

Welcome back!

The Big Update 2025

The Historic Religious Buildings Alliance
hrballiance.org.uk

Programme on our website, hrballiance.org.uk under 'events'.

Chairs

1. Morning: Trevor Cooper (HRBA Chair)
2. Morning: Chris Catling (RCAHMW)
3. Afternoon: Becky Payne (HRBA Development Director)
4. Afternoon: Charlotte Dodgeon (HRBA Events/Venues Officer)

Reusing Cinemas as Places of Worship

Kate Jordan, University of Westminster, June 2025



1938 - Andrew Mather and Keith Roberts - Former Odeon, Dunstable Road, Luton,
Bedfordshire (Now Calvary Church of God in Christ, 1937-38)



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Methodology

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Project overview

2-year project 2023 – 2025. Based at University of Westminster, funded by RIBA research grant. Led by Kate Jordan and Julie Marsh

Project aims: to explore the tangible and intangible heritage of former cinemas that have been reused as places of worship

2 elements to project: broad survey of sites in England and close case study of Zoroastrian Centre

Sites:

[Home >](#)
[Database >](#)
[Case Study >](#)



New Wine Church, former Odeon Cinema, 1937, Woolwich, London. Sirj Photography



The Redeemed Christian Church of God House of Praise (The Lighthouse), Former Regal Cinema, 1939, Camberwell, London. Sirj Photography

MOVING PICTURES

reusing cinemas as places of worship in the diaspora.



Christ Faith Tabernacle Cathedral, Former Granada Cinema, 1936-37, Woolwich, London. Sirj Photography

Survey

List compiled with the help of the Cinema Theatre Association

100 photographed, exteriors and some interiors

Discussions with a number of community members about work undertaken and engagement with planning authorities, Historic England and local community

Database, photographs and films on projects website

Julie Marsh: Film Installations at the Zoroastrian Centre



TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER

20 Nov - 21 Nov - 22 Nov - 23 Nov - 24 Nov - 25 Nov - 26 Nov - 27 Nov



Moving Pictures

Performing the adaptive reuse of cinemas as places of worship by diaspora communities

26 Nov; 6pm | The Zoroastrian Centre / the Ace Cinema

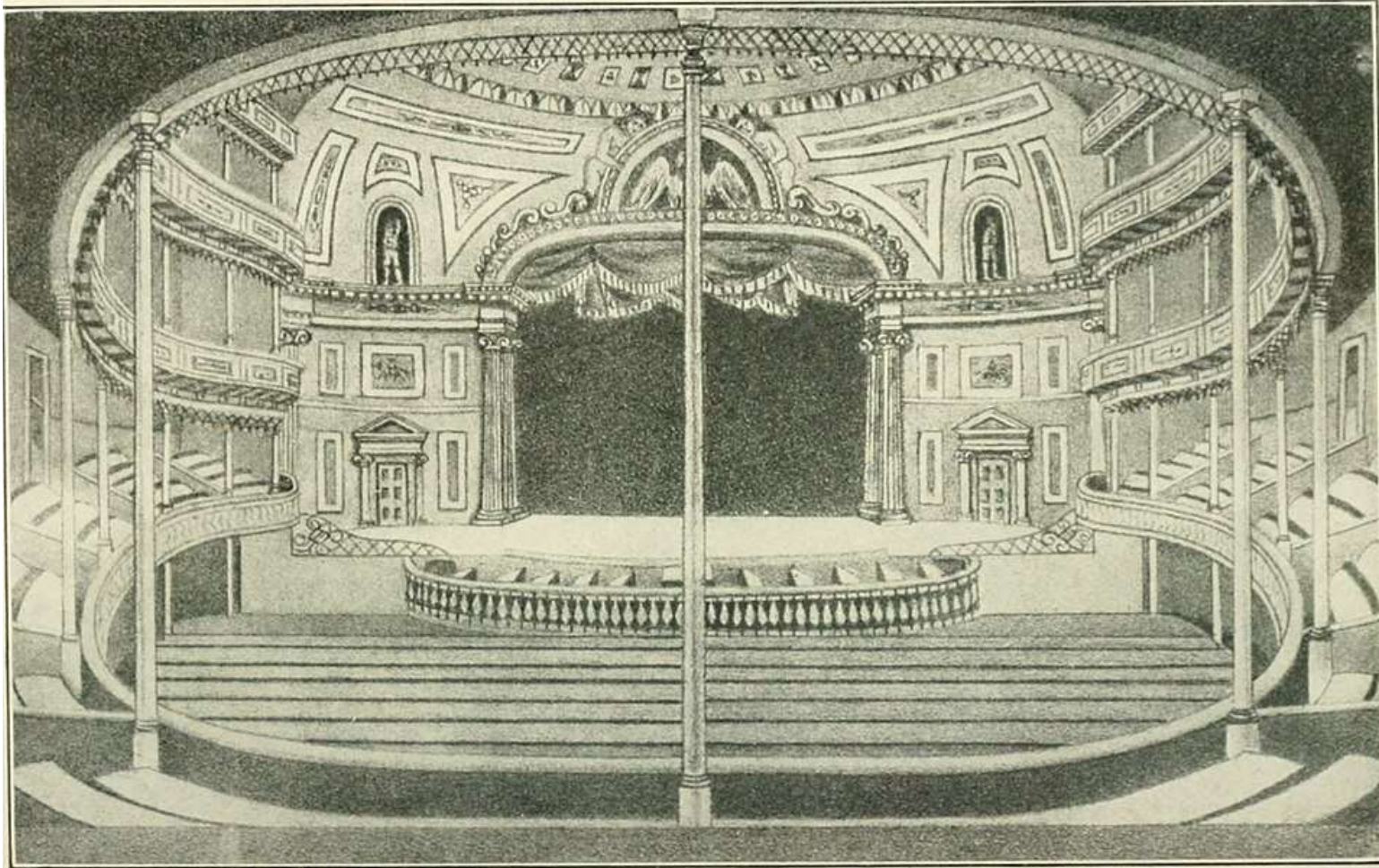
An expanded film performance, artist talk, and panel discussion at the Zoroastrian Centre, formerly the Ace Cinema in Rayners Lane, Harrow. A custom-designed filming and playback device captures religious practices from the congregation's viewpoint, which are then projected back into the site, maintaining the exact scale and time as the image maps onto the space.

Led by artist filmmaker Julie Marsh and architectural historian Kate Jordan at the University of Westminster.

Free - there will be refreshments served

TICKETS

Chatham Garden Theatre, New York, 1828. Used for Evangelical worship from 1832







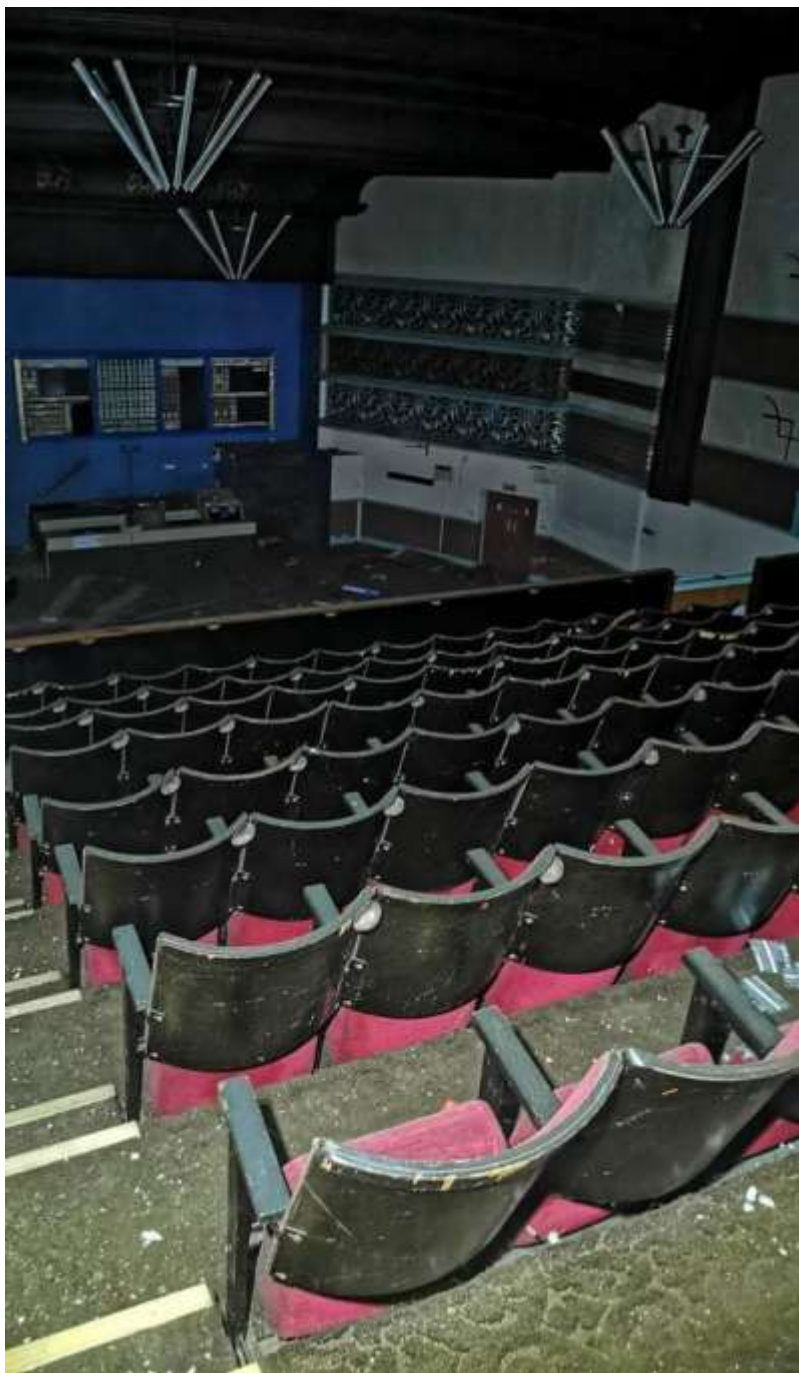
“I selected the Italian Gothic style, used mostly in churches, to decorate the interior of the Granada Woolwich. Houses of worship were not intended to be like cold dismal drill halls or mortuaries. They were not meant to depress people. Churches were designed for ‘religious shows’ which has the same origin as the shows of Secular theatre. The aim of ecclesiastical architecture was to attract people, to offer them not only rows of pews in which to say their prayers but romantic relaxation and artistic pleasure amid surrounds of hope, colourful beauty and harmony.”

Former Granada Woolwich, 174-18 Powis Street, SE18 6NL – Cecil Masey and Reginald Uren with Theodore Komsarjevsky – 1937 – Grade II* - Converted to Christ Faith Tabernacle Cathedral – 2011

Buzz Bingo, Former Granada Cinema, Tooting









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Picturehouse closures puts three historic cinemas at risk

17/07/2024



L-R: Fulham Road Picturehouse, Bromley Picturehouse, East Picturehouse.

Picturehouse has announced the closure of three historic London cinemas within the space of a month, citing 'increasing operational costs and declining admissions'. The arthouse Picturehouse brand is part of the Cineworld group, which reportedly plans to close approximately a quarter of

Former Plaza, Bradford Junction, Southsea, Portsmouth PO5 1 –Henry J. Dyer and Son
– 1928 - Grade II - converted to Jami Mosque – c2000s



Gurdwara Baba Sang Ji, Smethwick, former Empire Theatre, G Bowden and Son, 1910 – 1957 converted to DIY store – 1994 converted to gurdwara



Former King's Theatre, King's Place, Ramsgate, CT11 8NN – 1910 – converted to church, 1989 – converted to Hindu Temple – 2017



Former Granada Woolwich, 174-18 Powis Street, SE18 6NL – Cecil Masey and Reginald Uren with Theodore Komsarjevsky – 1937 – Grade II* - Converted to Christ Faith Tabernacle Cathedral – 2011



Unlisted George Coles cinemas: Freedom Centre International, Welling, former Odeon, 1934 and
Potters House Church, Leyton, former Classic Cinema, 1938



Overview of findings to date



Former Redesdale Cinema, 224-226, Foleshill Road, Coventry, CV1 4HV – 1933 – converted to Nanasakar Gursikh Temple – 1979

- Currently 101 cinemas in use as places of worship in England, of which 24 are listed
- 39 in London (16 listed)
- 29 in the South (3 listed)
- 14 in the Midlands (2 listed)
- 19 in the North (3 listed)
- 17 mosques, 3 Hindu Temples, 3 Gurdwaras, 1 Zoroastrian Centre, 77 churches
- Most have been in use for over 10 years, many for decades, at least one for longer than it was used as cinema

Planning issues and local objections

THE STANDARD

Campaigners fighting plans to turn disused south London theatre into a church

Streatham Hill Theatre could be turned into a place of worship



Faith leaders condemn 'racist' objections to Golders Green mosque

Christian, Jewish and Sikh ministers unite to welcome proposal to convert north London Hippodrome to Islamic centre



📷 The Hippodrome. The Centre for Islamic Understanding has submitted a planning application to Barnet council. Photograph: Alamy

Last chance to object to the church plans for Walthamstow's art deco cinema

by [Martin Belam](#) 25 September 2009

Today is the final day to object to a planning application seeking permission to turn Walthamstow's listed art deco cinema into a church. As you may know, the cinema has been closed for some time, and the church owners have allowed it to fall into considerable disrepair. Back in the sixties, the EMD used to have concerts on, [including The Beatles](#), Rolling Stones and The Who. It also has lots of cinematic history, being the cinema where Alfred Hitchcock grew up watching films. The campaign to save it has been backed by the likes of [Mick Jagger](#), [Alan Davies](#) and [Tony Robinson](#).

Objections need to mention the specific planing application number - (2009/1048 & 2009/1049/LB) - and mention the address of the cinema, 186 Hoe Street, E17. You can send your objection via email to demail@walthamforest.gov.uk. This is what I sent in:

"I'd like to register my objection to the current planning application number (2009/1048 & 2009/1049/LB)

Plan to open mosque in Trocadero in London sparks objections

Foundation seeks to convert part of historic building into mosque and community centre



📷 The Trocadero is in an area of London known for its bars and nightlife, which is one of the factors cited in objections to part of it being converted into a place of worship. Photograph: David Lawrence/The Guardian

A plan to convert part of the famous Trocadero building in Piccadilly Circus in London into a mosque has sparked objections from people who say a place of worship in an area noted for its bars and nightlife is inappropriate.

Next steps

Working with Historic England

- Introduction to Heritage Assets on cinemas, with section on reuse
- Missing Pieces Project
- UoW/HE/C20Soc Symposium
- Listings

Influencing Local and National Policies

- Written evidence submitted to DCMS inquiry on Protecting Built Heritage
- Policy briefing note distributed to local authorities and amenity societies

Possible listings



Jehovah's Witness Assembly Hall,
Southgate, former ABC/Ritz, 1933



Potter's House church, Leyton,
former Classic Cinema, 1938



Fountain Gate Tabernacle,
Becontree, former Regent
Cinema, 1929

Listing test case: Aziziye Mosque, former Apollo Picture House, 1913



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HEADCORN
METHODIST CHURCH

SUN We Have Moved!

The Methodist Church
now meets in the
House Meeting Room
Village Hall 10.30am every
SUNDAY
ALL ARE WELCOME

Cake & Company
Cakes & Company, the nearest shop to the church, is pleased to announce that the church's cake sale will be held in the Village Hall on Sunday 18th January. The sale will be from 10.30am to 12.30pm. The proceeds of the sale will go to the church's fund. The sale will be held in the Village Hall, which is a large, comfortable room with a high ceiling and a large window. The sale will be held in the Village Hall, which is a large, comfortable room with a high ceiling and a large window. The sale will be held in the Village Hall, which is a large, comfortable room with a high ceiling and a large window.

Next meeting Tuesday
18 January

AUCTION

Clive Emson 

LAND AND PROPERTY AUCTIONEERS

0330 024 1044

cliveemson.co.uk



**OUTRAGE
OVER PUB
CAR PARK
HOUSING
GO-AHEAD**

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

**BLANTYRE
MEMORIES:
PRISONERS
WERE FOUND
IN THE BAR**

FULL STORY, PAGES 16-17

September 22-September 29, 2021

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Hallelujah!

Villagers save church
from going to auction

Campaigners fighting to save a 200-year-old church got the news they'd desperately hoped for, with the building given a reprieve from being sold off at auction.

Headcorn Methodist Church, on the corner of the High Street, had been up for sale.

This sparked the heart of Headcorn group into a battle - lasting seven months so far - to buy it back, fearful it would be converted into housing or demolished.

Their bid to have the building listed as a community asset was partially successful - leading to its withdrawal from the auction just days before the scheduled sale which suggested a minimum guide price of £170,000.

Medway council did not agree that the whole building could be listed, but accepted evidence rooms at the back of the building had been used for community meetings and are worthy of being brought back.

The decision gives the campaigners a breathing space of six months to raise the necessary cash, and renewed efforts to secure £200,000 are being made.

Turn to page 2



Headcorn villagers have been celebrating the campaign's success



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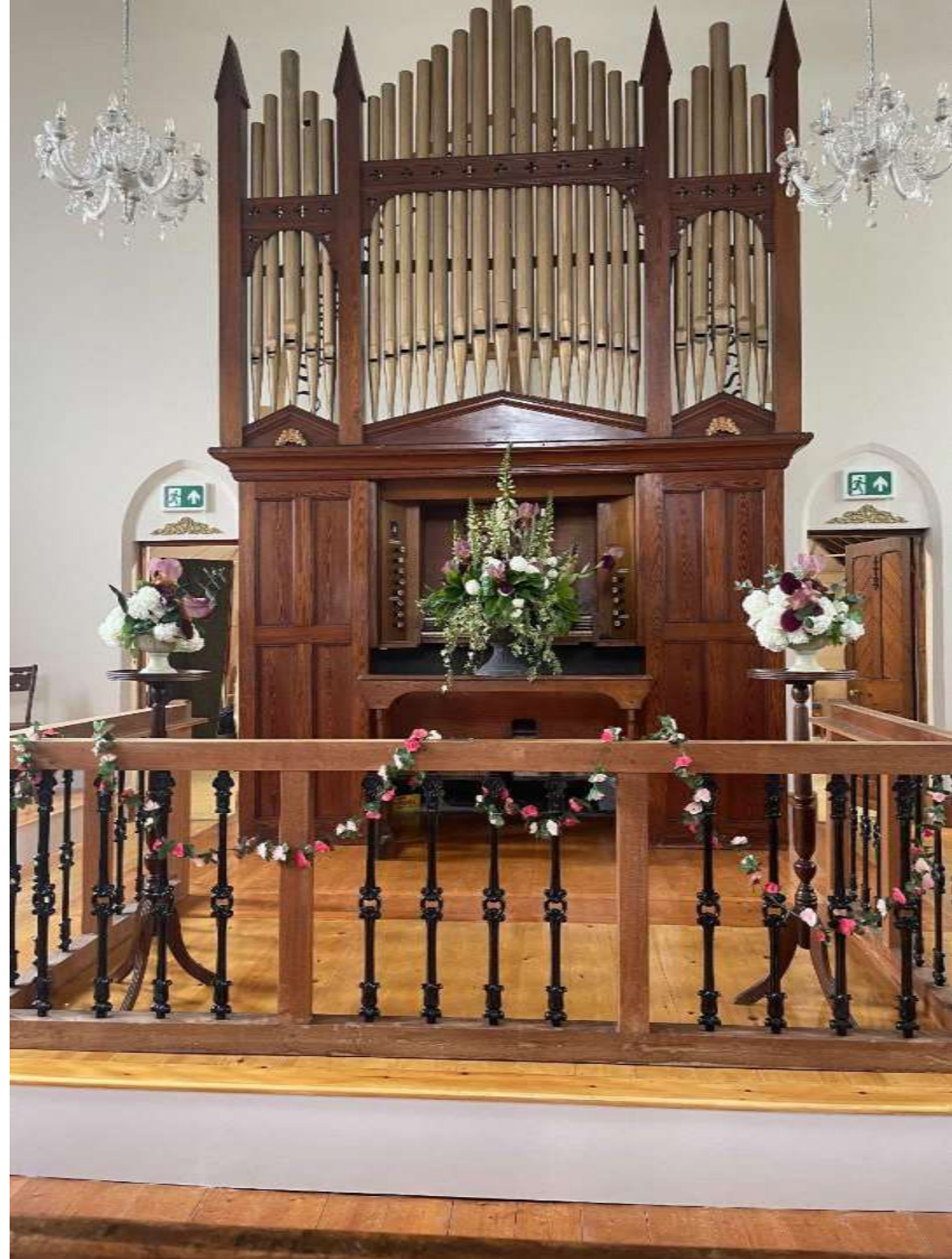
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benendenhospital.org.uk











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FESTIVAL CHURCHES



Festival Churches

A Model for Growth

Nigel Mills



What is a Festival Church?

- Church Building Review 2015
- Recommended in the Taylor Review
- Amendments to Canons B11, B14 and B39
- Not an official “designation”
- Very much a positive choice!



ASSOCIATION OF
FESTIVAL CHURCHES



A way of “Doing Church”

- Doing less formal worship - but doing it better
- Enabling more people to be actively involved in the management of the church



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The Initial Positive Step



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St Mary, Longsleddale

- Small Church in a dead end valley
- Existing PCC wanted to close the church
- 12 month fallow period
- Joint PCC
- Friends Group
- Financially sustainable



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From the Brink of Closure

JOHN FARMER
Chair of Friends
St Mary, Longsleddale



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A MODEL FOR GROWTH

- Catalyst for Change
- Numbers increasing year on year
- Engaging more people
- Mission focussed
- A strategic tool
- New potential sources for funding



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Looking Forward and Outward



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Want to Know More?

The Association of Festival Churches

www.festivalchurches.org.uk

The Church of England

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/strategic-planning-church-buildings/festival-churches>

The Diocese of Ely

<https://www.elydiocese.org/outcomes-and-documentation.php>



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Keep In Touch

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I'm also around all day!



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The Final Word!



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