

A POSTCARD TO THE FUTURE

From
LIVING STONES: THE CHURCH
AND COMMUNITY TRUST

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Old Christ
Church,
Newark on Trent



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The Churches Community Development
Consultancy

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The Churches Community Development Consultancy

- Founded in 1975
- Registered as a charity
- Changed its name to The Church and Community Trust

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The Churches Community Development Consultancy

- *To assist Christian churches seeking their new role in society and to encourage them to become a positive influence of change in their community.*
- *To enable such churches to influence the process of change, development and growth in contemporary society, and in the provision of suitable buildings and furniture for the promotion of the church's charitable work in society.*

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RURAL CHURCHES IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

- Funded by the Millennium Commission following an application by The Church and Community Trust and the National Rural Officer of the Church of England
- To enable rural churches to convert their buildings for community use in addition to worship
- The initiative had to be focussed on the wider community with all projects demonstrating projected high levels of use and support of the community

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RCCS 2003 review looked at:

- Success against the original aim
- To establish who had benefitted from the new facilities
- What the impact had been on the church congregation
- How had the church finances been affected, and
- What lessons had been learned.

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2003 review showed that success is dependent on:

Committed volunteers with useful skills, drawn from both the church and the wider community, both during the development phase and afterwards to run the church as a community resource.

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RCCS 2009 REVIEW

- What each project had set out to do and what had been achieved at the 2003 review
- What was happening **now** and who were the beneficiaries **now**
- Impact on church attendance and finance.

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2009 review showed that:

- Less community activities were taking place

The reasons included:

- Overstretched volunteers
- A surprisingly high turnover of clergy leading to long interregna

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2009 review showed:

- The vast majority of *churches* had benefitted from the provision of good facilities giving opportunities for different forms of worship, fellowship, training courses, festival meals and financial stability.

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2009 review showed:

- Community projects, *and churches*, are successful and sustainable due to a regular supply of willing, reliable and competent volunteers.

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St Mary the Virgin,
Wirksworth,
Derbyshire



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St Mary the Virgin,
Wirksworth,
Derbyshire

The kitchen in the
North transept



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Living Stones' new Mission Statement

Helping church communities:

- *To reconnect with the society around them*
- *To find a renewed gospel purpose, and*
- *To put their resources of people, buildings and money to best use in serving God and their local community.*

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Blessings or Burdens: Listed Places of Worship and their role in communities:

- Nationwide
- Inner city, suburban and rural
- Across denominations and religions

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The conundrum that preoccupied Living Stones for over forty years:

How to help the body of Christ to be relevant to the community it serves whilst trying to hang on to, and care for, its heritage of religious buildings.

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Society entrusts the protection of historic church buildings to those same people whose real stewardship is the fragile living gospel.

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- Church buildings are not museums
- Church buildings are the place where the living gospel is preached.

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Dear Future

Please remember that:

- Volunteers are the greatest resource the church has, listen to them, value them and support them in every way, and
- If the church is to survive it must be allowed to be relevant to today and this includes how historic buildings are used.

With love from Living Stones