



ST AUGUSTINE'S
NEUTRAL BAY

Building for the Kingdom

1. Why do we need to do anything to our church property?

1.1 Church Services

Our church building can seat 130 adults comfortably and current attendance at our 9:45am service is on average 90 adults. The number of weeks at which over 100 adults attend is increasing.

Those adults are bringing 70+ kids each week who are distributed as follows:

Kids Church age group	Current attendance	Room capacity
Crèche	15	20
Preschool	16	25
Infants	20	30
Primary	12	Offsite
High School	10	Offsite
TOTAL	73 (average)	75

There are 90 kids on our roll of regular attenders and each month we are finding ourselves over-capacity in one room or another. There are 150 adults on our church register who regularly attend St Augustine's. There are another 70 who attend sporadically.

It is apparent that there is a mismatch of capacity between adults and children. The church building can theoretically accommodate 50% more adults (but both church practice and logistics prevent this from happening), however we are already unable to accommodate all kids onsite.

It is apparent that numbers of adults attending is unlikely to increase to over 100 due to constraints both with children's work and with seating capacity in church. It is generally accepted in church growth studies that the number of people attending will rarely exceed 80% of available space, which confirms the likelihood that numbers at our family service will plateau or be constrained by capacity at current levels.

1.2 Access to facilities

Our **church office** is located at the rear of our site and is inaccessible to those with mobility issues; our **ministry team** has nowhere to formally collaborate in their work; **visitors** have been observed to not enter our premises because of unclear access points. A heritage architect noted that "Anglicans are not very good at moving from one building to another. But when you make it easier for them to move, they tend to stick around and more things happen." It currently neither logical nor smooth to move from one part of our site to another, especially in inclement weather.

2. What are the goals of the proposed redevelopment?

Our goal is to further expand Kids' Church by splitting the Primary and High School groups in half (ie, create groups of yrs 3-4, yrs 5-6, yrs 7-8, Senior High), to create 7 Kids' Church groups. So not only can our current site not accommodate the present 5 groups, it provides us with no scope for growth.

We are seeking to bring more adults into church, more often. This means more people in church on Sundays, and more people at events (Evangelistic and otherwise) at other times.

We need to provide collaborative space for existing staff, let alone any additional staff, provide facilities for more Church and other groups and ideally locate our Office toward the front of our site.

Side benefits include **future-proofing** our site against future maintenance costs (see 4.2 below), foreseeable regulatory changes (including disabled access requirements for public buildings, emergency egress & 'green' building requirements) and possible demographic changes (hence the proposed lightweight construction in the hall).

3. Isn't there another (ie, cheaper) way?

3.1 Can we divide the 9:45am family church in half and run 2 identical services and kids' churches?

Running 2 congregations of 40-45 adults may not be sustainable, bearing in mind we would need to double the number of musicians, morning tea servers, AV operators and welcomers if we are to maintain the current offering. In addition, we would need to double the number of Kids' Church leaders. Realistically, we would need a regular adult population of over 130 adults with children to support a split, which is not likely in our current built environment.

We have tried for the past 3 years to source leaders for our kids' church as it has grown, and we have struggled to do so. Only 3 leaders out of 9 are unpaid volunteers from our church. A further 2 are unpaid volunteers from another church. Church is remunerating, in full or part, 4 of our leaders.

It is hard to see how running 2 identical services is feasible with our current numbers given the persistent reluctance of people to date to step up and serve in the apparently unglamorous ways of kids' ministry, morning tea and AV (but almost everyone wants to read the Bible in church).

3.2 Can we move offsite?

In an anonymous online survey of parishioners last year, strong attachment to our church building emerged in parallel with decided resistance against moving permanently to another site, such as a nearby school.

If we were to move offsite, in light of the preferences expressed through this survey, I expect it would have the effect of creating 2 similar family services. This is because some would be quite resistant to a permanent move away from our church building, requiring the maintenance of a Kids' Church programme onsite as well as a new Kids' Church programme offsite. This duplication of church services carries with it the attendant personnel challenges noted above.

Of course, an offsite move may temporarily allow for increased numbers but my first pastoral priority must be for those who already call St Augustine's their church family and not those who may in the future join with us. In any event, were the church to proceed with a development of its site, a

temporary off-site solution would prove unequivocally whether there is an appetite for growth in such an environment. If there was, it would be an ideal platform from which to launch a church plant back in to the redeveloped site, where we have a track record of consistent positive growth but are limited by space.

3.3 Can we achieve an appropriately scaled site that promotes our ambitions?

The question then becomes how we can appropriately scale our site so that people of all ages are safely and suitably accommodated to hear the gospel and respond in repentance and faith. By appropriate, we include the need to comply with strict legislative controls around the heritage value of our church building, which limits where and what we can build.

Appropriately scaling our facilities will also allow the incoherence of previous developments to be overcome. For example,

1. there are 9 entry points (external doors) from Shellcove Road into our site. A midweek visitor has a logical choice of 4 ways to find someone. A site masterplan will ensure our buildings present coherently to the street and 'welcome' visitors in a clear way.
2. Trip hazards abound as a result of the multiple levels our meeting rooms are on. An unsafe site is unacceptable in the cultural context we find ourselves in. Linking the church and hall provides opportunity to create 1 level 'ground floor' across the 2 buildings, in place of the 4 current levels and external trip hazards.
3. The church office is hidden in the upper rear corner of the site and there are no non-residential rooms equipped with desks suitable for staff meetings. Noting the benefits of collaboration, we want our buildings to encourage collaboration, not isolation, among our pastors and staff.

This is not to say our forebears made bad decisions with property. Far from it. We must give great thanks to God for those before us at St Augustine's who gave so generously to

1. leave us a church building that is so conducive to corporate worship around the Scriptures,
2. provide a hall that generates \$50,000+ pa cash, and accommodates 2 Kids' Church groups, &
3. leave us with \$1.0m cash in the bank, which returns us ~\$40,000 pa.

But those buildings were products of their time and the designers had no concept of the way our society now seeks to gather and relate (open, light spaces; more lay leadership and involvement; audio-visual and power needs), nor that St Augustine's now has a full-time ministry team of 3 plus professional administrative support. And so our existing infrastructure has no place for such developments.

3.4 Can we use one of our residences as a 'ministry centre'?

This will add significantly to our cost base as alternative housing would need to be rented for the displaced minister and his family, thus mitigating against a ministry team and pushing the church back towards a 'one minister parish'. This option would not address the access issues we currently face.

4. Should St Augustine's fund a significant redevelopment of its site?

4.1 Is it self-indulgent?

1. St Augustine's is in the practice of giving away 12-15% of its total income to non-parish Gospel work (and that excludes all the grocery collection and other non-cash giving), which is considerably more than many churches do and it is the current Parish Council's intention to continue to do this.
2. We have already generously donated property in excess of \$4.7m in the last decade to promote the gospel in financially disadvantaged areas of Sydney:
 - a. We gave the St Chad's church site to the Diocesan Mission Board, who sold it at an option strike price of \$4.2m.
 - b. We sold a \$900,000+ Naremburn residence to Naremburn Anglican for \$390,000
3. When we consider improvements to our own homes, we don't opt for the barest, cheapest option but ask what will work best for us.
4. In light of the property and investment legacies bequeathed to us by previous generations of parishioners, there is a moral obligation on us to 'pay it forward' to future generations.
5. It is probable that in the coming 4-10 years, the current tax deductibility for building works such as these will be removed. So if we agree that additional space is required on site, if we don't fund it now, it is possible that in addition to higher building costs the future after-tax funding costs will increase by as much as 45%.

4.2 Is it wise?

6. Strong businesses invest in the business in order to strengthen the business.
 - a. Strengthening the local church strengthens the gospel in the diocese, and thus in the world.
 - b. Investing in facilities that can be used to bring people to Christ is an act of obedience. Our current facilities are inadequate to the task (several evangelistic events have been at capacity and take more work than they should because of old plant and property).
 - c. The \$1.0m of investments left to us should be used to fund non tax deductible works, not reduce the cost to us of tax deductible projects.
7. Culturally appropriate, WH&S-compliant facilities will help reach the unchurched in our area.
 - a. Few will think we care if our facilities are out-dated and unsafe.
 - b. New facilities will bring new versatility and help reach a new generation of unchurched. This is different from what we've provided in the past. So we need to adapt and be innovative.
 - c. Our Christian brothers and sisters, like the rest of the population (and notwithstanding the baby boom at St Augustine's) is ageing – we should ensure they can continue to worship with their Christian family by ensuring safe and easy access to our site.
8. The Wardens have been advised that between now and 2020, \$369,000 ought be spent on maintaining the memorial hall and church building to their current standard. A significant portion of these costs, together with WH&S improvements to the church backyard, will be obviated by the redevelopment.
9. Those who sacrificially gave to build the church in 1924, and the hall in 1958, did a godly and wise thing for which we are now grateful.

Church 1924 cost: £12,847 (insurable value: \$6.7m)

The parish remained in debt for 25 years

Memorial Hall 1958 cost: £23,288 (insurable value: \$1.2m)

Seven parishioners guaranteed a £10,000 loan

4.3 What about us?

10. We spend generously on our houses (bathrooms, kitchens, extensions) irrespective of whether those improvements are used for many or for a few hours each week.
 - a. By way of example, if 100 families each holidayed locally next year, delayed a home renovation or acquisition of some large asset and gave an average of \$20,000 over 2 years, we'd have \$2,000,000.
11. Our current tax laws allow tax deductibility for the funding of our plans, but these concessions are unlikely to last.

4.4 What about other churches?

12. A survey of other churches in the Sydney region confirms that the cost of what we are proposing represents fair market value. One nearby church, for example, is spending \$1.2m to upgrade their site without creating any additional facilities.

5. What are the objectives?

- To deliver a church campus that reflects what we believe; namely, that relationships with God and each other are the most valuable things in life. So this project seeks to promote relationships between individuals and their creator God, and between individuals and each other.
- To provide facilities that will allow our main congregation to grow to a size which will allow us to split into two (and more) family congregations who can worship at St Augustine's. For this, we need minimum regular numbers of 130 parents and space for 80 children.
- To provide facilities for staff to collaborate regularly together, ensure the safe and easy movement of people into and around the site, and reduce OH&S site risks.
- To invest in our facilities in a cost effective way. This will reduce ongoing repair and maintenance costs, provide improved spaces for the conduct of evangelistic and church events, and generate additional revenue from external users of our site.

6. Is it time to do something?

1880s – first church built

<40 years>

1920s – current church built

<30 years>

1950s – church hall built

<60 years>

<1990s – assets (Isla, the then rectory) liquidated to keep church solvent>

2010s – here we stand

I urge you to prayerfully consider giving generously to this appeal, over and above your existing generous support of our ministries, and join with us in *Building for the Kingdom* here in Neutral Bay.

Rev Craig Roberts

Senior Minister, on behalf of the Churchwardens and Parish Council

5 August 2012