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We want to encourage you to make wider, more imaginative and more strategic use of your church building, opening it up to all in your community and giving people new reasons to cross the threshold.

We can help you select the right legal and funding model to develop your building for uses beyond worship.

Download our guidance

- [Legal options for complimentary use of church buildings \(968.23 KB\)](#)

Church bookshop inside bell tower

Share your church with other Christian groups

Sharing your building with another Christian group is a great way to make connections and spread the load of caring for your church.

Many parishes share their building on an informal basis with one or more Christian groups. But you may need to put this on a more formal basis with a sharing agreement. Parts of the building could also be leased.

The [Sharing Church Buildings Act \(1969\)](#) sets out the legal parameters.

[See the legal options table for more information](#)

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Community, cultural and commercial uses

The medieval church building was an important community hub as well as a place of worship. With the closure of local pubs, shops and schools the church is often the last community building available.

We encourage you to consider the needs of the wider community and discuss how your building can be most effectively used within your deanery's plan, complementing what other churches can offer.

The legislation allows for parts of your church building to be leased to third parties for these purposes.

[See the legal options table for more information](#)

Remember:

The more uses, the more sustainable your church building is likely to be.

Case studies

- [Café - St John Hackney \(356.17 KB\)](#)
- [Café - All Saints Northampton \(281.38 KB\)](#)
- [Café, gift shop, florist and children's play area - St James, West Hampstead \(1.33 MB\)](#)
- [Children's centre - Springfield project, Birmingham \(651.58 KB\)](#)
- [Community arts venue - St Mary Ashford \(197.16 KB\)](#)
- [Community room and IT centre - St Mary Stannington \(318.09 KB\)](#)
- [Community space - St Peter Swainstrophe \(2.95 MB\)](#)
- [GP surgery and community complex - St Cuthbert Copnor \(435.51 KB\)](#)
- [Meeting room and gallery space - St Peter Notting Hill \(1.01 MB\)](#)
- [Music venue - St Oswald Guiseley \(370.97 KB\)](#)
- [Post office - St Mary Cloughton \(917.36 KB\)](#)
- [Village shop - St Giles Langford \(622.75 KB\)](#)
- [Visitor centre, arts and drama - St Mary the Virgin Ashford \(826.45 KB\)](#)

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Volunteers, trusts and friends groups

Your church depends to a large degree on the work of volunteers.

If they wish to form an organised group, we recommend setting up one of three kinds of such friends groups or trusts. Or you may be somewhere which already has a group like this, which might not be faith-based, but instead made up of those who love the church for its history and social contribution. These groups make a huge contribution to keeping churches open.

In some cases, you may want to lease part of the building to them. [See the legal options table for more information.](#)

And find out more about friends groups and trusts

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Open and sustainable

Open means:

- Open for worship and for visitors during normal working or daylight hours; if this is not possible, there will be clear information about opening times, services and where a key can be found
- Open in the sense of providing a welcoming atmosphere for all, including those of other faiths or none, and regardless of their initial reason for visiting
- Open for partnership, where appropriate, with community and commercial interests, and for cultural uses (including tourism and education)
- Open in the sense of providing wherever possible good access and modern amenities

If you are considering developing a community business within your church, [Plunkett](#), supported by the Allchurches Trust, provide grants, support and bespoke advice to Christian places of worship.

Sustainable means:

- Environmentally sustainable, striving to meet our goals set out in our environment programme, and to protect and enhance the ecological value of our buildings and churchyard
- Sustainable in the true sense of conservation, which is the responsible management of change, preserving the heritage value of our churches and churchyards while seeking to enhance and reveal their significance and use
- Socially sustainable, by providing a resource which is accessible and attractive to large sections of the community, and therefore able to draw on this social capital
- Economically sustainable, in terms of covering the costs of mission, social outreach, and maintenance while maintaining healthy reserves

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Want more help?

Set up a friends group

[Download the National Churches Trust's toolkit](#)

Crossing the Threshold

Follow step-by-step advice on how to develop your church building

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/sharing-your-building-and-finding>