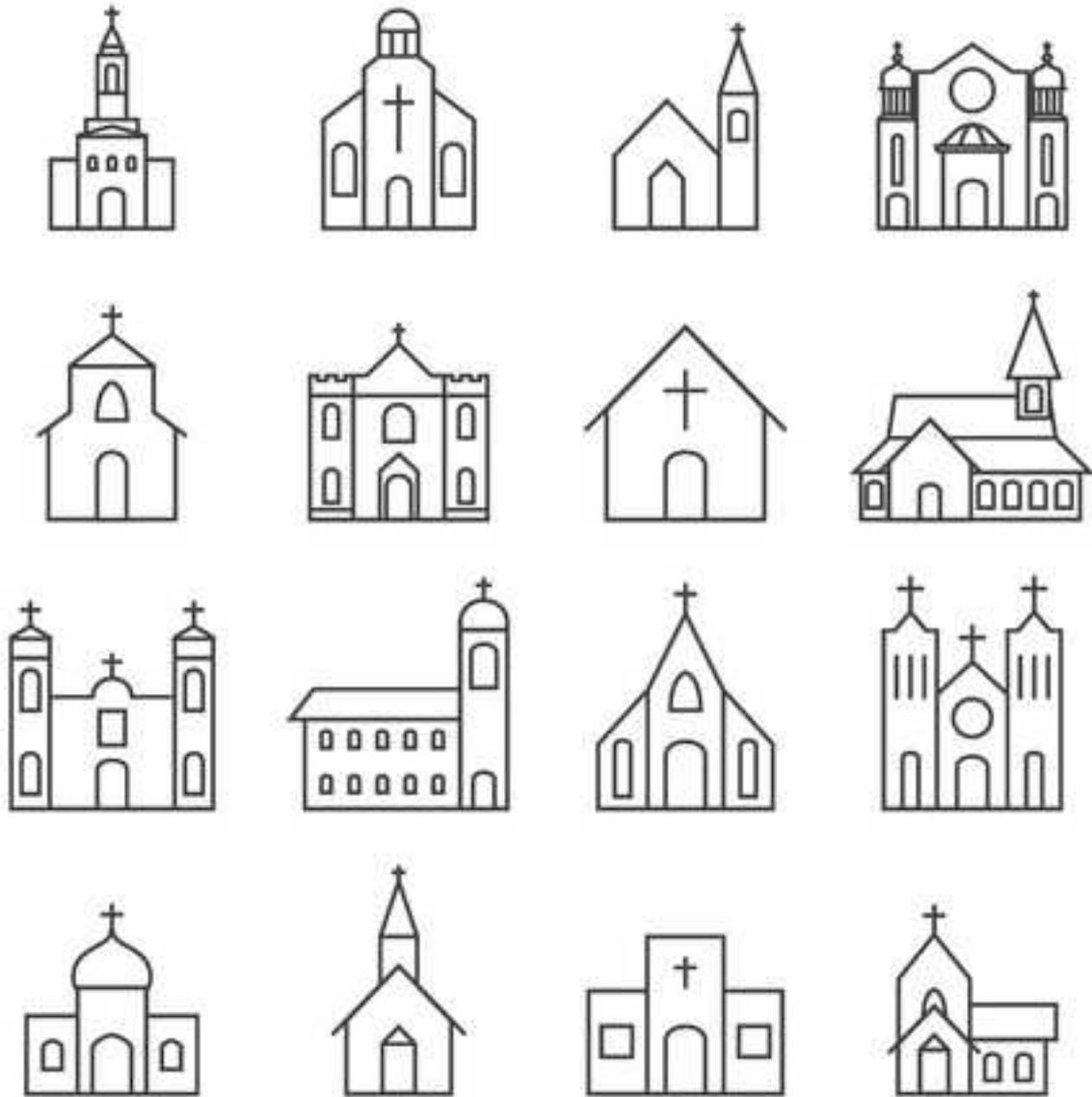


 THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

THE DIOCESE OF SODOR AND MAN



**The Diocesan Strategy  
for Church Buildings  
2020**

## Foreword to the strategy document

The Diocesan Strategic Review Group was established to review our church buildings and consider how they enable the Diocese of Sodor and Man to engage with the Mission of God. (See our brief in Appendix 1). It has taken a long time because we have worked carefully and the situation has been fluid: even as we were about to publish, the impending lockdown brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic enforced the closure of all churches and halls and so we delayed to take further stock.

The financial consequences of that 3 month lockdown for the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF), PCCs and individual church members has, taken altogether, been catastrophic for the diocese. **This has meant that we can no longer take our time over this process, as had originally been envisaged, and the outcome may be less of a smooth progress than had been hoped for.**

We have sought to balance strategic missional importance measured in terms of physical coverage (Anglicans are committed to the parish system whereby everybody and every square inch is in someone's parish) with a realistic assessment of the cost of maintaining a local building and whether that building is able to be made fit for purpose for the whole of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We have considered, where known, the likelihood or possibility of housing development, noting that new estates built around e.g. Ballasalla, Rushen and Peel have much changed their demographics; often the buildings we have are firmly planted in the wrong place.

Furthermore, as we came towards publication, General Synod in February 2020 decided that it is essential for the Church of England to reach a carbon neutral position by 2030 (it had previously been 2045 – a challenging enough goal). We have not been able to take a great deal of account of this, but we are hoping that the early sale of some assets will enable the DBF to offer interest free or low interest loans to our newly defined "Hub Churches" to cover the cost of the installation of carbon neutral heating and lighting installations (re-payable from the savings made in their payments for traditional fuel supplies). A separate diocesan policy on this is being developed.

**What had been the report of a Diocesan Working Party is now our diocesan strategy and is available to be considered by everybody.** It is offered to the whole diocese and our partners with the prayers of the bishop, the Working Party and the Implementation Group that we will work together for the Mission of God in our diocese preparing ourselves for a viable ministry throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century by the decisions we take at this time.

The Archdeacon  
Chair of the Working Party

(The Working Party was the Archdeacon, the 4 Mission Partnership Team Leaders and a lay person invited by each MPTL from their Mission partnerships)

6<sup>th</sup> August 2020  
*The Feast of the Transfiguration*

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### **Online Only Resources (too big to print and be legible)**

The **maps** and **databases** which we used to inform our work are available online at [https://www.sodorandman.im/diocesan\\_map](https://www.sodorandman.im/diocesan_map)

# 1. Our Vision Statement

## **“Partners sustaining one another in the Gospel”**

As a Diocese **we aim to work in partnership** with:

- our sister churches
- in Mission Partnerships
- in Parishes
- in churches
- and with all people of goodwill

to enable the Church in Sodor and Man to flourish

1 Corinthians 12.12-18 et al *‘For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body’* v13

### **Implications for buildings:**

- Avoid duplication of buildings

**We aim to carry out this mission in a sustainable way** by:

- reducing the churches’ carbon footprints
- ensuring resources are available in terms of:
  - staff (paid and voluntary)
  - finance and
  - buildings

to meet the challenges of mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Acts 2.43-47 *‘All who believed ... had all things in common [and] distribute[d] the proceeds to all, as any had need’* v 44-45

### **Implications for buildings:**

- Buildings are made sustainable by those who use them (please see the body of the strategy document for details concerning financial support)
- Meeting targets associated with reducing the carbon footprint
- Ensuring that staff (not just clergy) are not over-extended in terms of servicing existing buildings

**We aim to enable members of the body of Christ to inhabit the Gospels,**

forming a learning community able to be confident disciples speaking to our culture.

Colossians 2. 2-12 *‘As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.’* v6-7

### **Implications for buildings:**

- Enabling buildings to be places of learning and translating that learning into activity and service in the local community

## 2. Theological Basis

**Church buildings are inseparable in the minds of most, Christians and otherwise, from the Church itself. We commonly refer to the sacred buildings in which the Church of God meets simply as “the church”. It can be said that this has led to a confusion between the buildings in which we meet and the Church of God.**

Sometimes this confusion leads us to think that our buildings are not only set aside for worship, but that they cannot be used for any other purpose, or changed in any way. As Archbishop Justin Welby has said “the Church is not a building. The buildings are a gift, a treasure, but they are not the Church.” (Church Times 17<sup>th</sup> April)

There is an argument made that in an age of change people expect the Church to remain constant and unchanging. This might apply to our God (cp. Hebrews 13:8) but it does not apply to the parish church buildings of the Isle of Man, or anywhere else. The architect Richard Rogers wrote in The Sunday Telegraph Magazine (25<sup>th</sup> February 1996): “No one today wears the clothes, drives cars or writes journalism like they did a hundred years ago. Why should buildings be any different?”

And it is certainly true that many of our buildings have changed a great deal over the centuries – as has the worship offered in them – whilst all the time the ageless and yet ever new Gospel of Christ remains a constant.

### 2.1 The Good News of Christ

The heart of the Gospel is summed up by the Apostle Paul as: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

This is recognised by the architect-priest, Richard Giles in a seminal book on the changing architecture of churches, “Re-pitching the Tent”:

“At the heart of Christian worship ... lies the mystery of the transformation of the people of God themselves into the temples of the Holy Spirit...” (Richard Giles p.145)

He goes on to reflect that the spaces we cherish may have become spaces for all sorts of other activities (flower arranging, brass polishing, needlework, rota writing, building preservation etc.) - all sorts of activities so many of us enjoy, or appear to do so, at least; but do they encourage us to celebrate God amongst us? Do they invite us into a transformative relationship with God in Christ? Do they reflect to the outsider a living worship of the God who is the creator of the physical world, who has shared the physical world in order to redeem the physical world - do they speak of transformation and beauty, of courage and creativity?

## 2.2 The Mission of God

**“It is not the church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a church in the world.** The church’s involvement in mission is its privileged participation in the actions of the triune God.” (*“Beyond Duty”* by Tim Dearborn)

The Church of God is called to belong to God, it is not a merely human institution and our church buildings are to be seen primarily as a part of God’s mission in the world. That mission is not bound by or limited to church buildings, but it can be served by church buildings or hindered by them.

We need to remember that the Church, in Archbishop Rowan’s words, exists **“to find out what God is doing and join in”**. What is God doing on the Isle of Man? How might the mission of God, the work of the Kingdom, be helped by the Christian churches of this island? And what part may the Anglican family play in this mission, working alongside our brothers and sisters in all of the other Christian churches in the fellowship and family of **Churches Alive in Mann?**

## 2.3 Pause to reflect

*A Mission Partnership Council (MPC) or Parochial Church Council (PCC) or a home group could discuss these questions as well as individuals use them for private prayer and reflection. If a large group of more than a half dozen is looking at them, they could split into smaller groups and tackle a & b in one group and c - f in another, or a & b, c & d and e & f in three small groups or pairs, then feedback to the whole meeting.*

- a. **What is God doing on the Isle of Man? How might the mission of God, the work of the Kingdom, be helped by the Christian churches of this island?**
- b. **What part may the Anglican family play in this mission, working alongside our brothers and sisters in all of the other Christian churches in the fellowship and family of Churches Alive in Mann?**
- c. **If, as Archbishop William Temple said, the Church exists for those who are not its members, then how do your parish churches speak to those who are not its members?**
- d. **And how does it enable the faithful community to serve those who are not its members?**
- e. **The central scriptural summary of the Christian good news, the Gospel, is “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself”. How do our buildings reflect this Gospel of reconciliation between the divine and the human?**
- f. **This reconciliation is of such transforming power it must change the way we live outwardly towards others as well as inwardly towards God - how do our church buildings reflect and encourage, even enable, reconciliation in human relationships?**

### 3. The Diocesan Financial Situation

“The Lord has all the money he needs for his mission in the world; it’s just that it’s still in his people’s pockets”, as the old adage goes.

In the parishes our congregations are working hard to generate income: in recent years we have raised more and more money each year – and until recently most of that money has gone to the diocese to pay for our stipendiary clergy and essential Diocesan administration and costs to support the clergy and the parishes.

In 2019, a year or two earlier than predicted, a record number of parishes indicated at the start of the year that they would be unable to pay their Shared Ministry Fund assessment in full and by substantial amounts – and this when we were in a second year of capping the assessment at 3% when it should by right have been 10%. At this present rate of dwindling returns we will run out of money in 5 years maximum – sooner in reality as PCCs will continue to run out of money and continue to give less of their Shared Ministry Fund Assessment.

Our current levels of staffing remain relatively high per capita of population (although reducing) for the Church of England and the sizes of many of our parishes are very small compared to the English average. So we do need higher levels of giving to pay for our stipendiary clergy. **Also, unlike most English dioceses, the largest part of our diocesan income comes from the parishes’ giving:** here it’s around 75%; in England the average is less than 50%. Our parishes have responded well to these demands but many are beginning to lose the struggle, and too many buildings is proving an unsustainable drain on resources.

Nevertheless, our giving record does not necessarily compare favourably with the rest of the Church of England. (However, we know that we have to be very careful in handling statistics in tiny dioceses, as the smallest change gives dramatic results as compared to English dioceses which are far larger).

Planned giving figures puts the Diocese in the middle of the league table (but like some football leagues, there is a huge gap between those at the top and the rest who are all huddled together on low points tallies!) and other indicators place us towards or at the bottom of the statistics. Furthermore, we have one of the highest ratios of priests to average population of parishes, and those around us in *that* statistical table are dioceses with many, many times our annual income from sources other than giving.

However, we believe that money follows vision, and that vision moves at the speed of trust. So long as people think that their money is being wasted on white elephant buildings or vanity projects, or so long as they will only give to their own building, then we will continue to head towards a financial black hole.

**A major part of the challenge for the Bishop and his diocese is Christian stewardship; we urgently need a Generous Giving Adviser.**

The **lockdown** triggered by the Coronavirus (Covid-19) from March 2020 onwards with its necessary closure of churches for several months has brought us, along with many other dioceses, to the brink of financial ruin. The Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) are looking to the central Church of England to support us through this, but we cannot tell how much this will affect our PCCs' finances in the long term. **One thing is certain: the lockdown with its closures of churches and halls has brought some of the recommendations in this strategy document into very sharp focus and makes some of the decisions we urge are made even more urgent** especially the need outlined in Appendix 1 in this review group's brief from the Church Commissioners: **"not least to decide where we may need to invest dwindling diocesan and parochial resources in keeping a parish church open for missional reasons."**

Holding on to buildings regardless of all other considerations will be disastrous. The cost of maintaining them may in some cases draw funds away from where they are needed and will have a greater impact on our sustainable mission and ministry. The retention of some buildings of dubious value for mission and ministry but which may easily be saleable for serious money denies funds we will need to ensure the Church can continue to serve the Lord and the island for the century ahead.

**We note that two of our thriving island denominations own or use without ownership less than 10 buildings and have numbers of worshippers that rival our own total attendance figures; we have 41 church buildings at the time of writing, as well as church halls.**

We have sought to be bold and are offering what may appear to some to be radical options. A few years ago at a Tynwald garden party a senior civil servant and a leading figure of the island's business community were in conversation with the archdeacon; they observed that either the Church of England was incredibly wealthy or incredibly stupid. When the archdeacon asked why, they pointed out that no other institution or business could afford to keep open so many huge and costly buildings all selling the same product: you need to target your resources, they said, that's what anybody else would have to do in order to flourish.

**There is a widespread acceptance both within and outside the church that we can't afford all the church buildings we currently have, and that as in many cases those buildings are seeing a declining attendance and house ageing congregations we do not need all the churches we have.** Usually most church members and especially members of Diocesan Synod agree with this – unless they think their church is on a list of those to be closed; then we discover a myriad of reasons why that one particular church could never be closed.

This strategy document proposes that we need to realise some of those high value assets which are also a financial liability whilst we hold on to them: those buildings who have greater value in the marketplace than they do for the mission of God and the ministry of his Church. By realising these assets over

the next few years it will relieve the strain on some PCCs who are struggling to maintain all their buildings and pay their fair share towards the cost of being a diocese. **By realising this capital we can invest the money in a more strategic manner** on those buildings which are most likely to be fruitful in the mission of God going forward, and which might therefore not only survive but thrive, **and be enabled to generate revenue** through growth and adaptation. Their buildings could be better adapted to be more self-supporting with the help of grants from the DBF. They could cut their overheads by using carbon neutral power sources such as solar, ground and air heat exchange – installed with the support of the DBF from funds which become available by realising assets. Furthermore, they would **have a clearer focus** because they would have fewer buildings to shore up, to heat, light and staff.

As we have said, we need the courage and the faith to break free of an insular way of thinking about the Mission of God and to be open to what God is doing on our island, and where his Holy Spirit may be leading our island church. We are a church founded on the urge of Celtic saints to spread the Gospel, and today we are a church that needs to reclaim that mission imperative and to re-structure to allow us to move forward with confidence and in faith.

## 4. Conservation and Church Buildings

The Isle of Man has many buildings which need to be conserved. The Church of England is not a conservation agency. Conservation of the island's built heritage is not our primary or even our secondary purpose. Nonetheless, we are custodians of some buildings which are valuable parts of the island's built heritage in terms of history and architecture: Kirk Malew, St Sanctain, Kirk Maughold, St George's Douglas, St Mark, Kirk Christ Rushen, Kirk Michael, St Patrick's Jurby, St Peter's Onchan, and the "Old Kirks" (Ballagh, Braddan, Lonan, Marown) to name a few obvious ones.

In fact, 20 of our church buildings are registered, but three of those in our list above of some obviously valuable buildings are NOT registered. This obviously means that three churches which we would consider most worthy of protection in terms of history and heritage are not registered, whereas some of the registered churches we would consider to be of little value either architecturally or historically or in terms of the mission of God are registered.

We also have an eye to issues of conservation given that many, even most perhaps, of our church buildings have been self-registered by PCCs hoping this would lead to government maintenance grants (which it rarely did). **There is currently no will in government or its civil service to revise the registered building list by the removal of any buildings, and a zeal to protect those buildings on it. This has to be taken into account and does not make our task easier.** We also need to consider the capacity of the local church, the congregation, for missional engagement and community service.

**We are of the strong opinion that the registered building list so far as it applies to churches is not fit for purpose.** We would like to see a two tier list, the upper tier being those churches agreed by conservationists and the special interest groups (including the denominations) to be of great value to the island's heritage, and **qualifying for support from public monies.** At the moment government insists on the right to exercise oversight of the fabric of all registered buildings but pays not a penny for any maintenance. This appears to us an injustice on behalf of the Isle of Man Government and we respectfully ask the present government to be open to a new and more equitable partnership in the conservation of all of our built heritage, sacred and secular. In an ideal world, **we would also like Government to discuss with us an Ecclesiastical Exemption<sup>1</sup> from some aspects of central control** such as is the case in England. This will free the churches of time consuming bureaucracy which is already adequately dealt with by our own Faculty Jurisdiction laws – and in 2016 Tynwald exempted us from the War Memorials legislation on the grounds that Faculty Jurisdiction already offered the War Memorials in our care sufficient protection. We believe it's time this principle applied to the whole building.

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<sup>1</sup> In England: Works to places of worship for exempt religious denominations may require planning permission, but under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, they are exempt from listed building and conservation area consent.

**We want to help Government to see that by helping to fund repairs to the island's built heritage, sacred and secular, they would be leveraging monies into the island economy** as for the most part local builders and artisans will be employed, and other Trust money is more likely to flow often from the U.K. and, hopefully, apprenticeships can be developed.

**We would want to see a mechanism whereby, if the parishes thought it appropriate, the "Old Churches" could be taken out of the care of the parishes and the diocese and handed over to conservation or "Friends" groups to run and maintain** with the support of government or Manx National Heritage in their maintenance and the local church in worship; a sensible division of labour. We believe that MNH are not opposed to this idea and would welcome dialogue on the matter.

## 5. Categories of Churches

Two things are apparent from the experiences of the past 10 years: divesting ourselves of traditional, large church buildings, especially surrounded by burials, has been very difficult, even when requested by a PCC, and can be costly and absorb a lot of diocesan staff time. **We cannot simply recommend closing such church buildings as and when a PCC so requests.** We need to be more proactive and the Church Commissioners need a framework which allows them to respond in a way which meets the Bishop's vision for the diocese over the next 10 years.

*It should be noted, however, the recent decision (December 2019) by the Land Registrar to accept a Deed of Consecration as proof of ownership sets a precedent which should make establishing title for any future sales quicker and less costly.*

We need Mission Partnership Councils (MPCs) to work with the Church Commissioners and the Bishop's staff to place the churches within their Mission Partnerships into various categories. And to this end we offer a tool they can use to identify churches and make recommendations to the Church Commissioners. **This tool is primarily for the MPC.** The MPC may recommend to or even request that PCCs in parishes with more than one church building, and only those with more than one building, use the tool for their own churches and pass on their findings to the MPC.

**The MPC will be the only body to make a report to the Implementation Group of the Church Commissioners.** We suspect that it is likely that most PCCs and even LCCs will argue that their one building is clearly indispensable to God's mission: this would take us no further forward and it is this thinking which has brought us to the challenging position in which we find ourselves.

We also believe that we should take seriously the fact that **a few of our church buildings are the only church building and/or the congregation is the only potentially missional community in a village** and that these congregations and their buildings need to be supported.

**We urge that most church halls will be sold** or have long-term leases (see recommendation 13 on p. 20) – or possibly be used for mission and worship in place of a church building which has become unsustainable.

To assist the Church Commissioners in making the immensely difficult decisions as to which churches are going to be sustainable in the long term and which are essential to the mission of God on this island in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we offer the following definition of categories of church buildings.

## **The Categories of Churches**

- A. Hub Churches**
- B. Community Mission Churches**
- C. Heritage Churches**
- D. Churches at a 'Crossroads'**
- E. Marketable Churches**

### **A. Hub Churches**

Mission Partnership Councils, working with their PCCs, are expected to identify hub churches within their area.

- There would be only one hub church per multi-church parish.
- This church would be the focus of mission in the parish and would aim to resource other churches in the parish should they exist. This is sometimes referred to as the 'Minster' model.
- Should grants be available from the diocese for buildings, priority will be to enable the hub church to meet modern standards associated with heating levels, toilet facilities, kitchen area, office and meeting space.
- It would be expected that the hub church would be a multi-use venue often making the need for a church hall redundant (unless the church hall is generating a substantial and sustainable profit).

### **The Community it serves**

In such a community you would expect to find a catchment of:

- at least 6,000 people<sup>2</sup>. (It is recognised that some areas may have a projected increase in population due to new development, others may experience decline.)
- One or more primary schools.
- The community around the church having a place for interaction e.g. business, leisure or shops.

### **Hub Church/Hall**

The expectation that there would be:

- A Sunday Eucharist.
- Prayer said publicly daily (at least once).
- Be a focal point of the community.
- A rationale is developed if both hall(s) and a church are to be retained to justifying two buildings e.g. the hall is generating a substantial and sustainable profit or is an essential venue for multiple, regular missional activities.

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<sup>2</sup> We commend this number as at least a starting point. We believe it is still a small size of parish or benefice compared to the vast majority of English benefices.

- An expectation that the hub would offer significant community use or mission outreach.
- The church would be open to the public daily.
- That the parish pay their Shared Ministry Fund contribution in full enabling them to support a full-time stipendiary post.

**What support can be expected from the diocese:**

- Resourcing of a full-time stipendiary post for the benefice.
- Accommodation for an incumbent in as near green-guide standard as is feasible. (The diocese will also be working towards parsonages having low energy costs.)
- Permitted to apply to the diocese for grants for missionary initiatives.
- Advice on sources of development funding.

**B. Community Mission Churches**

These churches may be kept but should not be supported from central funds nor should they be independent parish churches nor expect weekly Sunday Eucharistic worship. Their buildings are able to be adapted or have been adapted to generate social and financial capital from the local community. They may be "hibernated" over the winter (probably except for Christmas and funerals).

Parishes would be expected to identify community mission churches within their parishes.

**The Community it serves**

- Expect to find a catchment of at least 1,000 **OR** the church or hall is the only community building in the district.
- Should become the focus of community interaction e.g. business, leisure, shops, service facilities.
- May be newly established 'plants' in areas of perceived need e.g. on a new housing estate.

**Church/Hall**

- The expectation that the church would be looked after by a non-stipendiary Local minister (lay or ordained).
- The expectation that there would be one service a week (not necessarily on a Sunday and not necessarily the Eucharist).
- These churches may have a worshipping function within a community centre.
- They may continue to offer the full range of occasional offices.

- A rationale is developed by the parish if both hall(s) and a church are to be retained to justify two buildings. The aim should be the creation of a fully used multi-purpose building.
- The retained building would be a base for community outreach.
- The church/community centre would be open to the public daily.
- The parish pay their ministry fund contribution in full.

#### **What they can expect from the diocese/Mission Partnership:**

- Assistance in developing lay leadership.
- Advice in developing plant.
- Advice regarding sources of funding.
- Permitted to apply for grants for missionary initiative.

### **C. Heritage Churches**

These are churches which have a clear heritage and/or architectural value but which struggle to attract a sustainable congregation, can't pay a full parish SMF consistently AND maintain their building. They should be helped to look for partnerships to maintain as versions of festival/heritage church, as cemetery chapels maintained on the rates or as self-funding community resources. They should cease to be a drain on PCC resources. They may be "hibernated" as well.

These would be buildings which are essential to the historic fabric of Manx society but are not necessarily a priority for the church's Mission. These might on occasion be associated with significant burial grounds serving urban populations and which are still active.

These are likely to have been identified by government in terms of registered buildings and the parish (in agreement with the diocese) will identify whether they should be offered to government or a Trust e.g. Manx National Heritage (MNH), Friends group or retained by the parish.

#### **The Community it serves**

- These churches may no longer be the only Anglican churches serving the community, or may be isolated from centres of population.
- These churches should explore a new raison d'être, for example, linked to visitors and pilgrimage and Church-camping<sup>3</sup> sites.
- A key function may be associated with funerals.
- They are unlikely to be financially sustainable and unless having significant endowments will require external funding to be retained. In the case of a church with a cemetery they might become a charge to the Burial Authority as a Cemetery Chapel.

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<sup>3</sup> N.B. parishes may not use the word "champing" as this is copyright the Churches Conservation Trust

## **Church/Hall**

- The expectation that there might be occasional services e.g. during the summer months or Festivals.
- May be used for occasional offices under special agreements.
- Compatible uses should be found for the buildings where possible.
- If retained under the full control of the parish that the parish:
  - pay their ministry fund contribution in full
  - enable the church to be accessible to the public daily, even if by indicating a key holder
  - should establish a Friends organisation.
- Collections associated with services will help pay the costs of ministry.

### **What they can expect from the diocese:**

- Guidelines for good practice in developing a Friends group.

### **What the diocese needs to negotiate with government:**

- A strategy of engagement with government or other body e.g. MNH or burial authority for:
  - financial contributions to repairs.
  - Enabling them to be handed over to new uses e.g. Church-camping (see footnote 3 on previous page).
  - Taking them into public care where preferred.

Each parish needs to indicate heritage churches

(a) that can be resourced by the parish **or**

(b) 'un-resourced' and has no future unless other complementary uses are found or there is government or other external support.

## **D. Churches at a 'Crossroads'**

Churches where radical change needs to happen with a long-term strategy of sustainability. This may involve closure, sale, demolition or radical new uses.

### **The Community it serves**

- They may have a dispersed congregation.
- The local population is small and/or do not relate to the church.
- The Church has had no long term plan to make contact with the community.

## Church/Hall

- The church may be challenging to categorise, it might be a 'heritage church', a 'Burial Church' or even a 'hub' church in a parish teetering on viability.
- If retained under the full control of the parish:
  - the parish pay their ministry fund contribution in full, and
  - enable the church to be accessible to the public daily.

### What they can expect from the diocese:

- A strategy of engagement with government where necessary for:
  - removing 'registered building' status, sale, demolition **or**
  - **support** in developing a strategy for long-term development, funding and radical new uses.

As and when revised faculty jurisdiction is in place, faculties will continue to be granted for this class of church in order to enable essential maintenance prior to a long-term strategy being in place.

## E. Marketable Churches

These are churches with small congregations but which would be easily sold for a fair market price, the funds to form a kitty to maintain Hub Churches. They may be sustainable at present, and we are not recommending a whole scale closure and sale of these buildings immediately, but if their market value exceeds their value to the Mission of God then the Church Commissioners cannot justify the cost of keeping them open. However, we should look to divest ourselves of at least one or two of these over the next five years, with the proceeds going into the diocesan Pastoral Fund to pay for grants and loans to Hub Churches. Once identified they need to be valued for a sale price by an Estate Agent appointed by the DBF.

These are churches which may have some of the following characteristics:

- easily be turned into new uses such as housing or another appropriate marketable use.
- Have a small congregation and/or serve a small population (less than 2,000).
- May be at a distance from centres of population.
- Have little or no engagement with the local community.
- May have a Methodist (or another Church in fellowship with Churches Alive in Mann) church that could be shared nearby.

## 6. Principles and Recommendations

1. **Diocesan Synod has re-iterated several times over the past eight years that we need boots on the ground rather than all of our buildings.** We support this position, whilst noting how very difficult it can be to dispose of some parish church buildings – although this may prove to be simpler with the Land Registry’s landmark December 2019 decision to base title for All Saints Lonan and All Saints Douglas on the fact of their consecration.
  
2. **We strongly recommend to the Bishop, Church Commissioners for the Isle of Man and Diocesan Synod that a major thrust of diocesan policy be to encourage every PCC to carefully explore the possibilities of finding additional uses for their church buildings:**
  - i. If their building can be used to generate social capital.
  - ii. If their building can be used to generate income.
  - iii. If neither, why not and what is to be done about it.

**And to report to the Archdeacon of Man within 6 months.** This then to be collated and presented to the Church Commissioners for consideration.

*This may not apply to the purely heritage churches (see 9 below).*
  
3. **We strongly urge that the leaders of the denominations and the leaders of local churches of all the mainstream denominations (Churches Alive in Mann members) should talk openly and realistically about sharing buildings** (especially between ourselves and the Methodist Church as we often find both denominations have church buildings in villages scarce able to support just one congregation) and do so in a spirit of sacrificial recognition that the Gospel takes priority over our devotion to our traditional buildings.
  
4. **We would like the diocese to be realistic about the number of buildings we can sustain**, especially given the harsh realities with which we live:
  - i. The notable lack of young people and children in most of our services on most Sundays.
  - ii. The lessening income through direct giving.
  - iii. The exhaustion ageing congregations are feeling in the face of the ever growing need for fund raising.
  - iv. The perceived reluctance of charities (and government) to support church buildings (– or, possibly, the inability of church members to write convincing applications).
  - v. The generally downward trend in church attendance across the island and across the denominations.

5. **We urge the Church Commissioners, with the support of Diocesan Synod, to identify which church buildings are assets such as would realise a fair market price**, and measure that against their value to the Mission of God, considering the proximity of other churches, including those of other denominations, size of congregation, capacity to pay their way etc., in deciding whether the time has come to realise that asset in order to pay stipends or support more essential buildings. (See 6).
6. **We need to consider how we can make grants to “Hub Churches”** identified by the Church Commissioners with the help of Mission Partnerships using the tool we have provided to improve these buildings for mission and ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Furthermore, we need **to offer loans** for those churches the Church Commissioners agree are sustainable in the long term to be able to afford to install environmentally friendly (i.e. not primarily powered by fossil fuels) heating and lighting systems e.g. solar panels, ground source and air source heating systems.
7. **We urge Diocesan Synod to encourage PCCs’ commitment to paying their Shared Ministry Fund assessment in full over the cost of maintaining all of their parish buildings indiscriminately, and this accountability should be a part of e.g. the faculty process**, using the factors in points 2 - 6 above. The necessary changes to both Faculty Jurisdiction and the Inspection of Church Measure are currently with the Diocesan Legislative Committee and will be presented to Diocesan Synod in due course. This change of legislation will enable all of us to better manage responsible spending by all PCCs on church buildings by identifying which buildings are our shared priority for the mission of God, but also e.g. which we need to maintain as a part of our care for the island’s heritage. We recognise that sometimes mission and heritage will overlap.
8. **We recommend** the Church Commissioners explore closing some churches for public worship or re-designating as not parish churches and e.g.
  - i. “Hibernating” them i.e. to close them for most of the year, but open them up for either key festivals, or throughout the summer.
  - ii. making them funerary chapels maintained on the burial rate. We understand that this may mean in some cases bringing them up to a sustainable condition for this new purpose.
9. **We urge the Bishop and his senior staff to seek Government funding of heritage buildings especially churches.** By helping to fund repairs to the island’s built heritage, sacred and secular, they would be leveraging monies into the island economy through additional Trust money, for example, from the UK as for the most part local builders and artisans will be employed and, hopefully, apprenticeships can be developed.

Churches can then concentrate on being community assets – congregation members are key to the voluntary sector, for instance. Allied to this, **we ask Churches Alive in Mann and Government open dialogue on “Ecclesiastical Exemption”**.

10. **We want a mechanism agreed with government and/or Manx National Heritage whereby the “Old Churches” can be removed from the care of the parishes and the diocese** and handed over to conservation or “Friends” groups to run and maintain; Manx National Heritage have indicated a willingness to consider working with such groups in caring for these churches, perhaps under a custodianship arrangement.
11. **We have a responsibility as the established church of this island to every one living on the island.** We believe that we should take seriously the fact that a few of our church buildings are the only church building and/or the congregation is the only potentially missional community in a village and that these congregations and their buildings and/or their mission must be supported. **We need to come to see the need for mission as the priority over the need for a building to be maintained.**
12. **We are of the clear opinion that the registered building list so far as it applies to churches is not generally fit for purpose** and would like to work with government, other denominations and amenity societies to effect reform. Part of that reform might consider grading e.g. Registered Building Grade A and Grade B. There also needs to be a clear distinction between exterior and street scene value and interior value. To take an example from the list: Charles Street in Peel is composed of Registered buildings, but actually their sole value is in their front facade. On the other hand Our Lady Star of the Sea and St Maughold in Ramsey are also Registered, but quite apart from the exterior they have very important interiors.
13. **Regarding Church Halls we urge PCCs to consider selling halls which are not actively generating a reliable, substantial and sustainable profit for the PCC**, and invest the capital in developing their identified Hub Church whilst ensuring their Shared Ministry Fund assessment is paid in full. (See APPENDIX III for list of church halls).
14. **That we do not reduce the establishment of stipendiary clergy and missionaries much below current levels (2020) or we may cease to be functional as a modern diocese.** However, some may need to be deployed more creatively. We urge a development of **Team Ministries with one Incumbent and a team of other ministers such as stipendiary Team Vicars, Self-Supporting Ministers (SSMs – what we used to call NSM) and licensed Local Lay Ministers, Pioneer Ministers (lay and ordained)** etc. Such appointments allow a far greater flexibility and responsiveness to changing patterns of ministry. And that these ministers be deployed according to need around the diocese.

**15. Regarding the appointment of stipendiary clergy, we recommend that**

- i. the Bishop and the Church Commissioners recognise that a parish population of 6,000 as the normal minimum number to ensure a whole stipendiary appointment and that such a parish generates a contribution to the diocesan budget which covers at least the cost of a whole priest including the diocesan administration to support a priest in a parish (currently about £60k). Parishes smaller than this in population or finance could e.g. have resident parish priests who also shoulder a more significant diocesan post (see 15ii below) or be merged with a neighbouring parish and/or have some other model of leadership and priestly support.
- ii. it is assumed that all parochial clergy will also have a diocesan brief also which will normally be in excess of a 20% commitment.
- iii. that there be only one hub church per parish per stipendiary priest. (See section on church buildings and their types for a definition of Hub Churches.)

## 7. What Happens Next?

The Diocesan Synod accepted this document at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2020. Now that the Report is the official strategy of the Diocese of Sodor and Man, as amended it is to be published on the diocesan website, along with the Tool Kit (also slightly amended).

### Reporting Back

The Bishop announced at the meeting of the Diocesan Synod in August 2020 that he would establish an **Implementation Group** in order to deal promptly with the reports of the MPCs. This Group would be, in effect, a working party of the Church Commissioners. He asked for MPC reports by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

### What do the Implementation Group require from the Mission Partnership Councils?

- 1. A simple list of all churches** in your Mission Partnership grouped by parish and with the category you recommend they be placed in: e.g.  
St Agatha's in the Wold A (Hub Church)  
St Mungo's in the Wold B (Community Church) etc.  
- as agreed by a simple majority of those attending the meeting. If there is an evenly split vote, please return "undecided".  
n.b. We do not need any reasoning or special arguments; if we need to know more, we will ask.
- 2. A note of any pastoral re-organisation** you would commend to the Church Commissioners to enable us to achieve an approximate 6,000 population per stipendiary priest.
- 3. A brief comment** on any of the recommendations we have offered as they affect your Mission Partnership (referring to the number of the recommendations as listed in the Strategy document).

**n.b. We cannot accept any submissions from PCCs or individuals.**

### How the Tool and the Report will influence forward planning

The Implementation Group will then work with these recommendations to place all of our church buildings into a category and align their decision-making, and that of the DBF and other diocesan bodies, accordingly.

The Implementation Group and the Church Commissioners will advise the bishop, who must make the final decision in all these matters.

The MPC reports should be sent by email to the Archdeacon's Office  
[archdeaconsec@sodorandman.im](mailto:archdeaconsec@sodorandman.im)

**Before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020**

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

### **The Church Buildings Review 2016, Sodor and Man**

*A confidential advisory report for the Church Commissioners of the Isle of Man*

The Diocese is led by the Bishop in Synod. The wisdom of this Diocesan Synod over the next five years regarding the use of our resources will be crucial to the future of the Diocese in terms of survive/thrive. It will need to decide how best to deploy our resources to enable the mission of God in this Diocese in an increasingly secular and multi-cultural society.

The Church Commissioners want to help the diocesan Bishop, his leadership team and Synod to develop a strategy for the Diocese not only to survive but to thrive.

We have been working on a model for "Festival" Churches as we have closed churches for public worship. The flexible Festival model has so far been our basic response, and allows a community group to take over the maintenance of a church building, under faculty and to hold occasional services. It also allows us to "re-activate" the church building as a parish church should circumstances change. Hitherto, we have closed churches as circumstances arise (usually a request from the local PCC). This is necessarily a haphazard approach; so far we have been fortunate that those buildings closed have not e.g. been all in the same area or the same parish even, or anywhere we would think to be essential for mission. However, we would like to put this on a firmer strategic footing, **not least to decide where we may need to invest dwindling diocesan and parochial resources in keeping a parish church open for missional reasons.**

We wonder what this might look like in terms of:

(a) the level of financial support from church members (we are among the worst givers per capita in the Church of England). We do need to improve this record, but that's a job for another group. Assuming this doesn't improve dramatically in terms of people giving far more, several times more than they give at present, then -

(b) what will this mean for deployment of stipendiary clergy? And the development of other ministries? We are keen not to cut back staff and thereby cut back on an enabling ministry and so lose momentum and ultimately numbers. However, deployment of stipendiary clergy and the testing of vocation, training, deployment and resourcing of "free" volunteer ministry are both very expensive. Generally speaking the previous Synod accepted that stipendiary clergy take a priority over church buildings:

(c) therefore, if we are going to need to cut our suit to match our cloth, to match our ministry and what we offer locally to dwindling financial resources this must mean several things about buildings; we need to review them and attempt to draw up a guide list for the Church Commissioners of our present buildings:

- i. which ones will likely be money pits with little hope of drawing in sufficient funds by finding alternative and additional uses to maintain themselves?  
i.e. a list of those church buildings we probably can't afford to keep.
- ii. Which ones must we keep for a variety of reasons e.g. outstanding architectural merit, outstanding and unique historical worth, great potential for missional engagement, great value for other ministry (e.g. pastoral offices etc.), potential to be adapted for multi-purpose use (e.g. community and commercial use with a view to their sustainability, perhaps to become self-funding.) A part of this list may form the basis of a new Registered Building system with MNH and Government - I have suggested to them this will be a half dozen buildings tops rather than nearly all of them as at present.
- iii. Which ones we'd quite like to keep if we can afford it (i.e. the rest) but it will be helpful to list them in preference per Mission Partnership.

We do have the Sharpe Report as a starting point if we would find it helpful.

This is a confidential task and I would suggest the report needs to be strictly confidential as it's meant to advise the Church Commissioners and the Bishop; they may disagree with our findings and circumstances will change e.g. a new housing development in a certain area. The pastoral observations of the Sharpe Report were meant to be confidential – until it was accidentally or otherwise published with the general architectural report. If we go around listing churches for closure, then they MAY be spurred into action, a fresh frenzy of fund-raising and a whole new commitment to paying their Shared Ministry Fund (this has happened!) - but it's far more likely to become a self-fulfilling prophecy and discouraged congregations simply give up, perhaps even in anger and bitterness, and drift off aimlessly rather than being enabled to work in the parish for a sustainable mission and ministry based in other buildings.

The review group will be chaired by the Archdeacon, and will consist of the four Mission Partnership Leaders (all parish clergy themselves) and four lay members of congregations in their Mission Partnerships.

## APPENDIX II

### List of Anglican Places of Worship

1. The Cathedral Church of St German
2. St George, Douglas
3. All Saints, Douglas (closed for public worship and about to be sold)
4. St Ninian, Douglas
5. St Matthew, Douglas
6. St Thomas Douglas
7. St Peter, Onchan
8. All Saints, Lonan (closed for public worship and being handed over to a local charity)
9. Christ Church, Laxey
10. Old Kirk Lonan (St Adamnan)
11. St Brendan, Braddan
12. St Sanctain, Santan
13. Kirk Malew (St Lupus)
14. St Mary Ballasalla (The Abbey Church)
15. St Mark, St Marks
16. St Columba, Arbory
17. St Mary, Castletown
18. Kirk Christ Rushen (Holy Trinity)
19. St Catherine's Port Erin
20. St Mary, Port St Mary
21. St Peter, Cregneash
22. St John, St Johns (a.k.a. The Royal Chapel)
23. St James, Dalby
24. St Patrick, Patrick
25. St Michael, Kirk Michael
26. St Runius, Marown,
27. Old Kirk Marown
28. St Paul, Foxdale (at the time of writing closed pending repairs)
29. St Luke, Baldwin
30. St Mary de Ballaugh, Ballaugh
31. Old Kirk Ballaugh
32. St Andrew, Andreas,
33. St Stephen, Sulby
34. St Patrick Jurby (now part of a Mission Initiative under a Bishop's Mission Order)
35. Kirk Lezayre (closed for public worship)
36. St Olave Ramsey
37. St Brigid, Bride
38. St Fingan, Glen Auldyn (closed for public worship and for sale)
39. St Paul's Ramsey
40. Kirk Maughold
41. Christ Church, the Dhoon

*Plus:*

The Chapels at Bishops court and King William's College (both remain under faculty jurisdiction but both are in private ownership) and St Jude's, which is run by a Trust but remains under Faculty.

St Cairbre, Colby (closed and sold)

## APPENDIX III

### List of Church Halls

Only those in distinct buildings are listed so, e.g. not St Ninian's "pod"; this is additional buildings for which our PCCs are responsible.

In the same order as the churches.

1. The Corrin Hall
2. St George's (fully leased, pays to maintain the church)
3. All Saints (used by parish of St George and All Saints)
4. St Matthews ('semi-detached' with church)
5. Onchan Village Hall (a complex ownership Trust)
6. Braddan Church halls (old and new)
7. Santon
8. The Abbey Church hall
9. St Mark's Schoolroom
10. St Catherine's Hall ('semi-detached' with church)
11. St Mary's Hall (Port St Mary)
12. St John's Hall \* (the Church is the responsibility of government to maintain)
13. Patrick Hall \* (long-term lease to Knockaloe Trust)
14. Andreas Village Hall (for sale at the time of writing)
15. Sulby ('semi-detached' with church)
16. Lezayre (still owned by PCC but fully leased and provides income)
17. St Olave (North Ramsey)
18. Bride
19. St Paul's (South Ramsey)
20. Kirk Maughold (plus Church House)
21. Dhoon

The Parish of the West Coast sold the Kirk Michael Hall, and the Parish of Marown, Foxdale and Baldwin sold the Marown Church hall.

\* If sold income raised goes to the Department of Education

## APPENDIX IV

### List of Registered Church Buildings (including private chapels) and Halls of all denominations

As at November 2016, Source: [IOM Registered Buildings](#)

- a) The number in the first column is the Registration number.
- b) The date is the date Registered.
- c) If you click on the website above or on any of the names below, the hyperlink will take you to a file with full details, history, etc.
- d) Those highlighted in **yellow** are buildings that we maintain – except Braddan Cemetery Office/ Chapel, which is a Bailey Scott building covered under the Churchyard Rate by Braddan Burial Authority.
- e) Bishopscourt and King Williams College are private chapels and used by invitation.
- f) Lezayre Church is now in private ownership but may eventually be reopened for occasional worship with the Bishop's permission as a Festival Church.
- g) All Saints Church, Douglas is closed for public worship.

ANDREAS PARISH		
2		<u><a href="#">Leodest Methodist Chapel, Leodest Road</a></u> 23/05/1983

BALLAUGH PARISH		
11		<u><a href="#">Ballaugh Old Church, The Cronk</a></u> 21/07/1983
1		<u><a href="#">Bishopscourt, together with buildings contiguous therewith</a></u> 23/05/1983

BRADDAN PARISH		
12		<u><a href="#">Old Kirk Braddan Church, Saddle Road</a></u> 21/07/1983
130		<u><a href="#">St Luke's Church</a></u> 26/04/1990
158	+	<u><a href="#">Cemetery Office, Braddan Church</a></u> 26/01/1996

CASTLETOWN PARISH		
185		<u><a href="#">King William's College, Castletown</a></u> 06/07/2001

DOUGLAS PARISH		
106	<u>St Matthew's Church, North Quay</u>	19/09/1988
178	<u>St Thomas Church</u>	14/06/1999
188	<u>All Saints Church, Alexander Drive</u>	15/08/2001
197	<u>St Mary's of the Isle Catholic Church, Hill Street</u>	20/09/2002
228	<u>St Ninian's Church, Ballaquayle Road</u>	22/07/2005

LAXEY PARISH		
85	<u>Christ Church</u>	21/01/1986

LEZAYRE PARISH		
138	<u>Kirk Christ Lezayre Parochial Church</u>	11/07/1991
170	<u>St Stephens Church and former School Room, Sulby</u>	22/4/1998
172	<u>Sulby Methodist Church, Sulby</u>	22/4/1998

LONAN PARISH		
13	<u>Old Kirk Lonan (St Adamnan's) Ballamenagh Road, Baldrine</u>	21/07/1983

MALEW PARISH		
181	<u>Old School/House, St Mark's</u>	06/12/2000
182	<u>St Mark's Church, St Mark's</u>	09/05/2001
256	<u>Malew Parish Church, Great Meadow IM9 4EB</u>	08/04/2008

MAROWN PARISH		
14	<u>St Runius Church, Ellerslie</u>	21/07/1983

MICHAEL PARISH		
248	<u>St Michael's Church aka Kirk Michael and All Angels Church, Main Road</u>	08/05/2009

ONCHAN PARISH		
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118	<u>St Peter's Church Hall, Royal Avenue</u>	11/09/1989
119	<u>St Peter's Parish Church</u>	11/09/1989

PEEL PARISH		
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194	<u>Primitive Methodist Chapel</u>	31/10/2001
204	<u>St. German's Cathedral</u>	18/10/2002

RAMSEY PARISH		
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80	<u>Our Lady of the Star and Sea St Maughold's Roman Catholic Church, Queens Promenade</u>	26/04/1985
84	<u>St Paul's Church, Market Square</u>	27/11/1985
90	<u>Ballure Church</u>	08/05/1986

SANTON PARISH		
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15	<u>Santon Parish Church (St Sanctain's), Church Road</u>	21/07/1983
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