



New Community and Church Facilities  
Maidstone United Reformed Church

Maidstone United Reformed Church  
Week Street  
Maidstone  
Kent ME14 1QU

Minister: The Rev. Andrew Royal

Church Secretary: John Williams 01622 738887

Treasurer: Rod Cox 01622 741603







## AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INVOLVEMENT

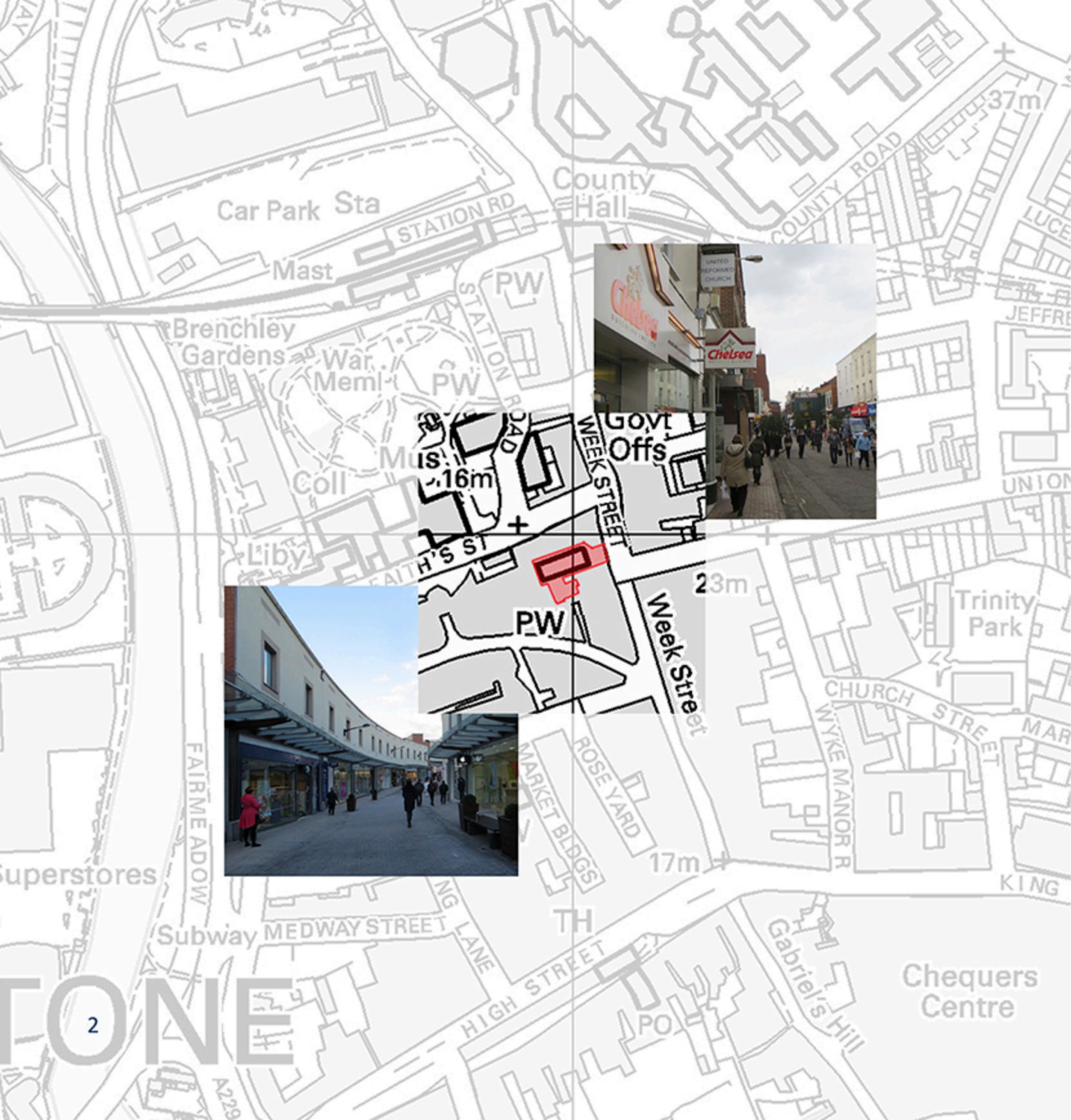
*We invite you  
to support the future development of  
Maidstone United Reformed Church.*

*Our current building dates from 1865 although a church  
has been located on our town centre site since 1747.*

*We have supported and sustained the local community  
through both difficult and good times.*

*We now want to secure our position in the town centre  
for the future and enhance our facilities so that  
we can expand the services and support we provide  
and respond to the needs of our local community  
both now and in the years to come.*





# our mission

Our historic church building and extensive community facilities are tucked into a town centre site between Week Street and Fremlin Walk. As well as providing a place of Christian worship we host many different community activities including the following:

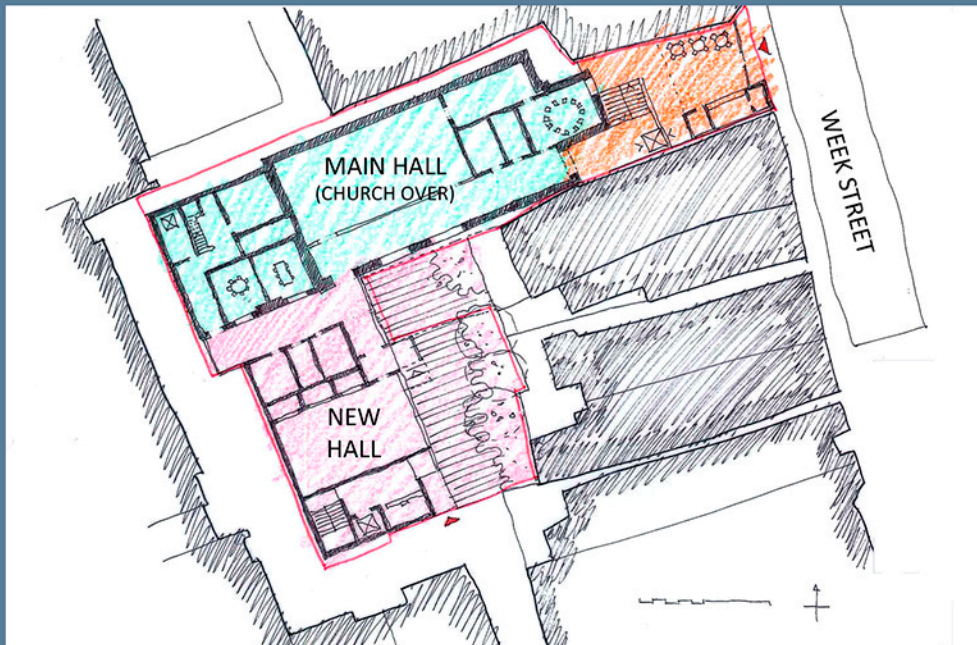
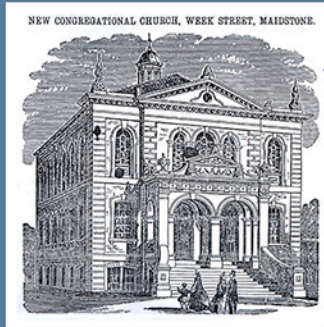
- Community café
- Weekly Country Market and community charity market
- Evening and lunchtime concerts
- Functions
- Charity and Public Meetings
- Conferences
- Carers and children's activities
- Youth Groups
- Dance and keep-fit classes and groups
- A sleeping shelter for homeless people
- Multi-faith chaplaincy centre for Fremlin Walk Shopping Centre

Our mission is to continue to serve the social and spiritual needs of our local community by responding to the current needs of the folk in the town centre. We intend to improve the quality of the spaces within our buildings and the facilities that we provide so that they can be enjoyed by more people.

Our faith calls us to walk with the people of Maidstone, to invite them into a place of welcome and support and engage with their lives by helping to meet their practical and spiritual needs.

We seek to be a place of refuge in the busy shopping and working streets, to offer practical help and advice for those vulnerable people in our town, quiet spaces for reflection and a café, children's groups and other activities which promote community cohesion.





# the proposal

Our redevelopment can be implemented in stand-alone phases:



Phase 1 - £730K\*: Remodelling entrance, new café, lift and stairs.



Phase 2 - £150K\*: Improving community facilities



Phase 3 - £1.2M\*: Socially responsible redevelopment of the Dunning Hall site plus new hall and garden

Our proposal to remove the 1990's canopy and our shop unit which currently obstructs the space between Week Street and the church will allow us to create a public foyer and café for activities on the site. The fine Victorian portico of the church will be more visible from the street, improving the amenity of the town centre. A lift and improvements to circulation will make all levels available to people with restricted mobility for the first time and enable a wider range of community activities to take place simultaneously on the site. We propose to demolish the Dunning Hall, the poor quality free-standing church hall, and create facilities that meet the needs and aspirations of local people. An exciting development on the site of the Dunning Hall could include a new hall with a small adjacent garden, possibly funded by a development above, perhaps social housing, or a hostel for former rough sleepers. There is independent access to the Dunning Hall site from Fremlin Walk.

Overall we are looking to provide exciting, open and welcoming buildings which are well equipped to accommodate large and small functions in a variety of rooms; a perfect town centre setting for concerts, meetings and a whole range of community activities for the people of the town.

\*all costs are inclusive of VAT and fees







# a town centre church

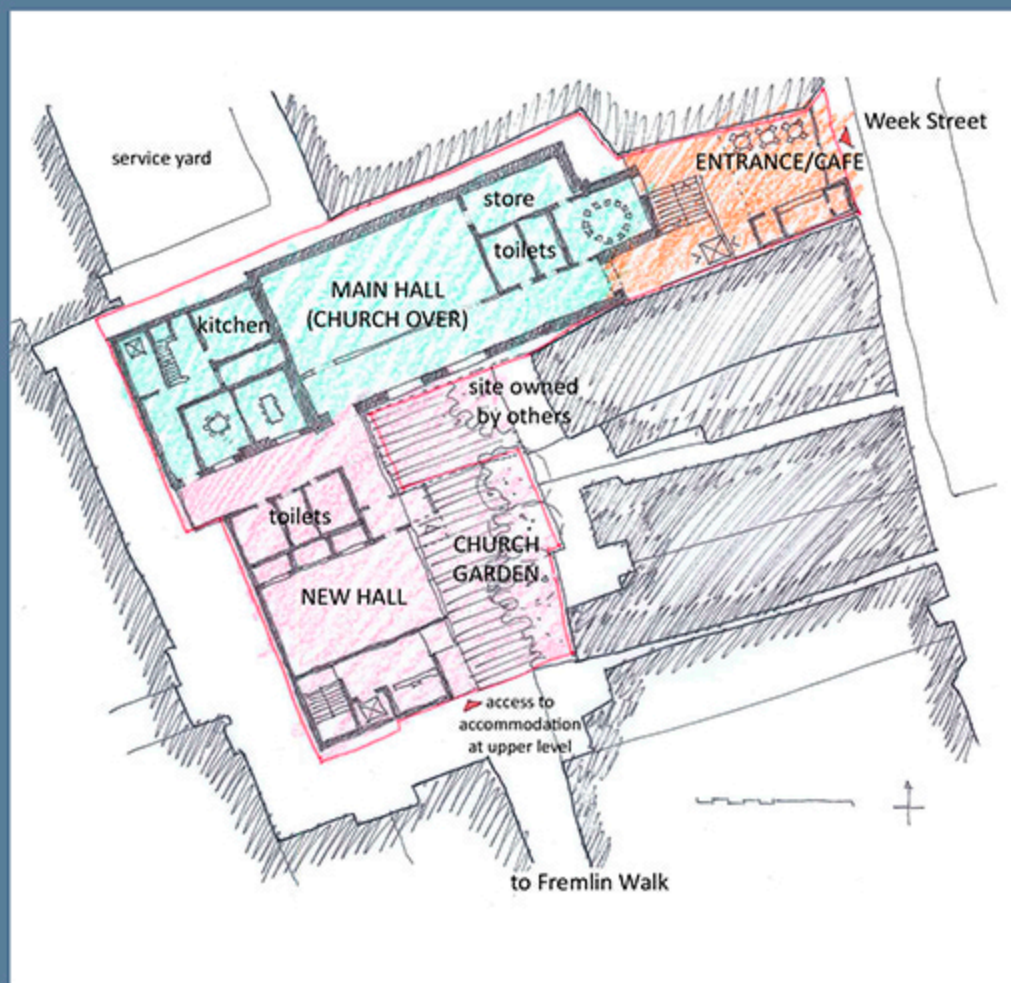
Located in the heart of Maidstone, we have a proud history of service to the local community.

In the 1914-18 conflict the church hall and rooms were open for recreation and in the Second World War more than a million meals were served by volunteers in a canteen on the site. We seek to respond to need as it arises, whether it is the extreme situation of homeless people, to whom we offer food and shelter, or the family and friends of prisoners, when we hosted temporary accommodation for visitors. Other users of the buildings include carers, children and youth groups. The sanctuary, with its excellent acoustics and good quality pipe organ, provides a venue for lunchtime and evening concerts. Music, dance and keep-fit groups offer the opportunity to get involved.

Although Maidstone is considered to be a relatively prosperous Borough the church is located within an area of considerable need. High Street ward – where our church is sited - is one of the most deprived local areas in the whole of England (Index of multiple deprivation 2010). 24.4% of children under 16 living in the ward are considered to be in poverty, 9.8% of young people under 25 are unemployed and 41.7% of under 16s are receiving disability living allowance. 21.6% of those over 60 are pension credit claimants and 47.2% of this age group are receiving disability benefit. Overall unemployment is at 5.9% compared with a county average of 3.2%.

Our discussions with the local authorities and other service providers continue so that we can develop programmes to help wherever we can.





# church partners

Our Church is located in the Town Centre adjacent to one of the main pedestrian routes into the Town Centre. On one side the Church abuts the newest of Maidstone's Shopping Centres – Fremlin Walk - while all other boundaries are formed of retail, leisure and restaurant units at ground level – many with residential accommodation above – and some over one or two floors. Our main access is onto one of the busiest streets – in footfall terms - in the Town Centre.

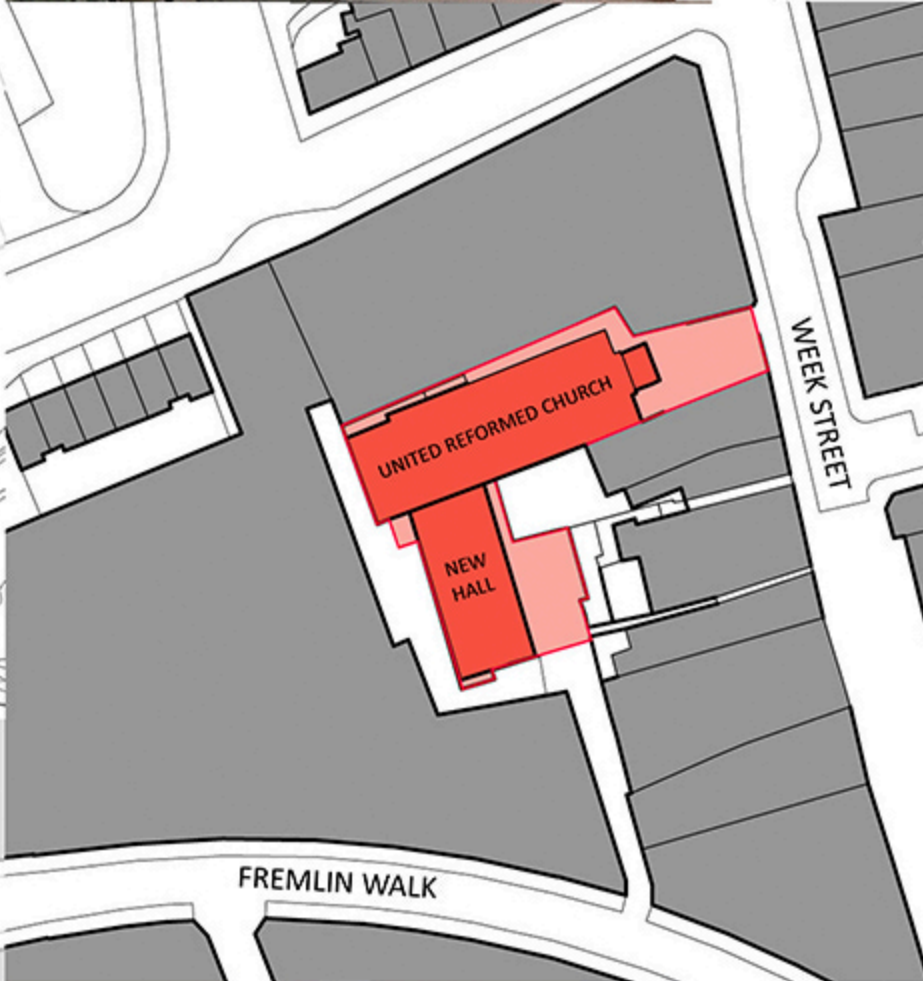
In addition to the flats above shops our church is but a very short walk from a wide variety of residential accommodation including almshouses; flats converted from older houses; terraced houses and newly built apartment blocks. These properties offer a mix of tenanted and owner occupied accommodation. Indeed, a building adjacent to the Church has recently been granted planning permission for the conversion of the upper floors to provide around 30 flats situated above two retail units. The face of the Town Centre is already changing.

The removal of the existing shop unit and creation of a new foyer and café in the space between Week Street and the church will form an attractive and useful social area for visitors to our building and be a great improvement on the somewhat daunting alley that currently leads to the entrance.

Currently, the only means of access from Week Street for wheelchair bound folk and others with mobility problems is via two elderly stair climbers. The proposed lift will facilitate access for everyone to all levels of our building and this, coupled with improved circulation and facilities, will provide fresh opportunities for community activities.

We intend our church to be a multipurpose building providing not just a sanctuary for Christian worship but also meeting the needs of all ages and all sections of the community through the provision of unique spaces as the home for a broad spectrum of activities.





# development partners

We are embarking on an ambitious project and although our members will wish to be involved, we expect that the major part of the cost of our proposed works will need to be financed by what we hope will be generous contributions from relevant grant making bodies, charitable trusts and other similar organisations.

That said, we believe that phase 3 of the proposed works could well be suited to some form of joint development with partners willing to work with us to redevelop the Dunning Hall site in a socially responsible manner that is compatible with the planning constraints for the site. For this phase our partner might be a registered social landlord or charitable foundation. The types of uses that we would consider include:

- Warden managed transitional accommodation for rough sleepers to enable them to live independently
- Housing for key workers
- Facilities for community use

Development of the Dunning Hall site could also provide facilities that would benefit the local community and church such as:

- A new hall
- A garden that would improve the amenity of the community and church facilities

We are open to imaginative ways of working with partners to secure the redevelopment of this part of our site. We see this as an exciting opportunity which we anticipate being ready to discuss with potential partners later this year.







