

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION WITH YOUR CONGREGATION – AROUND PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS

i) *What do you already have?* Your place of worship and any other buildings e.g. a hall. What is special about your building (its history, architecture, atmosphere) and your location? What do you add to your local area? What are the stories that people connect with or could connect with? What about the churchyard? Does it have monuments of interest and/or potential wildlife interest?

ii) *What is your core purpose or do you have more than one?* These could include: your mission, community outreach, a worship space? Are they equally important? If there is more than one do they complement each other? Does each activity bring added benefits to other activities? Is there any conflict between the different roles?

iii) *How do your church members currently connect with the community?* What relationships do you already have? What form do they take? Could they be improved in any way?

iv) *How do other people currently engage with your building?*

- List all the different groups that come into the building: members of the congregation, tourists, architectural historians, school groups, community groups etc.
- How do you interpret your building, its history, its stories, and its function?
- What is happening in your church today that involves the wider community?
- What events and activities already take place there?
- What kind of people (age, gender) attend these events and where do they come from?

v) *Think about what the building means to you.*

As a spiritual place? As a quiet space? What about emotional connections?

vi) *Think about how others beyond the immediate congregation might see you and the church building.*

- What do people find when they go into your church? A living church? A church bearing witness to the Christian faith? A church involved with their community? A church with lots going on?
- Think about the sense of ownership that others in the community may have for the building. It may be that for most of the wider community, it is the church building with which they connect and have an emotional attachment (e.g. married there, grandparents buried there, or interested in historical buildings) or they may just see it as an important local landmark.
- What sort of welcome do you provide for visitors? What do you do to encourage repeat visits?

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION WITH YOUR CONGREGATION – ABOUT THE BUILDING/S

vii) How much do you know about the management of your building/s?

- What is the current financial situation of the church as a whole?
- What are the current annual/monthly running costs for the church building/s?
- How much do you pay for energy? Is this the right tariff and do you pay 5% VAT?
- How is maintenance undertaken? Is the cost of undertaking effective maintenance included in your annual budget?
- Do you know if there are any major building repairs coming up?
- How much do you have to fundraise every year? For church activities? For the building/s? Is there a shortfall?
- Where does your current support come from – some or all of the congregation/local community?
- Is/are the building/s currently sustainable? Environmentally, socially and economically?

- Are you struggling to manage your building/s in terms of manpower and raising the funds to pay for running costs and necessary repairs and maintenance?

viii) Are you making the most effective use of your building?

- What opportunities might there be for the wider use of your building/s?
- Do you know what your community needs/lacks?
- What would you be willing and able to offer?
- What possible barriers could there be to opening up your church for wider use?
- How might the building need changing? Do you have a toilet and catering facilities? Will you need to upgrade facilities?
- What about comfort levels? (Heating, lighting, acoustics, seating, decoration)
- What about access to the building? Could it be improved?

- What about improving energy efficiency?
- What about transport links and availability of parking?
- How easily is it for people to visit you? Are you welcoming? Do you have an online presence? Signage?

ix) What is your vision for your church?

- How would you like to see the building being used in the future? Where do you want to see it in 5-10 years' time?
- Who will be the beneficiaries of your vision? The congregation? The wider community? Particular groups within the community?
- Does the current church building fit your vision? Will you have to make any changes to the building in order to achieve your vision?
- How can you encourage more volunteers to take responsibility and help you look after the building?
- How might the current worship practice be affected?