

SMLT Mission and Ministry: Interim Development Strategy July 2020

Information Sheet 3

Context and Background

Approved by PCC: 28/07/2020

This is a statement of the PCC's development strategy for St Mary-le-Tower Church Community following the first wave lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic. Beginning from March 2020 we recognise that the future is different and uncertain for the next year or so, and so it is all the more important that the PCC has clear aims and objectives for the management of the mission, ministry and finances of SMLT both in the short and medium terms.

The year 2020 started for SMLT with a recognition by the PCC that SMLT finances were looking perilous, and that urgent fundraising was needed both in terms of a major giving renewal for SMLT Community, and also with an external major donations campaign to sustain the cathedral-style choral ministry of SMLT into the future. In the autumn of 2019 two particular factors had given new urgency to the need for new fundraising.

Firstly, a long anticipated and substantial legacy (£333k from the estate of Barbara Bellamy) turned out to have been given as a restricted donation specifically for the Tower House Parish Centre project, rather than directly for the choral ministry of SMLT as expected. Although this was a shot in the arm for the Tower House Community Engagement project including the proposed new Song School, it meant that new fundraising for the choral ministry of SMLT now became a very high priority.

Secondly, the retiring treasurer drew to the attention of the PCC that planned and plate giving to SMLT had declined very significantly over the previous five years. In 2014 and 2015 it had been just under £80k, but by 2018 it had fallen to less than £56k per annum, and was continuing to fall year on year. A fall of £19k had taken place between 2016 and 2017, due to the combination of people moving away and passing away. A major giving renewal was therefore already overdue.

The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown has put these giving renewal and external fundraising plans on hold, turning a challenge into a crisis. A new management account for the years 2018 to 2021 was prepared in May 2020 to be a basis for PCC decisions, which revealed very starkly the annual deficit that the PCC was now facing. It identified that for the first time there was a real danger that SMLT could move into 2021 no longer as a viable business. A summary of projected PCC fund movements is available as Finance Information Sheet 2.

Principal Strategic Aims for SMLT Mission and Ministry

- A. Maintain an all-age, cathedral-style, choral ministry, with sections including: boy choristers, girl choristers, soprano choral scholars, ATB choral scholars, adult sopranos, and adult ATBs.**

Principal Objectives

- A1. Provide cathedral-style choral worship at SMLT to draw congregation from a wide area to be members of the town centre church of Ipswich (Growing in Number).
- A2. Engage young people deeply in a life changing experience of choral singing and Christian community, teaching important musical and life skills (Growing in Depth).
- A3. Draw young families in the life of SMLT (Growing Younger).
- A4. Provide a genuine Christian experience of inclusive, all-age worship and activity (Growing in Depth).

Current Strengths

- a) Good professional music staff, who work well together and who possess appropriate skills.
- b) Good numbers of committed singers in all sections, maintained by significant online choral activity during the lockdown.
- c) Integrated faith nurture programmes for young people, e.g. Monday and Tuesday chorister clubs and Youth Alpha.

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Current Threats

- d) Music department funding – Severe threat.
 - e) Church House doesn't provide appropriate facilities for an all-age choir from a safeguarding perspective, and requires major external repairs anyway – Severe threat.
 - f) Key staff retention – Severe threat.
 - g) Limited scope for choir singing in church during the Covid-19 pandemic – Severe threat.
 - h) The churchyard can often feel an unsafe environment for young families – Moderate threat.
 - i) General choir recruitment is difficult in the current context – Moderate threat.
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B. Increase the capacity of SMLT community to grow in faith and to resource and participate in the Mission and Ministry of SMLT.

Principal Objectives

- B1. Provide opportunities for the Christian formation of adults and young people, for the development of vocation, and for participation in key leadership teams for SMLT (Growing in Depth).
- B2. Encourage generous and committed participation in SMLT Planned Giving (Growing in Depth).
- B3. Provide appropriate pastoral care to the whole SMLT community (Growing in Service).
- B4. Develop lay participation in SMLT administration, finance, and communications (Growing in Capacity).
- B5. Develop links with businesses and community organisations in Ipswich (Growing in Capacity).

Current Strengths

- a) Committed core of faithful volunteer leaders, though often overstretched.
- b) Reasonable total congregation when everyone there, but often looking thin.
- c) Leadership Team and PCC working well together.
- d) New capacity being developed in financial management.
- e) New capacity being developed in communication by social media, including live streaming services.
- f) Strong bell ringing team.

Current Threats

- g) Very significant fall in planned giving over the last five years – Severe threat.
 - h) Generally low level of participation in faith and vocation development – Severe threat.
 - i) Generally modest general level of volunteering – Moderate threat.
 - j) Limited capacity at present to meet socially as a church – Moderate threat.
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C. Caring for SMLT church and churchyard and providing a daily welcome to visitors.

Principal Objectives

- C1. Maintain the church in good structural repair and decoration (Growing in Service).
- C2. Open the church regularly during the week for visitors and private prayer (Growing in Service).
- C3. Maintain the church as a warm, welcoming, interesting and clean place (Growing in Service).
- C4. Maintain the churchyard as an attractive and peaceful green space in the heart of Ipswich town centre (Growing in Service).
- C5. Develop the facilities of the church to support activity in the church (Growing in Capacity).

Current Strengths

- a) Church building is generally in good structural repair except for winter storm damage for which repairs are in hand.
- b) Churchyard is well cared for with good partnership with IBC staff.
- c) Wood carvings being well cared for and heating system generally working.
- d) CCTV system finally making progress.
- e) The nationally renowned 12 bell ring is in good repair.

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Current Threats

- f) Unable to open church regularly for visitors and private prayer because of a lack of staff and volunteers in this area. This has a serious impact on the ability of SMLT to attract grant aid for fabric repairs – Severe threat.
 - g) Modest fabric reserve fund, projected as less than £35k by the end of 2020 - Moderate threat.
 - h) Internal decoration generally in poor condition with the church increasingly looking shabby. This includes a faulty paint system throughout, leading to significant deterioration of plasterwork in places – Moderate threat.
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D. Develop community engagement and key facilities for SMLT in the Tower House Community Centre Project.

Principal Objectives

- D1. Provide a new Song School facility to support the expanded choral ministry of SMLT with a larger rehearsal space and better safeguarding in multiple ways (Growing in Capacity).
- D2. Support the community and voluntary sector in central Ipswich with a managed community centre close to the public transport hub (Growing in Service).
- D3. Develop opportunities for SMLT to serve the wider community through links with organisations using Tower House (Growing in Service).
- D4. Provide important parking for key church activities especially the music department and midweek volunteering (Growing in Capacity).
- D5. Provide meeting and activity space for SMLT community (Growing in Capacity).

Current Strengths

- a) Parish Centre aspect of the project has received major funding via a recent legacy, and the proposed new Song School would provide excellent facilities for SMLT Choral Ministry.
- b) The car park provides important parking space to support the operation of SMLT, particularly in respect of Choral ministry.
- c) Up until the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a community of licensees who appreciate the low-cost facilities, and operational expenses were more or less breaking even, but it is not clear whether this will still be viable post-Covid-19.
- d) A very significant potential strength of the project was emerging just before the Covid-19 pandemic, with the prospect of the Tower House project being key to a major heritage led project encompassing the whole SMLT campus including the Choral tradition as heritage, bringing together much of the SMLT development that we have been aiming to achieve. It is currently unclear whether this very exciting opportunity will become a viable prospect again.

Current Threats

- e) It is a challenge to manage the building and it is not clear whether there will be sufficient demand for low cost office space post-Covid-19 to make the operation of the building viable (Severe threat).
- f) There is a risk to the reputation of SMLT if the PCC decides to withdraw from supporting the voluntary and community sector in Ipswich at a time of crisis for the town. This risk may be amplified if the impression is created that SMLT is withdrawing from the project in order to redirect funds specifically given for the project. This may then impact on the ongoing ability of SMLT to raise funds from the wider community (Severe threat).
- g) The south wing of the Tower House has a number of major repair issues that were not evident when the building was purchased, which have significantly increased the costs of refurbishment (Moderate threat).
- h) The original vision for Shared Community Space has not been supported by continuing demand from community groups, even before the pandemic (Moderate threat).

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Priorities for 2020/21

1. Mount an Emergency Appeal to the SMLT Community and beyond from July to September 2020, to raise at least £50,000 to sustain the choral ministry of SMLT, with the aim of ensuring that SMLT moves into 2021 with sufficient operating reserves to remain a viable business.
2. Plan for a major Giving Renewal programme for the SMLT Community in the first half of 2021 for the ongoing general mission and ministry of SMLT. Although the PCC will be asking people to give generously again, this time it will be an invitation to give regularly in a committed way from income, rather than in lump sums.
3. Plan for a major donations fundraising appeal in 2021 more widely in East Suffolk, to establish an endowment fund to support the posts of the key professional musicians which are vital for the Choral Ministry of SMLT.
4. Maintain a single weekly Sunday service with live streaming, with as much musical input as Covid-19 regulations allow, in order to keep the whole SMLT community engaged with the life of SMLT as much as possible.
5. Sustain the Choral Ministry of SMLT with as much online activity as possible to guard against loss of key capacity in this area.
6. Establish and grow a lay-led communications team to develop the social media presence of SMLT in a time when online church activity has become significantly more important.
7. Seek staffing cuts in 2020 without limiting the potential of sustaining either the Choral Ministry or the potential of Community Engagement of SMLT through Tower House.
8. Active research and engagement to inform a fundamental review of the Tower House project towards the end of 2020, when the post-Covid-19 situation is becoming clearer, including:
 - a. Establish whether the major campus-wide, heritage-led, development project, which started being explored in early 2020, remains a viable prospect for Heritage Lottery Funding. This was a £5m+ project for the physical development of Tower House, the Church building, Church House and the churchyard, including funding for Choral Ministry as heritage, and developing SMLT capacity to manage and sustain such a heritage project.
 - b. Establish what demand there is likely to be post Covid-19 for Tower House facilities and services for the community and voluntary sector in Ipswich town centre.
 - c. Establish what role Tower House could play in the regeneration of Ipswich Town Centre post Covid-19, in the expectation that Ipswich may well attract significant government funding for such regeneration.
 - d. Establish if there is a case for abandoning the project on its own terms, including investigating the prospects for being able to sell Tower House in the current climate and use the Bellamy legacy for other purposes, together with assessing the impact on the Choral Ministry of SMLT in no longer having the prospect of new facilities in Tower House.
9. If the PCC withdraws from the Tower House project in 2021 as a result of the fundamental project review, there would then be the prospect of project funds contributing substantially to Priority 3 above, but nevertheless still leaving much further funding still to be raised.