

ST PAUL'S CHURCH
FOXDALE



***POTENTIAL CLOSURE AS
'A PLACE OF WORSHIP'***

*A meeting will be held at
7.00pm on Thursday 26th January
in Foxdale Primary School
to present more details and
provide an opportunity for Q & A's*

St Paul's Church, Foxdale, was opened in 1876 for the thriving Mining community in the village at the time when going to Church at least once on a Sunday was common. Although built with funds raised by the community, Churches within the Anglican faith are owned by the Church Commissioners. For the following century or so, the Church flourished with its own Vicar, Sunday School and a Choir.

Since then Church attendance has steadily declined. In 2012, St Paul's Church became part of the Parish of Marown, Foxdale and Baldwin with a Vicar, who lives in Marown and oversees four Churches. More recently, with still declining numbers, St Paul's Church has only held a 'Messy Church' (modern Sunday School) for the whole Parish, attended by 2 or 3 local families, on the first Sunday of each month, and on the fourth Sunday a traditional service attended by a few individuals, with just one from Foxdale itself. A small number of funerals, baptisms and weddings have been held in the Church each year.

There was a consultation within the Village in 2015, aimed at increasing the use of the building, with support for 'Community Days' alternate Fridays from the end of the summer break to Easter. Coffee mornings and Film evenings were poorly attended and ceased after a few months. Although activities have been disrupted by building issues and the pandemic, the fortnightly 'Soup lunches' were well supported by both the local and surrounding Communities - but brought in little income and relied largely on people from outside the village to organize them.

The 2020 Diocesan Strategic Review of Church Buildings asked each Parochial Parish Council (PCC), responsible for running their Churches, to consider the future of their Churches based on a set of criteria. With such a small congregation, St Paul's Church was felt to be a 'Church at the crossroads' with its future in the balance.

To many who visit St Paul's Church it is an awe-inspiring building. It is also old and requires extensive work simply to try and keep it safe and usable. Around £90,000 has been spent in the last 10 years from ever diminishing Church funds – there is no central funding support. The Church has been closed since early last year, again for safety reasons when several further 'ceiling panels' were deemed to be in imminent danger of collapse. More work is also required on the building to make it 'safe, accessible, functional and comfortable' for decades to come – at a potential sum in the region of at least £250,000. An annual revenue stream of at least £15,000 is also needed.

A Church building without the support of a congregation of local worshippers is unsustainable as a 'Place of Worship'. There is no central funding. Two Church Wardens, responsible for the building under canonical law and elected annually from the congregation, are also required. Those presently holding these positions are from outside the Village, are well into their 'senior years,' with no identifiable successors.

Members of the PCC have deliberated at length about the future of St Paul's Church and found it difficult to create a positive vision for its future.

Regrettably, the Parochial Church Council has, therefore, made the decision to petition the Church Commissioners for the closure of St Paul's Church, Foxdale as a 'Place of Worship'.

The Church building and its future will become the responsibility of the Church Commissioners. The graveyard will remain open, funded as it always has been from the rates, with services prior to interment at Marown Parish Church or elsewhere. Church members have had a presence at weekly 'Mums and Tots' and monthly 'Open the Book' sessions at Foxdale Primary school and will explore other opportunities for expressions of Christian witness in the Village in the future.

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