

Stewartry of Strathearn
Dunning Church refurbishment

Architect's brief DRAFT June 2008

1. The Stewartry of Strathearn includes the 1908 church (formerly St Paul's) in Dunning. The Kirk Session, recognising the centenary of the buildings, wish to undertake a refurbishment of the building to make it 'fit for purpose' for the 21st century. This brief sets out the preliminary considerations of the Session as a basis for engaging an architect.
2. Attached to this brief are:
 - a. Appendix 1 - Background history
 - b. Appendix 2- Plans: location, copies of original drawings
 - c. Appendix 3– Photos
 - d. Appendix 4 –Latest property survey
3. This brief covers:
 - e. A description of the existing church and halls
 - f. The process proposed for the development of refurbished designs
 - g. Future vision
 - h. Approval process
 - i. Ecclesiastical requirements
 - j. Budget
 - k. Appointment process

Existing church and halls

4. The building was erected 1908/09, and has seen little change since then – other than the usual coat of paint, and a change in the heating system to 'on peak' electricity. It is not listed.
5. The building involves a church that seats approx 325 (excluding the sanctuary), with vestry and toilet attached; a hall capable of seating 50 and a 'kitchen' area that connects the two with toilet attached. Disabled access is via the door into the 'kitchen', - and was installed in 2002 [check property register]
6. The buildings are built of stone (mostly local, but the lighter coloured stone from Norway) and the external walls are generally in good repair. The roof is slated and fair state of repair. The fleche has recently been sealed up.
7. The layout of the church is unusual; it has no central aisle, but one 2/3 across the church. The interior is best described as 'gloomy', and lacks a proper focus on the chancel. The organ is electric, and has seen better days!
8. The church has a fine collection of Edwardian and Modern stained glass windows (8 having been installed since 2000).
9. In removing the old oil heating system, the boiler house, at the back of the church is out of use. Consideration may be given to using the airspace above the boiler house.

Development process

10. The client for the project will be the Kirk Session of the Stewartry of Strathearn. The Stewartry has four churches with one Session and Board. The Board has appointed a working group to progress the refurbishment, and the chair of the group will be the client's representative.
11. The client wishes to ensure that all existing users and potential future users are consulted and involved in the refurbishment process. The client considers that this involvement will lead to a greater feeling of 'ownership' of the refurbished building. The client will look to the appointed architect to participate in the consultation process which the client has begun.
12. The current users of the building are:
 - l. The worshipping community. This is normally about 40 people, but can rise on particular events (e.g. Christmas, Harvest Thanksgiving) to 100. The church is of course used for weddings and funerals – sometimes funerals involve standing room only! The church is the largest worship space in the Stewartry.
 - m. The ministerial team – who only use the vestry at times of public worship. The Stewartry has an office at Aberdalgie, next to the Manse.
 - n. The choir
 - o. The Tuesday Club
 - p. Committee meetings, e.g. Session
 - q. Community groups such as the Yoga group
 - r. The school uses the church for assemblies three times a year – Christmas, Easter and school prize giving.
13. The potential users are the rest of the Parish and Dunning communities. Community groups use it on an irregular basis for events such as exhibitions and concerts (including barbeques in the grounds). The church is the largest indoor space in the village – the Village Hall (owned and operated by Perth and Kinross Council) has a maximum capacity of 80. A new primary school is under construction (due to be completed in August 2008) and may offer larger community facilities. Consultation has already taken place with the following community groups about potential use:
 - s. Dunning URC Congregation
 - t. Auchterarder RC church
 - u. Dunning Community Council
 - v. Dunning Primary School
 - w. Dunning School PTA
 - x. Dunning Parish Historical Society
 - y. Dunning Community Trust
 - z. Dunning Community Association
 - aa. WRI Dunning and Forteviot Branches
 - bb. Dunning Flower Show
 - cc. The Dunning Monday Club
 - dd. Forteviot Hall Committee
 - ee. Dunning Play Group
 - ff. Keep fit group
14. The client has been arranging for visits to other churches that have been refurbished, and will wish to discuss the features of these with the appointed architect.
15. The architect will be expected to develop this brief in consultation with the working group, and therefore to meet with the group on a regular basis.

Future vision

16. The church as it stands is uninviting – it is dark, dreary and suggests that Christianity is a 'dead' religion – it is not fit for purpose. The hall is equally out of date.
17. The vision is of a suite of accommodation that will provide attractive, modern facilities which indicates that Christianity is relevant to the 21st century and welcoming to all – not just for a small group, or for high days and holy days. Thus the issue is not simply the interior of the church, but how the church is seen from the road and the village. The broken gas lamps at the gate; the kind of notice board, the external lighting and the entrance way are all part of the 'image' that needs to be addressed.
18. Within the church itself, the following has already been identified as needing to be tackled:
- gg. The sanctuary is particularly gloomy and lacks a visual central point. There are too many things going on. The choir is located there because the organ console is there – the console is moveable and since it is an electric organ could be anywhere – possibly at the back of the church where the choir could boost the singing! There is a question about how long is the life of the current organ; and therefore whether it should be replaced by an electric piano/organ that would be more flexible (and may encourage other people who do not consider themselves to be organists, but can play the piano to contribute – organists are becoming more difficult to find!).
 - hh. The pews are not only uncomfortable, but do not help to focus worship – since they obstruct the view of the sanctuary. The seating capacity is such that the smaller congregation are scattered – mainly at the back of the church. So a more flexible form of seating would help to bring people together, and focus on the sanctuary.
 - ii. There is no real 'gathering' space at the entrance to the church.
 - jj. The lighting is very poor!
 - kk. The heating involves tubes under the pews.
19. Since the church is the largest space in the village, the potential is there for it to be used for other activities – but not for ball games! The vision is of a building that can be used in same way as the mediaeval Cathedrals. It is a **gathering place** – used for meetings, concerts, exhibitions, even markets as well as worship. It is a **welcoming place** where people feel welcomed and to where the current congregation feels it wants to welcome others. It is an **inclusive place** – where people with disabilities do not feel second class citizens because they have to come through a back door. It would be available for other Christian denominations to use (e.g. URC and RC). It is a **connecting place** - linking worship to the common life. It is also a **holy place** –where people feel the presence of God and are at peace. This is not just about the inside of the building - but also how the building is seen from the outside. The vision is of a building (and church community) that contributes to the life of the village and adds value to the urban fabric of the village.
20. The vision for the hall is of a place that is bright and welcoming. It is warm and comfortable. There will be modern kitchen facilities that meet health and hygiene standards, and there will be toilet facilities that are suitable for people with disabilities and those with babies (including a family toilet). The hall should be larger than present and suitable for young people to play some games, and capable of being sub-divided easily. There is also a need for a couple of smaller spaces for smaller meetings and breakouts.

Approval process

21. While the Session is the client, there are other parties whose authority will be required:
- ll. The Presbytery of Perth Fabric Committee
 - mm. The Presbytery of Perth Finance Committee
 - nn. Church Art & Architecture Committee

Ecclesiastical requirements

22. The last Minister, Rev Colin Williamson retired in June 2008. He has made the following comments regarding Dunning Church:

- oo. The church is very poorly lit by suspended fittings. The church is gloomy at all times. The feature of the ceiling is lost as the eye is forced downwards by what light there is. The windows require a strong interior lighting if they are to remain in perspective. The sanctuary could be transformed and 'increased in size' by strong hidden lighting.
 - pp. The strange ordering of the pews is a major hindrance to any sense of participation. There is no centre aisle with the result that sight access to the chancel is impeded by horizontal pew back barriers. The notion that a congregation is an audience has no place in current liturgical thinking. There must be nothing to bar the worshipper from the Table, the centre for the community of faith.
 - qq. The chancel itself cannot speak clearly as presently ordered. Viewed over the pews and even approached by the passages the chancel is cluttered. It is housing for an organ console. It has rows of chairs to accommodate a choir. The Holy Table of open style is lost among the horizontals and confused by various verticals seen through it. The chancel is dark because of poor light and heavy panelling. Someone has fixed four brass ornaments to the panelling. On close inspection they are seen to represent the four evangelists; but it is doubtful if many worshippers know this and they look more like horse brasses on the panelling of a pub.
 - rr. There is no space in the sanctuary for groups of people to meet and stand. Access at the 'west' end from the porch leads to a narrow run behind the pews into equally narrow passages.
23. He has suggested that reordering should involve consideration of the following;
- ss. Removal of pews which are not of good quality, which are uncomfortable and which are badly ordered to the detriment of the liturgy.
 - tt. Clearing the chancel. The present electronic organ is well into its life span but serious consideration should be given to moving the console either to the side of the church or, more sensibly to the 'west' end, the traditional site where organ and choir can most usefully lead the congregation's praise.
 - uu. The opportunity presents itself for careful and imaginative consideration of how 1) font 2) lectern 3) pulpit & 4) table are to be placed so that these eloquent symbols are allowed to make their statements. Does the chancel still need a dais? Might lectern return to its ancient place amongst the people? How is the link between baptism and Eucharist to be demonstrated?
 - vv. The Holy Table should be provided with fabric on a rail inside the wood, changeable in colour for the season. One could not then see through the table and the carving itself would be better featured.

Budget

24. At this stage, there is not a budget; the first step is a feasibility study that will look at the potential changes and provide an estimate of cost. Thereafter a budget will be fixed.

Appointment process

25. The client will invite a short list of architectural practices for interview to conduct a feasibility study. At the interview, practices will be asked to present:

- ww. Examples of work already undertaken – with names of the client. We will take references from these clients
- xx. How they would undertake consultation with building users

- yy. How they would wish to work with the Client's working group
- zz. Fee basis upon which they wish to work
- aaa. Preliminary proposals are not required

Appendix 1 – background history (copied from Dunningite Autumn 2007)

St Paul's Church, Dunning

Peter Duncan tells the story of how St Paul's Church came to be nearly 100 years ago.

St Paul's church dates from 1908 but to establish the reason for the building we must go much further back in history – some 200 years earlier.

The law of patronage had been challenged at the ordination of William Reid in September 1691, when his ordination at St Serf's was stopped by armed parishioners refusing entry to the church. He was ordained the following month and he is remembered for preaching in Auchterarder against the Jacobite rebellion with a pistol round his neck.

Since that event the law was seldom acted upon. However, on the death of the Reverend Alexander Smyth in February 1768 the Reverend Lewis Dunbar was settled on a direct presentation. A number of elders and heads of families did not subscribe to this call. The laxity of discipline and morals in the establishment was also a reason for unrest in the church.

This led to the establishment of seceder churches in Dunning; the Burghers and Anti-Burghers.

The main gathering points of the Anti-Burghers in Strathearn were at Kinkell and Pathstruie. The Broom made a more convenient place of worship for the seceders from Dunning and Forteviot and a church was established there in 1790. The church congregation dwindled until the buildings were sold in 1872 and the funds used for missionary and benevolent purposes.

The Burgher faction remained in the village. A church was built after great difficulty. So determined had been the opposition from the established church that ground could not be obtained on which to build a church. They eventually prevailed upon an individual to sell them a feu. They then had difficulty obtaining materials to build their church as none were available in the immediate neighbourhood. The Reverend John Mackie was appointed in 1772 and ordained in August 1773. The session met at Mains of Pitcairns until 1781 when meetings were held in the manse, but there are no clues where the church and the manse were. In August 1780 the Reverend John Bengo was ordained and in 1806 the session agreed that the kirk should be taken down and a new one erected. By this time all hostility against them had ceased. Every facility for building a place of worship was afforded them, proper materials were in abundance and a new church (now the United Presbyterian) was built at Townhead in 1810. The Reverend James Smith was ordained in 1812 and the session agreed to borrow money to defray the expense of building a manse.

In 1803 a branch of the Relief Church was opened in the village. A place of worship was built in 1804. Willowbank in Upper Granco Street is the site of this church. 1820 saw a branch of the Original Secession Church built where Old Bank House is in Lower Granco Street. These churches, which had united in 1847, folded in 1868.

In 1843 a statement of protest was read and laid before the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, leading to the disruption and formation of the Free Church. The first minister in Dunning was the Reverend Charles G. Stewart formerly minister in Aberdalgie. A church was built in Quarry Green in 1844.

At this time the parish was much over-churched, there being five places of worship within its bounds and of these, four were within the village. The population of the parish was only about 2000, some 1100 in the village itself.

The accommodation of the four churches was:

1	Established	700
2	Burgher	300
3	Free	400
4	Relief	300
5	Seceder	176
	Total	1876

The Free Church manse and classrooms were erected shortly afterwards and the debt for construction was cleared in 1865. In 1873 the school was handed over to the new government Education Board. In 1879 the school board sold the school house which was bought back by the Free Kirk for £10.

In 1883 it was agreed to raise funds to build a new church because the existing church's roof was too heavy for the building and the walls were having to be reinforced. Also the situation, being some sixty feet below the road, made entry and exit for the members steep and slippery especially in inclement weather. Mr Jones, who was factor to Lord Rollo, drew up the necessary plans. In the 1890s the school board was granted the use of the school house for cookery and dairy classes.

In September 1889 the ladies of the U.P. church decided that the manse had been neglected in favour of the church and was badly in need of some repair, renovation and enlargement to make it befitting the status of the U.P. Church. It was agreed to hold a sale of work and this took place in the town hall on Friday and Saturday 25th & 26th July 1890. The Friday sale was opened by Andrew Grant Esquire of Invermay and the Saturday sale by Lord Provost Whittet of Perth. It was quite a sale, warranting two columns in the Strathearn Herald, and raised £545.11.4d, a considerable sum for those days.

The Free Kirk and the United Presbyterians began proposals for union in 1898, which took effect in 1900. The Free Kirk was named the South United Free Church and the United Presbyterian the Townhead United Free Church. The United congregation agreed to build a new church provided funds were available prior to building commencing. Sir John Wilson of Kippen offered £1000 and Mr. Whyte of Muirhead also £1000 from himself and his brothers.

So it was that St Paul's was built in the Perth Road. Plans were drawn up by W. Carruthers Laidlaw, architects of Edinburgh who supervised the whole project. The contractors were Mr Peter Anderson, Builder, Auchterarder; Mr Robert Lamb, Joiner, Edinburgh, Mr McArthur, Painter, Edinburgh, Mr Dougall, Slater and Mr Stirling, Plumber, Dunning. The building walls are of dressed freestone from the local quarry on Duncrub estate and the roof covered with green Westmoreland slates. The foundation stone was laid by Lady Wilson on 18th July 1908 and the first service was held on Saturday 8th May 1909. The dedicatory service was conducted by the Rev. Dr. Alex. Whyte, senior minister of St. George's United Free Church, Edinburgh, before a distinguished gathering. The Rev. John M. Jeffrey who had been inducted on 8th July 1908 was the first United Free minister of the new church. St Paul's served as the United Free Church until 1929 when union with the established church took place, giving two congregations in Dunning. These were united in 1972 leaving St Paul's as the parish church.

Peter Duncan July 1st 2007