



**REPORT OF A MEETING HELD BY FATHER ED TOMLINSON**

**AT ST. BARNABAS CHURCH, TUNBRIDGE WELLS,**

**ON SUNDAY, 27TH. JANUARY 2008.**

**The Historical Context.**

The Parish of St. Barnabas, Tunbridge Wells, was founded in the late nineteenth century as an offshoot of the Parish of St. James. This resulted in a situation, which might have been created intentionally, whereby the richer inhabitants of the two parishes lived in the newly reduced parish of St. James, and the poorer inhabitants, mainly the families of servants and the poor, in the new Parish of St. Barnabas. Even now, over a hundred years later, the Parish of St. Barnabas contains pockets of considerable poverty, which the public authorities have done little to correct. Whilst the immediate surroundings of the Parish Church are generally impoverished, the Church itself acts as the focal point for an Anglo-Catholic community extending over a much wider area.

**The Present Position in the Parish.**

At the present time, the Parish of St. Barnabas is still struggling with a variety of social problems, the foremost of which are as follows:

1. The Parish has an exceptionally high proportion (45%) of children who have Special Educational Needs, and a high proportion (37%) of children for whom English is a second language. Furthermore, 75% of children presenting at St. Barnabas School have had no pre-school instruction. Whilst the standard of teaching at the School is high, the standards of instruction of pupils on arrival is so low as to ensure that the majority are unable to catch up during the remainder of their school careers. The school inspectors, whilst finding that the educational attainments of pupils are low, have nevertheless observed a high level of pastoral care at the School.
2. There is an acute need for adult educational facilities in the Parish.
3. There is also an acute need for pre-school facilities in the Parish, and it is hoped that it will be possible to launch a pre-school facility by Easter of this year. Within the last year or so, a Mother and Toddler facility has been formed and is extremely popular. At the moment, about 20 families are members, and numbers are likely to grow.
4. There is a need for health checking facilities, but, at the moment, nowhere for them to be carried out. There is also a need for counselling.

## **The Envisaged Solution to the Parish's Problems.**

Father Tomlinson considers that the solution to many of the Parish's problems lies in the refurbishment and extension of the Church Hall, which lies in the grounds of the Church. The successful completion of this work would enable the parish to offer facilities for at least some of the following, which would include both essential services and activities aimed at fostering social cohesion:

1. A Lunch Club.
2. Meetings of the West Kent Hindu Community.
3. Rainbows.
4. Adult Education Facilities.
5. A Dance Club.
6. OAP Fitness Classes.
7. Badminton
8. Majorettes.
9. Pre-School Learning.
10. Health Clinics.

## **The Situation Regarding Funding and Timing.**

The total cost of extending the Church Hall has been estimated at £350,000. This sum would cover the cost of a major refurbishment of the existing premises, the construction of a first floor extension of the building on the side facing Quarry Road, and the new building of a Cafe and other satellite structures on what is now car parking space. The use of these new structures is preferred to the alternative solution of providing the existing structure with a first floor, on the grounds that it would be less disruptive, and would enable the Pre-School facility to function without interruption. It is envisaged that, in order to minimise disruption as far as possible, building work would be scheduled for the summer (school) holidays. Of the sum required for the completion of the work, £50,000 has been made available by the Educational Authorities, and a further £47,000 has been given by private subscription and donation. This leaves an amount of £253,000 still to be found.

## **Conclusion.**

The proposed work represents an immensely worthwhile undertaking, and Father Tomlinson has asked us to do all we can to help raise the funds necessary for its completion.

[www.sbarnabas.com](http://www.sbarnabas.com)

Michael Larsen.  
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