

Our new church building is taking shape at an incredible rate. The dry winter has given the builders considerable advantage and they are pressing well ahead of schedule, more than keeping apace with our Methodist friends at the other end of the Rathmore Road as they build their new sanctuary. I understand that there is a little friendly rivalry between our respective church families as to who will be finished first!

Of course, we still have a long way to go. The most difficult phase still lies ahead when from May to August we shall not have the use of our church building. At the moment we are looking at alternative plans, including meeting elsewhere or using the New Hall. If more probably the latter, then we need to consider at least three morning services in the hope that everybody doesn't turn up at the same one! We also need to make alternative arrangements for Crèche, Sunday School, Children's Church and Young West. Obviously we'll be keeping you informed.

By the beginning of September all three phases of the building programme should be complete, and we are contemplating an official opening later in the autumn. Our existing halls have already been vastly improved and our new kitchen facilities are being fully used on a daily basis. Various decisions still need to be taken including, for example, the nature of the new seating in the church! We can't allow anyone to get too comfortable during the sermon!

For the first time at the end of January I had the privilege of touring our building site and seeing all our new rooms beginning to take shape. I felt very excited as I was able to visualise a place full of life and activity. Looking up at the clear sky I felt the endless potential of an open heaven! We have every reason to feel confident and expectant as we look to the future. We need to see our Church developing as a Ministry Centre and reaching out ever more imaginatively into the surrounding community with the only Good News that really matters. Central to the extension will be a large, attractively designed welcome-reception area. I want it to be a place where the kettle is always on and where people feel totally at home!

But then that's always been something that has been very attractive about West. Many have joined us throughout the years who, as they have come through our doors, have had the sense of coming home. The Church is always more than buildings. It is about a living, vibrant community being totally at home together in the love of Jesus Christ and reaching out to others in that same spirit.

We have so many reasons to feel blessed as a congregation. Thankful to God for His faithfulness in the past, there is always the incredible potential of what He still wants to do in our lives, here in West and beyond. The prophet Isaiah put it like this: "Clear lots of ground for your tents! Make your tents large. Spread out! Think big! Use plenty of rope, drive the tent pegs deep. You're going to need lots of elbow room for your growing family."

I am excited! I hope you are too!

*Agape! - Charles McMullen*