



DIOCESE OF TRURO
DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM
GROWING THE CHURCH

Closed Church Buildings

It is important to realize that a diocese does not close churches; it is the people who use, or more accurately do not use them, who start the process of closure, and the diocese then responds to any formal approach by a Parochial Church Council. Churches, like other buildings, can outlive their original purpose. This may be due to population movements, changing social patterns, or other factors.

In 2008, the church changed the terminology surrounding church closure and 'redundancy' is now known as 'closure for regular public worship'. Those churches no longer required by the Church of England for regular public worship may be closed by a scheme under the provisions of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011. The Measure also sets out procedures for settling the future of these buildings. The main emphasis is on finding suitable alternative uses for listed buildings or those within conservation areas which are often important parts of our national heritage.

Each diocese is responsible for seeking new uses for closed church buildings in its area. This work is carried out by a sub-committee of the Diocesan Pastoral Committee which usually appoints agents to market these buildings. Currently about 30 churches are declared closed for public worship each year; of the 43 English dioceses, the Diocese of Truro has the smallest number of closed churches, having only closed ten. The diocese is obliged to try to find alternative and appropriate uses for the buildings, which must be viable in the long term, and sometimes this may take several years to achieve.

If a suitable use and purchaser, or lessee, has been identified, the Church Commissioners prepare a draft scheme for public consultation. The prospective user will also have to apply for listed building consent and planning consent where applicable. The Commissioners will obtain independent advice from a Statutory Advisory Committee of the Church Buildings Council on any conversion plans. If there are representations against the proposal, the CBUDC will adjudicate. Any transfer of the property will be subject to various covenants, giving the church a residual interest in what happens to the building.

Finding a Suitable Alternative Use

When a church is closed for worship, the diocese normally tries to find a suitable alternative use. New uses, often for the benefit of the wider community, have been found for over half of all Anglican churches taken out of parish use since 1969.

If no such use can be found, the choice will normally lie between preservation by the Churches Conservation Trust, (some 21% of redundant churches), or demolition (20%). Of those demolished, over two-thirds of their sites have been adapted for community purposes. There is no prior obligation to seek an alternative use if the building is unlisted or outside a conservation area.

In the Diocese of Truro, Holy Trinity Bolventor, St Michael's Baldhu, St Anthony in Roseland, St Mary East Looe, St Day Old Church, St John's, Godolphin, St Paul's, Penzance, St Paul's, Truro, St Nicholas, Tresmere and St Pinnock have been closed for worship, and redundancy schemes adopted or in preparation. Some of these have been adapted for residential uses, others are subject to ongoing consideration for future use.