## **Tyldesley church spire**

It’s good that so many people from Tyldesley and the surrounding areas have commented on social media about the lads shinning up and down our spire like ninjas, these last couple of days

As part of our responsibilities, all Anglican churches have a ‘quinquennial’ report prepared by a nominated architect, to describe the condition of the fabric of the building.

Quinquennial means every five years!!

Our last report showed potential problems with the spire, as well as other repairs needed to clerestory windows, parapets roofs etc.

As a consequence, a structural engineer visited earlier in the summer and recommended further temporary repairs to the upper stonework and pinnacle. (the last remedial work was in 2018).

We are very grateful for the skilled workers from High Life Rope Access, from Llanberis in north Wales, who have spent the last three days with us working internally on ropes within the spire and externally on ropes to the parapet, undertaking repairs to our historic building. As well as the new boarding and strapping that can be seen externally, they have installed additional webbing supports inside the 150’ high spire and re-secured the pinnacle, which was beginning to be a cause for concern.

These temporary repairs will cost in the region of £5000.00, which St George’s PCC will be responsible for. They have a two-year life.

Our next step is to make a funding bid to English Heritage for more permanent repairs to be undertaken. The costs of these will be several hundred thousand pounds.

We would ideally wish to be spending money re-ordering the interior of church to make it a more amenable fit-for-purpose community space, able to host a variety of community activities. Sadly, it is inadvisable to spend money internally whilst the fabric – the stonework, glass and associated material – needs expenditure. A conundrum that the parish church council has struggled with for many years.

St George’s has started its bicentennial celebrations. In July 1820, “Thomas Johnson gave to His Majesty’s Commissioners for Building New Churches a parcel of land on ‘the highway to Leigh’, for ecclesiastical purposes”. On St George’s Day in 1822, the new building commenced. The church was completed in 1824, and consecrated by the Bishop of Chester in 1825. This was at a time of massive population growth in Tyldesley as cotton mills and coal mining took a hold on our immediate neighbourhoods. Before the church was built, the parish centre was in Leigh; Atherton and Astley, each had a ‘chapel of ease’, but there was only the Top Chapel’ in Tyldesley. The Commissioners gave £17,000.00 towards its cost.

It is Tyldesley’s established church, sadly used by a dwindling number of regular worshippers.

Churches in Astley and Mosley Common have similar issues to deal with, as have others across the diocese of Manchester and nationwide.

It would be good to hear from local people their views of how church should be developed in the next 200 years!