



The Rev. Stephen Ball outside St. Paul's Church, Staverton

Staverton Church Shuts Its Doors

The Grade II listed church in Staverton will close on March 1, after its congregation battled for years to keep it open.

St. Paul's Church will close at the end of this month due to the dwindling number of parishioners and the tens of thousands of pounds worth of repairs needed to keep it running.

Rev. Stephen Ball, the priest in charge of the Canalside Benefice which includes St. Paul's, said that he is sad to see the building close but feels it is the only option.

He said: "It is a decision that we have all had to make together. The decision is made by the Parochial Church Council based on the realistic factors.

"In recent months we have had about 12 parishioners, but it is still an upward task because of the costs of the building. The nature of the village is such now that not many people are interested in the church.

"It's with great sadness we have asked the pastoral committee to get a scheme together to close the building for services."

He explained that there is an immediate need for repairs costing £25,000 and long term repairs and maintenance would cost up to £100,000, including repairing or completely replacing the roof.

Church member Mary Tapping, of Horse Road, Hilperton, said: "I used to go to the church regularly as a child growing up and was a member of the choir. I spent years of my adult life away but moved back here in 2000 and have been involved with the church on and off.

"I think the crux of the matter is that Staverton is no longer the close community it used to be.

"It will be sad to see it close. I would not feel so bad about it if I knew that it would have a future life which was in keeping with its background."

Any potential owners would be restricted as to the building's use, it is a listed and has numerous covenants on it regarding its use and maintenance.

Churchwarden Lesley Warne said: "It is a very difficult situation for the congregation. It's traumatic, I would say we are all feeling upset about it all."

A service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance will be held next Saturday at 7.30 p.m. and a Holy Communion service will be held on Sunday at 11 a.m.

Although the church is going to be closed for services the churchyard will remain open for burials.

The church commissioners have still to decide what will happen to the church but following its closure it will be administered by the Diocesan Board of Finance while a use is found for the building.

Worshippers can now go to St. Mary's Church on Horse Road or St. Michael's Church in Hilperton.

This is Wiltshire, 19 February 2011