



## Mission and Discipleship Council

### Committee on Church Art and Architecture

#### Guidance notes for those involved in the closure of a church building

1. Contact ought to be made with the office of Church Art and Architecture (121 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4YN [gentrustees@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:gentrustees@churchofscotland.org.uk) or telephone 0131 225 5722 ext 2359.
2. All items being transferred to the new place of worship do **not** need to be listed.
3. All sacramental vessels surplus to requirements **cannot** be sold or donated without the express written permission of the Committee, under General Assembly regulations, and any proposal to sell or dispose of sacramental vessels must come with clear descriptions of the items and preferably photographs, for consideration.
4. The committee has a website, managed by the Media Services Department called, *Exchange and Transfer*, and items that are to be disposed of, with the agreement of the Committee, may be advertised there. Contact numbers and detailed description of items are required and all enquires must be handled by the congregation.
5. A comprehensive list of the items to be disposed of must be submitted to the Committee with on the right hand side of the page, an indication of any suggested place, or organisation, which might be given the item. Once this is received by the Committee, a decision to allow the disposal may be given or a visit arranged to review the whole building.
6. On no account may War Memorials be disposed of, and they must be incorporated into the agreed new place of worship. Any infringement of this guidance may lead to severe financial penalties due to the intervention of the War Memorial Trust. Guidance as to the suitable place of the relocation of War Memorials may be sought from the Committee.
7. Stained glass windows are expensive to remove and if the congregation does wish to do so, there are specialists in this area whose names are kept by the Committee. Any idea of removal will lead to the need for local council building consent and the building will not longer be protected under the ecclesiastical exemption rules. Any removal will have to take account of the need to replace the window with an appropriate window fitted to standards required by the local council.
8. A full and detailed pictorial record of the buildings to be vacated ought to be taken prior to any transfer of artefacts and a copy of the record sent to the Committee for retention in its archives. The congregations should keep a copy for historic interest in safe keeping.
9. Organs may be removed with the permission of the Committee and reinstalled in another building. Advice by professionals is available through the Scottish Federation of Organists and can be arranged by the Committee. Often there is no market for the sale of an electric organ as their technology is readily outdated. There may be some recycling of pipe organs.

10. Pews may be recycled, but it is important not to allow them to be removed and taken by contractors for very little money. If there is interest in them from the members of the congregation, this should be considered first and only then a number of companies should be contacted regarding the sale of the pews.
11. The committee encourage consideration of the reuse of pulpits and liturgical furniture in the new place of worship, with adaptation as required. Again this is a matter for an individual congregation in consultation with the Committee to consider.
12. All wall plaques that are being transferred to the new place of worship ought to be listed and steps taken to identify who might want them in the local community, or in the families of those commemorated.
13. Bibles and hymnbooks may be recycled through the website, or through Oxfam who have a religious book section.
14. The proceeds from any items which are sold at auction, or by other means ought to be spent on ensuring the fabric for the new place of worship is appropriately decorated etc, and may be used to buy a particular item for use there. Advice on this can also be sought from the Committee.
15. While this list is far from comprehensive, it does outline the main areas of concern. Any particular concerns ought to be put in writing with clear indication of the parish and the identity (with full contact details) of the person seeking guidance and their authority for doing so, to the Committee. On some occasions it will be necessary for a representative of the Committee to undertake a visit to the building to assist in the determination of the disposal of items and report this to the Law Department.
16. The Committee works in partnership with the solicitors of the Church and will ensure that the solicitor involved in the sale of the building is kept informed of progress on all matters relating to the disposal of interior items.

The Committee on Church Art and Architecture has its office within the Church Offices in Edinburgh. The address and telephone number are: The Church of Scotland, 121 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4YN, tel 0131 225 5722, email: [gentrustees@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:gentrustees@churchofscotland.org.uk)