

STRAIDE CHURCH CONSERVATION FUND

Dear Parishioner,

In recent months two serious problems have emerged in relation to our Church building, namely:

- The significant intake of water into the fabric of the building and
- The discovery of dry rot present in some of the wood in the Church.

There is now an urgent need to make the building water tight and to deal with the dry rot issue. The costs involved for such large-scale projects cannot be met from the parish's annual maintenance budget in the same way that other smaller projects usually are.

Local architect, John Halligan, has been employed to advise on the best way to proceed with resolving the structural issues. His very comprehensive reports have advised that

- The original (1916) lead flashing under the stone barges on the roof needs to be replaced.
- The gutters and down pipes have also to be replaced.
- Cracked / broken roof slates need to be replaced.
- Some stone work requires repointing.
- Storm glazing on the windows needs to be replaced.
- Dry rot infected wood needs to be removed, replaced and the affected areas treated.
- The lightening conductors also need to be upgraded.

To ensure transparency (as well as value for money) the work has been put out to tender. It has emerged that the conservation work will cost €165,000 approximately. This figure includes all costs associated with the work (architect fees etc., etc.) as well as built-in contingency funds. The figure is approximate, in that it assumes that no other major issues will be discovered while the actual agreed work is being carried out.

We have no choice but to proceed with all works that are necessary to address the two main issues of making the Church watertight and free from dry rot. These works are now essential and cannot be delayed. They are the minimal works necessary to address the two issues adequately and to avoid more expensive longterm costs.

It must also be borne in mind that, at this moment in time, other very worthwhile fundraising ventures are already taking place within the community. Following feedback from recent public meetings (as well as other various formal suggestions received), the Finance Committee has decided to take out a loan to cover the costs associated with the Church conservation and, having due regard for other current fundraising drives in the community, has also decided not to get involved in major fund-raising initiatives.

The cost of this loan will, however, have to be serviced by the parish. Most of the feedback received, suggests that the least burdensome way to do this would be to request households (if in a position to do so and without causing undue hardship) to contribute €5 per week to a special *Straide Church Conservation Fund*. Special envelopes for this purpose will be distributed to each household shortly. The special collection will run for one year from the first Sunday in October and should allow the loan to be serviced. This special weekly collection will run in conjunction with our regular Weekly Offertory Collection, which is always supported most generously in this parish.

As the diocese / parish is a designated Registered Charity, all additional contributions made to the special collection will qualify for our tax rebate scheme. This scheme allows the parish to claim back the income tax already paid by parishioners on all their contributions made to the Church. In effect, it means that every €5 placed in an envelope and given to the Church is actually worth €7.25. This scheme is totally anonymous, in that it is based solely on your PRSI number and your annual contribution to the Church. No other information is provided to (or received from) the Revenue Commissioners. Payments to the parish from the Revenue Commissioners are grouped and are not linked to any individuals. Furthermore, the scheme does not affect your tax liability in any way. I would, as always, *strongly* encourage all contributions to the Church to be made by way of envelope. On average, most years we receive a tax refund of approximately €10,000 from this scheme.

I do realise that the costs associated with conservation of the Church seem daunting. However, I am confident that the generosity of people will, in time, cover these costs. It is hoped that the work will begin very shortly and be completed in 8 – 10 weeks, with priority being given to outside works to be completed first.

September 9th 2017

Fr. M Conway

On behalf of the Parish Finance Committee

STRAIDE CHURCH

WORKS RECENTLY COMPLETED

Over the past number of years, a considerable amount of work has been done in and around our Church in Straide. These works include:

- Landscaping & setting trees
- Building perimeter walls
- Replacement of steps at the front of the Church & towards the Abbey
- Replacement of the gates at the front of the Church
- Addition of Flood Lighting to the entrance gable
- Replacement of entrance ramps
- Installation of CCTV
- Installation of Monitored Alarms
- Power washing and painting
- Works associated with the recent Church Centenary Celebrations

All of the above have been made possible by the generosity of parishioners through their Weekly Offertory contributions and through the Charitable Tax Rebate scheme. No additional major fundraising was undertaken, or was necessary. We are extremely grateful for such great generosity on the part of the community. All monies received in the weekly Offertory Collection go *entirely* to the maintenance of the Church and its grounds as well as paying the very considerable associated overheads e.g. insurance, light, heat etc., etc.

In accordance with diocesan regulations, the Offertory Collection is not used to pay the Parish Priest in any form. Unlike larger parishes, our parish does not have any employees (e.g. secretary, cleaner, housekeeper, book keeper, caretaker, sacristan etc., etc) whose wages would, ordinarily, come from the Offertory Collection. Thus, all Offertory contributions go entirely to the maintenance of the Church and the payment of associated overheads.

If a major project has to be undertaken the Offertory Collection, alone, may not be sufficient to cover the cost - as is now the case. As all parishes are expected to be self-financing, they must raise funds to cover any shortfall. The diocese may assist by acting as a guarantor to a commercial loan, but it is not in a position to cover such costs within a parish. Thus, it has always been of the utmost importance to utilise parish income in an open, transparent and responsible manner, to keep costs to a minimum and to strive, at all times, to get best value for money.

The parish Finance Committee is tasked with the responsibility of overseeing all parish income and expenditure and ensuring that proper Books of Account are maintained. Parish accounts are subject to audits conducted by independent external auditors on behalf of the diocese. As a Recognised Charity with Charitable Status, the parish accounts are also subject to all the regulatory rules and oversight of the *Charity Regulatory Authority* (CRA). Thus, all monies contributed to the Church are overseen and are used entirely for the purposes intended.

