



## Property: CARTA

For more than 80 years, what is now the Committee on Church Art and Architecture (CARTA) has been charged with advising congregations about how to make church buildings designed for worship and witness in the past fit for the same purposes in the present, while respecting their distinctive character.



In the early days, much of its work was concerned with the design and location of memorials to those who fell in the Great War, but today it deals with requests for advice or approval on a wide range of proposals for non-structural alterations. These include the creation of flexible space within the sanctuary for worship, chancel alterations, pew removal, the choice of chairs and liturgical furniture, organ repair and replacement, stained glass installation and conservation, lighting systems, disabled access, the choice of colour schemes and flooring.

In addition, CARTA advises on the disposal of the contents of redundant churches. Furthermore, CARTA must be consulted about the installation of audio-visual systems and its permission is needed for the disposal of communion ware.

Many congregations occupy historic buildings which limit what they can do by way of contemporary worship and outreach. CARTA exists to assist them by creating online and other resources to inform, encourage and inspire; arranging site visits (at no cost to the congregation) to offer advice or recommend approval in principle when proposals are at a fairly early stage; and formally approving worked-up proposals on behalf of the General Trustees.

While CARTA works closely with the General Trustees, who now operate a single gateway for all requests relating to property matters, its independent role in the process of authorising change ensures that the Church of Scotland continues to enjoy 'ecclesiastical exemption' from the requirement that proposals to alter the interiors of listed buildings need local planning authority approval; this saves congregations much time and money. But whether or not your church is one of the more than 700 Church of Scotland properties listed on the Historic Scotland website, you should contact CARTA if you are contemplating or planning any alterations, using the application form on the website.

CARTA's work is carried out by a network of volunteers with relevant expertise and experience based across Scotland, who meet five times a year to consider site visit reports and arrange further visits. Requests involving the design, installation and conservation of stained glass are handled by an expert



sub-group. Where a request for approval is straightforward and uncontentious, it can often be dealt with fairly quickly under Convener's powers.

We are always keen to hear from people who would be interested in contributing to our pool of knowledge and expertise: architects, artists, surveyors, property or fabric conveners, ministers and elders who have experience of refurbishing their church buildings – and lived to tell the tale! If you are one of these, why not contact us at [carta@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:carta@cofscotland.org.uk)?

### **Further reading and resources**

CARTA information leaflets\*, especially 'The Setting of Presbyterian Worship', 'Open Church - making better access' and 'Better Lighting for Churches'

Quick Guides - Worship Places\*

\*These can be found on the Church of Scotland's [resourcingmission.org.uk](http://resourcingmission.org.uk) website.