

Maintenance Report

Church Restorations

Following on from the Stonework Condition and Conservation Report commissioned last year, we engaged an engineering firm, specialising in heritage structures, to deliver a Building Structural Condition Report of the church. This was undertaken in May, revealing a number of repair items to be added to those identified in the Stonework Condition report. A list of the works required include:

- restoration of the spire and bell tower
- fix water ingress points in the church
- repair interior water damage
- improve downpipes and drainage around the church to prevent further damage
- fix the windows

The high-level estimate for the cost of these repairs is around \$2 - \$2.5 million with most of the work required in the next 2-3 years. The pressing work is the spire and bell tower estimated to be around \$1.3m.

Given the cost of the restorations exceeds the means of the NEAC congregation, Parish Council agreed that we should seek to raise funds external to the church. In doing so, investigate options of a tax-deductible fund to underpin this and look at fundraising activities that could commence in the sesquicentennial year as an ideal platform to launch these activities.

I am pleased to advise that late last year the National Trust approved our application to establish a Conservation Appeal to cover restorations, repairs and maintenance work for St. Stephen's Church and Rectory. This means donations to the St. Stephen's Church Restoration fund, through the National Trust, are tax deductible.

We are asking that the congregation give consideration to contributing to the restoration appeal in addition to their regular giving. It is important that this is not considered an alternative to regular giving as donations to the National Trust account can only be used for restorations, not ministry work.

A small fundraising committee has been established to look at options, primarily focusing on appeals rather than activities, per se. This will include requests to:

- benevolent organisations
- the local community and businesses
- dignitaries and attendees of the sesquicentennial celebrations
- current and past parishioners as well as
- continuing to seek out and apply for appropriate grants as and when they arise.

We would encourage all parishioners to commit to prayer the fundraising activities and pray, that in His goodness and mercy, God will provide the necessary funds to see the St Stephen's church building survive for at least another 150 years!

Rectory Roof

As reported at last year's AGM, the Parish Council considered options available to facilitate repairs to the rectory roof as a result of two storm events. It was decided the rectory roof should be replaced rather than repaired. This was the only alternative available as contractors, quoting to repair the roof, would not guarantee the work due to the age and condition of the existing roof.

Subsequently, the parish applied for (and was granted) a loan of \$150,000. This, together with monies from the insurance claim, is expected to cover replacement of the roof and gutters where necessary, some repairs to the verandah and outside painting of the rectory.

It has taken the best part of the year to obtain the necessary heritage and council approvals to progress with the work. The roof replacement is due to commence next week (Monday 25/3). Work is expected to take up to 6 weeks, weather permitting. After which the painting will be undertaken.

Grants

The Wardens and Parish Council thank God for the provision of two grants in late 2023. The first is \$42,000 from public funds allocated for 'Securing Faith Based Organisations'. This will see the fence around the hall and rectory replaced with a new black chain link fence and timber posts. Also, security cameras will be installed at the entrance to the cemetery and hall. The second is for \$26,000, which represents a 50% contribution to fix the roof over the creche in the north of the church. The work for both of these will progress in the coming months.

We have also submitted two applications for a Community Building Partnership Grant. One to renovate the toilets in the Newtown Hall and the other to replaster the inside of the Erskineville church. We will be given advice as to the success of the applications in May.

The Wardens and Parish Council would like to extend our thanks to Jenna Weston and Ryan Southwell for their efforts and dedication in pulling together these grant submissions.

Erko

In August it was identified that the two Camphor Laurel trees, nearest the church, had been poisoned. Despite efforts to save them they died and were subsequently removed in November. The last working bee at Erskineville focused on distributing the significant amount of mulch that was left after the tree removal.

While the removal of the trees has opened up the site, making the church more visible and a positive for new church plant, it has also removed the shade that was enjoyed by Junior Jivers.

Working Bees

Parish Council and the Wardens would like to thank the numerous volunteers who have attended working bees over the past year at the Newtown and Erskineville sites. We seek to position these to coincide, if possible, with outreach activities and major church calendar events such as Easter and Christmas. alternating between Newtown and Erskineville

Working bees generally cover significant gardening items outside of the scope of the day to day gardening, cleaning out storage cupboards and disposing of unwanted/broken items, tidying up and additional cleaning of the church, painting and general repair items within the skill set of working bee members.

Our sites are extensive and have unique maintenance challenges which, without the support of volunteers would be even harder to maintain.

NEAC Wardens Report – 2023

Risk Management

In 2023, the wardens, in consultation with Andrew, developed a comprehensive risk register for NEAC, to ensure the protection and effective stewardship of both the tangible and intangible assets of the church and its ministry. The register will allow us to continually identify, assess, manage and monitor risks across all of NEAC, which supports decision making and progress towards our NEAC vision.

As part of this work, the wardens continue to develop and refine NEAC systems, policies and processes to support the sustainable use of resources, and ensure that our ministry is adequately equipped. This also includes routine administrative and compliance tasks, such as annual risk and insurance reporting to the Diocese, WHS review, incident management, CCLI reporting etc.

Human Resources

NEAC has had some significant changes in the staff team in 2023, with the departure of Matt Aroney, and onboarding of Peter and Marcelle Rodgers, Fergus O'Shea, Janelle Bray and rotation of student ministers. The wardens have worked closely with Andrew to review the NEAC staffing profile to canvass the options and opportunities ahead to ensure there is adequate support for the ministry at NEAC. The wardens have also overseen the onboarding and offboarding of staff at NEAC, and have developed resources to streamline these processes moving forward.

To promote connection between the staff team and Parish Council, Andrew commenced an initiative to invite a different staff member to Parish Council meetings throughout 2023. Parish Council were able to hear their reflections and suggestions on the needs of the church and the staff team, which has been very encouraging, highlighting the wisdom, talent, skill and enthusiasm for the gospel throughout our staff team. The wardens have also made plans to engage staff 1:1 periodically to provide support and care for them as NEAC employees.

We are excited to see what God has in store for NEAC in 2024, and look forward to working alongside the parish and staff team to support the work of the gospel here in Newtown and Erskineville.