

**An ecumenical buildings strategy for Cumbria
The Diocese of Carlisle, the Methodist Church Cumbria District
and the United Reformed Church Cumbria Area**

Introduction

This is one part of a three-part ecumenical strategy as a part of the Growing Disciples Together process. It works with the ministry and mission strategies as part of creating a Christ-centred, caring church for and in the community using sustainable buildings appropriately located to serve present and future mission. Although in the first instance this is a partnership between three churches, it is open to the inclusion of other church traditions along the way. Indeed, there are already buildings shared with other denominations. Final versions of the strategies must be shared with those traditions.

We commit ourselves and our churches to continue the work of developing strategies whereby we optimise the use of our church buildings for the benefit of communities throughout the county.

1 Shared understanding (the why)

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 (see *Presence*¹ and *Buildings strategy, discipleship and growth*² (the ‘Thinking Document’). 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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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

¹ www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/pubs-presence-230310.pdf

² www.carlisediocese.org.uk/uploads/1371/Buildings_Strategy_Discipleship_and_Growth_v_1-0-pdf.html

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 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.

2 We are committed to working ecumenically (the how)

We commit together that there will be no substantial investment in any building without prior ecumenical conversations about what buildings are needed. In any major expenditure (say over £12,000) we would expect to consult with neighbouring church communities (whether they own a building or not) and with the community as a whole. Any conversations about ceasing to use a building for regular worship and about subsequent use, conservation, or demolition would also be shared.

Permissions within our church structures would be dependent on this consultation. There would be a presumption of attempting to share provision – but in some situations, finding complementary uses will be appropriate, eg one building for worship and one for community use. Sustainability and community audits are very important during this process.

Shared use of community buildings may be the right option in some areas.

There are some places where we need to be present even if it costs, because of community need or high heritage significance.

We recognise that there are too many church buildings in Cumbria and many of these are not sustainable in the medium term. By working together in the process of discernment about their future we are hoping not to have to choose between communities, or to lose everything in one geographical area. The right place to make these sorts of decisions will surely be the Mission Communities. So, for example, the results of the Churches Trust for Cumbria buildings surveys will need to be sent to the Mission Communities; and it is within the Mission Communities that discussions about what buildings they need should be had.

There are other ways to work together eg tourist trails. There are some good examples of these in the south and the east of the county.

3 Recognition of differences

We note the different approach to buildings within our traditions especially the different legal structures. A brief description is included in appendices 1-3. Each denomination may also need its own buildings strategy but we hope that there will be some connection between them.

4 The sharing of buildings

We now have some 23 formal partnerships and shared buildings in the county, some having existed for some time. We commit to the dissemination of how to make sharing work including legal and spiritual issues but not forgetting practical experience. Where things are going well we will share stories and we will learn together when things go wrong.

We are searching for a way to facilitate sharing agreements. This may come out of the process of a county wide Extended Covenant Partnership. We do need to simplify the process of sharing. Where it is the right solution we shouldn't have churches baulking at sharing because of cost or timescale.

5 Shared tools

The tools for moving buildings forward will be developed and used ecumenically where possible, some will be have to be denominational.

The following are part of this toolkit:

- improving quinquennial inspection surveys and reports
- churches sharing experience of architects and surveyors
- expert advice
- maintenance regime/plan
- simple annual building check list eg Methodism's Property Check List and URC Building Health Check
- engaging with and changing the planning system on a countywide process
- Churches Trust for Cumbria
- heating and insulating using an ecumenical energy management adviser
- commitment to a green agenda eg Ecocongregations³
- civic or parish plans and community planning
- history audit
- possible joint ventures eg with Methodist Action North West or local building contractors
- managing graveyards

6 Disposal of surplus buildings

³ www.ecocongregation.org

We hope to handle jointly issues like dealing with the planning system, feasibility studies, possible joint ventures for development of buildings and sites including the possibility of affordable housing (see Purpose fulfilled? chapter in *Presence*⁴).

7 Global themes

Some of the global themes picked up from the ecumenical Church Buildings Strategic Review so far include:

- transient/struggling communities where second homes or lack of work or transport significantly reduces the size, strength and sustainability of a community, borne out in congregation figures and ages in some places, coupled with potential for affordable housing from church owned buildings or land where churches could take a strategic approach with all planning authorities, affordable housing organisations and Cumbria Rural Housing Trust/Community Land Trust to plan how to turn this into an opportunity for communities
- potential for churches to be used as concert and art exhibition venues or tourist trails
- central resources for maintenance eg purchase/hire of equipment or shared qualified advisers
- heating issues, including fuel purchasing
- serving the needs of the poor in the community eg hosting foodbanks and advice surgeries
- other hosting to improve access to services eg post offices and hubs for shared transport
- advertising meeting space and facilities available from churches/church halls cooperatively
- shared vacancy or interregnum supervision as occasionally non-priority building works are slipped through during this time or surveys avoided)

8 Work in hand

Next areas to be considered are

- more detail about the tools for the job and
- disposal of surplus buildings (much of the information for this is in the documents listed in section 1).

9 Notes

This document has a precursor: *Buildings strategy, discipleship and growth*⁵ (the 'Thinking Document'). Although written only from an Anglican perspective it still represents a valuable contribution, which needs to be read alongside this document.

The mission strategy contains a note on buildings and grounds with which we concur and should perhaps be moved to here:

Buildings and Grounds

Church buildings are often what those outside of the church first think of in response to the word 'church'. Historic buildings are key landmarks in cities, towns and villages, and they hold an emotional attachment for many people.

a. Church buildings and grounds shall be accessible to the whole community (as far as possible) and pleasant places to visit.

⁴ www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/pubs-presence-230310.pdf p39

⁵ www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/uploads/1371/Buildings_Strategy_Discipleship_and_Growth_v_1-0-pdf.html

- b. Churches will be encouraged to explore whether their buildings can be kept open either full time, in daylight hours or during advertised times that are in addition to worship services.
- c. Churches will be encouraged to produce simple resources to their buildings that are explanations of physical features and furniture but also invitations to reflect and ponder on the spiritual story and significance of the building, both past and present.
- d. Churches with grounds will be encouraged to develop their grounds as oases for people to pause. This includes the sensitive maintenance of graveyards but also might include developing quiet gardens, laying out permanent labyrinths and the provision of benches.
- e. Church notice boards will include statements that encourage passersby to ponder and reflect on their lives so that they encounter the spiritual as well as contact information and service times.

Appendices

1 Church of England buildings procedures

Church of England buildings are hedged about by complex legislation. The basic idea can be traced back to Theodore of Tarsus in the 7th century and it is that everyone in England lives in a parish which has a parish church where they have the right to be baptised, married and buried. So parish churches belong to the vicar (for the time being) for the use of the parishioners, and are guarded with all sorts of legal protections, for the sake of those parishioners.

A second strand is that Church of England polity is based on autonomy and checks and balances. So the Church of England does not have a hierarchical line management. For the most part each unit is fiercely independent, with parochial clergy not under the line management of the bishops and archdeacons. Instead, on the one side there is loyalty and on the other there is influence rather than power. This extends to the laity, with churchwardens amongst the oldest elected offices in the country (from the 13th century).

These two factors give a huge sense of ownership of their parish church to local people and usually that is entirely good. However, it can make it slow to cope with change.

A third strand is that all of this survived the reformation and the commonwealth. So when, in the 20th century, the state wished to regulate matters or make them independent from the church, eg marriages, burials or the planning system, the Church of England preserved its own versions of these systems. In particular, it operates its own planning system called the faculty jurisdiction. The archdeacons do quite a lot of the running of the system, with applications for a faculty going to the Chancellor of the Diocese (a judge) for decision after advice from the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

Although the Church of England is responsible for 45% of all Grade I listed buildings in the country, it gets no state aid other than Heritage Lottery Fund money and relief on VAT.

2 Methodist building procedures

In broad terms all property is held on Model Trusts of the Methodist Church Act 1976 and the rules governing its administration can be found in the *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* (CPD) volume 2 part 9⁶. This property includes all land and buildings used for local church purposes, all circuit and district manses and most connexional (national) properties, together with funds which support the mission of the church.

CPD provides for two types of trustee – custodian and managing. The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) are custodian trustees who hold the title to buildings, have a duty to ensure managing trustees do not act in breach of trust but do not get involved in the day-to-day management. Local managing trustees are responsible for the day to day management of the property and exercise power or discretion in respect of it.

Under the terms of CPD each district synod⁷ appoints a Consent Giving Body (DCGB) which is responsible for the control of all property projects for all district, circuit and church property. A private website⁸ is used for this purpose and this enables the managing trustees for the three tiers of property for local church purposes to fulfil their responsibilities. The only exception is district

⁶ www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/cpd

⁷ www.methodist.org.uk/links/districts-circuits-and-other-methodist-organisations

⁸ www.propertyconsent.methodist.org.uk

property where the role is undertaken by the Strategy and Resources Committee on behalf of the Methodist Council which is the controlling body above the district. Special provision is made within the property consent system to enable TMCP to fulfil their role and for the Conservation Officer to deal with listed buildings and those in a conservation area to maintain the ecclesiastical exemption under the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Order 2010. The roles played by TMCP and the Conservation Officer are vital.

3 United Reformed Church building procedures

With the coming together in the United Reformed Church of three strands of Nonconformism Churches of Christ, Congregationalists and Presbyterians some kind of uniformity had to be reached which still respected the conciliar nature of the denomination. The denomination's seventeen churches in Cumbria all fall within the URC North Western Synod which in turn has a second tier in the form of the Cumbria Area. Legislation relating to our denomination is embodied in the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972, 1981 and 2000. This ensures that churches comply with the requirements in terms of their responsibilities as trustees at Custodian level and at local Church level which is the Elders Meeting who are the managing Trustees.

Most URC churches in Cumbria have as their Custodian trustees the North West Synod Trustees but some churches still have locally appointed Custodian Trustees. The majority of Manses are owned by locally appointed Custodian Trustees but the North West Synod has a voluntary policy inviting Churches to place their manses in the hands of the North West Synod Trustees to enable the Synod to be able to react better to changes in patterns of ministry.

The decision to sell a church or buy another building is initially made at local church level by the Church meeting on the recommendation of the elders' meeting which has been duly recorded. In the event of a church finishing up with no members the decision to close and sell then falls upon the District Council whose members are elected by the URC North Western Synod. In the event of a sale of a building the local church is invited to donate up to 20% of the proceeds to Synod. Once a Church decides to sell property that has to be ratified at both Area and Synod level.

Building alterations have to be approved at Area level and if the building is listed all Ecclesiastical Exemption procedures have to be followed. There is an overriding rule that if an individual church wants to spend more than £12,000 on a particular piece of work to either a church building or a manse then that requires Synod approval even if the church is spending money from its own reserves.

Proper maintenance of church buildings is encouraged by Quinquennial surveys and the availability of Synod grants for churches in need of financial assistance.

Local United Reformed churches are encouraged to share their buildings with other Christian denominations and sharing agreements and the like are encouraged. Congregations are encouraged to use their buildings to promote mission.

4 Theology of place

There are two contributions here, coming from different traditions, so we have included both:

Contribution A

Jewish thinking about God came out of a background in which there were many gods, each being localised to a particular family or place. The Jews always claimed, to the surprise of those around them, that God was the God of gods, and their claims became steadily more universal: God is the only God and is God everywhere.

However, even for the Jews, God was particularly present in the Ark of the Covenant. From Moses to David, the ark 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, which was then seen as the guarantee of God's presence and by implication of his favour. Of course there are two things going on here – the marking of an already sacred space, and the transition from nomadic to settled.

There is therefore a tension between being the pilgrim people of God and being rooted in and committed to particular locations and settled communities. The 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. The Bible seems to show that God goes along unwillingly with the desire for a monarchy and a temple, but some would argue that in reality this debate is not resolved in the Old Testament: the royal, temple, establishment strand and the pilgrim, independent prophetic strand are both represented throughout the tradition.

Perhaps Jesus is the resolution, being the faithful and righteous descendant of David, and also the great high priest at whose death the temple (veil) is torn open. However, his first followers did not necessarily see it like this: “they worshipped daily in the temple”. St Paul came from the diaspora, in which for some permanently, and for all on a daily basis, Jewish life and worship was based around the synagogue and the home, rather than the temple and the home. (However, Jewish thinking about the synagogue changed with the destruction of the temple in AD70, and Christian thinking changed at roughly the same time with the expulsion of Christians from the synagogue.)

So when St Paul uses several images for the church (vine and branches, body with parts, temple of living stones), he helpfully reminds 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. So Revelation offers the vision of a new Jerusalem, with the temple replaced with the real presence of God.

In addition, we must suspect that our theology comes as much out of personality as it does out of abstract doctrine. There does seem to be, for many people, a tendency to see some places as special: at its simplest, people do create shrines. On the other hand, others resist this as being superstition or idolatry. These two strands are reflected in, on the one hand the strong feelings people have about churchyards, and on the other, the Reformed tradition of avoiding the word church for buildings, and seeing the sanctuary as the whole place where worship takes place. For us then, biblical thinking is to be held alongside the tensions we face about our buildings rather than as offering a simplistic resolution.

Richard Pratt
February 2013

Contribution B

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...').⁹ 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'¹⁰, Jacob's encounter with God at Bethel – 'surely God is in this *place* and I did not know it...' ¹¹, 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...' ¹² (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 Sinai¹³, encounter takes place (literally!) not just in 'space' but 'place'. Much has been written in recent times about the 'erosion' of place in late-modern¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

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 historical understandings not so much of 'sacred space' (which warrants another paper entirely) but of 'holy places'.¹⁷

⁹ 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 *Nicomachean 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.

¹⁰ Genesis 3:8

¹¹ Genesis 28:16

¹² Exodus 3:5

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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 19th/20th 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).

¹⁵ 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*.

¹⁶ 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...).

¹⁷ 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.

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 amphictyony¹⁸ 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 landless 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...¹⁹

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...*'²⁰ 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*'.²¹ Nonetheless, it soon becomes clear that Jesus, now risen and ascended, is not simply the 'great high priest'²² 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

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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, 'dislocated'. 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.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ Luke 24:53.

²² Hebrews 4f.

constituting the 'spiritual' Temple, of which Christ is now the 'chief cornerstone'.²³ 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...*'²⁴

In the gospel narratives, in his predictions of the Passion, Jesus foretells the destruction of the Temple²⁵ in an elliptic reference to his own body, made explicit in the gospel of John – '*...he was speaking of the Temple of his body*'.²⁶ 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.'²⁷ 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').²⁸ 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*'.²⁹ 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 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.

²³ 1 Peter 2. See also Luke 20:17.

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

²⁵ See Matthew 24:1-2, Mark 13:1-2.

²⁶ John 2:19-21.

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ 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 its being 'prayed into being' rather than its simple designation of a 'place apart' by the inclusion of objects that denoted the sacred – altar, candles, cross etc.

²⁹ Davies, D. (1994) 'Christianity' in Holm, J. and Bowker, J. *Sacred Place*. London: Pinter Press, p. 53.

5 Energy Management Adviser

We have created the post of Energy Management Adviser

- to provide Cumbria-wide advice to churches about their use of energy
- to coordinate energy conservation which will link with the Anglican *Shrinking the footprint*³⁰, the Methodist carbon reduction programme³¹ and similar initiatives from other denominations, and
- to help churches be better informed customers.

The post is, strictly, part of Churches Together in Cumbria, but pragmatically the existing post-holder is already an Adviser for the (Anglican) Diocesan Advisory Committee and carries insurance in that role, so it makes sense at least for the moment to bolt the ecumenical aspects of the role onto the Anglican position, though we expect the role to be more proactive than, for example, the Diocesan Advisory Committee advisers.

Secretarial support could be provided from existing resources. We would need to put together a voluntary team to assist the adviser.

Prioritisation

To provide countywide advice is a big job. There would need to be some prioritising of churches within that, if we are going to be proactive rather than reactive. One way of doing this is to use the categorisation of the Building Strategy: it suggests dividing churches into four groups. The first group is those churches which are more or less OK. Some of these will also be OK as far as energy use is concerned, but some will benefit from addressing energy questions and it is assumed that all of these would have the capacity to sort themselves out to an extent. Things that could be done with this group include encouraging them to have a professional energy audit (costing around £600) and then to prepare an improvement plan. If we are going to advocate this with them we will need to show how they can recoup the costs over some period, in order to encourage them to spend the money up front.

A second group is those churches which need to diversify, need to get mission action plans, need to do things with their buildings and have some capacity but perhaps not enough to make these changes on their own. A third group is those churches which we cannot or do not want to dispose of, but which will not have a full range of weekly worship and other activities, but will to a greater or lesser extent hibernate. A fourth group is those churches which we will sell. Probably the Energy Management Adviser would not need to be involved with these last two groups.

Figures including all denominations, or even the three denominations in the Growing Together group have not been estimated. But figures for Anglican churches have been estimated: about 130 in the first group, about 130 in the second, about 60 in the third and about 30 final group.

³⁰ www.churchcare.co.uk/shrinking-the-footprint

³¹ www.methodist.org.uk/mission/climate-change/carbon-reduction

Churches in the first group in each denomination would probably be the first priority. The aim would be to create that list by the end of 2014. We estimate that that tackling that might will take about six months, given the capacity of these churches to help themselves.

The list of churches in the second group would therefore need to be in place by mid-2014. We estimate that it might take about a year just to identify what needs to be done with these churches. The threats, but also the opportunities, for churches in this second list are great.

Relationships

An adviser needs to establish a clear and good relationship with churches' existing professional advisers such as architects on the Anglican DAC.

The adviser should work with Churches Trust for Cumbria and with Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS).

Background to the work

Energy costs have risen hugely over the past few years and are projected to continue to do so:

2011	Energy costs up by	7%
2012	Energy costs up by	7%
2013	Energy costs up by	6-8%
2014	Energy costs up by	3-4%

The adviser will need to build up some hard information about the performance of new technology eg the purchase of some sensors and data loggers to be installed temporarily in those churches using, for example, air source or ground source heating. The adviser will also need to build up some knowledge of other new technologies eg solar panels in order to help churches be well-informed customers. S/he will need knowledge of technical information about the best way forwards with older buildings such as insulation as our buildings are not like domestic buildings and many are used just once or twice a week.

Costs

We envisage that the adviser comes "on the national health service" as it were, but that churches, seeing the benefit of tackling these issues, spend the money themselves and make the savings themselves.

The cost of the post has been estimated at £2,000 a year (£400 for professional indemnity insurance and £1,600 for 6,400 miles travel at 25p a mile). While the post is linked to the DAC Adviser, that insurance is provided by the Diocese and can be extended to cover work with churches of other denominations. If in the future it is "located" within Churches Together in Cumbria (CTiC) expenses would come through CTiC.