



The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Studham

The Vicarage
Clayhall Road
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January 2025

Dear regular worshippers and parishioners,

As you'll be aware, here at St. Mary's Studham we have spent a number of years praying, thinking and acting on the need to care for God's creation in the context of the environment – both in and around the church building as well as through prayer and preaching, and through our daily living. We're proud that this has resulted in our receiving the 'Silver A Rocha' award.

At some point in the future, when it comes to the end of its life, we will have to replace the old oil powered heating system with a new one – and although this is not immediately imminent, we will want to move to something which is as green as possible. With this in mind a small group from the PCC has been working on solutions, with the assistance and advice of the Diocesan Advisory Committee, without whose authority no change can be made. In 2024 external funding was given for a church environmental audit by an expert. Unfortunately, our use of the building makes solar power unsuitable, so the advice is to move to heating using electricity. This would mean an upgrade to the supply, which we have to take into the cost.

It has also been suggested that a major heating project gives us an opportunity to review our seating arrangements, with the possibility of replacing some of the pews with chairs.

There are three main options:

1. Retain all pews and introduce an under pew heating system, with supplementary electric radiators in the sanctuary, vestry and kitchen and an overhead heater above the main door.
2. Replace the pews with heated upholstered chairs (though these are not yet available in the UK), or chairs with heated cushions with electric radiators in the sanctuary, vestry and kitchen and an overhead heater on entry into the church.
3. Replace the pews in the centre of the building only with chairs as in option 2, maintain small side pews and have electric radiators at 'person level' round the walls and in the sanctuary, vestry and kitchen and an overhead heater above the main door.

Obviously, all of these options have positives and negatives. The first retains the traditional appearance of the church whilst introducing a modern and (we're advised) very efficient form of heating. The second is the most expensive but allows for a different and more versatile use of the building. The pews themselves are not of great historical value (aside from the linenfold ones at the West End, which would be retained in all options). As it's important to seek as many views as possible, we are hoping that you will think and pray about this, and let the PCC know your thoughts, preferably by email at revnicolalenthall@btinternet.com, and if you could please copy in our churchwarden Meg meg.bender4@btinternet.com and PCC secretary Caroline cjhitchman@hotmail.com that would be really helpful. Just to emphasise – none of this will be happening in the very near future (we hope!) and this is just the beginning of the process of consultation.

With my love and prayers

The Reverend Canon Nicola Lenthall
Rector, Studham, Kensworth and Whipsnade