



archdeacons' visitation news

Spring 2019 - issue 14

A warm welcome from your Archdeacons

When we use the word “heart”, most of us will think about the organ in our body that keeps us functioning. There are however plenty of other ways in which the word “heart” is used.

Whether in the cities of Peterborough or Cambridge, or in our market towns and villages, we use the word “heart” frequently. When that happens, we generally use it to mean the central or innermost part of something.

As Archdeacons, we drive around vast swathes of the Diocese and visit many communities. Every now and then, there are signs as you enter a community starting “Save our...” - and you can insert your own word here, be it anything from the school, pub, village shop, library or village hall.

Fortunately we don't see signs like that for our churches, but the danger is that the majority of people in our communities simply accept that the church is there and always will be. They take it for granted; they don't see it as the functioning heart of the village. They don't see it as being at the core of the community. Sometimes that's our fault, for all our talk about welcome, we often keep the church locked and give the impression that people can only come in on our terms, or if they are members of 'the club'.

Our vision for our churches is that we want them to be at the heart of our communities - the place where community life begins and flourishes. We want to see our *sacraments in stone*, as Bishop Stephen has called them, the very physicality of the building bearing witness to the truth of God coming among us and bringing new hope and life in our community. This is a vision that many of you already share and as your Archdeacons we are very grateful for all that you do, as Churchwardens and PCC members, to ensure your buildings are maintained and take care of.

In this edition of Archdeacons' News, we will focus almost exclusively on the work we as a Diocese are doing to support you in this way. Together, we can help ensure our buildings are an essential part of community life and at the heart of our communities.

ely2025



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Churchwardens' Training Day 2019

Calling out to all Churchwardens across the Diocese

We should like to invite you to attend this year's Churchwardens' Training Day which will, as ever, be of interest to all churchwardens, whether you are newly elected or have been in post for some time.

If you know of someone within your parish who might be thinking about serving as a churchwarden in the future, do encourage them to come along too, as the day is a good overview of what to expect when in office.

Saturday 21 September
9.45am to 3.30pm

Venue: Prickwillow Village Hall,
40 Main Street, Prickwillow, CB7 4UN

Please reserve your place by
Monday 2 September via email
archdeacons.events@elydiocese.org

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Re-imagining our Buildings: from Strategy to Action

By Geoffrey Hunter

The Diocese of Ely Strategy, *Ely 2025: People Fully Alive*, calls all those in the Diocese to action, through five “Levers of Change”. One of those Levers is “Re-imagine our



Geoffrey Hunter, Church Buildings Consultant, Diocese of Ely

buildings”, which has become the inspiration for *Re-imagining our Churches as Community Assets for the Common Good* – or as the project is more publicly known - *REACH Ely*.

Compared with the other Levers, “Re-imagine our buildings” is less overtly about “the church”, as many of us in the Diocese would understand the term. Indeed, church buildings are often cited as “burdens” to the people of the church; anachronistic throwbacks to an unappealing and now irrelevant earlier phase in the development of the Christian church in England.

However, ask a member of the public (or indeed, the Oxford, Webster’s or any other modern dictionary what is meant by the word “church”), they will first give the definition of the building and not the people. If modern society’s understanding of “church” is so culturally wedded to the buildings of the church, what is to be gained from knowingly telling them they are wrong? Should we not be using those buildings as a means of the people of the church, reaching the wider

community that surrounds them? Has that not always been the main purpose of church buildings?

Communities frequently seem to coalesce around a good church building project - fix the roof, build a loo, install effective heating. From formal Friends’ Groups to individual volunteers, there is often a sense of “ownership” evident in those living near to church buildings. Such prosaic projects are a common way for people to get involved and express how they value the church, both the building and the institution, without exposing themselves to anything overtly *religious*.

We don’t understand nearly enough about that. Why do people care? Do *they* even know why they care? Is there an opportunity for us in the church to explain to them why they *should* care? When a building project is complete, how do we sustain that new community coalescence through the church building? What opportunities does all this provide for inviting people more wholly into the family of the church?

REACH Ely’s unashamedly ambitious intention is to help every church in the Diocese of Ely to find the answers to these questions and how to build on the cultural significance of its building in order to re-imagine its relationship, spiritual, cultural, financial, with its local community.

Have you tried the Online Faculty System?

Since January 2017, the Ely Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) and Registry have been accepting Faculty applications via the Church of England’s *Online Faculty System* (OFS). We have seen a rise in the numbers using the system since then and traditional postal applications are now the exception, rather than the rule. However, the majority of cases submitted to the DAC now come via email attachments. All submissions made by email could easily be submitted through the OFS and there are several advantages to churches doing that.

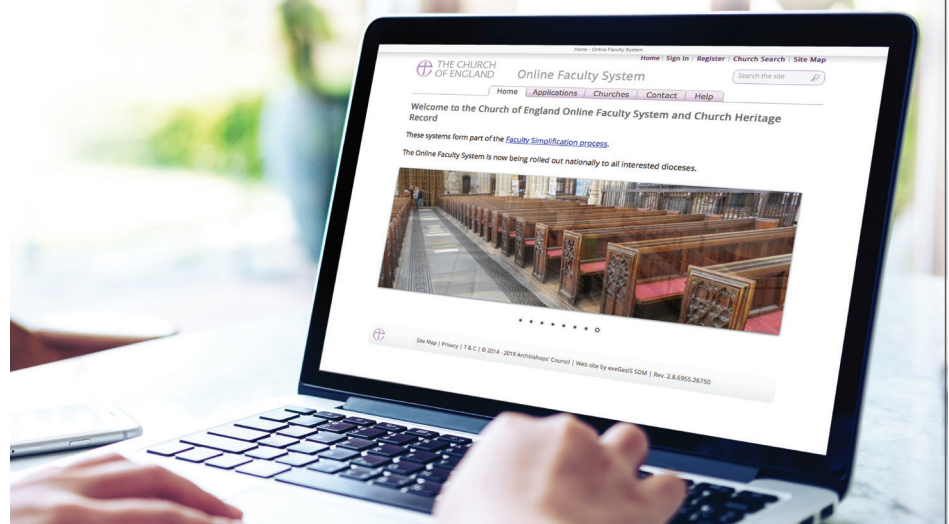
- Each church can nominate a number of people to use the system, including their project architect
- Applicants have a clear record of what has been submitted (and when) for every faculty case
- The application can be partly completed and saved for completion later
- Documents which are needed for every application you make, such as the statements of significance, or the “Faculty Form 1”, are saved onto the system for future use

- The issuing of the DAC’s notification can happen much more quickly for online applications than for those received via email, which have to be printed and stamped
- There is no need to send bulky sets of papers and drawings to the Diocesan Registry – just remember to press “submit” on the system.

The online system will also lead applicants through a process to decide whether their project is something that can be agreed by the Archdeacon, without any need for a Faculty at all.

There is a very helpful and comprehensive user guide for the system on the OFS website: <https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org/home> - but the best thing you can do is to simply register (using this link) and try it out for yourself.

Below: The Online Faculty System Portal



REACH(ing) our local communities: three challenges

It is something of a cliché to say that the future of church buildings lies in engagement with their local communities. The Church of England proclaimed this publicly through the report *Building Faith in our Future* in 2004. Several other reports and research projects have since supported that view, culminating with the Government's *The Taylor Review: Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals* in 2017.

However, what none of these projects achieved was to actually reach the 97%+ of people who, despite living in a Church of England parish, have little to do with their parish church. The Taylor Review's consultation was deliberately targeted at a broad range of respondents, but in the end the majority of its evidence was gathered from people already involved with the church in some way.

If REACH Ely is to achieve its ambitions for all the churches of the diocese, we need to approach the challenges differently.



Little Paxton Line Dancing

First Challenge

"It is clear that the top-down approach used in earlier projects has not worked and one size certainly does not fit all".

The answer to the first challenge is that local information is best gathered locally, at village events and public consultations, through visiting and meeting the people who live or work nearby. That is not something that can

be "done to" churches by the Diocese, but rather the Diocese, through this project, can help deaneries and their parishes to do this for themselves. We have identified the deanery as the closest 'level' at which the project can be consistently carried out across the Diocese.

Second Challenge

"Qualitative research of this type is very easy to get wrong; we need to ensure that those working at the grassroots are being guided by real expertise".

In answer to the second challenge, enter the Cambridge Judge Business School (JBS). The JBS guided us through the process of devising the Diocesan Strategy in 2015 and by drawing on the knowledge and skills of the JBS Centre for Social Innovation, we will be in a good position to succeed.

Third Challenge

"Do we have the resources, both human and financial, to achieve this ambition?"

In answer to the third challenge, the Allchurches Trust and Historic England have both stepped forward as funding partners for this project. This has enabled us to recruit a full-time research associate at the Judge Business School to help shape and carry out the project over three years, Dr Timur Alexandrov.

A word from Timur Alexandrov

Research Associate, Cambridge Centre for Social Innovation

One of the unique features of the English landscape is the presence of churches and their friendly towers. This is especially noticeable in the Cambridge flatlands where I live. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that the spires of the Cambridge medieval colleges could equal the number of church towers – given the city has a great concentration of historic churches within walking distance of one other. Unlike museums, with collections of national treasures, churches are artefacts themselves to interact with – they are living buildings with individual characters that can tell us about both the past and the present of a local community.

At present, facing challenges brought by secularisation, English churches pursue new ways to strengthen ties with their communities and find new roles to be useful for and welcoming to a wider population. The same task is also shared by other religious institutions abroad. My previous research on social practices of local churches, mosques and synagogues in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (countries with diverse ethnic composition and dissimilar religious dynamics) revealed that these institutions act as civil society enterprises that educate, help generate social skills

through daily events, and engage in cross-sector social projects.

While the mosque has historically been a centre of social life and its community unifying role is more discernible in Uzbekistan, Orthodox and Catholic churches aspire to engage with their communities through various social and community development activities. Community members, including non-believers, can witness charitable and social actions done for the collective good by fellows of congregations, inspired by religion. These activities can strengthen social ties and set motivations for social and community development choices amongst those outside religion.

Reviving the original ethos of the church as a 'community' itself is a complex challenge for churches. Not to forget, church buildings are not only places of worship and monuments of national heritage but also community centres that contribute to the shaping, production and reproduction of a community identity. With this in mind, the REACH Ely project is a timely attempt to understand community values and perceptions of church buildings and to explore new ways of measuring the success of churches' work in their local communities.

What struck me the most about the REACH Ely project is the innovative research landscape, a real dive into the English culture and the interdisciplinary nature of the project. Within a wider research area, this study is rooted in the discipline of community enterprise and interlinks with sociology of religion, architectural anthropology, cultural studies, phenomenology, and social networks. The academic research on enterprising church buildings is still developing.

Despite the wider use of church buildings being topical in the academic research, there is a relatively small body of literature concerned with community assets audits and value measurement. At the initial steps of the project, I will look at the existing literature on community enterprising exemplars and alternative uses of church buildings in Britain and abroad, and collect data to develop case studies on how churches reach out and relate to those outside religion.

Our aim is to build-on and extend current knowledge on enterprising churches that face declining congregations and escalating upkeep costs. Within the wider 'community assets' and 'greater good' agendas, the project will fit by enhancing our understanding of how community values can be used in the most effective way to ensure the sustainable future of historic church buildings.

For more information about the project, please visit www.reachely.org

Fund Finder – a quicker and easier way to search for funding

By Holly Isted, Historic Church Buildings Support Officer

The Diocese of Ely has renewed its subscription to this online tool which searches through thousands of Government, Lottery, charitable trusts and other funds. Register at: <http://www.idoxopen4community.co.uk/ely>

We advise you to 'Browse Funding' rather than 'Search for Funding', as it results in a much broader range of grants to choose from.

For building related projects try; "Browse for Funding", "Voluntary and Community Organisations", "Arts, Culture and Heritage" or "Heritage" - then scrutinise the list making sure your project can meet the criteria.

It's a great idea to then save this 'browse' setting, using the save search option, and opt to receive email alerts.

More details can be found on the pdf user guide under 'Help and Advice' section.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

The new Heritage Lottery Fund, now called The National Lottery Heritage Fund was launched in January. The new framework aims to simplify the process with three general grants categorised by amount.

Details on how this will affect church projects is explained further on the Diocese website and for further information please visit

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk>

The REACH Ely timetable

Year One: 2018-2019

Finding out how to do it right

- Why did previous projects fail to reach out effectively to local communities?
- How can we do it better?
- Do we have good examples of where churches and communities already interact really well?
- Why/how have they succeeded?
- How can we make best use of our limited resources?

The project got under way at the end of 2018 with a review of all the previous projects that have tried to achieve similar things. We are now engaged in undertaking approximately fifty case studies of churches in the Diocese. We are also planning to meet with every deanery synod during 2019 to discuss the shape and ambitions of the project and to help us to design a successful, achievable year two.

Year Two: 2019-2020

Doing it

- Reaching our wider communities
- Hearing what wider communities have to say
- Understanding how wider communities value "the church" in all its different facets
- Discovering what each church can do uniquely to build on those values

After the project team has consulted with all the deaneries and carried out a broad selection of case studies, we will be ready to support parishes and deaneries in undertaking the local work needed to reach out to their local communities.

Year Three: 2020-2021

Telling the world about it

- Distilling what we have discovered into a toolkit
- Diocesan and national conferences
- Wider national, public and scholarly interest

We have had a lot of interest in this project and its ambitions; that is why it has attracted funding from outside the Diocese. As well as writing-up the findings of the project and presenting them at conferences, we intend to publish a toolkit, reflecting what we have learned, for other dioceses or similar organisations to use to assess their own buildings as community assets.

Whilst Ecclesiastical has used reasonable endeavours to ensure that the information in this newsletter is correct at the time of publication, please note: (a) the information is not intended to constitute a definitive or complete statement of the law on any subject, (b) the information may over the course of time become incorrect or out of date; and (c) neither Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc. nor its subsidiaries can accept any responsibility or liability for action taken or losses suffered as a result of reliance placed on the information provided in this newsletter.

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