**our church buildings**

Many, but not all of our churches are listed. Listing offers necessary protection to buildings (and contents) of special architectural of historic interest. To undertake any work on a listed building requires special consent. This is an important part of our care for our local and national heritage.

For listed church buildings, and their curtilage listed building consent via the local authority does not apply. However, for any alteration to a church, its contents or grounds and churchyard permission is required from the Ecclesiastical Court. This permission is known as a faculty. External works may also require planning permission from the local authority.

Lots of works of maintenance and repair can, though, be undertaken without a faculty, but sometimes requires the consent of the Archdeacon. There is a relatively simple mechanism now for applying for a faculty or Archdeacon’s consent and for logging minor works.

You can find out more on the Diocesan Website under Parish Support > Church Buildings. The diocesan Care of Churches Officer is Kevin Tucker. ktucker@diocant.org

listed buildings

**CARE FOR OUR BUILDINGS**

There are a number of established and new initiatives for supporting churches in caring for historic buildings:

* Parish Buying and Maintenance Booker are established ways to make savings on such things as utilities and maintenance work.
* The National Churches Trust makes grants and maintains a database of grant-making bodies to assist with repairs and development projects.
* The Diocese has received funding to employ a Church Buildings Support Officer to help local churches, including with moves towards carbon net zero.
* The Church of England is developing a scheme for further savings on insurance and maintenance of church buildings.

**REIMAGINING OUR BUILDINGS: COMMUNITY USE**

In many communities the Church may be the only, and is probably the largest, public building. Historically churches have played a major part in the social, cultural and economic life of communities. Many churches have rediscovered this aspect of the use of a church building through sensitive adaptation of the space.

![A group of people eating at a table

Description automatically generated]()

Thinking about this might begin with a community audit – asking what would be useful for the community and the mission of the church. See [www.dioceseofcanterbury.org/community-audits/](http://www.dioceseofcanterbury.org/community-audits/) for more details.

**Parish Buying** (discounted purchasing on utilities, insurance and equipment)

[www.parishbuying.org.uk](http://www.parishbuying.org.uk)

**Maintenance Booker** (accredited contractors, competitive tendering)

[www.maintenancebooker.co.uk](http://www.maintenancebooker.co.uk)

**National Churches Trust** (advice, grants and a database of funding bodies)

[www.nationalchurchestrust.org](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org)

**Friends of Kent Churches** (our local support group, small grants, ride and stride)

[www.friendsofkentchurches.co.uk](http://www.friendsofkentchurches.co.uk)

**Parish Giving Scheme** (help with managing donations and regular giving)

[www.parishgiving.org.uk](http://www.parishgiving.org.uk)

**Archdeacons**

Canterbury – The Venerable Will Adam

[archdeacon-canterbury@diocant.org](mailto:archdeacon-canterbury@diocant.org)

Ashford – The Venerable Darren Miller

[darren.miller@archdeacashford.org](mailto:darren.miller@archdeacashford.org)

Maidstone – The Venerable Andrew Sewell

[andrew.sewell@archdeacmaid.org](mailto:andrew.sewell@archdeacmaid.org)

Looking further

**REDUCING ACTIVITY OR CLOSURE**

Sometimes it may be the best option to reduce the activity in a particular church building so as to divert financial and human resources elsewhere.

**Festival Church** is a name given to a church where a decision has been made, with the permission of the bishop, to reduce the frequency of public worship (but to do it well when there is a service) and to share the maintenance responsibility more widely, normally through a community support group. Becoming a Festival Church is *not* the first step towards closure. It is a means to secure the sustainable future of the church and can be reversed in the future.

The **Closure of Churches** is necessarily complicated and a last resort. But sometimes it can be right in the wider context of the mission of the church and experienced as a sign of positive growth rather than decline. The wide consultation begins with the PCC and includes the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, the Bishop and the Church Commissioners. Once a church is closed the Commissioners seek an alternative use for it, which might include sale or redevelopment.

**NEW CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

Our second bold outcome for 2030 is 200 New Christian Communities. Is there a need for a new way for people to connect with one another and with God in your community?

**OTHER CHURCHES**

We often receive requests for use of Church of England buildings, both churches and church halls, by other Christian churches and denominations.

This is a great way to show hospitality and often to share in mission together with others. It can also be a source of extra income or contributions towards running costs. However care should be taken in maintaining good relationships, looking after the building and relating to neighbouring properties.

If you receive a request please contact your Archdeacon for advice.