Archbishops' Council Cathedral and Church Buildings Division

COMMISSIONING NEW ART FOR CHURCHES: A GUIDE FOR PARISHES AND ARTISTS

PREFACE



The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Richard Chartres KCVO DD FSA, Bishop of London and Chairman of the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division

These guidelines have been developed by a working group set up by Anne Sloman of the Church Buildings Council under the leadership of Mark Cazalet and drawing on evidence from a number of experts in the field. As Chairman of the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division of the Church of England I am very grateful for the careful work and expertise which have gone into producing these helpful notes in such a pithy form.

St Augustine's vision of God was of a beauty at once "ancient but also fresh". New commissions should do justice to the challenges of the contemporary world while being rooted in an understanding of Christian mystery and church tradition. This requires profound dialogue between artists who do not just want "to do their own thing" and patrons with spiritual and liturgical discernment.

The 16,000 parish churches of England are repositories of English art from many centuries. These guidelines are designed to assist those responsible for parish churches today to ensure that the legacy of the 21st century will be as eloquent and enduring as the best of the past.



THE IMPETUS

Do you wish to set out on the adventure of commissioning new art? Or do you have something to celebrate – a life, an event, a milestone or the millennium of your church – to be remembered by commissioning something really worthy of your stewardship? Maybe you have been given a bequest for a work of art for your church, or perhaps you are an artist interested in working with churches or about to respond to a call for proposals for a church commission?

Whatever your reason for commissioning a work of art, or for responding to a brief from a church, you are about to embark on a stimulating process that can be both enjoyable and rewarding if you think, plan and prepare well for the process and the work to be displayed.

Much of the information in this guide is aimed at parishes, but will also provide an insight for artists and other interested parties. This process of making something that is site-specific and bespoke sometimes appears complex and can be lengthy. Follow these guidelines and you will be surprised at how straightforward it can be.

Initially there are many questions for a parish to answer: Why? What? What is it for? Where? Will it be temporary or permanent? There can be benefits to temporary installations, and there are conservation, environmental and "upkeep" considerations for permanent works. What is needed? Not something to fill a gap, that's for sure! You are stewards of a very significant inheritance that can and should speak eloquently about your community and its encounter with God in that place; your church is a physical record of the beliefs, hopes and daily lives of the generations before you. You are proposing to add to that story and enhance that eloquence, honouring them and adding a note about yourselves to the record. How does this fit in with your strategy for mission, for art, for advancing the Kingdom of God? The process and the work itself should make you look at these questions and the architectural space afresh, to renew the life of your church. This is a matter of your theology and proclamation of the Gospel to your wider community. As you think these things through, you

are effectively forming your "outline brief", and it is worth writing it down to guide the next steps you will be taking.

There are plenty of examples to help you when writing the formal brief. Take advice from a local arts organisation, your **Diocesan Advisory Committee** (DAC), or the **Church Buildings Council** (CBC) and its website (www.churchcare.co.uk). These organisations are there to help you and it is worth consulting them, and your insurers, early in the process.

Set up a commissioning group early. Experts on the group will be able to guide you in general **budgeting:** how much will be needed for preliminaries – do you have to repair the roof over the area where the artwork will be sited, for example? If you are running a competition, what will it cost? There will be the costs of the work itself, the installation, the artist's time, the welcome you plan to give the work and the inevitable contingencies.

Consider the architecture, its special features and the works of art that are already there. What do you love about the place? Enhance that: make it speak more clearly and consider changing things that muffle its articulacy – clear up the clutter in the corners. Consult your architect and consider his or her role. Who else has a role? Expertise on the commissioning group can be invaluable. It should be a strong group not a compromise (or the work may itself be compromised and weak). **Consult widely:** you are stewards on behalf of the parish, past, present and future – the parish church belongs to the parish. The wider the sense of "ownership" of the work, the more successful the process will have been.

1

Uncredited images are the copyright of the Archbishops' Council

Front cover: Aumbry by Nicholas Mynheer (dimensions 850mm x 750 mm). St Mary, Iffley (Diocese of Oxford) Photo © N Mynheer

Back cover: The Power of Two: an installation by Rona Smith. St Mark, Leeds (Diocese of Ripon & Leeds) Photo © R Smith

- Altar by Henry Moore set off by kneelers designed by Patrick Heron. St Stephen Walbrook, City of London (Diocese of London)
- 2 5 Details of the kneelers by Patrick Heron. St Stephen Walbrook, City of London (Diocese of London)



THE BRIEF

Preparing the brief is crucial to the commissioning process it should identify a bold, balanced and concrete proposal with an adequate budget to install an excellent work of art. The brief is a set of criteria that must be agreed by the designated commissioning group, who will represent the parish and see the process through. The brief should enable all those involved (congregation, PCC, DAC, Chancellor, artists and any other interested parties) to understand as clearly as possible the purpose and aims of the commission, without unduly inhibiting the artist's creative response to the challenge. Think positively - consider the following points in relation to your project and you will find it easier to begin your brief.





- Processional Cross, by Brian 6 Catling. St Peter & St Paul, Dorchester (Diocese of Oxford) Photo © B Catling
- 7 Detail of the Processional Cross. St Peter & St Paul, Dorchester (Diocese of Oxford) Photo © B Catling
- The Holy Trinity, by Nicholas Mynheer. Holy Trinity, Blythburgh (Diocese of St Edmundsbury & (lpswich)
- The simplicity of hand-blown clear 9 glass. St Stephen Walbrook, City of London (Diocese of London)
- St Ethelburga: stained glass by Helen Whittaker, reusing medieval fragments in the cloak and the top lights. St Ethelburga, City of London (Diocese of London)
- Contrary Rhythm: glass by James Hugonin. St John, Healey (Diocese of Newcastle) Photo © John McKenzie



- The brief should reflect the shared enthusiasm and will of the community.
- The depth and beauty of the work commissioned should n be of the highest order: excellent in terms of its vision, design, handling of materials and longevity.
- Your theological and liturgical themes should be set out n clearly and concisely, but avoid swamping the artist with words – leave sufficient space for interpretation.
- Give the artist enough scope to respond to the themes n and architectural space, without limiting their choice of materials, so they can find an original solution, perhaps even a novel one.
- Identify the possible site(s) for the commission, making n specific reference to aspects of the context you consider relevant, such as light levels, adjacent artefacts, materials, the history of the building and use of the space.
- Set a realistic budget, taking advice if necessary, with a thorough audit of all eventual project costs. This should cover: competition or other selection costs, initial design costs, installation, lighting, structural issues, remedial repairs required, photography, maintenance and increased insurance.
- Set out the procedure and criteria for comparing the applicants. Agree an adequate fee for the initial designs and include an opt-out clause if none finds sufficient approval.
- Draw up a flowchart setting out the stages in the n commissioning journey, ensuring you include the faculty jurisdiction process, which may add several months. Remember that the faculty process may well be new to many artists and could require them to amend their original design, its costing and how long they are involved in your project.
- The work may need to be phased on a timeline, with a staged payment agreement written into the artist's or fabricator's or subcontractor's contract(s). These contracts must be formally set out in writing and agreed.
- The individual members of the commissioning group need to be allocated specific roles to spread the responsibility. While it is important that one person is appointed the main point of contact, ensure they do not become the lynchpin, in case of a change of circumstances.

ARTIST SELECTION

The commissioning group will need to select an artist by evaluating the various proposals against the brief.

ARTIST

Some parishes may already have an artist in mind for their commission, in which case they do their research, invite the artist to submit ideas in line with the brief, consult widely and secure broad agreement for the proposal. They then agree terms, obtain all necessary permissions, sign the contract – and begin planning the unveiling. But it is not always this simple so it is worth considering the following points when selecting an artist.

AGENTS

Commissioning a work of art is not something a parish does very often so it may be helpful to use consultants to guide you through the process. They will have experience of processes and artists, but bear in mind they may have preferred artists and craftsmen, and look carefully at their fee structure.

OTHER SOURCES OF ADVICE

Local museums and art galleries or the art departments of a nearby university can be useful sources of advice. While the DAC Secretary cannot recommend individuals, they can tell you where to find examples of good practice locally. Art & Christianity Enquiry (ACE, www.acetrust.org) and the CBC can provide examples of good practice nationally.

COMPETITIONS

Running a competition is a good way to generate ideas. You can either invite a limited number of artists to submit ideas or run an open competition. But it is important to remember that it costs an artist to prepare a proposal so a competition should not be seen as a cheap way to secure ideas. Ideally, if you want to run a competition, you should invite a small number of artists to submit ideas – and be prepared to pay them for doing so.

At the artist selection stage it is important to think laterally and beyond local artists and craftsmen. Look at national and international practitioners. Aim high! The best artist for your church may well be someone who understands your particular vision rather than sharing your precise background of faith. Leave the artist to respond to the brief and draw up proposals. Try to avoid micro-managing the creative process and remember that provoking and shocking has its place. You want the best artist for the site chosen for the commission and someone who will work happily with you and the congregation.

FINAL SELECTION

Once the proposals have been submitted, you need to evaluate them against the brief. Consider whether the proposal meets the brief in terms of quality and congruency – does the proposed commission look right in your building alongside the current furnishings and fittings – and in terms of inspirational qualities.

CONSULT

Hopefully you have been consulting with all interested parties, both within the parish and more widely, as your vision has developed. This is crucial. Don't try to avoid public debate and never underestimate the knowledge of interested parties. Commissioning is not a democratic process, but it must be sympathetic to popular feeling, particularly if you need to raise money to finance the commission.

When you make your final choice of artist and proposal, resist the temptation to make a bureaucratic process out of the decision-making by taking a vote. Have the confidence to choose your artist because he or she has answered your brief and promises to produce something that is truly inspirational and expresses Christian faith.





THE PROCESS

AFTER SELECTION OF THE ARTIST THROUGH TO COMPLETION OF THE ARTWORK

Once selected, the artist will need to prepare a preliminary design for the commissioning group. This must be presented to the PCC and, if approved, to the DAC for initial feedback. The commissioning group may want to stress its right to suggest amendments to the design or even to step back from the commission if the artist's proposed design cannot be agreed.

PRESENTATION

If the artist's design does find favour with the commissioning group they must act as ambassadors to the congregation and PCC and not leave the artist to present their work alone. The DAC and Chancellor are looking for strong support for the project from the parish. One way of engaging the parish is to display the proposed design over a number of weeks so people have a chance to see and discuss it in situ. Before the PCC's decision it is worth asking the artist to give a talk about their work, the new design and its possible interpretations. The congregation should have the opportunity to discuss the proposal without the artist being present. It is also useful to display a concise artist's statement alongside the proposal.

THE DESIGN

The preliminary design should be a scale drawing or model that shows the materials to be used, how it is going to be installed (including any fixing devices) and any impact this may have on the fabric of your building (as well as how these procedures can be reversed). When submitting designs for faculty, include a copy of the original brief and the artist's statement to contextualise the purpose of the artwork and its iconography. Only send the highest quality photographs – poor-quality images may prevent the proposal being seen in its best light.

SUBMISSION

The design is formally presented to the DAC for consideration, who will recommend it (or not) for the granting of a faculty by the Chancellor. Bear in mind that these two stages can take several months. Statements of Significance and Need – advice can be found on www.churchcare.co.uk – are essential here because they acknowledge the specific historical context of the building and the intention of the new work. Try to handle these areas of the process very carefully – poorly researched or missing information will cause delays and may damage your case for a new work.

CONSULTATION

Parish churches vary widely in their architectural significance and listing status. Whether or not you are granted a faculty for your new commission depends on its visual impact and its effect on existing artefacts and the interior as a whole. Your proposal will also be judged on the appropriateness of its theme, style, siting, scale and materials. It is always necessary to consult the DAC (see Legal Necessities) and possibly the CBC as well as relevant groups such as English Heritage and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society or the 20th Century Society as appropriate. This approach can head off future problems and make the whole process shorter and smoother.



point of contact with the parish and generally prefer to be left to get on with the work undisturbed. Perhaps ask the artist to keep a photographic record of the commission in progress for the interest of the parish and as an archival document.

COMPLETION

Decide at what point and how the commission will be signed off and the final payment made to the artist. Issuing an architect's certificate is the routine way of concluding an installation of permanent fixtures. Also remember that lighting may need installing or adjusting to properly illuminate the commission.

- Westerly Millennium Window, reusing medieval 12 fragments in the top lights, by Tom Denny. St Mary & St Michael, Great Malvern (Diocese of Worcester) Photo © B Denny
- East window, by Shirazeh Houshiary and Pip 13 Horne. St Martin-in-the Fields, London (Diocese of London) Photo © P Ashley
- 14. St Wilfred hauling in the fishing nets: stained glass by Mel Howse. St Mary, Chidham (Diocese of Chichester) Photo © M Howse
- 15. St Cuthman taking his mother to Steyning by wheelbarrow: stained glass by Mel Howse. St Mary, Chidham (Diocese of Chichester) Photo © M Howse
- Name plaque, by Charles Gurrey. St Olave, York 16 (Diocese of York)
- 17-18
 - Millennium corbels, by Charles Gurrey. St Olave, York (Diocese of York)





TEMPORARY WORKS, EXHIBITIONS AND LOANS

There is a growing trend for artists to work on commissions that are designed to be temporary, particularly in buildings of historic significance where placing permanent artworks can be problematic and expensive. Working with an artist on a temporary commission can be as rewarding for a parish as a permanent project and comes with many of the same provisos described above. But there are some allowances and limitations to temporary works that are worth considering.

REFLECTION

A work that is temporary may, in the best sense, stretch the boundaries of what is normally acceptable in a place of worship. For example, an installation that would hamper the parish's regular liturgical practice can, for a short period, challenge the congregation and clergy to re-appreciate the significance of liturgy. Or it can be an opportunity to explore more experimental and ephemeral art forms.

THEME

Temporary works can be very effective in addressing different liturgical seasons. Stations of the Cross, for example, are a good way of inviting different interpretations of a major Christian theme and need only be exhibited during Lent and Holy Week.

DURATION

Temporary works can give impetus to a short but intense period of involvement from the parish. Holding artist-run workshops, giving over a part of the church as "studio space" or briefing an artist to respond to the congregation, as well as the building, can all be ways of maximising the significance and lasting effects of a project. Take care to specify precisely how long the project will last and to photograph the work and any related events.

SALE

If work is made for a church on a temporary basis there may be the possibility at the end of its exhibition to sell it to help the parish cover its costs. If this is the case, the parish should be careful to set out from the start the conditions of the sale of work and any percentage the artist will receive. Make sure that there is an agreed plan for what will happen to the work at the end of the exhibition. See the "The Brief" and "Legal Necessities" for guidance on contractual arrangements with an artist.

PERMISSIONS

A parish should be aware that most temporary works or exhibitions will require a faculty from the Chancellor and the timescale for seeing through a project should reflect this.

LOANS

Artworks can often be loaned on a temporary basis, which can be more cost-effective for a parish that can't afford to purchase a permanent work. However, the parish must be responsible for having a clear timeframe for the exhibition of an artwork and, once the term of the loan has elapsed, it must decide whether to apply for a permanent faculty to acquire the work. There are many inappropriate works of art that have simply been left behind in churches! Parishes must also feel empowered to say "no" to benefactors who wish to loan or donate an artwork if they feel it would not be appropriate to acquire the work long term. They should always take professional advice from those with expertise in valuations as to whether the work is of the value its donor claims.









- Angel, by Rose Finn-Kelcey. St Paul, Bow Common (Diocese of London) Photo © D Ross 19
- Jesus' Body is laid in the Tomb, by Aishan Yu. St Andrew Fulham Fields, Fulham (Diocese of London) Photo © J Brown 20
- 21 Entombment, a collaboration between members of the community and Mark Cazalet. St Andrew Fulham Fields, Fulham (Diocese of London) Photo © K Keara Pelan
- Christ takes his Cross, a collaboration 22 between members of the community and Mark Cazalet. St Andrew Fulham Fields, Fulham (Diocese of London). Photo © K Keara Pelan

- 23 26 Community of St Andrew's Fulham Fields making their own Stations of the Cross. Photos © K Keara Pelan
- The Power of Two: an installation by Rona Smith. St Mark, Leeds (Diocese of Ripon & Leeds) Photo © R Smith 27







WELCOMING THE NEW COMMISSION

Welcoming an artwork into your church should be a celebratory event similar to integrating a new member into a family. Many artists can be reticent about explaining away the mystery of their work, but it is important that they can talk about their inspiration, making methods, techniques and intentionality. The new commission may provide an opportunity for workshops with local schools, colleges or art groups – this is an opportunity for local press coverage and a chance to invite people into your church who are interested in art but do not normally attend services.

This is now the time to alter the parish's Statement of Significance to acknowledge the new commission (see www.churchcare.co.uk for guidance). If you haven't already done so, you need to contact your insurers to let them know about the new artwork, its value and any security or preventative measures taken to protect it – such as stained glass grilles, secondary glazing or sculptural attachments. Take some good photographs when the work is installed to act as a condition report in case of future repairs or replacement.

Maintenance is far from anyone's mind when a new work is unveiled or dedicated, but you need to consider this in advance and take advice from the artist about the most suitable methods and materials for cleaning, varnishing and maintaining the work. You should also find out how long it is projected to last and how to handle the work if it ever needs to be moved. Check www.churchcare.co.uk for advice and also be sure to file a set of instructions for the benefit of your successors.

28 – 32

- Altar table and seasonal hangings by Polly Meynell. St Leonard, Seaford (Diocese of Chichester) Photos © P Meynell
- 33.– 34
 - Boat: copper, glass and steel, by Victoria Rance. St Andrew, Waterloo (Diocese of Southwark) Photos © V Rance
- 35 Detail of the Westerly Millennium Window, by Tom Denny. St Mary & St Michael, Great Malvern (Diocese of Worcester) Photo © B O'Callaghan

36.-37

Cope by Angela Dewar, modelled by N Harris, Senior Verger. St Margaret, Westminster

LEGAL NECESSITIES

LAW

For any successful commission, the law applicable to the introduction of art into churches, whether permanent or temporary, must be fully understood by all concerned.

FACULTY

It is a legal requirement to obtain a faculty (a licence issued by the Chancellor of the diocesan court authorising the work) before any new item is installed in a church (even if the item is a gift) or any alterations are made. Exceptions can be made for specified periods for temporary exhibitions or displays, but you should seek advice from the diocesan registry in these cases. If a faculty is needed, you must seek advice from the DAC first, although the final decision is always that of the consistory court. Within the legal framework, consideration of pastoral issues arising from the commission is best left to the diocesan chancellor. If the church is listed, the views of one or more amenity societies may also be required and, if the item to be introduced is itself of particular artistic interest, the diocesan Chancellor will want to consult the CBC. A temporary re-ordering may in certain circumstances be permitted in writing by the archdeacon for a period of not more than 15 months, but the ownership of the artwork should be made clear in relation to any such period.

CONTRACT

For both the commissioning and introduction of new art a written contract is essential. Depending upon the complexity and cost, your contact should include the staging of payments as and when specified stages are reached, as well as a break clause in appropriate cases. It may also be a good idea to clarify that, once complete, the artist may not alter their work. It is essential to bear in mind general law, for example in relation to disabilities. All those concerned, including the artist, must be made aware of the law applicable to particular articles: ecclesiastical law, for example, requires that chalices and patens (the plate holding the Eucharistic bread) are made of gold, silver or another suitable metal and although occasionally ignored in the past, covers are required under canon law for all fonts. Any font design should therefore incorporate a cover not only so that the ultimate design is all of a piece but so that delay and extra expense is not incurred later in the process. Church law also demands that there should be no commemoration of a person in church (apart possibly from a deceased incumbent) unless the life of that person has been particularly exceptional, locally, regionally or nationally. So that this may be weighed objectively most (if not all) dioceses expect a period of at least two years to pass before the introduction of such a memorial is considered. This rule is sometimes relaxed in relation to commissions for stained glass windows.





INSURANCE ESSENTIALS

Insuring works of art is not difficult but you can avoid unexpected surprises by consulting your insurers early on.

VALUE OF THE COMMISSION

The value of the item will determine not only the premium but also the level of the security and other protection that may be required. The more valuable the commission, the more likely it is that increased security measures may be required although susceptibility to theft also hinges on desirability and recognisability. The new commission may impact on other valuables making them more vulnerable. Security such as an intruder alarm is usually only required in exceptional circumstances.

NATURE, SIZE AND WEIGHT OF ITEM

A large heavy object is likely to be less vulnerable than a small light object. Whether the item is a picture, installation, fresco, tapestry, sculpture etc will also influence the precautions to be considered in relation to vulnerability to theft, malicious, accidental or fire damage. The materials used may also influence decisions. When new stained glass is being commissioned, its protection should be considered during the design and making stages: good protection can even become part of the art itself. Consider also whether scaffolding is required for installation, or whether electrics will be altered.

INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE CHURCH?

Commissions sited inside the church will be affected by whether the church is locked or unlocked; if the commissions are freestanding, hung, or secured to the fabric of church; and whether there will be supervision of the item(s) when the church is open to the public. For instance, might a sudden influx of visitors damage the church fabric or furnishings?

If the commission is sited in the open then its vulnerability to theft and/or malicious damage needs to be addressed. As some installations are designed to be "used" by people consider their safety when doing so. It is also as well to think of how children or others might use the commission in ways unintended by the artist.

Owned, Loaned or Exhibition Commissions

If an item is on loan or displayed in an exhibition it is essential that the terms and responsibilities are understood in relation to its insurance, delivery and return. Condition reports should be carried out upon delivery and return. Also remember that loaned items will need insurance while in transit.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Archbishops' Council Cathedral and Church Buildings Division

Janet Gough Director janet.gough@churchofengland.org 020 7898 1887

Diana Coulter Divisional Support Officer diana.coulter@churchofengland.org 020 7898 1860

Dr Pedro Gaspar Senior Conservation Officer pedro.gaspar@churchofengland.org 020 7898 1889

Jonathan Goodchild Senior Churches Officer jonathan.goodchild@churchofengland.org 020 7898 1883

Jude Johncock Casework Officer jude.johncock@churchofengland.org 020 7898 1864

The Church of England Church House Great Smith Street London SW1P 3AZ

T: 020 7898 1866 E: CCB_General_Enquiries@churchofengland.org W: www.churchcare.co.uk Registered Charity No. 1074857

The Church Buildings Council would like to thank the following who contributed to the preparation of these guidelines: Peter Ball, Paul Bayley, Timothy Briden, Rupert Bursell, Bridget Cass, Mark Cazalet, Richard Davey, Peter Delaney, Tom Devonshire–Jones, Allan Doig, Martin Eastwood, Bob Johnson, Charles George, Vivien Lovell, Jonathan MacKechnie-Jarvis, Polly Meynell, Laura Moffatt, Nicholas Mynheer, Claire Pardy, Sarah Quail, Victoria Rance, Anne Sloman, Richard Taylor, Simon Thurley, Graham Williamson and all the participants at the Consultation held at St George's House, Windsor.