



A Future for Oaklands?

Interim Report of the Feasibility Study Steering Group

4 April 2011

Members of the Steering Group:

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INTRODUCTION

Terms of reference

Despite our small congregation and the imminent resignation of remaining society officers at the general meeting, there is an interest in the New Church continuing at Oaklands. This is a recognition that we have responsibility for communicating our wonderful religious teachings that will continue to be widely needed. There is a lot of goodwill towards us in the area with an ever-growing list of local individuals and community groups wanting to hire rooms for various activities or projects. The Steering Group has been asked to examine the feasibility of continuation.

Working of the Steering Group

The Steering Group, chaired by Stephen Lacy, was convened on Sunday 13th February at the Extraordinary Church Committee Meeting at which it was agreed not to sell the building immediately and to give ourselves more time to consider alternative options for the future of Oaklands.

We have met on 6 occasions between 27th February and 19th March, effectively having 3 weeks to think, challenge and question each other about the role the Birmingham New Church Society might still have in functioning as a church whilst managing Oaklands and forming new relationships with others to enliven the spaces and help administer the lettings.

Our meetings have been based on open-minded enquiry. As well as the members of the Steering Group, we have also drawn on conversations from local organisations, contributions from Ministers of the National New Church organisation and existing and potential users of the building.

THE PRESENT BIRMINGHAM NEW CHURCH SOCIETY

The Church's Objectives

The objectives of the Society, as set out in the Constitution are as follows:

- To provide its members and associates with the facility and opportunity to worship the Lord Jesus Christ as the one God in whom is the Divine Trinity
- To engage in activities that will spread the teachings of the New Church
- To be involved with the life of the surrounding community and its needs.

The Society has a rich spiritual history. For example a previous minister Rev Paul Zacharias writes:

“We will NEVER forget the many wonderful lessons and blessings we received from Oaklands... those solid memories are still very much part of who we are today. That church has served a wonderful use for many decades.”

The Steering group felt that the Society might continue to meet these objectives whilst expanding and adapting our forms of worship. For example more active reflection and participation could be introduced into Sunday morning worship. We could continue to have Spiritual Growth meetings and also organise Workshops and Seminars with Visiting Ministers that are open to all.

Current Members and Officers

To be a 'member' of Birmingham New Church Society entitles one to vote on matters arising and be nominated to an officer position, such as Secretary and Treasurer. The President (Chairman) is decided at the first meeting of the Committee following an AGM if there is a vacancy. 'Friends' of the New Church may also attend Committee Meetings, but are not entitled to vote.

Gill Silk has announced that she intends to retire from her position as President at the AGM in May; and the Treasurer, Ken Eadie, also intends to retire then, if not sooner. Don Marshall was the Secretary for many years, but passed away in December and so there is currently no Secretary. Marjorie Belfield is also retiring as a Committee Member.

It is critical to the feasibility of the Society continuing that there is a viable Church Committee. Stephen Lacy, Sheree Wilkinson, Jane Leigh and Cathy Mahmood are standing for election at the AGM on 22nd May 2011. Catherine Lauber is a member of the Church Committee in her position as Minister until August this year. We urgently need more nominations to join the Committee for at least the next 2 years if we are to pursue the opportunities within this report. We understand that currently the Church Treasurer and one other member of the Church Committee serve as Trustees for the Emma Ball Trust.

Paid and in-kind support

The Church has a caretaker and cleaner, Barbara Bourne, and in-kind support from Michael Bourne who also acts as caretaker, opening up and locking up, turning the heating on etc. Barbara Holmes is currently employed as Project Manager/ Bookkeeper by the Emma Ball Trust, connected to Birmingham New Church Society.

Constitution

The Constitution was written at a time when the Society was thriving, with an expectation that a variety of teams would oversee a range of regular tasks and duties. Officially, according to the Constitution, we currently require 6 members of the Church Committee to be present for valid transaction of business and any constitution rule changes require 10 members. If people are willing it is possible to change these rules within our Constitution and reduce the number of members we need for decisions to be taken.

Current Users of the Building

The current regular users of the building are:

- Birmingham New Church: Sunday morning worship twice a month, Spiritual Growth Group, monthly Tuesday evenings
- Banner Theatre: Mon - Fri office space, rehearsal rooms, storage
- Handsworth Historical Society: Third Wednesday of the Month, evenings
- Unity: Third Saturday of the Month, 11am - 3pm
- Bridge Clubs: every Monday pm and Wednesday pm

A Future Vision

The Feasibility group felt the need to write a Vision Statement to make clear what the New Church is and what we believe in:

The heart of the New Church is our love for the Lord and desire to live the Lord's life together. The essence of our worship manifests in how we connect to a community spirit of love and light.

We use Swedenborg's interpretation of the Bible to enhance our understanding of the divine working through us. We believe our teachings are universal and can be inspirational to all spiritual seekers.

We hope to work collaboratively with other people using the Oaklands Centre as a base for Spiritual growth and well-being. We are committed to finding new ways to express and share our faith.

OPTION 1 HAVING A RANGE OF USERS

How it might work

Continuing as we are to a large extent.

Pros and cons

- The Steering group were not able to think of any major advantages for this option. The trouble is any time that a church group declines to 10 or 12 people, is this making the best use of our limited resources?
- There is little growth potential if we are not widening out to other groups who are holistic in their approach.
- It is doubtful if there would be a viable committee - when current officers retire in May 2011 because there would be little enthusiasm from others to stand for election if there is not a vision to grow and develop. Jane, Stephen and Cathy would not be willing to be involved.
- Missed opportunity for new revenue streams from Tree of Life and others.
- Missed opportunity to refresh the building and gardens.

Conclusion

Option 1 is not seen as viable.

OPTION 2: TREE OF LIFE AS A MAJOR USER OF THE BUILDING

What is proposed

- To continue at Oaklands – maintaining regular worship and encouraging participation in New Church spiritual workshops and discussion groups run by our Ministry.
- To maintain the current Church Committee Objectives (p3)
- To rent out space to the Tree of Life as a major user of the building for an initial period of two years.

How it might work

We consider that church growth cannot happen unless we try to reach out to others who might be receptive to our religious teachings. We would need to be prepared to switch from some of the time we currently spend attending traditional services of worship to spend some time engaged in sharing our faith at events to which people from outside the New Church may be more ready to attend. We would hope that some of the people attracted to a range of holistic events marketed and organised by the Tree of Life organisation, would feel helped and inspired by our religious knowledge and understanding. The Steering Group can see an opportunity of working with this organisation and for the Oaklands building to become a significant religious/spiritual resource for the community. We consider that without such a relationship as the one that might develop with the Tree of Life, the Society could not continue.

To pursue our vision we would need to gradually replace the current practice of renting rooms to various groups who use the space and then go away with little connection to the ethos of the Centre. Instead we would support the idea of Oaklands Centre developing an informal atmosphere as well as a busy programme where there is a social milieu for people to come and explore their spirituality to be sociable, uplifted, inspired, and supported.

Given the financial liability of Trustees of the Emma Ball Trust, the Steering Group support the current policy of passing on the Trusteeship to another appropriate body.

Pros

- There would be an increased income through Tree of Life's need to book rooms
- Significant in-kind support through volunteer efforts
- Chance for our outreach to spiritual seekers using the building
- Continuation not only of our Church society but also an opportunity for National Church outreach to use a location in the centre of the country at Birmingham for day events as Purley Chase gets more filled with bookings
- Continuing availability of a developing centre on the doorstep of Emma Ball flat tenants, for their use.
- Potential survival and growth of the Church in Birmingham

Cons

- A reservation has been expressed to the Steering Group that our numbers are too small to maintain a twice monthly programme.
- It might be feared that our Church identity would be swamped by the larger presence of the Tree of Life events.
- The Steering Group acknowledge an apprehension amongst those not involved in our feasibility study and recognise that without support by the congregation the venture cannot succeed.

Church identity and ethos

How compatible is the holistic ethos of the Tree of Life with the religious ethos of the New Church?

We are still learning about the holistic ethos of the Tree of Life. When other church members have a chance to meet with them they will be able to form their own views.

Revd David Lomax Principle of the New Church College and Mrs Jan Miller of the Committee for Auxiliary Ministry have written to the Steering Group addressing the feasibility of continuing as a church with people of a different ethos in the building. They write:

“We are conscious of a need to look at how connections with a variety of spiritual approaches pursued by individuals and groups within the wider community might be able to be integrated with traditional New Church practice and beliefs. Whilst we value the opportunity to evaluate how the development of a “broad church” approach can be of assistance in this type of process, we are also aware that ways need to be found to anchor this in New Church theology, practice and belief. We support the need for conversation and dialogue, both within the circle of the existing New Church Society and beyond, to enable this to take place.”

The Tree of Life feel that their multi-faith ethos is in harmony with spiritual well-being and say they see no potential problems in forming a deeper association with our Christian denomination given the universal spiritual nature of our religious teachings. They seek to honour and integrate within the centre the continued use of the building as a sacred space. They are happy to not book events that go against the New Church’s religious ethos and help show what the New Church is offering, sharing display space with us. Our initial impression of their two leaders is that they are professional in the way they communicate and do things and sensitive to the spiritual aspects of what is being suggested, in a way that allows us to promote our identity and teachings.

Feasibility of sharing space

Is there enough space at Oaklands to accommodate Tree of Life as a major user of the building as well as ourselves and other lessees?

Our needs for space in the foreseeable future are likely to be as follows:

- Currently twice monthly Sunday morning religious meeting
- Currently spiritual growth group – 3rd Tuesday in the month
- Potential 1 day a week pastoral counselling
- Bi-monthly Church Committee meeting
- Several New Church ministers have expressed an interest in running workshops and organising professional/business meetings at Oaklands.

Unity Group

- Currently every third Saturday from 11am to 3pm using Charleville, downstairs kitchen and occasionally Newhall.

Banner Theatre

- Currently use Reddings as an office all the time and need space for meetings. They would also like Newhall for occasional rehearsals. They use two rooms as a store but due to rooms being needed for booking and this will probably have to change.

Tree of Life

- Office needed (Moseley or downstairs office)
- Events and activities run under Tree of Life Banner – Twice yearly large Mind, Body & Spirit festivals; weekly Monday evening talks, weekend holistic workshops, weekly Wednesday lunchtime meditation group, monthly social events,
- Bookings by other spiritual groups gained through Tree of Life marketing.

The competition for space is likely to hot up but we think there is enough room for the Tree of Life presence to be feasible. If the regular users of the building including ourselves have a block booking then vacant rooms could be allocated on a first come basis. The type of building and its layout lends itself to this venture and with this use of space we think that the Church could retain its identity within the building while promoting a spiritual community focus.

Feasibility of having common ground rules

Part of the New Church vision is to foster spiritual well-being in a sacred place. We can see that users of the building will be willing to be careful in the way they express any critical comments and negative feelings. Such negativity is likely to be felt from time to time as different groups and individuals rub shoulders together in using the same facilities. It is expected that spiritually aware people will be sensitive and tolerant to the deeply held beliefs of others before giving expression to their own attitudes.

We have looked at building security and health and safety issues and believe that feasible policies can be drawn up and implemented. (See Appendix 6 Draft Outline Policy for Use of Space, p24 - 26)

Feasibility in terms of human resources

Have we enough people to keep the Church going? Who could do what?

A refreshed Church Committee with Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer would take responsibility for all management tasks. They could set policies for room bookings and use of the building, health and safety, security. They could manage any rental and service agreements, organise New Church religious activities and events, publicize our spiritual teachings, provide some pastoral counselling, respond to Church correspondence, authorise all payments, and take accountability for Church financial planning and reporting.

Administrative tasks could be delegated. Someone like Barbara Holmes could be paid for say 20 hours a month to organise and monitor building/utilities repairs/maintenance and make and receive payments. Cleaning and some role in locking the building and turning on gas heating might be done by our paid cleaner Barbara Bourne and also by Michael Bourne who is willing to provide some extra voluntary help.

We need to identify someone to do the financial bookkeeping. Michael Bourne has volunteered for this role although it seems sensible that it should be undertaken by the same person who receives money and pays bills authorised by the Church Treasurer.

It makes sense to only have one room bookings book which could be administered by Tree of Life on our behalf. (See Appendix 6 Draft Outline Policy for Use of Space, p24 - 26.)

There would be regular informal liaison between Jane Leigh, and other Church representatives with Tree of Life regarding their Rental Agreement (see Appendix 5 Draft Outline Rental Agreement with Tree of Life, p22 – 23) including the working of the health and safety and building security policies, their willingness to organise their volunteers to do gardening, and their contribution towards the refreshing of the inside of the building.

Our religious events and activities could be organised by our present Pulpit Secretary Stephen Lacy.

Jane Leigh is willing to be present at Oaklands as someone to talk to about New Church beliefs and as a liaison person, involved in promotion and communication

Stephen Lacy is willing to contribute towards pastoral counselling one day a week in the building by acting as a professional counsellor, offering confidential appointments in spiritual life coaching, using Swedenborg psychology. He would want to train others to foster sustainability.

Handling New Church enquiries

Who on the spot would be in a position to respond to New Church telephone and visitor enquiries?

It is envisaged that Tree of Life would do this because they would have a continual presence in the building during working hours. They could redirect people giving out the telephone number of the appropriate Church member depending on the nature of the enquiry. (See Appendix 7 Responding to New Church enquiries, p 27)

Financial Feasibility

The projected budget on the next page gives an indication of the likely income and expenditure from April 2011 to the end of March 2012, if we pursue Option 2 and begin booking rooms for Tree of Life activities from May 2011 and other groups from September 2011 once the rooms have been prepared.

The projected budget is an indication of what Birmingham New Church Society might expect to be working towards in the coming year solely in relation to the building and its regular and new activity. Other regular income for the Birmingham New Church Society such as Charity Investment Dividends, GCIF Dividends, Offertories and Envelopes, Tax repayments, bank interest and the grant from Emma Ball have not been included simply to show that the steering group believe it is possible for the building to pay for itself, mainly through increased usage and rent. The income generated through renting rooms can cover the cost of paying the Buildings Administrator £80 a week to do the book keeping and oversee buildings maintenance and services, and increase the caretaker and cleaner pay to £250 a month.

Notes to the budget

- The gas and electricity figures are projected as 25% higher than 2009/10.
- Income through rent could reach above £15,000 if we fully utilise the potential interest from various groups and individuals in a fully operational year.
- We expect there to be a small charge for some of the bi-monthly National New Church workshops. £5 x15 people x6 workshops = £450. For the purposes of this projected budget, we show this coming in and going out in workshop leader travel expenses.
- Rent from the flat is at it stands at £274 a month. Outgoings are £63 a month in council tax.
- Only a small marketing budget has been allocated as the majority of marketing will be via email and Tree of Life networks.

DRAFT OAKLANDS CENTRE PROJECTED BUDGET

Income	2011/2012
Hire of Rooms (inc Banner and Tree of Life office spaces)	£11,383
Rent Flat	£3,288
Bourne Electricals Store	£1,044
Income from National New Church workshops	£450
TOTAL	£16,165
Expenditure	
<i>Staff</i>	
Buildings Administrator, 20 hrs a month	£4,160
Caretaking and Cleaning	£3,000
<i>Overheads</i>	
Gas	£2,187
Electricity	£962
Insurance	£1,100
Water rates	£550
Telephone & internet connection	£335
Outgoings Flat	£756
Repairs and Maintenance	£1,000
<i>Marketing</i>	
Website	£12
Stationery and Postage	£100
Design and Print	£200
<i>Other Programme costs</i>	
Performing rights	£126
Workshop leader expenses	£450
Regular religious workshop activities	£520
Travel Expenses, Pastoral and Counselling	£707
TOTAL	£16,165
<i>surplus</i>	£0

CONCLUSION

The Steering Group conclude that the continuation of the Society is practically feasible in terms of ethos, space, human resources, and finance if we adopt Option 2 with the Tree of Life being a major user of the building partnering us in the venture of developing a spiritual well-being centre.

The primary aim of Oaklands centre would be to foster a spiritual foundation for people in their lives. The Centre's spirituality would be universal in its outlook and welcoming of people of all backgrounds and beliefs. Whilst being rooted in a Swedenborgian approach to Christianity, it would validate all faiths and welcome open dialogue between people of all religions and those with none at all. We believe we can learn from each other and this can lead to new experiences of life and spiritual growth; ultimately bringing peace and harmony into our lives and the world. Life is a journey and at each stage there is something new to learn.



Possible logo for future Oaklands Centre

RECOMMENDATIONS

After production of the Interim Report (end March 2011)

- A. Members of the Steering Group seek opportunities in face-to-face and telephone conversations to address questions and concerns. They should also encourage the expression of views and information on issues not covered in the Report. The latter include the following:
 - Will it be necessary to change our rules within the Constitution, regarding numbers of members and officers required to vote?
 - What was the Church's income and expenditure for 2010/2011?
 - Who might edit and produce the Church Newsletter?
 - Who might be able to volunteer some time for helping with spring cleaning and tidying up?
- B. As well as one to one conversations, we have a group meeting, maybe using conversation cafe, to allow members to express their feelings and hear others in atmosphere of non judgement and acceptance.
- C. Steering group or representative to ideally meet with Kathy Brook/David Haseler, Nigel Sutton and Ken Eadie to clarify all financial commitments, both incoming and outgoing to ensure we are working with facts not assumptions.

- D. Steering group or representative to ideally meet with Jack Dunion to learn from his experience of creating a group separate from the church and fully supported by the national New Church in Paisley. This way he has been able to acquire funding for projects otherwise not accessible.
- E. We invite Revd Catherine Lauber to join the steering group as appropriate when liaising with Tree of Life and Banner when discussing shared vision, common ground rules and any other activity she wishes.
- F. In the Final Report we recognise the support offered by others to help in this process
- G. Complete the Final Report before end of April

After the Annual General meeting

If the Steering Group's proposals are agreed at the Annual General Meeting and there are new members elected to the Church Committee, then the following actions will probably be needed by the Committee:

1. To continue to pursue the policy of passing on responsibility for the Emma Ball Trust.
2. Finalise who does what for the Society including service agreements for cleaning, financial and buildings administration.
3. Finalise use of space, health & safety, and security policies and in particular deal with Banner Theatre's storage.
4. Finalise the Rent Agreement with Tree of Life
5. Re-look at rental charges for current users and finalise the rooms pricing policy.
6. Discuss and finalise a tenancy agreement for the flat.
7. Finalise the Society's budgets for 2011/2012
8. With Tree of Life work towards completing the Flow Chart for Responding to New Church enquiries.
9. Audit and remove unwanted books and other property, de-cluttering and spring cleaning of the office space and some other areas.
10. Ensure our strong identity within the building displaying our theological teachings and New Church related materials and submitting article(s) to Tree of Life Magazine
11. Consider adding stoppers to radiators to reduce heat wastage
12. Pursue planning with national ministers of spiritual workshops at Oaklands.
13. Jane and Stephen start to develop their presence in the building as needed, and informally monitoring use of the building in liaison with administration officer, Tree of Life and other users of the building.
14. Arrange for monthly religious events involving less traditional forms of worship.
15. Consider need for investment in some good quality chairs
16. Audit current information and start an updateable electronic database of members of the Society and people attending our religious events
17. Publicise our venture to the national New Church.
18. Encourage possibility of finding a New Church minister after the present ministry contract expires.
19. Set up training in pastoral counselling, communication of our teachings and other needed skills.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Very many thanks to the present Church Committee for the opportunity to explore these options and to all the people who have contributed their ideas, enthusiasms and also concerns and fears that have helped shape this Interim Feasibility Report.

Here are a few selected endorsements and thoughts from wider networks:

Helen Brown, New Church Minister “Every year the workshop planning team put together a workshop which is available for use around the church. I would be able to hold this at Oaklands to be open to all who wish to come, with the support of local people who can advertise and help setup and host the day. This is suitable for those who are spiritual seekers.”

Rita Russell, New Church Minister “I’m very happy to come and support your new venture at Oaklands New Church Centre... I would be happy to come approximately twice a year to lead a day of Sacred Circle Dance”.

David Gaffney, New Church Minister “Unity comes from diversity. Only a few 'organs' in the Maximus Homo correspond to Christians or the New Church. The rest belong to all types of good people of numerous faiths and without all of them the heavens couldn't function”.

Helen Newton “Your vision for Oaklands sounds so exciting. I believe working with others in the area of spirituality is the way forward. We do not do our church or those who don't know about Swedenborg any favours by keeping so separate. I would be delighted to come over to Oaklands several times a year to lead workshops or groups. I would think possibly 5 times a year would fit into the workshop timing slot... Thinking about what you are proposing I am also wondering if you have thought about a coffee/bookshop? This would mean the centre was open more and used as a drop in by the community. It would also give the option of prompting Swedenborgian concepts through the written word, video, CD, cards - whatever resources we are producing. It would require more human resources but I feel this might be money well spent - perhaps the person could also link in with the bookshop at Purley which would benefit from having someone there more regularly than I am able to be. Just a suggestion if this is not already in your vision! May your visioning be blessed with what it needs to become a reality.”

David Lomax, New Church College Principal “I think some people’s concerns could derive from feeling that we might be “tainted by association” as they would see it. If other groups are running activities at “our” premises, people from the community at large might think that any ideas put forward are what we believe, when that is not necessarily the case. I think it’s worth saying that if we take a “not feeling able to accommodate people whose beliefs differ from ours” approach to its (logical?) extreme, that would mean that we couldn’t allow any spiritually-based activities to take place on our premises unless people believe exactly what we do... I think one of the questions in all of this is that of having a “New Church presence” in the midst of other events. This means that it might become apparent that what we believe differs from what may be being presented at another event. However, that only happens if there is this involvement and dialogue as part of what is going on, preferably spontaneously...”

Richard Becher, minister of Elmwood URC This is a tremendous opportunity for shared ministry

Donna Roberts, therapist If a course /study group is started at the centre relating to the teachings of Swedenborg I would be interested in attending ... Purley Chase is too far to travel really, the deeper teachings within the scriptures is something I have great interest in”.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 Responsibilities and human resources

Administrative tasks

1. Dealing with Church correspondence: Church Secretary
2. Convening Committee and Church General Meetings: Church Chairman
3. Setting a policy for room bookings and use of the building: Church Committee
4. Setting a policy for building security: Church Committee
5. Setting a health and safety policy: Church Committee
6. Planning & monitoring developments: Church Committee
7. Drawing up tenancy agreements: Church Secretary
8. Organising and monitoring building/utilities repairs/maintenance: Buildings Administrator (Barbara Holmes)
9. Turning gas boilers on and off: Barbara Bourne / Michael Bourne
10. Routine cleaning: Barbara Bourne
11. All room bookings: Tree of Life (implementing Church policy)
12. Redirecting Church phone enquiries: Jane Leigh/ Tree of Life (implementing Church's flow chart)
13. Publicity: Jane Leigh / Tree of Life
14. Showing people round: Jane Leigh/ Tree of Life / Michael Bourne
15. Monitoring working of health safety policy & common user rules: Buildings Administrator (Barbara Holmes) Jane Leigh/ Michael Bourne
16. Gardening: Tree of Life

Religious tasks

1. Spiritual coaching/counselling: Stephen Lacy
2. Organising regular religious meetings: Stephen Lacy
3. Organising ad-hoc religious workshops: Jane Leigh, Helen Brown, Helen Newton,
4. Newsletter: editing / production ?

Financial tasks

1. Authorising payment of bills: Church Treasurer
2. Monitoring performance of the Society's investments: Church Treasurer
3. Preparing authorised bills: Buildings Administrator (Barbara Holmes) There will be 2 signatories from the Church Committee for cheques.
4. Receiving money: Buildings Administrator (Barbara Holmes)
5. Bookkeeping church accounts: Buildings Administrator (Barbara Holmes)

APPENDIX 2 Who are 'Tree of Life'?

Tree of Life is an independent non-profit making community organisation based in Birmingham. It was founded in 1992 as Tree of Life Magazine and is now Birmingham's leading focal point for holistic learning. It is run with the help and support of many volunteers - dedicated to exploring diverse ways of living and being, honouring all spiritual traditions and welcoming people of all cultures.

What do they do?



They produce and distribute a Magazine - Maggy Whitehouse started this in Birmingham in 1992. It's a holistic community magazine that covers all areas of mind, body and spirit and has inspiring articles from some of the world's leading writers. In addition the magazine is a place where local holistic practitioners, teachers, groups, classes, shops and centres can advertise what they are offering to the community. The magazine is printed on a quarterly basis with 7,000 copies of each issue being distributed across Birmingham and the surrounding areas to spiritual, holistic and healing centres, libraries, health food shops, organic cafes, therapists and many other places where there is an interest in holistic well-being (estimated readership 14,000). In addition the magazine has a full programme of workshops, talks and community events.

- Their weekly Monday night series of talks have been running in Birmingham for almost two years. They have had a whole variety of authors come to speak on many different holistic subjects.
- There is also a varied programme of holistic workshops and classes on weekends and some week day evenings.
- They have a weekly meditation group every Wednesday from 12.30 - 1pm
- They run monthly social evenings and community parties for all the family. People bring vegetarian food and non-alcoholic drinks to share. There is world music, dance and taster movement classes.
- They have classes and workshops on healthy eating and how to increase well-being through changing what one eats.
- They present a weekly one hour Health & Wellbeing Show every Monday afternoon on local Community Radio
- They run Mind Body & Spirit Festivals twice a year in Birmingham

1. Extract from a letter from Joginder Bola and Marketa Rozsypalova, Tree of Life

"We currently do not have our own centre and so have to hire various premises across the City for our events. We have been praying for a centre where all activities can be based and from where we can grow. We would be able to bring the full programme of Tree of Life Holistic Community events to Oaklands. Through the magazine, events and festivals we are already well connected with many of the spiritual & holistic groups across the City. We would open-up the space to be used by these groups and also by therapists and healers. We would also be happy for Banner Theatre to continue as tenants to part of the building.

We would have a permanent daily presence at Oaklands. We have a large team of volunteers with many skills including gardening, construction, painting & decorating and building maintenance. We would renew the gardens and grounds and refresh the inside of the building. We also have community members who would be interested in living in any accommodation available on the Oaklands site.

From the many Tree of Life events we would run at the Centre together with hiring out the space to other groups we are sure that we will be able to pay for the on-going maintenance and utility bills on the building. We would liaise and work closely with the Oaklands New Church on all of this.

We are very excited about working together with you to create a truly inspiring holistic centre for Birmingham. A place for nourishment of the mind, heart and spirit. A place which welcomes everyone and uplifts the whole community."

APPENDIX 3 Draft Price Guide 2011

Draft Room Hire Charges:

	2010 Hourly rate	2011 Hourly rate	Block bookings of 10 or more sessions	Banner and Tree of Life Special rate
Ground floor rooms				
Hall	£12	£16	£14	£8
Charleville Room	£4	£10	£8	£5
Small room (Mother & Toddler room)		£6	£5	£3
Kitchen (If using crockery and cooking facilities)	£8 for the day	£12 for the day	£10 for the day	£6 for the day
Meeting Room (currently The Office)		£8	£6	£4
Craft Room (nearest the kitchen)		£8	£6	£4
Art Room (back room)		£8	£6	£4

Upstairs Rooms

Wretham Room (large room)		£10	£8	£5
Kitchen		included	included	included

We have developed this draft new price guide taking into account the estimated costs per hour for over heads (water, insurance, staff and maintenance) and the estimated costs per hour for heating rooms (based on costs per hour for utility bills, gas and electricity). See Appendix 7. We have also looked at charges made by other local venues with rooms available to hire and whilst increasing our hourly rate, have kept our charges comparatively low keeping in mind the needs of the groups who would like to continue or begin booking rooms in the immediate future. The Church will retain discretionary powers to discount these rates for particular groups or events.

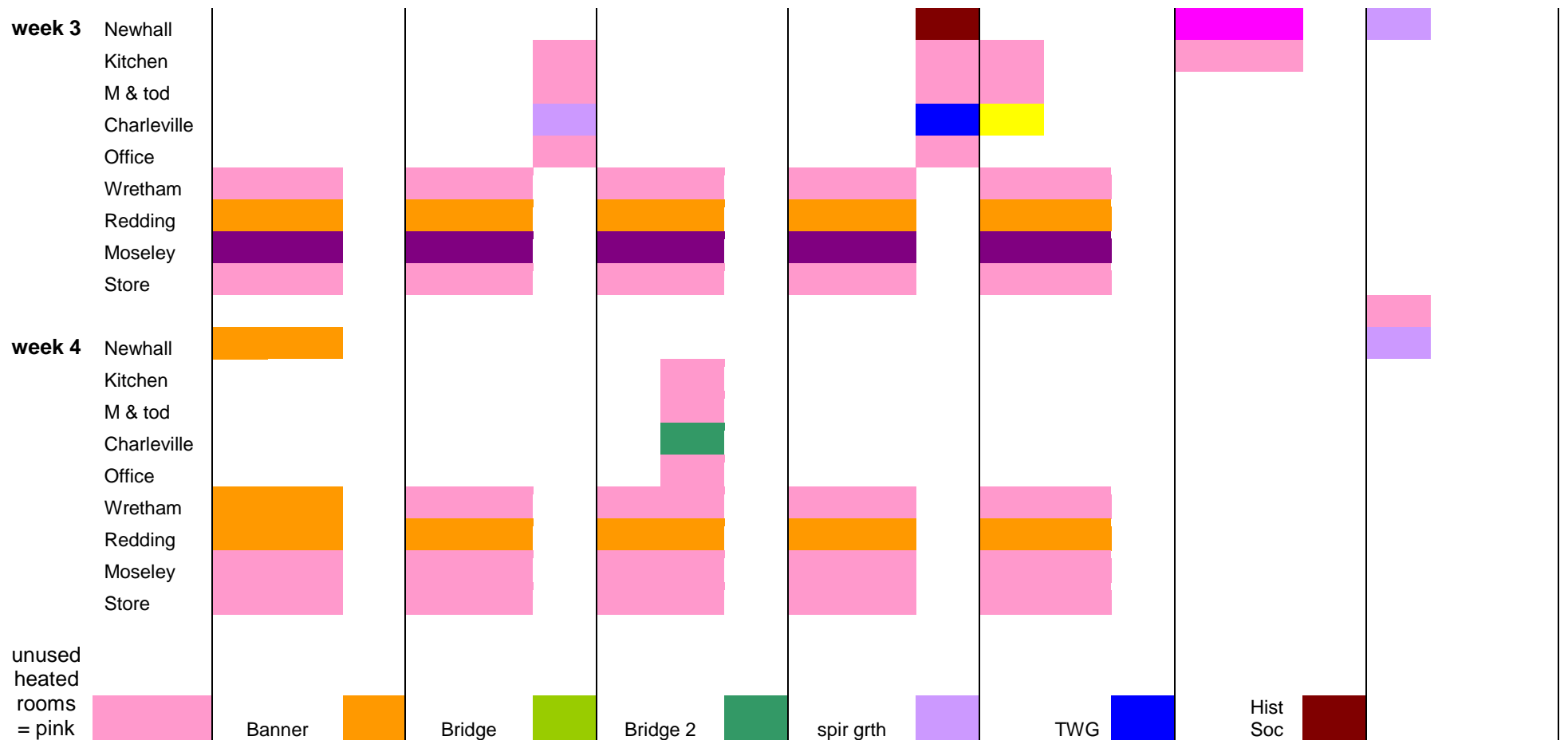
It is proposed that two groups, Banner Theatre and Tree of Life, as the main regular users of the building with additional office space, have a special discounted price for renting other rooms of half the normal rate; partly to keep their usage high whilst maintaining affordability.

The Banner and Tree of Life discount applies only to Banner and Tree of Life activities, not other groups booked through Banner or Tree of Life.

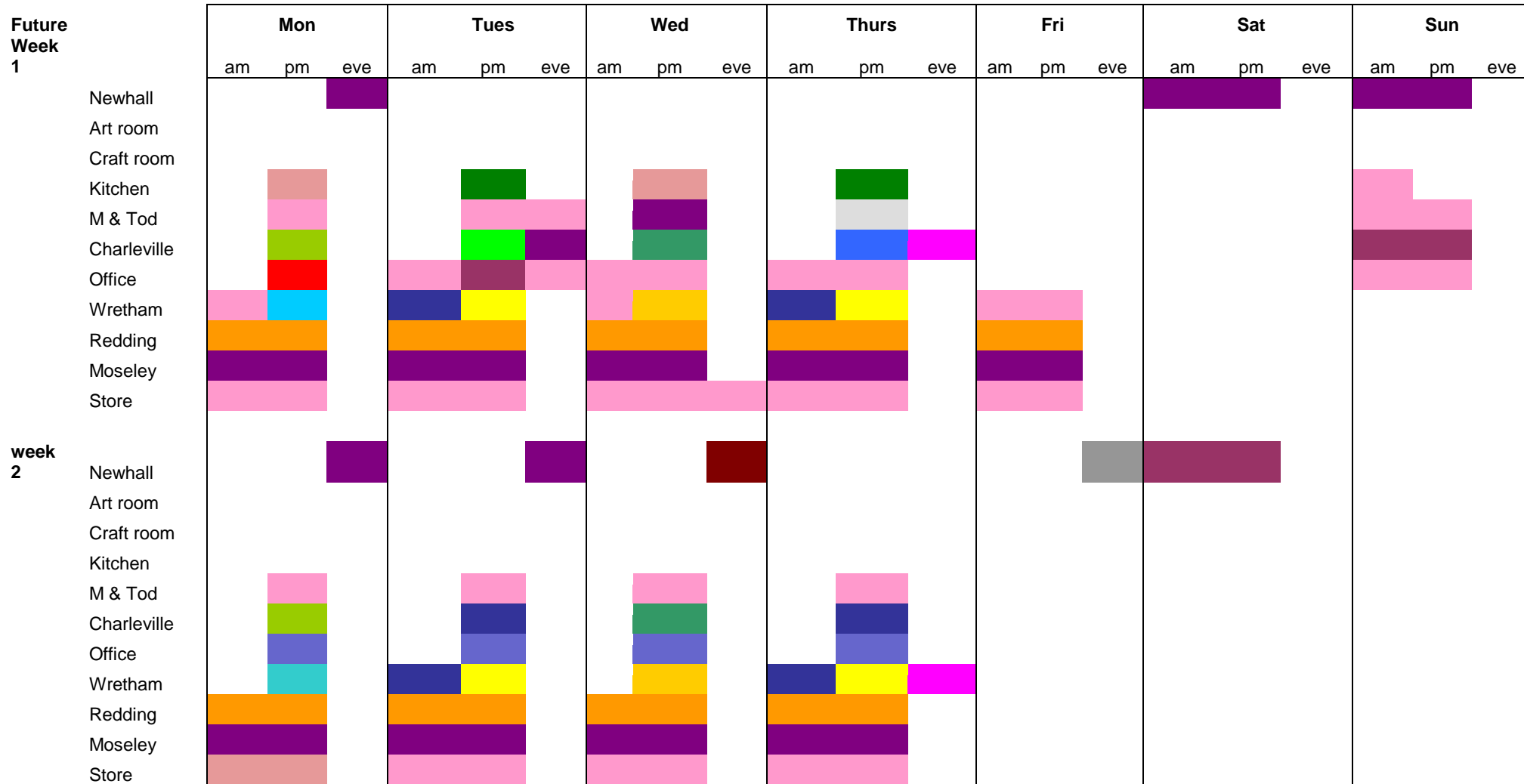
APPENDIX 4 Previous and Projected use of space.

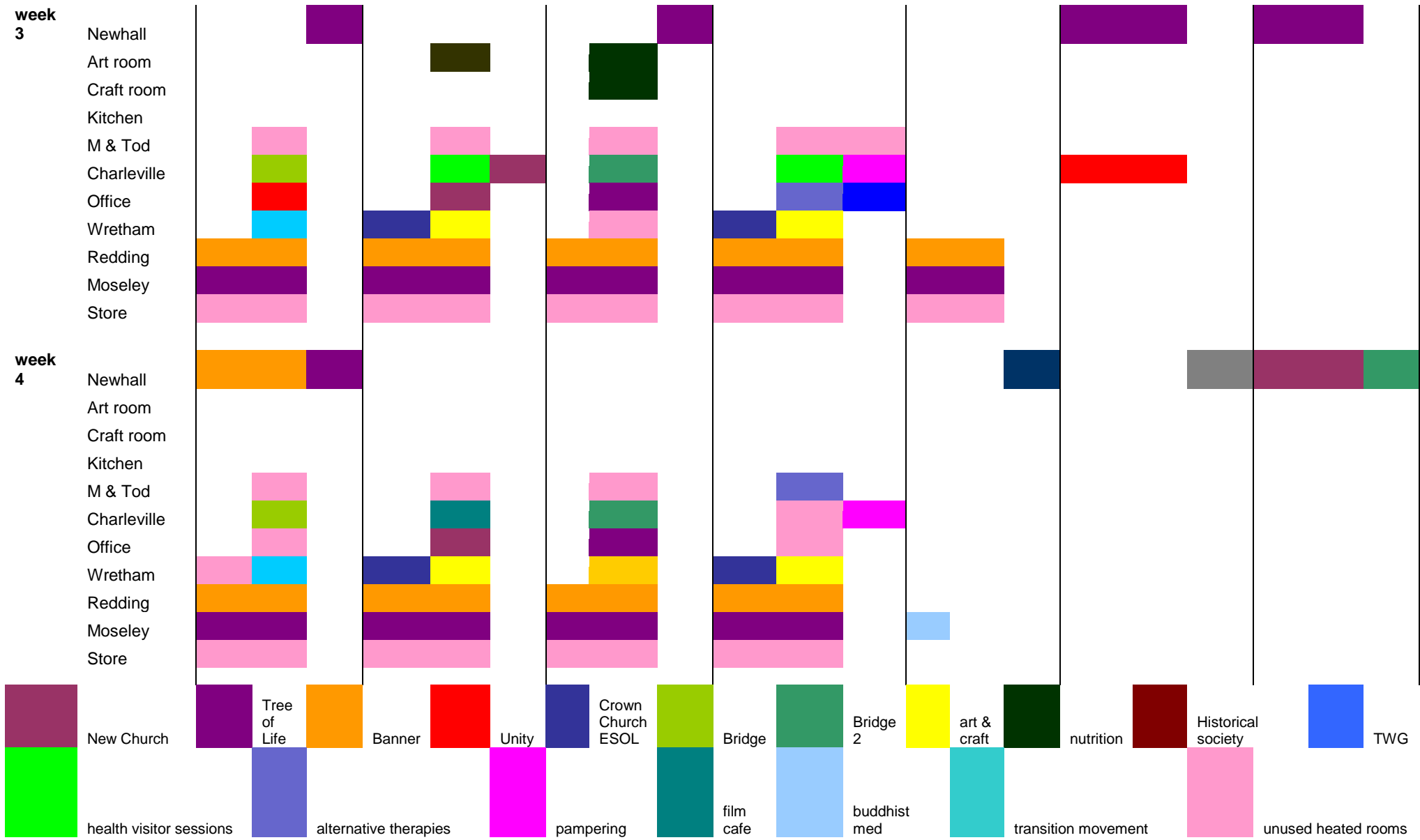
The pink areas indicate the times when the rooms were typically being heated but not in use to show spare capacity at little extra cost.





This table indicates the possible range of future users and how the space can be shared; making the most of when the building is already being heated.





APPENDIX 5 Draft Outline Rental Agreement with Tree of Life

It is agreed that the Tree of Life will

1. Seek to honour and integrate within the centre the continued use of the building as a sacred space.
2. Pay a monthly rent of £135 for the full use of the Moseley room as office space from September 2011 and additionally pay for any rooms used for Tree of Life activities in line with the price guide and policies.
3. Act on behalf of the New Church in booking rooms at Oaklands according to the New Church Committee's use of space and pricing policies. The priority will be for New Church events and activities and those of the existing regular users of the building. However it is expected that there will be space for additional appropriate bookings which may be events and activities run by :
 - The Tree of Life acting as the umbrella for a holistic centre e.g. programme of meditation, social events, talks etc.
 - Independent organisers through Tree of Life marketing,
 - Groups and individuals unrelated to the Tree of Life.
4. Pass on payment for use of rooms to the New Church Committee.
5. Not book events that go against our religious ethos
6. Respond to and re-direct New Church enquiries according to written guidance.
7. Take responsibility for minimising any nuisance to local residents from car parking by visitors to the building. It is expected this will include encouraging the sharing of cars, and use of public transport as well as providing a car parking attendant at large events and exploring the possibility of using the nearby school as a car park and road side parking in Devonshire Rd.
8. Pursue the use of their volunteers in donating artwork for display and time gardening.
9. Help shop window what the New Church is offering and sharing display space setting boundaries about people bringing their own leaflets to events
10. Engage in informal monthly review of progress considering doubts and hopes regarding the working of the agreement, paying attention to use of space and the working of the booking system.
11. Participate in a formal review of the venture after two years, gathering data relevant to the following criteria :
12. Qualitative and quantitative information about who attends Tree of Life events and activities and workshops and events run by independent organisers via Tree of Life marketing.
 - The state and use of the building.
 - Financial feasibility.
 - Progress towards the Tree of Life vision of a holistic spiritual well-being centre.
 - The views of other users of the buildings.

It is agreed that the New Church Committee will

1. Organise some de-cluttering and spring cleaning of office space and some other areas before the Tree of Life move in.
2. Give permission for the installation of internet access and a phone line under separate billing.
3. Invest in some good quality chairs
4. Engage in informal monthly review of progress considering doubts and hopes regarding the working of the agreement, paying attention to use of space and the working of the booking system.
5. Participate in a formal review of the venture after two years, gathering data relevant to the following criteria :
6. Qualitative and quantitative information about who attends New Church events and activities
 - The state and use of the building.
 - Financial feasibility
 - Progress towards the New Church vision of sharing religious growth.
 - The views of other users of the buildings.

APPENDIX 6 Draft Outline Policy for Use of Space

Introduction

There is a need for a policy to guide the way space is allocated, what behaviour is expected of users, their health and safety and the security of the building. The available space is as follows:

For events & activities

- Newhall
- Charleville Room
- Rooms off New hall (potential Craft Room and Art Room)
- Small Room (Mothers and Toddlers)
- Wretham Room (large room upstairs)
- Reddings (Banner Office)
- Moseley (preferred office for Tree of Life)
- Meeting Room (downstairs office)

For storage

- Near upstairs kitchen and near downstairs kitchen

Shared space

- Downstairs kitchen
- Upstairs kitchen
- Downstairs toilets

Expected use of space

Birmingham New Church

- Currently twice monthly Sunday morning religious meeting
- Currently spiritual growth group: 3rd Tuesday in the month
- Potential 1 day a week pastoral counselling
- Bi-monthly Church Committee meeting

Wider New Church

- Several New Church ministers have expressed an interest in running workshops and organising professional/business meetings at Oaklands; these include Helen Brown, Helen Newton, Rita Russell, Mary Duckworth, David Lomax, Christine Bank, Jan Millar, Kathy Brooks, Becky Jarratt.

Unity Group

- Currently every third Saturday from 11am to 3pm using Charleville, downstairs kitchen and occasionally Newhall.

Banner Theatre

- Currently use Reddings as an office all the time and need space for meetings.
- They would also like Newhall for occasional rehearsals.
- They use two rooms as a store but due to rooms being needed for booking and this will probably have to change.

Bourne Electrical

- Space for storage.

Other current users

- Bridge Clubs currently on Monday and Wednesday afternoons in the Charleville Room.
- Townwomen's Guild
- Handsworth Historical Society

Tree of Life

- Office needed (The Moseley Room is probably preferable to downstairs office; allows the downstairs office to become an accessible meeting room and also takes into account the fact that upstairs is already being heated)
- Events and activities run under Tree of Life Banner, Twice yearly large Mind, Body & Spirit festivals; weekly Monday evening talks, weekend holistic workshops, weekly Wednesday lunchtime meditation group, monthly social events
- Bookings by other spiritual groups gained through Tree of Life marketing.

Other potential spiritual-orientated bookings

- These might include Buddhist Yoga meditation group, Sacred voices, various healers, Brahma Kamaris, Birmingham Findhorn Group and others.

Priorities for use of space

The priority for room allocation is the New Church. The current needs of Unity should be met. After regular bookings have been allocated, vacant rooms should be allocated on a first come basis.

Common Ground Rules

Part of the New Church vision is to foster spiritual well-being in a sacred place. This means users of the building are expected to be careful in the way they express any critical comments and negative feelings. Such negativity is likely to be felt from time to time as different groups and individuals rub shoulders together in using the same facilities. One should be sensitive and tolerant to the deeply held beliefs of others before giving expression to one's own attitudes.

All users are expected to respect the needs and comfort of others regarding noise, smell and vision both inside the building and in its surrounds. Any behaviour that disturbs or disrupts the well-being of others cannot be allowed.

Health and safety

The elements of good health and safety should include attention given to:

- Insurance policy
- Allocation of responsibility for day to day health and safety
- Safe storage of materials
- Free access
- Minimising of fire risks
- Emergency procedures
- Identification of hazards
- Accident risk minimisation
- Availability of a first aid box

For example in relation to a potential hazard of slipping on spillages or tripping over obstacles, there should be good housekeeping by users particularly of kitchen and eating areas, good lighting including stairways, rectification of loose carpet, removal of boxes from corridors, and no leaving of trailing leads or cables.

Building security

The aim of building security is to reduce opportunities for criminals to enter the building and cause damage or theft. This means attending to the fabric of the building as well as the way users secure entrances.

The policy for security should itself be a secure document with people being informed of what is expected of them on a need to know basis.

Oaklands building would be more vulnerable to break in if there is no one on the premises overnight such as a resident of the Oaklands flat.

The policy should pay attention to the issues of who is responsible for what security measures, the security of valuables and vulnerable parts of the building for illegal entry.

Internal security measures are needed for rooms where valuable items are stored such as computing and other electronic equipment, money, etc and it may be appropriate to use a safe as well as to fit robust doors and locks.

Special attention will need to be given to responsibility for locking the building in the evening, the use of mortice locks and the security of windows especially those not in public view.

APPENDIX 7 Responding to New Church enquiries

Nature of the enquiry	Redirect to:	Telephone Number	Email address
Paying / receiving money Maintenance / repairs Health & safety issues Building security	Barbara Holmes		
Liaison	Jane Leigh	0121 523 6880	janeleighis@gmail.com
Pastoral Counselling appointments	Stephen Lacy	01384 873321	russell_lacy@hotmail.com
Religious teaching	?		
Correspondence	Secretary		
Complaints	Chairman		
Heating requirements	Barbara Bourne		
Room bookings	Tree of Life		
Publicity / Newsletter	?		
Being shown round	Jane Leigh / Tree of Life / Barbara Bourne/ Michael Bourne	0121 523 6880	janeleighis@gmail.com
Spiritual workshops	David Gaffney, Helen Brown, Helen Newton, Mary Duckworth		
CAM	Jan Miller		
Religious courses	David Lomax SOLCe		
Leaflets / Books	Stephen Lacy Jane Leigh		
Emma Ball Trust	Treasurer Committee member		

APPENDIX 8 Projected Use and Calculations. This table was created to help calculate the price guide and projected income for 2011/2012.

Group	Rooms required	Frequency	Day	Time of day	Hours	Gas and Electricity	Water	Insurance	Staff	Maintenance	Costs inc overheads	Session charge	Projected income	surplus/deficit
						£2.33/hr d'stairs	£480	£1,100	£7,160	£1,000				
						£2.70/hr, hall	£1.32	£3.01	£19.62	£2.74				
							£0.16	£0.38	£2.45	£0.34				
New Church, worship	Charleville Rm	Fortnightly		morning	2	£6.99								
NC National workshops	Hall	bi-monthly		tbc	3	£12.15								
Spiritual Growth Group	Charleville Room	monthly	Tues	evening	2	£6.99								
B.Holmes & J.Leigh	Moseley Rm ?	ongoing	Mon - Fri	am, pm or eve		£0.00								
Counselling, S. Lacy		weekly	tbc			£0.00								
Church Committee Mtgs	Charleville Rm	bi-monthly	tbc		2	£6.99								
Banner	Redding Room	ongoing	Mon - Fri		40	£139.80							£1,600	
Banner	Hall	irregular	various	daytime	8	£75.60							£1,232	
Banner	Wretham Room	irregular	various	daytime	8	£27.96							£432	
<i>Banner subtotal</i>													£3,264	
Tree of Life	Moseley Room	ongoing	Mon - Sun	daytime		£0.00							£1,620	
Tree of Life workshops	Hall	Weekly	Mons	evening	3	£18	£0.49	£1.13	£7.36	£1.03	£27.56	£24.00	£1,200	-£3.56
Tree of Life workshops	Hall	Monthly	Tues	evening	3	£18	£0.49	£1.13	£7.36	£1.03	£27.56	£24.00	£288	-£3.56
Tree of Life workshops	Hall	Monthly	Weds	evening	3	£18	£0.49	£1.13	£7.36	£1.03	£27.56	£24.00	£288	-£3.56
Tree of Life workshops	Hall	Fortnightly	Sat & Sun	9.30- 5.50pm	8	£31.05	£1.32	£3.01	£19.62	£2.74	£57.73	£64.00	£1,600	£6.27
Tree of Life raw food	Charleville Rm	Fortnightly	tbc	2 hour slot	3	£10.49	£0.49	£1.13	£7.36	£1.03	£20.49	£15.00	£375	-£5.49
Tree of Life meditation	Moseley Room	Weekly	Weds	lunch time	1	£0	£0.16	£0.38	£2.45	£0.34	£3.34	£4.00	£200	£0.66
<i>Tree of Life subtotal</i>													£5,571	

Historical Soc & Ironbridge Trust	Hall	Monthly	Weds	7 - 9pm	2	£14.85	£0.33	£0.75	£4.90	£0.68	£21.52	£24.00	£288	£2.48
Unity	Charleville	Monthly	Sats	11 - 3pm	4	£13.98	£0.66	£1.51	£9.81	£1.37	£27.32	£32.00	£384	£4.68
Bridge Clubs	Small Room	Weekly	Mons	2 - 6pm	4	£13	£0.66	£1.51	£9.81	£1.37	£26.16	£12.00	£576	-£14.16
Bridge Clubs	Small Room	Weekly	Weds	1.30 - 4.30pm	3	£10.49	£0.49	£1.13	£7.36	£1.03	£20.49	£12.00	£576	-£8.49
Townswomen's Guild	Charleville	Monthly	Thurs	6.30 - 9.30pm	3	£10.49	£0.49	£1.13	£7.36	£1.03	£20.49	£15.00	£88	-£5.49
Buddhist Yoga Meditation	Hall	fortnightly	Friday	7 - 9pm	3	£18	£0.49	£1.13	£7.36	£1.03	£27.56	£48.00	£196	£20.44
Holistic Spiritual Healing	Charleville	Monthly	Sats	10 - 5pm	5	£15	£0.82	£1.88	£12.26	£1.71	£31.82	£50.00	£350	£18.18
Pampering days	Hall	by appointment	Sats	all day	8	£31	£1.32	£3.01	£19.62	£2.74	£57.73	£128.00	£128	£70.27
Herbalist, Shabana	Small Room	by appointment	Week day	2 hour slot	2	£8	£0.33	£0.75	£4.90	£0.68	£14.83	£12.00	£336	-£2.83
Baby Yoga	Charleville or Wretham	fortnightly			2	£8	£0.33	£0.75	£4.90	£0.68	£14.83	£16.00	£448	£1.17
Sacred Voices, Singing	Charleville or Wretham	Weekly	Mons	pm & eve	4	£13	£0.66	£1.51	£9.81	£1.37	£26.16	£32.00	£1,216	£5.84
Findhorn B'ham Group	Charleville or Wretham	Monthly	Suns	6pm - 9pm	3	£10	£0.49	£1.13	£7.36	£1.03	£20.49	£24.00	£288	£3.51
Health Visiting team	Charleville or Wretham	fortnightly	tbc	3 hour slot	3	£10	£0.49	£1.13	£7.36	£1.03	£20.49	£24.00	£480	£3.51
Energy Field Healing	Small Room	by appointment	Week day	2 hour slot	2	£8	£0.33	£0.75	£4.90	£0.68	£14.83	£12.00	£60	-£2.83
Craft Sessions, Balbir Curry	Art Rooms	Weekly	tbc	2 hour slot	2	£8	£0.33	£0.75	£4.90	£0.68	£14.83	£12.00		-£2.83
Cooking, Jenny Hall (Vol)	Kitchen	fortnightly or monthly			2	£0	£0.33	£0.75	£4.90	£0.68	£6.67	£24.00	£60	£17.33
Counselling, Jenny Hall (Vol)			tbc		2	£8								
Music, Jane Elliot		Weekly	tbc	2 hour slot	2	£8	£0.33	£0.75	£4.90	£0.68	£14.83	£12.00	£120	-£2.83
Psych K Workshops	Charleville	once a year	2 days	all day	7	£20	£1.15	£2.64	£17.16	£2.40	£43.15	£70.00	£140	£26.85
Psych K Therapy	Small Room	by appointment				£3	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£3.50	£0.00		
The Crown Church, ESOL	Wretham Room	twice a week		daytime	2	£8	£0.33	£0.75	£4.90	£0.68	£14.83	£12.00	£672	

Annual total:

£15,241

Notes to Appendix 8 Projected Use and Calculations

The Gas and Electricity prices are based on: Gas at 4.662p per kwht hr (inc vat) and Electricity at 14p per kwht hr (inc vat) .

Readings were taken over an hour period for the two downstairs boilers; one of which heats the hall using 40 kwhts over an hour = £1.86; the other heats the rest of downstairs (minus the hall) using 35 kwhts = £1.63. Electricity readings were also taken for downstairs, 5 kwhts = 70p and the hall, 6 kwhts =84p.

This is how we arrived at Gas and Electricity costs per hour of £2.33 for the downstairs and £2.70 for the hall. However, the table above is only a guide and should not be read 'literally'. Please note: The boilers will switch themselves off when the required temperature is reached and so will not be on continuously for an 8 hour period. The heating is also not required over the summer months. The surplus / deficit column is only an indication of costs and these other factors, including shared use of upstairs and downstairs rooms for different groups at the same time, will reduce the perceived cost of heating.

APPENDIX 9 SWOT Analysis (written at the first Steering Group Meeting)

Strengths

Our facilities - the Building and rooms

Space outside, garden areas

Our good reputation in the local community, particularly among artists, healers and activists

Our Location, bus links, Car park

We have something good to offer, our fundamental teachings

We have good relationships – with the InterChurch Council; past, current and potential users; a lot of interest for health, artistic and eco-friendly activities.

Participants of the Church are interested and positively want Oaklands to stay open if a way can be found. Our desire to keep it open and succeed. Our love of the building.

People currently involved, Michael and Barbara, are willing to take on more roles.

Potential users are willing to take on admin and management roles too.

National New Church also in transition, it's a strength that there are people who want to support us.

Weaknesses

Our perception that we have to have all the answers and solutions before moving forward - can be a barrier to ourselves.

Very few numbers attending regularly as members and friends of Oaklands

A lack of clarity over our Vision as a Birmingham New Church Society within wider group – the Feasibility Group has described a new 'Vision' and this needs to be articulated and become a shared vision. As a society, need to be able to communicate to other users about New Church beliefs and our purpose in running a Oaklands – joint ownership of the vision
Currently, no minister or spiritual teacher to lead the spiritual growth of New Church participants

Historically, there have been no written tenancy agreements with users. (These can be put in place).

Opportunities

We would like to express a wide view of the 'New Church', focusing on the openness of our teachings. In the long term, we are not envisaging attempting to revive the traditional forms of service and worship but create new forms and to hold on to those elements we really value and appreciate.

We have offers of support from ministers across the UK, David Lomax, Helen Brown, Mary Duckworth and Jan Miller of the auxiliary ministry to establish a workshop / seminar programme, similar to Purley Chase.

It was felt that we also need to have the presence of New Church teachers locally, so that collaborating can happen with other spiritual groups and in the long term, training may be given to current members in communicating New Church teachings. If we become a thriving centre, the opportunity of attracting and affording a minister may arise in the future.

To formulate our vision for Oaklands, partly through undertaking this Feasibility Study.

To present options for the management of the building and associated activities that will lead to the creation of a really vital, living organism for the local community and beyond. Using a 'head, heart and hands' approach.

Ensure an umbrella organisation (B'ham New Church Society or Spiritual centre subgroup with user representatives) oversees Oaklands as a Spiritual centre. A Sub group could report back to the B'ham New Church Society. Terms of reference adopted would incorporate operating structure.

Professionalise – ensure we have policy documents re use of the building, tenancy agreements and letters of agreement for volunteers and staff.

Different B'ham New Church Society members to take officer positions on the committee – we need a President, Secretary and Treasurer.

Current opportunities and the people we are already talking to include:

More New Church spiritual activities (advertised to wider audience); Maintaining Unity Developing our relationship with Banner Theatre and their work; Tree of Life - they organise spiritual activities, nutrition and wellbeing courses and have contacts with holistic groups across the city. They are proposing to be based at Oaklands, 7 days a week, acting on our behalf for lettings. They have lots of volunteers and could work on the grounds and develop the spaces.

We are looking for groups who have a potential harmony and compatibility with New Church activities and there have already been requests for hiring rooms from individual therapists and practitioners, from the NHS for mother and baby yoga and massage; Sacred Voices singing group and more.

There's an opportunity to share and sell books from our Library (although we may not have the specialism or knowledge in-house of the books on sale to help people make a choice).

We also have an opportunity to learn from others

Opportunity, and probable necessity, to change the rules within B'ham New Church Society constitution - so that fewer people are needed to vote.

Threats

Other groups using the building for their own purposes – a fear among wider New church members that they may 'take over' and New Church lose its identity.

If new people do not stand to be on the New Church Committee then there will not be a quorum to take a vote on future direction.

Fear of acting like busy fools, helping others enjoy the building.

APPENDIX 10 Management Structures

