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Major General  
George William  
1896 SYMES 1980  
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Regiment 1916 to the 1st  
KATHIONI  
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# A FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION-MAKING

- 2a Shifting styles of worship
- 2b The significance of specific items of furniture
- 2c Inventories
- 2d Storage of retired items

Set out below are four key areas that form a framework within which to consider proposals affecting liturgical furnishings.

## 2a Shifting styles of worship

Ways of worshipping come and go, and as we consider changes to meet our current needs we must bear in mind that theological emphases and styles of worship will change again in the future. In twenty or fifty years' time our successors might well wish to reverse not only the additions, but also the removals or relocations, of pieces of liturgical furniture that we have made within our cathedrals and churches.

This is well illustrated by the rapid changes made to the setting and forms of worship that occurred during the last century. The twentieth-century Liturgical Movement deeply affected our understanding of liturgy and of the architectural context in which it is celebrated. This understanding will undoubtedly continue to evolve, and care should be taken not to make changes that would unreasonably preclude either new developments or the reinstatement of what a previous generation removed.

For instance, a significant change triggered by the Liturgical Movement was to recapture an understanding of the eucharist as a sacrament and rite which is celebrated by the entire community: wherever possible the people of God gather around the table for that celebration, and the priest is understood to be the president rather than the celebrant. This conviction led to altars being brought forward to allow the priest to face the congregation. It may be difficult to imagine a time when a reordered space and its furnishings might be returned to an earlier configuration, but this should remain a possibility – and, in every case, the reconfiguration and siting of items of furniture and liturgical foci should be sensitive to the architectural lines and character of the building.

Many churches today have rediscovered the importance of baptism as the fount of and gateway into the Christian faith. The font, wherever it is located in a church, invites all who enter to begin the Christian journey, and should remind Christian worshippers that in dying and rising in Christ we are incorporated into Christ and reborn in the waters of baptism. The placing of fonts directly inside the

west doors of cathedrals and churches early in the history of Christianity, and indeed the construction of separate baptisteries immediately outside the west doors of cathedrals, are clear indicators of this.

Large cathedrals with multiple chapels may well contain more than one font, but it may be confusing to have two fonts within a single liturgical space such as the nave. Similarly, if an altar in a cathedral is to be moved or replaced then it is not liturgically justifiable to retain two altars within the same liturgical space, but this prohibition does not extend to multiple chapels within cathedrals, each of which is defined as its own liturgical space. The underlying liturgical principle here is that the font and the altar should be visible loci of the liturgical action.

Although visitor interpretation will never be the main reason for the placement of liturgical furnishings, it is an increasingly relevant consideration for cathedrals as they embrace the many different ways people encounter and experience their buildings. There may sometimes be a tension between the arrangement of furnishings for directly liturgical purposes and the presentation of a cathedral in a way that may most appeal to tourist visitors. The ordering of liturgical furniture has the capacity to inform and inspire, but this may be haphazard if there is no clear rationale to determine its disposition.

Some cathedrals have seen radical changes, with almost all of the furniture being cleared. In the main, these changes have been justified on the basis that the benefits of meeting the liturgical needs of the cathedral would outweigh any harm caused to heritage significance. Such justifications need to be weighed carefully. A sweeping reordering is not an easy option for the disposal of unwanted furniture; neither, however, is an installation of enduring value *solely* because it is historical.

In planning for changes to liturgical furnishings, Chapters should consider the implications for the entire building; for instance, when an altar is moved forward this can often leave a rather desolate space in the east end of a cathedral or chapel within the cathedral. Proposals for the storage, movement, relocation or disposal of liturgical furnishings should always be presented in the context of the cathedral's Liturgical Plan, and if no such plan exists it should be produced as a necessary

precursor to any major reordering proposal. Guidance on the production of liturgical plans can be found on the [ChurchCare website](#). The Cathedral Fabric Commission's Liturgy and Liturgical Furnishings Working Group can also visit your cathedral to discuss proposals on site: please contact the Commission's Secretariat to find out more.

## 2b Assessing significance

It is important to consider any changes to liturgical furnishings in the context of a robust and objective assessment of their significance. Set out below are some criteria against which such an assessment might be made, with reference to Historic England's [Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance](#):

- The **architectural and aesthetic significance** of a piece of furniture or set of furnishings, both within their own era and across the centuries. Items may be considered to be of higher significance if they formed part of a significant phase of development; were designed by a significant architect, designer, maker or school (particularly if they are part of a significant group of furnishings, or represent an especially good example of the work of that person or school); and/or display a high quality of design, materials or finish. The potential impact of the removal, relocation or replacement of an object upon the wider architectural composition of a space should not be overlooked (the aesthetic impact of any proposed replacement items may also be a relevant consideration).
- The **historical significance** of an item in the context of the cathedral and its local area (and possibly beyond). The location of an item of furniture may form an important part of its historical significance by helping to indicate how the building would have been used in the past, or to explain the location of other nearby features (for instance, a font beside a window depicting baptism). The historical significance of an item may include its association with a particular individual or event, for example its donation as a memorial. These considerations may render an item significant even if it is not of outstanding aesthetic interest.
- The **communal value** of an item or group of furnishings, including their significance to local and individual memory and identity. The communal value of an item may also include its impact upon the worshipping life of the cathedral, which might not always be affirmative. Whether positive or negative, the communal value of an item may have no direct relationship to any formal historical or aesthetic values that may have been ascribed to it.

Advice on significance may be sought from your Fabric Advisory Committee, the Cathedrals Fabric Commission, Historic England, and the national amenity societies. For furnishings of more than one date (for instance, nineteenth-century seating incorporating Georgian or earlier fabric) a report by an independent expert may be necessary to clarify the successive phases of development and their relative importance.

## 2c Inventories

The Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 requires every cathedral to have an inventory.

It is the duty of a cathedral Chapter to compile an inventory of items of significance in historical, archaeological, architectural and artistic terms, and for its Fabric Advisory Committee, after consultation with the Cathedrals Fabric Commission, to designate the items on the inventory that are of outstanding interest.

A cathedral with a robust inventory will be able to use it as a valuable tool for the management of its collections, including to assess the relative significance of items within the context of the cathedral and to support their security, care, conservation, display and use.

If a cathedral does not yet have a working inventory it must treat all historic furnishings and other items in its possession as though they are of sufficient importance to be recorded on the inventory for the purposes of the Measure unless or until its Fabric Advisory Committee and/or the Cathedrals Fabric Commission determines otherwise.

## 2d Storage or disposal of retired items

The following principles should guide decisions on the storage or disposal of significant liturgical furnishings:

- The relocation of redundant furnishings within the cathedral or into storage on site will usually be the preferable option in conservation terms. If this is not your intended course of action it will be important to have a clear and cogent explanation as to why, supported by a robust options appraisal.
- It is not always desirable to retain redundant furnishings in a cathedral because of the risk of cluttering the space; and not even the largest cathedral has limitless storage. In cases where it is desirable that an object should remain in the ownership of the cathedral but where relocation or storage on site is not an option, the Cathedrals Fabric Commission can work with the cathedral to identify suitable off-site storage options.
- Deposition in a local or national museum may be appropriate in some cases. This may well mean the donation of the item to the museum in question, as museums are increasingly reluctant to accept items on long-term loan. However, a deed of gift can be used to ensure that the item would be offered first to the cathedral should the museum ever wish to dispose of it. A [template deed of gift](#) can be found on the ChurchCare website.
- Cathedrals should actively pursue the appropriate reuse of redundant furniture within another listed church. Churches within the diocese should be contacted first by working in collaboration with the local Diocesan Advisory Committee, and if this is unsuccessful dioceses can be alerted nationwide.
- For most objects of significance in cathedral ownership it will be desirable for them to remain publicly accessible, even if no longer in the cathedral itself, such that sale to a private individual will generally be considered acceptable only where other options have been exhausted.
- The destruction of any significant item (which would include the reuse of its materials for another purpose) will rarely be considered acceptable and only ever as the option of last resort.

Below: **St Paul's Cathedral**





3





# PREPARING AN APPLICATION

The development of any proposals under the Care of Cathedrals Measure should be informed by a suite of documents that take a holistic view of the use and future development of the cathedral and which should be prepared independently of any specific scheme. In the case of proposals for the storage, movement, retention or disposal of liturgical furnishings, the most relevant documents are likely to be the cathedral's **Inventory**, **Liturgical Plan** and **Collections Management Policy** (the latter of which should include a **Disposals Policy**). Sections of the cathedral's **Conservation Management Plan** and **Visitor Engagement Plan** may also be of relevance. If it is proposed to commission additional or replacement liturgical furnishings this should be undertaken in line with a cathedral's **Arts Policy**.

When considering changes to liturgical furnishings the first step is to assess the significance of the item or items in question, as discussed in section 2b, above. The cathedral should consult its Fabric Advisory Committee at this stage and may also wish to seek additional expert advice.

Alongside an assessment of significance the cathedral should also review the use of the piece or pieces in the day-to-day life and worship of the cathedral, with particular reference to their liturgical plan. As far as possible this should be an objective review of pros and cons, rather than an argument for removal.

If these assessments lead to the conclusion that removal of the piece is liturgically desirable and justifiable in terms of its impact on significance, then the cathedral should make an appraisal of the options for reuse, storage and disposal (ideally to another location where they can continue in liturgical use).

These documents should then be presented to the Fabric Advisory Committee, and in the case of outstanding items the Cathedrals Fabric Commission, for advice. The cathedral may also wish to seek the advice of Historic England and the national amenity societies at this stage.

Once options have been fully explored then an application to the relevant body for the removal of the item from the cathedral to storage, loan or disposal should be made.

Items that are fixed to or permanently situated in a cathedral are considered part of the fabric for the purposes of the Care of Cathedrals Measure. This would include, for example, a font or pulpit, the removal or relocation of which would therefore require approval from the Cathedrals Fabric Commission. Moveable items, such as candlesticks or lecterns, may be relocated without formal approval, but any new permanent location should be recorded on the inventory. The sale, loan or other disposal of any item on the inventory requires permission from the cathedral's Fabric Advisory Committee or, in the case of items of outstanding interest, from the Cathedrals Fabric Commission.

Further advice on making an application can be found in the User's Guide to the Care of Cathedrals Measure, available on the [ChurchCare website](#).



4





## FURTHER INFORMATION

### **Guidance on Liturgical Plans**

The Cathedrals Fabric Commission's guidance on the process of preparing a liturgical plan is available on the ChurchCare website:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/churchcare/cathedral-fabric-commission/advice-and-guidance-cathedrals/liturgical-plans-for-cathedrals>

### **The Liturgy and Liturgical Furnishings Working Group**

The Liturgy and Liturgical Furnishings Working Group can offer advice on proposals affecting liturgical furnishings and on the preparation of a liturgical plan. The Group is formed of members of the Cathedrals Fabric Commission, the Church Buildings Council, and other experts. To consult the Group please contact the Commission's Secretariat.

### **A User's Guide to the Care of Cathedrals Measure**

The Cathedrals Fabric Commission's guidance on the process of preparing an application under the Care of Cathedrals Measure is available on the ChurchCare website:

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/CCB\\_UserGuide\\_CareOfCathedralsMeasure0319.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/CCB_UserGuide_CareOfCathedralsMeasure0319.pdf)

Hard copies may be requested from the Commission's Secretariat.



