

Encountering God: Sacred spaces



Historically, church buildings were not just places for worship but a space for the wider community to come together and use. Going back to these community roots can offer today's buildings a new lease of life, while also encouraging more people to encounter God in His holy place.

Spaces where people can encounter God

We have thousands of places of worship in the UK, spaces in our local communities where people can encounter God. They are focal points where people have gathered for centuries to mark rites of passage, places where people go to sit, to think and to pray.

Our church buildings bear witness to our local skills and craftsmanship. They are performance spaces for cultural, musical and dramatic activities and civic centres, used at times of national remembrance. They are important to our sense of place and well-being. They exist for all, and *everyone can and* should have access to them, whatever their faith tradition. Often they're the only shared building in a rural community and their uses are becoming more diverse and creative.

A sacred responsibility

Rural congregations comprise wonderful, resourceful, faithful people who love and care for their church buildings. They see it as their sacred responsibility to keep the building available for worship and preserve the place of encounter with the living God. Sometimes they need help engaging with the local community, to draw on their love for the building, to help the congregation care for the church.

There are concerns about the sustainability of our rural church buildings and even a perception that they hinder mission, take a lot of looking after and require lots of energy and money. Germinate's newly revised Rural Church Buildings Resource offers examples of good practice, case studies and simple commonsense guidance. It includes advice on project development, funding sources, business planning, community consultation and project delivery, plus guidance on the Church of England faculty system and other legal frameworks.

Small change, big impact

Sometimes, relatively small changes can have a big impact. At St Michael and All Angels Church, Kingstone, Herefordshire, new toilets and a small kitchen servery have been installed. This has enabled them to offer tea and cakes every Thursday afternoon, bringing around thirty people together, including many who wouldn't normally consider entering the building.

Community is all about coming together. It's not always about place, but the right place can change the way a community engages with itself and others. With the right resources, communities can make adaptations that turn their building into a space that serves the common good.

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Useful resources

Rural Church Buildings Resource (Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre)

Guidance on dealing with all the practical aspects of being responsible for a building including looking after the fabric of your building and its contents, undertaking effective maintenance, preventing metal theft and making your building as energy efficient as possible. Security, health and safety and opening up your church buildings for visitors are also covered.

germinate.net/church-life/rural-church-buildings-resource-2018

Crossing the Threshold (Diocese of Hereford)

Step-by-step guidance on how to develop a church and community project based within a church building and how to manage all stages of a building project. There are ideas on how engage with your local community, an overview of the process for seeking and obtaining permissions as well as an explanation of the available legal frameworks by which you can share your building with your community and other organisations. It covers all aspects of fundraising including new funding models.

hereford.anglican.org/Crossingthethresholdtoolkit

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