

THE HOUSE OF GOOD



**The economic and social value
of church buildings to the UK**



**National
Churches
Trust**

For people who love church buildings

About the National Churches Trust

The National Churches Trust is the charity for people who love church buildings. Our work is dedicated to supporting churches, chapels and meeting houses open for regular worship and of historic, architectural and community value throughout the UK.

We do this by providing grants for urgent repairs and community facilities, helping places of worship keep their buildings in good condition and making it easy for everyone to discover the wonder of the UK's sacred heritage.

In the last ten years we have awarded over 1,500 grants totalling £14 million. We are experts in what we do, and churches know to turn to us for support.

Find out more at nationalchurchestrust.org

About State of Life

State of Life, who carried out The House of Good study, use open data, economic analysis and digital technology to evidence social impact and value. This helps organisations demonstrate the difference they make to their funders, partners, volunteers, staff and members and wider society.

stateoflife.org

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THE HOUSE OF GOOD AT A GLANCE

Church buildings are so much more than places of worship.

From food banks to credit unions, church buildings across the UK provide a growing list of essential services for people in urgent need.

We've long seen the power of churches, chapels and meeting houses to bring communities together and help them thrive. But we've never been able to measure it.

After all, how do you put a price on feeling confident about where your family's next meal is coming from, or knowing someone cares about you?

In 2019, we commissioned social impact and value specialists State of Life to conduct a pioneering study to find out. For the very first time, we can now quantify the economic and social value of all church buildings to the UK. Not the bricks and mortar but the welfare and wellbeing they create in our communities.

We believe that these findings are remarkable. They show that the UK's church buildings are not just Houses of God. They are also Houses of Good – good that we risk losing, and may never be able to replace if they do not get the financial support they need.



Claire Walker,
CEO, National Churches Trust



Luke March,
Chairman, National Churches Trust

October 2020

THERE ARE OVER 40,000 CHURCHES IN THE UK. NONE GETS GUARANTEED GOVERNMENT FUNDING. **ALL RELY ON CHARITY.**



There is no long-term strategic national or government funding to help church buildings stay open and in good repair.

Rural or urban, ancient or modern, all church buildings rely on charity, ad hoc grants from organisations and government, and – predominantly – the fundraising efforts of their congregations.

But these aren't the only people who benefit from churches. **The social impact of church buildings goes far beyond those who worship in them.**

THERE ARE MORE FOOD BANKS THAN MCDONALD'S IN THE UK.¹ MOST ARE LINKED TO A CHURCH BUILDING.



The UK's churches, chapels and meeting houses are some of the most beautiful and historic buildings in the world.

But these places of worship also have huge value to people in need.

Food banks. Youth groups. Drug and alcohol support clinics. After-school care. Mental health counselling. Church buildings house a growing number of essential activities and services.

Together, the UK's church buildings provide the social glue that keeps our communities together. They are the safety net that stops our most vulnerable people falling through the cracks.

THE HALO EFFECT



CHURCH BUILDINGS CREATE **£12.4 BILLION** IN VALUE PER YEAR

That's roughly equal to total NHS spending on mental health in England in 2018.

This figure includes the market value of the events and activities that take place inside church buildings.

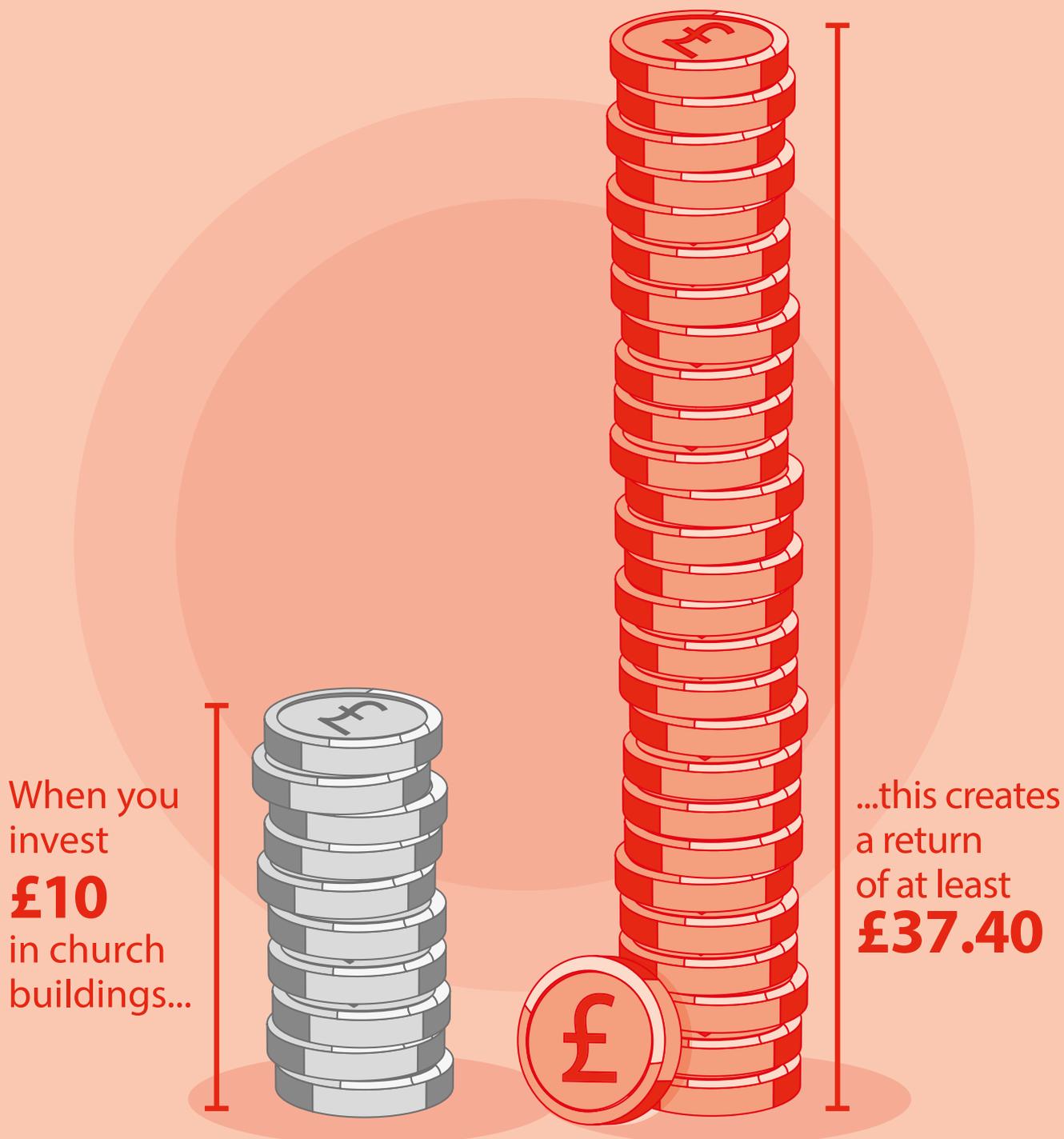
It also includes impacts that are harder to measure – such as the huge wellbeing benefit from the different activities and services provided inside church buildings.

Together, these circles of value enrich our communities and improve lives in many quantifiable ways.

We call this the Halo Effect.



FUNDING CHURCH BUILDINGS IS A **FANTASTIC INVESTMENT**



And this is the most conservative cost-benefit analysis. Other wellbeing valuation methods show a social return on investment of up to £181 for every £10 invested.

CHURCHES HAVE RISEN TO THE COVID-19 CHALLENGE



The impact of Covid-19 has made the social value of church buildings even more relevant.

Despite having to lock down, some **89% of churches** continued providing local support – from online worship to delivering shopping to isolated or vulnerable people.²

Together, they are a **ready-made network of responsive hubs** – providing care and creating wellbeing for our local communities.

CHURCH BUILDINGS ARE AT RISK. THE RISK IS HIGHEST WHERE THE NEED IS GREATEST.

In 2019, the National Churches Trust made 188 grant awards totalling £1.3 million to help keep church buildings open. **But this only funded 25% of the requests we received.**



Because of the overwhelming demand, we typically have to turn down 75% of the churches that come to us for help.

Many of our applications come from churches in deprived areas. This is where support is needed the most to benefit local communities – but it's also where church buildings are most likely to struggle for funds and face closure.

THE TRUE VALUE OF CHURCH BUILDINGS



During the Covid-19 pandemic, churches were placed in the same category as gyms and cinemas, and forced to lock down. But for the most vulnerable in our society, the support church buildings offer is not a recreational choice – it's an essential need.

Covid-19 has made us all familiar with the term 'key workers'. We believe it's time to identify the '**key places**' where we will start to rebuild our communities and look after our most vulnerable people. And to protect these vital, life-changing buildings – now and for future generations.

We want to be here for **all** church buildings that need our help.

But we can't do it alone.

See how you can support us and get involved at
nationalchurchestrust.org/houseofgood

REPORT SUMMARY



**WHAT WE DID,
WHAT WE FOUND,
WHY IT MATTERS.**



OMNES GENTES



© Push Creativity

WHY WE NEED THIS REPORT

Church buildings have always helped communities to survive and thrive, but we have not been able to measure this value until now.

In the past, churches founded and ran numerous hospitals, schools and charities. Today, church buildings are home to many different community organisations and services – including drug and alcohol support groups, mental health and counselling services, youth clubs, after school care and credit unions, amongst other valuable services. There are currently more food banks than McDonald's in the UK³ – and churches have played a vital role in setting up and running the majority of them.

In short, a church building is more than a House of God. It is also a House of Good. But how do we quantify this benefit to society? And will we still be able to count on it in years to come?

To answer these questions, we commissioned a pioneering independent study into the value of church buildings.

For the first time, this enables us to put a monetary figure on the services and support that church buildings provide for our communities, and the health and wellbeing they create in our society.

WHY WE NEED IT NOW

The UK's church buildings are facing an urgent funding crisis.

Reliant on their congregations' generosity, churches, chapels and meeting houses are struggling to raise the funds they need to keep their buildings open and in good repair. Many lack basic facilities such as toilets and kitchens. (In 2017, The Church of England alone estimated that only half of its churches have a kitchen and one third lack toilets.)

Historically, local funding, national philanthropy from trusts and foundations, and government and heritage body grants have been essential to keep church buildings open and in good repair.

Recent years have seen considerable support for church buildings from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and from the Government-supported Listed Places of Worship Roof Repair Fund. But the amount of NLHF grants has fallen following the end of its ring-fenced Grants to Places of Worship scheme whilst the Listed Places of Worship Roof Repair Fund only provided funding in 2015-2016.

Initiatives such as the Taylor Review pilot, funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and run by Historic England – which has provided some funding for maintenance and repair projects, are to be welcomed. However, it has become harder for places of worship throughout the UK to obtain the funding they need to remain open and in good repair.

Today, over 900 churches are on the Historic England 'Heritage at Risk Register', with many more in a parlous state in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The National Churches Trust already gives significant grants to churches to enable them to keep their buildings open and serving local communities. In the last ten years we have awarded over 1,500 grants totalling £14 million. But we can only give a grant to one in every four projects that we would like to support.

Sadly, the risk of church buildings closing is also highest where the need is greatest. According to a recent study by the Church Buildings Council,⁴ churches in the most deprived parishes in the country are "far more likely to struggle" than those in less deprived areas, and even more likely to close.

Right now, our church buildings are in danger. And if they're in danger, so are our most underprivileged communities.

The Covid-19 pandemic has underlined how much life-changing work churches do to support the most vulnerable in our society. Though forced to close during lockdown, 89% rapidly re-purposed their efforts to help communities through the first wave of the virus.⁵

It has never been more important for this contribution to be understood and quantified. To know what our church buildings are truly worth to the UK. And what we all stand to lose if we let them disappear from our communities.

// *If the church is not there doing what it does, other charities would not pick up the work. When I was on my own crying out for help, other charities would say they were limited in the help they could give because of the restrictions placed on their organisation. But the church didn't care who I was, which area I lived in, or what benefits I was on – there were no restrictions to them helping me."*

Rachel Irish-Colligan – Volunteer at Mount Merrion Parish Church, East Belfast

HOW WE DID IT

This section is a summary of the methods used and the assumptions made in this study by the research team at State of Life (stateoflife.org). For full and comprehensive detail of the approach and methodology, including a literature review, gap analysis and datasets, please see the full House of Good report at nationalchurchestrust.org/houseofgood

What do we mean by 'church buildings'?

For the purposes of this study, we mean church buildings open to the public and being used for Christian worship. This covers most Christian denominations in the UK, and includes churches, chapels, meeting houses and church halls but excludes cathedrals.

According to research carried out for the National Churches Trust by The Brierley Consultancy, there are currently around 40,300 churches in the UK.⁶

Where did we get our data?

We used the following datasets:



2020 National Churches Trust Survey

Over **900** churches:

824 in England

33 in Scotland

43 in Wales

18 in Northern Ireland

2010 National Churches Trust Survey

Over **7,000** churches:

6,079 in England

552 in Scotland

463 in Wales

139 in Northern Ireland

3 in Ireland

Understanding Society – the UK Household Longitudinal Study (for individual-level impacts)

To analyse the relationship between church attendance, wellbeing and volunteering, we used 77,510 responses from all areas of the UK from the Understanding Society Survey 2009-10 and 2012-13.

For church-level statistics, the study has generally used the National Churches Trust 2020 Survey data, with the National Churches Trust 2010 Survey data used as supporting data for triangulation.

In all cases, the researchers compared and referenced primary data to supporting third party reports and data. The result is a consistent and robust picture of the economic and social value provided by church buildings.



Our evaluation approach

The House of Good study follows the approach of HM Treasury's The Green Book (The Green Book), the UK Government's key source of guidance on how to assess a policy's economic and social value.

In line with The Green Book, the evaluation is divided into two key sections on market and non-market value (also called social value). This breaks down into six key stages – or circles of value – for analysis.

On Pages 20-21 you can see how we have applied these six stages to calculating the value of church buildings – moving from church economic activity in the narrowest sense to the more widespread benefits to individuals and society. This 'Halo Effect' was used by Partners for Sacred Places in the USA in 2016.⁷

The study also follows The Green Book's guidance on using counterfactuals to evaluate impact.

Giving a value to wellbeing

No one has evaluated the wellbeing benefits created by church activities and support before.

However, there are two methods for calculating the monetary value of wellbeing which are increasingly being used in the literature:

- The income equivalence method of Fujiwara and Dolan (2013) (the 'Fujiwara approach').⁸
- The Frijters and Krekel (2021) method of using the WELLBY (Wellbeing Adjusted Life Year) measure that is benchmarked to the accepted Treasury health measure of the Quality Adjusted Life Year (the 'WELLBY approach').⁹

We decided to use the more conservative WELLBY approach as our main valuation method.

As a result, it's important to note that the true non-market value of church buildings **may be higher** than the figures we present in this report – in fact, the Fujiwara approach generates values that are roughly six times higher. But until there are further methodological developments in this field, we prefer to err on the side of caution.

A conservative evaluation

Finally, it's important to mention another element of The Green Book: the idea of 'distributional weighting'.¹⁰ This is the understanding that there is a higher social value in helping people with a greater need than a lesser need.

Though urban and rural churches generate the same amount of social value per person, The House of Good data shows that church buildings in urban areas, which are more deprived on average, generate more social value overall – mostly because they serve larger communities.

Despite this, we have decided not to apply distributional weighting to the findings, since the added complexity would be beyond the scope of this study. If we applied this distributional weighting, that would multiply some of the value of the findings in this report by at least 1.3 or as much as 2.5.

This means that the figures in this report represent **the most conservative possible evaluation** of the benefits created by church buildings.

WHO WE TALKED TO

While the researchers were calculating the social and economic impact of church buildings, we decided to visit church communities across the UK to hear the personal stories behind the statistics.

Here are some of the people and churches that you'll hear more from later in this report.



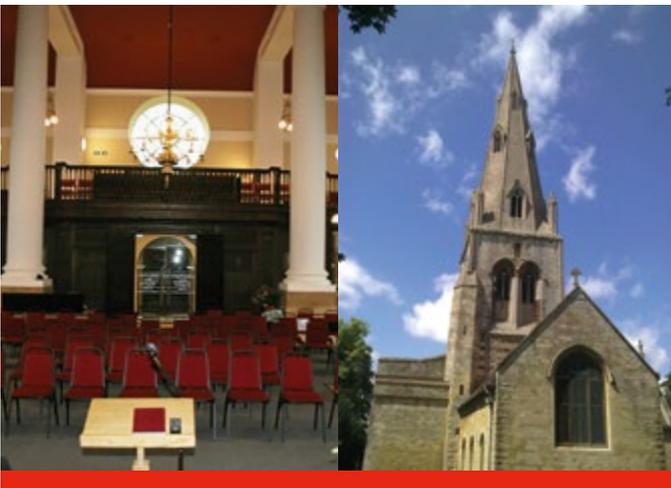
Alasdair Hutson is the Operations Manager at Hull Minster.

With parts of the church building dating back to 1285, Hull Minster is a major attraction for people heading into the city centre. The church is the focus for public events and civic activities that draw people from a wide area including recently – and perhaps a little improbably – the Hull Beer Festival.



Lindsey Bradshaw lives in West Bowling, Bradford, and regularly attends the community church St Stephen's.

West Bowling in Bradford is an area of multiple deprivation. Sixteen years ago, St Stephen's was on the verge of closure. Today, following substantial repair work and the creation of a flexible community space, the church building has a thriving congregation and is home to a charity which runs an array of activities and services for the local community.



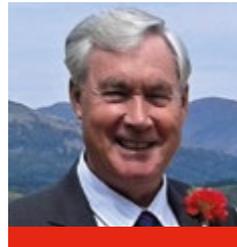
Jean Rose is the PCC Secretary for St Mary's Church, Wollaston, Northamptonshire.

St Mary's Church dates back to the 13th century and has significant Georgian and Victorian alterations. Today, it belongs to a group of four churches, and has a lively and worshipping community. A recent re-ordering has enabled the church building to become a community hub, running activities for young and old – even screening the latest films on its new system.



Annette Saunders has volunteered at Sacred Heart Church in Tamworth for the past four years.

Sacred Heart Church dates from the 1960s and serves the Glascote Heath neighbourhood, a mainly residential part of Tamworth with a few convenience stores and pubs. The church is building a new cafe area to help reach more people. This will be a welcoming place for people to come and find the support services they need.



David McLelland, church member at St Mary's Episcopal Church, Port Glasgow.

St Mary's was consecrated in Port Glasgow in 1857. Originally a fishing hamlet, the town grew to be a centre for shipbuilding along the lower Clyde. For many years, after the second world war, the roof of one of the chapel buildings was supported by a ship's mast. As shipbuilding declined, unemployment rose. But St Mary's has always been there to support its community. In 1984, the original building was replaced by the present church.



Fr Steve Gayle, St Michael and All Angels Church, Stoke Newington Common, London.

St Michael and All Angels is a vibrant Church of England parish church in North London. Like so many others, the church has responded to the needs of the local community by running a homeless night shelter, a seniors lunch club, and a food bank.



WHAT WE FOUND



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£2.4 billion

per year: market value and replacement cost

▶ **£1.4 billion**

the direct economic value created by the running, staffing and hiring out of church buildings.

▶ **£200 million**

the replacement cost of social and community services, like food banks, youth groups, mental health services.

▶ **£850 million**

the replacement cost of volunteers' time.

£10 billion

per year: non-market (social and wellbeing) value

▶ **£165 million**

the wellbeing value to volunteers.

▶ **£8.3 billion**

the wellbeing value to the people who benefit from social and community services.

▶ **£1.4 billion**

the wellbeing value of attending church services.

Total value: £12.4 billion per year

The total economic and social value that church buildings generate in the UK is at least £12.4 billion per year (averaging around £300,000 per church – with the value of some much larger, and others much less). That is roughly equal to the total NHS spending on mental health in England in 2018.

These are conservative valuations. With alternative methodology, this value could be as high as £62.8 billion – an average of £1.5 million per church and around half of all NHS spending in 2019.¹¹

This 'Halo Effect' is an astonishing contribution by institutions which receive no guaranteed public funding and little public acknowledgement of the contribution they make to help local people.

Now let's examine each value in a little more detail.



THE FINDINGS – BY VALUE

MARKET VALUE AND COST REPLACEMENT: OVER £2.4 BILLION PER YEAR

The 'market value' describes activities or resources that can be readily given a cash value, like the time taken to perform a service. (For example, volunteer hours spent teaching children.)

This £2.4 billion figure does not include the value of church land or property. It covers the following three specific values.

MARKET VALUE 1

DIRECT ECONOMIC VALUE CREATED BY RUNNING, STAFFING AND HIRING OUT CHURCH BUILDINGS (PER YEAR)

£1.4
BILLION

The direct economic value of a church building is created through its upkeep, the day-to-day work that goes on in the buildings and the value of any investments.

This includes:



employment costs for clergy and staff



money spent on maintenance and repairs



running costs like heating and electricity



donations of money



revenue generated from hiring out the facilities



tourism-related income

All of these add economic value to the local and wider UK economy.

If money spent or generated through a church building were spent in any other sector, this would also increase economic output. To account for this, the researchers made adjustments to capture only the economic value that is additional, measured in Gross Value Added (GVA) terms.

According to the preferred data source, the National Churches Trust 2020 Survey, the estimated total direct economic GVA contribution of 40,300 church buildings to the UK economy is approximately £1.4 billion.

This means that an average church building generates approximately £34,750 of direct economic value to the economy each year in GVA terms.

These figures are consistent with the Church of England's 2017 parish finance data which report very similar figures of £1.2 billion of national value and £28,918 per church per year.

You can find details of the method, data sources and assumptions behind these findings in Section 1 of the full House of Good report.



"This is what a church can bring to society."

Alasdair Hutson, Operations Manager Hull Minster, Hull

"The beer festival was controversial when it started here. But since it has been in Hull Minster, the levels of drunkenness and staff abuse have both gone down.

Is that because security has increased? No. It simply came into a place of reverence and respect – where we could have a conversation about Alcoholics Anonymous and alcohol abuse in the same place as being able to enjoy a decent pint of beer.

This is what a church can bring to society."

MARKET VALUE 2

REPLACEMENT COST OF THE SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PROVIDED IN CHURCH BUILDINGS (PER YEAR)

AT LEAST
£200
MILLION

In this study, we focused on four key areas of social and community good provided by church buildings:



counselling and mental health services



food banks



youth groups



drug and alcohol support

These are significant both because of their number and scale in church buildings – and because of their vital social and health benefits. But they are not the only activities provided or supported by churches – and so the figures reported here only represent a part (and therefore a lower-bound estimate) of the true value.

We estimated both the cost and the replacement cost of providing these services.

In other words, what they currently cost the church to provide, and what they would cost the government (or other institutions) to provide if the church wasn't doing so.

Taken together, these four activities represent £124 million in direct costs – and at least an additional £82 million needed if they weren't able to take place in church buildings.

You can find details of the method, data sources and assumptions behind these findings in Section 2 of the full House of Good report.



“Being part of a church group gives me a feeling of value and self-worth.”

Lindsey Bradshaw, community member at St Stephen's Church, West Bowling, Bradford

Lindsey has Parkinson's disease. For the past few years, he has been a regular at Creative Threads, an arts and crafts group, and the creative writing project, Well Words, both hosted at St Stephen's.

“St Stephen's is more than just a church where you go on a Sunday. It's a community. Because of my medical condition, there are some days when I can't do much – but I'm always made to feel part of the group. That makes you happier, more cheerful. Uplifted. You feel positive and like you've actually achieved something.”

MARKET VALUE 3

REPLACEMENT COST OF VOLUNTEER HOURS (PER YEAR)

£850
MILLION

Church buildings and facilities only work thanks to the people who are willing to give their time, energy and compassion to support their local communities.

The data from our 2020 survey shows that each church in the UK reports an average of 214 volunteer hours per month. That's almost double the total hours reported in our 2010 survey.

Providing this level of volunteering by staff paid at the National Living Wage (£8.21 since April 2019) would cost local or national government (or other organisations) £21,080 per year for the volunteer activity at a church. That's around £850 million per year for all the UK's churches.

You can find details of the method, data sources and assumptions behind these findings in Section 3 of the full House of Good report.



"People are no longer isolated."

Jean Rose, PCC Secretary at St Mary's Church, Wollaston, Northamptonshire

Jean began volunteering at St Mary's four years ago when she started a Mothers' Union to give lonely and elderly people a warm, friendly place to go where they could chat to people.

"People are no longer isolated, they are more comfortable in the church. They are happy to talk to the volunteers and happy to share their issues and problems which really boosts their mental health and wellbeing.

Building personal relationships with people is key. The community activities we hold in church bring our neighbours through our doors. It's not about getting increased attendance figures at Sunday service but just showing the love of God to our community."



THE FINDINGS – BY VALUE

NON-MARKET VALUE: AT LEAST £10 BILLION

Non-market (also called social and welfare) value describes an activity or outcome that is difficult to measure in pounds and pence. For example, things like health, happiness, confidence or trust are incredibly important but difficult to put a price on – let alone buy.

For the first time in the UK, this study measures three non-market values of the wellbeing that church buildings create among their congregations, their volunteers and the people they help.

For more detail on these methods, please see Sections 4-6 of the full House of Good report.

NON-MARKET VALUE 1

£165
MILLION

WELLBEING VALUE TO VOLUNTEERS IN CHURCH BUILDINGS (PER YEAR)

We have already shown the cost of replacing church volunteers (£850m). But those volunteers also get important health and wellbeing benefits from giving their time to their communities through the church.

We calculate that the wellbeing value of regular volunteering (at least once a month) in church buildings in the UK is at least £165 million.¹²

In reaching this figure, we draw on findings from the 'Happy Days' report into the association between volunteering and life satisfaction¹³ – alongside survey estimates of regular church volunteers and the value reached by the WELLBY approach.

You can find details of the method, data sources and assumptions behind these findings in Section 4 of the full House of Good report.



“People turn to the church because they are in need.”

Annette Saunders (pictured far right), volunteer church outreach worker at Sacred Heart Church, Tamworth, Staffordshire

“I’ve always volunteered since my children were small. I’d take them to church and help out. I love working with kids, with the homeless, with different people. I hate seeing anyone struggling, it breaks my heart.

The church is right where it’s needed – in the most deprived area of Tamworth. So many people depend on the church and the space it offers. Frankly, if the church cannot offer support, there is no one else to do it.

The vulnerable people in our community really appreciate the help we give here. A lot of the people don’t come to worship – they turn to the church because they’re in need.”

NON-MARKET VALUE 2

WELLBEING VALUE TO PEOPLE WHO BENEFIT FROM SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES (PER YEAR)

AT LEAST
£8
BILLION

We've already looked at the £200 million cost of replacing community services like youth groups, food banks and mental health counselling. But this market value is dwarfed by the value of the health, confidence and wellbeing that those services create for the many people who use them.

Social and community services in church buildings create £8.3 billion in wellbeing benefits to the community every year.¹⁴ That is equivalent to half the size of the UK care home sector. And this calculation only covers food banks, mental health services, youth groups and drug and alcohol support. There are many more social and community activities that take place within church buildings, which will further increase this wellbeing value.

Around £7 billion of this total is generated by food banks – reflecting the fact that churches play a vital role in setting up and running the vast majority of Trussell Trust food banks and 50% of independent food banks in the UK.

The demand for food banks has risen significantly in recent years and sadly is likely to remain high in the post Covid-19 pandemic world.

You can find details of the method, data sources and assumptions behind these findings in Section 5 of the full House of Good report.



“The church is there for everyone – religious or not.”

David McLelland, church member St Mary's Episcopal Church, Port Glasgow

Having worked in the shipyards his whole life and seen the impact of their closure, David McLelland knows the vital role the church plays in holding his community together.

“We sometimes feel a bit like we're a lost community in this uphill part of Port Glasgow. We need a place in the community.

Every day there's something happening in the church, and it's there for everyone – religious or not. Without it, the impact would be disastrous. People who are really in need have received life-changing support that they just wouldn't get elsewhere.”

NON-MARKET VALUE 3

WELLBEING VALUE OF ATTENDING CHURCH SERVICES (PER YEAR)

£1.4
BILLION

The evidence shows that people who attend church services feel happier and healthier than those who don't.

This wellbeing boost is attributed to a number of factors – from companionship and social interaction to a sense of belonging and purpose. Also, it could simply be the pleasure of being in a beautiful place with a rich history.

Using 2020 church attendance figures, we calculate that the monetary wellbeing value of regular church attendance in the UK is £1.416 billion per year (or £604 per person).¹⁵

You can find details of the method, data sources and assumptions behind these findings in Section 6 of the full House of Good report.



“These are people who can rely on each other for support.”

Fr Steve Gayle, St Michael and All Angels Church, Stoke Newington Common, London

“An essential part of our church is the sense of community and friendship between the congregation members before and after worship. These are people who can rely on each other for support – they visit each other during the week, sometimes bringing a home-cooked meal and supporting each other in sickness and grief.

An essential part of the church is the sense of community and friendship. During Covid-19, St Michael and All Angels had to adapt quickly. In the lockdown, we took our worship online. However, Zoom worship lacks the personal touch, the laughter, the hugs, the kisses, the warmth and exchange of gifts and presents – all vitally important for emotional, spiritual and mental flourishing.”

THE VALUE OF OUR GRANTS

The National Churches Trust provides grants for church buildings throughout the UK.

In 2019, we made 188 grant awards totalling £1,344,474 (including recommendations on behalf of other grant-giving organisations). The total sum awarded was 6% higher than in 2018.

One of these grant awards went to All Saints' Church in Newcastle, which is currently on the Historic England 'Heritage At Risk Register'. In 2019, this Grade I listed church received a £30,000 National Churches Trust Cornerstone Grant, which helped fund major work – enabling the building to open once again as a church.



"We are so thankful for this generous grant from the National Churches Trust. It has come at just the right moment. The Trust is one of the few organisations which grasps just how important kitchen and toilet facilities are to the life of a church. We will be blessed by this wise provision for many years to come."

Dr William Schweitzer,
Minister at All Saints' Church, Newcastle





COVID-19 RESPONSE

During the Covid-19 lockdown, questions were asked about the future of church buildings – especially around providing both worship and community support virtually.

We commissioned this study before the Covid-19 pandemic, but to measure the impact of lockdown on churches and their communities, we conducted an additional online survey in May 2020 and received 566 responses from churches across the UK.¹⁶

Key findings

89%

of churches successfully managed to continue providing some form of support to their communities, and 34% said they were able to fully continue their existing support.

AROUND
75%

of churches taking part in the survey said that closing their church during the lockdown had a negative effect on the community.

64%

of respondents said that churches will become more important in the future as a result of Covid-19.

Churches set up a wide range of new services during the Covid-19 lockdown. The most popular were:

- 1. Reaching out to isolated or vulnerable people**
- 2. Online worship**
- 3. Telephone befriending**
- 4. Shopping and delivery of essentials**
- 5. Online support groups**

WHAT NEXT?

This report shows – for the first time – the incredible, life-changing impact that the UK’s 40,300 church buildings have on society.

Doing good works.

But if we don’t do something now to protect these Houses of Good, their value could be lost forever.

During the initial Covid-19 lockdown, we all understood the concept of ‘key workers’. Today, we believe church buildings should be designated as ‘key places’ – recognising the life-changing social and wellbeing value that they bring to everyone, but especially the most vulnerable people in the most disadvantaged towns and villages in the UK.

They are a ready-made network of responsive hubs that look after the care and wellbeing of the local community.

The funding gap

Many people think that church authorities or government pays for the upkeep of the UK’s church buildings. But it is actually up to parishes themselves to raise the money needed to repair a leaking roof or fix a crumbling spire.

The UK’s churches, chapels and meeting houses will always require funding from a variety of sources to pay for repairs and new facilities.

That’s partly because of the costs involved in looking after historic buildings. Places of worship in deprived areas find it hardest to raise money for their buildings. Yet that’s often where they do the greatest amount of good.

Three quarters of British people (74%) say that church buildings play an important role for society by providing a space for community activities.¹⁷

Over half (57%) believe it is the government’s responsibility to help to fund repairs.¹⁸

Without funding from statutory bodies, philanthropic trusts and individuals, we risk losing an increasing number of churches, chapels and meeting houses and the good that they bring. This is particularly the case in more deprived areas where church buildings are a major contributor to caring for the community but where raising funds is more difficult.

Because of their strategic importance, Government and the National Lottery Heritage Fund will continue to have an important role to play in helping to keep church buildings in good repair.

1. Building on the success of the Taylor pilots, the Government should examine how best to establish a new Repair and Maintenance Fund for places of worship. The social and economic benefit of doing so must not be overlooked.
2. Use of church buildings for community activities, in addition to worship, increases their long-term viability. Additional uses bring in new people who then have a stake in the future of the building. Funding to provide toilets, kitchens and other essential facilities in church buildings will enable these buildings to function fully as Houses of Good.
3. The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme gives grants that cover the VAT incurred in works to listed buildings in use as places of worship. In October 2019 it was announced that the scheme is to be extended by the Treasury for a further year until March 2021. This scheme should be guaranteed for at least the next five years, to provide certainty for churches undertaking repair projects.
4. The devolved administrations and local authorities also have a role to play in providing a strategic overview for church buildings. This could include imaginative funding schemes, such as the Community Facilities Programme in Wales, which has provided grants to a wide range of buildings, including places of worship.

We all have a part to play. Together, let’s make sure these Houses of Good remain at the heart of the communities for which they were built – and can continue to play an integral part in all our lives.



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

At the National Churches Trust, we are doing everything that we can to support church buildings in need. But we currently have to turn away three out of every four funding requests we receive.

You can help us be here for every church building – and the people and communities who rely on them.

If you're involved in running a church building...



Share your story

We want to hear from you about the good that you're doing across your community.

Join our Facebook group: facebook.com/groups/ukchurcheshousesofgood

Tweet your House of Good stories using the hashtags [#HouseOfGood](#) and [#DoingGoodWorks](#)

Contact us at houseofgood@nationalchurchestrust.org



Show your value

You can use this report to show local authorities and potential funders how much value you bring to your community, and what a fantastic return on investment you represent. This report gives you the national picture, but you can relate each of the six values to your church, chapel or meeting house.

If you want to support us...



Become a Friend

As a Friend of the National Churches Trust, you'll help us protect even more church buildings. Choose from individual, joint or lifetime membership.

nationalchurchestrust.org/membership



Make a donation

A one-off or monthly gift will fund community facilities and essential maintenance – and ensure more church buildings remain at the heart of their local communities.

nationalchurchestrust.org/donate



Stay connected

Sign up for our e-newsletter and find us on social media to see more about how we're saving the UK's church buildings.

nationalchurchestrust.org/enews

Get involved today at nationalchurchestrust.org/houseofgood

FURTHER READING

You can read and download the full House of Good report at nationalchurchestrust.org/houseofgood

Footnotes

- 1 <https://fullfact.org/electionlive/2019/dec/9/food-banks-more-mcdonalds/>
- 2 [https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/sites/default/files/29-05-20 State of the churches COVID-19 FINAL PDF.pdf](https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/sites/default/files/29-05-20%20State%20of%20the%20churches%20COVID-19%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf)
- 3 <https://fullfact.org/electionlive/2019/dec/9/food-banks-more-mcdonalds/>
- 4 https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Struggling_closed_and_closing_churches_report.pdf
- 5 <https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/sites/default/files/29-05-20%20State%20of%20the%20churches%20COVID-19%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf>
- 6 <https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/news/holy-spirit-uk-has-more-churches-pubs>
- 7 <https://sacredplaces.org/uploads/files/16879092466251061-economic-halo-effect-of-historic-sacred-places.pdf>
- 8 <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/51577/1/dp1233.pdf>
- 9 Frijters, P., & C. Krekel (2021), Handbook of Wellbeing Policy for the UK. Forthcoming with Oxford University Press. LSE Working Paper. 433 pages.
- 10 HM Treasury (2018). The Green Book: Central Government Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation. Page 77, Appendix 3 (distributional weighting)
- 11 <https://fullfact.org/health/spending-english-nhs/>
- 12 This figure rises to £1bn if we use the Green Book-recognised Fujiwara approach, and further still if we include all (rather than just regular) volunteers.
- 13 <https://www.stateoflife.org/our-work>
- 14 This figure rises to £50bn if we use the Green Book-recognised Fujiwara approach.
- 15 Using the more conservative WELLBY approach.
- 16 <https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/sites/default/files/29-05-20%20State%20of%20the%20churches%20COVID-19%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf>
- 17 <https://comresglobal.com/polls/national-churches-trust/>
- 18 <https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/2017poll>

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Pauline, a volunteer at a food bank run from St Margaret's Church in Streatham Hill, south London.



“ There are church buildings throughout the United Kingdom. They take many shapes and forms, but there is still likely to be one fairly close to everyone in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. Prayer and worship are at the heart of their purpose, whether it takes place daily, weekly or less often, but the Christian faith also challenges us to put our prayers into action. This new and timely report shows how much our church buildings can contribute to the good of the communities they serve.”

Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury
Most Revd Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York
Joint Presidents, National Churches Trust



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