**Comments recorded at the March 17 Diocesan Synod in response to a presentation from Becky Clarke, Director of Cathedrals and Church Buildings Division**

**Summary of responses**

111 comments recorded during the session which was facilitated in Deanery groupings

Only 1 in 10 comments could be considered as having either a cautious or slightly negative tone

Over 20 comments with a particularly positive framing

15 comments phrased as questions – *the Review Group will try to respond to these as we go*

28 comments related directly to community and mission opportunities (1 in 4)

**NOTE:**

* 3 comments have not been grouped and shared, as they were case sensitive’ and…
* all other comments have been recorded as written on the flip charts
* this write-up was very difficult and could be split up other ways

**The responses have been grouped, with some comments appearing in more than one group**

**1 Context**

Geographical location

Travel distances inhibit church attendance elsewhere if village church closed.

Buildings in wrong places. Community changes. Church changes Ownership.

New housing areas

How do we use schools and community buildings?

How we engage in community space in new housing areas?

House building and house sales affected, what should church response be?

Church buildings on new estates and support for new church buildings be involved at planning stage (through Buildings Officer?)

Discussion about. Struggle to maintain buildings in post-industrial (coal) parishes and to do mission in the community. How to Mission in big housing estates?

Potential conflict between local and diocesan agendas

Deanery plan?

New Deaneries!

New deanery still ‘gelling’ as a family!

Lottery funding an issue for churches with “anti-gambling” congregation

Relationship between Trust (*Diocesan?)* and PCCs important

Mission and Ministry aims important

Buildings that are important because they are there

Freedom from a building allows missional movement

Look at buildings alongside finance

Where is the missional growth opportunity?

* What resources do we need?
* What resources do we have?

Engaging community re how they see the local church eg parking issues (need community support)

Need to know what we have locally so we can move forward

What are our local church visions?

**2 Competition / partnerships**

Other community facilities

Varieties of partnership working

New housing areas

How do we use schools and community buildings?

Worshipping space in schools, community buildings?

Practicality concerns about Festival Churches – still require someone to regularly check all ok

School visits to church great opportunity – although links with non-church schools harder to set up

Clarity on each church building: What do we want them to be?

* Sacred space
* ‘activity’ within them
* buildings that are important because they are there

Learning from other Dioceses

Church buildings on new estates and support for new church buildings be involved at planning stage (through Buildings Officer?)

Make use of major churches – Melbourne and share expertise/support other churches

Schools, projects, etc

Links with CVS?

Starting conversations with Peak Park e.g. reducing energy consumption, support with planning for change

How to use church buildings as shared spaces (eg to reduce financial pressure) noting the burden of responsibility on church wardens

Engaging community re how they see the local church eg parking issues (need community support)

Need to know what we have locally so we can move forward

Community use of church halls helps church buildings to stay open

**3 Suitability**

Building access

Heating costs

Green energy/solar panels

Flexible spaces/pews

Buildings in wrong places. Community charges. Church changes

Can we run our church buildings as businesses?

Freedom from a building allows missional movement

Starting conversations with Peak Park e.g. reducing energy consumption, support with planning for change

How to use church buildings as shared spaces (eg to reduce financial pressure) noting the burden of responsibility on church wardens

Is closure a failure?

**4 Engagement**

Needs to be grassroots initiated

Drastic action needed to motivate community

Grassroots influence

Innovation

New housing areas

How we engage with new housing areas?

How we engage in community space in new housing areas?

How do we engage with deprived urban estates?

Buildings in wrong places. Community charges. Church changes

How do we use schools and community buildings?

Worshipping space in schools, community buildings?

School visits to church great opportunity – although links with non-church schools harder to set up

Discussion about post-industrial (coal) parishes. Struggle to maintain buildings in those areas (and mission in the community). How to Mission in big housing estates

Clarity on each church building: What do we want them to be?

* Sacred space
* ‘activity’ within them
* buildings that are important because they are there

What does God want us to do with the space?

Church buildings on new estates and support for new church buildings be involved at planning stage

Schools, projects, etc

Links with CVS?

Deanery level - Sub-Committee

* Advice from Graham Webster?
* To feed into working group
* List of people to approach for grants

Group in Deanery to feed into working group

* Importance of Deanery
* Two way interaction

Where is the missional growth opportunity?

* What resources do we need?
* What resources do we have?

Having a Deanery/local view is important

* The importance of Deaneries
* Need for a strategic approach
* Due to limited resources
* People
* Money

How to use church buildings as shared spaces (eg to reduce financial pressure) noting the burden of responsibility on church wardens

Engaging community re how they see the local church eg parking issues (need community support)

Need to know what we have locally so we can move forward

**5 Uses**

Weddings and festival church

Clergy not museum manager

Flexible spaces/pews

Varieties of partnership working / Innovation

Can we run our church buildings as businesses?

Use of land parochially owned and glebe

Community use – great idea!

Post Office – affects much of Hardwick Deanery as rural. Lots of opportunity?

Folk without internet. Internet café hubs in churches?

The children who need internet for homework?

We all welcome openness of Diocese to creative and missional use of buildings

School visits to church great opportunity – although links with non-church schools harder to set up

Community use of church halls helps church buildings to stay open

CAP courses – Debt centre – Food Banks all discussed

Clarity on each church building: What do we want them to be?

* Sacred space
* ‘activity’ within them
* buildings that are important because they are there

Positive of having a building as a base

Sabbath time and space (theological reflection)

What does God want us to do with the space?

Festival Churches welcome

Schools, projects, etc

Cultural activities – libraries – arts festival? For deanery churches

Where is the missional growth opportunity?

How to use church buildings as shared spaces (eg to reduce financial pressure) noting the burden of responsibility on church wardens

**6 – Positives and concerns**

POSITIVES

Clarity and simplification

Churches open more than locked

Are DACS being re-educated

Varieties of partnership working

Innovation

New housing areas

Positive to think we don’t need to close churches! Community use – great idea!

Post Office – affects much of Hardwick Deanery as rural. Lots of opportunity?

Folk without internet. Internet café hubs in churches?

The children who need internet for homework?

We all welcome openness of Diocese to creative and missional use of buildings

Change of rules will be useful (e.g. 6 services only per annum; one PCC across multi-church benefices)

Resonated: Time is right

Range of ‘options’ helpful

Allowing building to ‘rest: not necessary, defeat

Encouraging people to look ahead

Have the courage to look forward rather than being mired in the past

Where does God want us to be in 20 years’ time? What will we have to do?

Managing the present as well

Like idea of Diocesan Trust

Encourage churches to be open

CONCERNS

Is closure a failure?

Clergy not museum manager

Maintenance of closed churchyards

Area Dean quote “Ideas I don’t need, I have loads. Personnel help and support is what I need”

Heating costs

**7 Resources**

*Parish –*

Heating costs

Green energy/solar panels

Can we run our church buildings as businesses?

Practicality concerns about Festival Churches – still require someone to regularly check all ok

Community use of church halls helps church buildings to stay open

Managing the present as well

Look at buildings alongside finance

How to use church buildings as shared spaces (eg to reduce financial pressure) noting the burden of responsibility on church wardens

Issue of base knowledge (eg faculties) moving from practical issues to mission

*Deanery –*

Deanery appointment to develop building matters

Make use of major churches – Melbourne and share expertise/support other churches

Deanery level - Sub-Committee

* Advice from Graham Webster?
* To feed into working group
* List of people to approach for grants

Group in Deanery to feed into working group

* Importance of Deanery
* Two-way interaction eg to reduce financial pressure) noting the burden of responsibility on church wardens

*Diocesan –*

Support from Diocese for a person with vision to encourage vision thinking in a parish

Range of ‘options’ helpful

A lot of recent funding gone to churches where neglect has happened/been allowed rather than to churches where working hard to maintain (sacrificially) - strategic thinking required

Diocese development resources re HLF (skills to take congregation through big questions? A bit like MAP guide?) – central resource team?

Like idea of Diocesan Trust

Buildings officer and buildings support

Diocesan trust

Guidance for Festival churches and umbrella PCCs

Diocesan Buildings Officer – support funding applications, support with projects

*External –*

Funding of unlisted buildings

Learning from other Dioceses

*Other comments -*

Maintenance of closed churchyards

Area Dean quote “Ideas I don’t need, I have loads. Personnel help and support is what I need

European money for areas with low education levels. Too much for local clergy to head up!

Lottery funding an issue for churches with “anti-gambling” congregation

Discussion about post-industrial (coal) parishes. Struggle to maintain buildings in those areas (and mission in the community). How to Mission in big housing estates?

**8 Legalities**

Legal issues re consecration/dedication

Ownership. Potential conflict between local and diocesan agendas

Can we run our church buildings as businesses?

Use of land parochially owned and glebe

European money for areas with low education levels. Too much for local clergy to head up!

Change of rules will be useful (e.g. 6 services only per annum; one PCC across multi-church benefices)

Range of ‘options’ helpful

Like idea of Diocesan Trust

Issue of base knowledge (eg faculties) moving from practical issues to mission

**9 Scope**

Look at all our plant, not just churches. Include halls and all housing [*amendment to include housing rejected at Synod*]

How do we use schools and community buildings?

Worshipping space in schools, community buildings?

**10 Miscellaneous / other –** *[difficult to group or understand without going back to the context on the day]*

Glad to see school visits now counted into church parish dashboard figures

Mission identity/threshold?

Festival churches/joint PCCs

Does it fit for the 40/80 approach?

House building and house sales affected, what should church response be?