

'The wider church community has supported the hall for 50 years'

Margaret Church explains why she would like to see an end to the 'differences' between HCA and the parish church

AS SOMEONE who has loyalties to both the Hilltop community and the parish church, I have hesitated to join in the discussions about St Faith hall and its future. However, as a former member of Hilltop Social Club committee and church treasurer for both St. Nicholas and St. Faith, I feel I have something to offer to the debate.

Since the hall was opened in 1951, the electricity bills, water bills and insurance premiums for the hall have been paid, as would be expected, by the church council. The church council was also responsible for any major repair bills until 2000 and this commitment was particularly important during the late 1980s and early 1990s when social activity at the hall declined. In the later 1990s, interest revived when more social events were organised by Hilltop.

As the financial position of Hilltop improved, the committee made the offer of a donation of £220 towards the 'utility' costs of the hall which was happily accepted by the church council. At that time, the sum represented about half the utility costs. That sum is still being donated and the church council is still responsible for the (now four-figure) bill for the utilities on the hall.

Rental income for the hall has never been very high - but it has been retained by HCA and the social club before it, for at

least the last ten years. The offerings at church services have never covered any associated 'costs' and this has never been an issue as far as the church council is concerned.

Social events and clubs at the hall - from Harvest Suppers to T'ai Chi - have always been organised by the people living around the hall - some of them churchgoers, some of them not - and the income retained by HCA. Fortnightly church services have continued for more than 50 years, and some are still held through the year. Thirty six households continue to subscribe to the church magazine.

Conclusions

This leads me to two conclusions: far from having no interest in the hall, the wider church community has happily (but quietly) supported the hall and its various activities for more than 50 years; and, while the fortnightly services may have been suspended, residents of the area continue to support and be supported by the wider church community through prayer, attendance at services, pastoral visits, taking the magazine and involvement in events at the hall.

I hope that in 2007 the differences over the future of St Faith will be resolved, thus allowing the mutually beneficial management of the hall that has evolved over the years to continue to the advantage of the whole community.

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