

Church Building Projects - Where to Begin...?

afterwards our buildings shape us

“We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us.” Winston Churchill

Start Here...

This sheet provides a playful way of grappling with some of the serious issues that need to be considered **before** launching into a building project - the things you need to think about **before** you appoint an architect and other professionals.

The aim is to achieve at the outset the **clarity** you will need for a successful outcome. How you use this sheet does not matter - the key thing is to focus on the important issues, so that you can define the problem you want to address.

So use this sheet in whatever way suits you. Doodle! Brainstorm! Make a Mess!

How Well Do You Know Your Existing Building?

Do you know what you are dealing with? If the building has any historic value, have you prepared a Statement of Significance?

What are the known limitations? Consider archaeology, conservation, planning, trees, legal etc

Current Constraints

In what ways do your existing buildings prevent you realising your vision? Download the Springboard or Millstone Health Check from ChurchBuild to help people explore their perceptions. This can be a great tool for building consensus around the need for change.

The Art of Compromise

You will never achieve everything you want, and the act of choosing helps define the point of the project - always compare this with your vision.

With that in mind,

Yes Please! What are the key things to achieve...?

No Thanks! What are the key things to avoid...?

What on Earth Do You Think You're Doing?

Who are you as a church, and what are your core values? How does what you do relate to those values? What 2 or 3 things make you distinctive in your local community?

Feeling (Dis)Connected?

How does your community see you? Who thinks the church is important? Are there people who feel excluded? Are there people who feel they own the church?

Where Do You Think You're Going?

Do you have an overall vision of what God is calling you to be and do in this place? Leaving building projects to one side, what are you hoping to achieve as a church - what is your dream?

Who Are You, Anyway?

Think about how you are going to organise yourselves. What skills do you already have within the church, and what might you need to buy in from outside? Who has ultimate responsibility for decisions and how do you reach agreement? Which one person will be given the authority to represent the church within the project team?

What Does Success Look Like?

Imagine you have completed your project; how will things be different? How will you recognise success when you see it? What does it feel like? What can you do now that you couldn't do before?

How To Use This

Print this out at A3 for use by a small group - the central section can then be copied at A4 if needed. Or contact us and we will happily print this for you at A1 size for putting up in the wall, or for a larger round table discussion.

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Q&A

Don't worry! At this stage you don't need to have all of the answers - in fact you don't want them, as better answers will unfold as you better define what you want. What is important is to have a clear focus and a sense of purpose, so that you can formulate the best possible questions...

... scribble away!

Other Resources

Church Building Seminars - from time to time we help organise regional seminars for churches - a great place to come for ideas and information. Details from www.churchbuild.co.uk

The Gate of Heaven - How Church Buildings Speak of God, by Nigel Walter. This booklet examines the principles of what is a key relationship for any church and suggests practical means of forging a better partnership. Equally relevant whether you are struggling to maintain a historic building, considering a substantial reordering or contemplating a new building. www.grovebooks.co.uk

Re-Pitching the Tent, by Richard Giles. Subtitled 'The definitive guide to re-ordering church buildings for worship and mission' it does what it says on the tin. Includes appendices with good practical guidance.

With thanks to Nigel Walter and Jim Hammett, for the material from their website www.churchbuild.co.uk



Where To Next...?

How do you move on from here? The point of this stage was to get all of the issues out onto the table - if possible into the middle space on this sheet.

Out of this you can develop a formal **Brief**, which defines the key questions you want answered - an architect can help you to refine and improve this.

With a Brief defined, you may then commission a **Feasibility Study**, which would look at whether the vision can be achieved within the practical limitations, and give a broad indication of cost. The Feasibility Study may well help revise the Brief.

Only once you know the project is a) feasible, b) in line with your overall vision, and c) necessary to achieving that vision, should you appoint an architect to begin designing you a building.