

## **Report: A vision for our buildings**

The central and prime purpose of all our church buildings is spiritual.

Most churches are the oldest and best preserved in the locality and represent a historical and spiritual link to local individuals as well as a positive asset - and not necessarily a financial millstone. They symbolise "the community" for most of its inhabitants.

As a Deanery it is impossible to interfere with or manage centrally all the individual ideas, projects etc. that the 36 churches will have or envisage for their buildings. There are a plethora of ideas and projects that may be suitable for some churches in this Deanery. However, we suggest the Deanery plan only sets parameters and manageable guidelines for greater use of buildings so that Benefices and not parishes can implement them.

We see the benefice as a workable and answerable entity that can more easily translate into the Deanery rather than 36 individual parishes.

We must take on board the fact that each church building cannot be all things to all people. Before any individual church starts to implement a change of uses process, each Benefice must start thinking corporately as to how each building can (or cannot) be used to ensure that its plans and purpose are for the Benefice as a whole and not as a separate parish. Each Benefice needs to take stock and work more effectively together.

Funded feasibility studies are available and should be used if and when benefices see their way forward.

If churches are considering alterations they must also consult and work with the local and wider community to see how this impacts on the locality. What benefit will it have on the community as a whole, not just as a church? A lot of funding, especially government is tied in with this aspect. Consultation with Parish and local councils is a must.

**Benefices must see that opening up church buildings for a wider well managed purpose is a positive thing that will have many long term benefits.**

Imaginative and complimentary thinking is needed to achieve the purpose. The faculty process must be more flexible and the DAC consultation part of that process needs to be streamlined. Adding kitchens, WC's, etc should only be half of the vision, although if we do nothing to equip our buildings for greater flexibility of use then they will, in the final analysis cease to be viable entities. No one wants to see the emotional heartache that would therefore ensue.

Any change should be approached with a positive attitude rather than maintain the status quo with an air of depressed resignation and with greater visible support from 'on high'.

### **Recommendation**

**That the deanery encourages the buildings of the deanery to be developed once again multi use buildings addressing the needs of the community in which they are placed**