
35/07 Architecture for Buildings for Contemporary Church

(A report from a committee appointed by the Archbishop.)

Introduction

1. By resolution 35/07 the Synod requested the Archbishop to appoint a committee to investigate and report on the architecture of buildings for contemporary church, with special attention to the impact of technological changes.

2. A committee of architects and clergy, with some input from people with technological expertise, met on four occasions in 2009. Members of the Committee were –

Mr Geoff Deane – Architect
Mrs Kim Bazeley – Architect
Mr Stephen Cox – Architect
Mr Ken Sandell – Audio Advisor
The Rev Bruce Dingwall
The Rev Stuart Holman
Archdeacon Ian Cox

Architectural Guide

3. As God is the Creator of the whole world all things are his. As part of the creation, architecture is something to be used for the purposes of glorifying God. Ecclesiastical architecture has arisen for the purposes of housing the people of God when they assemble to both provide a building for the gathering and in many cases to enhance the gathering's understanding and experience of God's relationship with His people.

4. While many churches gather in temporary spaces, as evidenced in the early church in the Book of Acts, throughout history the church has seen fit to gather in particular geographical areas. As the church became established the temporary meeting place developed into a permanent presence in the community.

5. God's plan is to redeem the world through His Son, Jesus Christ. Architecture like the rest of creation will not be perfect. Poor architecture can be frustrating and retarding of effective ministry. Good architecture facilitates the gathering and can assist many important aspects of the functions and actions of the church. For these reasons architecture is an important consideration as the church gathers. The committee has given some thought to an appropriate building to house the group of people who meet together to fellowship and worship God.

6. The design of church buildings ought to be driven by our Theology of Mission as much as our Theology of Christian Assembly. The Connect09 Mission suggests that our parishes relationally and through our church buildings will assist our connection with our community on a seven day a week basis. The shape of our mission requires a space that can be used for Christian assembly and Christian ministry, as well as outreach activities into the community.

7. The committee was of the view that a strategic ministry plan for future ministry in the parish was essential before professionals and various Diocesan organisations are engaged to consider any building plan. The building plan must be subservient to the ministry plan. It may be that as a congregation thought about its plan, it will decide that they do not need a building at all. A building needs to have the ability to add or change its mode of worship and its needs in conjunction with the ministry plan.

8. Having decided that a building is an appropriate response to the strategic ministry plan, the Committee thought that there were three essential considerations for a congregation to discuss in developing a building proposal –

- (a) What kind of building will address the strategic ministry plan for the future?
- (b) What is the nature of the suburb, its cultural heritage and the place the parish and its buildings will have in that suburb?
- (c) What are the steps that should be taken in the planning and procurement process?

9. A parish that plans to undertake a building program needs to consider how this building will reflect something of our theology. Buildings signify something that can be read by the congregation, as well as the community.

10. Our Theology of Christian Assembly and Mission suggests the following –

- (a) Both the surrounding community and our own membership should be able to read something of our Christian identity from the design of the building. The building will be a "*statement*" about who we are as the body of the ascended Christ.
- (b) The building should provide for the functional needs of a ministry centre providing for the Sunday gatherings, teaching, pastoral care, counselling and small group ministries, not just Sunday meetings.
- (c) The building should enhance Christian fellowship – with appropriate spaces and hospitality areas.

- (d) The building must be seen as an opportunity to deepen our life together serving both the congregation and the local community.
- (e) The building ought to be comfortable, low maintenance, energy efficient.
- (f) It would be desirable that specialist consultants should be employed in areas of power, lighting, vision and audio. It is much easier to make provision for technological requirements and innovations during the planning and construction of a building than it is to introduce them into an existing building.

11. The committee believed it was essential for a manual (which includes a Step by Step Guide) to be produced outlining the procedures that a congregation should plan and agree upon as they consider the type and style of a new church building. This document should also contain the policy, process and procedural requirements of the Diocese (eg. Property Trust, Mission Property Committee and Architectural Panels) as an aid to developing a building plan.

12. It was not the brief of this committee to produce such a document. The Architectural Guidelines currently provided for Architectural Panels to Parishes needs to be revised and made more applicable for the needs of the contemporary church.

13. A DVD/CD could be used to summarise the content of such a document. This audio visual could contain testimonies of congregational members commenting on their strategic ministry plan and the building that was constructed from that plan.

14. Our society has advanced dramatically in the area of technology and we can expect further technological changes that will impact on church gatherings.

15. Christians are "exhorted, not to be conformed to this world" however, in our desire to connect with the community, buildings and technology can be used to enhance the growth of Christians in the knowledge of God and provide opportunities to connect with the community through its use of buildings.

For and on behalf of the committee.

ARCHDEACON IAN COX
Archdeacon of Liverpool

24 August 2009