

Project Type: New Works: toilet, servery, heating, access and reordering.

Project Title: Reach Development Project

Location: St Etheldreda's, Reach

Aims: To develop the church building for both church and wider community use

Total Cost: Not specified

Funding Sources: Legacy

Project Duration: 2014 – 2023



Above: works starts in 2022 Below: completion in 2023



Brief Overview

In 2014, St Etheldreda's church received a very generous legacy to be used for 'the repair, renovation and decoration of the fabric of the church and its grounds'. The priority was to carry out some essential repairs before considering how to develop the church building for both church and wider community use. A wide consultation was carried out with initial plans produced in 2015. These were soon added to and whilst it became clear that modern facilities and more flexible space were welcome, opinions about removal of all the pews were divided.

In the years that followed, various versions of the plans were produced, each further developing the requirements, and including consultation with both the village and the DAC. In 2018, a set of plans was produced that incorporated all suggestions received. Uncertainty surrounding the impact of Brexit, the future of the VAT reclaim scheme and then Covid, all caused delays.

Reach Church was completely refurbished in 2022/3 and is now well equipped to serve the needs of the church and the villagers of Reach and beyond. The changes included:

- A servery and toilet with disabled access
- Entrance and access improvements
- Underfloor heating, with wall heaters to boost the temperature when the church is in use.
- Improved lighting and audio-visual facilities
- The removal of some pews, replaced with stackable chairs. Other pews fitted with castors so they can be easily pushed aside when needed.

In 2024, work started to landscape the garden to promote biodiversity, creating a variety of habitats and including wildflower areas to attract pollinators. It has extensive views of the Fens and the ruined arch of an older chapel and, although a little bare at present, will form an attractive area for contemplation as it matures in the months and years to come.

Website: You can find out about the history of the church here: www.reach-village.co.uk/church.html
The church website is: www.stmarysburwell.org.uk/