

Guide to Understanding your Church building

Introduction

Some clergy and churchwardens are very interested in church buildings; others perhaps less so. And even among those who know about buildings, there are so many different aspects – the history, the design, the lighting, the heating... that no-one is expert in all.

Yet understanding our church buildings and their contents is essential – especially when we are considering making changes. For example, some features of a building and some pieces of furniture etc in churches, are important in their own right; others are previous solutions to issues and disregarding them might mean the issue returned.

Sources of Support.

Church Heritage Record

For every church in the diocese there is a basic Statement of Significance (created by the diocese from two sets of building audits) on the [Church Heritage Record](#)

Your Statement of Significance can be improved gradually over time – for example each time you apply for a Faculty. Or a person or a group interested in local history might be prepared to do some work on your buildings Statement of Significance.

ChurchCare

ChurchCare has developed guidance for completing your [Statement of Significance](#) along with your Statement of Need which is required for larger faculty submissions.

Your Architect

It is always a good idea to phone your architect (just as you would the diocesan Safeguarding Adviser or diocesan Communications Manager or issues concerning them) before doing anything beyond routine maintenance; we know that churches are wary of involving architects, often because of the fear of cost, but most architects are happy to take a phone call

Churches Trust for Cumbria

CTfC has produced a series of videos to help you understand your church and explore its potential as a place of worship, heritage and community asset. They can be accessed here [Videos | Churches Trust for Cumbria \(ctfc.org.uk\)](https://ctfc.org.uk)

NADFAS

Some churches have had more extensive surveys done by bodies like [NADFAS \(National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies\)](#). These too help us to understand what we are stewards of and tell stories of our communities.

There are also a number of books on church architecture and information on the internet, where you may find someone has already undertaken some research into aspects of your church.

- **Do make sure you understand your building and its contents and that you record that understanding in your Statement of Significance, improving it regularly step by step, and referring to it to learn from it.**
- **Do phone your architect for advice**
- **Do contact the DAC for advice dac@carlisle-diocese.org.uk**