

Appendix B

National Context on Church Buildings

1. Research on church buildings

The Church Buildings Council at the Church of England state,

'The Church of England is the largest steward of England's built heritage through its network of 16,000 parish churches. Among these are 45% of England's grade I listed buildings, showing just how special these buildings are'.¹

Within the national Church of England and at government level, there is increasing focus on church buildings to seek to understand the issues and identify the best ways forward in their sustainable use and management.

The overall trajectory in the Church of England is one of reducing congregations that lack cross - generational representation, which affects volunteer and financial capacity. (Source, Statistics for Mission, Research and Statistics Department, Church of England). When combined with the context of challenging times to secure public and private funding, and vast costs of repairs and improvements to what are often historic buildings, the issue has become a far higher priority in our time to address.

The 'spotlight' on church buildings is evidenced in the frequency of high-level research reports over the last few years. There is increasing focus on the sustainable use and management of church buildings. This includes, for the first time, the government commissioning the Taylor Review report (2017) and launching a subsequent pilot scheme (2018-2020) based on its recommendations. Also, the government-commissioned Kruger report, *Levelling Up Our Communities*, 2020, which explicitly states the value of faith communities during the COVID pandemic.

Research includes the following reports:

-

¹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/governments-english-churches-and-cathedrals-sustainability-review-welcomed>.

- **2021. [Church in Action 2020/21: A survey of churches' community responses to the pandemic](#)**, by the Church of England, April 2021
- **2021, [Churches, COVID-19 and Community: experiences, needs and supporting recovery](#)**. By the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, University of York, March 2021. [Executive Summary and Full report available](#).
- **2020, [Keeping the Faith: Partnerships between faith groups and local authorities during and beyond the pandemic. A report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Faith & Society](#)**, Nov 2020
- **2020, [The House of Good report: the economic and social value of church buildings in the UK](#)**, commissioned by National Churches Trust, October 2020
- ***2020, [Levelling up our communities: proposals for a new social covenant. A report for government by Danny Kruger MP](#)**, September 2020
- **2020, [The GRA:CE Project Report by Church Urban Fund](#)**. Growing Good: Growth, Social Action and Discipleship, by Theos and Church Urban Fund.
- ***2020, [Evaluation of the Taylor Review Pilot: Sept 2018 - March 2020](#)**, managed by Historic England on behalf of the government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Diocese of Chester is participating in the pilot, based on recommendations in the report.² Published Oct 2020.
- **2018, '[Suggested Template for a Diocesan Strategic Review of Church Buildings as part of Mission Planning](#)'**, published by the Church Buildings Council (CBC), Church of England, June 2018.³
- ***2017, '[Taylor Review: Sustainability of Church Buildings and Cathedrals](#)'**, published December 2017, commissioned by the government, Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).⁴
- **2016, '[Church Buildings Review](#)'**, published January 2016, commissioned by the Church Commissioners and the Archbishop's Council, Church of England.⁵

(*Government-commissioned report)

² <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/places-of-worship/churches-sustainability-review/>

³ <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/diocesan-resources/strategic-planning-church-buildings>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/english-churches-and-cathedrals-sustainability-review>

⁵ http://www.hrballiance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/church_buildings_review_report_2015.pdf

A comprehensive list of publications that date from 2000 to the current date, (with hyperlinks to the reports), is available from the [Historic Religious Buildings Alliance](#).⁶

2. Different organisations' interest in the sustainability of church buildings

There are different reasons why a variety of organisations and individuals have prioritised the need to address the sustainability of church buildings.

If it was written as a sentence to complete, it may be as follows –

'We need to find right solutions to the sustainability of church buildings because it is urgent and important to...

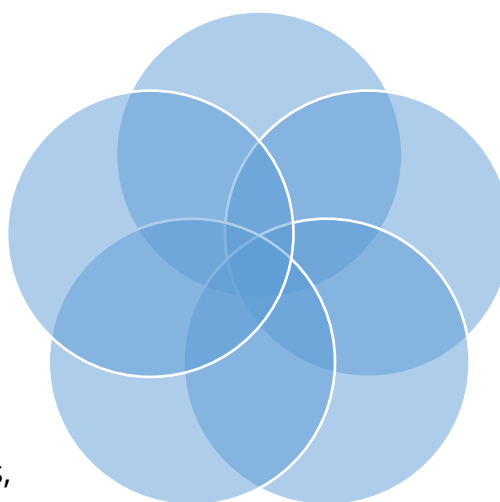
Join God's plan of saving grace (by making wise choices about buildings as one enabling aspect)

Save communities by saving valuable facilities and resources

Save the Church of England

Save the nation's, (or local), heritage

Save our church



It is essential to acknowledge the varying core reasons why church buildings matter, so there is an understanding of where people are coming from.

To only focus on areas of common ground risks misunderstandings and ineffective partnership working; whereas exploring both the wider context *and* areas of common ground increases the likelihood of honest and open discussions with different interested groups, including Christian mission and ministry, heritage and community sectors.

⁶ <http://www.hrballiance.org.uk/resources/policy-documents-etc/general-repository/>

It may also bring into sharper focus the driver for change within an individual church and/or wider geographical area to aid meaningful discussions on the right way forward and help set priorities.

3. Priorities emerging from research

The main commonalities in national research may be expressed as the need for churches to be:

- **More focused on engaging communities** and working with them to use church buildings for a variety of relevant and appropriate uses.
- **Further increasing partnership-working**, especially the use and maintenance of church buildings, including exploring new ways of working, for example, with volunteers and community or Christian organisations.
- **Taking a more strategic approach** in managing and maintaining church building assets; for example, developing a 'Diocesan Buildings Strategy' or a strategic approach to buildings within the context of an overarching Diocesan, Mission or Deanery Plan. For example, see footnote 11 for a template produced by the Church Buildings Council at the Church of England.
- **Considering new approaches, including taking a more social entrepreneurial approach** in the use of church buildings and land (church and/or glebe). The most common example is a community café in a church building, but new ideas are ever-emerging⁷. As one example, the report, *'Building Community: Local church responses to the housing crisis'*,⁸ published in April 2019, explores different ways that churches, supported by local

⁷ To give two examples of research - *The faith sector, the state and the market: Entrepreneurship within new forms of Christian social action*, People, Place and Policy, 9 (2), 110-122, 16th July 2015, <https://extra.shu.ac.uk/ppp-online/the-faith-sector-the-state-and-the-market-entrepreneurship-within-new-forms-of-christian-social-action/>. Also, *Social enterprise and rural places of worship in England*, a research report by Germinate (Arthur Rank Centre) and Plunkett Foundation, published March 2017, https://plunkett.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/places_of_worship_and_social_enterprise_final_report.pdf

⁸ *Building Community: Local church responses to the housing crisis*, Miriam Brittenden and Tom Sefton with Alice Braybrook, The Centre for Theology and Community in partnership with the Church of England, April 2019

authorities, are releasing surplus land for affordable housing, and/or using their buildings to provide support for people in need. This includes examples of both selling land/buildings for new use such as affordable housing, and also retaining land/buildings in church/Diocesan ownership for a new use that also has a long-term income generation stream.

- **Changing the legislative framework** governing the use and management of church buildings to make it simpler and more flexible to local situations.
- **Increasing the capacity**, numbers and range of volunteers engaged with caring for church buildings.
- **Increasing financial resources** and removing barriers to accessing funding.

To summarise the direction of travel, it is for the Church to be more 'people' focused rather than concerned with 'preserving the institution', more outward-looking and responsive to be more sustainable.

From a government, community or heritage perspective, this outward-looking approach may be described as seeking to ensure communities are more positive and resilient. Therefore, the concept of churches as 'community hubs' that enhance spiritual, social, cultural and physical wellbeing is welcomed. Also, that the nation's heritage is not lost, as more people engage with and use church buildings, and, in turn, value them, so more likely to contribute (such as giving volunteer time and/or finance) to ensure they are maintained and remain a community and heritage resource in their locality.

From a Christian perspective, this outward-looking approach may be seen as prioritising the *Missio Dei* - a Latin Christian theological term that means the 'mission of God'. This is explained in '*Mission-shaped Church*', published in 2004, which writes,

"The Church is both the fruit of God's mission – those whom he has redeemed, and the agent of mission – the community through whom he acts for the world's redemption. 'The mission of the Church is the gift of participating through the Holy Spirit in the Son's mission from the Father to the world.'"⁹

It goes on to quote Tim Dearborn, who succinctly summarise it as,

⁹ *Mission - Shaped Church*, a report from the working group of the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council, Church House Publishing, 2004, p85.

'It is not the Church of God that has a mission to the world, but the God of mission who has a Church in the world.'¹⁰

It calls for all we do as church to be shaped on Jesus' principles. To give two examples of these principles –

The Anglican Five Marks of Mission are:

1. 'To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'.¹¹

A second example is the discipleship resource, *Jesus Shaped People*, which defines Jesus' principles, which the church should also prioritise as his followers. These are 1. People (especially those who are marginalised); 2. Teaching about the kingdom of God; 3. Team building (unity, discipleship); 4. Prayer; and 5. Prophetic challenge in today's world.¹²

In whatever way the motivation for being more 'outward-focused' is interpreted, national research on church buildings suggests this may include opening them more often during the week; engaging more effectively with communities by beginning or hosting relevant projects, activities, services, events and/or ways of working; increasing the number of volunteers involved in caring for church buildings; increasing the capacity of volunteers to care for and better realise the potential of church buildings through training and advisory support; increasing partnership working with communities and relevant organisations and public services as well as working ecumenically, for example in the use of buildings and ways to assist with their upkeep; and taking a more strategic approach in managing building assets at parish, deanery and Diocesan level, for example,

¹⁰ Ibid, p85, quoting from Tim Dearborn, 'Beyond Duty: a passion for Christ, a heart for mission', MARC, 1998.

¹¹ www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx

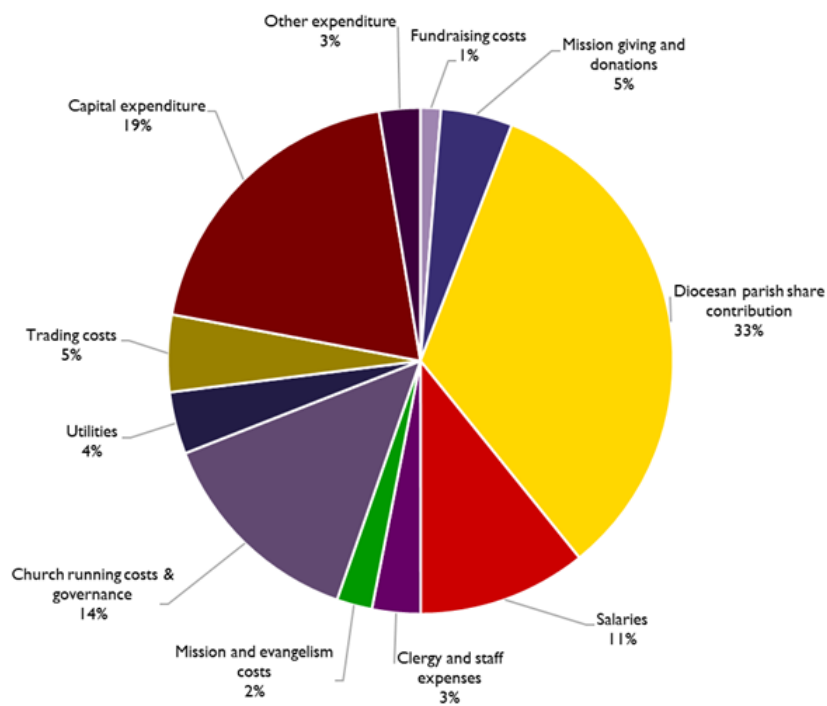
¹² www.jesusshapedpeople.net

church building reviews or audits and including church buildings in Mission Action Planning.

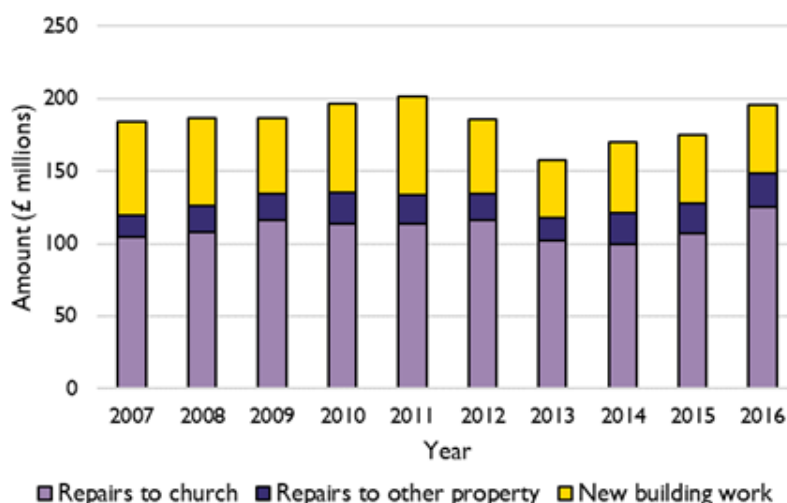
4. National expenditure on capital works in the Church of England

The *Parish Finance Statistics* report 2016 by the Research and Statistics Department at the Church of England includes figures relating to church buildings and halls, as shown the following two diagrams.

Breakdown of parish expenditure between expenditure categories, 2016



Parish capital expenditure breakdown, 2007-2016



The pie chart shows that the greatest expenditure after Parish Share (33%) is capital works (19%), defined as major repairs to the church building, major repairs to church halls or other PCC property and new building works. This contrasts with 2% on mission and evangelism. However, the contrast may not tell the whole story.

On the one hand, expenditure to mission may be in other categories such as staff expenses for a Youth Worker. Also, capital expenditure may pave the way for the church to be more missional, such as a more flexible space with toilet and refreshment facilities. A further factor could be that mission and evangelism may be happening but has a low demand on finance, such as utilising free Alpha course resources with volunteers running it and donating the food.

On the other hand, it could indicate a strong imbalance that needs to be addressed by investing more in missional training, resources and people. The pie chart, therefore, is more a conversation starter to ask more questions to explore the issue of where the church should invest its financial resources.

The bar chart shows that repairs have and continue to dominate expenditure. Also, that the significant costs relate to church buildings, with a much smaller expenditure on church halls. The call for greater funding for the repair, maintenance and enhancement of church buildings is also frequently made by churches to help realise their potential, especially given their often grade listed status as well as their social and cultural role within communities