

Church Building Review Toolkit

The challenges our buildings face in the 21st Century

The aim of this toolkit is to help clergy and lay leaders to have a full, creative and open discussion about their church building(s) in light of the two main challenges:

1. Whether their building is an effective place for worship and mission in their communities in the 21st Century and,
2. The ongoing challenge of maintaining and repairing the fabric of the building.

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DIOCESE OF TRURO

DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM
GROWING THE CHURCH

Church Building Review Toolkit - Your details

Building	
Parish	
Benefice	
Deanery	

Church Building Review Toolkit - Introduction

Our Diocese of Truro is home to a wide range of churches. We have glorious mediaeval churches, beautiful Victorian buildings and multi-purpose modern churches. We also have churches that are less glorious, not so beautiful, and less functional, which are nevertheless well-loved by their congregations and often highly valued by their communities. Churches have a variety of uses - we often think of them for worship but as an icon they speak directly of our faith even when we are not there. Many casual visitors appreciate the sense of place that they can provide.

Each of our churches presents us with two key challenges. The first is the challenge of being an effective place for both worship and mission in our present community. The second is the on-going challenge of maintaining and repairing the fabric of the building which has been bequeathed to us. Some of our churches are well suited for the worship and mission needs of the 21st century, some could be and, perhaps, some are not. Some of our churches are sustainable, some could be made sustainable and again, perhaps some cannot.

The aim of this simple toolkit is to help clergy and lay leaders to have a full, creative and open discussion about their church building(s) in the light of these two challenges, and bearing in mind the other resources available in the benefice and deanery. It is really important to be clear about this at the outset for two reasons.

First, it may surprise you to know that in the Diocese of Truro we spend around £3 million a year on keeping our churches open, roughly £10,000 per church. That is an awful lot of money, about as much as we spend on stipends and pensions for clergy who serve our parishes. We need to be confident that what we spend maintaining our buildings is also an investment in our worship and mission.

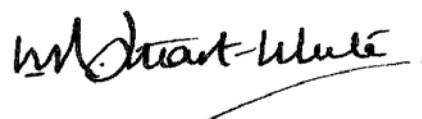
Second, in many cases our church buildings and their heritage help us to grow and thrive and we want to affirm that. However, sometimes our church buildings are less suited to worship and mission in the 21st century church and we need to take steps to develop them. And, occasionally, our buildings are a hindrance to mission, draining finance and the energy of our committed volunteers. We sometimes need to think creatively about other options.

So from time to time we need a robust conversation about our church buildings. This toolkit is intended simply to help start this conversation, and to enable the conversation to be part of the development of benefice and deanery mission plans.

This toolkit has been developed from ideas in Liverpool and Bristol Dioceses (we are grateful for their permission to adapt their work). The recent 'Report of the Church Buildings Review Group'¹, presented to General Synod in November 2015, gives a more detailed consideration of the role of church buildings in the Church of England, of the challenges and opportunities which they present to us, and of the need to take our own strategic reviews concerning how our buildings are used.



Archdeacon of Bodmin



Archdeacon of Cornwall

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Church Building Review Toolkit - Preparation

Some simple preparation will help make the most of the time you give to this toolkit:

Gather some background information, financial data, and information regarding the use of the church building. Use the following tables to share this data. The aim is that this will help you take an overall view of the church building.

Look back at the report on your last Quinquennial Inspection, the recommendations it made for work to be done, the estimated costs of that work and on what progress has been made to date.

If you have more than one church building then we suggest that you complete a separate toolkit for each one as they may well be very different and we encourage everyone to see each church as an individual.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit should be discussion starter and how you use it is entirely up to you. The bottom line is this: do what you need to do to take the issue seriously in your own context, and to consider your building alongside others in your benefice and/or deanery. The intention of this exercise is to help you to consider how each building can best enable worship and mission to take place in your locality, and how different buildings can complement each other.

So in one context this may be an evening discussion for a small group of clergy and lay leaders, perhaps the deanery standing committee or benefice council. In another it may be the main or even the sole item at a PCC or the focus of a church council away day. Results of the toolkit analysis will best be shared with others in your benefice or deanery, so that a wider understanding of the challenges and opportunities available to you are gained. The discussion is unlikely to be fruitful if squeezed into half an hour in a packed PCC/deanery synod agenda.

In each section of the survey there is an initial statement of an 'ideal', which expresses what we might like our buildings to be and do. So, for example, section 6 states, "Our church has the facilities required to support and strengthen our life together as part of the Body of Christ". So how does your church building match up?

For each question, allow each individual present to rate the ideal statement according to how well it describes your church building at the moment, on a scale of A to E. It is not important to be over-precise in making these scores - there is no league table to think about! It is much more useful to be honest and open about strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities. Enter the overall result in the first box for each section - the idea is to collect your initial views, perhaps the ones you brought to the meeting.

Then, together, reflect on the questions which have been listed - feel free to add your own, there is no one right way to do this. Again, be as open and honest as possible and in the light of the discussion, seek to arrive at an agreed score, and sum up the reason for choosing the revised score - briefly enough to fit in the box.

Finally, in the light of your revised score, think about ways in which you might be able to improve the rating of your church building in each area. In some cases, the issues you identified in the initial assessment may be simple to address whilst others could be major projects - or even impossible! Try,

however, to be realistic, perhaps thinking about what might be done in the next five years, soon enough to have to get on with it right now.

Which buildings?

The purpose of this survey is to help assess the contribution specifically of the church building to the life, worship, ministry and mission of the church. Of course, our churches vary considerably. Sometimes the church is the only building the congregation has. In other cases church halls are physically attached to the church and offer easy access to kitchen and toilet facilities and to rooms large and small for a range of church activities. In other cases the church hall is a separate building. This may be close and convenient, it may be on the other side of a main road or occasionally further away. Meanwhile some modern buildings are a single unit with a worship area sharing the same roof as a hall and other rooms and facilities.

When completing this survey think about what works for you. If the church and hall are a single building or have easy, weatherproof access between them then you may well treat all your buildings as a single unit. If a church hall or rooms are entirely separate then please answer the questions with regard to the church building alone.

In some cases, congregations meet in buildings which do not belong to the parish - a school, hall or a church of another denomination. It is still valuable to carry out this exercise as the place where you worship is especially relevant to the way in which you are able to fulfil the ministry and mission of your parish.

Data Collection

Please fill in the following tables before arranging a group meeting to discuss the toolkit itself.

Background Information

Date when the church was built	
Grade of listing (if any)	
Postcode	
Date of last Quinquennial Inspection	
Quinquennial Architect	
Date of last Disability Audit	
Date of last Health & Safety Audit	

Financial Data

Annual Expenditure	£
Water	
Gas	
Electricity	
Oil	
Insurance	
Routine maintenance	
Staff Costs	
Other	
Total	

Data Collection cont.

In the next table enter the amount spent over the last five years on major items, whether planned or not and show the average annual amount.

Long Term Expenditure	Five Years	Annual Average
Planned works from last QQ		
Unexpected major repairs		
Improvements		
Total		

In the next table, identify any income which can be related directly to the church building. Do not include collections, planned giving or other similar unrestricted donations. Whilst fees for Occasional Offices (mainly weddings and funerals) are for more than the upkeep of the building it is helpful to see how it helps to generate this income.

Income	£
Fees from Occasional Offices	
Rental income for use of building	
Restricted donations for church upkeep	
Friends Group income to PCC	
Total	

Footfall Analysis

This task is aimed at helping you understand the many different ways in which your church is used. The aim is to estimate the number of visits that are made to the building *in the last year* - do not distinguish whether these are by different people, some coming once, others many times or for very different reasons.

Try to think about all the ways in which people visit: not only the congregations on Sunday mornings but all the other times, some for services, others when the church is used for different purposes. Also remember that one event (say a school carol service) may involve several visits for rehearsals and setting up. Count each of these separately.

Go through your Visitors Book - not all visitors will make an entry in the book and each actual entry may represent several people coming together. Try to make an informed estimate based on the evidence.

Your church service register may not always show the numbers attending, either because individual services were omitted or because certain types of occasional offices never have the numbers recorded. Try to tap into various people, not just your incumbent, to estimate the numbers involved. Chatting to your undertaker may help. Weddings often have rehearsals beforehand and people coming to prepare such as flower arrangers and musicians.

Some churches offer a home to specific activities - such as a nursery, a shop or regular rehearsal and concert uses. All of these should be added to your list.

Do the analysis for a whole year - this way you will be less influenced by seasonal patterns. Some places have more visitors in the summer, others have lots of Christmas or Easter school events.

Overall, keep in mind that no individual type of activity is necessarily more important than another - just list all of them.

Once you have completed the list and worked out the percentages in each category, it is worth having a session at a PCC meeting to reflect on your findings. Sometimes it will help bring out the variety of ways in which the church is serving all sorts of different needs.

If you have a lot of different items of data, you may want to use a spreadsheet to help, but the tables on the next page form a useful summary and may be enough for some places. Whatever you do, keep a record of where each number comes from so that it is much easier to check and perhaps to repeat in a few years' time to make a comparison.

Footfall Analysis

Church	
Start Date	
End Date	

Services

Event	Numbers	Percent
Sunday morning		
Sunday evenings		
Mid-week services		
Seasonal services		
Baptisms		
Weddings		
Funerals		
Total		

Other Visitors

Event	Numbers	Percent
General visitors		
Choir practices		
Ringing practice		
Church meetings		
After school club		
Concerts		
Rehearsals		
Meetings		
Total		

Total Footfall

Total		
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Church Building Assessment - Introduction

The next pages comprise the main part of the Church Building Assessment.

This is where you will need to get together whichever group is undertaking the task. Although you may wish to give everyone a chance beforehand to look through the various sections and the questions, it is helpful if they all try to come to the discussion with an open mind. There are no 'right' answers and it is not always possible to make direct comparisons between different church buildings. Not every place interprets the challenge of mission and ministry in the same way.

Church Building Assessment

1. A building in which we as the people of God can worship Him

Launching point: "Our church is a great place in which to worship God"

E Very Poor	D Seen Better	C Average	B Pretty Good	A Excellent

Now consider the following questions:

- a. Does the building provide a worshipping congregation with a sense of the presence of God? How is this achieved?
- b. Does the building encourage flexibility and freedom of expression in the worship of God, or are there aspects which serve as a hindrance to worship?
- c. Can the building cater for worship by groups of different sizes and adopting different approaches to worship?
- d. Does your church have appropriate facilities (e.g. toilets, heating, catering) for people to use the church in comfort?

Having discussed this aspect of the building you may wish to review your Launching point score:

Revised Score	Why did you award this score?

What could be done to improve this score? What score might you achieve by these means? Indicate whether short or long term and how ambitious they might be.

Ambition Score	What do we need to do to achieve this?

Church Building Assessment cont.

2. A building which is welcoming to visitors and newcomers

Launching point: "Our church presents an open and inviting appearance to those who don't regularly attend our services or activities"

E Very Poor	D Seen Better	C Average	B Pretty Good	A Excellent

Now consider the following questions:

- Are the main entry points into the building clearly marked? Are any special facilities for disabled people well indicated?
- Are the signs around the church, including notice boards, attractive and welcoming? Are they kept up-to-date? Do out-of-date posters remain for a long time?
- Is the building left unlocked during the week?
- Can visitors find their way to the church easily and, inside, are key features well signed and described? Does your church have any features specially interesting to visitors?
- Is the church heated efficiently and to a standard that visitors might expect?

Having discussed this aspect of the building you may wish to review your Launching point score

Revised Score	Why did you award this score?

What could be done to improve this score? What score might you achieve by these means? Indicate whether short or long term and how ambitious they might be.

Ambition Score	What do we need to do to achieve this?

Church Building Assessment cont.

3. A building which is well-positioned within the parish and local community

Launching point: "Our church is well-located for our own people and for mission to the surrounding area"

E Very Poor	D Seen Better	C Average	B Pretty Good	A Excellent

Now consider the following questions:

- Is the building well-located in terms of the main centres of population?
- Is the building well-located in relation to shops, workplaces or any public facilities within the parish?
- Is the building easy to find by people coming for the first time?
- Does the local community use the building for non-worship activities?

Having discussed this aspect of the building you may wish to review your Launching point score

Revised Score	Why did you award this score?

What could be done to improve this score? What score might you achieve by these means? Indicate whether short or long term and how ambitious they might be.

Ambition Score	What do we need to do to achieve this?

Church Building Assessment cont.

4. A building which is easy to get to

Launching point: "Our church is easy to access by a variety of forms of transport"

E Very Poor	D Seen Better	C Average	B Pretty Good	A Excellent

Now consider the following questions:

- Are the walking and cycling routes to the building safe, clear and well lit, especially at night?
- Is there adequate parking space available nearby without causing a nuisance to local residents?
- Are the access roads to the church easy to navigate? Is the church signposted from the nearest main road?
- How do people without their own transport get to church?
- Is every community in your parish sufficiently supported? Are there parts of your parish from where very few come to your church? Is location an issue?

Having discussed this aspect of the building you may wish to review your Launching point score

Revised Score	Why did you award this score?

What could be done to improve this score? What score might you achieve by these means? Indicate whether short or long term and how ambitious they might be.

Ambition Score	What do we need to do to achieve this?

Church Building Assessment cont.

5. A building which speaks well of the Christian faith

Launching point: "Our church looks good and appropriately honours the God we worship"

E Very Poor	D Seen Better	C Average	B Pretty Good	A Excellent

Now consider the following questions:

- a. Does the building appear well used and well cared for?
- b. Does the building express the mission of the church to bring good news to the whole community? How are you using the building to explain the Christian faith?
- c. Is the appearance of the building at least of a standard that one might expect of public buildings generally?
- d. Does the appearance of the building and its grounds give the right message to visitors and those passing by?

Having discussed this aspect of the building you may wish to review your Launching point score

Revised Score	Why did you award this score?

What could be done to improve this score? What score might you achieve by these means? Indicate whether short or long term and how ambitious they might be.

Ambition Score	What do we need to do to achieve this?

Church Building Assessment cont.

6. A building which provides facilities we need to grow and develop as the people of God

Launching point: "Our church has the facilities required to support and strengthen our life together as part of the Body of Christ"

E Very Poor	D Seen Better	C Average	B Pretty Good	A Excellent

Now consider the following questions:

- a. Does the building provide spaces for formal and informal gatherings, both during a service and at other times?
- b. Does the building allow a congregation to meet informally following a service?
- c. Does the building provide facilities suitable for different age groups?

Having discussed this aspect of the building you may wish to review your Launching point score

Revised Score	Why did you award this score?

What could be done to improve this score? What score might you achieve by these means? Indicate whether short or long term and how ambitious they might be.

Ambition Score	What do we need to do to achieve this?

Church Building Assessment cont.

7. A building which is appropriately sized for now and the future

Launching point: "Our church is the right size to meet both our current needs and our hopes for the next ten years"

E Very Poor	D Seen Better	C Average	B Pretty Good	A Excellent

Now consider the following questions:

- a. Does the building accommodate all of our church's current range of activities?
- b. Would the premises be able to cater for future numerical growth in the congregation and the church's mid-week programme? Is the building too large, too unwieldy or too inflexible?
- c. Is there potential for the building to serve as a venue for anything which would respond to unmet needs in the community?
- d. Would it be possible to develop the interior of the church building for a wider range of uses than it is currently used for?

Having discussed this aspect of the building you may wish to review your Launching point score

Revised Score	Why did you award this score?

What could be done to improve this score? What score might you achieve by these means? Indicate whether short or long term and how ambitious they might be.

Ambition Score	What do we need to do to achieve this?

Church Building Assessment cont.

8. A building which can be easily maintained and is not an excessive drain financially

Launching point: "The cost of upkeep of our church premises is within acceptable limits and is sustainable for the future"

E Very Poor	D Seen Better	C Average	B Pretty Good	A Excellent

Now consider the following questions:

- Are we spending what we consider to be a reasonable proportion of our church income on maintaining and repairing the basic fabric of the building?
- Do we give enough consideration to the environmental impact of the building? Have we done all that we are able to make it as energy-efficient as it can be?
- Are building-related issues a minor or major preoccupation in the running of the church?
- Would we be able to make and afford alterations to meet a rise in expectations from those who use our church building?

Having discussed this aspect of the building you may wish to review your Launching point score

Revised Score	Why did you award this score?

What could be done to improve this score? What score might you achieve by these means? Indicate whether short or long term and how ambitious they might be.

Ambition Score	What do we need to do to achieve this?

Church Building Assessment cont.

9. A building which is accessible to all members of the community

Launching point: "Our building is accessible to all members of the community"

E Very Poor	D Seen Better	C Average	B Pretty Good	A Excellent

Now consider the following questions:

- Is there a step-free access route with hand rails from the street into the building?
- Are the church's facilities such as toilets and kitchen designed and positioned so that people of all ages and abilities can use them?
- Does the building support worship which is fully inclusive and accessible to all? Does it have a good sound system, hearing loop and space for wheelchairs? If a projector is used, can it be seen from everywhere?
- Are there facilities for baby-changing and a safe children's play area?
- When the church is full, can everyone see the liturgical action?

Having discussed this aspect of the building you may wish to review your Launching point score

Revised Score	Why did you award this score?

What could be done to improve this score? What score might you achieve by these means? Indicate whether short or long term and how ambitious they might be.

Ambition Score	What do we need to do to achieve this?

Church Building Assessment cont.

10. A building which engenders pride and service

Launching point: "We are proud of our church building and happy to give our time and money to support and maintain it"

E Very Poor	D Seen Better	C Average	B Pretty Good	A Excellent

Now consider the following questions:

- Do people (worshippers and others) have a strong sense of identity and commitment to the church building? Do they see it as a holy place with a significant history and story to tell?
- Do people who attend regularly see the potential for the building in support of mission within the community?
- Are there appropriate opportunities for people, worshippers and others, to serve and contribute to the maintenance of the building?
- Is it easy to enlist volunteers who will provide practical help in the day-to-day and occasional upkeep of the building?

Having discussed this aspect of the building you may wish to review your Launching point score

Revised Score	Why did you award this score?

What could be done to improve this score? What score might you achieve by these means? Indicate whether short or long term and how ambitious they might be.

Ambition Score	What do we need to do to achieve this?

Overall Assessment

If your answers are mainly:

A Congratulations! Your church building is well-maintained, fit-for-purpose and a credit to you. Keep up the good work! But remember that keeping your building to this standard will require continuing work and real investment in order not to fall behind our ever-changing expectations. Why not consider using your experience to assist a struggling church nearby?

B This is a good, fit-for-purpose building but it may need some work to keep it that way. How can you improve it even further? Develop a long-term strategy for future use and adaptation if you haven't already got one.

C The building is adequate for current use but probably requires some improvement. Is there a particular area, such as accessibility or flexibility, where it has scored particularly badly? If so, this is the concern to address.

D This is really the minimum acceptable standard in the 21st Century. There are major issues to address and NOW is the time to start doing so if you haven't already.

E You need to think very seriously about whether this building can ever adequately meet the needs of a 21st Century regular worshipping community, and start considering options for an alternative. Without major adaptations this building may be unsuitable for continued use as a church. You need to think about whether resources are available to carry out these adaptations and maybe start the conversation about alternatives. If this is a parish church, does your assessment indicate that you should be thinking about combining forces with an adjoining parish?

Reflection

Some final questions will help you 'think outside the box'.

1. We need to explore what really matters to us. Does the score summary above reflect the feel of our conversation and the opinions expressed? If not, why?
2. If we do nothing beyond simple, routine maintenance of our church building how will things look in another ten years?
3. How confident are we that the running costs of our building can be met for the next 10 or even 20 years?
4. Does the cost of capital repairs in our latest Quinquennial Inspection report pose a significant financial challenge to us?
5. Are there ways in which the church building space could be used by others on a commercial basis?
6. Compared to other church buildings in our area, what conclusions might we draw regarding the role of this building in the future?

So why not explore this question at the end of your discussion:

“Our church probably won’t burn down today or tomorrow, but if we were offered the chance of a completely fresh start what would we do.

And finally..

In the light of your discussions please take a few moments to agree and record the next steps you might suggest:

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

Useful Resources

We hope you found this *Church Building Review Toolkit* helpful. We hope that it has enabled you to have an honest conversation about your church building. It may be that the survey has revealed some needs to address or got you thinking about opportunities to explore further.

If you need help on the maintenance of your building there is plenty of practical advice at the excellent www.churchcare.co.uk which also lists sources of grant funding.

If you would like support and advice on buildings maintenance or on the Quinquennial Inspection please talk to your Architect.

Why not find out what other churches have done with their buildings? There are many stories in the diocese so ask around and perhaps visit some churches to see what may be possible for your church. Talk with your Rural Dean or Deanery Lay Chair to identify nearby churches that may be able to help.

If you have ideas then please do extend this local conversation to include your archdeacon or other Diocesan staff at Church House. They will be very happy to think through with you how your building can be used to develop sustainable ministry and mission in your parish.

If your discussion suggests you need to do some work on the church which may require a faculty do seek advice from the DAC Secretary, Sue Thorold at Church House. The DAC is very happy to visit your church, to explore options with you, and to offer informal advice. It is helpful to hear from churches as early in the process as possible as this can save everyone time and money.

If you think that establishing a Friends group in support of the church is a way forward or if you want to discuss other stewardship opportunities contact Julian Briscoe or Liz Wallace at Church House (Telephone 01872 274351 or look at the web site www.trurodiocese.org.uk)