

GUIDANCE NOTE

Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches



RE-ORDERING YOUR CHURCH – A PRACTICAL GUIDE

LOOK AT YOUR CHURCH AS IT IS TODAY

Your object is to use the building for future worship, mission and ministry in the best way possible, without losing its past or jeopardising its future as a place of worship.

For this you need to consider

1. What you have at present, what you need and what you hope to gain from your re-ordering.
2. What furniture and equipment used in worship, now in your church, should be kept - either exactly where they are or somewhere else in the building - and why this is so.
(Your completed Statements of Significance and Need, see p.3, will put you in a better position to make these decisions.)
3. Most important - **look at your whole church** with a view to using the past to enhance the present and the future.

HOW WE COME TO BE HERE

What we have inherited reflects the changing patterns of worship over the centuries:

- Traditionally churches face East.
- The altar and sanctuary are raised above the nave, as often, also, is the choir/quire.
- Ornate (medieval) rood screens separated the sacred from the secular.
- In the first half of the 20th century Matins and Evensong were the main services of most Devon parishes.
- The Eucharist / Holy Communion has become the main weekly service; Series 1, 2 and 3 and ASB, which we've worked through towards Common Worship, has led to the President of the Eucharist often facing the Congregation rather than the Altar.
- 'Family / Parish Communion' has brought us to a continuing of our fellowship in the agape-like refreshments afterwards... and the possible need to provide in-church facilities for these.
- We no longer 'hang-on' till the end of a service and generally expect WC provision as a matter of course.
- Churches are often venues for concerts - both for the benefit of church funds and as a community asset.
- Often church acoustics are good and the building provides an attractive background.
- Accessibility has to be considered – from outside and within.

YOUR CHURCH, ITS FURNITURE AND FITTINGS

An outline to help you consider their place in your re-ordering:

The name, importance and use of the altar in worship has changed over the centuries.

- **HIGH ALTAR** and Communion Rail on a higher level
- **NAVE ALTAR**
- **THE CHANCEL and CHOIR** - This area often has choir stalls / pews. These don't have to be static or behind a screen
- **SCREEN** (rood) - A full medieval / much-carved screen can pose a problem as it can hamper views even of a raised High Altar.

It can make a good backdrop / reredos for a nave altar, so the use of the space behind (East of) it must be considered in the whole-church plan.

- **STEPS** up to the chancel can be extended to form a raised platform which doesn't have to be permanent. N.B. Accessibility.
- **PULPIT** Can double as a Priest's Desk for service-taking and as a Lectern for reading-from.
- **LECTERN** - Often movable. Can double as a Pulpit.
- **FONT** and **BAPTISTERY** just inside the main entrance door.
- **ORGAN** - Its position has no liturgical significance.
- **PEWS** - May have to be kept, at least in part, as a detail of your church's journey through the ages. They can be made more comfortable, movable and adaptable. Sadly the most aged and valuable tend to be the most uncomfortable!
- **SIDE CHAPELS, AISLES, TOWER, VESTRY, PORCHES** - Available for change of use.
- **MEMORIALS**
 - On walls and windows may mention people well-remembered or entirely forgotten. Part of parish history and windows frequently point to Bible stories.
 - On furniture can be difficult if the furniture now appears redundant and the donors or their descendants are around. Consultation is essential.
- **FLOOR** will be affected if pews are to be made movable or changed for chairs. The archaeology and importance of the ledger (memorial) stones or tiles will need to be considered. Hard floors enhance acoustics and are longer lasting.

Carpets can enhance your worship and the feel of the church, yet may also adversely affect acoustics. This is something to consider if you are hoping to hold concerts, exhibitions and community events.

Not all floor-coverings have to be carpet!
- **HEATING AND LIGHTING** need to be considered when you're making changes **not** after you've put your new floor back or the scaffolding has been returned!

It is wise to employ an architect who knows your church and on whose advice you can rely on a regular basis. Building a good relationship with your church architect will save you money (and worry) in the long term.

THE WAY FORWARD

1. Talk with the PCC and parishioners about your church's present and future Mission and Ministry and the role the church building has in this. Alert your architect and the DAC secretary and ask for useful guidelines and / or arrange an early visit to discuss the changes in principle. Keep the Archdeacon informed.

It is important that you consult well. Look at what other local churches have done, ask for suggestions and about potential problems that local and national knowledge should reveal.

2. Together with your architect compile a **Statement of Significance** showing how your building has come to be as it is and its importance in your community.

You also need to be aware of your church as part of our national heritage and which Amenity Societies need to be consulted. Your architect should know and in due course should consult them on your behalf.

3. Find a plan of your church (usually in the QI). Make enough copies for each PCC member and use them as you consider the plans you have for the future of your church. (You may also like to make a large scale version to which you can add and move around furniture).

Always remember that your aim is to use the best of the past to enhance your worship and your present and future Mission and Ministry.

Look at the church building as a whole - be aware of what can be moved if necessary, what can change places or can be adapted.

You must be **clear** in what you intend and, with equal clarity, be able to justify yourselves. This discussion will form the basis of your **Statement of Need**.

4. Now is the time to present your instructions (The Brief) to your architect and to ask the DAC for a preliminary site visit. They will advise you if other statutory bodies should be invited to this meeting.

The site-visit should sort out possible impracticalities before they become problems... and ... before you get involved in architect's fees.

From this you will get a report from the DAC - and possibly from the other bodies - which will give you and your architect a good idea of the way forward.

5. Do not lose sight of your vision and work with your architect to bring it to fruition within whatever constraints your building imposes. It is your architect's job to deal with the practicalities of the overall context and planning regulations, drains etc....

Make sure you really understand your architect's plans. Then, when everything is **clear** and **complete**, present it to the DAC.

RE-ORDERING CAN BE A LONG PROCESS, BUT TIME TAKEN IS WELL REWARDED

DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED!

Useful publications and help:

Free from English Heritage, Customer Services Dept, PO Box 569, Swindon SN2 2YP - 'New Work in Historic Places of Worship' and 'Easy Access to Historic Buildings'.