

DAC Guidance Notes: Reordering

These guidelines cover general information regarding church reordering.

Church reordering

The prime need of religious buildings is to create an unmistakable atmosphere of reverence. A space for worship should lift people out of themselves and quicken their response to what a church stands for and has to offer. A wide range of information is available here:

[Churchcare: Developing your Church Building](#)

When approaching a reordering project, it is important to bear in mind that:

1. Church buildings are an expression of Christian faith to the whole community and an outward and visible sign of an inward reality and truth.
2. Church buildings have, in many cases, developed over the centuries and their sense of holiness can be a great inspiration to worship. The current community also act as trustees of the church for future generations.
3. Reordering is not to be undertaken lightly, especially if it involves irreversible change.
4. The main purpose of reordering must be to make the witness to Christ more effective, not just to follow current fashions.
5. Historically, most churches have been adapted or enlarged over time due to changing circumstances or liturgical practice, so there is no reason why this process should now stop. To be successful, however, modifications must be sympathetic to the original architectural design and to the statement that the architect was seeking to make when the church was built.
6. Local enthusiasm for a project must be coupled with professional and sympathetic advice and opinion. The Archdeacon and the DAC should be consulted at a very early stage. In addition to Faculty permission, Planning Consent will be required for external alterations, and Building Control permission will be required for many physical works such as the expansion of the drainage system. If English Heritage has given grants for works to the church fabric in the past 10 years then it too should be consulted.
7. Consultation and communication within the parish are essential from the start as misunderstandings can arise easily. There must be adequate opportunity for all views to be shared and Faculty petitions must include details of the PCC vote regarding the reordering.
8. There will normally have to be some compromise in a reordering project between what is desired and what can be practically achieved.

9. Where reordering is considered to provide non-statutory facilities (like kitchens, toilets or offices) for social or community activities, they should also contribute to the building's main purpose of providing a space for worship and mission.
10. The design and materials must be of high quality and in keeping with the architecture and furnishings of the church.
11. Where a building seems to be inappropriate for modern worship, a parish should first consider solutions such as new heating, lighting or an AV system and the effect that they might have, before embarking on a full reordering project.
12. No two buildings are alike, so each church must be treated individually. Nonetheless, it may be helpful in drawing up proposals to see how similar problems have been solved in other churches.
13. There may be some buildings that cannot be adapted to current liturgy. In such cases it may be helpful, using a flexible approach, to modify the liturgy to best take advantage of the available facilities.
14. Special caution must be observed when the reordering of a listed building is proposed. A Faculty will be granted only where there is a compelling reason to reorder, and great care must be taken to not affect adversely the special architectural and historical character of the building. Early consultation with the DAC is essential and it is also wise to consult the appropriate National Amenity Societies and English Heritage.

Liturgical matters

Whilst nave altars can be very successful they may leave a large empty space in the chancel and an isolated high altar. This is often a problem in Victorian churches. With skill and sensitivity a solution may still be found. There should be a single font, acting as the focus for baptisms, though much of the service can be conducted elsewhere to encourage congregational participation.

The pulpit and lectern should be of sufficient height, dignity, size and character to be in keeping with the rest of the church. Lighting needs to be adequate for the liturgy, but should also enhance the building's architecture, so collaboration from the start between the architect and an electrical contractor is vital. The same applies to the installation of sound systems. If proposals are to move away from the traditional choir stalls, another suitable setting for the choir and musicians will require thought. Music provision should not be forgotten when designing a new scheme. In some cases choristers can sing from a gallery, or it may be more appropriate for them to be nearer the congregation, perhaps raised on a shallow platform. More details can be found here:

[Churchcare: Reordering - the liturgical aspects](#)

Some churches are suitable to be adapted for secular as well as sacred uses without diminishing them. Congregations are sometimes not able to maintain a separate hall, but do need catering and toilet facilities close to hand. With sensitivity, parts of a church can be

successfully adapted or partitioned. These facilities can be reversible and made available for other church and community uses, as meeting rooms, or as educational and recreational space. Some churches are permanently locked for fear of vandalism, but insurers strongly advise that this and burglary is greatly lessened by encouraging multi-purpose or more frequent use of the building throughout the week.