

New glass for your church



16,000 buildings. One resource



The commissioning of a new window is an exciting opportunity for parishes and potential donors. High quality new glass, whether stained, clear or engraved can considerably enhance the atmosphere of a church. This guidance note aims to assist parishes, donors and Diocesan Advisory Committees in making decisions.

A new window?

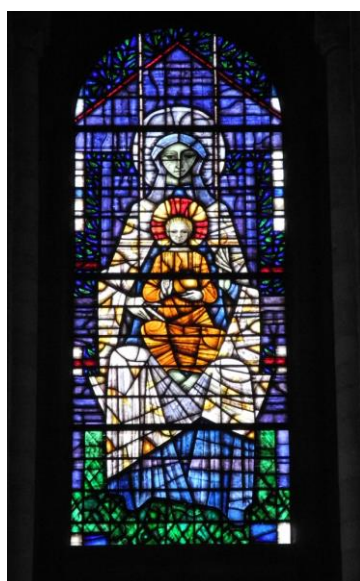
Proposals for stained glass in churches arise generally because of the desire to commemorate an event in parish life, or to commemorate the life of someone who has contributed a great deal to the community.

The prospect of a new stained glass window in a church is an appealing one. But those involved in decision making – in particular Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) and Diocesan Advisory Committees (DACs) - need to think carefully about the issues involved.

Statements of Significance and Need

As with any other change to a church building, any

proposals for change need to be considered in the light of a proper assessment of the significance of the building and a clearly stated need. Statements are an important part of the faculty process; guidance can be found on the Churchcare website.



For stained glass, the statement of significance needs to describe the existing glass in the building, with particular detail provided about any window proposed for reglazing, even if the glass in that window is plain or not thought to be of any special quality. The DAC will be able to help with assessing particular significances; in case of difficulty, it may be necessary to look wider; contact churchcare@churchofengland.org in case of difficulty.



Stained glass or something else?

High-quality stained glass can be an appropriate and beautiful addition to a church. However, new stained glass is not necessarily a good idea in every case. Some churches have good-quality plain glass which deserves to be retained, or an extensive scheme of historic glass. The introduction of any new glass needs to be considered carefully, because the alteration will change the character of the church for better or worse.

Talk to your DAC about these issues. Where the DAC advises against stained glass, why not think of some other form of new art in the church, perhaps involving engraved glass, plain glass with artistic leading patterns, woodwork or textiles?

The Churchcare advice on commissioning new art can be found [here](#).

Preparing a brief

Where new glass is decided upon in principle, the first thing is to prepare a brief to the artist; the Churchcare advice on this can be found [here](#).



For stained glass, an initial brief to the artist should include the following:

- How new stained glass might relate to the existing in terms of style, colour and balance, and what effect it would have on the light in the interior.



- What the subject matter might be.
- What the spiritual content of the design will be. A design for church stained glass, as a permanent addition to the building, needs to be backed up by some theological resonance and depth. The design should have a dominant Christian theme; an assemblage of local signs and symbols will not be suitable.
- Whether any discreet references to the donor or an inscription band might be included.
- Whether any external protection is required.

The PCC's initial brief can be worked up into a design statement once an artist is appointed.

A new art commission will be a major event in a community, so PCCs will naturally want to involve others – such as a local school – in the process. This needs to be done after a brief has been prepared and an artist selected. Any design work needs to be undertaken by professionals.



The church inspecting architect/surveyor will be able to assist in finding an artist, and in the technical aspects of the installation.

Try to draw up a shortlist of a few names for interview. Then work with the chosen artist in preparing an initial drawing for discussion with the PCC, DAC and other consultees.

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Finding an artist

Once a brief has been drawn up and agreed with the DAC, it is then time to find an artist. Talk to the DAC and discover which artists have undertaken widespread successful commissions for churches. For a major commission, be prepared to search widely throughout the country, not just in the local area. Find a selection of artists who can design in a style that is sympathetic to (but not a pastiche of) the existing glass in the building. Be aware that many artists work in a particular genre, and may not be able to respond to a brief.

Advice on choosing an artist can be found [here](#).