



Mission in the Diocese of Chester:

Building God's Kingdom

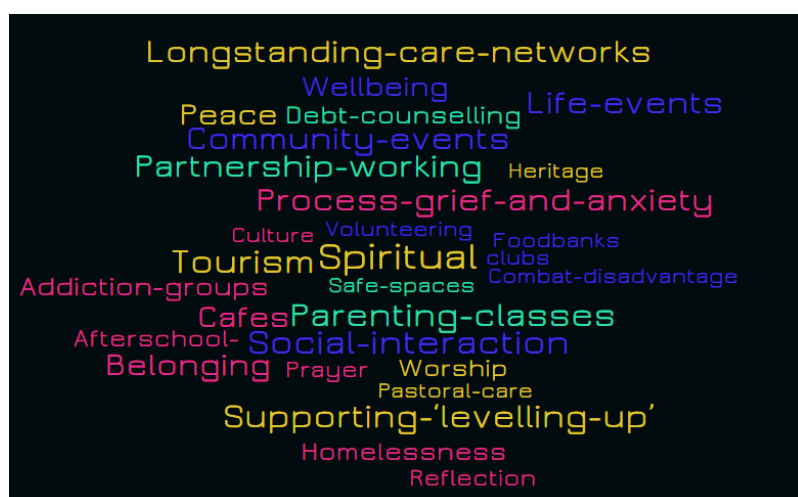
**A Research and Development Discussion Paper on
Church Buildings**

First published October 2019, updated May 2021

Foreword: Reflections on Places of Worship in light of the COVID-19

During the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is especially timely to consider the benefit of places and spaces where many people may come together. Over the last year, we have re-discovered our humanity lies in meaningful connections with others. We have seen an increased appreciation of spaces for gathered worship and social interaction, as well as spaces for prayer, reflection or support as more people experience bereavement, loss, and/or poor mental wellbeing. National research provides evidence for this:

1. [Churches, COVID-19 and Community: experiences, needs and supporting recovery](#). By the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, University of York, March 2021. This shows that churches and their buildings have provided COVID-hit communities with crucial support in social care; well-being (in mind, body and spirit), place-making and heritage; and support for people suffering grief and loss.
2. [House of Good Report](#), by the National Churches Trust, October 2020. This ground-breaking report demonstrates the total economic and social value that church buildings generate in the UK.
3. The government-commissioned [Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant. A report for government by Danny Kruger MP](#), Sept 2020. This report advocates the government 'should be actively supporting the extraordinary work of organisations of all faiths' (p36).



A snapshot of just some of the role of churches highlighted in the University of York report.

Read on to discover how Places of Worship can be spaces, alongside other places (online or physical), where God's Kingdom can be known in such a time as this.

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. Executive Summary	4
3. Theological Reflections on Sacred Space	6
4. Role of Church Buildings	10
5. Challenges	12
6. National Context	14
7. Diocese of Chester Statistics	16
8. Diocese of Chester Parish Survey 2018	17
9. Diocese of Chester Parish Case Studies	33
10. Conclusions	38
10.1. Conclusions Summary	38
10.2. Key Findings	40
11. Where We Go From Here, Closing Prayer, Supporting documents	49

'Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labour in vain.

Psalm 12 :1

1. Introduction

People and buildings are the church's biggest assets, as God invites us to be part of bringing God's Kingdom to earth, as it is in heaven.

This research report focuses on one aspect of this - buildings. Its aim is to better understand and stimulate discussion on the role of buildings in the Diocese of Chester, both now and in the future. This includes understanding the financial resources required, the impact of buildings on the mission and ministry of the church and views on the best way forward to manage church buildings in the future. Such thinking seeks to contribute to discerning God's will for our Diocese. It calls for us to have a willing and open spirit to respond to considering church buildings and halls and, crucially, also their balance with other places and spaces used for ministry and mission.

A variety of research material has been gathered and generated. This includes relevant contextual information and statistics to help us see the bigger picture in our Diocese and nationally; a PCC survey inviting responses in the Diocese July - October 2018; and the learning from a selection of case studies of church building projects in our Diocese.

2. Executive Summary

This research and development paper maps the current landscape of building assets and snapshot of parish-level views, and also gives a steer for key considerations for the future.

The need for Places of Worship mattered in Jesus' day and continues for us today, as one of three spaces used for mission and ministry, (the others being community spaces and private homes). In the Diocese of Chester, we have 348 church buildings, with an estimated 2 million visits to church services alone each year.

Church buildings can be valuable assets for empowering the gathered church as it collectively draws closer to God; a highly visible Christian presence in the community; a place of connection and support; and, as research shows, one factor in helping people come to faith.

Capital investment in making church buildings more versatile, accessible and with facilities, often combined with making the building structurally safe and watertight, has made a positive difference for some of our churches. In a 2018 Parish Survey and 14 case studies, the majority said that investment had made a positive impact in one or more of the following ways:

- Being more welcoming, comfortable and accessible for people.
- Opportunities to begin new ways of 'being church' and connecting with local communities.
- Better able to respond to needs of people, new activities, flexible to change to different uses of the space.
- Using the building more during the week and for a greater range of activities and services.
- Relationship-building is strengthened through better spaces to gather together as well as engaging with wider communities.

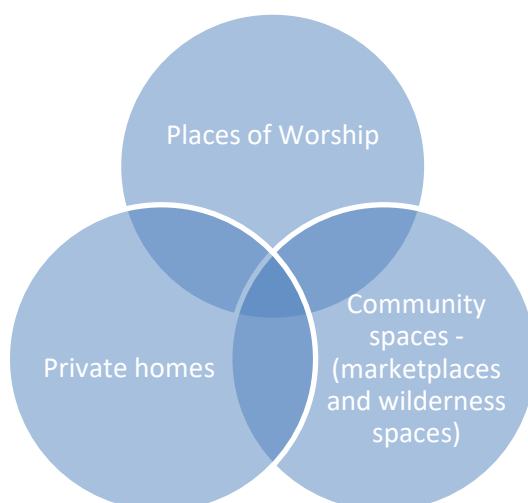
However, there are considerable challenges including needing to raise significant levels of funding, fewer people attending Sunday services and, for some, inheriting a location and/or form of building that may not be most effective or easily changed today. Parishes are collectively seeing to raise funds totalling at least £20million for capital works on church buildings and hall in our Diocese.

Key findings

1. The national focus on buildings makes it timely for our Diocese to also consider this issue.
2. We can learn from the three-fold use of physical 'spaces' for ministry and mission by Jesus and the early church – Places of Worship, Community Spaces (marketplaces and wilderness spaces), Private homes. The Church of England have significantly prioritised the first. Today, what is the right balance (and interaction) of places of spaces for the Good News to be shared most effectively?
3. At least two million visitors are welcomed in our Diocese each year!
4. Reflecting on the role of church buildings may assist shaping a vision for their right use, in line with the overarching vision for the church.
5. The impetus (nationally and locally) is for churches to be more people-focused and outward-looking, in which church buildings are one enabling role to achieve this by creating spaces where people connect in community with God and with one another.
6. Capital investment has led to positive impact in most churches in the case studies and the parish survey, linked to first discerning a clear overarching Godly vision for the church.
7. Vast sums of investment in capital works continue to be required.
8. Repairs are a priority need for capital works, alongside improvement works.
9. Church buildings both inhibit and enhance the growth of God's kingdom.
10. Parish thoughts on the future direction for sacred space include:
 - Change the permissions process to be more accommodating for change.
 - Being more missional in the use and focus of resources.
 - More capacity at Diocesan level to offer parish – level support with areas such as their missional potential, managing building projects and securing the finance.
 - The Diocese taking a more strategic approach to managing buildings, including closure of buildings that are no longer fit for the mission God intended and investing in those that do, combined with sharing space more frequently, both ecumenically and with wider communities.

3. Reflections on sacred space

In scripture, Jesus and the early church make use of three different types of physical space in which to live out God's calling in their lives:



Examples from scripture

Places of worship and community spaces

¹⁶ 'While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there'. (Acts 17:17)

Places of worship and private homes

'And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people...' (Acts 2:46 - 47)

Sacred spaces could be viewed as places that we intentionally use for the glory of God, whether church buildings, halls or temporarily using community space such as halls and cafes. Well maintained and enhanced church buildings are a strong witness that the Christian faith is very much alive and making a positive difference in our communities - our buildings 'speak'. They are our place for collective worship, a house of prayer and a resource for mission.

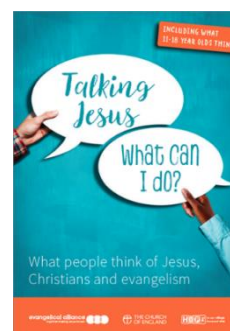
In '*The Report of the Church Buildings Review Group*¹', published in January 2016, led by the Right Reverend John Inge, Bishop of Worcester, it makes the point that buildings themselves are not holy; simply, they create space that is set apart as a reminder of who God is and what he has done.²

In '*Church Buildings for People*', Nigel Walter argues that church buildings are active partners in creating space where the family of God grows together in closeness to God and one another. Church buildings create space to strengthen these relational bonds and provide a sense of rootedness.³



Church buildings are a visible Christian presence on our high streets and in our villages. They are instantly recognisable, acting as a 24/7 noticeboard that could be described as 'evangelism in stone', acting as a witness to the permanency of God, and in turn, the resilience of the body of Christ through changing times.

Research shows church buildings play an important role in people coming to faith. In the ComRes research report, '*Talking Jesus: Perceptions of Jesus, Christians and evangelism (adults and young people)*', both attending wedding or funeral (in a church building) and visiting a church building outside service times were both factors in faith formation.



¹ The Report of the Church Buildings Review Group, p1 – GS 2008

² Ibid, p25

³ *Church Buildings for People: Reimagining Church Buildings as Nourishing Places*, Nigel Walter, Grove Books, 2014

Overall, in considering the Church of England's use of the three different types of spaces, it could be said that establishing and maintaining places of worship (church buildings and halls) has been significantly prioritised, despite considerable challenges. There have been less (although varying) levels of emphasis on nurturing Christian community, discipleship and mission in our homes. There seems even less emphasis of the church in community spaces or neighbourhoods, either where people naturally gather, (the modern-day physical or online 'marketplaces'), and/or the wilderness places where those on the margins of society often dwell.

Overnight, however, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21 shifted the balance of spaces, with church buildings forced to closed during national lockdowns, except mainly for small-scale funeral services and eventually some opened for private prayer as the first stage of the easing of restrictions. The forced closure and urgency to move to a digital or other platform, (as gatherings were prevented through social distancing restrictions), created the opportunity to reflect on what is the right balance of places and spaces for effective ministry and mission? *Where* are people seeking? *What* are people seeking or missing in the early stages of the pandemic and now in the recovery phase over 12 months later? Do views differ between members/regulars of the church and non-members?

On the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic instigated a dramatic increase in engagement beyond the church walls, which has been a wonderful opportunity, including online streamed services, missional engagement in neighbourhoods and delivering food parcels. Yet on the other hand, the impact of social isolation, loneliness and poor mental health have come to the fore, showing the negative impact of and individualist culture. National research, such as the report, [Churches, COVID-19 and Community: experiences, needs and supporting recovery](#) by the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, University of York, March 2021, has shown this has led to an increased appreciation of spaces for gathered worship and social interaction, as well as spaces for prayer, reflection or support as more people experience bereavement, loss, and/or poor mental wellbeing.

To find out more about the theological perspective on church buildings, including stories worth sharing to demonstrate what this looks like for real, please see [Appendix A: Theological Reflections on Sacred Spaces](#).

4. Role of church buildings

To summarise, one way of seeing the foundational role of church buildings is reflected in the following diagram. It is phrased in a non-church language to help broaden the range of people who can join the conversation about the role of church buildings and provide a different lens in which to view them. These roles are relevant across the whole church family (all age). A church may have particular strengths rather than each role being of equal weight. When considering the roles, it is important to consider all under the umbrella of how they help people encounter Christ, either for the first time or in a deeper way.



1. **Pray, Reflect** - Praying together as a Christian community, with people, for people and for the world. Open for all (church building and churchyard) as a sacred space to be still, calm and reflect on life in the sacred ambience as a House of Prayer; a place for vigils at times of great need; facilitating Christian spiritual awareness.
2. **Encounter, Learn, Enrich** - Growing personally and as a Christian community in our understanding of and closeness to God (whole-life discipleship) through proclaiming the Good News afresh and maintaining a Christian presence locally, (the role of church buildings in faith formation). This becomes a foundation for a positive sense of identity, value, purpose and belonging. Volunteering enhances personal development and fellowship.
3. **Relational, wellbeing** - Hub of community life, bringing people together, supporting and caring, reducing social isolation by building friendships; a place of refuge and sanctuary; equipping people to deal with life's challenges through drawing closer to God; helping create a more just world through prayer, support, encouragement, practical help and social action.
4. **Celebrate** - Rejoicing and thankfulness in God's blessings through worship and relationship-building; celebrating major life events of baptisms (christenings), weddings and blessings; celebrating special times and events in local and national life, held in often the largest public building for villages and some towns.
5. **Respect, Remember** - An open door for all to enter; a space for conversations and action that transform injustices. A place of remembrance, respect and honour to God, people's lives, significant events (past, present and future) and creation, including commemorative services, memorials, funerals, prayers, projects or initiatives and the missional role of churchyards.
6. **Be Inspired, Discover** - Inspiring, creative, and uplifting space with a special ambience, often historic, with great acoustics. Treasure-houses, built to the glory of God and so often amongst the finest architecture for an area; increasingly open for visitors, part of heritage and cultural tourism and local life.
7. **Be Rooted** - Symbolising the permanence of God and longevity of commitment to local communities; encapsulating stories of people's lives, often in landmark buildings; creating a sense of rootedness of place and identity on a personal, local and national level, including a spiritual sense of rootedness as belonging to the family of God; site of pilgrimage, preserving historical/cultural research, artefacts and churchyards.

5. Challenges

Managing and using church buildings, however, are not without their challenges. These cannot be underestimated. In terms of time, people and finance, their demands are extremely high.

Major investment has and continues to be required in what are often historic and grade listed buildings to make them safe and fit for the purpose God intended, such as space for worship and group activities, better facilities, lighting, heating, access, and equipment, as well as essential repairs to the historic fabric of the building and its special features. This has not come easy.

Vast fundraising efforts continue to be led by local people, for local people, who are voluntarily serving in churches.

Not all our church buildings are now in the right location and/or easily adaptable. For some areas, new housing developments are significantly increasing the population of a village or town. Further consideration is needed for how best to respond.

Church buildings may not be the only or indeed the best space for 'being Church' in multiple ways to enable a greater 'blended' (mixed) economy of Church to flourish. This involves both inherited Church and pioneering ministries that include Fresh Expressions that take place in church buildings, church halls and other community spaces.

How we use spaces intentionally for encountering God is a conversation that needs further exploration, to which this report is one contribution to such discussions.

Some of the main challenges with church buildings are summarised in the following diagram, based on feedback from parishes in the Diocese and key factors identified in national research.





6. National context

The Church Buildings Council at the Church of England state,

'The Church of England is the largest steward of England's built heritage through its network of 16,000 parish churches. Among these are 45% of England's grade I listed buildings, showing just how special these buildings are'.⁴

There is increasing focus on the sustainable use and management of church buildings. This includes, for the first time, the government commissioning the Taylor Review report (2017) and launching a subsequent pilot scheme (2018-2020) based on its recommendations. Also, the government commissioned Kruger report, Levelling Up Our Communities, 2020, which explicitly states the value of faith communities during the COVID pandemic.

Research includes:

- **2021, [Church in Action 2020/21: A survey of churches' community responses to the pandemic](#)**, by the Church of England and Church Urban Fund, April 2021
- **2021, [Churches, COVID-19 and Community: experiences, needs and supporting recovery](#)**. By the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, University of York, March 2021. [Executive Summary and Full report available](#).
- **2020, [Keeping the Faith: Partnerships between faith groups and local authorities during and beyond the pandemic. A report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Faith & Society](#)**, Nov 2020
- **2020, [The House of Good report: the economic and social value of church buildings in the UK](#)**, commissioned by National Churches Trust, October 2020
- ***2020, [Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant. A report for government by Danny Kruger MP](#)**, September 2020
- **2020, [The GRA:CE Project Report by Church Urban Fund](#)**. Growing Good: Growth, Social Action and Discipleship, by Theos and Church Urban Fund.
- ***2020, [Evaluation of the Taylor Review Pilot: Sept 2018 - March 2020](#)**, managed by Historic England on behalf of the government's Department for

⁴ <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/governments-english-churches-and-cathedrals-sustainability-review-welcomed>.

Culture, Media and Sport. The Diocese of Chester is participating in the pilot, based on recommendations in the report.⁵ Published Oct 2020.

- **2018, 'Suggested Template for a Diocesan Strategic Review of Church Buildings as part of Mission Planning**', published by the Church Buildings Council (CBC), Church of England, June 2018.⁶
- ***2017, 'Taylor Review: Sustainability of Church Buildings and Cathedrals**', published December 2017, commissioned by the government, Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).⁷
- **2016, 'Church Buildings Review**', published January 2016, commissioned by the Church Commissioners and the Archbishop's Council, Church of England.⁸

(*Government-commissioned report)

To find out more about the national perspective, including the priorities emerging nationally, please see Appendix B: National Context on Church Buildings.

⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/places-of-worship/churches-sustainability-review/>

⁶ <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/diocesan-resources/strategic-planning-church-buildings>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/english-churches-and-cathedrals-sustainability-review>

⁸ http://www.hrballiance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/church_buildings_review_report_2015.pdf

7. Diocese of Chester statistics

Map. Please click on this URL to access an interactive map of the Diocese, showing the location of all church buildings – <https://arcg.is/15rnXb>

Number of church buildings 348 buildings used for worship. (This includes Parish Churches, Chapels of Ease, Licensed Places of Worship and eight Private Chapels)

Grade listings. 42 Grade I, 66 Grade 2*, 140 Grade 2, 100 Unlisted.

Major Parish Churches. Chester St John the Baptist; Congleton St Peter; Nantwich St Mary; Macclesfield St Michael; Stockport St George; and Stockport St Mary. As defined by the Church Buildings Council at the Church of England.

Finance. The current known fundraising target for capital works in the Diocese is £20m. Based on the Statistics for Finance, the greatest expenditure aside from Parish Share is capital expenditure on major repairs and new building work to church buildings, plus church halls and other property owned by the PCC, equating to 16%.

Basic facilities in church buildings - Based on the Statistics for Mission, in 2015 the number of churches that had toilet facilities was 174 (79%) churches and kitchen facilities was 134 (61%), out of 220 respondents.

Open for visitors outside service times - Out of 183 respondents, there was a mixed picture. The most frequent answer was 'occasionally' open (57), followed by open 'five or more days per week' (45), then 'never' open (37). The remainder were open in between those levels.

Social Justice work by churches. 216 churches responded, detailing 329 projects run by churches, with a rounded total 700 social action projects they were involved in.

Visitors. Based on the Statistics for Mission data, it is estimated that the total number of visitors to our church buildings could be around 2 million!

Please see Appendix C: Diocese of Chester Statistics. This includes further details on the above, plus the footprint of grade 1 and 2* buildings, attendance at church services and a summary of the use of church buildings.

8. Diocese of Chester Parish Survey 2018

From July to October 2018, PCC's were invited to take part in a Diocesan-wide survey, exploring the use, management, role and thinking about church buildings and halls. A total of 20 responses were received. The findings are summarised below.

For full responses, please see Appendix D: Parish Survey 2018 full responses.

Q1 Have you enhanced your church building or church hall over the last decade?

19 out of 20 said yes.

Q2 What work was done?

- *To Church building* - the most frequent answers are audio/visual (A/V) and conservation of features, with a secondary priority of heating.
- *To Church hall* - improved meeting space is the most frequent work, closely followed by administrative/storage space, kitchenette and versatility of space for mission and ministry.
- *To both* - repairs are the overwhelming priority. Secondary priorities are lighting, heating, audio/visual (A/V) and energy efficiency.

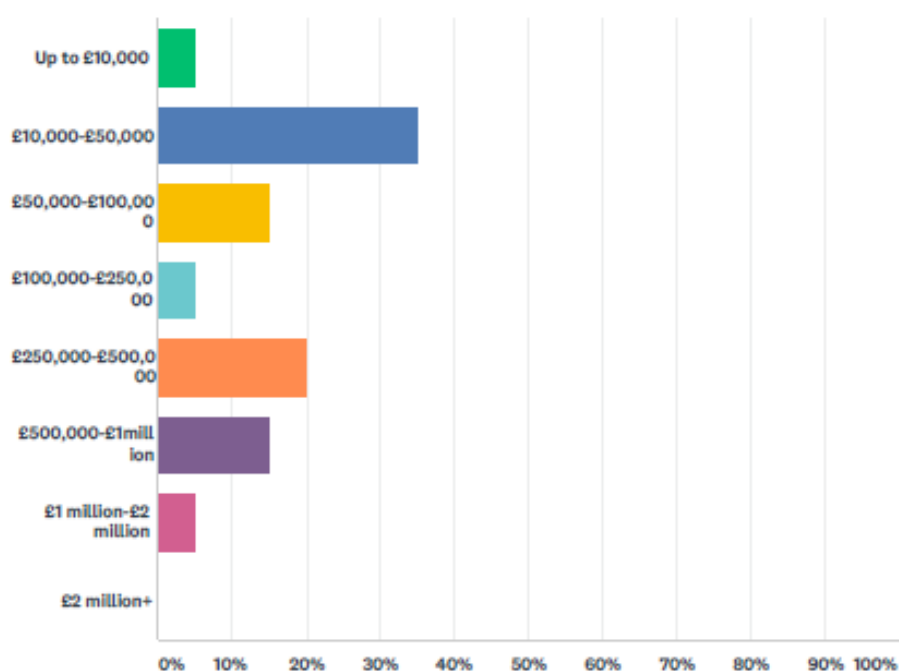
With all responses combined, it provides a fairly even picture of the breadth of needs for capital investment. Energy efficiency/environmentally friendly initiatives are the most frequent answer, followed closely with repairs, although further factors are not far behind.

Q3 What types of groups regularly use the church building and hall?

- *In Church building* - 'visitors' are the most frequent answer, closely followed by schools and churchyard visitors
- *In Church hall* - over 60's groups and celebratory events are joint first, closely followed by health/emergency services/council use and counselling/support groups.

- *In both* - youth groups and leisure groups are the joint most frequent answer, followed by meeting spaces and visitors. Third most frequent are schools and baby/toddler groups.

Q4 Approximately how much has been spent on the church building and hall over the last ten years for repairs and/or improvements?



Q5 How was the money raised for the building work?

<i>Method</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>
Congregational giving*	10
Individual/specific donations*	8
Grants, including lottery fund	11
Normal or general church fundraising	7
Legacies	5
Fundraising events	3
Reserves	3
Rental income (e.g. room hire)	2

Loan or mortgage 2

Budgeting 2

(*Responses include multiple phrasings, therefore the meaning of 'donations' may refer to both congregational giving and community or business giving. Therefore, it is likely congregational giving may be greater than indicated.)

Q6 Do you have a Friends Scheme?

Most responses do not have a Friends Scheme, (16 responses), one respondent said yes, and three are considering it in the future. No respondents have a group that is no longer active. (NB: the Diocese has a list of churches that it is aware of which have a Friends Scheme, currently totalling 19).

Q7 What difference has investing in the church building made to the life and impact of the church?

Summary – Out of twenty responses, all but one church that has invested in the building have seen a positive impact, especially increased church fellowship, community engagement, improved ministry, and a more welcoming, accessible and comfortable space for a variety of different people's needs and interests.



The majority (18) said the building project had made a significant difference to the life of the church, with two stating it made a minor or no difference to the life of the church. Re-occurring themes were:

- Being more welcoming, comfortable and accessible for people.
- Opportunities to begin new ways of 'being church' and engaging with people.
- Better able to respond to needs of people, new activities, flexible to change to different uses of the space.

- Using the building more during the week and for a greater range of activities and services.
- Relationship-building is really important. The projects helped strengthen this in relation to better space and facilities for church fellowship as well as engaging with wider communities.

Responses -

'Buildings now more welcoming and comfortable, groups enjoy and will come back. New projection system in church makes services / sermons more interesting, Space in the Church Hall is more adaptable giving more space for social events and for contact after services'.

'New chairs in the church has improved comfort especially for the elderly and also given us greater flexibility on using the space. Improvements to the kitchen has enabled us to offer soup and sandwich deliveries weekly to the housebound and isolated in our community and made it possible to hold meals on in church/hall for up to 80 people at a time. We have also recently opened a weekly "pop - in" café which will generate additional funds for the church. Improved heating has made the church warmer more quickly and made the church more comfortable for all. Turned a storeroom into the church office which has improved administration and communications; and provides a focal point for non - ministry related enquiries. Hall is also used as a polling station for local and national elections generating a useful source of revenue'.

'HUGE! The works of 14 years ago changed everything! It previously looked as though the church was closed, even when it was open. The building is now used something like 40 hours per week (including for worship) rather than the 10 or so previously. It has made the building a locus for our ministry to the town. Hundreds of people drop in each month. The 'town' knows that the church is open, active and available, and that 'we are for the town'.

'Massive. The church hall and its Cafe builds significant bridges to the community. The church as a grade 1 listed building is already an attractational feature'.

'Considerable, enabling disability access to the hall, and greatly improved space and facilities'.

Q8 Has investing in the building(s) made an impact on the growth of the church, either spiritually or numerically?

Summary - Overall, most building projects have played a role in numerical and/or spiritual growth, as the building has helped facilitate greater and new uses and therefore more opportunity for relationship-building to share faith. Both aspects of growth, (spiritual and numerical) are equally mentioned 11 times each.



Four out of 20 said it was too early to comment on growth, as the project had not long since completed. This leaves 16 respondents able to comment. Out of these, 50% of respondents, (ten churches), had seen an increase numerically since the building project. Four churches (25%) particularly commented on better engagement with children and families.

An example of one response –

'Different fresh expression services have added new people to our congregation and they have become active members of the church on the PCC and as helpers. It has also inspired 3 Alpha and 3 Lent courses as home groups'.

On the other hand, the remaining six churches that could comment on growth had experienced no numerical growth or not explicitly mentioned it.

A small number of churches had experienced both growth and decline, for example, more people attending but not as regularly, new people attending but there has been drop-off as well, or growth in mission beyond the church walls.

Eight out of 20 respondents directly commented on the project resulting in spiritual growth, although it was implied in others. This included growing maturity as a Christian through greater involvement in serving, generous giving (financial and time), coming together with one vision, the church becoming more outward-looking and better able to engage in worship when physical needs are met such as a warm and comfortable building in which people can clearly see and hear the service.

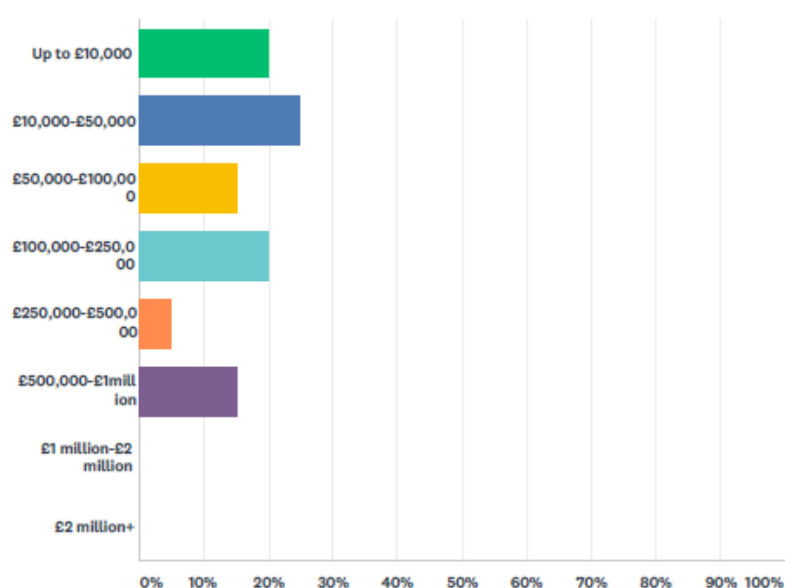
An example of one response -

'It changed the mindset of the church to be more outward - focused, recognising that in God we have something special to offer. Numerically there are probably more people attending, but not as regularly. As previously said, total numbers through the doors has rocketed, including some dropping in to worship. We feel as though we would not have attracted as many young families recently had we not done the work - it was a forbidding and less comfortable building then'.

Q9 Thinking about the future, what changes/improvements do you envisage carrying out in the next ten years?

- *For church building* - conservation of features of the building is the most frequent need, followed by repairs, lighting and versatile space for mission and ministry.
- *For church hall* - a range of work is needed, but this has a lower level of need than work on church buildings (indicated by fewer responses). Work includes suitable facilities for young generations, kitchenette, W.C., and heating.
- *For both* - Repairs dominate the work needed, followed by environmentally friendly/energy efficiency work and Audio/Visual.

Q10 How much do you anticipate this future work will cost?



Q11 How do you think the spaces used by churches *inhibit* the growth of the kingdom of God in our Diocese?

- Summary

Out of the ten responses, nine churches agreed there were inhibiting aspects to church buildings.

The most frequent factor was that church buildings create a negative first impression for those not familiar with entering them. They are spaces that can be intimidating, unwelcoming, uncomfortable, and not accessible.

This was closely followed by how resource-heavy church buildings are in terms of financial upkeep, time and people, with concern there was too great an emphasis on buildings rather than people and the work of the church, and too strong a 'heritage' focus.

Thirdly, respondents mentioned some church buildings have unsuitable space for mission and ministry, which inhibit their use, especially for group activities and more contemporary forms of worship. One respondent sums up the comments by writing,

'Intimidating and alien environment for unchurched people. Uncomfortable seating. Cold & hard to heat. Often dark & dingy. Huge financial drain inhibits mission and ministry. Often inaccessible physically. Often unsuited to running groups for children etc. Cost and delay of faculty proceedings. Size of building (if too large or too small) restricts growth. Surrounded by graves & often dark churchyards'.

The following examples of comments are grouped into key themes that emerged-

- Negative first impressions of not welcoming

'We have mixed views; some believe Churches present a big barrier to most people to even set foot inside. Once inside even if the welcome is good, the pews are hard the lighting poor and the service is a mystery to most people. Whereas others



believe churches to be beautiful historic places and they appreciate Anglican traditions'.

'Churches can be alien buildings which people find it uncomfortable to enter'.

'Access, especially when it is dark, can be an issue'

'They can suggest a backward looking or "heritage only" image of Church'.

'A church that keeps its doors locked except on Sundays is by definition a place of exclusion. We therefore now have the church open from 09.00 until 12.00 every weekday; sometimes unattended (with valuables locked away)'.

- Resource-heavy

'We can too easily become fabric and maintenance focused. It can create a very static view as church as location rather than church as the people'.

'They can be a huge drain on financial resources, and so on time and energy to get funding - distracting us from the church's mission to make disciples. They can give two impressions of: 1. "everything is alright - if they have a building like this the church must be 'loaded'". 2. "church is not for me because my life is a mess, and doesn't connect with this beautiful (and gothic) building.'

- Physical space unsuitable, challenge to making changes

'Too rigid in their layout to encompass modern forms of worship and to be of use to other groups in the community. They can be depressing and oppressive, lacking a welcome. More importance can be given to the building as a museum by professional objectors to change rather than to the people who are the church and their needs. The churches can be historic buildings but there must be a balance with their need to do God's work'.

- No issue - *'We believe we work closely and our 'sacred space' is valued and used efficiently'.*

Q12 How do you think the spaces used by churches *enhance* the growth of the kingdom of God in our Diocese?

- Summary

A total of 19 responses were received, which is nearly double that of the previous question. The most frequent related to the role of church buildings as spaces where people meet with God. Further factors within this are a visible sign of God's presence in the community and one aspect is creating a positive church experience that people would want to return. This was closely followed by loving service to the community in a myriad of ways, which often overlaps with the first point about being positive witnesses to God's goodness.



One respondent wrote,

'Enormously! Looking at so many ways people use our spaces, it is only limited by our imagination'.

The following examples of comments are grouped into two themes that emerged -

- Spaces where people meet with God, a visible sign of God's presence in the community, a positive church experience

'Our church buildings are loved and appreciated, by people of all ages, in our Diocese. Our spaces enable us to have a focal point for our worship'.

'They are visible signs of God's presence in this place. They speak of God's love of people in life and in death. A well kept church and churchyard shows WE care for environment, our worship, loved ones in churchyard'.

'For some coming into a traditional building can be helpful to aid persons spirituality'.

'The buildings can be inspiring, uplifting and a place of comfort and security. They can be welcoming and warm, bringing strangers into the love of God. Working together adds strength to our mission'.

'The buildings tend to be very visible in the public space (enhancing when in good repair/distracting when poorly maintained) and people tend to know where their local one is. Through welcoming people into our buildings we can reflect something of God's warmth and welcome, and use them as vehicles for teaching about God and our faith, and as a quiet space in a noisy world. We also use them for social action and mission (foodbanks, nightshelters, etc). Our spaces are also GREAT places for those times of public celebration and expressions of sorrow. Anglican buildings also tend to be the most inclusive in terms of ALL are welcome (even if not all can gain access!).'

'Our church is often considered a welcoming Church. It is also the local Church for the Community and many people feel a connection to us. Recognising the "belong then believe", there is an opportunity to increase the use of the Buildings. This could meet a number of needs and then people may move on in their Spiritual Journey. We recognised the need for increased Community use of the Buildings covering the areas identified in the Questionnaire. Encouragingly we are undertaking many of the activity listed. Our aim is to have a busy and lively Church Centre, aiming to be a Church in the Centre of the Community'.

'A friendly, welcoming, comfortable, warm church that isn't stuffy'.

'If they are welcoming, appealing and accessible they will attract more people to worship in them and use them'.

'The history of many faithful people gathering to worship and follow Jesus is a light in the community. We seek to reconnect people with their spiritual heritage and our building can help with this as it has been here for a while!'

'When they are actively and creatively used to point people to Jesus Christ'.

- Loving service to communities

'The recently refurbished church community centre is an asset that we need to fully utilize. It presents an opportunity to serve the community by positive and needed activities. People take ownership of these spaces to meet with God and experience his presence'.

'Comfortable buildings for funerals / weddings etc encourage people to come again'.



'By allowing the use of the church for appropriate community events (our church is one of the few buildings locally with seating capacity for over 250) it builds links with local people. For example the local primary school have their Christmas carol concert here. We recently held a concert with the Community Choir where we were joined by the children from the local Primary School choir which brought in an audience of nearly 200 and raised £800 for Claire House; a local charity. This has a very positive effect on our image as a community supporter. The various initiatives to provide soup and sandwich, bereavement lunches, Thursday coffee mornings, Monday café, Young At Heart Club all run by the church from the church Hall provide additional support to the vulnerable and lonely in the community helping to build our presence and God's work. Plus there are a number of children's activities in the hall helping to enhance the relationship with young families locally. The hall is also used by other "non - church" groups (Guides/Rainbows); keep fit; yoga; badminton; TWGuild; Art classes, community choir, Family events etc. The hall is often used by families for refreshments after a funeral helping to provide support to people in a time of need; these events are usually "staffed" by members of the church'.

'Some great examples of building projects, providing buildings accessible to and used by the community. People identify with church as theirs even if they don't come. Great not to have to set up a building each time we use it. With appropriate re - ordering and in good condition, can be attractive and practical facilities. Reverence and architecture and history resonates with people'.

'We are fortunate to have large spaces that allow us to serve the community in many different ways. Visitors using the facilities have expressed interest in the church by feeling comfortable as they make use of our spaces. Activities in the church and church centre help people to feel welcomed, loved and encounter God e.g. hundreds attend the Crib Service, a monthly lunch for the lonely. The different kinds of spaces allow us to respond to what people are coming for and what they need. We have missional communities in a hard to reach area, holding services in a local school building and a missional allotment, both meeting people where they are'.

'The location, profile and historic nature of the church make it iconic for the community and attract visitors'.

Q13 How best do you think we, the Diocese of Chester, should move forward with regard to allowing 'sacred spaces' to flourish, and so in turn play their part in enabling The Church to flourish?

- Summary

At total of 18 responses were received. Comments covered a range of topics. The most frequent, (particularly emphasised six times, with eight comments in total), was to change the permissions process to be more flexible with making alterations, simpler, quicker, less bureaucratic and time - consuming.

The second most frequent comment, (mentioned six times), was to be more missional, which overlapped with a need for more support from the Diocese in making buildings fit for mission, including assisting with their missional potential, managing building projects and securing the finance, (mentioned five times). This also links with the call for the permissions process to be more accommodating for making alterations to church buildings.

There was a call for the Diocese to take a more strategic approach to managing buildings, raised five times, including closure of buildings that are no longer fit for the mission God intended and investing in those that do, combined with sharing space more frequently, both ecumenically and with wider communities.

The following examples of comments are grouped into key themes that emerged -

- Changes to permissions process

'Be much more flexible in allowing churches to make alterations that encourage people to actively play a part in church life in a pleasant and welcoming place for worship. Provide help and advice for projects enabling a flourishing church. Shorten procedures and delays in getting approval for change'.



'Please improve the speed and efficiency of the faculty process. Become more accommodating during the process, recognising the practical use of the building for a worshipping community who give sacrificially to maintain and improve it. Encourage and support re - ordering and modernisation projects'.

'Respect, encourage and support congregations in altering their churches to suit all forms of worship and use. The faculty process should be simplified and streamlined to reduce timescales. Reports on plans are expensive, take too long and generally reveal nothing new. Architects and the DAC should be able to make decisions, unless the building is Grade 1, to reduce the power of outside bodies objecting. These frequently have no church base, have no alternative solutions and run up bills while offering nothing'.

'The Diocese needs to consider carefully the restrictions it imposes on churches, i.e. the faculty process. Its focus should be less about what can't be done rather providing an advisory service leading to approval, at speed and at low cost. The Diocese may consider itself to be exactly that, except the process does not lend itself to be so. It requires submission in a set format and then a response that usually consists of a number of questions and then further consideration before approval – a lengthy bureaucratic process at best. Two examples: When we were considering installation of a new heating system we visited a number of churches that had done so. At one we asked about the faculty process. The incumbent responded that he didn't apply for one on the basis that whatever the response it

would not be taken out! Our own experience with replacing the church pews – why a faculty should be required is a nonsense and serves no purpose. The fact that we have no faculty has made no difference. The fact that to replace chairs requires a retrospective faculty is all the more non - sensical. It's an illustration of a self - serving bureaucracy and is generally perceived negatively when it should be seen as a positive service. The Diocese needs to consider carefully how it can be so'.

'The diocese is too restrictive in its reluctance to embrace modern practices in resolving architectural problems and interior decoration'.

- More proactive in strategically thinking about building assets, including working ecumenically; more missional focus

'The diocesan faculty system is too long - winded and too slow to respond. Particularly for smaller churches with fewer people with experience to drive/develop buildings projects (repairs and developments) - How many clergy are drawn into managing the projects. So a central diocesan team of experts (architects/surveyors/project managers/fund - raisers/etc) would help. Also to include help with communication for mission/heritage displays, etc. Could the diocese be more supportive of development for mission rather than as guardians for conservation and heritage. There are also too many church spaces of all denominations. The diocese could be a voice and mediator for ecumenical sharing of use and reducing the overall number whilst retaining a sense of local identity'.

'Carefully assess each building - play up the very historical building (tours etc) , renovate well the buildings that are well located and can be renovated straightforwardly; those sapping resources that aren't significantly historical or well located - sell them or change use. In short use the building well or don't have it.'

'More multi - use of church buildings. Share buildings ecumenically. Close/mothball some churches. Churchyards should have environmental/green/recreational aspect.'

'By having a flexible and open approach and ensuring money goes where needed, eg pioneering and missional communities and not necessarily only into buildings. Removing unnecessary bureaucracy and hindrances that faculties and listed buildings can provide'.

'Being proactive in supporting churches to develop their sites to be more flexible and 'usable'. Making 'updating' church spaces easier and, where possible, removing restrictions and conditions which can increase the cost (and sometimes make any project too expensive)'.

'A reflection is that the Diocese focuses on the Church Building only, via the Quinquennial report. This tends to lead to action on the Church building, and our hall has been somewhat overlooked. So it would be good for the Quinquennial report to look at all the Church buildings in the future which are potentially available for Mission. That way we keep a more balanced outlook. Recently there has been more workshops with other Churches where good practice can be shared. The Diocese should continue to promote these so we can share good practice between Churches. Consideration of a "Church Health Audit" to see what we do well, and what we may not be seeing currently against the 5 marks of Mission. So thus balancing the focus on Buildings with the Focus on Mission. It is recognised that this is onerous for the smaller parishes, but should be available to bigger parishes in a more systematic way, perhaps as part of Archdeacons visitation?'.

'Supporting schemes that enable flexible use of church buildings, ideally including grants'.

'Our beautiful ancient building enables us to achieve our mission'.

'Draw people in'.

'Every 'sacred space' needs to pay for itself independent of congregational giving'

- More support to parishes (additional to comments above)

'Help with finance or in obtaining finance'.

'Pro - active advice on making spaces more useable, flexible and attractive'.

'Help people conduct time management surveys of their buildings - so max use made 24/7 of space we have'.

- Any other comments

This part of the Parish Survey gave the opportunity to raise any further issues or re - emphasise points made earlier.

'At a time, when for many, incomes are relatively static and inflation is increasing; it is becoming very difficult to encourage increased planned giving but the cost of repairs continues to climb. We are fortunate that we have received legacies which have enabled us to undertake some improvement work but for those churches where this is not happening then the prospect of maintaining their buildings must be a nightmare. Even simple things cost a huge amount (for example cleaning our church guttering was well over £3000 of which the bulk was for scaffolding). Given that our planned giving and general income just about meets the parish share we have very little left over for repairs; and to ask the congregation to come up with more money would in some cases be a step too far. As a warden I dread the day when we need to undertake a major repair, so far I have been fortunate but I do worry about this for the future'.

'Provide long awaited training to spread the good news in the community to anyone we meet'.

'Always hold the theology of 'the church as people' the driver for this. Also don't be afraid to ask is this building fit for purpose'.

'Buildings are incidental... it is the people who are important when building God's kingdom'.

'The faculty system is a nightmare'.

'Consider insurance for use of buildings by outside groups'.

9. Diocese of Chester Parish case studies



Case studies of church building projects have been gathered from across the Diocese, totalling 14. It seeks to rejoice in what we have and share the learning with others who may be considering a similar project. The impact of such projects has also been gathered to contribute to the research in this publication.

To read the full stories of case studies, please see the separate publication, **Appendix E: Case Studies: Building For God's Kingdom.**

For the purposes of this publication, a summary is provided below.

Q1 Why did you undertake your building project?

The following summary paraphrases the responses. Full answers are provided in the appendices.

- **To be 'church in the community'**, reach out to support, serve and connect with the whole community, making God visible through hospitality, welcome and generosity. Greater engagement with the local community, loving our neighbour as ourselves. A spirit of 'open doors' to share the Good News of Christ with the wider community, being more open during the week as a seven day ministry to all. Encouraging

increased use of the building by the community, groups and organisations. Enabling more ways of 'being church' for greater involvement in the community.

- **Better access for all, welcome and care**, being open, warm, well - lit, well equipped, better facilities and more flexible space, improved hospitality, fit for the purpose God intended as a 21st century church.
- **Better first impressions** of the church (exterior) to give a more positive welcome, raise the profile of church, being more visible, being more open and looking 'open for business' in order to change a negative perception.
- **Preserving the heritage**, as well as its 24/7 witness to the permanency of God.
- **Health and safety** reasons to make the building structurally safe and watertight so current services and activities can continue.
- **Better opportunity for fellowship** in the congregation.
- **Better operational running** of the church, such as better able to run services, better storage etc.
- **Making the church sustainable** both now and in the future.
- **Expand church youth work.**

Q2 What difference has the building project made to the church building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

Enhanced building

- Better condition of the building and its artistic and historic features
- Improved health and safety
- Improved visual impact of the building
- More accessible for all
- More welcoming space
- More family and schools - friendly space
- Improved internal space, facilities and comfort
- Addressed practical needs in the running of the church, such as storage, managing large services and events, pastoral support etc
- Improved long term maintenance

Enhanced use of building

- Building more regularly open throughout the week

- Wider diversity of people using the church building - members of the community, groups, organisations; also, greater range of ages, interests and needs
- Established or enhanced role in the locality
- Improved and/or increased role of hospitality and welcome
- Beginning new and different activities for the church, schools and wider communities; for example, concerts, events, café, art group, young family groups, social justice projects, fellowship gatherings, services, baptism and funeral gatherings, and so on
- More imaginative engagement with people; for example, through the use of art, Fresh Expressions of church, exhibitions, concerts
- More mid - week services held
- Growth in attendance at mid - week services
- Growth in attendance at events and activities, especially mid - week
- Growth in attendance by young families
- Growth in schools engagement
- New relationships developed or strengthened with community leaders, organisations and groups - a good witness and stronger links for joint working
- More bookings/use of the space by community groups, organisations and members of the community
- Raised profile of the church in local community, increased awareness locally of the significance of the historic building
- Better operational running of the building, such as accommodating larger services and events, children's activities, hospitality, suitable space for pastoral support etc
- More financially sustainable as a better used building increased regular income, such as from events

Impact on congregation

- Fellowship increased, for example, chatting over refreshments after the service
- Unity of spirit enhanced through closer teamwork and focused vision
- Raised confidence levels
- Greater faith (reliance, trust) in God

Q3 Did the project impact the spiritual and/or numerical growth of the church?

Spiritual

- Spirit of unity strengthened in congregations during the project through greater team working.
- Increased confidence to focus on new missional activities.
- Growing in discipleship through active service, increasing volunteer satisfaction and commitment.
- Raised enthusiasm and pride in the congregation, which led to more unity and a more positive outlook.
- Cultural change in the congregation accepting wider role of being more welcoming and outward-looking, confident and responsive in sharing the Good News.
- More creative freedom to express God's love in numerous ways; for example, hosting quiet days, events, art exhibitions.
- Drawing closer to God, increased faith in the congregation, trusting God more.

Numerical

- More people attending mid - week services.
- More people and wider range of people attending activities and events, especially older people and young families. Also wider range such as more visitors - families, shoppers, meeting place for events, wider ministry.
- More young families, increased attendance at Fresh Expressions aimed at families; for example, Café Church on Sunday and mid-week activities. Increase (for some, considerable increase) in young families on Sundays as well as during the week.
- Increased use by specific groups such as schools, weddings.
- Difficult to ascertain if project led to growth but our congregation is growing.
- No (or occasionally slight) growth in attendance at traditional Sunday services.
- Raised the profile of the church locally

Q4 How the project was financially resourced?

- Considerable and generous contributions from members of the congregation
- Legacies
- Grants - national and local
- Sale of property or other asset
- Donations from members of local communities, including special appeals such as 'sponsor a stone/slate'
- Fundraising events
- Friends scheme
- Church reserves
- In kind support from the local community (such as use of equipment or giving products for free)
- Loan

Q5 Learning points

Each case study was asked to reflect and respond to five learning questions in relation to their first-hand experience of their building project:

1. What went well?
2. What went less well?
3. What have you learnt that would be useful to share with others?
4. As a result of the learning gained during and after the project, have you now changed any aspects of your approach/work? Please explain.
5. General reflections

A summary of the responses to this question and collated full responses are given in the report, 'Case Studies: Buildings For God's Kingdom'.

10. Conclusions

10.1. Conclusions summary

The need for Places of Worship mattered in Jesus' day and continues for us today, as one of three spaces used for mission and ministry; complementing community spaces and private homes. In the Diocese of Chester, we have 348 church buildings, with an estimated 2 million visits to church services alone each year.

Church buildings can be valuable assets for empowering the gathered church as it collectively draws closer to God and creates space for those relational bonds to be strengthened; a visible landmark building of a Christian presence in the community; a place of connection and support; and, as research shows, one factor in people come to faith.

Capital investment in making church buildings more versatile, accessible and with facilities, often combined with making the building structurally safe and watertight, has made a positive difference for some of our churches. In a 2018 Parish Survey, 19 out of 20 churches said that investment had made a positive impact by one or more of the following, which is echoed in the case study report of 14 recent building projects in the Diocese. Common themes of positive impact include -

- Being more welcoming, comfortable and accessible for people.
- Opportunities to begin new ways of 'being church' and connecting with local communities.
- Better able to respond to needs of people, new activities, flexible to change to different uses of the space.
- Using the building more during the week and for a greater range of activities and services.
- Relationship-building is strengthened through better spaces to gather together as well as engaging with wider communities.

However, there are considerable challenges with managing and developing church buildings, including needing to raise significant levels of funding, fewer people attending Sunday services and, for some, inheriting a location and/or form of building that may not be most effective or easily changed today.

This research paper has shown there is a call from parishes for greater support with capital investment to repair and enhance them, yet a reoccurring theme is for this to be achieved in a focused and meaningful way. Parishes commented on the need for the overall approach to church buildings (capital projects and the use of space) to be more missional. Also, for the need for greater strategic planning in considering building assets.

In the Parish Survey 2018, thoughts were shared on the right way forward with thinking about church buildings, totalling 18 responses.

- The most frequent, (particularly emphasised six times, with eight comments in total), was to change the permissions process to be more flexible with making alterations, simpler, quicker, less bureaucratic and time - consuming.
- The second most frequent comment, (mentioned six times), was to be more missional, which overlapped with a need for more support from the Diocese in making buildings fit for mission, including assisting with their missional potential, managing building projects and securing the finance, (mentioned five times).
- There was a call for the Diocese to take a more strategic approach to managing buildings, raised five times, including closure of buildings that are no longer fit for the mission God intended and investing in those that do, combined with sharing space more frequently, both ecumenically and with wider communities.

In response to comments on the permissions process, Faculty Jurisdiction Rules have now been further reviewed to make them less bureaucratic. The revised Rules are intended to make the permissions process less onerous for those in parishes who have responsibility for church buildings, and to increase the efficiency of the faculty process. There will be a considerable increase in the number of List A and List B items (some works that previously needed faculty permission will now be List B, and some works that were List B will now be List A). The new rules are expected to come into force in April 2020.

Ecclesiastical Exemption means that for (open for worship) Church of England churches the Faculty Jurisdiction system replaces the requirement for (and

runs parallel to) Listed Building Consent from local authorities. It crucially means that the Church retains control over works taking place inside the buildings, but in order to maintain this privilege it must have parity with local authority permissions processes/scrutiny.

10.2 Key findings, with suggestions for consideration

Key finding 1 - The national focus on buildings makes it timely for our Diocese to also consider this issue

Church buildings have received far greater focus nationally over recent years, including, for the first time, the government commissioning a report on their sustainability.

Suggestion

For Diocesan central resources team. It is timely for the Diocese of Chester to explore church buildings in a more focused way, with resources to enable this to happen as part of mission action planning.

Key finding 2 - The three-fold use of physical places and spaces by Jesus and the early church still has great relevance for us today

These are 1. Public places of worship; 2. Community spaces (marketplaces and wilderness places) and 3. Private homes.

Suggestion

What is the right balance of these places and spaces today for ministry and mission? Is there need for a better balance? If so, what is right to let go of and take up? What is the relationship between the spaces as part of a blended ecology of church (inherited and pioneering ministries)? These and more questions are needed as part of ongoing discussion at all levels – parish, deanery and Diocese.

Key finding 3 - At least two million visitors welcomed in our Diocese!

It is a startling fact that in the Diocese of Chester, it is estimated nearly two million visits to 348 church buildings take place every year to attend church services alone! They are a significant space in local communities for spiritual, pastoral, social, cultural and physical wellbeing, and often are a significant heritage asset.

Suggestions

For parishes. Could reviewing the use of your church building (how often, for what? etc), help discern if the right balance of use is in place, encourage new ideas to develop, and/or help advocate the role of the church in its community?

For Diocesan central resources team. Exploring the frequency of the use of the building is not an area that has been explored centrally in the Church of England, as the focus has been on the number of people rather than number of visits. Counting number of visits, (repeat visitors and one-off visitors), is standard practice in the culture and heritage sector. It conveys how well used the building or venue is to gauge its value to people locally and wider. This may be something to explore further within the Diocese and nationally in the Church of England to advocate their role and significance.

Key finding 4 - Reflecting on the role of church buildings may assist shaping a vision for their right use, in line with the overarching vision for the church

The role of church buildings could be seen as a place for collective worship, a house of prayer and a resource for mission. They could be described as places of connection that create spaces for God to meet with people through:

- Prayer and reflection
- Encounter, learning and enrichment
- Fellowship, healing and support
- Celebration
- Respect and remembrance
- Being inspired and discovering

- Being rooted.

Suggestions for parishes

How do these roles of church buildings help you review and consider your vision for the church building?

If church buildings are one factor in people coming to faith, as shown in the *Talking Jesus* research, how are you intentionally praying for this happen and providing stepping stones for people to explore their faith journey further? See p12 for details.

What stories do you have worth sharing of God moving in people's lives through creating the right environment in the church building or hall? See pages 15-18. Please send to Email: emily.allen@chester.anglican.org. Subject: Stories worth sharing.

Key finding 5 – The impetus (nationally and locally) is for churches to be more people-focused and outward-looking, in which church buildings are one enabling role to achieve this by creating spaces where people connect in community with God and with one another.

A desire to have a 'lower-threshold' to entering the church building by being more accessible and welcoming, with more versatility inside for a greater range of uses is a key driving factor for many building improvement projects in the Diocese. Nationally, an emerging area is considering social entrepreneurialism; in our Diocese, the most common examples are community cafes but there is potential to explore this area further.

Suggestions

For Parishes. Could your building and/or land be used to social entrepreneurial activities that bless local people as well as provide not-for-profit income to invest back into the life of the church?

For Diocesan central resources team. Is social entrepreneurial potential for church buildings and/or land (church or glebe) something we want to invest in exploring further? If so, how can we learn from other Dioceses and build capacity to do so?

Key finding 6 - Capital investment has led to positive impact in most churches in the case studies and the parish survey, linked to first discerning a clear overarching vision first

The desire for people to grow closer to God, combined with loving service to communities, are the overarching reasons why churches invest in their buildings. This includes being a visible Christian presence, the desire to better engage with local communities, be more welcoming, accessible and fit for the purpose God intended in the 21st century. Also, ensuring church buildings can remain open and active by addressing safety concerns with the historic fabric of the building. Out of the five marks of mission, loving service was a strong motivating factor and impact of the projects, closely followed by teaching and nurturing people in their Christian faith.

Overall, most building projects from the case studies and parish survey have played a role in numerical and/or spiritual growth, as the building has helped facilitate greater and new uses and therefore more opportunity for relationship-building. Weekday services and activities was an area of growth. Discipleship growth for the congregation during the building project was also evident.

Suggestions

For parishes. Appropriate investment in church buildings and halls where there is a clear vision for mission and ministry seems a positive trajectory to continue where this is appropriate. For parishes, therefore, the need to discern an overarching Godly vision is essential as the first step; then step two is to discern how a building project may or may not be one aspect in enabling the overarching vision to become reality.

For Diocesan central resources team. The need for greater parish - level support in discerning the overarching Godly vision is required, as indicated in the parish survey and also from ongoing conversations with parishes in general. Without this, the vision for the building is likely to remain either unclear, which means no/slow progression happens; or the investment will be ineffective at making the anticipated difference to the life of the church and its impact locally.

For Diocesan central resources team. There may be benefit in further exploring how building projects and the use of sacred space on a day-to-day basis relate to missional principles, such as the Anglican Five Marks of Mission. And/or it could be exploring missional priority areas such as young generations, prayer,

discipleship and evangelism. To give examples, would there be benefit in this type of questioning to form part of the faculty process, Archdeacon Inspections, parish mission plans and so on?

Key finding 7 - Vast investment in capital works continues to be required

The very high financial costs of running and maintaining church buildings are stark. Nationally in the Church of England, the annual financial expenditure is 19%, which is second only to Parish Share.

Parishes are collectively seeing to raise funds totalling at least £20million for capital works for church buildings and hall across the Diocese.

Finance for capital works is largely raised from donations (congregational giving and individuals). Complementing this are grants, fundraising events and income generation. With declining congregation numbers, the pressure to raise significant funds from outside the congregation is ever increasing. Future financial investment from respondents to the parish survey varied, from typically £10,000 - £50,000, £100,000 - £250,000 and up to £10,000. Approximately 15% of respondents are seeking £500,000 - £1m.

Suggestions

For Diocesan central resources team. Ways to increase the capacity to support parishes with fundraising was strongly conveyed in the parish survey. Currently there is one full time Diocesan Church House role assisting with external fundraising amongst other areas of work. Further conversations are needed of the merits and drawbacks of different approaches to address this need for parish-level support, which may include increasing Diocesan central staff, ways to increase peer support, partnership working with other organisations and Dioceses, commissioning support from external organisations or freelancers, Diocesan grant bids and so on. It is important to consider other Diocesan work that may strengthen congregations to be more resilient as they prioritise joining in with God's plan to expand his kingdom on earth, for example, discipleship, fresh expressions and so on.

For parishes, deaneries, Diocesan – level. Although noting the pie-chart on expenditure does not fully reflect resources committed in their wider sense, it may be a useful starting point to open conversations if it was produced with

specific details for various levels; for example, parishes, deaneries, geographical missional areas and Diocesan level. Also, whether there is a right balance in financial expenditure is a discussion that needs continuing. This issue was raised several times in the parish survey. Also see point 8.4., which explores whether it is right to keep all buildings.

Key finding 8 - Repairs are a priority need for capital works

Repair and conservation work are a priority for capital expenditure on church buildings for respondents to the parish survey and often part of the case studies, with a second priority of making the building fit for the purpose God intended, including lighting, versatile space for mission and ministry and access. For church halls, a range of work is needed but this has a lower level of need (indicated by fewer responses). Hall work includes suitable facilities for young generations, kitchenette, W.C. and heating. Where a church has both building assets, repairs dominate the work needed, followed by environmentally friendly/energy efficiency work and audio/visual.

Suggestion

For Diocesan central resources team. The need for funding for the repair and conservation of the fabric of the building and its features remains essential to ensure sacred spaces continue to be used, along with their wider improvements to ensure their use can be maximised. Advocacy for funding for repairs as well as improvements is needed.

Key finding 9 - Church buildings both inhibit and enhance the growth of God's kingdom

A summary of comments is given below from the parish survey.

Key finding 9a). Inhibiting. The most frequent comment was a negative first impression for those not familiar with entering them - they are spaces that can be intimidating, not welcoming, not comfortable, nor accessible. This was closely followed by too great an emphasis on buildings rather than people in terms of financial investment, time and church buildings having a 'heritage' focus. Thirdly, respondents mentioned some church buildings have unsuitable space for

mission and ministry, which inhibit their use, especially for group activities and more contemporary forms of worship.

Key finding 9b). Enhancing. The most frequent response was around their role in helping people meet with God. This was closely followed by loving service to the community. Further factors were a visible sign of God's presence in the community and one factor in creating a positive church experience.

Suggestions

For parishes. This means that investing in buildings to make them more inviting and welcoming and useable matters, as well as preserving the fabric of church buildings as an important visible sign of God's presence and maintaining a useable space. Consideration of opening church buildings more during the week may be of benefit to further explore.

For Diocesan central resources team. Although noting comment above, there was no indication from the parish survey to preserve all church buildings at any cost. On the contrary, it was commented several times that we could take a more strategic approach and be braver when considering appropriate closures.

Key finding 10 - Future direction for sacred space

In response to how we, the Diocese of Chester, should move forward to allow 'sacred spaces' to flourish, and so in turn play their part in enabling The Church to flourish, parish survey respondents covered a range of topics. The most frequent was to –

Key finding 10a). Change the permissions process to be more flexible with making alterations, simpler, quicker, less bureaucratic and time - consuming, with some calling for more decisions to be made within the Church of England (Diocese and/or parish level) for buildings that are seeking minor changes or are not highly listed.

Suggestions

For Diocesan central resources team. Ongoing work to continue by the DAC to raise items with the national church that may simplify the permissions process. Also, opportunities for the DAC to deliver training on the faculty process.

Key finding 10b). The second most frequent comment was to be more missional. There was a call to be more balanced throughout the work of the Diocese, including priorities for discussions and strategic work, gaining approvals for change, financial investment (missional work, church halls as well as church buildings), and capacity building for parishes.

Suggestions

For Diocesan central resources team. See point 4 on need for greater capacity to support parishes discerning an overarching Godly vision, as this is foundational to all other work.

Key finding 10c). This was closely followed by the need for more capacity at Diocesan level with buildings, including their missional potential, managing building projects and securing the finance.

Suggestions

For parishes and deaneries. Exploring further ways to increase the capacity of parishes and pool resources could take many forms. As examples, at low – level it could be mentoring/peer support between parishes, reviewing shared administrative support and so on.

For Diocesan central resources team. Ongoing support with advice on access, understanding local communities, significance of the church buildings, fundraising and project management. Also see point 4 re. early support for parishes in vision work.

Key finding 10d). The Diocese taking a more strategic approach to managing buildings was also raised as many times as capacity building, including closure of buildings that are no longer fit for the mission God intended and investing in those that do, combined with sharing space more frequently, both ecumenically and with the wider community.

Suggestions

For Diocesan central resources team. Presently, our deaneries are support units rather than planning units. Bishop Peter asked for comments on the role of deaneries in his 2018 discussion paper, *Supporting and Developing Missional Communities: A Contribution to Discussion*. A more strategic view of building

assets could be the type of work a deanery could explore if their role changed (or smaller cluster of churches).

This could lead to place-based strategies developed for areas such as towns or at deanery level, working ecumenically to discern the best Christian witness and service. The role of buildings could be one aspect within this.

Place-based strategies need an outward-looking approach to consider how the church relates to local communities. Collaborating with local authorities to raise the profile of churches and identify opportunities for partnership working may also be beneficial. Discussions are needed on the best way to take this forward. For example, at what level should these discussions take place, by whom, how and so on.

It may be beneficial to look further at new missional opportunities; for example, new housing developments and how this affects current churches and their buildings.

11. Where we go from here

The first step is to share the findings from this report at the Diocesan meetings of the Mission and Pastoral Committee for each archdeaconry (MAMPC and CAMPC) and at Diocesan Synod, as well as uploading to the website. One suggestion is whether there is merit establishing a forum(s) on church buildings and fundraising to share thoughts and offer practical support to a greater number of churches. Comments are very welcome on this paper. Email emily.allen@chester.anglican.org

Closing prayer

May our sacred spaces be places that host stories worth sharing of what God has done in people's lives. May they be relational spaces, building connections with God and with one another as conversations go deeper and our awareness of his presence grows. May our buildings be beacons of light in our communities, places that people are drawn to and find they are houses of peace. And as God in his loving-kindness continually calls people to himself, may our spaces be a clear and tangible message of 'home' to the ever-widening family of God. Built for His Glory, may we discover afresh the full depth of this meaning in each of our localities for such a time as this. In the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Supporting documents

Appendix A	Theological Reflections on Sacred Spaces
Appendix B	National Context on Church Buildings
Appendix C	Diocese of Chester Statistics
Appendix D	Parish Survey 2018 full responses
Appendix E	Case Study Report: Buildings for God's Kingdom

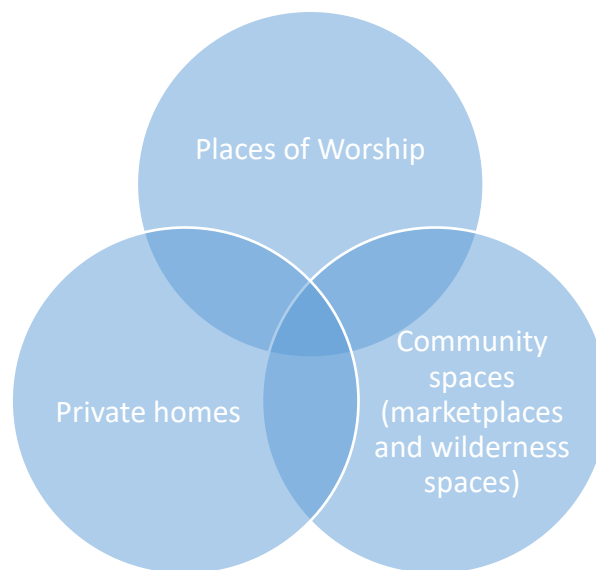
Written by Emily Allen, Church Buildings Missioner, Diocese of Chester, October 2019, updated April 2021

Appendix A

Theological Reflections on Sacred Spaces

1. Jesus and the early church, and what this means today

In scripture, Jesus and the early church make use of three different types of physical space in which to live out God's calling in their lives - their mission and ministry. The three spaces are:



Below is a small selection from many examples that show how all three different spaces were essential and mutually beneficial -

Places of Worship

'Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret'. (John 18:19 – 20)

Public 'on the streets'/community spaces

'When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them...' (Matthew 5:1)

¹⁶ 'While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and also in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there'. (Acts 17:17)

Private homes

'And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved'. (Acts 2:46 – 47)

It is sometimes mistakenly said that Jesus and the early church only met in private homes before heading out for missional work in the countryside and marketplaces. As can be seen from this small number of scriptural references, places of worship also matter. They are God's, built for his glory, open to all (publicly accessible) who hear his call to respond to his grace. Every person, for example, is freely available to attend a church service to hear the Word of God and see it in action.

An increasing number of churches are open outside service times for people to drop by for prayer or quiet reflection, benefit from provision such as a community café, foodbank or group activity, or explore the heritage.



Overall, in considering the Church of England's use of the three different types of spaces, it could be said that establishing and maintaining places of worship (church buildings and halls) has been heavily prioritised, despite considerable challenges. There have been less (although varying) levels of emphasis on nurturing Christian community, discipleship and mission in our homes. There seems even less presence of the church in community spaces, either where people naturally gather, (the modern-day physical or online 'marketplaces'), and/or the wilderness places where those on the margins of society often dwell.

Overnight, however, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21 shifted the balance of spaces, with church buildings forced to closed during national lockdowns, except mainly for small-scale funeral services and eventually some opened for private prayer as the first stage of the easing of restrictions. The forced closure and urgency to move to a digital or other platform, (as gatherings were prevented through social distancing restrictions), created the opportunity to reflect on what is the right balance of places and spaces for effective ministry and mission? *Where* are people seeking? *What* are people seeking or missing in the early stages of the pandemic and now in the recovery phase over 12 months later? Do views differ between members/regulars of the church and non-members?

On the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic instigated a dramatic increase in engagement beyond the church walls, which has been a wonderful opportunity, including online streamed services, missional engagement in neighbourhoods and delivering food parcels. Yet on the other hand, the impact of social isolation, loneliness and poor mental health have come to the fore, showing the negative impact of and individualist culture. National research has shown this has led to an increased appreciation of spaces for gathered worship and social interaction, as well as spaces for prayer, reflection or support as more people experience bereavement, loss, and/or poor mental wellbeing.

In particular, the report, [Churches, COVID-19 and Community: experiences, needs and supporting recovery](#) by the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, University of York, March 2021, shows that churches and their buildings have provided COVID-hit communities with crucial support in social care; well-being (in mind, body and spirit), place-making and heritage; and support for people suffering grief and loss. The report includes Section 2.2.1: 'Church buildings: spirituality, individual wellbeing, and worship', (p55-65). Findings include:

- 45%, nearly 1 in 2, non-members of the church stated during the pandemic they might have wanted to come to a church building to pray or leave a prayer request
- 41% said light a candle
- Most of the other reasons why non-members wanted to come to church buildings connected with a prayerful ambience:
 - 75% quiet reflection
 - 68% peaceful space
 - 50% remembering someone who has died
 - 40% new perspective.

This means the desire for prayer, reflection and spirituality goes far beyond the church congregation, and they are looking to church buildings as spaces to help facilitate that desire.

The focus of this paper is to explore the first of the three spaces initially mentioned - public places of worship; primarily church buildings, with some reference to church halls. This is because there are 348 church buildings in our Diocese, with an estimated nearly two million* visits each year in our Diocese to attend church services alone. However, this fact alone raises a significant question:

What is the right balance of places and spaces for more people to hear the Good News of Christ and grow in their faith? What is right to cherish and use more effectively, and what is right to let go of in order to embrace something new?

This research paper may be one facet in beginning to explore that question further.

2. Why do places and spaces matter? A theological reflection



'*The Report of the Church Buildings Review Group*¹', published in January 2016, led by the Right Reverend John Inge, Bishop of Worcester, includes a theological reflection of places and spaces. In exploring the role of church buildings, the report states:

*'The primary purpose of churches is and should remain the worship of Almighty God, to be houses of prayer. But that can and needs to be sensitively combined with service to the community. The imaginative adaption of church buildings for community use in many areas is breathing new life into them.'*²

The report argues that this fulfils God's Law, which summarises the Ten Commandments as loving the Lord with all our hearts, mind and strength (worship) and loving our neighbours as ourselves (service), based on Mark 12: 29 - 31.

In terms of the right focus on places and spaces, the report discusses how The Bible is based on the relationship between God, people and place. Therefore, places matter. They are a revelation of God; that he moved in this place. In the Old Testament, for example, there are many instances of the Hebrews using stones to mark the spot where God intervened. This concept continued down the centuries to the founding of churches, particularly the early church, which were often built on the site of visions, miracles and martyrs.

The report makes the point that it is not that buildings or spaces themselves that are holy; simply, that they create space that is set apart as a reminder of who God is and what he has done. It is a way of remembering, the need to set aside the busyness life, to

¹ The Report of the Church Buildings Review Group, p1 – GS 2008

² Ibid (in the same place)

spiritually 'look up' and be still to the truth of the sovereignty of God. As the report states,

*'Our attitude to cathedrals and churches should be a bit like our attitude to Sundays. It's not that Sundays and churches are nearer to God or more excellent: they are fractions, set apart to represent the truth that all time and space are God's. The part is consecrated, not instead of the whole, but on behalf of the whole.'*³

Church buildings, therefore, not only enable members of the body of Christ to gather in a sufficiently large enough space, but they encourage a deeper spiritual journey of pressing the 'pause' button on the routine of life to consider The One who gives and sustains life.

In 'Church Buildings for People', Nigel Walter argues that church buildings are active partners in creating space where the family of God grows together in closeness to God and one another, for he writes,

*'Belonging to a church is the means by which we partake in God's narrative, which is always communal. Church buildings are the way in which we take part in God's communal narrative in a particular place'.*⁴

As God is relational, so too is the church, as we are designed to live our lives in community. The need for spaces that strengthen these relational bonds and provide a sense of rootedness, therefore, is an essential factor in how we use and adapt church buildings.



³ Ibid, p25

⁴ *Church Buildings for People: Reimagining Church Buildings as Nourishing Places*, Nigel Walter, Grove Books, 2014

3. Role of sacred space, including church buildings

Sacred spaces could be viewed as places that we intentionally use for the glory of God, whether church buildings, halls or temporarily using community space such as halls and cafes.

Well maintained and enhanced church buildings are a strong witness that the Christian faith is very much alive and making a positive difference in our communities - our buildings 'speak'. They are our place for collective worship, a house of prayer and a resource for mission.

Our church buildings are where our worshipping communities come together- they are a sacred place where they participate in doing God's work and where they are equipped and strengthened to live put their faith in their home, at work and in their communities for the remaining six days a week.

Our buildings are a House of Prayer. A growing number are open for visitors to offer a space for prayer and quiet reflection. They are also a gathering place for collective prayer for our brothers and sisters in Christ, our communities, our nation and the world.

Church buildings are a visible Christian presence on our high streets and in our villages. Our buildings are a distinctive part of the skyline and character of the area, encapsulating personal and community stories through the generations. They are instantly recognisable, acting as a 24/7 noticeboard of a Christian presence. This could be described as 'evangelism in stone', as our church buildings are a witness to the permanency of God, and in turn, the resilience of the body of Christ through changing times.



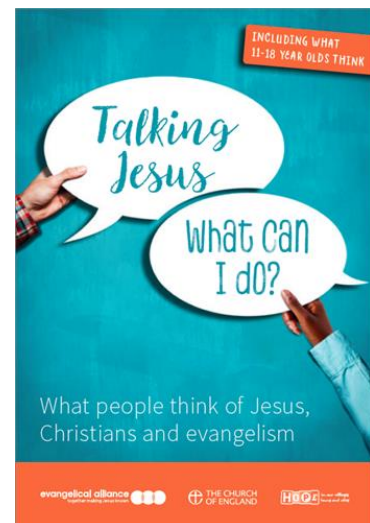
The symbolism of ‘permanency’ in our buildings conveys a further significant message to local people and stakeholder organisations - the longevity of the commitment of churches to local communities. Over the years, numerous community initiatives and spaces have ceased, but churches and the spaces they provide continue in the life of villages, towns and cities as a place of connection, support, fellowship, social action, enrichment of life and marking major life and community events. In some areas, churches are the only, or one of few, public spaces remaining open and active for all. In the paper, *Churches and Faith Buildings: Realising the Potential*⁵, published in 2009 by a working group of officials from the government and Church of England, it states,

‘Faith communities bring distinctive resources to local communities, supporting and empowering individuals, embracing a rich diversity of experience, skills and people motivated to change their communities for the better. Typically deep rooted, they are there ‘for the long term’, having unusual qualities of resilience and commitment, particularly in deprived areas.’⁶

Research shows sacred spaces are one conduit to enable people to encounter Christ. In the ComRes research report, *Talking Jesus: Perceptions of Jesus, Christians and evangelism (adults)*, the research includes the main reasons, or factors, why people become a Christian.

The second most important factor (out of 18) is ‘Attending a church service(s) other than a wedding or funeral’ (28%). This shows the importance of buildings as places of collective learning and worship in order to draw people closer to God.

‘Visiting/praying in open churches (i.e. not in a church service)’ scored 4%, which although initially seems of low significance, is only slightly less than attending an introductory Christian study course, which is at 5%.



⁵ Churches and Faith Buildings: Realising the Potential, 2009

⁶ Ibid, p3

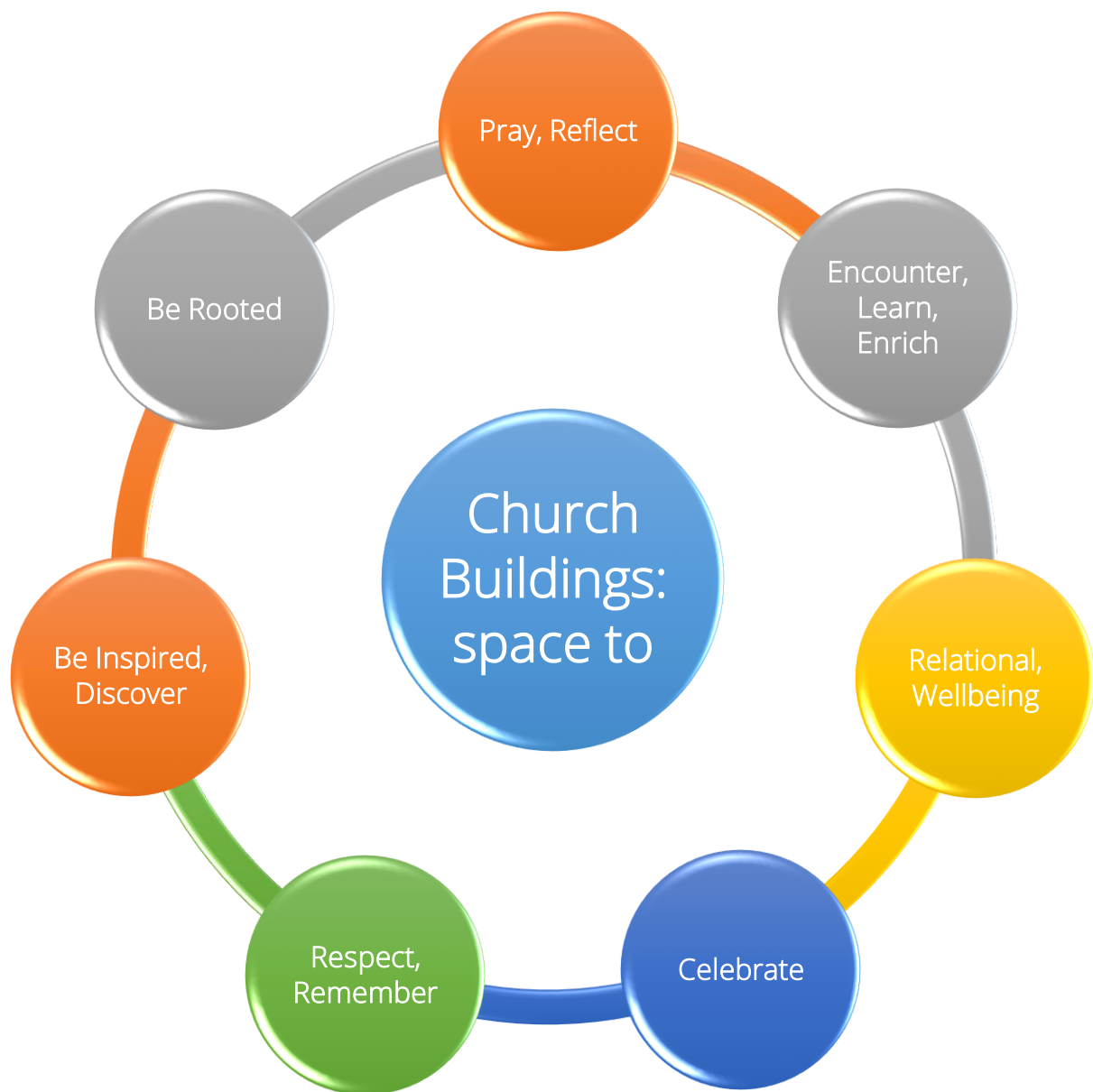
In the research report, *'Talking Jesus: Perceptions of Jesus, Christians and Evangelism (11 - 18 year olds)'*, young people stated the joint - 4th reason for becoming a Christian is 'Visiting a Church Building' (13%). This equates to about one in every seven young people. It tied with 'Going to a Church wedding, funeral, Christening, Baptism or Confirmation' and 'A Youth Group'.

This means that for young people, visiting a church building has a greater influence on becoming a Christian than a 'Faith activity in school e.g. assembly' (9%), 'Church based youth service' (8%), or 'Youth camp or summer club' (4%)

The research therefore shows that church buildings play a significant role in young people and adults coming to faith.

The following diagram explores the foundational role of church buildings. These are the qualities imbued within them for centuries. The way the roles are described deliberately use a 'non church' language to widen the range of people who can join the conversation; also to provide a different lens in which to consider them. It may be helpful to consider whether your church building inhibits or enhances each of their foundational roles.

One way of seeing the role of church buildings is reflected in the following diagram, of which an explanation follows.



1. **Pray, Reflect** – A House of Prayer. Praying together as a Christian community, with people, for people and for the world. Open for all (church building and churchyard) as a sacred space to be still, calm and reflect on life in the sacred ambience as a House of Prayer; a place for vigils at times of great need; facilitating Christian spiritual awareness.
2. **Encounter, Learn, Enrich** - Growing personally and as a Christian community in our understanding of and closeness to God through proclaiming the Good News afresh and maintaining a Christian presence locally. This becomes a foundation for a positive sense of identity, value, purpose and belonging. Volunteering enhances personal development and fellowship.
3. **Relational, wellbeing** - Hub of community life, bringing people together, supporting and caring, reducing social isolation by building friendships; a place of refuge and sanctuary; equipping people to deal with life's challenges through drawing closer to God; helping create a more just world through prayer, support, encouragement, practical help and social action.
4. **Celebrate** - Rejoicing and thankfulness in God's blessings through worship and fellowship; celebrating major life events of baptisms (christenings), weddings and blessings; celebrating special times and events in local and national life, held in often the largest public building for villages and some towns.
5. **Respect, Remember** - An open door for all to enter; a space for conversations and action that transform injustices. A place of remembrance, respect and honour to God, people's lives, significant events (past, present and future) and creation, including commemorative services, memorials, funerals, prayers and projects or initiatives.
6. **Be Inspired, Discover** – Inspiring, creative, and uplifting space with a special ambience, often historic, with great acoustics. Treasure-houses, built to the glory of God and so often amongst the finest architecture for an area; increasingly open for visitors, part of heritage and cultural tourism and local life.
7. **Be Rooted** - Symbolising the permanence of God and longevity of commitment to local communities; encapsulating stories of people's lives, often in landmark buildings, creating a sense of rootedness of place and identity on a personal, local and national level; site of pilgrimage, preserving historical/cultural research and artefacts, custodians of churchyards.

4. Developing a vision for sacred space

To realise the potential of sacred space, we first need to discern God's vision for the locality, opening our hearts to what is on the heart of God. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, succinctly summaries this discernment of mission in his presidential address at General Synod in 2003, by saying,

'Mission, it's been said, is finding out what God is doing and joining in'.⁷

Once a Godly vision is discerned, then is the right time to consider how this relates to the church building by discerning what we need *from* our buildings to fulfil this Godly vision, rather than focusing on what we want to do *to* them.

In this way the role of church buildings could be seen as creating the right environment for people to be more open in spirit, heart and mind, (a clear straight path, a conduit), for God to freely work in people's lives.

It may help by asking such questions as - What is 'the wilderness' in your locality? What's on God's heart? How can our buildings remove barriers and build bridges to people encountering Christ?

'A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God'.

Isaiah 40:3

⁷ <http://aoc2013.brix.fatbeehive.com/articles.php/1826/archbishops-presidential-address-general-synod-york-july-2003>

5. Stories worth sharing

Here are some stories worth sharing that demonstrate how sacred spaces such as church buildings are one conduit to help people encounter the living God. They can help create the right environment, (a sacred, uplifting, open and safe space), in which stories are created of God moving in people's lives. These examples, however, also show another dimension that is needed – intentionality to help people explore their Christian faith journey further.

Story 1

'As the designated 'taxi driver' for the morning, a granddad came into a Church Centre with his granddaughter and great – granddaughter to drop them off for the Monday morning toddler group. As it wasn't worth driving home to return an hour later, he decided to wait in the large, open-plan lobby area. I welcomed him and asked why he was here this morning. He asked if I was from the church and if I was 'religious?' By this, I guessed he meant, 'Do you know something about God?', so I said 'yes'. He then shared how he had been through two near - death experiences, during one of which he had met with God, and God had said to him, 'You are mine.' This had happened over fifty years ago. I fed back to him that he had met with the living God and God was saying that he had chosen him. Also, that God was waiting for a response to say yes, as he doesn't over-rule our free will. I then shared a little of what God had done in my life, to show God's good character and it's safe and right to invite him in. I suggested he may like to consider coming to church and looking for an Introductory Christian course such as Alpha, saying it was something to think about, to which he said 'Yes, it is something to think about'. I walked away amazed at what had happened; I'd only gone over to say hello and see if he needed any assistance! I wondered if he'd ever shared his story before? And if he had been waiting fifty years for someone to help him make sense of it and what to do next? I'm not some great evangelist, but we're all called to share the reason for the hope we have inside. It's simply seeing the God - moments and sharing who God is and what he's done for us, whenever and wherever the conversation begins.'

Creating suitable spaces for people to open up and share stories, build relationships and have meaningful conversations is so important. The Church Centre lobby area in this case was at the St Mary's Handbridge (Chester) new Church Centre, which opened in 2018. It has a wonderful lobby area for welcome and refreshments as people arrive or depart for their various activities. Important too is being intentional when those 'God moments' arise in an ordinary and unassuming way, meeting people one by one.

Story 2

'At a church prayer meeting, there was opportunity to give thanks to God and encourage one another with such stories. Paul told us about last weekend. He had been prompted by God to go into the streets of Chester and pray for people that God directed him to. He imagined this would be on the streets itself, but was led to go into St Peter's Church, (which is open every day), and just sit there and pray. So he did. Not long after, a woman sat down in a seat nearby. Paul noticed she was crying. He offered to pray for her and she said yes, and he prayed for healing and deliverance. She then left. About ten minutes later, a man came in and sat down in exactly the same seat as the woman. He also looked troubled. Paul offered prayer for healing too. The man left. Paul then went home to rest from a serious prayer time, having been a vessel for God to offer his healing grace.'

When I heard this story, it struck me that we simply do not know how many people are seeking God in troubled times, even if the people involved cannot articulate or are fully aware of whom they seek. Two people deliberately entered a church building to sit and reflect, somehow knowing that this sacred space was a beacon, a conduit, to finding the only true and lasting answer to peace. To make this happen, several things were needed. Firstly, the church building needed to be visible, so people could find it. Secondly, it needed to be open at a time when people were around. Thirdly, it needed to have space where people were welcome to simply come, sit, reflect, pray or be prayed for. Fourthly, it needed a Christian, whether from the church or from another, to intentionally seek or be aware of people that are seeking God and offer prayer and guidance as God directs.

Story 3

'A woman attended a funeral in a church building; a place she rarely, if ever, entered. As she sat down, her thoughts were solely regarding the funeral. However, afterwards walking back through the streets of the town, her mind raced with questions she had never considered, such as - What is the purpose of my life? Is there a God? Why am I here? Is life, is my life, meaningless? The woman was suddenly aware of a small group of young people, who asked if she was okay and if she would like prayer. To her own surprise, she said yes. It was then that the spiritual and emotional floodgates opened as the woman heard about the life - transforming love of God the Father through Jesus Christ; that in Him she had a purpose, was of immense value and could be in a loving relationship with God and so find true inner peace. In that very moment, she gave her life to Christ. It was also a special day for the young people, as they had just begun to pray in the streets, believing the God had called them to be more missional. They were totally depending on God to direct them to who He was calling to Himself, and so were led to this woman. It was quite a day for all!'

Without a church building that offers space to think, a caring and dignified place to mark such occasions as funerals and a public space to hear the Word of God, the person may never have stopped long enough to look deeper at her life.

Without the young people being intentional and dependent on God to lead them to her, the woman may have continued walking with her mind overburdened by questions but no hope of answers.

I hope these stories have made you think about your own church building(s) and halls/centres and their role in God's plan to bring his kingdom to earth as it is in heaven. It may also have stimulated thought about the three-fold use of places and spaces in Jesus' day and what this means for us today in our ministry and mission.

Appendix B

National Context on Church Buildings

1. Research on church buildings

The Church Buildings Council at the Church of England state,

'The Church of England is the largest steward of England's built heritage through its network of 16,000 parish churches. Among these are 45% of England's grade I listed buildings, showing just how special these buildings are'.¹

Within the national Church of England and at government level, there is increasing focus on church buildings to seek to understand the issues and identify the best ways forward in their sustainable use and management.

The overall trajectory in the Church of England is one of reducing congregations that lack cross - generational representation, which affects volunteer and financial capacity. (Source, Statistics for Mission, Research and Statistics Department, Church of England). When combined with the context of challenging times to secure public and private funding, and vast costs of repairs and improvements to what are often historic buildings, the issue has become a far higher priority in our time to address.

The 'spotlight' on church buildings is evidenced in the frequency of high-level research reports over the last few years. There is increasing focus on the sustainable use and management of church buildings. This includes, for the first time, the government commissioning the Taylor Review report (2017) and launching a subsequent pilot scheme (2018-2020) based on its recommendations. Also, the government-commissioned Kruger report, *Levelling Up Our Communities*, 2020, which explicitly states the value of faith communities during the COVID pandemic.

Research includes the following reports:

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¹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/governments-english-churches-and-cathedrals-sustainability-review-welcomed>.

- **2021, [Church in Action 2020/21: A survey of churches' community responses to the pandemic](#)**, by the Church of England, April 2021
- **2021, [Churches, COVID-19 and Community: experiences, needs and supporting recovery](#)**. By the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, University of York, March 2021. [Executive Summary and Full report available](#).
- **2020, [Keeping the Faith: Partnerships between faith groups and local authorities during and beyond the pandemic. A report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Faith & Society](#)**, Nov 2020
- **2020, [The House of Good report: the economic and social value of church buildings in the UK](#)**, commissioned by National Churches Trust, October 2020
- ***2020, [Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant. A report for government by Danny Kruger MP](#)**, September 2020
- **2020, [The GRA:CE Project Report by Church Urban Fund](#)**. Growing Good: Growth, Social Action and Discipleship, by Theos and Church Urban Fund.
- ***2020, [Evaluation of the Taylor Review Pilot: Sept 2018 - March 2020](#)**, managed by Historic England on behalf of the government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Diocese of Chester is participating in the pilot, based on recommendations in the report.² Published Oct 2020.
- **2018, [Suggested Template for a Diocesan Strategic Review of Church Buildings as part of Mission Planning](#)**, published by the Church Buildings Council (CBC), Church of England, June 2018.³
- ***2017, [Taylor Review: Sustainability of Church Buildings and Cathedrals](#)**, published December 2017, commissioned by the government, Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).⁴
- **2016, [Church Buildings Review](#)**, published January 2016, commissioned by the Church Commissioners and the Archbishop's Council, Church of England.⁵

(*Government-commissioned report)

² <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/places-of-worship/churches-sustainability-review/>

³ <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/diocesan-resources/strategic-planning-church-buildings>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/english-churches-and-cathedrals-sustainability-review>

⁵ http://www.hrballiance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/church_buildings_review_report_2015.pdf

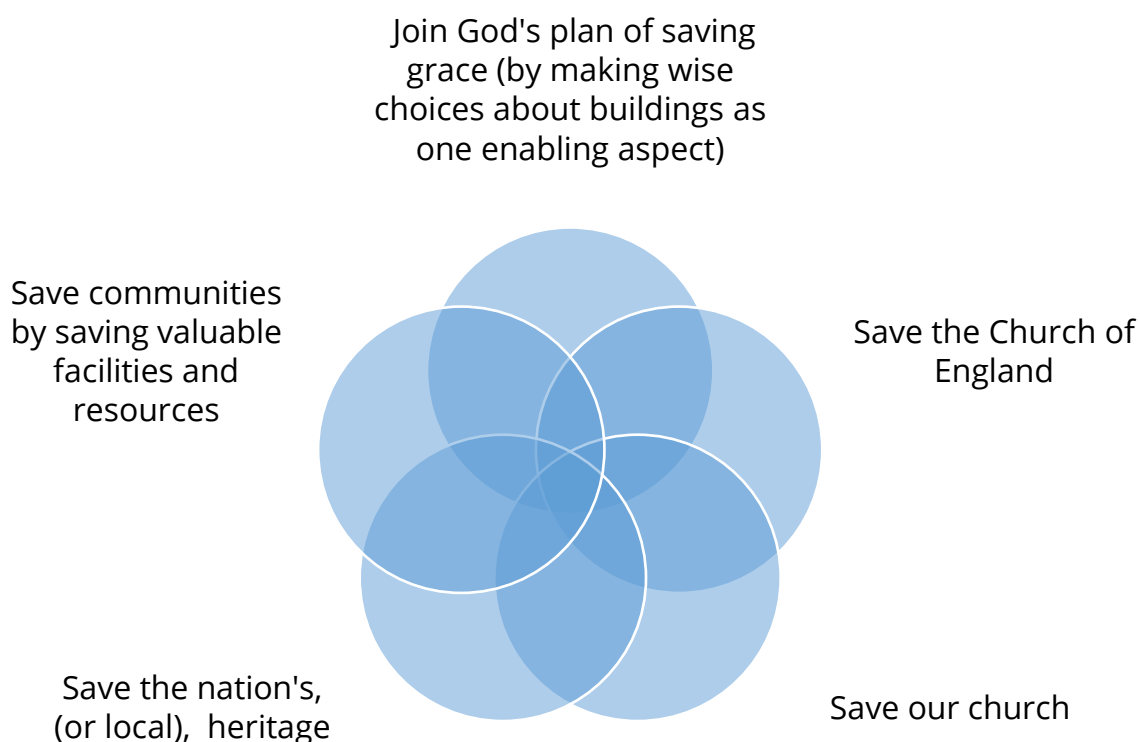
A comprehensive list of publications that date from 2000 to the current date, (with hyperlinks to the reports), is available from the [Historic Religious Buildings Alliance](#).⁶

2. Different organisations' interest in the sustainability of church buildings

There are different reasons why a variety of organisations and individuals have prioritised the need to address the sustainability of church buildings.

If it was written as a sentence to complete, it may be as follows –

'We need to find right solutions to the sustainability of church buildings because it is urgent and important to...



It is essential to acknowledge the varying core reasons why church buildings matter, so there is an understanding of where people are coming from.

To only focus on areas of common ground risks misunderstandings and ineffective partnership working; whereas exploring both the wider context *and* areas of common ground increases the likelihood of honest and open discussions with different interested groups, including Christian mission and ministry, heritage and community sectors.

⁶ <http://www.hrballiance.org.uk/resources/policy-documents-etc/general-repository/>

It may also bring into sharper focus the driver for change within an individual church and/or wider geographical area to aid meaningful discussions on the right way forward and help set priorities.

3. Priorities emerging from research

The main commonalities in national research may be expressed as the need for churches to be:

- **More focused on engaging communities** and working with them to use church buildings for a variety of relevant and appropriate uses.
- **Further increasing partnership-working**, especially the use and maintenance of church buildings, including exploring new ways of working, for example, with volunteers and community or Christian organisations.
- **Taking a more strategic approach** in managing and maintaining church building assets; for example, developing a 'Diocesan Buildings Strategy' or a strategic approach to buildings within the context of an overarching Diocesan, Mission or Deanery Plan. For example, see footnote 11 for a template produced by the Church Buildings Council at the Church of England.
- **Considering new approaches, including taking a more social entrepreneurial approach** in the use of church buildings and land (church and/or glebe). The most common example is a community café in a church building, but new ideas are ever-emerging⁷. As one example, the report, '*Building Community: Local church responses to the housing crisis*',⁸ published in April 2019, explores different ways that churches, supported by local

⁷ To give two examples of research - *The faith sector, the state and the market: Entrepreneurship within new forms of Christian social action*, People, Place and Policy, 9 (2), 110-122, 16th July 2015, <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/the-faith-sector-the-state-and-the-market-entrepreneurship-within-new-forms-of-christian-social-action/>. Also, *Social enterprise and rural places of worship in England*, a research report by Germinate (Arthur Rank Centre) and Plunkett Foundation, published March 2017, https://plunkett.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/places_of_worship_and_social_enterprise_final_report.pdf

⁸ *Building Community: Local church responses to the housing crisis*, Miriam Brittenden and Tom Sefton with Alice Braybrook, The Centre for Theology and Community in partnership with the Church of England, April 2019

authorities, are releasing surplus land for affordable housing, and/or using their buildings to provide support for people in need. This includes examples of both selling land/buildings for new use such as affordable housing, and also retaining land/buildings in church/Diocesan ownership for a new use that also has a long-term income generation stream.

- **Changing the legislative framework** governing the use and management of church buildings to make it simpler and more flexible to local situations.
- **Increasing the capacity**, numbers and range of volunteers engaged with caring for church buildings.
- **Increasing financial resources** and removing barriers to accessing funding.

To summarise the direction of travel, it is for the Church to be more 'people' focused rather than concerned with 'preserving the institution', more outward - looking and responsive to be more sustainable.

From a government, community or heritage perspective, this outward-looking approach may be described as seeking to ensure communities are more positive and resilient. Therefore, the concept of churches as 'community hubs' that enhance spiritual, social, cultural and physical wellbeing is welcomed. Also, that the nation's heritage is not lost, as more people engage with and use church buildings, and, in turn, value them, so more likely to contribute (such as giving volunteer time and/or finance) to ensure they are maintained and remain a community and heritage resource in their locality.

From a Christian perspective, this outward-looking approach may be seen as prioritising the *Missio Dei* - a Latin Christian theological term that means the 'mission of God'. This is explained in '*Mission-shaped Church*', published in 2004, which writes,

"The Church is both the fruit of God's mission – those whom he has redeemed, and the agent of mission – the community through whom he acts for the world's redemption. 'The mission of the Church is the gift of participating through the Holy Spirit in the Son's mission from the Father to the world.'"⁹

It goes on to quote Tim Dearborn, who succinctly summarise it as,

⁹ *Mission - Shaped Church*, a report from the working group of the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council, Church House Publishing, 2004, p85.

'It is not the Church of God that has a mission to the world, but the God of mission who has a Church in the world.'¹⁰

It calls for all we do as church to be shaped on Jesus' principles. To give two examples of these principles –

The Anglican Five Marks of Mission are:

1. 'To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'.¹¹

A second example is the discipleship resource, *Jesus Shaped People*, which defines Jesus' principles, which the church should also prioritise as his followers. These are 1. People (especially those who are marginalised); 2. Teaching about the kingdom of God; 3. Team building (unity, discipleship); 4. Prayer; and 5. Prophetic challenge in today's world.¹²

In whatever way the motivation for being more 'outward-focused' is interpreted, national research on church buildings suggests this may include opening them more often during the week; engaging more effectively with communities by beginning or hosting relevant projects, activities, services, events and/or ways of working; increasing the number of volunteers involved in caring for church buildings; increasing the capacity of volunteers to care for and better realise the potential of church buildings through training and advisory support; increasing partnership working with communities and relevant organisations and public services as well as working ecumenically, for example in the use of buildings and ways to assist with their upkeep; and taking a more strategic approach in managing building assets at parish, deanery and Diocesan level, for example,

¹⁰ Ibid, p85, quoting from Tim Dearborn, 'Beyond Duty: a passion for Christ, a heart for mission', MARC, 1998.

¹¹ www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx

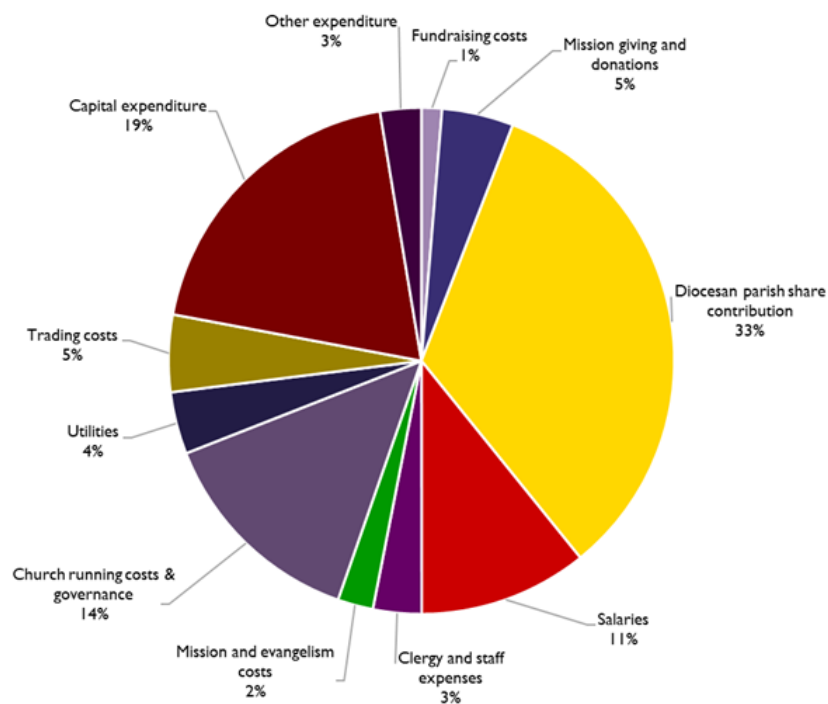
¹² www.jesusshapedpeople.net

church building reviews or audits and including church buildings in Mission Action Planning.

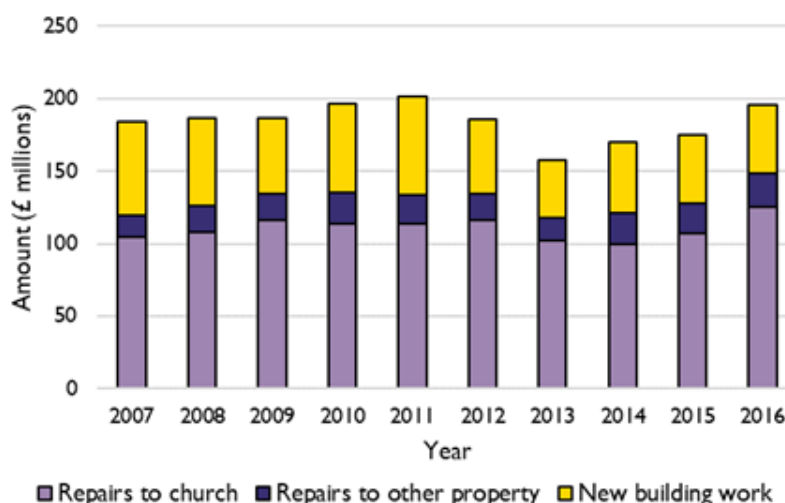
4. National expenditure on capital works in the Church of England

The *Parish Finance Statistics* report 2016 by the Research and Statistics Department at the Church of England includes figures relating to church buildings and halls, as shown the following two diagrams.

Breakdown of parish expenditure between expenditure categories, 2016



Parish capital expenditure breakdown, 2007-2016



The pie chart shows that the greatest expenditure after Parish Share (33%) is capital works (19%), defined as major repairs to the church building, major repairs to church halls or other PCC property and new building works. This contrasts with 2% on mission and evangelism. However, the contrast may not tell the whole story.

On the one hand, expenditure to mission may be in other categories such as staff expenses for a Youth Worker. Also, capital expenditure may pave the way for the church to be more missional, such as a more flexible space with toilet and refreshment facilities. A further factor could be that mission and evangelism may be happening but has a low demand on finance, such as utilising free Alpha course resources with volunteers running it and donating the food.

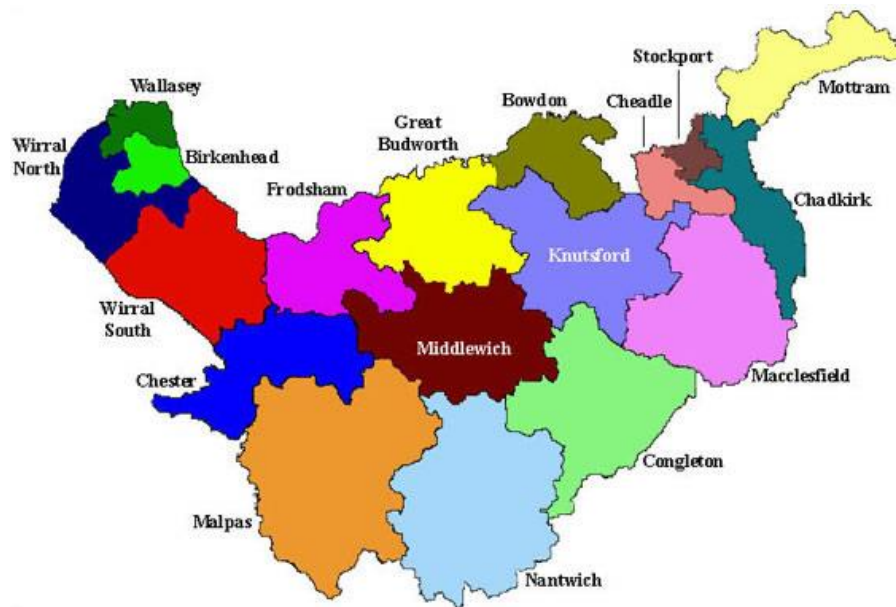
On the other hand, it could indicate a strong imbalance that needs to be addressed by investing more in missional training, resources and people. The pie chart, therefore, is more a conversation starter to ask more questions to explore the issue of where the church should invest its financial resources.

The bar chart shows that repairs have and continue to dominate expenditure. Also, that the significant costs relate to church buildings, with a much smaller expenditure on church halls. The call for greater funding for the repair, maintenance and enhancement of church buildings is also frequently made by churches to help realise their potential, especially given their often grade listed status as well as their social and cultural role within communities

Appendix C

Diocese of Chester Statistics

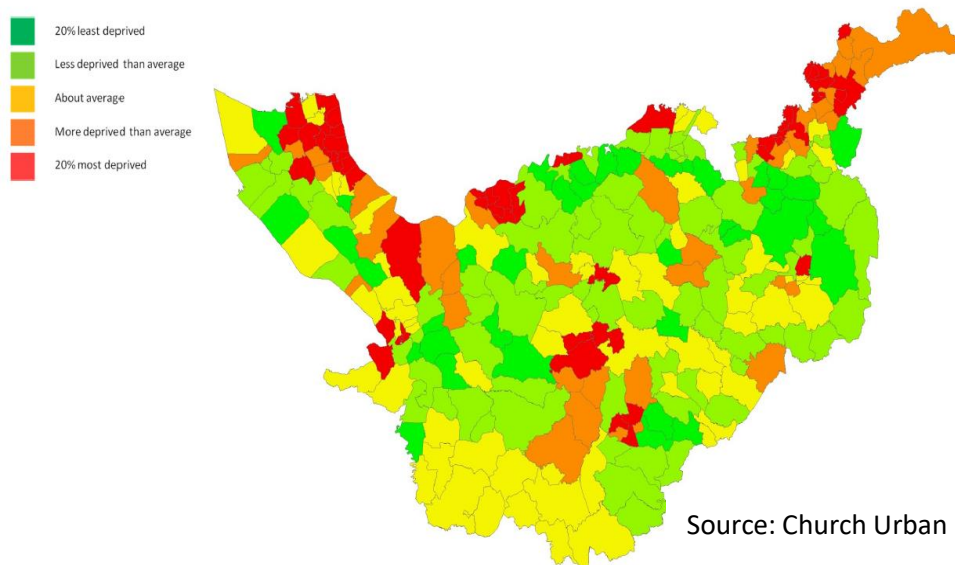
Map of the Diocese showing deaneries



Map of the Diocese showing the distribution of deprivation

What is the distribution of deprivation in the Diocese of Chester?

To create this map, IMD 2015 scores were converted from Lower Super Output Areas to parish boundaries and then each parish was colour coded according to the level of deprivation in that area. (Some parishes are not assigned an IMD score due to the way LSOAs are converted to parishes, these are shown as white.)



Source: Church Urban Fund

Searchable map of the Diocese

Please click on this URL to access an interactive map of the Diocese, showing the location of all church buildings – <https://arcg.is/15rnXb>

Geographical area where our buildings are located

- 12 Local authority areas in the Diocese of Chester. The Diocese largely comprises the Victorian County of Cheshire, which is now represented by the whole of the local authorities of the Wirral, Cheshire West and Chester, and Cheshire East, together with significant parts of Halton, Warrington, Trafford, Stockport and Tameside. A few parishes are now in Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Wales. The parishes vary from among the wealthiest in the county to the poorest, including 30 formerly 'UPA' parishes.

Number of church buildings

- 348 Buildings used for worship. (This includes Parish Churches, Chapels of Ease, Licensed Places of Worship and eight Private Chapels)

Grade listings

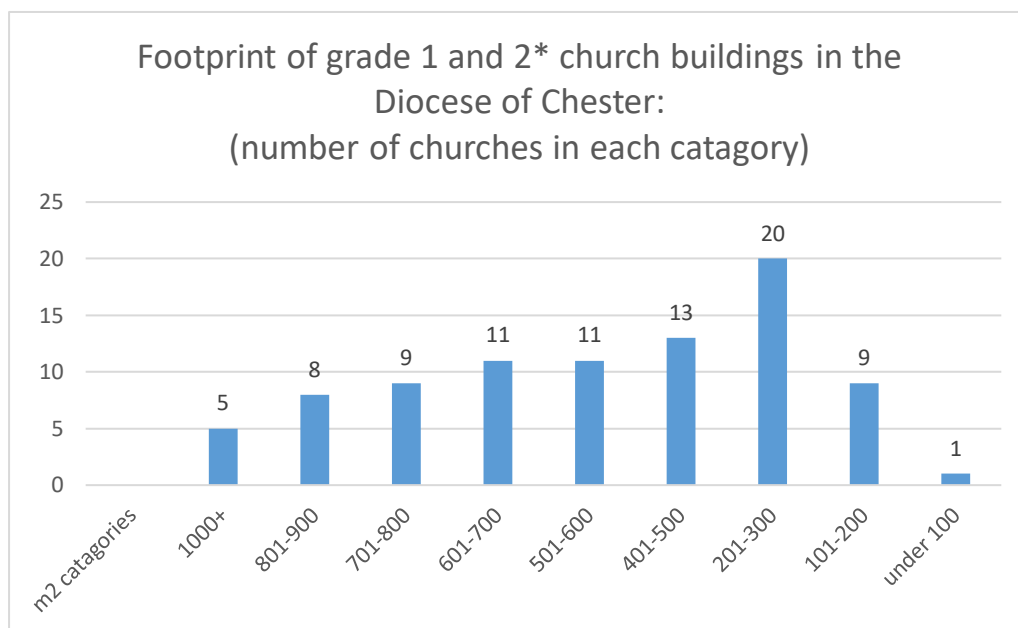
- 42 Grade I
66 Grade 2*
140 Grade 2
100 Unlisted

- 6 **Major Parish Churches** - Chester St John the Baptist; Congleton St Peter; Nantwich St Mary; Macclesfield St Michael; Stockport St George; and Stockport St Mary.

The Church Buildings Council at the Church of England define 'Major Parish Churches' as typically physically large (over 1000m² footprint); grade I or II* listed; with significant heritage value; open to visitors daily; make a civic, cultural and economic contribution to their communities.

Scale of church buildings

Footprint of buildings



Historic England researched the scale of grade 1 and 2* church buildings in our Diocese. A summary is provided in the bar-chart diagram, and full details are at the end of this appendix.

Number of people attending church services 2017¹

30,513	Average weekly attendance (all age)
22,882	Usual Sunday attendance (all age)
38,299	Easter attendance
84,983	Christmas attendance
34,394	Estimated visits to church buildings to attend baptisms (christenings). This is based on 2,293 services held in the Diocese in 2017, assuming an attendance of 30 people, (which is a conservative estimate), and assuming half of the baptisms were not in a Sunday service.
38,970	Estimated visits to church buildings to attend weddings. This is based on 1,299 services held in the Diocese in 2017, assuming an attendance of 30 people, (which is a conservative estimate).

¹ *Statistics for Mission* returns for the Diocese of Chester 2017.

84,900 Estimated visits to church buildings to attend funerals. This is based on 2,830 services held in the Diocese in 2017, assuming an attendance of 30 people, (which is a conservative estimate). This does not include cremations.

c. 2 million It is a startling fact that around two million visits take place every year to attend church services alone (1,924,524) in our Diocese! (This figure does not include Chester Cathedral, which attracted 300,000 visitors in 2017). The estimate is based on assuming 50 normal weeks. It includes visits for weekly worship services and the special services of Easter, Advent and Christmas (estimated as 1,766,259 visits); plus visits to baptisms (christenings), weddings and funerals. It does not include attending activities, groups, events, social justice work or visitors to open church buildings. Therefore, the actual total of visits to church buildings is far, far greater.



Use of church buildings

Numerous In our Diocese, they include Christian study groups, toddler groups, lunch clubs (especially for those in greatest need), holiday hunger clubs, community cafés open for all, wellbeing support groups such as those experiencing bereavement and addictions, social justice activities such as foodbanks, credit unions and debt support, art and craft groups, children's groups, young people's groups, civic services, cultural performances and rehearsal space (for example, choirs, music and drama groups), school visits and school services, fetes and special events, coffee mornings/afternoon teas, open for prayer, open for visitors, art and heritage displays, site of war memorial, family history and local history research enquiries, churchyard visitors and helpers, health and community awareness open days, exercise classes, meeting spaces for groups and organisations, and so on.

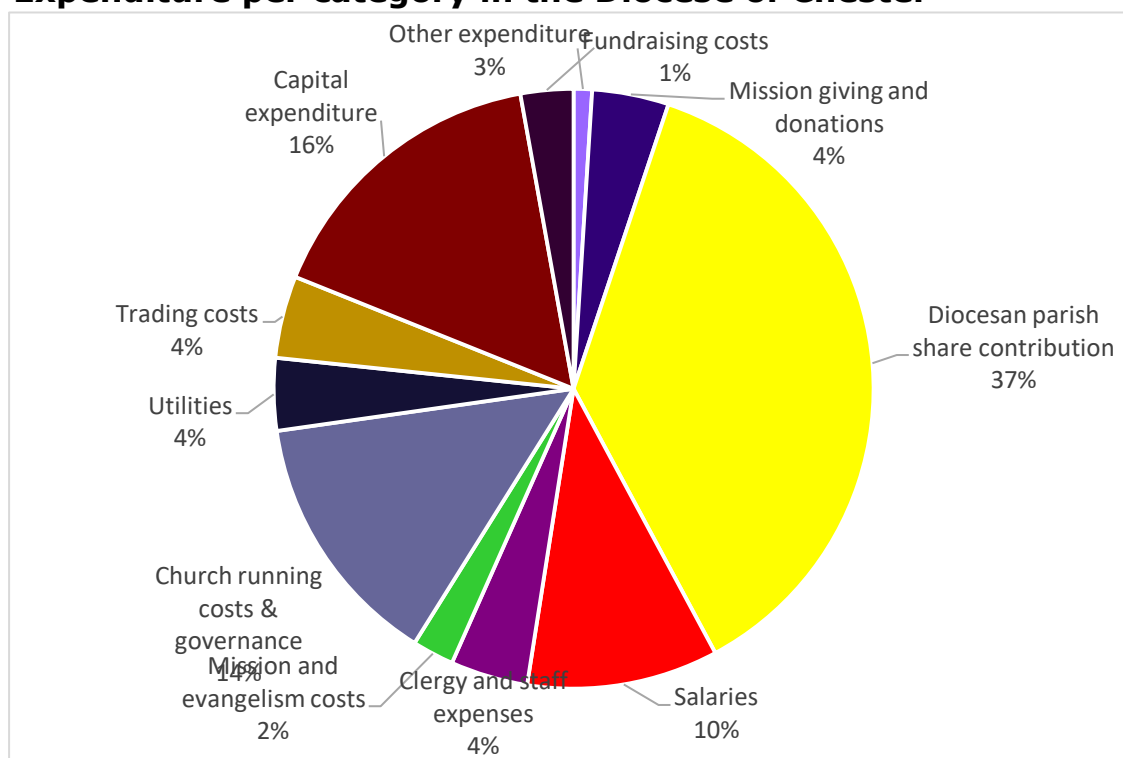
100+ Fresh Expressions of Church in the Diocese, such as Café Church and Messy Church



Fundraising for capital works

£20million+ Parishes are collectively seeing to raise funds totalling at least £20million for capital works for church buildings and hall across the Diocese. As this figure has been gathered only from churches working with the Church Buildings Missioner and have reached a stage where an estimate is available, the actual figure will be higher.

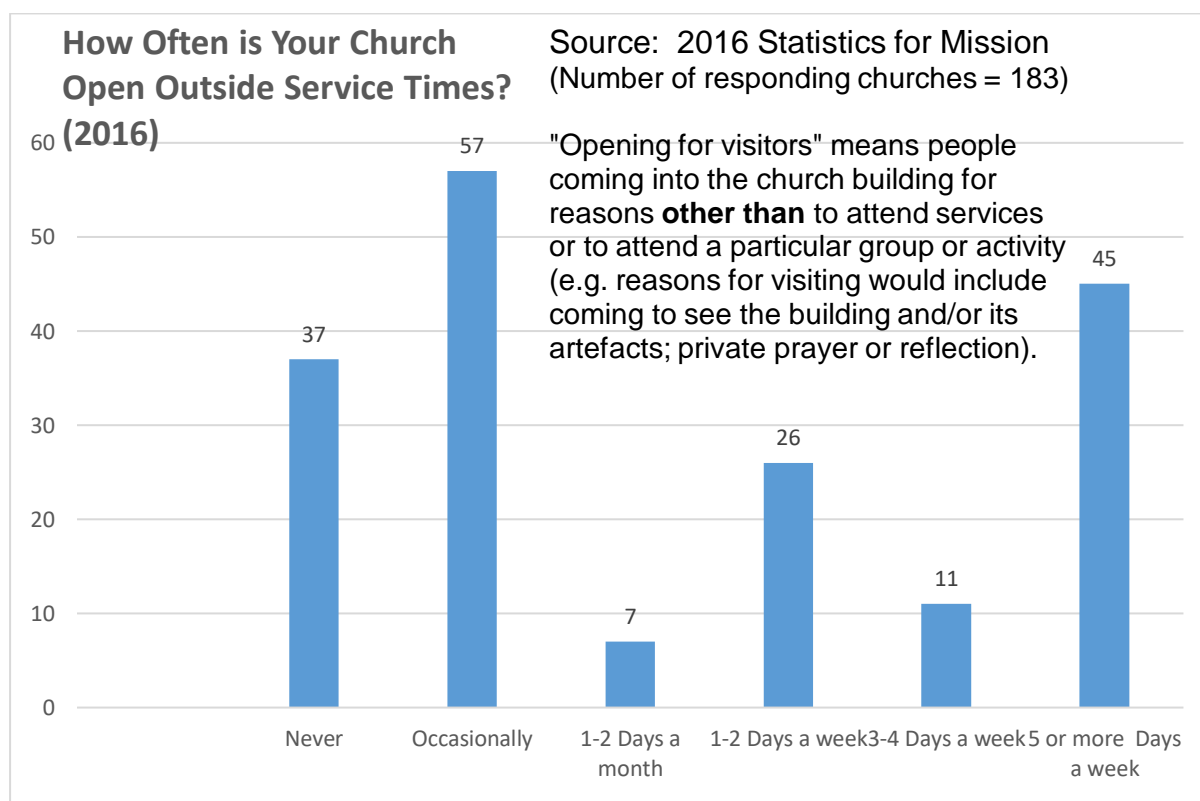
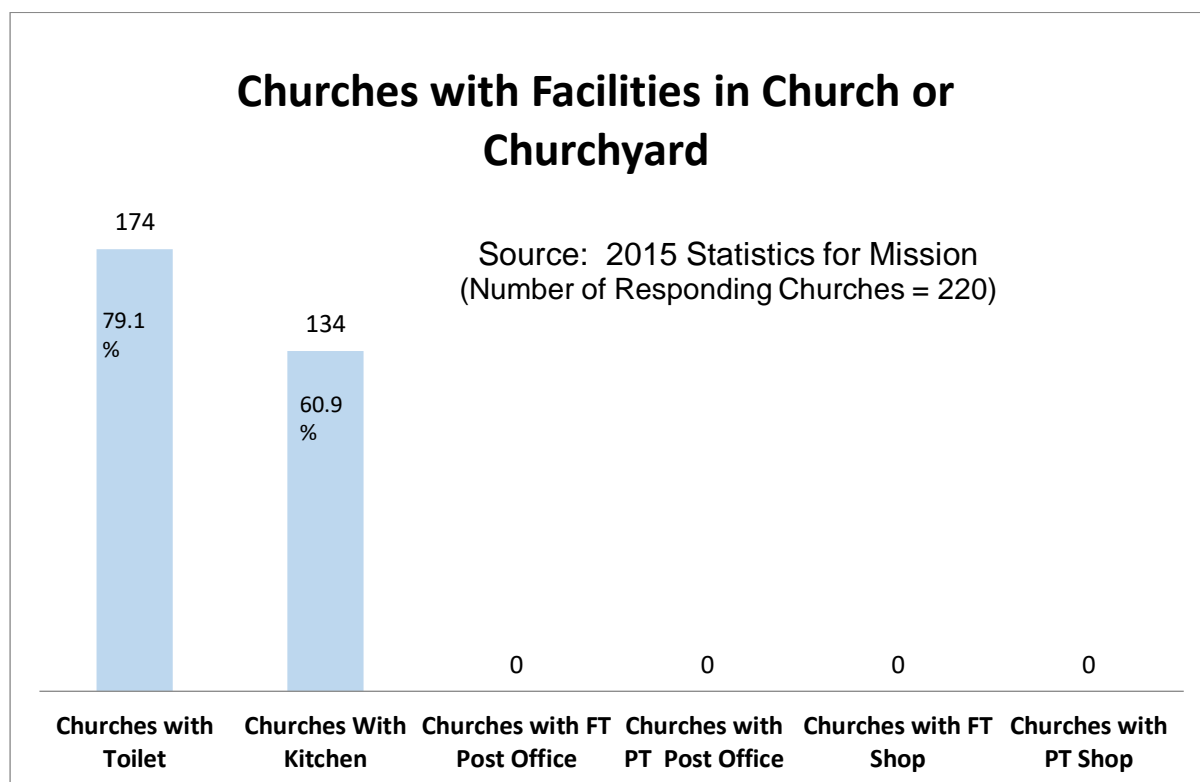
Expenditure per category in the Diocese of Chester²

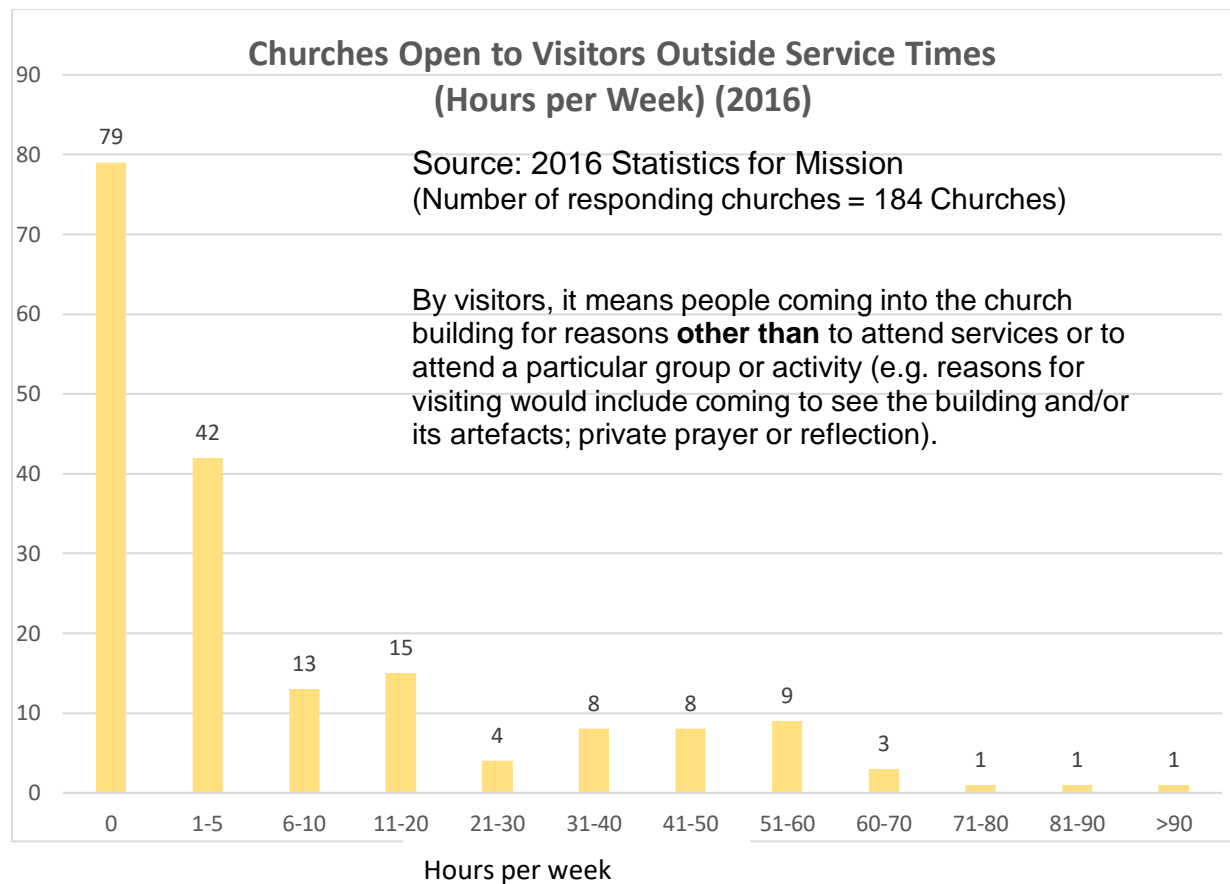


The pie chart shows the greatest expenditure in the Diocese aside from Parish Share is capital expenditure on major repairs and new building work to church buildings, plus church halls and other property owned by the PCC, equating to 16%. This is closely followed by church running costs and governance at 14%, which has some relation to the church buildings. This contrasts with 2% on mission and evangelism. On the one hand, some expenses relating to mission may be in another category such as salaries; for example, a families' worker or evangelist. Also, the benefits of capital investment may impact mission and evangelism. On the other hand, this may show an imbalance that needs addressing.

² Parish Finance Statistics 2016, Research and Statistics Department, Church of England

Statistics for Mission 'Special Questions' relating to church buildings in 2015, 2016 and 2017, Diocese of Chester responses

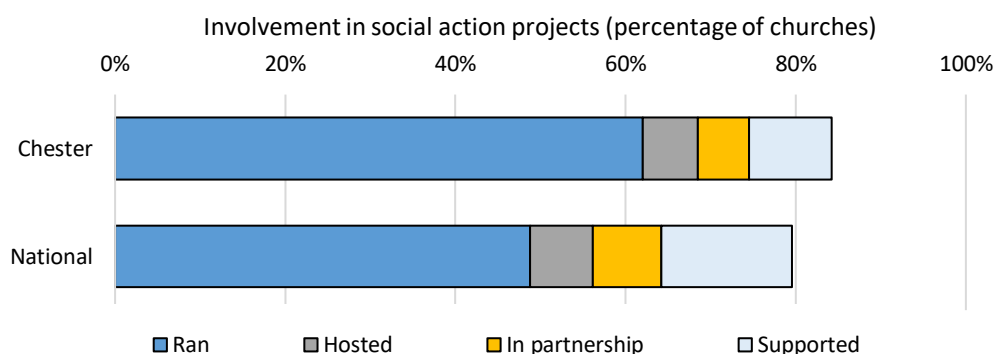




Statistics for Mission special question 2017 - Social action and community outreach activities

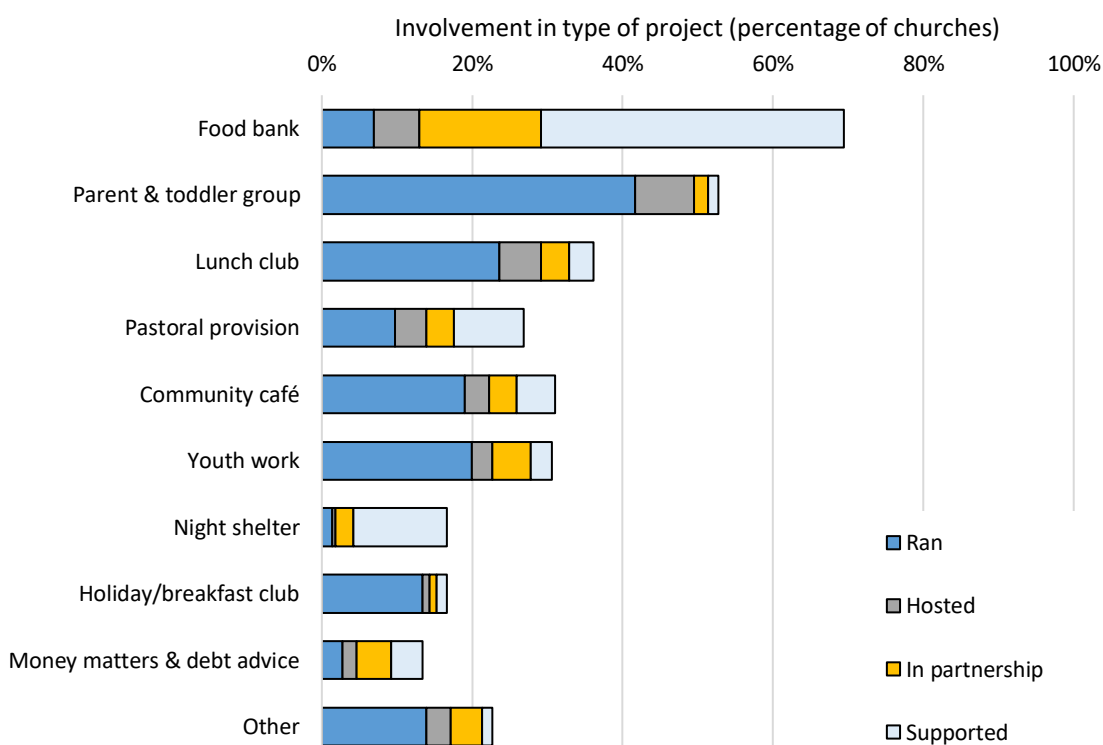
Churches were asked about their involvement in a range of different types of social action, including food banks, community cafes and night shelters. 216 churches responded, detailing 329 projects run by churches, with a rounded total 700 social action projects that churches either ran, hosted, worked in partnership with or supported in other ways.

Involvement in one or more forms of social action – Chester is at 84%



Types of social action projects - Chester

Chester



Footprint of grade 1 and 2* church buildings in the Diocese of Chester provided by Historic England.

Listed in order of scale (descending). NB: it is not a comprehensive list of all church buildings in the Diocese, as it does not include grade 2 and unlisted buildings.

ListEntry	Name	Parish	Area (sq m)	Grade
1067194	STOCKPORT CHURCH OF ST GEORGE	Stockport	1598	I
1375977	CHESTER CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST	Chester	1298	I
1206932	MACCLESFIELD CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL	Macclesfield	1068	II*
1206059	NANTWICH CHURCH OF ST MARY	Nantwich	1039	I
1309701	STOCKPORT PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY	Stockport	1013	I
1122650	CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN	Altrincham	960	II*
1201591	CHURCH OF ST SAVIOUR	Oxton	914	II*
1138740	CHURCH OF ST MARY	Newbold Astbury	873	I
1067160	PARISH CHURCH OF ST THOMAS	Stockport	870	I
1206898	CHURCH OF ST ALBAN	Broadheath	840	II*
1139156	CHURCH OF ST MARY AND ALL SAINTS	Great Budworth	835	I
1329880	CHURCH OF ST HELEN	Witton Northwich	818	I
1139180	CHURCH OF ST CHAD	Winsford	809	II*
1388414	CHURCH OF ST CROSS	Knutsford	783	II*
1104888	CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS	Runcorn	776	I
1138626	THE CHURCH OF ST BONIFACE	Bunbury	772	I
1135959	CHURCH OF ST OSWALD	Malpas	770	I
1375848	CHURCH OF ST MARYS	Handbridge	754	II*
1138795	CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS	Middlewich	753	II*
1325200	CHURCH OF ST MARGARET	Altrincham	742	II*
1278428	CHURCH OF ST OSWALD	Winwick	723	I
1138424	CHURCH OF ST WILFRED	Davenham	708	II*

1221919	CHURCH OF ST PETER	Prestbury	696	I
1387671	CHURCH OF ST MARY AND ST HELEN	Neston	689	II*
1330401	CHURCH OF ST MARY	Sandbach	689	II*
1253193	CHURCH OF ST LAWRENCE	Frodsham	685	I
1075462	CHURCH OF ST.ANDREW	Bebington	663	I
1230301	CHURCH OF ST MARY	Rostherne	655	I
1138867	CHURCH OF ST PHILLIP	Alderley Edge	637	II*
1330112	CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN	Acton	630	I
1261946	CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE DIVINE	Altrincham	625	II*
1222475	CHURCH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW	Wilmslow	606	I
1356436	CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS	Longdendale	605	II*
1388324	CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST	Knutsford	598	II*
1330302	CHURCH OF ST ANDREW	Tarvin	596	I
1287233	CHURCH OF ST MARY	Weaverham	595	I
1130450	CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS	Daresbury	581	I
1183871	CHURCH OF ST.BARNABAS	Bromborough	578	II*
1138446	CHURCH OF ST HELEN	Tarporley	564	II*
1241643	CHURCH OF ST MARY	Cheadle	547	I
1320306	CHURCH OF ST PETER	Heswall	536	II*
1139320	CHURCH OF ST WILFRED	Grappenhall and Thelwall	527	I
1330322	CHURCH OF ST PETER	Congleton	527	I
1138410	CHURCH OF ST MARY	Eccleston	511	I
1330063	THE CHURCH OF ST BERTOLINE	Barthomley	499	I
1139352	CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST	Walton	486	I

Appendix C Diocese of Chester Statistics

1136872	CHURCH OF ST JAMES	Audlem	460	I
1161954	CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS	Odd Rode	454	II*
1230254	CHURCH OF ST ALBAN	Tattenhall	438	II*
1279424	CHURCH OF ST CHAD	Farndon	429	II*
1115407	Church of St Paul, including south-west boundary wall and gates, Hooton	Hooton	427	II*
1376247	CHURCH OF ST PETER	Chester	419	I
1231620	CHURCH OF ST MARY	Disley	418	II*
1330249	CHURCH OF ST JAMES	Christleton	418	II*
1138390	CHURCH OF ST MARY	Pulford	409	II*
1357455	CHURCH OF ST MARGARET	Wrenbury cum Frith	408	II*
1375705	CHURCH OF ST PAUL	Boughton (Chester)	407	II*
1330242	CHURCH OF ST MARY	Thornton-le-Moors	387	I
1139162	CHURCH OF ST JOHN EVANGELIST	Norley	374	II*
1330059	THE CHURCH OF ST LEONARD	Warmingham	360	II*
1139104	CHURCH OF ST OSWALD	Nether Peover	360	I
1241823	CHURCH OF ST MARTIN	Marple	358	I
1139554	CHURCH OF ST WILFRID	Mobberley	341	I
1279021	CHURCH OF ST PETER	Mickle Trafford	332	I
1313128	THE CHURCH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW	Church Minshull	331	II*
1138815	CHURCH OF ST JAMES	Ince	325	II*
1139274	CHURCH OF ST LAWRENCE	Peover Superior	324	I
1138849	CHURCH OF ST MARY	Nether Alderley	324	I
1129940	CHURCH OF ST MARY	Tilston	320	II*

1225604	CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL	Marbury cum Quoislely	319	II*
1229297	CHURCH OF ST OSWALD	Brereton	314	II*
1130422	PARISH CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST	Weston	312	I
1298821	CHURCH OF SAINT BARTHOLOMEW	Barrow	307	II*
1145903	CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL	Shotwick	302	I
1138754	CHURCH OF CHRIST	Alsager	301	II*
1115561	CHURCH OF ST JOHN	Chelford	294	II*
1067893	CHURCH OF ST MARTIN	Sale	294	II*
1115612	CHURCH OF ST OSWALD	Backford	290	II*
1139201	CHURCH OF ST PETER	Little Budworth	287	II*
1139029	CHURCH OF ST LAWRENCE	Stoke	283	II*
1135747	CHURCH OF ST PETER	Waverton	282	II*
1138674	THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL	Crewe Green	281	II*
1387811	CHURCH OF ST NICHOLAS	Burton	279	II*
1139497	CHURCH OF ST JAMES	Gawsworth	273	I
1231569	CHURCH OF ST PETER	Swettenham	266	II*
1231322	CHURCH OF ST LUKE	Holmes Chapel	262	I
1138907	CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN	Bosley	243	II*
1067868	CHURCH OF ST GEORGE	Carrington	240	II*
1231229	CHURCH OF ST LUKE	Goostrey	230	II*
1277234	CHURCH OF ST CHRISTOPHER	Pott Shrigley	227	I
1115782	CHURCH OF ST BARTHOLOMEW	Heswall	227	II*
1138491	CHURCH OF ST PETER	Aston	220	I

Appendix C Diocese of Chester Statistics

1139465	CHURCH OF ST JAMES AND ST PAUL	Marton	218	I
1161743	CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS	Church Lawton	205	II*
1136639	CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN	Saughton	204	II*
1278683	CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS	Harthill	194	II*
1130643	CHURCH OF ST PETER	Foulk Stapleford	187	II*
1230337	CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS	Handley	179	II*
1139604	CHURCH OF ST CATHERINE	Over Alderley	167	II*
1106256	CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS	Siddington	166	II*
1139134	CHURCH OF ST LUKE	Whitley	164	II*
1129936	CHURCH OF ST JOHN	Threapwood	157	II*
1138586	CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL	Baddiley	136	I
1228322	CHURCH OF ST EDITH	Church Shocklach	120	I
1138927	CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST	Salterford (Rainow)	80	II*

Appendix D

Parish Survey on church buildings and halls

Full responses to Diocese of Chester PCC survey, summer 2018

From July to October 2018, PCC's were invited to take part in a Diocesan - wide survey, exploring the use, management, role and thinking about church buildings and halls. A total of 20 responses were received. The findings are summarised below.

Q1 Have you enhanced your church building or church hall over the last decade?

19 out of 20 said yes

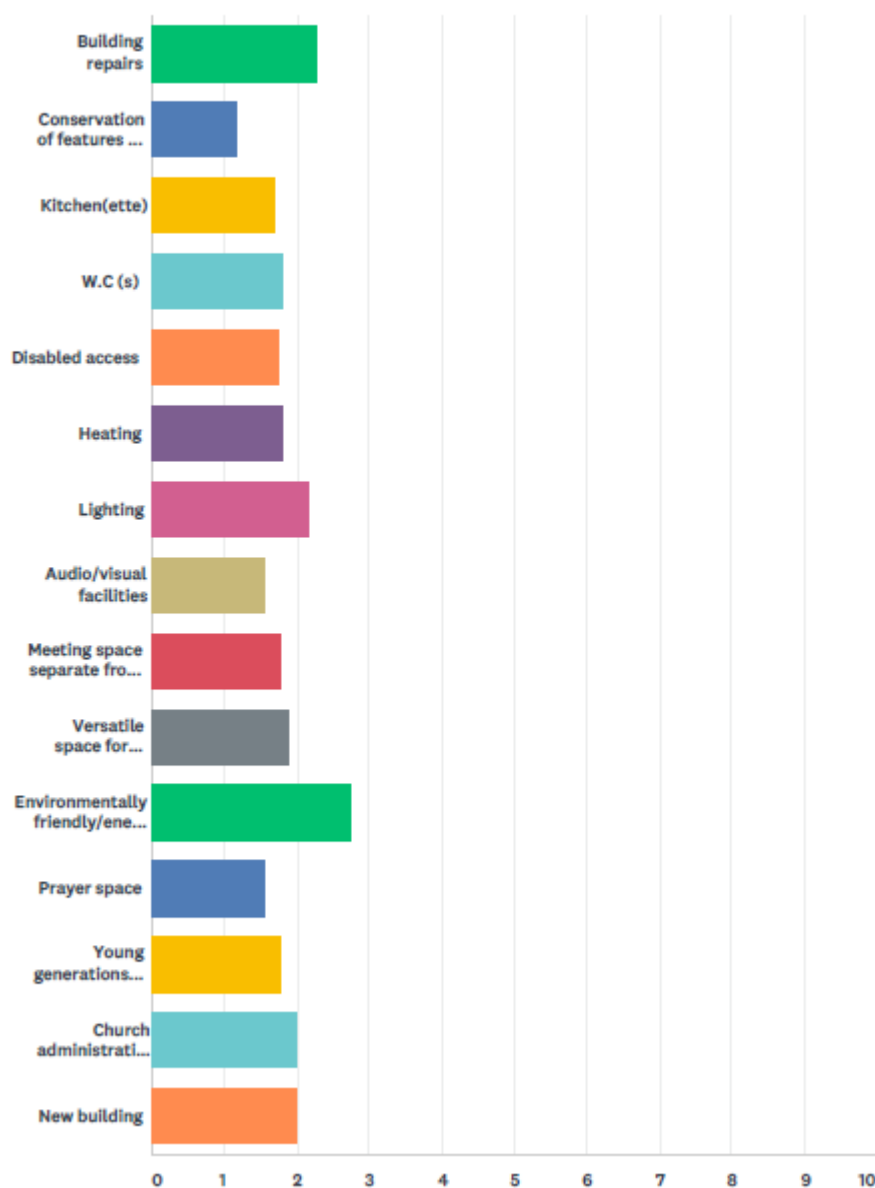
Q2 What work was done?

- *To Church building* - the most frequent answers are audio/visual (A/V) and conservation of features, with a secondary priority of heating.
- *To Church hall* - improved meeting space is the most frequent work, closely followed by administrative/storage space, kitchenette and versatility of space for mission and ministry.
- *To both* - repairs are the overwhelming priority. Secondary priorities are lighting, heating, audio/visual (A/V) and energy efficiency.

With all responses combined, it provides a fairly even picture of the breadth of needs for capital investment. Energy efficiency/environmentally friendly initiatives are the most frequent answer, followed closely with repairs, although further factors are not far behind. Please see the following survey chart for question 2.

Q2 If yes, what work was done? (Tick all that are relevant)

Answered: 18 Skipped: 2



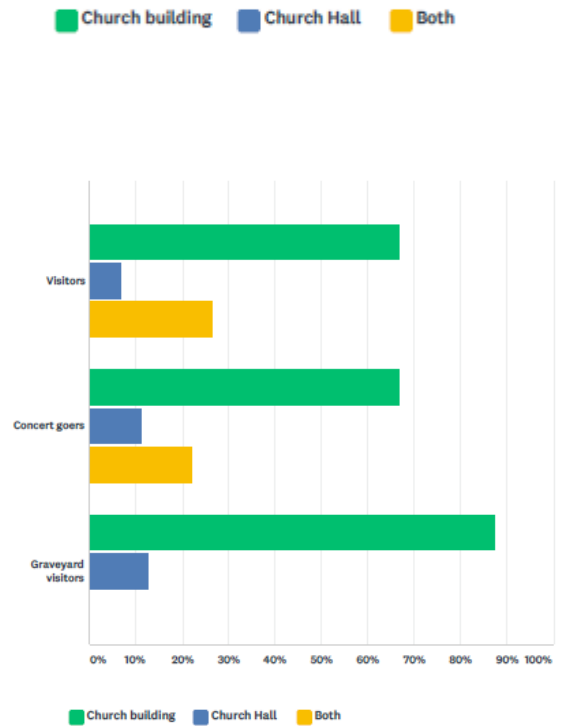
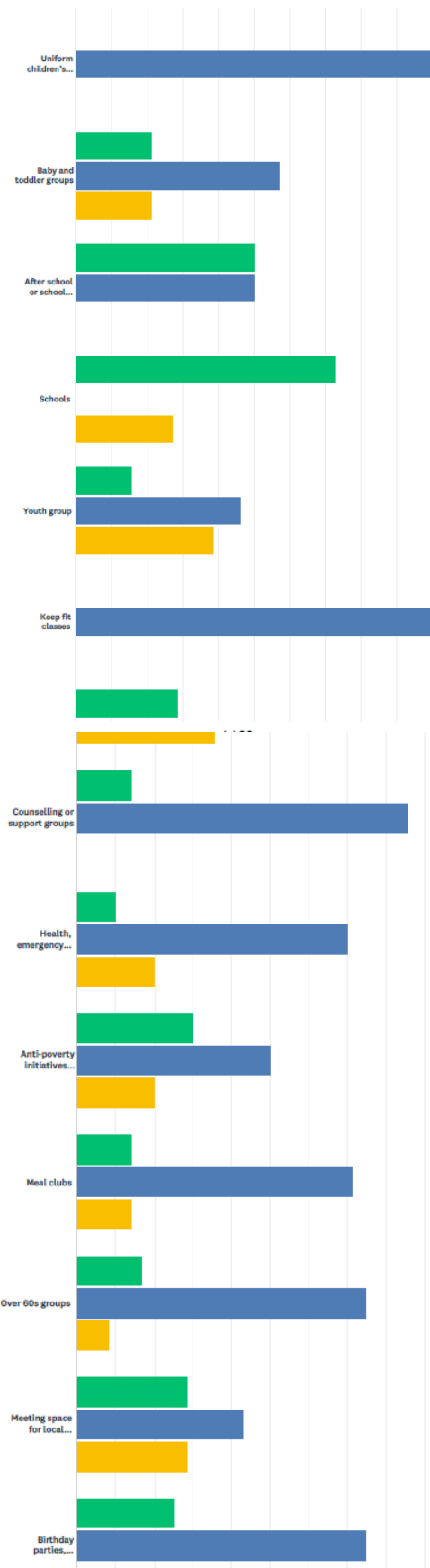
Q3 What types of groups regularly use the church building and hall?

- *In Church building* – ‘visitors’ are the most frequent answer, closely followed by schools and churchyard visitors
- *In Church hall* - over 60’s groups and celebratory events are joint first, closely followed by health/emergency services/council use and counselling/support groups.
- *In both* - youth groups and leisure groups are the joint most frequent answer, followed by meeting spaces and visitors. Third most frequent are schools and baby/toddler groups.

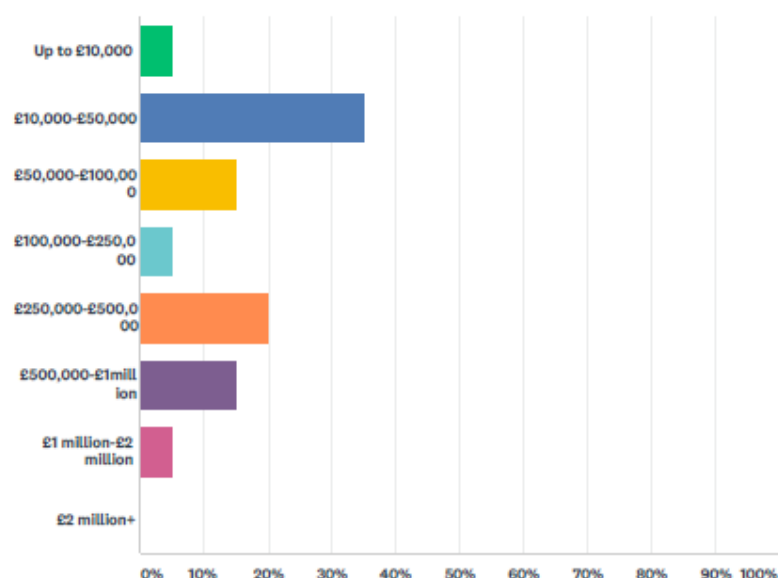
Appendix D Parish Survey Church Buildings and Halls 2018

Q3 What types of groups regularly use the church building and the church hall in addition to the congregation and those attending special services?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 2



Q4 Approximately how much has been spent on the church building and hall over the last ten years for repairs and/or improvements?



Q5 How was the money raised for the building work?

<i>Method</i>	<i>No. of responses</i>
Congregational giving*	10
Individual/specific donations*	8
Grants, including lottery fund	11
Normal or general church fundraising	7
Legacies	5
Fundraising events	3
Reserves	3
Rental income (e.g. room hire)	2
Loan or mortgage	2
Budgeting	2

(*Responses include multiple phrasings, therefore the meaning of 'donations' may refer to both congregational giving and community or business giving. Therefore, it is likely congregational giving may be greater than indicated.)

Q6 Do you have a Friends Scheme?

Most responses do not have a Friends Scheme, (16 responses), one respondent said yes, and three are considering it in the future. No respondents have a group that is no longer active.

(NB: the Diocese has a list of churches that it is aware of which have a Friends Scheme, currently totalling 19).

Q7 What difference has investing in the church building made to the life and impact of the church?

Summary - All but one church that has invested in the building have seen a positive impact, especially increased community engagement, improved ministry, and a more welcoming, accessible and comfortable space for a variety of different people's needs and interests.

Responses -

- Maintained the beauty of the church, which in turn brings our community together. Our collective goal is to preserve and conserve the fabric of our place of worship.
- A visible statement that we are here for the long term.
- Buildings now more welcoming and comfortable, groups enjoy and will come back. New projection system in church makes services / sermons more interesting, Space in the Church Hall is more adaptable giving more space for social events and for contact after services.
- New chairs in the church has improved comfort especially for the elderly and also given us greater flexibility on using the space. improvements to the kitchen has enabled us to offer soup and sandwich deliveries weekly to the housebound and isolated in our community and made it possible to hold meals on in church/hall for up to 80 people at a time. We have also recently opened a weekly "pop - in" café which will generate additional funds for the church. Improved heating has made the church warmer more quickly and made the church more comfortable for all. Turned a storeroom into the church office which has improved administration and communications; and provides a focal point for non - ministry

related enquiries. Hall is also used as a polling station for local and national elections generating a useful source of revenue.

- Increased community work and social aspect of church life.
- Limited refurbishment of a small hall has created small scale opportunities for pastoral and missional engagement.
- Kept the congregation dry, raised the profile of the church in the community, enabled development of heritage project.
- HUGE! The works of 14 years ago changed everything! It previously looked as though the church was closed, even when it was open. The building is now used something like 40 hours per week (including for worship) rather than the 10 or so previously. It has made the building a locus for our ministry to the town. Hundreds of people drop in each month. The 'town' knows that the church is open, active and available, and that 'we are for the town.
- Drawn the community into church for things other than services.
- Become more inclusive and has allowed a wider range of services attracting more people. More social events.
- Our church has to keep changing and evolving to meet the needs of its community and its mission. Encouragingly we have made a number of maintenance based enhancements to the Church Building and Church Hall over the last decade and ticked almost all the areas identified by the Diocese. At a basic level the Church has to maintain its fabric to allow the premises to keep functioning, i.e. heating lighting, keeping the rain out etc. These are considered maintenance requirements.
However, the Church Hall has received little substantial investment over recent years and the 1960s Church hall looks tired. Our link Building is only 25 years old and serves us well, but has flexibility issues. Therefore our hall is not particularly attractive and only functions for regular Church Hall users, who perhaps accept the hall as it is to some extent. The grounds have received a lot of focus through Messy Fellowship recently which has made an impact locally and some people come to support the Monthly maintenance sessions. This at a basic level gives witness to something is going

on at the church as it's easily visible from outside. So in summary, we have not invested significantly in its buildings over the last 10 years, and any impacts would not be due to the buildings.

- Made a more pleasant and comfortable environment for both church family and hall occupants.
- The PCC is confident that the new Centre will have a positive impact to the life of the church and the community. The church building itself is also the subject of considerable interest from visitors and tourists who comment on the high standard of building maintenance and general care.
- It has provided the space and resources to engage the local community and to enhance church life.
- It means we can offer hospitality before or after services, meetings or to other groups using the building.
- Massive. The church hall and its Cafe builds significant bridges to the community. The church as a grade 1 listed building is already an attractional feature.
- Flexibility. Made to be a more pleasant environment especially for groups to meet.
- New life to the church hall which is primarily used by the independent church.
- Huge benefit to mission.
- Considerable, enabling disability access to the hall, and greatly improved space and facilities.

Q8 Has investing in the building(s) made an impact on the growth of the church, either spiritually or numerically?

Summary - Overall, most building projects have played a role in numerical and/or spiritual growth, as the building has helped facilitate greater and new uses and therefore more opportunity for relationship - building. Both aspects of growth are equally mentioned 11 times each.

Four out of 20 said it was too early to comment, as the project had not long since completed. Four respondents said it had not led to growth.

Responses -

- Fund raising has brought our community together, which in turn has raised our numbers visiting and worshipping at our church.
- Better facilities make the church and hall more welcoming, thus encouraging community. Spiritually, improved lighting (in the church) and heating (in the new build hall) make for positivity. Some small improvement in attendance at main services.
- Hard to measure growth - numerically we have seen more people starting to attend, but there has been a drop - off as well. Spiritually the improved buildings have given increased opportunity for people to be involved in ministry, which has resulted in spiritual growth.
- The Church Centre has provided a venue for Messy Church and Little Fishes, the priority given to Baptisms by the Vicar has all been aimed at greater involvement of children and their parents and grandparents with considerable success.
- Too early to say, nothing measurable as yet.
- Its made people feel a bit more comfortable but hasn't necessarily made disciples because of the socialisation due to the issue raised in answer to question 11.
- Hard to quantify. Spiritually - arguably, through engagement of members of the congregation in helping with the project and in financial giving. Numerically - we hope in the future, through increased engagement with the community (project is current, roofing works are nearing completion). Improved AV facilities have greatly improved services, impact of this is significant but hard to quantify.
- Spiritually? It changed the mindset of the church to be more outward - focused, recognising that in God we have something special to offer. Numerically there are probably more people attending, but not as regularly. As previously said, total numbers

through the doors has rocketed, including some dropping in to worship. We feel as though we would not have attracted as many young families recently had we not done the work - it was a forbidding and less comfortable building then.

- Used the meeting room to hold services in the colder months as it is warmer than the main church.
- Yes. Different fresh expression services have added new people to our congregation and they have become active members of the church on the PCC and as helpers. It has also inspired 3 Alpha and 3 Lent courses as home groups.
- The biggest impact the Church has made in recent years has been on mission outside the building via Messy Church and Love Lache. Both these activities are undertaken off site independent of the building. So growth is likely to be in our wider worshipping community, rather than in our electoral roll or typical Sunday Worship numbers. We cannot yet evaluate yet whether investing in the Mission Shaped Church building project for a Mission Shaped Church will have an impact on growth of the Church.
- A more comfortable church enables people to focus on worship and a screen enables flexibility and wider choice of hymns and liturgy.
- Not yet.
- Several who go to functions/groups held in the church go on to join the church family especially youth and young families. There has been growth in spiritual maturity and some young people have gone on to Christian service. Investing in audio visual equipment has meant that corporate worship has been enhanced and kept fresh.
- It has impacted on disabled people who can visit church. Numbers attending services and visiting the church have increased.
- Some of our church building investment enabled our Christmas market initiative - which led to a 20% increase in attendance at carol services that year (and that has stayed high since). The Cafe in the church hall means something like 600 non - church people

per week pass through the building - and while it is hard to directly quantify how many moved from that to church, anecdotally I can name over 10, and I believe it has been more. That said, facilities only facilitate the relationships out of which faith is shared - none of it is simply the building - but it can help!

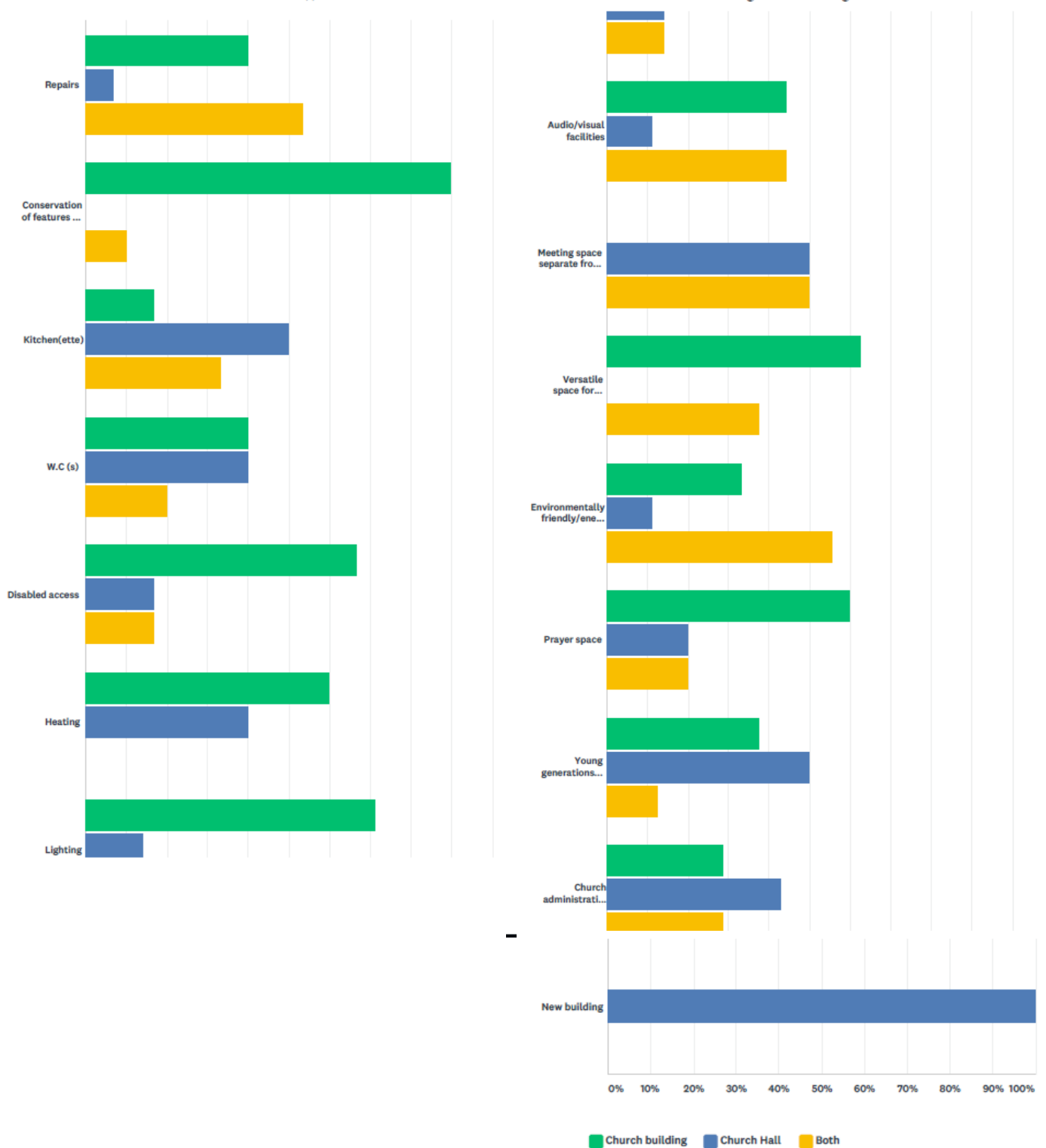
- Our youth work has space to grow and good facilities. Our main worship space is the same size but very flexible which allows use for new growing expressions of ministry like messy church and toddlers groups etc.
- Not at our church building, but probably at a neighbouring church, as they have more space to meet.
- Too early to say - we hope so to all those!
- Yes. It has enabled us to accommodate increase use of the space, including a community café now open 6 days a week.

Q9 Thinking about the future, what changes/improvements do you envisage carrying out in the next ten years?

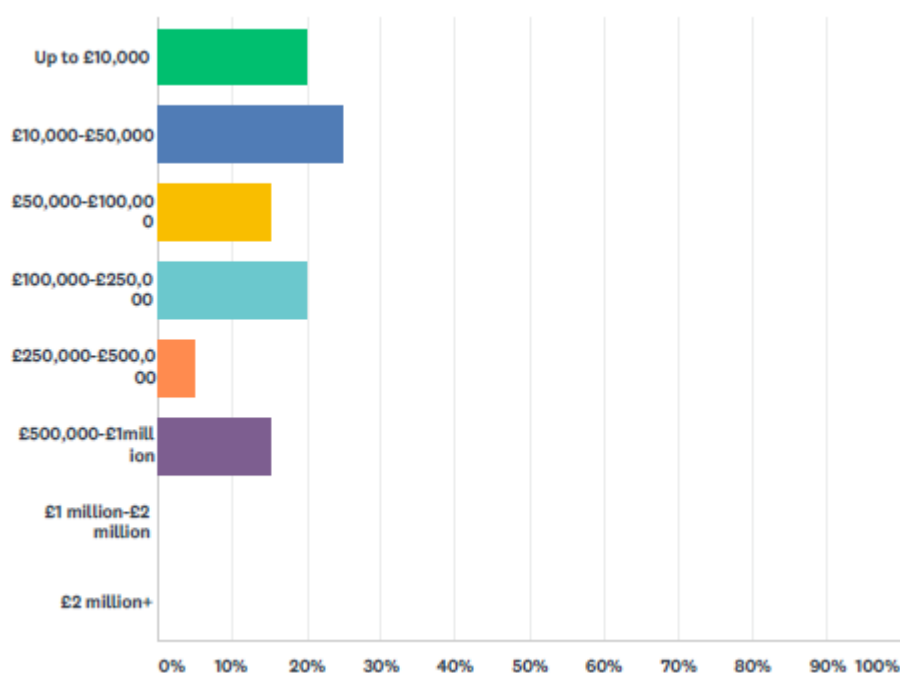
- *For church building* - conservation of features of the building is the most frequent need, followed by repairs, lighting and versatile space for mission and ministry.
- *For church hall* - a range of work is needed, but this has a lower level of need than work on church buildings (indicated by fewer responses). Work includes suitable facilities for young generations, kitchenette, W.C., and heating.
- *For both* - Repairs dominate the work needed, followed by environmentally friendly/energy efficiency work and A/V.

Please see the following survey chart for question 9.

Appendix D Parish Survey Church Buildings and Halls 2018



Q10 How much do you anticipate this future work will cost?



Q11 How do you think the spaces used by churches *inhibit* the growth of the kingdom of God in our Diocese?

Summary - Out of the ten responses, the most frequent was that church buildings create a negative first impression for those not familiar with entering them - they are spaces that can be intimidating, not welcoming, not comfortable, nor accessible. This was closely followed by too great an emphasis on buildings rather than people in terms of financial investment, time and church buildings having a 'heritage' focus. Thirdly, respondents mentioned some church buildings have unsuitable space for mission and ministry, which inhibit their use, especially for group activities and more contemporary forms of worship.

Responses -

- We believe we work closely and our 'sacred space' is valued and used efficiently.
- They can suggest a backward looking or "heritage only" image of Church.
- Churches can be alien buildings which people find it uncomfortable to enter.

- Access, especially when it is dark, can be an issue.
- A church that keeps its doors locked except on Sundays is by definition a place of exclusion. We therefore now have the church open from 09.00 until 12.00 every weekday; sometimes unattended (with valuables locked away).
- We have mixed views; some believe Churches present a big barrier to most people to even set foot inside. Once inside even if the welcome is good, the pews are hard the lighting poor and the service is a mystery to most people. Whereas others believe churches to be beautiful historic places and they appreciate Anglican traditions.
- We can too easily become fabric and maintenance focused. It can create a very static view as church as location rather than church as the people.
- Intimidating and alien environment for unchurched people. Uncomfortable seating. Cold & hard to heat. Often dark & dingy. Huge financial drain inhibits mission and ministry. Often inaccessible physically. Often unsuited to running groups for children etc. Cost and delay of faculty proceedings. Size of building (if too large or too small) restricts growth. Surrounded by graves & often dark churchyards.
- They can be a huge drain on financial resources, and so on time and energy to get funding - distracting us from the church's mission to make disciples. They can give two impressions of: 1. "everything is alright - if they have a building like this the church must be 'loaded'". 2. "church is not for me because my life is a mess, and doesn't connect with this beautiful (and gothic) building."
- Too rigid in their layout to encompass modern forms of worship and to be of use to other groups in the community. They can be depressing and oppressive, lacking a welcome. More importance can be given to the building as a museum by professional objectors to change rather than to the people who are the church and their

needs. The churches can be historic buildings but there must be a balance with their need to do God's work.

Q12 How do you think the spaces used by churches *enhance* the growth of the kingdom of God in our Diocese?

Summary - 19 responses were received, which is nearly double that of the previous question. The most frequent related to the role of church buildings as spaces where people meet with God. This was closely followed by loving service to the community. Further factors were a visible sign of God's presence in the community and one aspect in creating a positive church experience that people would want to return.

Responses -

- Our church buildings are loved and appreciated, by people of all ages, in our Diocese. Our spaces enable us to have a focal point for our worship.
- They are visible signs of God's presence in this place. They speak of God's love of people in life and in death. A well - kept church and churchyard shows WE care for environment, our worship, loved ones in churchyard.
- Comfortable buildings for funerals / weddings etc encourage people to come again.
- By allowing the use of the church for appropriate community events (our church is one of the few buildings locally with seating capacity for over 250) it builds links with local people. For example, the local primary school have their Christmas carol concert here. We recently held a concert with the Community Choir where we were joined by the children from the local Primary School choir which brought in an audiences of nearly 200 and raised £800 for Claire House; a local charity. This has a very positive effect on our image as a community supporter. The various initiatives to provide soup and sandwich, bereavement lunches, Thursday coffee mornings, Monday café, Young At Heart Club all run by the church from the church Hall provide additional support to the vulnerable and lonely in the community helping to build our presence and God's work. Plus, there are a number of children's activities in the hall helping to enhance the relationship with young families locally. The hall is also

used by other "non - church" groups (Guides/Rainbows); keep fit; yoga; badminton; TWGuild; Art classes, community choir, Family events etc. The hall is often used by families for refreshments after a funeral helping to provide support to people in a time of need; these events are usually "staffed" by members of the church.

- The recently refurbished church community centre is an asset that we need to fully utilize. It presents an opportunity to serve the community by positive and needed activities. People take ownership of these spaces to meet with God and experience his presence.
- For some coming into a traditional building can be helpful to aid persons spirituality.
- Some great examples of building projects, providing buildings accessible to and used by the community. People identify with church as theirs even if they don't come. Great not to have to set up a building each time we use it. With appropriate re - ordering and in good condition, can be attractive and practical facilities. Reverence and architecture and history resonates with people.
- The buildings tend to be very visible in the public space (enhancing when in good repair/distracting when poorly maintained) and people tend to know where their local one is. Through welcoming people into our buildings we can reflect something of God's warmth and welcome, and use them as vehicles for teaching about God and our faith, and as a quiet space in a noisy world, We also use them for social action and mission (foodbanks, night shelters, etc). Our spaces are also GREAT places for those times of public celebration and expressions of sorrow. Anglican buildings also tend to be the most inclusive in terms of ALL are welcome (even if not all can gain access!)
- The buildings can be inspiring, uplifting and a place of comfort and security. They can be welcoming and warm, bringing strangers into the love of God. Working together adds strength to our mission.
- Our church is often considered a welcoming Church. It is also the local Church for the Community and many people feel a connection to us. Recognising the "belong then believe", there is an opportunity to increase the use of the Buildings. This could meet a number of

needs and then people may move on in their Spiritual Journey. We recognised the need for increased Community use of the Buildings covering the areas identified in the Questionnaire. Encouragingly we are undertaking many of the activity listed. Our aim is to have a busy and lively Church Centre, aiming to be a Church in the Centre of the Community.

- A friendly, welcoming, comfortable, warm church that isn't stuffy.
- We are fortunate to have large spaces that allow us to serve the community in many different ways. Visitors using the facilities have expressed interest in the church by feeling comfortable as they make use of our spaces. Activities in the church and church centre help people to feel welcomed, loved and encounter God e.g. hundreds attend the Crib Service, a monthly lunch for the lonely. The different kinds of spaces allow us to respond to what people are coming for and what they need. We have missional communities in a hard to reach area, holding services in a local school building and a missional allotment, both meeting people where they are.
- If they are welcoming, appealing and accessible they will attract more people to worship in them and use them.
- - when they are used, flexible and attractive.
- The history of many faithful people gathering to worship and follow Jesus is a light in the community. We seek to reconnect people with their spiritual heritage and our building can help with this as it has been here for a while!
- When they are actively and creatively used to point people to Jesus Christ.
- Enormously! Looking at so many ways people use our spaces, it is only limited by our imagination.
- The location, profile and historic nature of the church make it iconic for the community and attract visitors.

Q13 How best do you think we, the Diocese of Chester, should move forward with regard to allowing 'sacred spaces' to flourish, and so in turn play their part in enabling The Church to flourish?

Summary - 18 responses were received. Comments covered a range of topics. The most frequent, (mentioned eight times), was to change the permissions process to be more flexible with making alterations, simpler, quicker, less bureaucratic and time - consuming, with some calling for more decisions to be made within the Church of England (Diocese and/or parish level) for buildings that are seeking minor changes or are not highly listed.

The second most frequent comment, (mentioned 6 times), was to be more missional. There was a call to be more balanced throughout the work of the Diocese, including priorities for discussions and strategic work, gaining approvals for change, financial investment (missional work, church halls as well as church buildings), and capacity building for parishes, with one call to make buildings financially self - sufficient beyond congregational giving.

This was closely followed by the need for more capacity at Diocesan level with buildings, including their missional potential, managing building projects and securing the finance, (mentioned five times).

The Diocese taking a more strategic approach to managing buildings was also raised five times, including closure of buildings that are no longer fit for the mission God intended and investing in those that do, combined with sharing space more frequently, both ecumenically and with the wider community.

Responses -

- Our beautiful ancient building enables us to achieve our mission.
- More multi - use of church buildings. Share buildings ecumenically. Close/mothball some churches. Churchyards should have environmental/green/recreational aspect.
- The Diocese needs to consider carefully the restrictions it imposes on churches, i.e. the faculty process. It's focus should be less about what can't be done rather providing an advisory service leading to approval, at speed and at low cost. The Diocese may consider itself to be exactly that, except the process does not lend itself to be so. It requires submission in a set format and then a response that

usually consists of a number of questions and then further consideration before approval – a lengthy bureaucratic process at best. Two examples: When we were considering installation of a new heating system we visited a number of churches that had done so. At one we asked about the faculty process. The incumbent responded that he didn't apply for one on the basis that whatever the response it would not be taken out! Our own experience with replacing the church pews – why a faculty should be required is a nonsense and serves no purpose. The fact that we have no faculty has made no difference. The fact that to replace chairs requires a retrospective faculty is all the more non - sensical. It's an illustration of a self - serving bureaucracy and is generally perceived negatively when it should be seen as a positive service. The Diocese needs to consider carefully how it can be so.

- Be much more flexible in allowing churches to make alterations that encourage people to actively play a part in church life in a pleasant and welcoming place for worship. Provide help and advice for projects enabling a flourishing church. Shorten procedures and delays in getting approval for change.
- Carefully assess each building - play up the very historical building (tours etc) , renovate well the buildings that are well located and can be renovated straightforwardly; those sapping resources that aren't significantly historical or well located - sell them or change use. In short use the building well or don't have it.
- Please improve the speed and efficiency of the faculty process. Become more accommodating during the process, recognising the practical use of the building for a worshipping community who give sacrificially to maintain and improve it. Encourage and support re - ordering and modernisation projects.
- The diocesan faculty system is too long - winded and too slow to respond. Particularly for smaller churches with fewer people with experience to drive/develop buildings projects (repairs and developments) - How many clergy are drawn into managing the projects. So a central diocesan team of experts (architects/surveyors/project managers/fund - raisers/etc) would help. Also to include help with communication for mission/heritage displays, etc Could the diocese be more supportive of development

for mission rather than as guardians for conservation and heritage. There are also too many church spaces of all denominations. The diocese could be a voice and mediator for ecumenical sharing of use and reducing the overall number whilst retaining a sense of local identity.

- Draw people in.
- Respect, encourage and support congregations in altering their churches to suit all forms of worship and use. The faculty process should be simplified and streamlined to reduce timescales. Reports on plans are expensive, take too long and generally reveal nothing new. Architects and the DAC should be able to make decisions, unless the building is Grade 1, to reduce the power of outside bodies objecting. These frequently have no church base, have no alternative solutions and run up bills while offering nothing.
- A reflection is that the Diocese focuses on the Church Building only, via the Quinquennial report. This tends to lead to action on the Church building, and our hall has been somewhat overlooked. So it would be good for the Quinquennial report to look at all the Church buildings in the future which are potentially available for Mission. That way we keep a more balanced outlook. Recently there has been more workshops with other Churches where good practice can be shared. The Diocese should continue to promote these so we can share good practice between Churches. Consideration of a "Church Health Audit" to see what we do well, and what we may not be seeing currently against the 5 marks of Mission. So thus balancing the focus on Buildings with the Focus on Mission. It is recognised that this is onerous for the smaller parishes, but should be available to bigger parishes in a more systematic way, perhaps as part of Archdeacons visitation?
- Help with finance or in obtaining finance.
- By having a flexible and open approach and ensuring money goes where needed, eg pioneering and missional communities and not necessarily only into buildings. Removing unnecessary bureaucracy and hindrances that faculties and listed buildings can provide.

- The diocese is too restrictive in its reluctance to embrace modern practices in resolving architectural problems and interior decoration.
- Pro - active advice on making spaces more useable, flexible and attractive.
- Being proactive in supporting churches to develop their sites to be more flexible and 'usable'. Making 'updating' church spaces easier and, where possible, removing restrictions and conditions which can increase the cost (and sometimes make any project too expensive).
- Every 'sacred space' needs to pay for itself independent of congregational giving.
- Help people conduct time management surveys of their buildings - so max use made 24/7 of space we have.
- Supporting schemes that enable flexible use of church buildings, ideally including grants.

Any other comments

- At a time, when for many, incomes are relatively static and inflation is increasing; it is becoming very difficult to encourage increased planned giving but the cost of repairs continues to climb. We are fortunate that we have received legacies which have enabled us to undertake some improvement work but for those churches where this is not happening then the prospect of maintaining their buildings must be a nightmare. Even simple things cost a huge amount (for example cleaning our church guttering was well over £3000 of which the bulk was for scaffolding). Given that our planned giving and general income just about meets the parish share we have very little left over for repairs; and to ask the congregation to come up with more money would in some cases be a step too far. As a warden I dread the day when we need to undertake a major repair, so far I have been fortunate but I do worry about this for the future.
- Provide long awaited training to spread the good news in the community to anyone we meet.

Appendix D Parish Survey Church Buildings and Halls 2018

- Always hold the theology of 'the church as people' the driver for this. Also don't be afraid to ask is this building fit for purpose.
- Buildings are incidental... it is the people who are important when building God's kingdom.
- The faculty system is a nightmare.
- Consider insurance for use of buildings by outside groups.

Church Buildings and Halls Case Studies

Redeveloping Places and Spaces
for Building God's Kingdom
in the Diocese of Chester



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Chester

Church Buildings and Halls Case Studies

Produced by

Chester Diocesan Board of Finance

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Cover Photo: Holy Trinity Church, Blacon

Foreword - By Bishop Mark Tanner

Building for God's Kingdom

*Here's the church and here's the steeple
Open the door and see all the people...*

Our church buildings stand at the heart of our communities, with our communities, and for our communities. They are places of welcome, thin spaces where we worship and encounter the living God. They are launchpads from which Christians are sent out in mission, and they make space for everyone whether or not they are members of the congregation. They punctuate the landscape of the present, stand as witness to the faith and commitment of previous generations in following the Lord Jesus Christ, and point us to a hope-fuelled future as we pray for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.



I warmly welcome this booklet; it is a deeply encouraging account of the different ways in which congregations across the Diocese of Chester are developing their buildings to make them more fit for purpose in today's world. Here you will read inspiring accounts of how parishes are discerning a radical vision of how God wants to use his people to reach others with his love. You will discover really practical ideas for improving church facilities. You will learn something of how congregations have raised funding and managed projects. The churches represented here are of many different kinds, sizes and traditions, and from many different settings, so there will be stories relevant to you, whatever your own context.

These case studies have been collected by Emily Allen, the Church Buildings Missioner in the Diocese of Chester, who has been actively involved in many of these projects. Emily's post was initially part-funded by Historic England, to whom we are very thankful. More recently, the enormous value of Emily's work to our parishes has led us to fund her role entirely from our own resources.

As I write these words, we are still in an extraordinary period of time when a global pandemic has greatly restricted the use of our church buildings, and curtailed many vital community activities. These challenges have only served to underline the key role our buildings play, and how good it will be when once more they can act as living centres of our towns, suburbs and villages.

The psalmist wrote that *'Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain'* (Ps 127:1). My prayer is that as you read these case studies, you will discover more of what the Lord is doing through his church today.

The Rt Revd Mark Tanner
Bishop of Chester

Foreword - By Judge David Turner QC

Down Memory Lane

This fascinating booklet has allowed me a heart-warming trip down memory lane as I recalled, through its case studies, some real highlights of my, now 22, years as your diocesan Chancellor.

Long gone are the Statements of Significance and Need, the architects' drawings and reports, the letters of support and objection, the DAC advice, the Faculties granted. Here are the 'finished products' – living buildings doing their job in mission and ministry. They are a joy to behold!

Buildings valued only for their past cease to be historic. They cannot be removed from the flow of history. Yes, change needs to be managed carefully, especially in some of our finest buildings, but it need not be feared as a threat, rather welcomed as evidence of life and growth.

This booklet tells something of that story.

Our buildings not only provide physical space for church and community, they signal Jesus's neighbourly proximity, they speak of God's welcome, warmth and friendship – of the Gospel itself.

And 'first impressions' matter. Our churches are 'open for business'.

Here are some powerful stories from the diocese of vision, creativity, generosity and fruitfulness which you will enjoy.

Here is a lively summary of practical advice and shrewd tips, blunt warnings and confidence-building encouragement which may help the next project.

I remember Bishop Michael Baughen, a former bishop of Chester, saying of building projects (large and small) that the prayer should always be that 'the spiritual will out-match the material'.

These case studies show how that can work. Let's rejoice in them and thank the God who has made them possible.

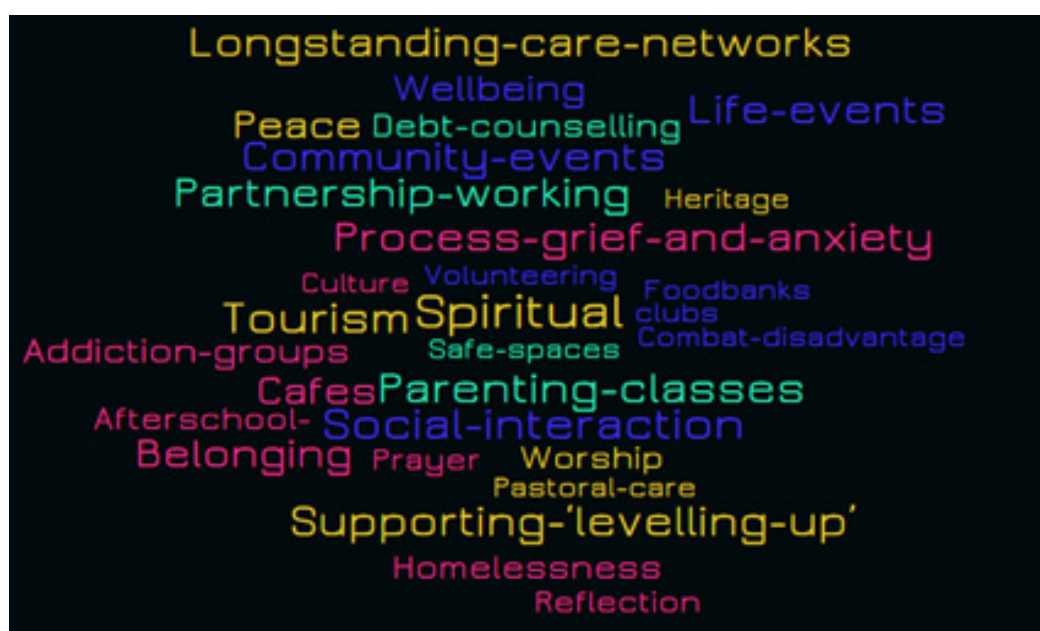


His Honour Judge David Turner QC
Chancellor of the Diocese of Chester

Reflections on places of worship in light of the COVID-19 pandemic

During the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is especially timely to consider the benefit of places and spaces where many people may come together. Over the last year, we have re-discovered our humanity lies in meaningful connections with others. We have seen an increased appreciation of spaces for gathered worship and social interaction, as well as spaces for prayer, reflection or support as more people experience bereavement, loss, and/or poor mental wellbeing. National research provides evidence for this:

1. [Churches, COVID-19 and Community: experiences, needs and supporting recovery.](#) By the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, University of York, March 2021. This shows that churches and their buildings have provided COVID-hit communities with crucial support in social care; well-being (in mind, body and spirit), place-making and heritage; and support for people suffering grief and loss.
2. [House of Good Report](#), by the National Churches Trust, October 2020. This ground-breaking report demonstrates the total economic and social value that church buildings generate in the UK.
3. The government-commissioned [Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant. A report for government by Danny Kruger MP](#), Sept 2020. This report advocates the government 'should be actively supporting the extraordinary work of organisations of all faiths' (p36).



Just some of the role of churches highlighted in the University of York report.

Read on to discover how places of worship can be spaces, alongside other places (online or physical), where God's Kingdom can be known in such a time as this.

Contents

Introduction	1
Case Studies	
(A) Entrance and Access	
1: Raised profile, young generations and services	2
2: Welcoming all ages/needs and outreach.....	5
Also see case studies 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10	
B) Halls/Community Centres	
3: Hall refurbishment - Lifelong learning and wellbeing.....	8
4: Hall new build - Healthy Church vision	11
5: Hall and church synergy - families and older people	14
C) Kitchen and Toilet Facilities with Space to Meet	
6: Community café, outreach and worship	17
7: Seven-day-a-week ministry.....	20
8: Mid-week growth and welcome	24
9: Church in the community	27
10: Care and welcome	30
Also see case studies 1 and 11	
D) Spires, Towers, Roofs and Other Repairs	
11: Community, mission and hospitality.....	32
12: Town centre church vision.....	35
13: Connecting with communities	38
Also see case studies 2, 3, 8 and 9	
E) Worship Space	
14: Worship, witness and welcome	41
Also see case studies 2, 5, 6 and 7	
Reflections on key themes and lessons learnt.....	43
Appendix - Full responses to lessons learnt questions	50

Introduction

People and buildings are our biggest assets in the life of the church, as God invites us to go in the strength we have to unite with Holy Spirit and be part of God's Kingdom coming to earth as it is in heaven, all redeemed under Christ.

This publication focuses on one aspect of this – the dynamic of places and spaces, (church buildings and halls), within mission and ministry. It aims to provide learning and inspiration for parishes seeking to realise the potential of their buildings, and to rejoice in what we have as a Diocese and what can be done to cherish this resource as part of local and national life.

Case studies are written by each church as they reflect on what they did, why, the impact it has made and how it was resourced. They are grouped by the main type of capital works undertaken, although noting many of the stories involve multiple types of works. In addition to the case study themes A) to E), you may also be interested in these electrical works:

- For audio/visual equipment, see case studies 7, 11 and 14
- For lighting, see case studies 7, 13 and 14
- For heating, see case studies 7 and 14

For a list of contributing parishes and their page reference numbers, please see the Acknowledgements page at the back of this publication.

Reflections on the generic learning from all case studies are captured in the second half of the publication. This begins by exploring the extent to which investing in places and spaces contribute to enabling people to meet with the love of God in a myriad of ways. It continues by sharing the lessons learnt from these first-hand experiences, which may be illuminating for other parishes considering similar work in the future.

As you read stories worth sharing of how God is working in people's lives, we hope you too will rejoice in what God has done across the Diocese, as well as reflect on what God may be saying for your own parish. Together, let us further seek God's will for how best places and spaces can be used for making life-long disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father, through the power of Holy Spirit.

'Mission, it's been said, is finding out what God is doing and joining in'.¹

¹ The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, [presidential address at General Synod in 2003](#).

Raised profile, young generations and services

St Oswald's church, Bollington

What was done?

In 2003 St Oswald's church had to step up from being the smaller daughter church to become the new Parish church; this was following the enforced closure of Bollington's former Parish church (St John the Baptist) due to structural problems too expensive to remedy. We therefore needed to make improvements to St Oswald's church building to match increased demands on its use both for worship and mission activities.

Following the installation of the 1907 oak altar and the War Memorial wall plaque reclaimed from St John's church, we replaced St Oswald's original rush-seated chairs with multicoloured upholstered chairs supplied by Rosehill, marking St Oswald's centenary in 2008.

We then set about the first phase of our building project- the extension and new entrance. The footprint of land surrounding St Oswald's is relatively small, so we had limited scope to extend outwards. Our solution was to take down the side porch and rebuild it, re-orientated from north to west-facing, (a 90 degree turn). This created a new space along the length (west side) of the building, housing three toilets and a store-room. A large glazed porch linked the extension with the church building. This formed our new main entrance, now fully accessible to all, with a new path leading to the entrance without any steps. This phase of building work cost around £184,000 and was completed in January 2013.

We commissioned a piece of artwork to fill the redundant side-porch doorway which now faced the main road. The external mosaic was a great community project with over 850 people placing individual tiles into the design, including Bishop Peter! *(See the full story on our website: stoswaldbollington.org.uk)*



Why do it?

Our new extension was designed to meet the need for St Oswald's to offer a more visible, accessible and welcoming main entrance, as well as to increase our storage space and toilet facilities (from a single loo to three).

The project was all with a view (for a future phase two) to maximise the available floor space at the west end of the nave, increase the influx of natural light and create better kitchen facilities.

What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

The new extension and level access entrance have given us the ability to raise our profile within the community and to open our doors more often to cater for a wider range of groups, such as the weekly After-School group for pupils in years 7 to 9 and our growing Praise and Play Parent and Toddler group.

We can also better accommodate larger services, concerts, festival events and social functions within the church (we do not own a church hall), ideally gaining some income from other users (if possible and appropriate) to help meet our maintenance/running costs, as well as aiming to serve a wider variety of evolving community needs.

We now open the church building all day on Wednesdays for people to call in for private prayer, putting the kettle on for refreshments if they wish, with personal reflection sometimes aided by thought-provoking displays, such as over the period of "Thy Kingdom Come". Imaginatively using our flexible space means we can offer Schools' Experience Weeks on biblical themes, reaching about 350 of our local primary school children each year.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

We are increasingly recognised as the Parish church of our community, with a considerable rise in the number of young families feeling more at ease in our re-furnished building (greatly enabled too by our newly qualified volunteer Children and Families' Worker).

As we develop as an outward-looking congregation, our versatile space is ideal for Quiet Days and a range of social, charitable and artistic events, all expressing God's love for the world.

How was it resourced?

The new seating was paid for by fundraising events and donations from individuals in the congregation.

Following careful PCC consideration, our little mission church, Holy Trinity Kerridge, closed in September 2009 with the express agreement that the sale proceeds fund the extension at St Oswald's.

The artwork was generously funded by an anonymous donor in memory of a loved one who had recently died.

Case Study 1

Next Phase

We are currently embarked on a “future phase” to make more space at the west end of the nave by re-locating the kitchen into the former main porch area at the southwest side of the nave (on the opposite side from the new glazed porch entrance). To do this, it has meant creating a new fire exit in a former window space on the south wall of the nave, which is nearly complete, and then we can block up the old porch door to create the kitchen space there.



Welcoming all ages/needs and outreach

St Thomas' church, High Lane

What was done?

The quinquennial report in 2009 and a subsequent survey of the tower recommended the need to repair the stonework of the tower, coping stones, windows and door surround. We also wanted to make improvements to the building to make it more accessible and usable. To date we have completed three phases:

Phase 1. Three-year project 2014-2016 total project cost £182,700

1. Repair/replacement works to spire including: stonework, weather vane, tie-rod, wooden cross-beam, hopper, pointing, waterproofing, bird netting, cast-iron bell frame and lightning system.
2. Repairs to roof stonework, pointing, spring-stone and parapet, apse string course, lightning system and roof vents.
3. Repair of four windows showing the highest level of deterioration namely three apse windows and one porch window. Repair of the front door stonework surround.
4. New works including disabled access to the front door including a sloping pathway, platform area and handrails; and relaying of the path from the front door and disabled access to the lych-gate.

Phase 2. 2017 total project cost £15,000

Lowering of the floor in the North Aisle to make a multi-usable space that accommodates wheelchair users, child buggies and an area that is used for displays, events and group activities

Phase 3. 2017 estimated project cost £15,000

Installation of a paved turning and drop area within the churchyard to alleviate hazardous stopping on a very busy A6 road.



Case Study 2

Why do it?

Our vision is 'St Thomas' is a living church in the community of High Lane where everyone is welcome, and our mission is to share the love of Christ with all.'

To fulfil this vision, St Thomas' had to embark on some major repairs and alterations to make the building fit for use for the present and future generations without the security of having all the funding identified.

The building structure is now secure and weatherproofed but the addition of a stone ramp in keeping with the original building has made it more accessible and visually more attractive.

Equally, having an accessible multi-use area inside the church enables far more activities to take place and not just on Sunday.

What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

The church has become more prominent in the village of High Lane. Commencing with lots of publicity, especially in our parish magazine telling the community about the repairs and enhancements, keeping a monthly running commentary of progression of the projects. The repairs were highly visible when the tower was covered in scaffolding.

The last phase with the addition of a paved turning and drop area allowed some landscaping that meant the church has a more visible presence from the busy main road.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

The survey in 2014 showed an attendance of 17,740, with a repeat survey in 2016 showed an attendance of 20,982. An increase of 18%. The increase is mainly due to opening the church to regular or occasional events during the week.

The project provided a focus and a kick start for missional outreach and a greater community involvement for St Thomas within the village of High Lane. Reaching out into the community was a first step in bringing people to Christ as well as making the church building available for use by the community for other activities and events.

The alterations to the building provided us with a larger space to hold a Messy Church



Case Study 2

once a month on Saturday afternoons. We were able to offer the church as a venue for a youth club for teenagers with special needs – C.O.A.S.T (Chill Out at St Thomas’)- enabling a group of young people and their parents space to get together and interact outside their own homes. The provision of the easy access ramp and the removal of pews in the north transept is of great benefit to this group and it continues to develop and grow in number.

For many years it has been church practise to hold a Christmas Fair in the village hall, an event that attracts over 150 people, but with the alterations in church we embarked on a new venture “A Taste of Christmas “, with the event being held in the church, giving more people the opportunity to visit the church building. Other ventures have included a Crib Festival held over several days, a WW1 exhibition, several concerts and talks and a U3A Carol Concert.

Opening the church for greater use by the community has been a great thing to do and having a church that is well maintained and easily accessible is important and I can’t over-state how much everyone using the building values the recent work done to enhance and repair the building. The new entrance elicits many favourable comments and the work on the spire was closely followed by members of the community who have expressed their appreciation that St Thomas’ is prepared to maintain and improve this important building in the life of the community.

How was it resourced?

Phase 1: mainly a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) project which took three years of project management activities for design paperwork, money and permissions before any actual work could commence.

HLF grant	£118,700	65%
St Thomas PCC	£40,000	22%
VAT Recovery	£24,000	13%
Total	£182,700	

Phase 2: £13,000 was funded by St Thomas PCC fund raising activities and VAT recovery £2,000.

Phase 3: was mainly provided by a local building firm, George Cox Ltd, as part of their Foundation Trust and fund raising by St Thomas PCC £3,000.

Hall refurbishment - Lifelong learning and wellbeing

St John's Community Centre, Buglawton, Congleton

What was done?

St John's planned to refurbish the kitchen in the church hall, but God and our then Curate The Revd Lynne Cullens had other plans and led us on a new path which was much more challenging. This was now our mission... to show God's love by serving the community and church across the Parish of Congleton by transforming two weary buildings- a derelict schoolmaster's

house and an under-used church hall, into a Community Centre, ran by St John's.



We first needed to make our church hall structurally sound. The 150-year-old iron nails were barely holding the roof slates in place, so it was a relief to find that most slates were in good condition. A vapour barrier (the Victorians didn't have such materials) was fitted and the slates refitted with copper galvanised nails. Cast steel guttering and down-spouts finished off the roof. Stone masonry was re-pointed, and all the old windows were replaced with heritage glazed units.

Inside, a huge steel girder now spans the building, creating a large mezzanine floor above the new kitchen space. The entrance is via a new glazed area, linking the renovated schoolmaster house to the hall, allowing access to the hall, kitchen or mezzanine floor without disturbing other groups using these facilities. There is under-floor and roof insulation, exposed original Victorian beams and facilities including high speed internet and an ultra-short throw state-of-the-art HD projector.

The Community Centre focuses on lifelong learning and all aspects of wellbeing (secular, charitable and Christian activities). This was achieved in a way that is relevant to the needs of the local community today, based upon research collated by us and our partners. For example, Cheshire East Council's Local Engagement Team provided support for a local survey, as well as statistics on Buglawton residents' economic, health and social deprivation. This research was foundational to ensure the Community Centre was tailored to meet these needs across all age groups.

Why do it?

The vision has always been to love our neighbour as ourselves.

The aim of transforming two old weary buildings into a vibrant church-led Community Centre was to create a focus for the community and provide a point of access for services aimed at improving the wellbeing of all residents across Buglawton. Community needs and skills were at the heart of the process at all stages of the project, remaining in-keeping with our Christian principles.

The redeveloped St John's Community Centre offers the people of Buglawton and Congleton a bridge between the community we live in and the facilities and services offered by a range of charities, support agencies, local clubs and the church.

What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

When it was suggested by various people that we should have a Coffee-Church in the Centre, most thought this would be a really good way of engaging with members of the community who don't often come into church for Sunday worship. Some people thought that Coffee-Church would be best in the morning, others thought that the afternoon would be best...and in true British fashion, 'Tea-Church' was plucked out of the air!

Tea-Church opens conversations about Jesus and everyday life, such as one talk about who did the washing up in your house and why Jesus was so annoyed with those concerned about washing hands, and another on the Lord's Prayer. Everyone joined in a lively and interesting debate. Stopping the discussions was tricky but sandwiches, cakes and tea was an incentive; the catering team excel. Age ranges from 7 to 97. Food and refreshments bond people of all ages together with good fellowship.

We host a popular luncheon club every Friday. This is a most enjoyable time, as some of the guests don't get out without some encouragement. A lift to the Centre is provided free of charge; we hire the Congleton Partner 17-seater community bus, as many do not have their own transport. The meal always starts with grace said very differently by a range of people but always giving thanks to the God who provides all to his people.

St John's Community Centre opens its doors every morning to serve toast and drinks free of charge to all children and parents going to the primary school next door; this is well received. Cookery lessons for a small number of young families has helped with healthy eating as well.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

Volunteers are the bedrock of most of our mission objectives. Being a volunteer means giving time to help the Centre operate and more importantly giving time to sit and talk with people. We have about 30 volunteers from the Parish, other churches and residents who want to do their bit for the community and have a meaningful input that gives them the satisfaction that it's worthwhile.

Case Study 3

Attendance so far to Tea-Church has been encouraging, with over 35 people attending on occasion. Numbers are growing. In 2017, about 250 people came to the Tea-Church, of which roughly 80 people were, as far as we know, non-church goers, so this was a breakthrough.

The luncheon club every Friday morning forms a successful bridge to Tea-Church. Normally we have about 10 volunteers on a rota basis, including young helper from the David Lewis Centre. Volunteers help prepare and serve a two-course hot meal to about 45 people. In the first year (2017), over 1,000 hours of volunteer time were given towards this worthwhile service...this is truly remarkable...God bless all our volunteers! We served 1,500 meals.

St John's Community Centre had a footfall in the first year of over 11,000 of which about 1/6 was led by or directly linked to church initiatives. This footfall exceeds the forecast used in our grant applications which was up to 10,000 after 5 years. We monitor the centre hours by a crude classification of activities...physical, social, mental, emotional and spiritual...the spiritual number of hours was 100 in a total of 1,500 hours last year but is growing.

How was it resourced?

Parish members kindly donated monthly and some gave surprising large lump sums, as they saw the work progressing and got the message that the project team were serious about the mission of loving our neighbours as ourselves.

Non-church members, the local Authority, Grant providers, WREN (being the largest), residents and a large legacy all helped to raise the £410,000 needed for the project from inception in 2012 to completion in 2016.



Hall new build - Healthy Church vision

St Mary's Handbridge Centre, Chester

What was done?

The building of a new Community Centre. The St Mary's old church hall was built in 1969 and in need of constant repair. The hall was used on a regular basis by members of the congregation for church activities and by members of the local community groups. Essentially, however, the hall was one large room with a Parish office, a small kitchen and toilets. A larger building was required with additional rooms to meet the increasing needs of the church and the local community.

church-based youth groups had flourished in the past, but they had declined, partly because of the lack of suitable accommodation and adequate facilities.

The stimulus to build not just a church hall but a full Community Centre started because of two requirements. Firstly, the need to replace the ageing building and secondly the results of a Healthy church event, which highlighted the need to reach out to other people. The vision was established for the church and a new Centre to become the active hub of the local community in Handbridge.

In 2014 the PCC took the decision to proceed with the building of a Community Centre.

Why do it?

In 2014, the vision of the PCC was to: 'Build a Centre which will be the active focus of the community. The vision is to re-vitalise the life of the whole community and the work of the church in the Parish of Handbridge in Chester'.

The Healthy Church Day in 2014 revealed that, as Christians, we needed to reach out to support and serve the local community. With such a large project and funding challenge we moved forward in faith and with prayer that all will be well in achieving God's will.



Case Study 4

Extensive consultation took place with the church congregation and the local community to determine what was required from a new building to meet the needs of both the church and people in the area. The results of the consultation led to the development of a design brief for the architect. At every stage during the planning of the Centre, people were asked for their views on the design. This ensured the building design matched the needs identified and our vision.

What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

So many people have worked together to raise money; evidence of their commitment to a development that will benefit the whole community. When the building was completed, over 250 people attended the opening of the Centre by the Bishop of Chester in June 2018.

From the interest and support already shown by people throughout the Parish, we believe St Mary's and the Centre is starting to become the hub of the community.

The Centre has a large hall and two community rooms. However, the actual hub of the Centre is a servery area that is open to all to make refreshments. This very much a meeting and social area. This is already seen as a very successful part of the Centre design and has a focus on addressing social isolation.

The rooms in the Centre have been named after people of Handbridge who lived in the 1800's on the site of the church before it was built in 1887. The family names are also mentioned on the First World War Memorial Plaque in St Mary's church.

The two delicatessen shops in Handbridge are also benefitting through events in the Centre that require catering. The local community Police Officer uses the Centre as a base and can use a small meeting room for private discussions.



Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

At the time of writing, the Centre has only been open for a year. It is too early to assess the full impact in terms of spiritual growth. When at the planning stage, many visits were made to other church halls and centres. One of the results from this research indicated that a new Centre often leads on to a growth in the congregation over time.

The Centre is regularly used for Baptism parties and funeral events. All the regular church-based meetings are held in the Centre. The Chester 'Churches Together' forum often use the Centre as a venue for their meetings. The building of the Centre is a visible witness to our Christian ethos at St Mary's to reach out, support and care for people in the Parish of Handbridge. Over fifty groups and organisations use the Centre on a regular basis and the Centre has become a hub for community activities.

For the first time, in addition to a Parish Office, the Rector has his own dedicated office in the Centre. This has provided the opportunity for the Rector to meet people of all ages when they use the Centre. During the first year the Centre has been managed by a group of dedicated volunteers from the congregation and the local community. This is a witness to their love and care for others.

On Christmas Day 2018, a group of people from the community provided a free Christmas meal and entertainment for seventy people who were on their own, students who could not go home and the elderly. This was a real expression of Christian love and met our vision of reaching out to the whole community.

With a building project of this size there will be many problems and challenges to overcome, but if you have faith, you will create a building to extend God's Kingdom.

How was it resourced?

Fundraising began in 2014. We were fortunate in receiving several large donations. These included generous private donations of £250,000 and £100,000. The sale of the old Rectory raised £150,000 and £200,000 was donated from the Grosvenor Estate, Pledges from the congregation raised £100,000. With a build cost of £1,230,000 and fees of £250,000 this still left a substantial amount of money to be raised. The remaining money required was raised through applications to Trusts and Foundations, and fundraising events organised by many people over the four-year period. We were very grateful for the active help of the Lord Mayor of Chester, Councillor Razia Daniels and the Chester MP Chris Matheson in supporting fundraising initiatives.

A 20-year loan of £250,000 was taken out with Methodist Chapel Aid, so that building could start in 2017. (The repayment of this loan is through the income generated by the Centre).

A grant from the Big Lottery of £78,000 enabled the complete fitting-out of the Centre to be undertaken.

At the end of the first year of the Centre being open, the income covered the outgoing costs of running the Centre and the annual loan repayments.

Hall and church synergy - families and older people

St Peter's church, Heswall

What was done?

The project was to provide the Parish church of St Peter, Heswall, with modern, adequate facilities for its growing congregations in the 21st century. The vision was launched in 2003.

The major phase was to replace a small, antiquated, wooden hall built in the 1960s. The new St Peter's Centre is a 400m² modern multi-user facility, which fronts directly on to Village Road. This phase was completed in July 2007 and it is the focus of this case study.

There was a much smaller second phase that was carried out in the first half of 2011. The interior of the church was completely cleaned, repainted, rewired, re-lit and provided with audio-visual facilities, a crèche, a nave platform and disabled access.

Why do it?

Our parish vision was, and still is, to be a church for the whole community of Heswall. St Peter's church is sited on the western edge of the town on a promontory overlooking the River Dee close to the older 'lower-village' which is a designated conservation area.

There was a 1960s small hall, hidden from view, between the church and Village Road. This wood-framed building was in very poor condition with antiquated facilities and inadequate space. The concept was to build a multiuser facility that fronted onto Village Road, enhanced the village environment and opened a view of the church behind it.



What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

The St Peter's Centre has become a key hub in the lower village. It houses the parish office (which is open weekday mornings) and the Rector's office.

There is a large, carpeted, welcoming foyer with round coffee tables in which a drop-in operates on weekday mornings. All the Centre's rooms and facilities are accessed from the foyer. The comfortable meeting room, hall and foyer have large full-length windows overlooking a lawn. The hall is equipped with excellent audio/visual facilities. It is linked to the large well-equipped kitchen by a reasonably sized annex to facilitate the serving of food and which also can be used as another meeting room. The fixtures and fittings are of a high standard appropriate for Heswall.

The entrance is on the same level as Village Road, so it is easily accessible for families and those using walking aids.

The building is in use seven days a week by church groups for both children and adults, uniformed organisations, local community groups, funeral receptions, children's parties and privately-run sessions for pre-school children and adults' fitness.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

The project has had very positive impacts in both spiritual and numerical terms on our diverse congregations. Church attendance includes many families as well as large numbers of retired people. So there is a broad range of Sunday services including an informal family service at 11am with music group and activities for children, a 9.15am common worship Communion service with robed choir and organ and BCP services at 8.00am and 6.30pm.

Impact on families

On the 1st Sunday in the month the 11am service moves into the Centre for Café Church in which the whole family are engaged. On another two Sundays each month children move into the Centre during the service.

The audio/visual facilities in both the Centre and church building have given greater flexibility in modes of presentation (including use of internet and YouTube), thus creating services that are visually stimulating and relevant to families with little previous church connections. Using the nave dais in the church building has brought the leaders close to the people.

Facilities such as the glass-fronted crèche with A/V links, activities for younger children and the easy safe access have encouraged families to come.

Our church school attracts new families and now more are becoming committed. During the week there are many events in the Centre for children.

The foyer has created a pleasant, safe, welcoming and waiting area for parents.

Case Study 5

Impact on the older generation

During the week large numbers of our retired members have become involved in helping run the daily drop-in, weekly lunch club and other events in the Centre for the local community. These activities plus the refreshments there after church services have built up a much more caring, outward-looking, collaborative and welcoming church community.

The working together in the Centre, plus the use of service booklets related to the church calendar and use of audio-visual facilities in church, has created a stronger sense of togetherness at the traditional church services.

Home group numbers have increased, and many new people have become regular attendees at Sunday services.

However, overall numbers at the traditional services have not increased greatly over the past 10 years because new members are needed just to replace those who have passed on.

The midweek Communion service is now held in the warm, easily accessible meeting room in the Centre followed by coffee at the drop-in. This setting has created a welcoming environment.

How was it resourced?

The major phase cost £850,000. It was primarily funded by an appeal, mainly from church members, which eventually raised £670,000.

The parish was successful in being awarded a BIFFA award grant of £50,000. The parish owned the original of an altar picture that was loaned to a museum in Liverpool and this was sold to a museum in Chester for £40,000. A small building on Village Road that had been used as the Parish office was sold for £102,000.

The £130,000 cost of the second phase was funded by donations and some surplus from the first phase appeal.



Community café, outreach and worship

Holy Trinity church, Blacon, Chester

What was done?

A kitchenette was installed in the south-east corner of the church building, to make it easier to run our popular community café, which previously was held in the nearby church hall.

Additionally, the worship space was altered, building a platform out from the chancel and removing three rows of pews, to bring the High Altar nearer the congregation and in effect shortening the nave a little. New altar rails were made to fit the platform, designed to be easily removable so that the space created could be more adaptable.

We also installed an accessible WC and ramp adjoining the choir vestry, so the building is now fully disabled friendly.

Why do it?

To improve our connections as a church with the local community, we started our Outreach Project in autumn 2013. This proved to be very successful, and a popular community café became a central feature of the project, (alongside a parent and toddler group and a gardening club).

Initially the café was designed to be in the corner of the church hall, running alongside a GP surgery that also uses the church hall. Due to the success of our café, and the noise this generated causing disruption for the surgery, it became necessary to move the café into the church building. This proved to be even more popular!

However, we had no facilities for preparing or serving drinks or food in the church, and everything had to be set up from scratch before café sessions (and cleared away afterwards). This was very time consuming and heavy work for volunteers we would otherwise want to be using their time and gifts for other aspects of our project.





Another problem was the size of the church building was usually far too great for the size of the congregation. The organ and choir are at the back, so not easily possible to move the congregation further forward. Moreover, the layout of the sanctuary and nave was entirely based around formal Eucharistic worship. There was very little space to do more flexible worship. So, being able to make alterations to the worship area frees us up to consider more imaginative options for worship.

What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

Not only alterations, but new carpeting, repainting the walls and sanding the floor give effect of feeling as though we have renewed the whole church building. The quality of the workmanship, and the sympathetic way the woodwork has been done, has impressed most visitors. church members who were highly ambivalent about the works beforehand have spoken enthusiastically about it since seeing it completed.

The free Wi-Fi now available in the church enables us to become a venue for computer training. Additionally, we have now been able to start using a card reader to receive payments and donations, and we also now have the option of using online material during worship.

The accessible WC – as well as the more modern inviting feel of the building – has enabled other groups to plan to use our building as a venue. It also means that we regularly have people using mobility aids coming to church services or the community cafe.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

The biggest numerical growth has been in the fringe of the church membership. We have about 200 people coming regularly to our community outreach project. Additionally, many hundreds of people come to us to the activities we hold during school holidays. We have seen new members of the church join through these various activities. In addition, because of the new layout at the front of church, we have changed our worship pattern, including contemporary worship (using the platform created at the East end of the nave) which was previously not possible. This new service, which has only just started, is much more seeker-friendly and we hope will attract more young people.

Because of the layout of the building, we have also been able to introduce a spiritual element to the community café, with a dedicated prayer space.

How was it resourced?

We had quotes for the building and joinery work which came to almost £40,000. By the time 'extras' had been paid for with the building project, (such as trimmings which had not been in the original designs for the kitchenette, including a dishwasher and installation of Wi-Fi in the church) the total spend was about £54,000. We are a relatively small church in a deprived urban estate (only a minority of church members can gift aid, for example). So, although in the scheme of church alterations that amount of money does not sound very great, it is enormous for us.

At the start of the process, we received a payment of £2,000 from Rowlinsons (building developers who had been working on new housing opposite the church and had temporarily placed their site office on our grounds) which the PCC decided to set aside for the building project.

We received £7,300 in private donations from church members, and fundraising (through Christmas Fair, pancake day etc) raised £1,400.

We would never have been able to attain our target without the support of grant making bodies. We received a total of £41,000 in grants, therefore the total raised before the start of building work was £51,700. Grants were promised or received from the following organisations:

Dame Susan Morden Charity	£20,000
National Churches Trust	£10,000
All Churches Trust	£1,250
Beatrice Laing Trust	£2,000
Ursula Keyes Trust	£2,000
Rylance Smith Trust	£750
WO Street Trust	£5,000
TOTAL	£41,000

Seven-day-a-week ministry

St Michael and All Angels church, Macclesfield

What was done?

What started out as plans to refurbish two existing toilets in the Parish room resulted in a nationally recognised award-winning scheme, both for the church and our Architects, Barlow Wright and Phelps of Buxton.



St Michael's church, located in the heart of the town of Macclesfield, has been a place of worship since the end of the thirteenth century. By 1997, its fabric and facilities spoke of a past age. What was needed in the eyes of the church council was a complete "makeover" to the whole of the interior if we were to continue in our mission, worship and service in making known the unchanging message of the gospel of Christ in our town today.

So began a five-year period of appointing an architect, visiting various churches for ideas, feasibility studies, refurbishment plans, liaising with Chester Diocese, the Consistory Court, raising funds and campaign launch until tenders for the proposed project were issued and the contractor appointed in 2003.

The project was to completely refurbish the west end of the church, with the Narthex (welcoming area), supporting two floors above, providing rooms for meetings and choir practice, while at ground floor level the plan allowed for a modern kitchen, additional toilets, the installation of a lift and new oak staircase, and office space for the administration staff. The interface wall between the Narthex and upper floors and the Nave was divided with bespoke cut-glass panels by Pilkington Glass, giving dramatic visual views from both sides.

The whole of the interior stonework was cleaned, new lighting and sound systems installed, along with new electric cabling. The old heating system updated together with a new boiler. The organ console moved, the organ pipes cleaned in the worship areas, the existing wood block floor polished and sealed, carpets laid in the Narthex and the meeting rooms. The old parish room was refurbished into a Youth Centre adjacent to the Chancel. On completion, a new octagonal platform was placed in the centre of the Nave for the communion table.

Case Study 7

Overall, a very challenging twelve months contract period both for the contractor and the church family. While the works were being carried out between the summer of 2003 and 2004, the congregation were grateful for the invitations to use the Town Hall and Methodist church for Sunday worship. Throughout the planning and building stages, the foundation of the project from start to finish was underpinned with prayer and faith by the whole of the church family and friends.

Why do it?

Although the existing church with its great historic fabric was in a prime location in the town centre, it remained locked for most of the working week. The inside lacked many modern facilities as well as being dark, gloomy and not very inviting.

From our many meetings and discussions, it became obviously clear that there was a great desire not only to provide modern amenities for the present and future congregations but to “open the doors” to share the Good News of Christ to the wider community. There was a great need for a seven-day ministry especially to those being in town during the working week and weekends, whether they be shoppers, office staff, tourists, as well as providing a friendly meeting place, suitably equipped for those wishing to host events.

Our refurbishment plans had to achieve their aims of transforming a forbidding interior into an open, accessible, warm and well-lit environment with modern, well-equipped facilities, with volunteers on hand to welcome people in and to provide the resources to meet their needs.

What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

For the building, we have contributed to its general long-term maintenance. Now the better access and the introduction of the three storey Narthex with staircase to the two upper floors has increased the viewing of the many stained-glass windows, but most importantly the refurbished church has increased greatly the footfall especially during town centre events such as Treacle Market Sunday and Barnaby Week. There have been times when we have been overwhelmed by the numbers coming into church. The building is now capable of accommodating concerts, festival events, meetings, training and counselling sessions, as well as being a brighter and friendlier environment for younger people or Mums and Toddler groups which are a weekly feature, as are our evolving contacts with various schools.

We now open seven days a week with refreshments served every morning enabling the public to visit the historic features and the many interesting and inspirational exhibitions, along with the opportunity to meet informally with members of staff to discuss any spiritual or emotional concerns. Two excellent and well-received exhibitions were by an artist displaying modern icon paintings, and a collection of light alabaster sculptures illustrating the feelings of grief and loss. Any income received from events helps towards our running costs as well as serving the needs of our wider community.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

We have all been amazed with the increase in numbers who now visit St Michael's since the completion of the project. Opening the doors to the wider community with a newly-refurbished interior with acceptable amenities, has enabled us to provide much needed facilities for mother and toddler groups, a friendly stopping-off environment for morning shoppers, a meeting place for events, as well as a challenge for widening the church's ministry.

There has been a considerable increase in the number of young families using the building both on Sundays and during the week, as well as the increase number of schools who regularly attend services and various activities.

However, the main change has been from our own congregation who have accepted their wider role in being more welcoming, outward-looking, confident and more responsive in taking out the unchanging message of our Lord to the more challenging areas in our town.

How was it resourced?

The overall project cost was in the region of £1.5m including professional fees and interest charges from Charity Bank for borrowing a loan, which enabled the project to go ahead in 2003. Without the loan we would more than likely have had to defer the building works for the best part of another year, which with inflation could have added an additional £50k to the overall costs.



Case Study 7

From our Treasurer's notes, the sources of income are divided as follows:

1. Legacies	27%
2. Gifts – Pledges and	39%
3. Sale of Property (the sale of the Parish Office on Churchside)	17%
4. Gift Aid Refunds	8%
5. Events	2%
6. Bank Interest Received	6%
7. Sales of goods and services	1%

It was the decision of the church council members, backed by the overwhelming majority of the congregation, not to seek funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. We had received a grant from English Heritage prior to this major project for repairs to stonework but with the amalgamation of English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund we had no alternative but to apply for funds from the newly-named Heritage Lottery Fund for work in repairing our lead roofing on the Chancel and part of the Nave in 2013.

One long-standing member of the church, who had seen all the improvements and outcomes take place, stated "You know, the biggest change which took place when all this [work to the inside of the church] was done took place up here", pointing to her head. She had recognised that prior to 'Open Door' the church community had been contentedly meeting together and using the building for worship. Although 'Open Door' was intended to be a means of welcoming people INTO the building, it also had the effect of helping the church members see OUT and recognise God's call to serve our neighbourhood.

St Michael's church is now at the early stages of 'what next?' The church is open every day of the week, and used and appreciated by many more people than before any of the above work took place. As a fellowship we are also acknowledged to be an interested and committed 'force for good' within our part of town. So what next? How can we further develop our sense of mission? What additional opportunities are there and resources do we need?

Building on the experience of 'Open Door' we are returning to the process of discernment under God: "Who is God calling St Michael's church to be?", and from that then "What do we need to do as a community and to our building to fulfil that sense of God-given vocation?". To be continued ...!

Mid-week growth and welcome

Holy Trinity church, Little Bollington, in the United Benefice of Rostherne with Bollington, High Legh and Over Tabley

What was done?

Holy Trinity is a small church built in 1858 and situated on the outskirts of the village of Little Bollington and next to the local Church of England Primary School. The strapline of the parish magazine is 'Church and Community Working Together' and in 2010 it was decided that to further that vision the two vestries at the west end church should be re-ordered to provide an accessible toilet and kitchen, and that the font which was sited between them should be moved to the front so as to provide space for refreshments after services and other church and community activities.

As part of the re-ordering it was also decided to create ramps to the north porch from the car park and the road. Although Holy Trinity is not a listed building, the desire of the congregation was that the re-ordering should make as much use of the existing fabric of the vestries as possible in the construction of the new facilities.

A Faculty and planning consent were granted in 2012, work commencing shortly afterwards. Except for electrical wiring, and the laying of tarmac, all work was undertaken by volunteers from the congregation and community. That meant the construction took longer than it would have if a contractor had been employed, but the financial saving was significant.

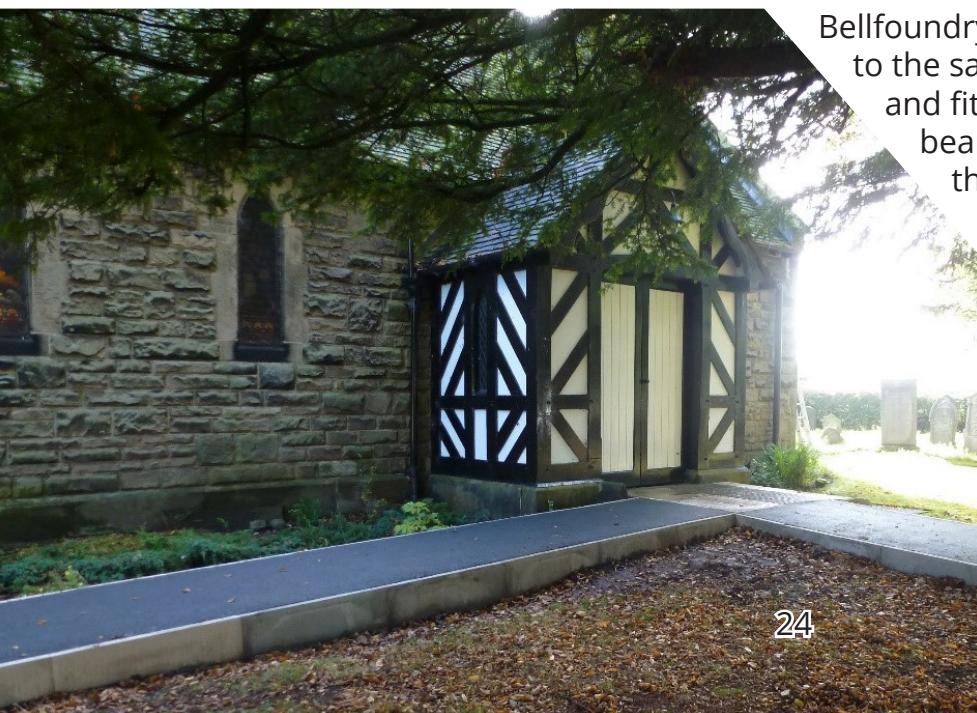
During construction the wiring had its regular inspection and was deemed unsafe. Therefore, the whole building was rewired, and the opportunity taken to install new lighting. Asbestos in the boiler room, discovered during the rewiring, was tested and found to be the least harmful variety. It was removed by members of the congregation and disposed of by a licenced operator.

The organ is unusual in that it is the village memorial to those who served in 1914-1918 War. It was decided that we have it completely rebuilt in time for the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War.

The bellcote needed repointing so we took the opportunity to remove the church bell which had been cast by Taylor's Bellfoundry in 1877 and take it back to the same foundry to be restored and fitted to a new headstock. New bearing blocks were fitted into the stonework of the bellcote.

At the same time a new weathervane was made to match an image in an original painting of the church.

A new gate to the churchyard was commissioned and installed.



Case Study 8

The ceilings of the chancel and nave have been renewed using insulation backed plaster board and scaffolding was used to make repairs to degraded areas of plaster in the church. The scaffolding was paid for by a donation and the materials were paid for by the congregation.

Why do it?

The reordering was intended to make Holy Trinity accessible to the congregation and to encourage increased use by the community. It was also intended to make the church accessible to the school next door which has close links with the church.

What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

During the design and Faculty process, some members of the congregation expressed doubts about the need to change a building that they had known and loved for many years. At a public meeting to explain what we proposed to do, there were some interesting comments! However, as we continued to explore the way forward, people began to catch a vision of what was possible.

The construction phase, which lasted 18 months, was well received and a vehicle for community cohesion. The place of Holy Trinity church in the community has been enhanced, and the role of the church increasingly recognised. Sub-committees of the local Parish Meeting have met in the church when their usual venue was unavailable. As one of only two fully accessible churches in the United Benefice (four churches in three parishes), Holy Trinity now hosts amongst other events: -

- A midweek 'Communion and Cake' for people from across the Benefice who, for various reasons, are unable to attend Sunday services.
- A monthly school assembly where groups from all year groups take turns to ring the bell before the service.
- Flower festivals and a 'Songs of Praise' during the annual Little Bollington Festival.
- Special events for children at Easter and Christmas.
- An outside vigil service around a fire at Easter.



Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

There has been slight growth in the numbers coming to Sunday services. The main impact of the project has been the increased number coming to midweek services. Having a fully accessible building makes it a great resource.

How was it resourced

The reordering, rewiring and new lights were paid for by fundraising events and individual donations.

All the labour was given by members of the congregation and community.

A local farmer gave free use of a mini digger to install new drainage and the water treatment plant. A local landowner gave a corner of the field adjacent to the churchyard for the water treatment plant so that it did not take up space in the churchyard.

The organ restoration was part funded by a grant from the War Memorials Trust, the balance being paid for by the congregation.

The bell was restored by a local family in memory of their daughter on what would have been the year of her 21st birthday.

A local blacksmith made and donated the weathervane and made a railing for the ramp which was designed to match the wrought iron balustrade on the stairs to the pulpit.

Church in the community

St Thomas' church, Stockton Heath

What was done?

Our Quinquennial report in 2008 identified major restoration and renovation work required to restore our church and tower. We also wanted to make improvements to the building. So far, three of the five phases are completed at £250k each:

Phase One, 2009, urgently addressed dry rot in our roof, replaced the central roof valley and roof over the organ loft and Vicar's vestry, re-routed and replaced water goods and downspouts.

Phase Two, 2011, replaced the north and south roof slopes, restored failing masonry to the south porch and installed a sloping floor for disabled access.

Phase Three was our most ambitious project. It involved re-roofing and extensive restorative masonry work to the historic Tower, renewal of louvres, renovation of the clock combined with the installation of a ring of ten bells. We also redesigned our dated kitchen and toilet facilities to include facilities for disabled visitors.

Why do it?

Situated in the heart of the busy village of Stockton Heath, our church strives to be a 'church in the community' with a focus on bringing God's love to this community. Our church has opened daily for over 10 years, with volunteers on hand to provide a listening ear, comfort and refreshment.

The projects were based on the underlying belief that 'church' means this happy mix of theory, theology and practicality with a pastoral thread throughout, making God visible in our community through hospitality, welcome and generosity.

To achieve these aims we therefore needed an open, accessible, weatherproof, warm and well-equipped place to welcome people into.





What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

It has preserved our beautiful church building for generations to come.

The project has also improved the internal space, facilities and comfort. There are no public toilets in Stockton Heath; therefore, fully accessible toilet facilities were important. The improved kitchen has helped run our community café and provide refreshments for services and groups.

Our restored and improved building has meant we can serve the community in different ways, including Foodbank Warrington, Credit Union Weekly, Pathways to Recovery (a service for drug and alcohol misuse), children's groups, hosting health open days, concerts, art, school visits and services, accommodate Melody Makers a Community Choir. We set up a quiet prayer corner for visitors.

Our historic bells were salvaged and restored, and we developed our own band of bell ringers, some of whom are drawn from the community. We were delighted to host the Annual Meeting and meal for the Cheshire Guild of Bell ringers.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

These large, challenging projects have fostered a spirit of collaboration, self-belief and achievement through faith amongst our existing congregations.

'Open Church' is valued and well attended by the community and the improved amenities have enhanced this. Being at the centre of Stockton Heath, Open Church has made St Thomas' more a centre of community. Ten years ago, we were open only on Sundays and Thursdays- now our Open Church 'welcomers' make St Thomas' a really warm and welcoming place for prayer, refreshment and quiet 24/7.

It is difficult to make a correlation between our enhanced building and numbers who come to church. However, we are maintaining numbers which bucks the national trend and in some areas our numbers are increasing (this Christmas we had more attending than ever before in the last 10 years and our usual weekly attendance went from 185-233 from 2008 to 2014.) We are a popular wedding venue with 11 weddings in 2017. We have a new bell ringing band of 8 some of whom are new to church.

Our families and children's ministry have grown through *Story Church*.

Case Study 9

Story Church

A versatile area at the back of the church building has created space to grow our children's ministry. Realising there was no provision for pre-school children other than a crèche at our main Family Service, and a real need to draw in young families into our church, a group of volunteers set up *Story Church*. They meet for half an hour at the back of the church building every third Sunday and each Sunday during August. Since its beginnings in 2014, it has grown from a small group to over twenty little ones. They have welcomed parents and carers from all backgrounds and nationalities.

Story Church has provided a link between our church primary school, pre-school activities that run during the week, and fills a natural bridge so that little ones can slowly be integrated into our Sunday School.

Some of our regular parents are now joining our church. We have had several baptisms and a church wedding from among our little congregation.

Older members of our congregation are taking an interest and often come early to join in; this intergenerational mix has strengthened our church family.

It is no coincidence that *Story Church* had helped to influence the congregation to support the appointment of a full-time Parish, Youth, Children's and Family Worker.



How was it resourced?

Grants from the then English Heritage (Phase One -£199,350 and Phase Two £199,350) and latterly Heritage Lottery Fund GPOW Phase Three £202,700).

Phase Three bells- Cheshire Diocesan Guild of Bell Ringers (funding and advice), The Sharpe Trust and Historic Cheshire Churches Preservation Trust. National Churches Trust gave a small grant towards structural work.

On each occasion we undertook an internal financial appraisal to determine the Parish contribution to the works and likely fundraising possibilities. Considerable and generous contributions from our congregations and the local community. During the first two projects we had a dedicated 'Fund Raising Action' group, which managed to raise approximately £10,000 per year. We also established a Friends of St Thomas' group to try to encourage external support from the community and those who attend church for Baptisms/ Weddings.

Care and welcome

St Peter's church, Waverton

What was done?

A small extension was built onto the church building. It is in the external space that existed between the west wall of the South Aisle and the Boiler Room. This extension comprises an easy access toilet and a small kitchenette. Additionally, this facility has an external door which allows a second exit from the church.

Why do it?

The PCC has, over several years, discussed the need for a toilet at the church.

Increasingly, the pressure from members of the congregation to seriously address this issue grew.

The closest toilet facility was at the Burley Hall, some 200 yards away. Whilst this is an excellent facility, there were numerous occasions when the distance of these toilets became a source of acute embarrassment and discomfort to our congregation and other users.

These difficulties were compounded by the fact that the church had only one door and there were circumstances, such as at funerals, when the exit through this door was a very slow process.

Additionally, the recent strategies for growth at St Peter's resulted in more and more young families with children attending regularly. It became clear that a baby changing or feeding facility would be a very useful addition.

The inclusion of the small kitchenette was possible in the space available and the intention is to use it following church events, such as Carol Services.



What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

The provision of an easy access toilet has been of considerable advantage to the pastoral well-being and comfort of our parishioners. An advantage that is equally appreciated by the many occasional visitors to the church.

One or two elderly members of our congregation who had stopped coming to our Sunday services for the want of a toilet have now returned and are clearly delighted that this provision now enables them to fully engage again with worship at St Peter's.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

The growth in regular attendance at Sunday services, particularly by young families, some with very young children, is testament to the wisdom of making this provision.

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, there are members of our congregation who have returned to regular attendance, secure in the knowledge that they will no longer suffer the discomfort and embarrassment as hitherto.

How was it resourced?

The funds were provided in the main by a donation from the Horace Burley Trust, a Trust which is solely dedicated to St Peter's church. An additional private donation of £10,000 was used to supplement this major donation.



Community, mission and hospitality

St Philip and St James' church, Alderley Edge

What was done?

Our 2010 Quinquennial Report gave us the unwelcome news that there was rusting ironwork in our Victorian spire, causing "bursting" of the stonework inside and out, potentially hazardous to passers-by and to the stability of the spire itself. Rectification is now (2018) complete, but for reasons outlined below it took us a considerable time to tackle the rebuilding of the upper section of the spire, removing all the existing ironwork and inserting new stainless-steel reinforcement where necessary. We also had the tower below fully re-pointed, with the replacement of eroded stone blocks and carved features.

Taking full advantage of the Heritage Lottery Fund's extra "new works" offer of up to 15% under their Grants for Places of Worship scheme, we set up a new community area at the rear of the church building, now known as the West End. This entailed a detailed consultation about removing the existing pews and then agreeing the layout and design of new toilets, a kitchen facility and adaptable space. The oak timber from the pews was reworked to form the kitchen enclosure and a range of full height cupboards, incorporating a television screen for talks and presentations.

The entire project reached completion in mid-2017 and was duly blessed and declared open by Bishop Peter on Sunday 30 July.

Why do it?

We had no alternative but to tackle the structural problems in our spire. The question was raised briefly "Why do we need a spire?" but our church and its spire are very much a feature and landmark in our village and in the surrounding Cheshire countryside. Also having Grade II* Listed status added weight to the restoration requirement.

However, we did not at first see the enormous benefits that we would win from the project. The mere fact of having a fully scaffolded spire and the stonemasons' yard next door to it, engaged great interest with the wider community. Regular features and reports on the Alderley Edge village website kept the local community informed, and were helpful with fund-raising, for example with our "Re-gild the Cockerel" campaign for the weather vane.

The re-ordering of the West End has led to a whole range of contacts and involvement with the wider community.



Case Study 11

We set to work with the local History Group and as a result we now house their archive and artefacts, acting as the only local Heritage Centre and providing facilities for meetings and lectures. An art class meets in the West End, as does a dementia-friendly singing group, a bereavement support group, a film club and an after-school drama club. The facilities are available for post-baptism and funeral gatherings. We hold concerts and discussion events, with post-event refreshments using the new facilities. The church is kept open every day and overall, we feel confident that we are offering a warm welcome to visitors, whatever their reasons for calling in.

What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

The fabric of the spire and tower are now in good condition for many years to come.

The interior of the church has been transformed by the creation of the West End facilities. Our church community was consulted and was almost unanimous in approving the many changes made, and there is now very wide support for what has been achieved.

Many of the congregation now stay on for coffee, biscuits and a chat after Sunday services. Mid-week communion is followed by well-attended informal lunch. The wider community is increasingly aware of all that we have to offer; attendance is good at our concerts and other public events and we have launched a greatly improved website to keep people informed.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

The project and its extended implementation period brought together several groups within our church community, helping to plan and manage the many aspects of the repair work, the fund-raising and the exciting new facilities. This process was harmonious and enormously valuable. The mere fact of being involved brought a great sense of teamwork in often difficult and demanding situations, particularly as our previous Vicar moved on to a new post part-way through the project.

Having a space at the back of church for welcoming people and socialising has made our fellowship feel central to our life as a church. This strengthens us as a body of Christ and also demonstrates to new-comers what being part of the body of Christ might mean to them.

Being able to organise non-church events inside the church building draws people into the building who might not otherwise enter and also serves to break down mental barriers people might have about entering the building and engaging with what goes on inside it.



Case Study 11

Having activities taking place within the church building that are clearly meant to be of service to others and yet do not place on people an obligation to join us for worship has helped us to get across to the community that we seek to love them for who they are in the name of a God who loves them for who they are.

The gentle decline in our overall membership and worshipping numbers has been halted and many of the new people joining us get to know us via activities which we are only able to organise because we have this new facility.

How was it resourced?

We went through a very substantial learning experience in coping with the project and in funding it. Our initial application to English Heritage (EH) was partially successful but they advised us that our remedial work proposals were less than satisfactory. At their suggestion we then moved on to make an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), which was at that time taking over from EH with grant awards.

Our first attempt with the HLF failed but we were given very positive feedback and advised to explore further how we would engage with and benefit the wider community beyond our regular congregation. Building on this advice we tried again with the HLF and were delighted to be awarded £286,100, subject of course to fulfilling the various stage requirements imposed with the grant.

We were also most grateful for awards from the Alderley Edge Institute Trust, the All churches Trust, the National churches Trust and the Historic Cheshire Churches Preservation Trust. In addition, we raised some £140,000 from generous individual donations and a variety of fund-raising events, and we were of course fortunate to be able to reclaim almost all the VAT payable (through the Listed Places of Worship scheme). Inevitably we experienced a diminution in our regular income from donations and collections, making it harder than usual to meet the demands of the Parish Share and other day-to-day costs and overheads.

Town centre church vision

St Peter's church, Congleton

What was done?

St Peter's Congleton is one of four churches in the Parish of Congleton. It is a Grade 1 listed Georgian church, listed chiefly for its interior.

In 2010, St Peter's congregation (c. 60 people) developed a vision for how the church and the adjacent graveyard could be developed to provide a facility for carrying forward the worship and mission of our town centre church. This we saw would involve major fabric repairs, updating the internal facilities, re-ordering parts of the interior and possibly building an extension.

Our initial sketch ideas were given shape by the quinquennial inspection of 2012, which identified the need for major fabric work: replacing the roof, repairing or replacing 14 gallery windows, repairing or replacing all the ceilings, repairing parts of the stone floor, and repairing parts of the tower. (We had previously installed a disabled toilet and a small kitchen in the north and west porches and replaced two large cast iron windows in the west gallery).



Case Study 12

As we came to terms with the scale of this list, we followed the advice of our architect and sought wider advice from English Heritage (now Historic England), DAC and Church Buildings Council so we gained a picture of what might be possible, given the restrictions of our site and our heritage listing. In retrospect, the first critically important step was to run a tendered process to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced architect.

We saw from the example of St Michael's in Macclesfield that it would be wise to bring together a team to manage the project, to include our vicar but not to be run by him so that his voice would always be heard but he was otherwise free to prioritise his parish responsibilities. We used the project team to share the different aspects of the project: bid writing, publicity, visiting other churches running projects, contacting advisory bodies, faculty writing, with the team leader liaising with the other members and the architect.

Our first major decision was to phase the work, to assist with fundraising and people's other commitments. We produced brief updates for the congregation, including a four-page A5 leaflet, "Key to the Future", which described our vision for the church and the stages by which we hoped to achieve it.

Why do it?

Church buildings in good condition and attractively presented are a silent witness to the gospel and its resilience through changing times. As the "Key to the Future" booklet describes, we aim to have a town centre church which will be open to the public and part of the community. It will be a sustainable resource for both the worshipping congregation and our mission to the wider community. It will continue to function as the town's civic church. The congregation will be showing a sense of responsibility towards the heritage they have received.

What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

So far, we have replaced the roof and are currently replacing the nave ceiling. The building with its Georgian interior and civic memorials from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries is now water tight and has dried out. Original timbers in the roof space and under the galleries are now safe. The risk of a disastrous ceiling collapse has been averted. The building is on Historic England's 'Heritage At Risk Register' and is currently closed while work on the nave ceiling is completed.

The congregation has a sense of achievement, confidence in our own resources, of pulling together and of waiting for and accepting God's timing and provision.

In the wider community, organisations and civic authorities have seen and responded positively to our work and our involvement in the town. They trust us to cope with events and see that we are worth supporting. They have invited us to be part of town events and individuals have come forward and volunteered to help maintain our site.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

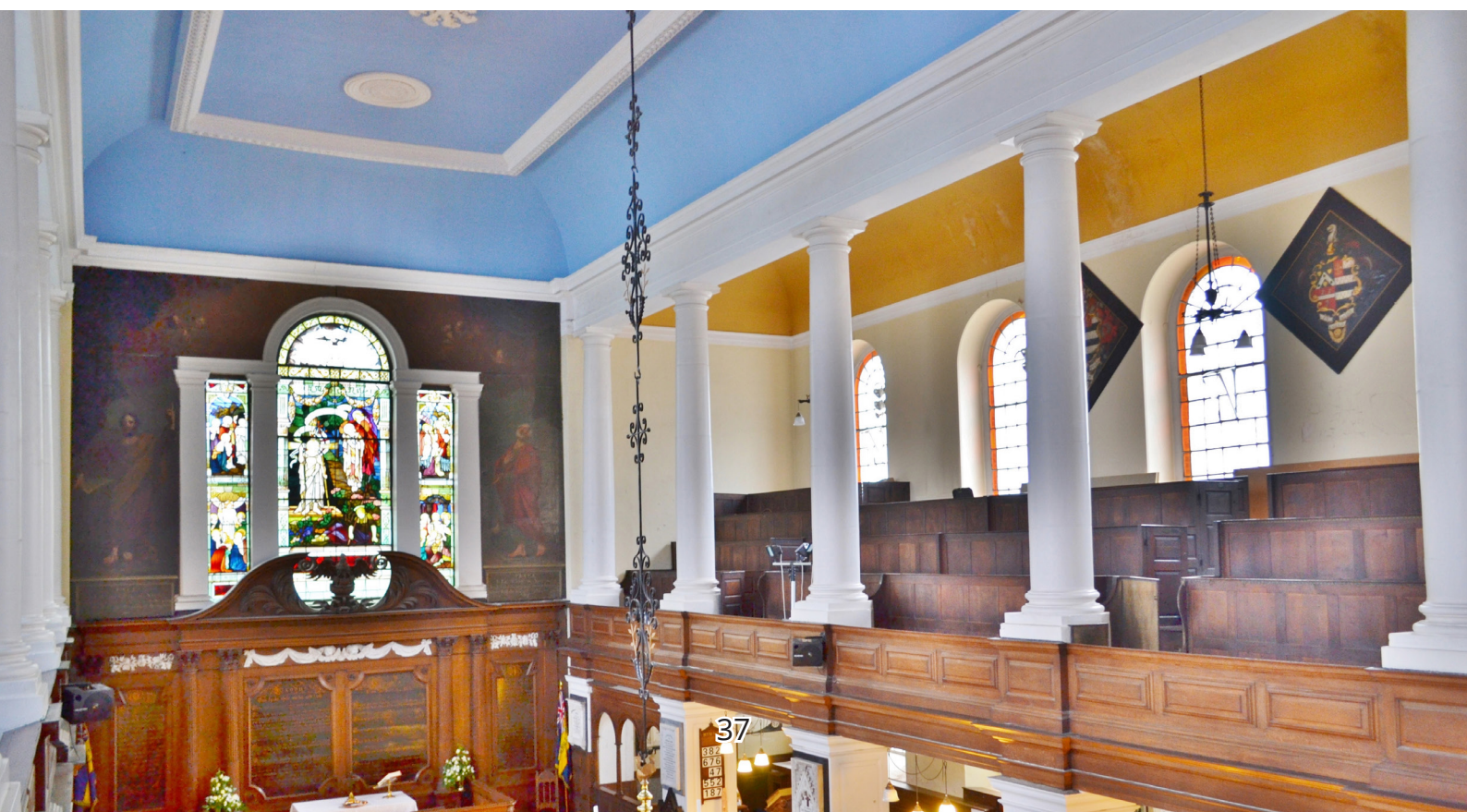
We have seen no numerical growth, in fact deaths and removals have shrunk our congregation. Spiritually we have come closer to trusting in God's leadership through a complex and long-term project. We have got to know our neighbouring congregations better during our period of closure while work on the nave ceiling was completed. This coincided with a Pastoral Scheme has made St Peter's one of two parish churches in the parish. We are still seeking ways in which all of our buildings can be developed and used to meet the aims and needs identified in the parish vision documents. The feeling of stepping forward in faith has been reinforced during a sixteen month period of vacancy. We feel reassured by the unexpected gift of a very large legacy, by the support and advice from diocesan and heritage organisations, most recently by contact with the Support Panel of the Major Churches Network, and by the time given in COVID-19 lock-down to review our plans.

How was it resourced?

The largest slices of finance have come from English Heritage (now Historic England), and the Heritage Lottery Fund. We obtained a large grant for the roof work from WREN, and smaller grants from other national and local organisations, including the Local Authorities.

However, we also fundraised among our own members and the local community. We raised 3% of the total cost from a slate signing on two Saturdays in the town centre and the church. This meant that the congregation were actively committed to support in terms of time and money. Finally, 14% of costs were gained by reclaiming eligible VAT through the Listed Places of Worship Scheme. We publicised our project and individual events in the local papers and on BBC local radio.

Our chief resource was to ask people to remember the project and the team in their prayers.



Connecting with communities

St James' church, New Brighton

What was done?

Two phases of repair work have taken place to our church building designed by Gilbert Scott.

Phase 1: The church faced a critical challenge when, in 2013, it was discovered that its 52 metre (172 feet) high stone spire had become unsafe and presented a danger to the public. The recommendation of the specialists was clear; the spire should be dismantled and rebuilt. Consequently, over the period September 2015 to April 2016, the top 60 courses of stonework were taken down, each stone was examined and either rejected or retained, and the spire was rebuilt using a mixture of original and newly-quarried stone. Stainless steel cramps were used to replace the corroded iron ones. A new cross-tree was built into the reconstructed spire.

In addition, the architects took the opportunity to reinstate much of the decorative carved stonework that had been stripped away during previous “restorations.” At the end of 2016, the National Churches Trust deemed the rebuild to be England’s best restoration project of the year, and the architect was awarded its gold medal, partly for the forensic work involved.

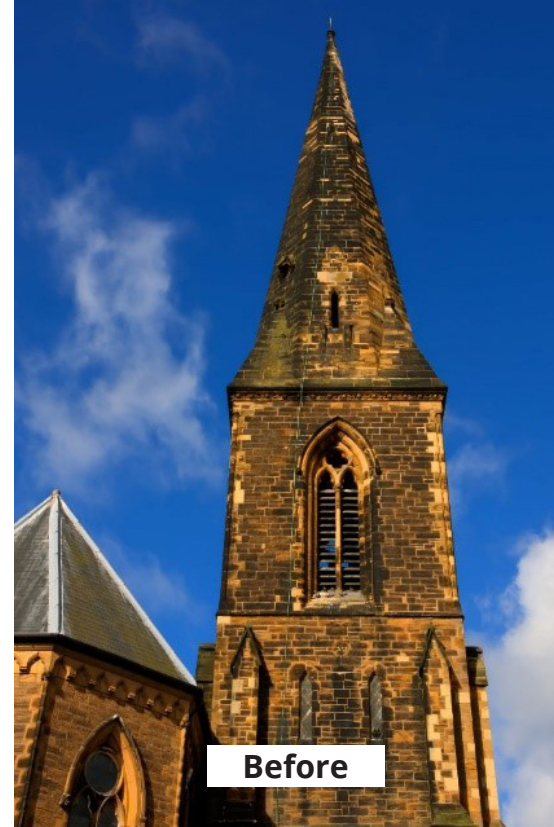
Phase Two

Tower masonry repairs were required. In some areas, repairs were needed due to previous repairs had been made in cement mortar. Other repairs were due to erosion, such as some arch stones, eroded quoins and corner shaft stones and the louvres to the Bell Chamber openings.

One of the main problems that had been encountered was the failure of the existing gutters and water drainage goods to cope with even moderate amounts of poor weather. Replacements and improvements were made.

Improving safe access for the maintenance of the gutters was achieved through installing an oak door access to the gutters and new access ladders and platforms were fixed in position.

Further work included the chancel arch and roof, internal repairs in the tower, vestry roof, conservation of the Angelus bell, and we installed new LED lights inside the Clock level and Bell level. The lighting is a great help inside the 50 step spiral stone staircase!



Before



During

Case Study 13

Why do it?

The prime motivation was simply a question of public safety, which had to be achieved within our responsibilities for maintaining the architectural integrity of a listed building. However, because a 172-foot spire being dismantled and rebuilt was visually so prominent an activity in New Brighton, and became such a talking point, it gave us many opportunities to gain press and radio coverage and to speak with people in the community. It demonstrated to townspeople that St James' was indeed "open for business", was investing in its future and was a living active church.

The need to fund-raise stimulated us to organise a wide range of social events and concerts, which in turn brought many new people into the building and reminded others that the church was at the heart of their community.



After

What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

- Preserved the safety and visual impact of our building.
- Increased an awareness in the community of the significance of this building in their midst.
- Established a reputation locally for the provision of social and cultural events.
- Enabled us to provide a home for the New Brighton Heritage and Information Centre in the building, which means that it is now open to visitors six days a week.
- Provided a target and common purpose around which the congregation can coalesce
- Community engagement has significantly increased. In Phase 2, 2018, guided tours have been very effective. Also, history talks, exhibitions, presentations and demonstrations were advertised to people using the *Wave Café*, which was recently established. Also, a new display area has been created. The first exhibition, in collaboration with the *Wallasey Historical Society*, showed late 19th and early 20th century local photographs.
- Social action work and families. We have begun a weekly holiday meals club for local schoolchildren (and their parents). Craft activities relating to a spiritual/ biblical theme take place with a story and quiet time, similar to Messy Church. This is the main example of a growing relationship with two local schools.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

In Phase 1, the project appeared to have had a neutral effect on spiritual and numerical growth but bear in mind that most of the work took place during a lengthy and difficult interregnum. However, the project has certainly raised the profile of the church locally and has increased its use as a venue for cultural events and concerts. Within our congregation, the mood progressed from negativity and “what a waste of money” and “it will never get done” while we were fund-raising and applying for grants, to enthusiasm and pride when everyone could see the spectacular work in progress. The key to this was great internal communications, which has resulted in a more united congregation and positive outlook for the future.

In Phase 2, we have established an excellent foundation on which to grow the number of people who will visit and appreciate the building and its facilities in the years ahead. Our main Sunday congregation has grown through different church initiatives and mission and we now have a church building that is safe to use. Our building is used significantly more by the community for a wider range of activities and is increasingly being viewed as a real community asset. And we have increased the number and geographical spread of visitors who come purely to learn of the history and heritage of St James' church. More recently we have worked on a prayer area in the lady chapel, which is being used.

How was it resourced?

Phase 1:

The total cost of the project was a smidgen under £450,000. Grants received of £250,000 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and almost £75,000 VAT recovery from HMRC's Listed Places of Worship scheme. About £15,000 was raised through special appeals (including a “Sponsor a Stone” scheme), and about £5,000 from social events and concerts. The balance (approx. £105,000) came from the PCC's unrestricted reserves – although much of this had been built up through appeals, pledged giving and donations in the two or three years prior to restoration commencing.

Phase 2:

The final cost of Phase 2 was £271,604.47. We were indebted to funding from grant sources, including the Heritage Lottery Fund (£250,000), Garfield Weston (£10,000) and Historic Cheshire Churches Preservation Trust (£1,000). Our own fund raising continued, including an organ recital by the internationally renowned organist Professor Ian Tracy, several church fairs, a concert with three choirs and a concert by the *Cheshire Police Band*, *Heritage Open Day*, church guided tours, art exhibitions and *The Wave Café*.

Worship, witness and welcome

St George's church, Poynton

What was done?

In Phase 1, the previous vicar was keen to replace the rather inadequate church hall with something much more fit for purpose. At the same time, he realised the church building needed a development programme. So although the church hall was the felt priority, before that in 1998 there was Phase 1 of the church reordering, removing choir stalls, pulpit and screen to have a clear raised area with upholstered seats and new front-of-church furniture in oak. The doorway entrance was also transformed with glass doors, a glass vestibule, and welcome desk/cupboards in oak.

In 2005 there was a new vicar and we set our minds to phase 2. The uniting motivation was the remarkably uncomfortable pews. At the same time, it seemed timely to include other aspects of reordering, so the project included new heating, new lighting incl. LED uplighters, new flooring, new wiring/electrics, new AV screens and digital sound system, as well as new seating. It took until 2011 to line up the specification as, for instance, there was disagreement about the replacement seating. Half wanted upholstered chairs, half preferred modern wooden pews. The impasse was solved through the discovery of padded oak benches from Irish Contract Seating, which ticked nearly all the boxes and enabled us to maximise our capacity for large services.

The architect was chosen because he understood us and our purpose, although we would not have been half so successful without an able and hardworking team, each with an expertise; for example, heating, lighting/sound, project management and quantity surveyor. We set ourselves to pay for the sound system/screen out of reserves (because there was some disquiet in certain quarters) and raised the rest (£375,000) by donations over four years, mostly standing orders, about £20,000 fundraising. The congregation was committed and generous and the pledge day; it covered over half of the total, giving us confidence to go ahead.

We have before and after videos on You Tube, which you can find here:

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=cdavemc+st+georges



Why do it?

We needed to enable everyone to sit comfortably, worshippers, concert-goers and the rest. It was previously very uncomfortable. The only opposition came from people who did not sit on the pews but who walked by outside.

The vast improvement in lighting and sound/vision has helped the development of a 'screen culture' service (meaning we reach more people on Sundays than with our 'book culture' service alone).

Festival services are much more effective Christian witness and we have seen ever growing numbers at Christmas, Easter and Remembrance, helped by the more pleasant environment (especially the lighting) and use of sound/vision system.

What difference has it made to the building, church community and its impact in the wider community?

The building is the same on the outside but transformed on the inside.

The 'book culture' service is glad of comfortable seats, clean walls and pillars, excellent lighting, and has welcomed the extra screens in Phase 3. Phase 3 was Easter 2018, and consisted of 3 additional LED screens (one in the chancel and two in the Nave) and 2 video cameras to provide live streaming to all 4 screens in church. Everyone in church can now see at least one screen, no matter where they sit. The 'screen culture' service has grown well. The local community is generally very happy as the quality of festival services has improved and concerts and school events are also much happier. The reordering allowed a good quality High School production of Christmas Carol to take place in church, with seats in the round, and full houses for four nights.

Has the project impacted your church in terms of spiritual and/or numerical growth?

The numerical growth of our screen culture service was very good in the four years following the project. The project itself was a united time and gave us more confident witness and happier fellowship.

How was it resourced?

The great majority of the cost was met by pledged giving from members of the congregation and other supporters. A part was resourced from PCC reserves. Four years later we had paid it off.



Reflections on key themes and lessons learnt

The following reflections provide greater depth to the key themes identified in the case studies, paraphrasing the responses to provide a more succinct summary. Full answers are provided in the appendix.

Five Marks of Mission

The five Marks of Mission may be one framework to understand the reasons why the churches in the case studies completed their building projects and the impact made. The Anglican Communion defines 'Mission' as the Five Marks of Mission, which are:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.' ([Anglican Communion](#)).

It is not straightforward to identify which mark(s) of mission are mostly strongly evidenced in each case study and generally, as the impact is often wide ranging and overlapping.

It is clear, however, that responding to human need by loving service, along with teaching and nurturing disciples, (interpreted here as life-long discipleship), are strong motivations and impacts throughout. These marks of mission are achieved both through the process of undertaking a building project, which sees greater teamwork and unity of vision. Also, after its completion, as an often more adaptable, welcoming and accessible space enables greater mission and ministry for a wider range of people, especially at mid-week services and activities.

The remaining three marks of mission are evidenced, for example, in creating a better worship space, audio-visual equipment and more family-friendly spaces to preach the Good News. Improved facilities enable social action work, such as meal clubs, to transform societal injustices, plus better enabling people who are disabled, have limited mobility or special needs to participate through a more physically accessible building. Also, environmental sustainability improvements have reduced the carbon footprint such as installing LED lighting, draft exclusion measures and energy efficient heating systems.

Why the churches in the case studies decided to undertake their building projects

- **To be reach out to support, serve and connect with the whole community**, making God visible through hospitality, welcome and generosity. Greater engagement with the local community, sometimes phrased as loving our neighbour as ourselves. A spirit of 'open doors' to share the Good News of Christ with the wider community, being more open during the week as a seven-day ministry to all. Encouraging increased use of the building by the community, groups and organisations. Enabling more ways of 'being church' for greater involvement in the community.
- **Better access for all, welcome and care**, being open, warm, well-lit, well equipped, better facilities and more flexible space, improved hospitality, removing physical barriers for people attending, fit for the purpose God intended as a 21st century church.
- **Better first impressions** of the church exterior to give a more positive welcome, raise the profile of church, being more visible, being more open and looking 'open for business' to change a negative perception.
- **Preserving the heritage**, as well as its 24/7 witness to the permanency of God.
- **Health and safety** reasons to make the building structurally safe and watertight so current services and activities can continue.
- **Better opportunity for fellowship** in the congregation.
- **Better operational running** of the church, such as better able to run services, better storage etc.
- **Making the church sustainable** both now and in the future.
- **Expand church young generations work.**

The difference the building project has made to the church building, church community and its impact in the wider community

Enhanced building

- Better condition of the building and its artistic and historic features.
- Improved health and safety.
- Improved visual impact of the building.
- More accessible for all.
- More welcoming space.
- More family and schools-friendly space.
- Improved internal space, facilities and comfort for better pastoral care for all.
- Addressed practical needs in the running of the church, such as storage, managing large services and events, pastoral support etc.
- Improved long term maintenance.

Enhanced use of building

- Building more regularly open throughout the week.
- Wider range of people using the church building- members of the community, groups, organisations; also, greater range of ages, interests and needs.

- Established or enhanced role in the locality.
- Improved and/or increased role of hospitality and welcome.
- Beginning new and different activities for the church, schools and wider communities; for example, concerts, events, café, art group, young family groups, social justice projects, fellowship gatherings, services, baptism and funeral gatherings, and so on.
- More imaginative engagement with people; for example, using art, Fresh Expressions of church, exhibitions, concerts.
- More mid-week services held.
- Growth in attendance at mid-week services.
- Growth in attendance at events and activities, especially mid-week.
- Growth in attendance by young families.
- Growth in schools' engagement.
- New relationships developed or strengthened with community leaders, organisations and groups- a good witness and stronger links for joint working.
- More bookings/use of the space by community groups, organisations and members of the community.
- Raised profile of the church in local community, increased awareness locally of the significance of the historic building.
- Better operational running of the building, such as accommodating larger services and events, children's activities, hospitality, suitable space for pastoral support etc.
- More financially sustainable as a better used building increased regular income, such as from events.

Impact on congregation

- Fellowship increased, for example, chatting over refreshments after the service.
- Unity of spirit enhanced through closer teamwork and focused vision
- Removing some of the physical barriers to people participating in services such as improved access and providing toilet facilities.
- Greater faith (reliance, trust) in God.
- Raised confidence levels.

The impact of the church building project on spiritual and/or numerical growth

Spiritual

- Spirit of unity strengthened in congregations during the project through greater team working.
- Increased confidence to focus on new missional activities.
- Growing in discipleship through active service, increasing volunteer satisfaction and commitment.
- Raised enthusiasm and pride in the congregation, which lead to more unity and a more positive outlook.
- Cultural change in the congregation accepting wider role of being more welcoming and outward-looking, confident and responsive in sharing the Good

News.

- More creative freedom to express God's love in numerous ways; for example, hosting quiet days, events, art exhibitions.
- Drawing closer to God, increased faith in the congregation, trusting God more

Numerical

- More people attending mid-week services.
- More people and wider range of people attending activities and events, especially older people and young families. Also, wider range such as more visitors- families, shoppers, meeting place for events, wider ministry.
- More young families, increased attendance at Fresh Expressions aimed at families; for example, Café Church on Sunday and mid-week activities. Increase, (for some, considerable increase), in young families on Sundays as well as during the week.
- Increased use by specific groups such as schools, weddings.
- For some, difficult to ascertain if project led to growth but our congregation is growing.
- For a small number, none (or occasionally slight) growth in attendance at traditional Sunday services.
- Raised the profile of the church locally.

How the project was financially resourced

In reviewing how each capital project was resourced, all required multiple funding sources.

The largest percentage of funds contributing to capital works was split between donations (for 6 parishes) and grants (for 7 parishes). One parish required an even mix of multiple sources.

The fundraising mix included donations from churches and individuals such as appeals and legacies, (particularly mentioned by 11 parishes), fundraising events (by 7 parishes), PCC reserves (5 parishes), funds through sale of land/goods (5 parishes), loans (2 parishes), in-kind support such as volunteer time and free equipment hire was particularly mentioned by one parish. Grants were also mentioned throughout.

The total financial value of the fundraising mix, where this information was provided, in descending order was: Donations £1,887,300, Grants £1,787,200, Sales £292,000, Loan £250,000, PCC Reserves £160,000 and Fundraising events £51,400. In-kind support, (such volunteer time, free materials or labour), was also a contributing factor, although often unstated.

The most frequently mentioned grants were the National Lottery Heritage Fund, (formally known as the Heritage Lottery Fund) (6 parishes), Historic Cheshire Churches Preservation Trust (4 parishes), Landfill Communities Fund (3 parishes), National Churches Trust (3 parishes); also the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme for reclaiming eligible VAT was frequently stated.

Parishes received financial support from the following grant-making trusts and organisations, listed in alphabetical order:

Alderley Edge Institute Trust
All Churches Trust
Beatrice Laing Trust
Cheshire Diocese Guild of Bell Ringers
Dame Susan Morden Charity
English Heritage
Garfield Weston Foundation
Heritage Lottery Fund
Historic Cheshire Churches Preservation Trust
Horace Burley Trust
Landfill Communities Fund
Listed Places of Worship Scheme (VAT)
Local Authorities
National Churches Trust
Rylance Smith Trust
The Sharpe Trust
Ursula Keyes Trust
War Memorial Trust
WO Street Trust

Learning points from case studies that may help parishes considering similar projects

Each case study was asked to reflect and respond to five learning questions in relation to their first-hand experience of planning and managing the building project:

1. What went well?
2. What went less well?
3. What have you learnt that would be useful to share with others?
4. As a result of the learning gained during and after the project, have you now changed any aspects of your approach/work? Please explain.
5. General reflections

A summary of the responses to each question are given below. Full responses to the questions are given in the appendix.

Q1. What went well?

- Right appointment and positive working relationship with the architect and the contractors, (for a small number including archaeological oversight), producing high quality work.
- Good project team in the church, with the right skills, sufficient time and a positive team-working spirit, good conversations in the PCC.
- Financial provision.
- The building work- high quality of work and/or completed on time/budget

- Good community relations and support, including from key people in the community.
- Early understanding of the needs and opportunities through consulting with people.
- Good relationships and feedback from consultees, including DAC.
- Good relationship with grant making trust.
- Support and encouragement of the congregation.
- Good communications.
- Enhancing the work and impact of the church.
- Considering the potential opportunities during the building phase.
- Clear vision for the project.
- Considering how best to use all the church building and land assets.

Q2. What went less well?

- Taking longer than anticipated.
- Challenges with grant funding and fundraising in general.
- Design elements not considered at planning stages, or, did not meet expectations.
- Challenge of co-ordinating around usual church life.
- Pressure on team members.
- Underestimated costs or lack of funds.
- Changes in the team.
- Poor communication, or lack of clarity on roles.
- Less community involvement than anticipated.
- Challenges with agreeing the vision.
- Appointment challenges.

Q3. What have you learnt that would be useful advice to give to others?

- Building design tips- shared in more detail in the appendices.
- Honest, open and full consultation and communication- ask, listen, share, reflect, revise, regularly update and enthuse. Ongoing communication needs careful planning for monitoring of progress and discussion/decision-making.
- Establish a strong team; know the skills required; set up clear roles and responsibilities- building team and fundraising team.
- Take time at the vision stage and establishing the project structure. Carry out a feasibility study for large projects.
- Make a wise choice of architect, quantity surveyor and contractors and keep in regular touch.
- Above all, keep in touch with the Diocesan Advisory Committee throughout the project. Their help is invaluable.
- It takes longer and involves more paperwork than anticipated.
- Carefully plan the budget, possible overspend and cash flow. Know the exact costs.
- Gather and collate evidence of need.
- Be ambitious and keep a broader vision.
- Write a clear and detailed (specified) plan.

- Think through and manage risk.
- Pray.
- It's character building! Look after one another.
- Involve communities in appropriate ways.
- Share success stories.
- Plan for ongoing maintenance.

Q4. As a result of the learning gained during and after the project, have you now changed any aspects of your approach/work? Please explain.

- Project management
 - o Managing contractors- more firm, better communication and collaboration.
 - o Project manager needed.
 - o Project team- encourage more young members to join, careful selection of members of core team to ensure they can stay for the long haul.
 - o Managing volunteers to be more realistic in what's possible.
 - o Appointing an architect through competitive tendering process, has required level of qualifications and re-writing the brief.
 - o Timeline needing careful planning.
 - o Retain some funding in the accounts in order to fund research/plans before permissions are granted and the church can apply for further funding.
- Keeping the vision of the church as a serving church and resource for the community, and now a greater ambition and vision for the future.
- No change, as present circumstances are different.
- Re-applied the learning, although now with greater confidence.

Q5. General Reflections

- We are left with a very fundamental question – is it right that so much of our collective energy and funding-raising, over a period of several years, has been dedicated to building maintenance rather than to making the most of our Christian values and outreach efforts? Fortunately, the HLF grant structure led us to create our new West End which is helping us to fulfil what really matters to us.
- Listen to all the people involved in the project and give them time to air their views, as the many are wiser than the few...the few being the project manager... me.
- Simple is often the way...don't go the hard way because you think you know best.
- Authority sometimes hides behind a veil of regulations, which tries to cover every eventuality but stops sensible and simple ideas dead. Challenge those that need challenging if common sense calls for it!
- Do not give up when you hit a wall...have a glass of red wine, pray and in the morning the sun will be shining!

Appendix - Full responses to lessons learnt questions

Q1. What went well?

- **Right appointment and positive working relationship with the architect and the contractors**
 - o We had an excellent architect and maintained very close and good relations.
 - o The architects were linked to churches and so understood church needs and they took notice of our proposals. We chose the builder well and the site engineer was very capable and experienced.
 - o We had skilled, flexible, amenable building contractors.
 - o Our Architect and professional team were excellent and helped us through the crisis of a bankrupt main contractor, without any increase in the overall project cost.
 - o The craftsmen on the project were enormously committed and hard-working, and stayed with the job almost uninterrupted, in spite of the bankruptcy.
 - o A good architect who worked closely with the construction team.
 - o The initial choice of architect with whom we developed a very close working relationship. His professionalism set us a high a high standard to work to.
 - o The appointment process, resulting in excellent consultants.
 - o The tendering process, resulting in an excellent main contractor.
 - o The Quantity Surveyor maintained good records that allowed St Thomas and the Contractor to keep broadly within budget.
 - o Good working relationship with the new architect who accepted the constraints of the low funding during the Development phase but which would be recovered during the Delivery Phase.
 - o Good working relationship with the selected contractor.
 - o The builders were clearly very experienced with work on church buildings and their workmanship is evident for all to see. The archaeological oversight was helpful and very informative.

- **Good project team in the church, with the right skills, sufficient time and a positive team-working spirit**
 - o We learned to work as a team, to consult widely on key decisions, to explain and illustrate what was being done, to seek out and make use of specialist skills within our congregation, and to be very patient and understanding.
 - o Working as a team: the division of tasks between team members, sharing ideas, having a wide range of consultants as sources of advice, later widening the team, learning to trust one another, holding team meetings with agendas and notes(minutes?), not waiting till we had unanimity.
 - o In all phases of the project using congregational members with relevant experience and appropriate project, technical, fundraising and business knowledge. Their advice and involvement (some became sub-contractors) was critical to the success of the project.
 - o We were blessed with having a retired Professor of Civil Engineering in our congregation who kindly and expertly oversaw our extension project on a voluntary basis, including preparing the ground for the PCC to make properly informed decisions; steering through our faculty applications; liaising with DAC/Victorian Society/local authority planning officers; and, whilst referring major decisions to the PCC, he was the principal contact person for our architects/ surveyors/ builders/ stonemasons. We were also blessed with having a Community Mosaic Artist in our congregation from whom we commissioned the feature mosaic, involving 846 people from the community in its creation.
 - o Creating two committees- one to run the project (43 meeting in total over 4 years); one facing outwards that included interested agencies.
 - o Internal organisation; the committee structure worked well.
 - o The team overseeing Phase 2 was excellent and made up for any weaknesses in the architect's approach.
 - o The debates in the PCC and the consideration of plans as submitted by our architect. By general consent we now have a beautiful addition to the church.
- **Financial provision**
 - o The giving was generous and good, thanks to the Lord and because the aspects of the project were all tangible to the congregation.
 - o We seemed to be very successful in obtaining grants.
 - o Small team to write Grant application.
 - o Fund raising: the roof phase costing £237,000 was met and completed on time and within budget in a period of less than two years, 2012-14. We have raised £304,000 for the ceiling work, which is due to finish on June 29th 2018.
 - o The HLF grant application (the maximum possible grant was obtained).
 - o Most aspects of fund-raising – particularly “Sponsor-a-stone”.
 - o The high level of usage by the community as well as the church has enabled the Centre to be self-funding in maintenance terms
 - o St Thomas PCC had sufficient funds available to cover the bills until grant instalments or VAT was recovered.

- **The building works**

- o The physical works – a structural and visual success
- o The lighting was initially thought by many to be rather costly (£60,000) but since opening everyone agrees it was worth it.
- o We fitted lots of extra wiring for the future (which seemed a little over the top), and already we have been very glad we did.
- o It was chosen/built to last and six years later it still looks well.
- o The carpets were hardwearing office carpet tiles and have withstood floods and a lot of wear and tear, while still looking good.
- o Creating specialised storage: specific storerooms for chairs and for tables off the hall plus a room (off the foyer) with 20 lockable storage cupboards for regular users, which limited their space on site and helps keep the whole building tidy.
- o High quality repairs to the Spire Roof, Windows and Doors stonework that will last for generations.
- o Additional essential work identified and repaired broadly within the budget.
- o There was a substantial amount of woodwork needed (screens on kitchenette, handrails and plinths for lectern and pulpit, shortening altar, new altar rails) and the quality of the work has been very high, so a major feature of the works.
- o Repainting the walls, ceiling, and sanding the parquet floor has given a major uplift to the building.

- **Good community relations and support**

- o The generosity of our community who rallied round supporting fundraising events, donating money and volunteering labour (for the bell installation).
- o Forming good links with the various agencies: Town and Unitary councils, Councillors, Police, Community Group, Pub, Housing Association, Choosing a relevant Architect.
- o Victorian Open Day with all agencies, a free BBQ and sticky dot exercise to prioritise what was important to the residents and church members.
- o Holding two public slate signing days: raised more money than the target, brought people into the church building, and involved a wider group of church members to manage them.
- o The leading stonemason demonstrated his craft at our local Primary School
- o Friendly and skilled stonemasons demonstrated a good relationship with the local community.
- o The project provided a focus and a kick start for outreach and a greater community involvement.

- **Early understanding of the needs and opportunities through consulting with people**
 - o Survey created by the Council to establish the needs and public interest
 - o Importantly we were pleased to invite and receive input of ideas from our congregation and wider community throughout the whole process, and this has proved invaluable in creating better local “ownership” of the changes, as well as increasing the subsequent footfall across our new threshold.
 - o The early consultation with current and prospective users, with the Heswall Society and other interested parties plus keeping written records of these meetings because they were essential when applying for grants.

- **Good relationship with consultees or grant provider**
 - o The willingness of the DAC to accommodate changes during the construction process.
 - o Once we were through the early stages, and had won our HLF grant offer, we were greatly helped by the HLF’s project management structure. We appointed our new Architect by competitive tender, and also set about strengthening and forging new community contacts – both of these as the result of the HLF’s requirements.
 - o Good working relationship with the staff of Heritage Lottery Fund; they really want you to have a successful project outcome.
 - o The advice at every stage from the officers of the Diocesan Advisory Committee was much appreciated.

- **Support and encouragement of the congregation**
 - o Our congregations were kept fully informed and were hugely tolerant of disruption and supportive financially and through hard work (cleaning, helping at fundraising or community events) and by general encouragement.
 - o The willingness of the volunteers from the congregation and local community to be involved.
 - o The congregation has been loyal, adaptable and supportive.

- **Good communications**
 - o Our congregations were kept fully informed*.
 - o Weekly photo update of progress to all parties once work commenced.
 - o Internal and external communications, which were well-planned and organised.

- **Enhancing the work and impact of the church**
 - o High profile and visible part of the project, the installation of the Disabled Ramp, has provided a significant enhancement to St Thomas for use by the wider community.
 - o New initiatives for community involvement were pursued.
 - o The survey showed a marked increase in the number of people visiting St Thomas.
- **Considering the potential opportunities during the building phase**
 - o Interestingly, the need to move services out of the church during construction phases was very beneficial. The less formal environment in the church school encouraged more people to take leading roles in the family service, increased congregational involvement and eased the exploration of different service formats.
 - o We had to worship in the church hall during the alterations (over about 6 weeks). Being on chairs in a smaller building, members of the congregation sat next to those they were not used to, and the sense of fellowship was enhanced.
- **Clear vision for the project**
 - o After an earlier aborted attempt to replace the old hall we spent a considerable time developing a detailed vision before going back to the architect with a functional plan.
- **Considering how best to use all the church building and land assets**
 - o The use of adjacent land in the Rectory frontage reduced the cost by providing a site establishment area.

Q2. What went less well?

- **Taking longer than anticipated**
 - o Grade II listed building regulations and conservation requirements halted progress for clarification reasons that added to the time and materials
 - o There will always be delays in the building phase. Our main delay was the delivery of the wrong colour bricks and it could have been shortened by more frequent on-site visits by the architect and QS.
 - o Our main contractor, although a long-established and very reputable business, went bankrupt at a critical stage in the project. The bankruptcy caused delays, leading to winter working and much lost time because of bad weather. The delays meant that scaffolding around our porch was still in place for weddings which should have been “scaffolding-free”.
 - o Delays and falling behind schedule
 - o Our first application to the HLF was not successful
 - o Due to the compressed timescales, the Faculty and the Local Authority

planning application could not be progressed until the approved drawings were available.

- o The intended building timescale of 4 months was not met. The building programme took 10 months to complete.
- o It all takes a long time
- o The heating system took twelve months of follow up to get right but we stuck at it until it worked for us.
- o Trying to get the community involvement parts of the programme completed took longer than expected resulting in requesting a four-month extension to the project completion.
- o The amount of time involved to liaise with the builders over the work they were doing, and make small decisions about aspects of the work was far greater than anticipated beforehand. Our Treasurer was on site most days to do that.
- o The alterations have had a knock-on effect on other things, which will take a while to sort out. So, there were many small tasks we decided to do ourselves, and those have taken far longer to complete than the original work. The nature of the building alterations has meant that the sound system has needed work doing, and the hearing loop was also damaged during the works. It has taken a very long time to have the necessary work done to put that right. Also, various pieces of furniture were moved out of the church to give space for the works, and we have decided we do not want them to return. A faculty will be needed to dispose of them, and that will take time. In the meantime, furniture is piled up in the choir vestry and the Rector's garage.
- o Dealings with the local Planning Authority were very time consuming. The Service providers, Gas, Electricity and particularly water and drainage were very slow to respond to requests for assistance. Probably this was the most frustrating aspect of the whole project.

- **Challenges with grant funding**

- o Bureaucracy in dealing with HLF, and the length of time it took them to take decisions, give permissions etc.
- o Timing of the various grant funds flow
- o Concrete dates that had to be met to receive grant milestones payments
- o Moving from English Heritage to Heritage Lottery Fund as our chief financial support. The latter's processes are very slow which gives the impression to outsiders and members of the wider congregation that nothing is happening. The processes are also very time consuming and sometimes repetitive, adding to the frustration of working with them. However, individual consultants appointed to our applications have proved very co-operative, helpful and reliable
- o Disproportionate amount of time spent on delivering the HLF's Activity Plan requirements (although the end results were good).

- **Design elements not considered at planning stages, or did not meet expectations**
 - o In hindsight we might have asked our architect to:
 - Add another door from our new glazed entrance porch to give access out into the rear garden;
 - Design a less heavy main door and add a small external canopy above it to give shelter from the rain for key-holders unlocking the church;
 - Consider increasing the height of the original internal doors leading into the nave (to allow easier access for shouldering of coffins).
 - o We found our architects were great on what you see but poor on the internal acoustic environment. We funded a report on the hall as it was similar to a sports hall. As we expected, it required a lot of sound absorption to create a pleasant environment. The architect assured us the carpet tiles and curtains would solve the problem elsewhere. They did not. So we had to organise the fitting of sound absorption ceiling panels in all the other rooms.
 - o In hindsight the controls for the lighting should have been based on manual switches making the system “as simple as possible” due to the great number of people using the church, rather than having a system which can be used with “touch button” controls. With the volume of space to heat, especially in the Nave and Chancel, we should have installed underfloor heating rather than just upgrading the existing Victorian pipe system. Although at the time it would have been very challenging to raise the additional cost with fundraising or extending the loan borrowing from Charity Bank. So maybe we were correct to just leave it on the “wish list”.
 - o Overall, the main disappointment with the whole project has been the lighting, the lack of impact the system allows, the fact we are consistently having to upgrade the system, although that said unfortunately our scheme was installed just before the revolution in fittings, LED and longer lasting cost saving bulbs.
- **Challenge of co-ordinating around usual church life**
 - o Dirt and disruption meant constant cleaning before every service, funeral and wedding and required coordination and many volunteers
 - o Coordinating work around the ‘business’ of the church- for example, work ceasing for funerals
 - o It was not attractive for wedding couples when shrouded in scaffolding
- **Pressure on team members**
 - o Internally, huge workload on very few individuals
 - o An element of worry about safety, fundraising and general finance
 - o It can sap your strength and enthusiasm for other things
- **Underestimated costs or lack of funds**
 - o The complexity and overall cost of the project were, at first, greatly underestimated
 - o Initial project costs were based on working to a budget and didn’t take into

account conservation techniques. This resulted in a complete dismantling of the spire instead of some of the repairs being performed insitu. The consequence was a significant escalation of costs.

- o Due to limited finances, we had to scale down our original ambition to include kitchen improvements, but this has now been embarked upon as our next phase

- **Changes in the team**

- o Having to change architects because our first choice architect left the practice with which we had a contract. We have, however, more clearly learned what to value in an architect.
- o The project coincided with an eight-month interregnum period – but we were lucky that this period was not longer.

- **Poor communication, or lack of clarity on roles**

- o Phase three was a challenge in that we had two contractors- masonry and building contractors *and* bell contractors, who did not always communicate or collaborate as we would have liked
- o Utility connection and responsibility divisions for public building safety issues

- **Less community involvement than anticipated**

- o Although we engaged with local schools very successfully, this went less well with a local FE college – the students were enthusiastic about getting involved but there were frequent staff changes and a loss of continuity.
- o Some of the intended community involvement initiatives were not realised. Low numbers of Guides and the children's club meant these folded.

- **Challenges with agreeing the vision**

- o Agreeing the wider long term aims of the project, some of which are still being debated. Planning for re-ordering has been approached by us, by the architect and by the Sheffield graduates.

- **Appointment challenges**

- o Not having a Conservation Accredited Architect engaged at the start of the Development Phase. Nearly half the 12-month programme had elapsed before the architect started work.

Q3. What have you learnt that would be useful advice to give to others?

- **Building design tips-**

- o A large foyer, with comfortable tables, chairs and kitchen access, at the heart of a building sets the tone and atmosphere for the whole building.
- o Consider carefully the acoustic environment in each room. All rooms and halls have hard sound reflecting surfaces on floors and walls ... curtains and carpet tiles have very little sound absorption. So the reverberation times will be too long thus creating a noisy environment with multiple conversations impossible.
- o Have someone who understands acoustics to consult with architects and absorption material providers. There is a simple model based on the ratio of the room's volume and the total sound absorbing surface area. Usually covering around 50% of the ceiling with quality sound absorption material is sufficient to create a pleasant environment.
- o Include a dedicated table store off the hall to house stacks of chairs with a chair lifter. Do not use a trolley as they are too heavy to move.
- o Include a dedicated cupboard with compartments or shelves for storage of tables.
- o Create a storage room (which is easily accessible at all times) with plenty of lockable storage cupboards for regular users.
- o Think carefully about installing a gas cooker as safety regulations keep getting stricter which can cause extra expense when replacing a gas cooker.
- o Install a top-loader dishwasher to remove the need to lift heavy baskets of crockery.
- o Good lighting makes such a difference to the finished effect

- **Honest, open and full consultation and communication with church, community and consultees - ask, listen, share, reflect, revise, regularly update and enthuse**

- o Maintain open, honest and full communication with the congregation. They have provided the majority of the additional funds and support required, and never ever fell short
- o Take a lot of time to consult and discuss with the wider church membership.
- o Communicate to the congregation regularly what is happening where the project is up to, highlight problems being encountered and define any contingency plans which may have to be implemented.
- o Be as transparent as possible with the congregation exploring the reasons behind embarking on any project and involve the wider parish community to enable proper discernment of the way forward. Don't be afraid to think outside the box!
- o Keep the PCC informed in writing, and refer to it to confirm major decisions, but avoid discussing undecided issues within the PCC, as far as possible.
- o Consult with the congregation, using illustrated questionnaires and asking specific questions but with space for comments and new ideas.
- o Report back to congregation and to the wider community regularly – donors appreciate knowing how their money is being spent.

- o Hold reviews, revise the process, listen..... and be completely open to advice.
 - o Good internal communications are crucial; keep everybody informed at every stage, generate enthusiasm and a sense of ownership by the congregation.
 - o *Enthusiasm of theChurch Council, Steering Group and the Congregation.*
 - o Take time in the planning stages, involve the whole congregation, making them fully aware that their total support is required throughout the project. And remember after "handover" – is the final project what was envisaged? The use and maintenance will be with the church for a long time.
 - o Have courage, stick to your vision, and listen to everyone but do not expect to please everyone. Some church members wanted radical change, others wanted to have nothing at all altered.
 - o Engage with all necessary parties at an early stage and establish their interest
 - o Ensure, through active surveys, that there is a mandate for the project before doing anything
 - o Consult the DAC at an early stage (we had a visit from them early on, and they helped us with thinking about what was possible)
 - o Above all, keep in touch with the Diocesan Advisory Committee throughout the project. Their help is invaluable.
- **Establish a strong team; know the skills required; set up clear roles and responsibilities**
 - o Ensure as early as possible that your professional team are up to the job and that it is not outside their experience; take advice on this from the Diocese and from other churches which have tackled similar projects.
 - o Set up a small project team, seeking out relevant skills within the congregation and, if necessary, from outside it.
 - o Have a good quality team to oversee the plans and the work
 - o Have a group or team with a leader to manage the project. Include the clergy with the proviso that their involvement will be limited by their parish commitments and therefore there will be points of proceeding without their say so. This should be understood from the beginning and not through a crisis part way through.
 - o Appoint a Chairman and Project Steering Group with each member having a clear defined role and responsibilities and capable of working together with a commitment to seeing the project through. (The steering group of course are ultimately responsible to the church council who ultimately have the final decisions).
 - o Appoint a dedicated project treasurer, also one individual to manage on-line applications, particularly to the HLF which needs a very consistent and determined approach.
 - o Make sure you have someone on your team who has high attention to detail!
 - o Have people waiting in the wings to succeed key personnel who might move away or become incapacitated.

- **Take time at the vision stage and establishing the project structure**
 - o Spend time developing a solid process: identify and agree your current situation, agree, in general terms at least, where you want to be, and be completely flexible about how you get there.
 - o Spend time at the suggestion of a project, meeting and discussing what is required and then produce your "Statement of Needs"
 - o Develop clear plans of what is required as dealing with changes during tender / contract stages can be expensive.
 - o Appoint your Architect who will be involved with the project, once clear plans of what is required is agreed.
 - o Visit other projects with the congregational members who have relevant experience and appropriate project, technical and business knowledge.

- **Make a wise choice of architect, quantity surveyor and contractors and keep in regular touch**
 - o Choose your architect and contractors wisely
 - o *Vision of theArchitect.* Choose your Architect carefully, they must, as well as being capable and good communicators, be able to share and understand "the vision of the proposed project and the enthusiasm being generated by the whole church"
 - o *Integrity of theMain Contractor.* Again, they should be capable of providing the necessary management and work base skills and of handling all aspects of site health and safety requirements, and have the ability to liaise and be a key member within the Team.
 - o Timely engagement of a Conservation Accredited Architect
 - o Ensure a good working relationship is established
 - o Don't assume that your project is the architect's and the contractor's top priority. Be a nuisance! Keep on their backs!
 - o Ensure you have engaged a Quantity Surveyor to keep detailed analysis of the contractor's work and get best value for your money.

- **It takes longer and involves more paperwork than anticipated**
 - o When you estimate the time and effort required to achieve the goal...double it!
 - o Dealing with a vast number of people and organisations, obtaining consensus and agreement can take a lot longer in time than planned. Timescale planning is made so difficult!
 - o VAT reclaims under the Listed Places of Worship Scheme take at least twice as long as advertised and this can cause cashflow problems
 - o Be patient – it takes a long time to raise the funds, to have plans drawn up, to obtain a Faculty. We started work 3 years after first plans for the alterations had been drawn up (and that was for relatively small changes, in an unlisted building).
 - o If dealing with the HLF, be prepared for a high degree of reporting and bureaucracy at all stages.

- **Carefully plan the budget, possible overspend and cash flow**
 - o Ensure there is at least 50% funding for the professional fees in the Development Phase [if undertaking a Heritage Lottery Fund project].
 - o Ensure estimates are based on conservation repair techniques.
 - o Do not underestimate [costs], as unforeseen problems do arise but if the problems are not severe then there is scope to absorb repairs as they are identified.
 - o Expect to exceed your budget. We aimed for £40,000 and raised in the end £51,700 – but thank goodness we did, as otherwise we would have had to cut corners on many important aspects, like the carpeting and the decorating costs.

- **Be ambitious and keep a broader vision**
 - o Be ambitious with your plans – we have done far more than we originally envisaged, but the net effect has been wonderful!
 - o Maintaining the vision is paramount. Our PCC never lost sight that all the projects were about God and His kingdom, making Him known in the world. There was never a time- no matter how tough it got- that we lost faith or thought about walking away
 - o Do not accept that authority or the establishment should always have the last word!
 - o We have a lovely church hall and daughter church buildings, which have needed work also during this period

- **Write a clear and detailed (specified) plan**
 - o Plan and clearly define the scope of work to enable budget costs and timescales to be clearly understood.
 - o Have clear plans on where to go for services and meetings, should the church be closed for a period of time while the work is being carried out.
 - o Agree the specification clearly in advance and don't let the contractors add things to the original estimate.

- **Think through and manage risk**
 - o Assume and plan for the project getting behind schedule and/or running over budget.
 - o Understand and manage risk as the client, attend progress meetings while the work is being carried out.
 - o Manage the project when problems and issues arise

- **Pray**
 - o Pray about the works; make them an integral part of the daily life of the church
 - o Above all, commit the whole project from start to finish to Prayer. Prayer is critical and vital at every stage, so is waiting and patience for permissions, funds and agreements.
 - o Pray at all times. Test God. Read about Gideon. Read about the people who trusted God in Hebrews chapter 10.

- **It's character building! Look after one another**
 - o Accepting from Day One that a faith project compared to a secular project needs a great amount of patience and commitment by everyone involved and that any faith project, as mentioned previously, must be underpinned by prayer at all the various stages.
 - o Commitment and competence are required but perseverance and thick skin is essential!
 - o Do not underestimate the time and intellectual effort that will be demanded of those church members leading the project.

- **Involve communities in appropriate ways**
 - o Innovative fund-raising opportunities – concerts and 'sponsor a stone'
 - o The project provided a focus and a kick start to greater community involvement for St Thomas.
 - o Do not expect too much of 'Friend's groups' or those outside the worshipping community
 - o Make your church freely available for the use and enjoyment of others

- **Share success stories**
 - o When you have been successful, share it
 - o Good publicity is helpful. Work with local newspapers, magazine

- **Plan for ongoing maintenance**
 - o We have found an annual 'touch up' by a small parish working party has kept the Centre looking fresh.

Q4. As a result of the learning gained during and after the project, have you now changed any aspects of your approach/work? Please explain.

- **Project management**

- o **Managing contractors.** If we ever have to work with two contractors again, communication, firm management and collaboration will be to the fore from the outset. Other than that, not really.
- o **Project manager.** We have recognised that the scale and range of work in our next phase mean that we will have to take on a professional project manager.
- o **Project team.** Apart from minor adjustments in the presentation in our “paperwork” which has become more or less electronic, our template for planning and implementation of projects seems to work. It has been tested out on the refurbishment of our Youth Centre and the first phase of the replacing of the lead work to our Chancel, Legh Chapel and part of our Nave roofs. The approach work for any faith project should be always open to review and change, as well as to embrace and mirror advancements in projects being carried out in the secular world. Although the team managed well to see this major project through for future projects, we would hope to encourage new capable and hopefully younger members to join the team.
- o **Managing volunteers.** We found that although many members of the congregation may volunteer to help with different aspects of the project, very few of these in practice are prepared to put in the necessary time and effort when it comes down to it. Managing volunteers is not like managing a business! In Phase 2 we will adjust our horizons accordingly.
- o **Appointing an architect.** We have to re-run the appointment of the architect process as the aims and complexity of this phase are different from the previous ones. We are moving to following what was originally suggested by the consultant from the Church Buildings Council. The brief will be different.
- o **Appointing an architect.** We have now engaged a Conservation Accredited Architect as our regular church Architect.
- o **Time management.** Construct a careful timeline for the project.
- o **Funding.** Try to keep some funds in the account in order to be able fund reports that will be needed for the applications to major donors, planning authorities and the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

- **Vision**

- o **Fundraising and vision.** There are still two phases to complete, grant sourcing is not getting any easier, we have to work with what is available and adapt. Keeping the vision of our church as a serving church and resource for the community will stand us in good stead.
- o **Greater ambition and vision.** We now have an appetite to continue the process of modernising the church – and church hall – buildings, and so we have ideas about other alterations which could be done.
- o No change, as present circumstances are different

- o Projects on the scale of the one we have now completed, occur (we hope) relatively rarely in the life of our church. Thus next time around the people involved will no doubt be different. Leaving clear records and an appraisal/ evaluation document for the project should be helpful for the future.
 - o We were pleased with the preparation and execution of Phase 2. We have started Phase 3 but are taking our time and doing one ingredient at a time, due to a less able team and the further improvements being seen by members of the congregation as less necessary
- **Re-applied the learning, although now with greater confidence**
 - o Since the completion of phase one of this project, we have gone on to work with the DAC obtaining the necessary faculties/ Archdeacon's permission for the installation of a replacement sound system, much improved lighting and very recently the replacement of our well-worn pipe organ bellows. Alongside this, we have managed to complete quinquennial stonework repairs, all funded largely by various events and local appeals. As a result, we feel more confident as we approach the next phase of our internal building improvements, and as a congregation we have been concurrently refreshing our regular financial giving commitments (bolstered by our new links too across the local community). We trust that all our efforts, to improve the building itself and to give renewed heart to the congregation, will combine to create a truly sustainable worshipping and witnessing community of service and outreach here in Bollington.

Q5. General Reflections

- We are left with a very fundamental question – is it right that so much of our collective energy and funding-raising, over a period of several years, has been dedicated to building maintenance rather than to making the most of our Christian values and outreach efforts? Fortunately the HLF grant structure led us to create our new West End which is helping us to fulfil what really matters to us.
- Listen to all the people involved in the project and give them time to air their views, as the many are wiser than the few...the few being the project manager... me
- Simple is often the way...don't go the hard way because you think you know best
- Authority sometimes hides behind a veil of regulations, which tries to cover every eventuality but stops sensible and simple ideas dead. Challenge those that need challenging if common sense calls for it!
- Do not give up when you hit a wall...have a glass of red wine, pray and in the morning the sun will be shining!

Acknowledgements

With many thanks to the parishes included in this publication who have kindly shared their experiences of church building and hall projects, for the benefit of all:

Alderley Edge, St Philip and St James' (p32)
Blacon, Holy Trinity (p17)
Bollington, St Oswald's (p2)
Chester, Handbridge, St Mary's Centre (p11)
Congleton, St Peter's (p35)
Congleton, Buglawton, St John's Community Centre (p8)
Heswall, St Peter's (p14)
High Lane, St Thomas' (p5)
Macclesfield, St Michael and All Angels (p20)
New Brighton, St James' (p38)
Poynton, St George's (p41)
Rosthere with Bollington, Holy Trinity (p24)
Stockton Heath, St Thomas' (p27)
Waverton, St Peter's (p30)

These are stories of what God is doing in the places and spaces we intentionally use for the glory of God. We hope reading them has been a source of encouragement and inspiration. As we draw ever closer to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, may we use our resources wisely to make Christ known, either for the first time or in deeper ways, as part of God's great reconciling work to redeem all under Christ.

Every blessings as you go forth in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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