

Churches in England cared for by Trusts

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WORD SLIDES ONLY – THE TALK WILL HAVE PICTURES!

What is a Trust?

- Organisation entrusted with resources for a particular task
- Run by 'Trustees' who must follow the terms of the Trust
- Task may be a charitable, not for profit one
 - In our case, caring for a church
 - May be a registered charity
- Continuity and permanence
 - IF Trustees can replace themselves
 - IF there is sufficient money

Background

- England – population about 54m
- Church attendance low (about 15% attend once or more per month), dropping
- Roman Catholic church
 - about 1m worshippers per week
- Free churches
 - about 1.3m worshippers per week
- Church of England (CofE) (branch of Anglican communion) – subject of this talk
 - about 1m worshippers per week
 - ‘State’ church
 - inherited existing church buildings at Reformation in mid-16th century
 - has majority of historically important churches
 - about 8,000 rural churches, many of them medieval
 - no church tax, no routine funding from the State (except VAT refund)
 - paid for by ‘parish’, in practice those who go to church
 - much love for church building in rural areas
 - slow rate of closure (less than 30 per year)

Types of Trust caring for CofE churches

CLOSED CHURCHES

- Multi-building Trust
- Single-building Trust (local)

OPEN CHURCHES

- Single-building community Trust (local)

Multi-building Trusts (closed churches)

- Five multi-building Trusts
 - Churches Conservation Trust (343) – State and CofE, majority rural churches
 - Friends of Friendless Churches (18) – independent, national, rural
 - Norwich Historic Churches Trust (18) – some local government involvement
 - Norfolk Churches Trust (13) - independent, regional, rural
 - Ipswich Historic Churches Trust (4) – some local government involvement
- Characteristics
 - Some preserve buildings ('curatorial'), some look for new purposes
 - Some have a strong membership base
 - Some set up local groups for individual churches
- Finance
 - heavy dependence on small number of large funders
 - general pressure (recession)
 - funders less interested now in curatorial model

Single-building Trusts (closed churches)

- No central list – hard to find
 - number unknown – certainly more than 40
- Very local – set up by community initiative
- Reasons for foundation vary (stop development / keep valued building)
- May own or lease building from diocese
- Usually deconsecrated. Uses vary, but typically:
 - ‘Curatorial’, but willing to modify space to make it usable (e.g. toilets)
 - hold a few services per year (popular)
 - use building for fund-raising for operating costs (e.g. concerts, talks)
 - may rent building out as a community space
- Capital sums raised by grants; no money put aside for future repairs
- Does purpose slowly change (from ‘keep building’ to ‘use building’)?
- Small number fail, most seem to continue
- Main problem is finding Trustees to continue the work

Single-building Community Trusts (OPEN churches)

- New idea: two examples known to me (may become more popular)
- Community-run Trust responsible for upkeep of entire building
- Congregation contribute money to Trust to use building for worship
- As a result:
 - financial uncertainty and some costs transferred to Trust
 - Trust has use of building (?nave) when not required by worshippers
 - wider public engagement with building / more income streams
 - organisation in place to do major fund raising if ever necessary
- Some theoretical issues, but no evidence that they have yet occurred
 - control of the weekly timetable
 - differing views over modification of the building
 - sustainability of the Trust, particularly if costs rise
- Modern voluntary version of the original compulsory community-financing arrangements ???