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DEVELOPING YOUR VISION

TEAM PRAYER

LORD, We have come together in the name of Christ to offer our thanksgiving for all the wonderful gifts of creation and redemption, to hear and receive God's holy word, and to pray for the needs of the parish, that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may give ourselves to the services of God. We pray that our picture of the future would not be limited to our own hopes, ideas and agendas, but that they would ultimately come from you. Birth your vision in the hearts of your people and may the pursuit of your vision bring honour to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen



“Every place of worship has a mission to its community.

Each church can seek to articulate this, or develop it, in different ways. The most important task for any parish is to try to work through, honestly, objectively, and prayerfully, what it means to be people of God in their own community, location and circumstances.”

Resources for Rural Places of Worship,
Germinate: Arthur Rank Centre

www.germinate.net/church-life/rural-church-buildings/7-getting-the-most-out-of-your-buildings

CLARIFYING YOUR MISSION

From the very beginning, ground all your thinking and planning in the reason for your existence – your special part to play in God’s mission of love for all people and creation. Sentence starters such as “We exist to...” “We see our special part to play in God’s mission as...” “Our mission as the church in... is to...” will help. Focusing from the start on what is really important will guide your steps as you develop vision and plans for how your building could be used in all sorts of creative ways for God’s mission.



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DEVELOPING YOUR VISION

What do you picture? How do you see your church building serving God's mission locally? Begin by discerning and praying. Your overall vision and aims should not be too specific; particularly if your church may go on to do more projects. Example aims could be:

- to improve the quality of life for the local community
- to broaden the range of activities taking place within the local community
- to improve the accessibility of your building for community events
- to use the church building more effectively

You may want to develop a **vision statement** which is usually one sentence and is an aspirational description of what your church would like to achieve or accomplish in the mid-term or long-term future.

Examples might be:

We want to make our inhospitable, cold and dark place of worship, a place of light and warmth and a welcoming space so we can meet the spiritual and social needs of the whole community.

To make our church more welcoming and by the provision of facilities be able to share our space with support services for children.

It is often helpful to turn this thinking into a short **mission statement** memorable enough to come to mind as a kind of compass to help you steer and make choices.

Developing a simple **mission action plan**, will help you identify a range of actions, faith-based and community-based, that together with taking into account physical facilities, will take forward your mission. Your mission aims may include for example spreading God's Love and helping the most vulnerable in your community in Christ's name. This will help you set priorities and identify what it is you hope to achieve. It will help to keep you focussed and clarify to others the reason for your existence. That means that any proposals to change or develop the building that you consider will be held in a mission context that you are clear about from the beginning. Most dioceses and denominations will have guidance on mission development and planning on their websites.

Vision: A big picture of what you want to achieve ie: your dream. A statement that describes how the future will look if you achieve your ultimate aims.

Mission: A statement of the essential overall purpose of an organisation i.e. a statement of how you will achieve your vision. Does not state an outcome. Contains no time limit or measurement. It describes what you do, for whom you do it and the benefit.

Objectives (sometimes called aims or goals): Specific, quantifiable, realistic targets that measure the accomplishment of a goal over a specified period of time. They should be measurable in terms of whether or not they are achieved. They should also set out the process and the person who is responsible for the achievement of the objective.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CHURCH VISION A REALITY

The next stage is to identify what this could mean practically and think about specific projects.

If your vision involves using your church building more effectively, then it will be important to be informed about its current physical condition and provision of facilities.

It is pretty much now accepted that if a congregation wants to grow and also offer a more welcoming building then they will need to be able to provide toilets and catering facilities.



'When people were asked what would most encourage them to visit churches, the top five responses were:

- *a friendly welcome;*
- *the provision of toilets;*
- *a café or refreshment area;*
- *comfortable seating;*
- *access to useful visitor information.'*

Findings of the ComRes poll, commissioned by the National Churches Trust, which interviewed 2038 British adults online between the 16th and 17th December 2015.

www.nationalchurchestrust.org/news/our-new-opinion-poll-public-attitudes-church-buildings



A BUILDINGS AUDIT

You need to ensure that you are up to date with the physical condition of your church building. Your latest Quinquennial Inspection report will provide details on outstanding repairs. It may be that you will have to undertake major building repairs before you can open up your building to a wider use.

Look at how you currently use your church building. A useful practical exercise is to walk around every bit of your church and look at how all of its space is being used. Are there wasted areas or areas filled up with old pieces of furniture that are not being used? Too often churches become cluttered with old junk that has been “donated” over the years. To help concentrate the mind, think of this as “fuel for a fire” – a hazard – and deal with it accordingly!

Look at all your other assets - you may have a hall or another building. Is it being used as effectively as it might be?

It would also be pragmatic to look at how you are currently managing maintenance. Is it being done in the most effective way? Do you undertake regular inspections? How are you ensuring that necessary tasks such as gutter and downpipe clearance are being carried out? Are you aware of your energy use?

OWNERSHIP

It sounds obvious, but if you are planning changes to the access to your church or thinking of selling a hall, wanting to add an extension to your building or create increased parking, then it is always advisable to check who owns land around the church and churchyard. Find out about any rights of way especially those which provide access. Check whether there are any covenants attached to your land.

IS YOUR BUILDING LISTED?

You can find out if your building is listed from your local authority. Usually this information will be available on the planning or environment pages of their website. Larger public libraries should also have this information. However, you can obtain a copy of a listed building entry for a church in England, by simply visiting the National Heritage List, which can be accessed here www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list. For Scotland, you can search the Designations list here www.portal.historicenvironment.scot/designations

IS YOUR BUILDING ON THE HERITAGE AT RISK REGISTER?

You can find out if your church is on the HAR Register by visiting the online register here www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk



IS YOUR CHURCH IN A CONSERVATION AREA?

You can find out if your church is in a conservation area by contacting your local planning authority. They will be able to tell you when it was created, how far it extends, the reason for its creation and the level of protection in place.

Even easier, for **Church of England** and **Church in Wales** churches, you can consult the **Church Heritage Record** <http://facultyonline.churchofengland.org/churches> and www.churchheritagecymru.org.uk/churches. These websites will also provide information on listing and scheduled monument status, conservation areas, if the church is on the Heritage at Risk Register and whether there is evidence of bats and much more.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

At this stage, it would be a positive move to begin – if you haven't got one already – producing a **Statement of Significance**. A good understanding of the significance of your building is essential for delivering a successful project. It will help inform decisions and identify possible areas of conflict. A Statement of Significance should be an objective document, and be in place before you start formulating ideas on specific projects.

Along the way you may also find out so much more about your building that you appreciate it even more. (Guidance on this can be found in Chapter 5)

A PARISH AUDIT AND A COMMUNITY AUDIT

Before you can identify how your building could help your community, you will need to research your community and understand it.

A good way to do this is to undertake first, a Parish Audit and then, a Community Audit. A Parish Audit entails compiling a factual profile of your church, while a Community Audit aims to compile a factual profile of your community/neighbourhood. You can also use these exercises to listen to and collect people's views and ideas on what needs to be improved within their community and how this might be achieved.

There are five groups of people that you should consult:

- (a) your congregation;
- (b) current users of the building;
- (c) the local community;
- (d) those running local services, including charities, community groups and community spaces; and
- (e) local government including your own parish/town council.

In a small community, people may be members of more than one of these groups.

Guidance on carrying out a Parish Audit is below. Guidance on undertaking a Community Audit and consulting with your wider community (c) to (e) are covered in Chapter 2.

TALKING TO YOUR OWN CONGREGATION

You need to give the congregation time to reflect on their church/church building and how it currently functions. This could be done by organising a special meeting and asking those interested to come along.

The aim would be to produce a **Parish Audit** which describes as many aspects of your church as possible such as: style/s of worship; a profile of the people who come; current resources and activities that take place within the church and current relationship with the local community. This would include your building audit.

Suggested topics for discussion with your congregation are set out in the template on the next page.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION WITH YOUR CONGREGATION – AROUND PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS

i) *What do you already have?* Your place of worship and any other buildings e.g. a hall. What is special about your building (its history, architecture, atmosphere) and your location? What do you add to your local area? What are the stories that people connect with or could connect with? What about the churchyard? Does it have monuments of interest and/or potential wildlife interest?

ii) *What is your core purpose or do you have more than one?* These could include: your mission, community outreach, a worship space? Are they equally important? If there is more than one do they complement each other? Does each activity bring added benefits to other activities? Is there any conflict between the different roles?

iii) *How do your church members currently connect with the community?*
What relationships do you already have? What form do they take? Could they be improved in any way?

iv) *How do other people currently engage with your building?*

- List all the different groups that come into the building: members of the congregation, tourists, architectural historians, school groups, community groups etc.
- How do you interpret your building, its history, its stories, and its function?
- What is happening in your church today that involves the wider community?
- What events and activities already take place there?
- What kind of people (age, gender) attend these events and where do they come from?

v) *Think about what the building means to you.*

As a spiritual place? As a quiet space? What about emotional connections?

vi) *Think about how others beyond the immediate congregation might see you and the church building.*

- What do people find when they go into your church? A living church? A church bearing witness to the Christian faith? A church involved with their community? A church with lots going on?
- Think about the sense of ownership that others in the community may have for the building. It may be that for most of the wider community, it is the church building with which they connect and have an emotional attachment (e.g. married there, grandparents buried there, or interested in historical buildings) or they may just see it as an important local landmark.
- What sort of welcome do you provide for visitors? What do you do to encourage repeat visits?

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION WITH YOUR CONGREGATION – ABOUT THE BUILDING/S

vii) How much do you know about the management of your building/s?

- What is the current financial situation of the church as a whole?
- What are the current annual/monthly running costs for the church building/s?
- How much do you pay for energy? Is this the right tariff and do you pay 5% VAT?
- How is maintenance undertaken? Is the cost of undertaking effective maintenance included in your annual budget?
- Do you know if there are any major building repairs coming up?
- How much do you have to fundraise every year? For church activities? For the building/s? Is there a shortfall?
- Where does your current support come from – some or all of the congregation/local community?
- Is/are the building/s currently sustainable? Environmentally, socially and economically?

- Are you struggling to manage your building/s in terms of manpower and raising the funds to pay for running costs and necessary repairs and maintenance?

viii) Are you making the most effective use of your building?

- What opportunities might there be for the wider use of your building/s?
- Do you know what your community needs/lacks?
- What would you be willing and able to offer?
- What possible barriers could there be to opening up your church for wider use?
- How might the building need changing? Do you have a toilet and catering facilities? Will you need to upgrade facilities?
- What about comfort levels? (Heating, lighting, acoustics, seating, decoration)
- What about access to the building? Could it be improved?

- What about improving energy efficiency?
- What about transport links and availability of parking?
- How easily is it for people to visit you? Are you welcoming? Do you have an online presence? Signage?

ix) What is your vision for your church?

- How would you like to see the building being used in the future? Where do you want to see it in 5-10 years' time?
- Who will be the beneficiaries of your vision? The congregation? The wider community? Particular groups within the community?
- Does the current church building fit your vision? Will you have to make any changes to the building in order to achieve your vision?
- How can you encourage more volunteers to take responsibility and help you look after the building?
- How might the current worship practice be affected?

CASE STUDY

QUAKER MEETING HOUSE AT MOSEDALE, CUMBRIA

<http://homepages.phoncoop.coop/iank.watson/CumbAM/MosedaleHist.htm>

Population: 284 (2001 Census)

The Mosedale Meeting House is situated in the hamlet of Mosedale on the NE edge of the Northern Fells of the Lake District. Mosedale nestles at the foot of Carrock Fell at the entrance to the secluded valley of the River Caldew.

From 1668 to 1831, Mosedale Friends formed part of Caldbeck Monthly Meeting. The meeting was discontinued in 1865 and re-opened for a few years until 1913. It was used from about 1936 to 1970 as a chapel of ease of the Church of England. It was then restored by Friends and opened for Quaker Meetings for Worship in 1973. In 1987 the meeting house was re-roofed by a group of 48 volunteers.

During July and August it is opened as a coffee shop for visitors. Staffed by volunteers and Friends from other local meetings, it opens on Saturdays from 10am to 5pm and on Sundays from 2pm to 5pm until September 4th.

Coffees, teas, home-made cakes and light lunches are available and there are also exhibitions, sales of local arts and craft and books and bric-a-brac in the barn. Proceeds go to the Northern Fells Group services and the rent helps Quakers to maintain the building.



There is a Quaker Meeting every Sunday from April to October and on the 2nd and 4th Sunday from November to March.



“But thinking about what’s possible and desirable, as well as what’s necessary, can be difficult: imagining new scenarios when stood in a familiar setting can be very challenging and bold changes can be hard to visualise. There is no formula for what will work in any given church... however, seeing what others have done, what worked and what didn’t, and what they’d do differently if given the chance, can help to stimulate ideas and discussion.”

The English Parish Church through the Centuries (DVD-ROM), The Christianity and Culture Project at the University of York.

[www.christianityandculture.org.uk/
resources/epc](http://www.christianityandculture.org.uk/resources/epc)

Remember this is only the beginning of generating ideas. Feel free to talk around lots of ideas and be bold – don’t worry too much about practicalities at this stage. Bear in mind, you don’t necessarily have to re-order for the sake of it. You do not have to remove all the pews unless you have a good reason. One pew removed for a tea point would be less expensive and all that is required.

You may also find that there are some simple actions you could take straight away such as making the church more welcoming by providing better signage, a ‘church open’ notice or developing a welcome pack for visitors.

CURRENT USERS OF YOUR CHURCH

Speak to groups who already use the building and ask them how they find it and what could be improved. This will include church groups such as the Mothers’ Union as well as any local groups. Don’t forget the cleaners, choir and bell-ringers, as they will be using the church at different times.

VISIT OTHER CHURCHES

There are plenty of good examples which are the result of imagination and good design. Go and look at other places of worship that are undertaking similar projects and others that have already completed projects and talk to them about how they did it and the lessons they learnt. Ask them who and which organisations they went to for help and guidance. Contact your local Diocesan Advisory Committee Secretary or Denomination Property Adviser to find out about other projects in your local area that you could go and visit.

NEXT STEPS

To make your vision become a reality you will need to start thinking about:

- gathering information and consulting the wider community to get their views – Chapter 2
- developing a team of people to take this forward – Chapter 3
- developing a structure to manage project development and to manage the project in the long term – Chapter 4
- beginning the process of thinking about what changes, if any, may need to be made to the building – Chapters 5 and 6

TOP TIPS



- Remember, this isn't about installing facilities for existing church users (although they will clearly benefit); it's about getting more use from the building (**MORE** people to use the building, or the same people using it more)
- When generating a vision, don't think of one idea – **think of many**. It's possible that some can be linked together to form one bigger project, or a large project with distinct **phases**.

CHAPTER 1 CHECKLIST

Have you talked to your congregation and other users?

Have you got a clear Vision and Mission Statement?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Developing a Mission Statement

The Diocese of Hereford has guidance here

www.hereford.anglican.org/missionresourcesforparishes

And there is also guidance on the Diocese of London website here

www.london.anglican.org/kb/mission-action-planning

How to Do Mission Action Planning: prayer, process and practice by M Chew and M Ireland, 2009, ISBN 978-02810-61228. A practical, local-church centred approach to local level mission planning and goal setting.

www.spckpublishing.co.uk/product/how-to-do-mission-action-planning-3

Germinate: Arthur Rank Centre has resources on ‘*Helping communities flourish by equipping rural churches to identify and meet local physical, social and spiritual needs*’.

www.germinate.net/mission

The *Making Connections* workbook from **Germinate: Arthur Rank Centre** emphasises the engagement of rural churches with others: other churches, of the same or different denominations; other individuals or organisations within the local rural communities where the churches are found; and other voluntary and statutory bodies. This is presented as a key part of affirming and developing the mission of the local rural church in its context.

www.germinate.net/church-life/church-workbooks

Presence, a workbook to help promote and sustain an effective Christian presence in villages.

While this document is prepared for Methodists and therefore uses Methodist language, they ‘offer it to all Christian communities, both rural and urban, for adaptation and use’. It seeks to better equip churches in rural communities for contemporary mission, ministry & involvement with their communities. It includes stories and examples of the creative and innovative use of church premises in rural communities.

www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/pubs-presence-230310.pdf

A new version of this has now been produced jointly by the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. Entitled **A Discipling Presence** you can find it here www.germinate.net/a-discipling-presence

A **Church Development Plan** is a new tool from Churchcare to help churches become more open and sustainable. It is a three-stage process to help you achieve what you want with your church building, especially if you are looking to increase community, commercial or cultural uses.

www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/churchcare/making-changes-your-building-and-churchyard/plan-your-building

Cadw have written a strategic action plan for historic places of worship which aims “to find ways in which these cherished buildings can retain or renew their value at the heart of Welsh communities, with their significance sustained or enhanced.”

www.cadw.gov.wales/docs/cadw/publications/historicenvironment/29012016CadwHistoricPlacesOfWorship-en.pdf

ChurchBuild

A website created by Archangel Architects that offers very useful guidance to help a church through all the stages of a project.

www.churchbuildingprojects.co.uk

They offer a **free** Health Check which can be downloaded for a *‘quick and easy way to find out which are your biggest constraints, and the best opportunities for improvement’*.

www.churchbuildingprojects.co.uk/wpdm-package/1-6-millstone-springboard-healthcheck

Ecclesiastical’s 2016 competition theme was ‘Reaching Out, Inviting In’. Churches were invited to send in details of how they had engaged with their community during 2015 whether it was through a one-off event or an ongoing outreach project. You can read about the top 25 entries here www.ecclesiastical.com/churchmatters/churchinsurance/church-insurance-made-simple/community-outreach-activities/ideas/index.aspx

Caring for God’s Acre is a non-religious charity dedicated to conserving and celebrating burial grounds and encouraging a holistic approach to management. They provide guidance on how churchyards can be places for people, for wildlife and also sites for events and learning. www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk

Historic England has new guidance (2018) on new and additional uses for places of worship. This considers uses alongside worship and uses if a building is closed for regular worship. www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/places-of-worship/new-uses