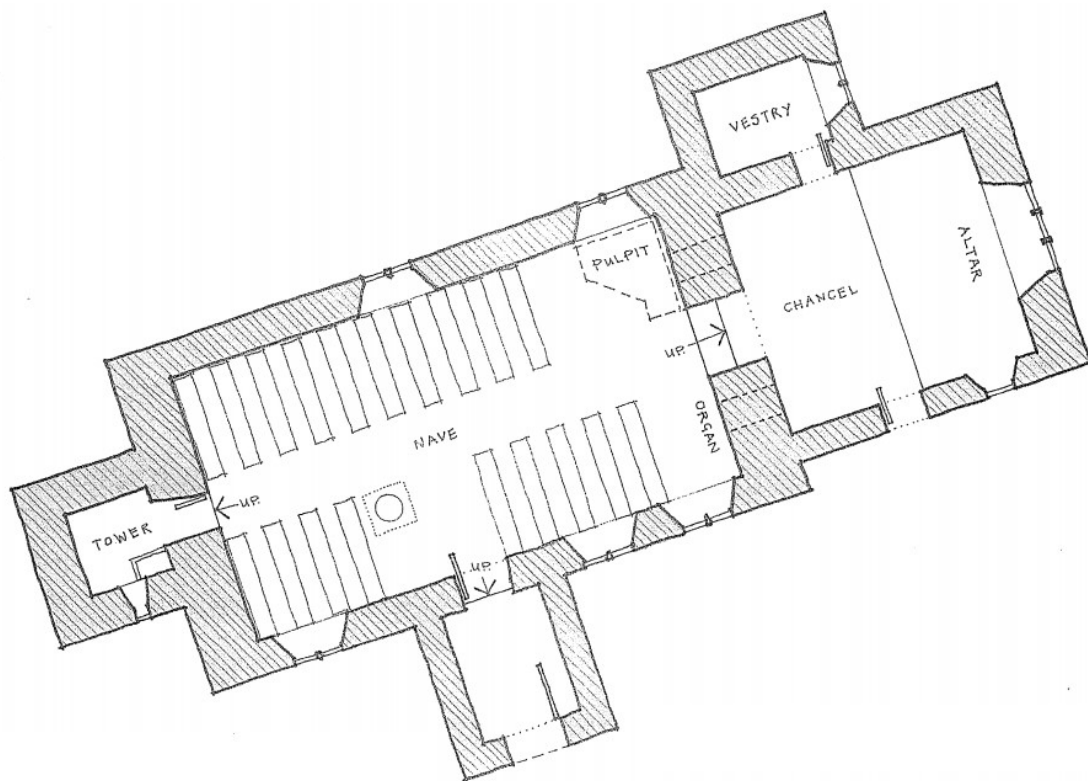




**St James' Church, Wick**

**Statement of Needs**



# **St James' Church, Wick**

## **Statement of Needs**

### **Introduction**

St James' Church is a 900-year old Grade II\* listed building which seeks to meet the needs of the village of Wick in terms of both religious observance and community engagement and support. This Statement of Needs addresses changes which are required in order to effectively discharge these obligations.

### **Background**

The church has a close relationship with Wick and Marcross Church in Wales Primary School, which is located just across the road. Our clergy hold services there and school services are also held in the church. We aim to support the school, which prides itself on developing the Christian principles of openness, acceptance, tolerance and forgiveness.

In the past two years, the village of Wick has grown with 124 new houses, bringing the population from around 700 to approaching 1,000. The church is reaching out to new arrivals, including both young families and older people. Our Garden Party in July 2019 attracted many new to Wick. The Friends of St James' Church held a coffee morning in the church to encourage people into the building. The church was filled with 110 people for a Benefice service in June and 120 for the Remembrance Sunday service. Accommodating these numbers involves setting out additional seating in the aisle. There was also a full church for a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at Christmas.



*Christmas 2019*

In October 2019 the Benefice, working with other organisations, hosted 'Holding on to Hope', a week-long event in Llantwit Major to explore mental health through art, music and contemplation. (This was covered by the BBC Radio Wales programme 'All things considered'.) A 'Seasons Café' bereavement group has also been established there. The aim is to bring these to Wick in 2020. The church is also in touch with the local Health Board about services to support dementia sufferers.

During 2020, St James' will have a key role in the Llandaff Diocesan Year of Pilgrimage as the starting point of a pilgrimage trail, which is being developed in consultation with a local walking group. This will also have a role in addressing mental health.

## The problem

It has long been the policy of the church to welcome visitors, offering tea and coffee, though this has meant bringing in water as there is no supply other than a tap by the lychgate to service the churchyard. While tea and coffee are served after the main services by members of the congregation, the church is open every day and visitors are invited to help themselves.

Among those encouraged to do so have been parents meeting each other after taking their children to the school. This often means also accommodating younger children.

While providing refreshments would be aided by the installation of a modest server, a more significant problem is the lack of a toilet. Not only does the lack of a toilet discourage people who would otherwise participate in activities or spend time in the building, but it is a serious embarrassment for those attending funerals and major events, indicating a distinctly unwelcoming environment.

The church community obviously aims to do what it can to overcome these shortcomings. We have been fortunate that on many occasions visitors have been allowed to use a toilet in a nearby house. Also, with due notice, we have on occasions been able to access toilets in the Village Hall. Neither of these options can be guaranteed.

We are conscious of the particular needs of the young, the elderly and the disabled. Several have had problems with the chancel steps when going to or from the altar rail, so handrails are being installed. A trip hazard around the font is being removed. The main entrance to the church from the south porch has a step, which is a particular problem for wheelchair users. This has been addressed by means of a portable ramp.

## The Village Hall

Wick and Monknash Village Hall is situated along the road from the church. The hall is operated as a registered charity managed by a committee acting as a board of trustees.

The hall is well used by individuals and groups, who have exclusive use during the time that they have rented it. The church itself rents the hall for its Sunday Club. When not in use, the building is kept locked for security reasons. The possibility of using the hall toilets thus depends on the hall not being rented out at the relevant time and a keyholder being available to grant access.

The church has made a formal request to the hall committee to consider a facility whereby, in return for payment, a key could be made available to the church, where it would be kept securely and only be accessible to the churchwardens. The request was however denied on grounds of security.

Having at least one toilet in your church increases your potential for welcoming visitors and your wider community into the building. It is also a useful facility for worshippers!

It is estimated that nearly a third of the UK's church buildings do not have toilet facilities (NCT Survey, 2010) and that listed buildings are generally the least well equipped. In a recent survey (ComRes, December 2015) 34% of those asked said that toilets would encourage them to visit a church, chapel or meeting house.

*National Churches Trust*





### **Views from the community**

Wick Community Council conducted a community mapping exercise in 2018. Responses to their enquiries, both via questionnaire and at community events, indicated a demand for a community café or informal meeting place. The church was mentioned as a possible location, but the lack of a toilet was identified as a problem.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council has offered £10,000 towards the installation of toilet and refreshment facilities at the church. This is from funds provided for community projects in the context of the recent housing development and is intended as an offer of faith in the project to encourage other funding.

### **The need**

There is a requirement for a refreshment point. The aim would be to facilitate serving of drinks and cakes. There is no need for a full kitchen, but there would need to be a water supply and a sink.

The toilet would need to serve a range of users. It would have to meet the needs of wheelchair users, of whom we currently have two, and baby-changing facilities to meet the needs of those with young children.

### **The options**

Several approaches have been considered.

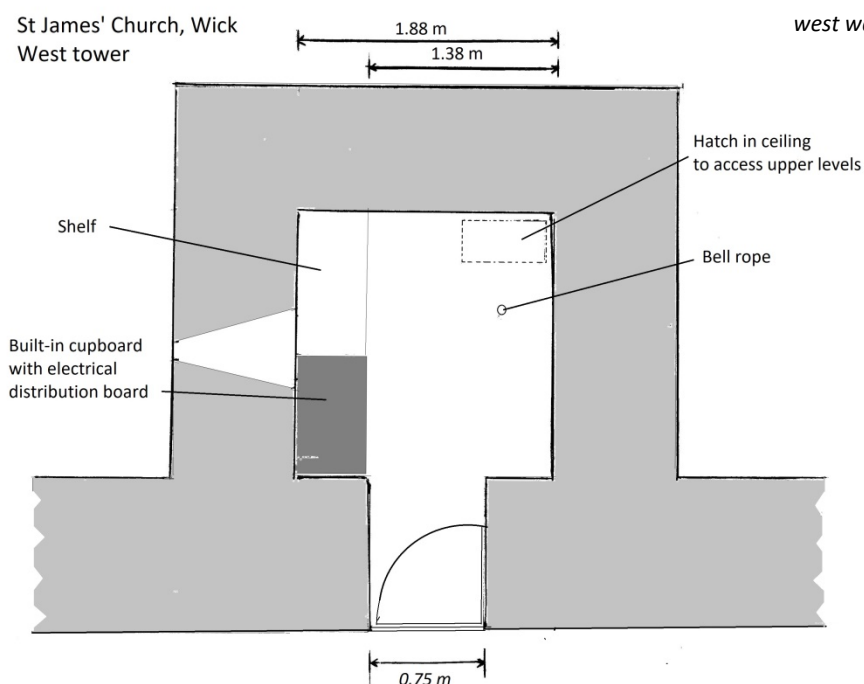
A refreshment point could possibly be accommodated at the west end of the nave, provided that this was discreet and could be closed off when not in use. Constructing a toilet within the nave area would however restrict the use of the building at a time when we want to encourage its use. It would no longer be possible to accommodate school services or major events. It would not have been possible to cope with the numbers attending the recent Remembrance Sunday service or the Carol Service. While at most times there are tables at the back of the church to provide a meeting area and to serve refreshments, these are cleared away for major events, when the space is required for additional seating.

### ***The tower***

As indicated in the image below, the interior space under the tower is extremely limited. There is a built-in unit providing some storage and electrical distribution board. There is a rope for the single bell housed in the upper part of the tower and a ladder providing access to a hatch to the floor above. Access to the tower from the nave is via a narrow doorway with a step. The space could therefore only be used for a toilet with widening of the door and installation of a ramp. Even then, there is doubt about whether the space would be sufficient to turn a wheelchair when a toilet, changing shelf and washbasin had been installed.



*Door to the tower. It is likely that this dates from the 1871 restoration. There is evidence of an earlier substantial entrance in the west wall of the tower.*



### ***The vestry***

The vestry, which was added in 1895, some time after the main restoration, is sufficiently large to accommodate a toilet, but at present the only access is via a narrow and low doorway from the chancel, 0.76m wide and 1.73m at the apex. To reach the chancel from the nave also involves negotiating steps.

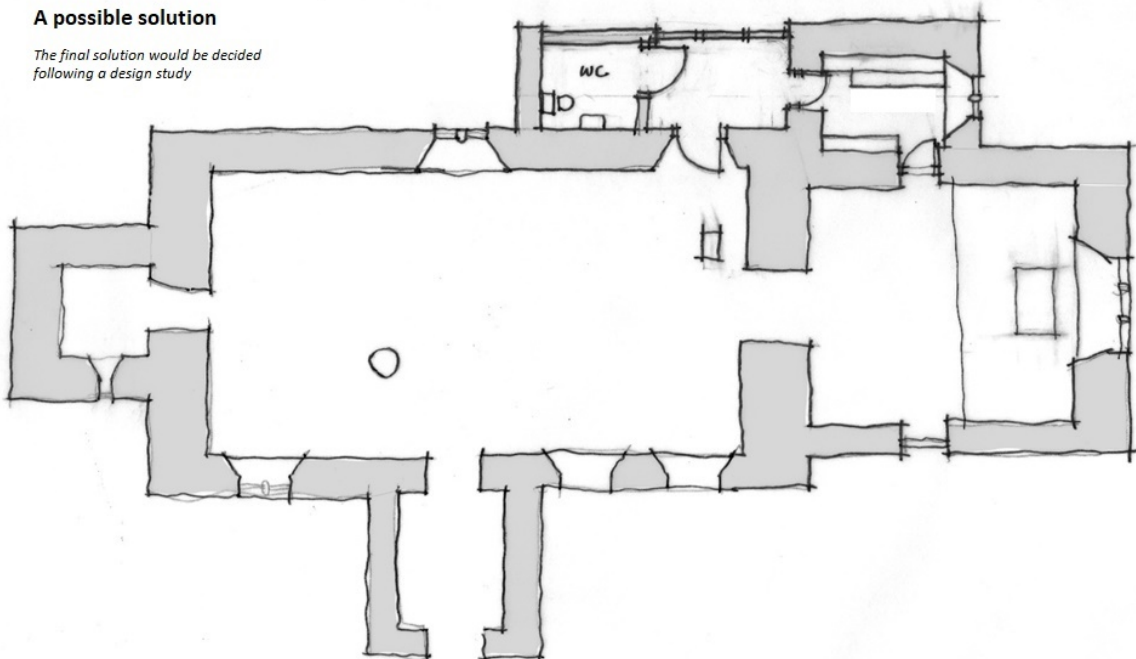
Adapting and extending the vestry to allow access from the nave appears a possible solution. This approach could also allow for a refreshment point in this area.



*Door to the vestry. This doorway was opened up in 1895 when the vestry was built. This necessitated moving a memorial plaque, which is now above the door.*

### **A possible solution**

*The final solution would be decided following a design study*



## **Conclusion**

St James' is a small but active and thriving church with a growing congregation which needs to meet the needs of an increasing local population. There is a need to meet the pastoral and societal needs of both the elderly and young families. The lack of a toilet severely inhibits the extent to which services to these groups can be provided within the church building.

The restrictions currently imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic currently prevent group activities, but these will become particularly important once the restrictions are eased. There will in particular be a need to progress mental health initiatives and to resume activities relating the church's role in pilgrimage.

After considering various options, it is clear that a toilet cannot sensibly be installed within the confines of the existing building. Conscious of the historic character of the building, it is accepted that any alteration needs to be done with sensitivity, minimising the impact on the existing structure. It seems that this can best be achieved by adaptation and extension of the vestry.

The DAC is invited to endorse this approach and to agree that it is appropriate to commission a detailed design study.

St James' Church, Wick  
April 2020