

## Questions about Buildings for Mission Communities

### Preamble

The key point in all our thinking is that the Church and churches have to change – we have to allow God to transform us. This is especially true about buildings, and yet this is one of the most difficult areas to change, partly because of cost and partly because of our feelings and attachments. Yet experience shows that problems which are deferred become bigger, more difficult, problems: they do not go away!

As God's mission is our main work, we may need to recognise that simply having a place of worship, especially if all the energy of the congregation is expended in survival, may not really be missional.

- a) Money spent on buildings may be money not spent on other sorts of work – so we may need to reflect on the best use of money for mission.
- b) What may most encourage people to come to church or encounter God? Awe-inspiring and warm buildings are good but warm hearts and a warm welcome may be even more important.
- c) It will be good to offer a variety of styles and traditions of worship across a Mission Community – but more than one style or tradition can be offered in a single building.

To put the whole thing at its simplest : is each building an asset or a burden?

(NB asset may mean different things to eg a conservation architect, a missionary... but we are trying to get at the overall picture of our churches.)

So we ask you – laity and clergy – to work through this set of questions, as a useful “tool”.

- a) Don't do this on your own! We envisage you involving your Mission Community Constructive Coach and Friend, and (at some point) the Strategy Development Officer (the Archdeacon). You can also involve the independent Churches Trust for Cumbria. Your Architect will also be a good resource.
- b) If you need to do some research, agree specifics about who will do this.
- c) Set dates for future discussion.
- d) The discussion needs to be had (and the research findings shared), and in the end the decisions made, across the other churches in your Mission Community – either all of them or, where appropriate, a smaller group. So as well as working independently, you will need to work together. The Churches Trust for Cumbria (and eg the Diocesan website) may be able to help with both information and information sharing.

At some point you will need to make decisions. This may be sooner than you would like, especially if you have delayed in the past. The decisions belong not just to individual churches but – because we should be accountable to one another and because the lives of our churches are linked – to the wider Mission Community as well. You will need to think carefully about how you communicate these decisions.

You may think this feels like a very “head” process where your “heart” says something different. We all understand this, even if we don't all directly share your link to your particular building. One of the reasons for producing these resources has been to help you think about your buildings in a way that respects your feelings but also gets behind the emotion so that there can be shared insight and good decisions.

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## Questions about Buildings for Mission Communities

### 1 What church buildings are there in each “local community” comprising your Mission Community? [A Mission Community might have one or several “local communities”.]

Make a listing of:

- a) The churches and chapels of all denominations, where they are situated (perhaps most clearly shown on a map); an overview of their condition; and the uses to which they are currently put (in addition to worship)
- b) Other church buildings, again with their location, an overview of their condition and the uses to which they are currently put
- c) You may want to include manses and vicarages etc
- d) The size and nature of the congregations that regularly worship in those churches or in other buildings, including fresh expressions, Network Youth Church, etc.
- e) Other relevant community resources, the uses to which they are currently put and the uses for which they might be suited (don't forget schools!)
- f) the heritage and cultural value of the buildings – you may need to consult an expert on this; important elements will be the Listing of a building and any Conservation Areas;

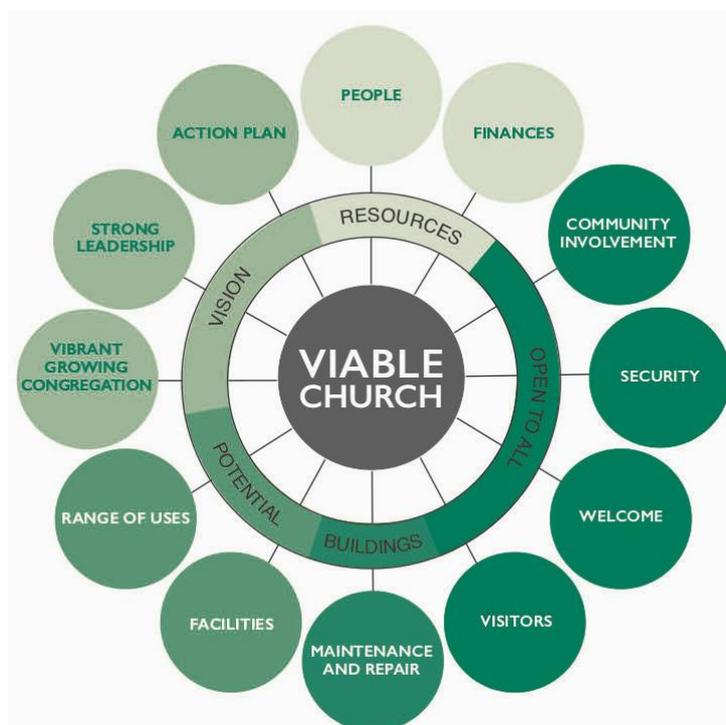
### 2 Needs of the community

- a) What resources the community is lacking and which might be provided in the context of a church or other church building, with or without adaptation,

### 3 Money

- a) How much money do you expect to spend on these buildings over the next two years? (both maintenance and running costs)
- b) How much money **needs** to be spent on repairs to each of them (see eg the Quinquennial Surveys) over the next five years?

### 4 Please assess each of your buildings against each of the petals of the “Sustainability Rosette” – developed by the Churches Trust for Cumbria (CTfC).



CTfC suggests using the following two scales (ie you associate two words with each “petal”)

**how you see things at this point:**

strong  
satisfactory  
fragile  
broken

**how you see the trend:**

growing  
static  
weakening

There are no weightings for these “petals” but crudely, there are three simple indicators in order of increasing weight and concern:

- the fabric of the church,
- the finances of the church,
- the congregation and wider support

Having looked at each of the “petals”, you should be able to come to an overall assessment of the sustainability of your church.

Why not look at the reports (for your church and the summary report) from the CTfC Audit?

## 5 Mission

- a) How could you bring the wider community back into church? What would they say they want from their church? How do you let them know that it is their church not yours? And that it is open for them?
- b) What missional activity might be best done in partnership with the wider community rather than by the church alone? (even if this might be less comfortable for the church)
- c) What community resources might be used for mission, ministry and other church-related activities? (perhaps with extra investment)
- d) These first three questions will help you answer this final question which sums them up and links to your Mission Community Mission Action Plan : What buildings are needed for your Mission Action Plan?

## 6 Issues

- a) Are there local communities within the Mission Community where there are too many places of worship? Or buildings in the wrong place? (eg if you were starting from scratch, you wouldn't have built them all, or in that place)
- b) Are there buildings which you don't need for your Mission Action Plan?
- c) What action do you need to take to address the sustainability issues identified in Question 4?
- d) What buildings in your Mission Community could benefit from adaption for mission (NB putting a toilet into a church may be a good idea, but doing this is not, in itself, mission!) What sort of amounts would need to be spent to do this adaptation?
- e) Are there places where we should have buildings but there are none now (eg major new housing development)?

## 7 Decisions

- a) In the light of all the above, what decisions have you taken / could you take now?
- b) How do/could the different buildings in the Mission Community interrelate?
- c) What issues are you leaving unresolved/parked for now? Do you have any thoughts about when you might pursue these unresolved/parked issues?

## 8 Finally

- a) Where do you see your church(es) in ten years time?