

## Buildings Strategy and Theology

### Three approaches

#### 1 A shared understanding

We share an understanding of the opportunities and threats of buildings and we share an understanding that there is a theology of place and a theology of presence – and that these are important<sup>1</sup>. We do not necessarily share a common understanding of place and presence, but are committed to thinking theologically about place. Place and presence have some important aspects in our county namely:

1. The existence of special places within the Christian story in Cumbria irrespective of the building that stands there. Some would call these ‘thin’ places. Some might in some sense be regarded as iconic. Examples are sites associated with waves of Christian mission to Cumbria where many folk have said that they meet God eg Bewcastle or Furness Abbey.
2. The importance of communities and the patterns of belonging within and between geographical areas. These may or may not have a strong relationship with denominational or civic administrative units.
3. The location of church buildings and whether they are in the midst of an historic community eg St Mary’s Wigton, Whitehaven United Reformed Church, Appleby Methodist Church and still in the midst, once in the midst, but now ‘on the edge’ because housing has moved away from it or the centre of gravity of a community has shifted, or deliberately separate from a residential community or set between several communities eg St Bridget’s Moresby, the Cottage Wood Centre, Plumpton.

We are committed to thinking theologically about space within church owned buildings and particularly about any boundary between sacred and secular. We recognise a divergence, both among and within our denominational traditions, between those who think that certain spaces can be intrinsically sacred or holy, and those who would emphasise that God is everywhere and can be worshipped anywhere. We recognise that for some of us church buildings are an essential tool for mission and for some of us they are a distraction. To some extent the temple/tabernacle tension of the Old Testament is still with us. This is important because it affects the extent to which space used by a church community for its main act of weekly worship can be put to use for other purposes and activities. Is it all of it, some of it or none of it? And what other activities are to be encouraged or allowed?

Between us we have places where several church buildings jostle together and places, both urban and rural, where there is only one church building and it is vulnerable. Legally each Church of England parish must have a building, and there are those among us who would see the existence of a building to work from as essential to the mission undertaken by congregations and ministers in Cumbria today. On the other hand the former Alston Moor Methodist Circuit had no church buildings of its own at all. But we note the tendency among ‘new’ churches now looking for a building after a generation without.

The question of using the church, especially the space used for worship, for other things would currently give different answers. In the Church of England there has been a traditional distinction between the nave and the chancel or sanctuary in the sense that the former is secular and the latter sacred. Other activities often took place in the nave. In many newer church buildings it is possible to screen off the sanctuary area to emphasise that the rest of the space is available for exactly the same

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<sup>1</sup> see eg Presence: [www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/pubs-presence-230310.pdf](http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/pubs-presence-230310.pdf)

range of uses that a church hall would be put to. On the other hand the free churches have more often regarded the whole worship space as the sanctuary. The practice of screening off the pulpit, lectern and table to create a hall does exist but is rare. Each church must reach a consensus within itself about what other activities apart from worship are permissible in the main space; the answer ranges from 'none at all' to 'anything that could take place in a separate space'. In working out this consensus the congregation are engaging in a theological discussion about place and space.

Church of England buildings particularly are often open during the day for people to come in for shelter, curiosity or prayer. Often free churches are locked. One reason for this is negative, ie security fears, but there can be another justification. John Calvin made sure that the church buildings were locked outside worship times partly because of fears of superstition but more so because he felt that worship services were part of training the church that was most truly itself when dispersed in the world.

*Alistair Smeaton and the Buildings Strategy subgroup*  
Dec 2013

## 2 A Reformed perspective

Human beings are inextricably bound to place. As embodied creatures our very physicality means that we not only exist in time and space but at any one moment we are also 'located' (from the Latin *locus* – place) in a particular place (think of the common retort, 'I can't be in two places at the same time...').<sup>2</sup> Though God is not embodied (though we will turn to the incarnation later), his interactions with people inevitably mean that such encounters are 'located'. Whether it is Adam and Eve in the Garden 'in the cool of the day'<sup>3</sup>, Jacob's encounter with God at Bethel – 'surely God is in this **place** and I did not know it...'<sup>4</sup>, or Moses' theophany, in which he encounters God in the burning bush and receives his commission, where he is commanded to take off his shoes because 'the **place** on which you stand is holy ground...'<sup>5</sup> (in other words, place is made holy both by the presence of God and because it is the place of divine/human interaction and so is named thus by its participants), or the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai<sup>6</sup>, encounter takes place (literally!) not just in 'space' but 'place'. Much has been written in recent times about the 'erosion' of place in late-modern<sup>7</sup> society as human beings move from their traditional 'systems' of being place orientated (where people lived, often in multi-generational contexts, in settled communities, growing up, going to school and into the workplace, marrying and settling, and so beginning the cycle again, sometimes within the space of only a few streets, to a much more 'dispersed' model in which 'network' has replaced (sic) 'place' and where a much more mobile population has developed a way of being that is now much more 'multi-locational' – people live in one place, work in another, socialise in yet another and communication is far less dependent on people 'getting together' than on the use of social media to develop 'networks' of relationship.<sup>8</sup> The re-discovery (or re-instatement) of the significance of place has important connotations for the Church's engagement (or re-engagement) with contemporary society, as least in a western context.<sup>9</sup>

To understand this, and its implication both for churches as physical entities and Church as communities of believers (whether gathered or dispersed) it is helpful to look back to biblical and

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<sup>2</sup> The distinction between 'space' and 'place' is significant but beyond the scope of this paper. Its roots can be traced back to early Greek philosophy but is important in contemporary discourse across a variety of disciplines. The notion of place as a kind of 'bounded container' finds its origins in the writings of Aristotle who argues that without such a concept, physical entities will not only fail to be located but will fail to 'be' at all (cf *Nichomachean Ethics*). Such a concept of place as a kind of 'inert' container has been challenged by many modern writers on the significance of place, who see 'place' as having a much more 'dynamic' quality.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 3:8

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 28:16

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 3:5

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 19, 20. The association of the divine with 'high places' is not a distinctively Judeo-Christian concept but was well known in the pagan cultures of the ancient world, not least the Ancient Near East (hence much Old Testament antipathy to 'high places'). The pagan world was, and continues to be, well acquainted with the notion of sacred association with graves or water courses or springs, for example.

<sup>7</sup> Some would argue that our present context is that of 'post-modernity'. I dispute this and argue that whilst we are undoubtedly 'progressing' from the stance of 'modernity' we are not (or at least not yet) so far removed from the mindset of modernity to warrant the term 'post-modern'. Nonetheless, people certainly were place-orientated until the late 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century when social change accelerated the decline of social cohesion. The Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel has described the twentieth century as the 'age of the expatriate, the refugee, the stateless and the wanderer'. The sociologist Anthony Giddens argues that social theory has largely ignored the concept of 'place' as the context in which things happen, reducing the importance of place to the periphery (see Giddens, A. (1979) *Central Problems in Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press).

<sup>8</sup> The implication of this for the churches and for church life has been explored by a number of writers like Pete Ward, who has developed a tentative theory of what he calls 'liquid' church. See Ward, P. *Liquid Church*.

<sup>9</sup> It may be, of course, that the Church seeks alternative ways of 'being' more consonant with the prevailing trends in society as with the current emphasis on Fresh Expressions of Church, the last two words being vitally important, though often omitted...).

historical understandings not so much of 'sacred space' (which warrants another paper entirely) but of 'holy places'.<sup>10</sup>

As we have already intimated, 'place' is an important concept in the world of the Old Testament and forms an important part of the relational dynamic between God and people in the biblical narrative. 'Places' are thus the context of God's dealings with the created order and with human beings within it. Thus there is a sense in which 'places' and 'community' are inter-dependent from earliest times. Thus even in the early stages of Israel's life as a people called into being, the several shins of the amphictyony<sup>11</sup> enabled certain places to act as a focus or 'gathering point' for the community. The biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann has argued cogently that with its emphasis on 'the Land', the theology of the Old Testament is fundamentally a theology of place, arguing that the biblical narrative centres primarily around land as a place of promise, against the 'homelessness' of the wilderness experience with the arrival at the edge of the Jordan as a pivotal moment at which a land-less people (those who have 'no place') are gifted land. He says that:

Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation and envisioned destiny. Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued. Place is indeed a protest against the unpromising pursuit of space. It is a declaration that our humanness cannot be found in escape, detachment, absence of commitment, and undefined freedom...<sup>12</sup>

With the building of the Solomonic Temple in around 957BCE, the protest, '*will God indeed dwell on earth, behold heaven and highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house which I have built...*'<sup>13</sup> is not a negation of the importance of a theology of place but rather a protest against a view, prevalent in pagan cultures, that God could be domesticated, contained like the genie in the lamp, summoned to do human bidding. The protest is not against place but against an abuse of place and an erroneous understanding of its significance.

When we turn to the New Testament, the language and imagery of both Gospels and Epistles makes it clear that there had been a fundamental shift of emphasis from the Temple as 'place' to the Temple as Jesus, even though the earliest apostolic community continued, at least for a while, their earlier practices of Temple worship. Luke's gospel ends (with a neatness that marks Luke's literary style) with the disciples returning to Jerusalem after the ascension, '*and they were continually in the Temple, blessing God*'.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, it soon becomes clear that Jesus, now risen and ascended, is

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<sup>10</sup> Because of the constraints of space we will limit this to the biblical canon. The development of particular 'places' as the locus of faith expression in the history of the emerging Church warrants much more serious attention in this context but is beyond the scope of this brief analysis.

<sup>11</sup> Originally used to describe the relationship between neighbouring city states in ancient Greece, particularly in the context of their common interests, the word is used here to describe the theory that the Ark of the Covenant (associated with God's 'presence') in the pre-Temple period 'rotated' around the tribes, being associated with the various 'hill shrines'. This God is 'located' but not in any one place but rather as a focus of community 'gathering'. For more on the Church as 'gathered' community, see later.

<sup>12</sup> Brueggemann, W. (1977) *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. London: SPCK. p.5. Brueggemann also makes much of the expulsion from Eden and the Exile as examples of people being, quite literally, 'dis-located'. Note: It was during the Exilic period that synagogues emerged as 'gathering places'. These had become a normal feature of community life by the time of Jesus and took on particular significance in the survival of Judaism after the destruction of the Temple in 70CE. See also Davies, W. D. (1974) *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine*. University of California Press.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Kings 8:27. Davies argues that by the New Testament period, the concept of the 'Land' has no longer any importance in and of itself.

<sup>14</sup> Luke 24:53.

not simply the ‘great high priest’<sup>15</sup> but he brings the significance of the old temple system to a close, with Jesus’ body now *becoming* the new Temple, the ‘dwelling place’ of God. In 1 Peter this imagery is extended to embrace the Christian community who are described as ‘living stones’, themselves constituting the ‘spiritual’ Temple, of which Christ is now the ‘chief cornerstone’.<sup>16</sup> This theme is resonant also in Paul who in 1 Corinthians (probably the most undisputed of the Pauline *corpus*) described the Christian community as ‘God’s Temple’ – ‘*God’s Temple is holy, and you are that Temple...*’<sup>17</sup>

In the gospel narratives, in his predictions of the Passion, Jesus foretells the destruction of the Temple<sup>18</sup> in an elliptic reference to his own body, made explicit in the gospel of John – ‘...*he was speaking of the Temple of his body*’.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, by the time of the writing of the Book of Revelation, we are told that the ‘New Jerusalem’ has ‘no Temple’ since ‘its Temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.’<sup>20</sup> This ought not to suggest a ‘demotion’ of the significance of place in the light of the ‘spiritual’ since it is clear, and remains clear, that through the incarnation God makes holy the physical and material world we inhabit by making it the place where God ‘dwells’ (literally, ‘is tabernacled’) although the time is envisaged when the ‘old’ world will ultimately pass away to make way for the ‘new’.

For the present, it is possible to discern in the physical world those ‘thin’ places, in which the boundaries between the physical and spiritual places are rendered at their most permeable by the sense of time and space conferring sacrality (i.e. making a place ‘holy’).<sup>21</sup> As Douglas Davies argues, ‘*the dimension of history becomes added to personal identity and individual experience, giving a place particular cultural significance and making it very sacred.*’<sup>22</sup> Much more could be said of the significance of ‘places’ throughout Christian history as the places whether of pilgrimage and/or gathering, in which people come to places not simply *because* they are sacred but by their coming *make* those places of sacred significance as they ‘ground’ people in the narrative of their faith histories and express the reality of divine-human encounter.

Thus, the oft-cited maxim that ‘*the Church is people, not buildings*’ is at best only partially true. As we have seen, whilst certainly from a reading of the New Testament, the Church is that which is constructed of ‘living stones’ of which Christ is the ‘chief corner-stone’, nonetheless, as physical beings, the notion of place, and not least holy (or sacred) place, is an indispensable dimension of who we are and not simply of what we do. Church buildings thus become the focus that connects people with their past and with their futures. This is, perhaps, why although church membership and Church

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<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 4f.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Peter 2. See also Luke 20:17.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

<sup>18</sup> See Matthew 24:1-2, Mark 13:1-2.

<sup>19</sup> John 2:19-21.

<sup>20</sup> Revelation 21:22. It may be inferred from this that just as through the incarnation, Jesus’ body supersedes the physical Temple as the *locus* of God’s dwelling, so the significance of the physical Jerusalem as the centre of national identity and worship is superseded by the heavenly city.

<sup>21</sup> The notion of ‘thin’ places is owed to George MacLeod, the founder of the Iona Community in his description of Iona as a physical place in which the long history of Christian presence, prayer and worship has endowed it with a sense of the ‘holy’. In other words, by participation in place and with place as the context for encounter with God, place itself becomes ‘thin’, offering the physical world as a ‘window’ into encounter with the divine. The notion of the significance of place/creation as providing the context of encounter with God has a long history in celtic spirituality and theology. The notion of the ‘sacralising’ of particular space can be exemplified in the words of a hospital Chaplain who described the significance of a new hospital Chapel in it’s being ‘prayed into being’ rather than it’s simple designation of a ‘place apart’ by the inclusion of objects that denoted the sacred – altar, candles, cross etc.

<sup>22</sup> Davies, D. (1994) ‘Christianity’ in Holm, J. and Bowker, J. *Sacred Place*. London: Pinter Press, p. 53.

attendance in the West is undoubtedly declining, people feel such an affinity with their 'local' Church as a physical entity (and often seek its presence at those 'liminal' moments – birth, marriage, death), as it acts as the ultimate antidote to the lack of 'rootedness' that is the mark of so much of late-modern life.

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*July 2013*

### 3 An Anglican perspective

#### Section A: Introduction

This document is an attempt to set the Buildings Strategy within theological reflection. It is in a sense, thinking out loud. It is also a way of incorporating into Diocesan thinking what has come out of the Churches Trust for Cumbria's Buildings Strategic Review. At the end it sets out some questions – though it doesn't answer them all! I wrote it for myself; others may read it to see my "working" or in order to understand the scope of the issues which the Buildings Strategy must tackle.

#### Section B: Context

It is probably uncontested that if we were starting from scratch we wouldn't erect buildings as we currently have them. We would prefer to have many of them in different locations; we would prefer them to be easier to heat and to maintain; we would probably prefer them not to have such large amounts of fixed seating, thus allowing more flexible uses; we would prefer access to them to be easier. If church buildings of other Christian denominations are also taken into consideration, the situation is more complicated and the problems are more compounded. However, we are where we are.

The Bishop, Archdeacons and "Diocese" are bound by Church Legislation (the Pastoral Measures etc) and cannot unilaterally close buildings. Nor is it in the spirit of the Church of England or of the current Diocesan Strategy (with its commitment to localism and subsidiarity) to try to act in this way. The changes that come have to come out of and be run by local communities – in conversation with other churches locally, with Deaneries, Archdeacons, the rest of the Diocese, and in a spirit of mutual accountability.

On the other hand, experience and common sense tell us that congregations do not generally campaign to close surplus buildings until there is absolutely no other alternative. They are more likely to choose to put scarce and possibly diminishing resources into church buildings than into paying for Ministry, Outreach and Mission.

There are 351 Anglican church buildings in the Diocese, with a total insured value of over £800 million.

#### Section C: Theology

From Moses to David, the Ark of the Covenant had no permanent home, but the impulse to provide a permanent building was a theme growing in volume and intensity until Solomon built the first Temple. There is a tension between being the pilgrim people of God, and being rooted in and committed to particular locations and settled communities. The moveable Tent for the Ark is one expression of faith, but the visible and permanent presence of a Temple building symbolising the visible and permanent presence of God is another.

St Paul uses several images for the church (vine and branches, body with parts, temple of living Stones) helpfully reminding us of the church as the people of God rather than a building. But St Paul is writing in the, at the time, secure context of the presence of the temple in Jerusalem. For us, his thinking is to be held alongside the tensions we face about our buildings rather than as offering a simplistic resolution.

Whether we like it or not, church buildings are then a visible sign of the presence of the Church in an area and, by extension, of God's work and presence in a community. Communities value their church buildings and their churchyards and we must accept that as right and proper. But when Jesus points out that God is Lord of the living, not of the dead, He is saying something about being for the present and the future, rather than just for the past. Our faith is meant to liberate us, and to fill us and others with joy. A few of our buildings help to do this, but many are burdens which weigh us down, with small groups holding on to them with grim determination. How could we set ourselves free?

There is also a tension between sacred and secular. Jesus in incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, tore down the barriers between sacred and secular, demonstrating the divine inhabiting the created, and taking the created back to heaven. However as flesh and blood humans, we need reminders and symbols of the sacred alongside the secular and this seems to be a universal, psychological as well as spiritual, requirement. So St Benedict in his Rule lays down that the chapel of the monastery should not be a place for storing 'odds and ends', but a place clear and clearly devoted to prayer and worship. His Rule also reminds his monks that work is prayer and prayer is work; that is, the sacred transforms the secular.

In our context we achieve this by keeping part of the church (the chancel and sanctuary) reserved for prayer and worship. However the nave, the body of the church, does not have to be so kept, but is sanctified by the sanctuary as the world is sanctified by God in Jesus. Whilst in some places this view is not accepted and there is resistance to using Church buildings for activities, it seems that it is becoming much more widely acceptable to use Church buildings flexibly.

The places we inhabit, their design and architecture, have profound influences on us: indeed they shape us as much as we shape them. We need to be clear about our intentions as Christian communities, and make sure that we fashion our buildings in ways that are consonant with what we want to be. At its crudest, are our Churches inward-looking fortresses cut off from their communities, or are they outward-looking hubs at the heart of them?

Some factors which make these discussions difficult:

- ❖ The tendency for congregations to become clubs rather than churches.
- ❖ The huge emotional investment in churchyards and graves; of course one function of the early Church was as a burial club.
- ❖ Attitudes like: "it will see me out".
- ❖ The fear that the discussions shine a spotlight on the failures of the work of the clergy and congregations.
- ❖ The feeling that rural communities have had much taken away - and of course this is true, though it should be seen against a recognition that the urban communities have never had the resources of the rural communities eg ratio of clergy to people...

### **Section D: Challenge**

The Diocese, through the Archdeacons and Bishops, does have a role in challenging congregations and communities. For example, good buildings, as we all know, can enhance prayer and worship,

but at least some of our church buildings are not good and do not enhance prayer and worship. Lack of warmth, poor lighting, untidiness or even dirt and an appearance of being unloved, do no credit to God, his Church, or us.

Church buildings may be a visible sign of the presence of the church and by implication of God and his work; and being a Christian may be equally about believing and belonging; but we can easily see that if we are adequately mature in faith, we will not be too tied to our buildings – that would be idolatry, putting the buildings in place of God himself.

When our forefathers erected these buildings labour was cheap and expectations of levels of amenities in churches were low. It is also clear that our forefathers sat very lightly to the buildings and traditions of their past, for example demolishing mediaeval buildings in order to have what they saw as nice new modern buildings! The demands of good stewardship of the resources we have need to be faced just as squarely by us, though recognising that these are sensitive matters. Small communities probably cannot and probably should not try to maintain several church buildings, even when each of these is located in a separate hamlet or suburb. (NB Cumbrian understandings of small and large may need to be challenged if we are to face squarely the economics of our situation.) This question is made more complex if we take into account buildings of other Christian denominations. It is made even more complex still when we notice that quite a number of villages took the opportunity afforded by the Millennium to upgrade village halls, many of which now provide excellent facilities.

Again, if we are good stewards of our resources we will not be happy seeing our church plant used for one hour a week. We need to find ways in which they can be used, as they say, 24/7.

Our Mission Communities are increasingly taking their share in the responsibility for staffing and deployment. Buildings will attract some resources (eg Friends groups, grants, people who are interested in having a church in their village without being committed Christians) which could not be used for mission and ministry (eg paying clergy or lay workers). But buildings will always be a call on limited resources, and Mission Communities and congregations cannot simply argue for the maintenance of buildings at the expense of Parish Offer.

However, disposing of buildings is not easy or quick; simply shutting a church will not put an end to our responsibility for it, nor to bills for it needing to be paid. We should not have unrealistic expectations about realising the capital tied up in redundant churches. The legislation is complex, and the proceeds of sale do not automatically come either to the Parish or to the Diocese.

The quality of our discussions about these matters will be a test of the quality of our relationships. We need to be able to ask hard questions and to listen carefully to the views and feelings of each other. The way in which our buildings are used by the wider community will be an equally acid test of the quality of our relationships with the communities in which we are set. Are we distanced from them, or are we and they partners? Resistance to change may come more from that part of the community which doesn't use its church than from that part which does! So conversations which include all conversation partners and which are about listening as well as speaking will be essential.

## Section E: Questions

1. Should we think of our buildings as like peach trees which need to be pruned in order to allow a smaller number of choice peaches to flourish; or are they like shop windows of franchises which we should keep open to maximise our market share? or are they like Post Offices? or Schools? These too are important 'shop windows' (ie contact and access points) and community facilities? However, all are also ultimately governed by economic realities, for they are expensive provisions. A further question associated with the closure of a School or Post Office is how the core services can still be offered in that community.  
NB the Methodist thinking on "Presence" (David Emison and others), and our Anglican self-understanding as here for everyone, need to be brought to bear here. Although Methodist thinking emphasises presence of people rather than of buildings, churches have repeatedly through their history been unable to avoid the links between the two. This is still true today, when even some independent churches, which formerly were content to hire buildings, are now looking for more permanent homes.  
Would this thinking on presence mean that we should consider pruning large unsustainable urban churches rather than small rural churches? On the other hand, our rural communities are still well-resourced by the Church when compared to our urban communities (though they may not feel this).
2. The Churches Trust for Cumbria Buildings Strategic Review is discovering that a key element and indicator for sustainability is the capacity of the people supporting a building (ie their ability and activity). Could this mean that a building - because it was well supported - was viewed as sustainable, when from a different perspective it would be simpler to dispose of it, and better to keep a different, at present less well supported building? A "market methodology" would perhaps answer that if a building has that much support, by definition it is the right building to keep. To put this more theologically, some might say that where a church is active, we discern that God must be at work so that, again by definition, it is in the "right" place. However, this would mean that active successful churches survive – simply because they can, with no other questions being asked. Is this what we want / believe ?
3. Those churches which need support would survive only where the Diocese and Deanery decided that they were needed strategically. Would this be unjust to some church communities which may be struggling because they have been let down by clergy or the Diocese in the past? The impact on Diocesan finances would need to be considered: it would not be a new idea to allocate resources on the basis of mission, but this might require a larger shift and corresponding commitment than we have currently coped with. In addition, there might be an unintended consequence of colluding with a greater emphasis on directing resources to maintaining buildings rather than on mission and new work.
4. One approach might be complete laissez-faire: if churches can survive, there is no need to say or do anything; when they cannot, then conversations will begin. I reject this view: although we respect the fierce independence of our communities, a laissez-faire strategy would endanger our mission to the whole of Cumbria; it would be bad stewardship as at least some churches and communities would be galvanised into action only by crisis, rather than doing good regular maintenance; it would fail to count the cost of resources both lay and ordained in responding to crises in an ad hoc way; it would not take into account the possibilities opened up by ecumenical cooperation. A more strategic approach will not achieve all its aspirations in every case, but the power of persuasion, along with those levers available to us, must be worth trying.

5. The biggest single factor may be Churchyards: around these are understandably located the most emotional issues. It will be very important to have rational thinking underpinning decisions to help where strong feelings are involved. Some of our churches could become cemetery chapels – though how they would be maintained is not clear.

*Richard Pratt*

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