

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF THE DIOCESE OF YORK

IN THE MATTER OF THE PARISH OF BRAMHAM

THE CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS

IN THE MATTER OF A PETITION REQUESTING A FACULTY for the reordering of the east end of the church

Neutral Citation Number: [2017] ECC Yor 3

JUDGMENT

The Petition

1. By a petition lodged in the Registry on the 16 March 2017, the Petitioners - the Rev Canon Peter Bristow, vicar, the Rev Jane Brown, acting priest in charge, and Mr Chips Browning, churchwarden - petition for a faculty:
 - (i) to move the stone altar forward approximately 1 metre, (which will involve dismantling and rebuilding the altar close to the top of the sanctuary steps;
 - (ii) to move the reredos back 18 cm;
 - (iii) to construct a new oak shelf for candlesticks
 - (iv) to remove and dispose of 2 front children's choir stalls (which are not integral to the adult choir stalls behind them);
 - (v) to move a Memorial stone in front of the altar to a central position in the chancel floor in front of the steps before the communion rail;
 - (vi) to improve an existing spotlight, lighting the reredos, with a soft LED light

Proceedings

2. The matter was considered by the DAC at its meeting on 28 February 2017 when it granted a certificate recommending the proposals.
3. On 25 March 2017 I issued Directions stating that I was satisfied that the petitioners had made out a case for their proposal and I therefore directed that subject to the relevant display of Public Notice and no objection being received, a Faculty shall pass the seal until further order.
4. Public Notice was duly given.

5. Thereafter letters were received in the Registry on 29th March 2017 from Mrs M Wilson; on 10 April 2017 from Mrs Julia Hammond; on 21 April 2017 from Jacqueline Clark. Each of them in similar terms objected to the proposal on the basis of cost, the lack of a need for such a reordering, and other needs such as a toilet if money is to be spent.
6. The Registrar informed each of these persons of their options under the rules, either to complete Form No 4 and become a party to the contested proceedings or to allow their letters to stand as their objections which would be considered by me when reaching a decision after the Petitioners had had chance to comment on their objections.
7. None of the 3 responded. I am of course therefore duty-bound to take those letters into account in coming to a final decision on this matter.
8. The letters were copied to the petitioners. On 15 June 2017 the Rev Jane Brown responded to the objections. The petitioners she said believe that there is a need for a liturgical space which can offer more flexible worship and engage the wider community. They believe that it is necessary to make their worship more accessible to younger people and families and that an east facing altar is not conducive to that. They accepted the need for a toilet but that is much more expensive and has a number of difficulties that have yet to be overcome but they hope to progress that at some point in the future. As to the general maintenance they were not aware of any major works apart from work to the organ for which they are about to launch a fundraising campaign and do not see this as being in competition with the proposed reordering.

Consideration of the issues

9. The **Minute of the DAC Meeting** records that "The Archdeacon supported this reordering of what was a very crowded chancel area. The 2 pew frontals would be kept and stored but the tiny children's benches could be disposed of. The new oak shelf would be simple and would replace an existing large lumpy one. The spotlight should be 3000 Deg k, not 6000 Deg k, as the lighting to the wonderful reredos needed to be warm."
10. The **Statement of Need** submitted by the Petitioners with their Petition records that "All Saints Church stands in the middle of Bramham village and is used by all sections of the community for worship and other events. Since 2011, various celebrants have used a freestanding oak table at the head of the chancel, as there is no westward facing altar table in the church. Many younger families live in the village and a lot of energy is being put into attracting them to worship and participate in church life."

The intention is to bring forward the altar to allow the celebrant to face westwards during the Communion service. With the removal of the children's choir stalls, we will also be able to gather the average Sunday congregation in the chancel and to use the area more flexibly for worship and other events.

The current layout means the congregation are approximately 15 m, at least, from the altar and these changes would reduce this distance considerably, providing for a more focused and intimate environment for worship."

11. I have been provided with **photographs** of the area and also, of course, with the **drawings** for the proposed alterations.
12. I also have a copy of the **Resolutions of the PCC and VCC**. On 16 March 2015 All Saints VCC passed a resolution in favour of the works by 8 votes to nil with one abstention. On 17 October 2016 the PCC of Lower Wharf passed a unanimous resolution in favour of these proposals.
13. It is the incumbent and PCC who are responsible together for cooperating in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. This is achieved by mutual cooperation and support, by joint decision-making, and of course by listening to others in the parish.
14. It is clear to me that the incumbent and the PCC have performed this task in a proper manner. They have made decisions about how the mission of the church should be advanced. They have not only consulted within the parish, but have also sought the advice of the Diocesan Advisory Committee, which has recommended that they be permitted to carry out this modest reordering of the East End of this parish church.
15. I am quite satisfied that what they seek to do in terms of mission, reaching out to people in the village, is not only commendable but is a necessary response to the gospel imperative. I am equally satisfied that the proposed works in relation to the altar are steps that they might reasonably consider will help them in that missional role.
16. In all those circumstances I am persuaded that the work is far from unnecessary, that it is a proper use of the modest resources that will need to be expended, and that any other major works whether the installation of a toilet or the refurbishment of the organ will also be advanced as and when plans are made and funds are available.
17. I therefore remain persuaded that the petitioners have made out their case for these proposals

Directions

18. I therefore direct that a faculty shall pass the seal until further order

19. Of course, the raising of the objection means that this becomes a “contested petition” which means that the costs of the proceedings will have to be met by the petitioners, which means the parish, rather than by the DBF, as in the case of uncontested petitions. I will certify the sum to be paid upon being provided with details by the Registrar.

20. I will allow 12 months for the completion of the works.

Canon Peter Collier QC

Diocesan Chancellor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Collier', with a horizontal line underneath.

9th July 2017.