

IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF THE DIOCESE OF GLOUCESTER  
IN THE MATTER OF THE MARINERS CHURCH GLOUCESTER

## JUDGMENT

### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

1. The Mariners Church in the Gloucester docks was built to cater for the transient community of bargees and seamen who had begun to come to the dockland area of the City, which grew up after the Gloucester and Sharpness canal was opened in 1827 to allow barges and more sizeable vessels to bypass the twists and turns of the River Severn via a canal from Sharpness to the City. The City, which provided Robert Raikes with the impetus for the foundation of the Sunday School movement, blossomed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century into an evangelical revival, “the Second Evangelical Awakening”. The idea for a plain and simple little church building to provide for the transient, nomadic boatmen community originated in about 1831, when a room was registered for worship in an office in the canal basin. However, a proposed Chapel for seamen was not then built, for lack of funds, and the proposer of this project, a Mr. Campbell, died. The money for the proposed mariners’ chapel then went to fund a similar one in Worcester. So it was not until 1846 that the evangelical commercial interests in Gloucester had raised the money to build this Chapel. The Chapel’s outreach extended to the area of Sharpness docks.
2. The building, listed Grade 2, comprises of a nave and small bell tower. It sits in the middle of the docks, surrounded by large warehouses, and, initially, had tramway tracks running past its door. Its expensive dressed limestone and gothic detailing contrasts strikingly with the surrounding redbrick warehouse, so that this Church, for all its small size really does stand out. Because of its rather cramped position amidst the warehouses and the water, the church is liturgically orientated in such a way that the Chancel is at the West end, rather than the East. I say “Chancel” but so plain and restricted in space is the building that the chancel is a notional space, being only a small altar, backed by a low wooden backing, almost too

plain and minimal to be termed a reredos. On entering the effect is of being in a barn or very simple hall. Other than the stained glass windows and the credence boards, this building is a Church reduced to its most elemental items, which, to many, is its attraction. The architect was a local man, John Jaques as was the builder William Wingate, who began the construction in 1848. The building was opened in February 1849. The cost of building was met by subscriptions and private benefactions, and of maintenance by voluntary contributions.

3. Although serving a declining local resident population, it primarily served as an evangelical religious point of contact for the transient community of seamen and bargees from many nations who visited the docks in the course of their work. A portable organ was used for services on the quays, which must have attracted a congregation. Tracts and Bibles in various foreign languages from Chinese to Welsh were handed out, as well as services in various languages, and Sunday Schools were held for boatmen's children. The plainness and the simplicity of the building was not damaged by the fluctuating congregations whose behaviour, whether in drink, fighting, swearing or spitting on the floor might not, sadly, have been appreciated in many inner city churches in Gloucester in the period. This building could and did cope with all this. It thrived, and opened up an old cheese warehouse in 1884, which served as a coffee and reading room for seamen, and as the Sunday School for boatmen's children. The church ran an adult night school and a coffee shop. The present Church hall is in Llanthony Road, very close to the Church, and it, too, where the church's active work of outreach continues.
4. The legal status of the Church was also a little convoluted. It was never a Parish Church, but was originally an "Extra Parochial Place" within the Church of England. Initially the church had been funded by local donations, being set up and run by "a Committee of Gentlemen" which was responsible for nominating the Chaplain of the Church to the Bishop. When opened it was in the extra-parochial area of South Hamlet and was attended also by people living near the docks for Sunday services and for baptisms. The chaplaincy was in the gift of the committee managing the chapel's funds until 1858, when trustees were appointed. The Church Pastoral Aid Society granted £75 a year towards the chaplain's stipend on condition that the same amount was raised locally, but in 1909 the society's grant was only £60 a year.
5. According to the Church Society : "*The (I take it the original founders) Committee continued to be trustees until the Deed of Appointment, dated 3rd June 1939, when the Church Association Trust became the Trustee of all the property of the Church and having the right of presentation.....*

*The Church Association Trust was renamed in 1950 the Church Society Trust. On 16th December 1996, the Charity Commissioners approved a scheme, which made the Church Society the trustees of 'Charities in connection with the Gloucester Mariners Church' (among others).*

6. *The site [of the Mariners church] was leased originally from the Docks Company, but subsequently from the British Waterways Board. A new long-term lease was drawn up with then owners of the site, SWRDA (South West Regional Development Agency). Currently therefore, the Church Society continues as Trustee (including of the Mission Trust Deed) and, in consultation with the Mariners Church Council, appoints the Chaplain”*
7. However, matters moved on so that by a transfer dated 18<sup>th</sup> July 2011 SWRDA transferred the reversion of the lease of the church (among other properties) to the Council of the City of Gloucester, who have developed the docks area into a marine/leisure area rightly popular with tourists. That transfer included the reversion to the Church building which is leased to the Church Society from January 1992 for a period of 200 years. This rather convoluted history meant that the building managed to wriggle out of the Faculty jurisdiction notice by, it would seem, keeping its head down over the years. Indeed, there has been confusion as to whether the church was ever consecrated. The effects of that will be seen below.
8. I should say that the Church Council acted to all intents and purposes as a PCC would in other circumstances, save that members could be added to it on an ad hoc basis rather than by being voted on at an annual meeting. There are no Church Wardens. This Church was, and continues to be, a proprietary Chapel, whose cleric is licensed by the Bishop, and having no PCC but, as I have said, a council acting in a similar capacity. The Gloucester Archives describe as holding “PCC minutes” for a number of years, though these are more accurately to be described, as in the current Faculty Petition, as “Council” minutes, and these archives also hold the conveyance of “a warehouse, cottage and offices in Bristol Road to the Mariners’ Chapel Mission (1884). Latterly, it forms part of the parish of Hempsted with St Mary de Lode and St Mary de Crypt. The church constitution has been recently updated, and the Church has registered a new governing document with the Charity Commission. It is now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, with the members of the church council being its legal trustees. There was also some doubt, as I have said, as to whether this church building had ever been consecrated. Some time recently had to be spent enquiring about its actual status, which delayed matters, but it is now licensed for services, and falls within the Faculty jurisdiction. Initially,

the Church was negotiating with the City planners until its legal status under the protection of the faculty jurisdiction became clear. For reasons I set out below, this delay has had rather unexpected effects.

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

10. The changing demographic of the docks area and the running down of the commercial use of the docks mean that this little church ministered to a declining population, both local and seamen. By 1980 services were being conducted on Sunday evenings and the first Sunday morning of each month to a small but loyal congregation. However, the docks had become derelict, and the Church Hall was leased out. By 2012 it is said that one service was offered on a Sunday afternoon, with an average attendance of 7 people and no children.
  
11. However, in or about 2011 an active former lawyer became the Minister appointed to the Mariners Church. From then on he, with the support of an increasing, engaged and outgoing congregation, re-invigorated this church. In 2013 when the Roberts Limerick Heritage Statement report was prepared, the church services had increased to a weekly Sunday evening service, a monthly Sunday morning service, early evening worship on Tuesdays and Thursdays and evening meetings, and an Alpha course on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Since then this church has continued its active growth. Such impetus came admirably hand in glove with the re-generation of the Gloucester docks as a leisure port of yachts and other craft, as a tourist centre, and as the hub for new housing and apartment development. The Mariners Church is now a focal point of the docks area. The success of this mission church, catering for a wide variety of ages, has grown and grown. It was this that triggered the initial application for a re-ordering. The church was bursting at the seams, but, because of its position between warehouses and the dock basins, it physically could not expand outwards in any direction. It has no graveyard or surrounding garden/land, but sits on the quay side. The Mariners Church is in the docks designated conservation area as reviewed in 2007. By 2016 this congregation had risen to 200 people, with a wide variety of services courses and activities on offer. This has been achieved by the introduction of evangelical Charismatic services with minimal liturgy and contemporary worship. The document in support of the Faculty goes on to say that the Sunday morning service has had to be split into two to accommodate all who come. (These services have now moved out into a large joint service at the Kings School premises to accommodate the numbers attending but on occasions this resource is not always available). The Sunday evening service moved to the church hall.

There is a lunch time service at the Mariners Church on Thursdays for nearby workers, and a Sunday evening service there for young worshippers and students. I am told that the noise generated at this service actually entices the curious to come in. It is also proposed that a women's prayer and worship meeting held from 2016 in the church hall could be moved to the church. There were a large number of various Groups, offering and running courses such as Alpha, a drop in café, Bible study groups, prayer walking, a food bank, a money course and much, much more. In 2016 meals were being served in the church hall to those in need. Certainly a proper kitchen in the church (rather than the cramped and tired facility there at the moment) would assist in this. Having inspected the church hall, a little walk away from the Church, I could see how the proposals could work. The Mariners Church attracts a steady throughput of tourists, who are actively welcomed in an open Church. Alpha video loop presentations are on offer. Every effort, I am told, is made to engage visitors with personal faith.

13. Ironically, the delay occasioned by these proposals being worked up has had an unusual outcome This is now not a case of a church wanting a reordering to enlarge its space; ironically the insertion of a vestry and toilet facilities and about 100 chairs instead of the pews will only actually reduce the seating capacity. It appears to be about using this church differently in conjunction with the Llanthony Road hall.
14. Its successful growth has made this energetic congregation self-develop. As one might always have hoped, their congregation has out-grown this building. They have had to look elsewhere. As a Chancellor, I am, on occasions told/threatened that a particular congregation will move if it does not get what it wants by way of a re-ordering. Here, this congregation has had to move many of its services and other meetings elsewhere because the Mariners church building, even if it were totally empty of contents, is just too small for its current and growing congregation, and it cannot, physically, be enlarged. Looking at their current "What's On" sheet and the letters from objectors one can see that the main Sunday services (apparently in two shifts with a refreshment break in between to unite the different congregations has had to migrate to facilities at the Kings School Gloucester (a 10 minute walk away with space and parking). On a Sunday evening, as I have said, there is a 75 minute youth service at the Mariners Church, and a communion service there on a Thursday lunchtime with "*contemporary worship and relevant teaching*".
15. On every third Sunday evening there is a service in the church hall, which is also used for a variety of courses, and where youth services are held. Youth Services are also held in the Church Hall on alternate Saturdays.

Interestingly, in one of their handouts this successful and growing church says: *“as a growing church in our lovely, iconic but small building we were really challenged for space on Sunday mornings...so we are now meeting at Kings School where we have more space, great facilities for our children’s work, good amenities and plentiful parking.... we have not abandoned our lovely church we continue to hold celebrations (services) there at 6pm on Sundays and 12.30 on Thursdays”*.

No Chancellor could have anything but the highest of regards for the work and outreach of this Church, said to be one of the fastest growing churches in the Diocese of Gloucester. However, this is a congregation which has outgrown the Mariners Church. The re-ordering proposals are not primarily aimed at providing for its congregation in that church building, because that building is of a finite size, and these proposals will actually reduce its size. They appear to be aimed at providing a space for other things. The “iconic charm” of the building and its historic interest should, if possible not be thrown out with the bath water. Can a balance be struck?

16. That is not to say that improvements cannot or should not be made. Now this church has had additions and alterations over the years. It was redecorated for Queen Victoria’s Jubilee in 1899, and in about 1904/5 the Ten Commandments boards were added at the altar end. The creed and the Lord’s Prayer are similarly displayed on the liturgically South wall. These are displayed in a gothic style frame with pinnacles and crochets; the then organ being also against that wall then, though apparently a different organ, was moved later to the opposite end of the church. This later organ, played on by Ivor Gurney, when organist here and in the Cathedral, just before the First World War, was sold in 2011. A more powerful organ from Gloucester prison was installed, but this too has recently gone. In the space where it was is an upright piano, which was being played, thoughtfully, by someone on the day of my first visit. The pulpit has also changed. It has shrunk to the present tub-shaped one, which has a ship’s wheel attached to it. A 1909 photograph shows that there was wainscot panelling to shoulder height round the church walls, and above that there were stenciled ribbons, carrying appropriate biblical texts. These have gone. When the mid Victorian St Catherine’s Church, in Priory Way Gloucester was demolished in 1921, four fine Clayton & Bell memorial windows from that Church were altered in size and placed in the Mariners’ church. Radiant heaters hang from the walls, and the current lighting is looking tired. The current altar and its small area of surrounding tiles also are said to have come from St Catherine’s, though the altar rail has gone. TV monitors have been installed; the wiring for which would never have passed any DAC consideration. All

the above alterations over the years have been done without any thought about obtaining a Faculty.

17. In reality, this church regarded itself for many, many years as being outside the Faculty jurisdiction and has managed to avoid receiving such advice and help which might have been forthcoming from that source. The sight of trailing electric feed wires to television monitors, gaps of plaster where boards had been ripped from the wall and the shack of a kitchen at the rear of the Church shows the wisdom (however boring and time consuming) of the Faculty jurisdiction which would have stopped this current mess, and the DAC could have given advice as to how what was being proposed could have been done better.
18. A small partitioned area against the back wall, to the left of the only entrance door, was also added in the 1970s/1980s. It is described as the vestry. Of this a 2013 survey says “*No record exists of its construction*”; wisely I think. Although on my first visit I could not gain entry to it, (but I have since seen inside). I am prepared to say that almost anything might be better designed and more appropriate for that space. It looks like a small builders’ shack that has migrated inside this church. Inside it resembles, if there is such a thing, a sort of clerical man-shed. In this plasterboard erection are kitchen units, and on its roof, at least in 2013 were stored arched boards detailing past chaplains and benefactors.



19. This photograph shows the back of the church, with the “vestry” on the right, and the space where an organ was and where the piano now is, and where the toilet facility is proposed to go. It also shows the heavy and clumsy draft door. However, rather striking additional new nave windows were inserted in the 1990s, designed by a resident in the docks.
20. The problem here is that this church appears to have considered that it was free from the Faculty jurisdiction (which in earlier years it might well have been) with the results that when one compares photographs of the church even as recently as in the 2013 document, changes have gone on merrily without, it would seem, any real oversight or advice. The latest organ has gone from the altar end wall. Who knows where? For simplicity, I will now refer to the east wall where the only entrance to the church is, as the back wall and the west wall where the altar is as the front wall. The statement of need also mentions other items, such as the painted inscription over the altar, “Praise the Lord” In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it read “The blood of Jesus Christ cleansed us from all sin”
21. It appears that in or about 2013 Roberts Limbrick Architects were approached to provide a heritage statement for this Church, and their detailed and thoughtful document is before me. That obviously, and properly, gave rise to further discussion, but their proposed removal of some but not all the pews is marked “superseded”. It could seem that even as early as 2012/2013 plans were afoot in this parish to consider how a church of this size could be used. These hopes and plans were not in vain.

## **THE FACULTY PETITION**

22. The Faculty standard form Petition refers to a PCC meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2016 when these proposals were unanimously passed. In fact this is not a PCC as the Petitioner makes clear, but the Church Council, acting for all practical purposes as a PCC. At that meeting those present were referred to “the latest plans” for the re-ordering. Now again I am not surprised at this, because PCCs often, sensibly, chew over and revise proposals.
23. I have taken these approved proposals as forming the basis for the Faculty Petition before me. They are set out in the Minutes as follows:-
  - To move the “10 Commandments” boards towards the back of the church on the north wall; the Lord’s Prayer and Creed boards will be put on the back (i.e. geographically east wall) between the windows.
  - To move the TV screens on to the front (west wall) at either side of the altar table. The issue of not being able to see the screens in



summer because of the sunlight was raised. In reply to queries about this, it was said that “we would not have that issue with the TVs as the resolution was so much better than the projector screen we used to use”.

- To store safely the flags currently located at the front which may be from organisations which are no longer operating.
- To remove the pews; they are not historically significant. So it was felt that removing them would not be a problem.
- To carpet the church; this would help with the sound in the building It is currently very resonant.
- To dismantle the current porch and build a new one properly centred on the wall
- Double glass doors would be installed; we can't change the front door
- To build a disabled toilet in the rear corner between the west and south walls
- Adjacent to the toilet to construct a large storage area (e.g. for the safe and for musical equipment)
- Tea/kitchen would be to the right of the main entrance at the rear of the north and west walls (*I think here they are referring to the liturgical west and not the real back east wall*)
- To remove the pulpit, the existing one is not original (The designer showed some examples of wooden and acrylic ones we might acquire
- To apply for a new lectern (possible acrylic) chairs and altar table ...we are looking for 100 chairs approx. (sic)...mean the space could be very flexible
- To build new staging to cover over existing raised area , and new back screen to cover existing dark screen
- Construction and fittings to use a light coloured wood (e.g. ash).
- To apply for heating and lighting chandeliers down the middle of the church
- To apply for new speakers – hung from the beams ...all the forgoing clears the walls of clutter.

24. These were unanimously agreed, but it is right to say that amendments and changes have developed, so that the current proposals are not quite so overpowering. It was noted that the electricity supply needs to be reviewed and possibly up-graded for future increased use. I am assured that the lighting and heating can be safely and properly supplied via the existing supply source. There is no doubt that the current lighting is tired, and proper thought as to replacements can only but bring a substantial

improvement. Because of the historic damp problem in this church the electricity must be a priority to be considered, and the exterior pointing. Now this is an ambitious, but not impossible, list which, if properly costed, money raised and a scheme of what needs to be done in what order, can be prepared. I was concerned just what the outside was told of the totality of these plans, but having discussed this with the Rev'd. Mr. Osmond and his team I am satisfied as to proper public advertisement

25. Following that decision on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016, the Minister, the Rev'd. Mr. Osmond, petitioned seeking "internal alterations". The petition set out that an Alex Clennett, of a design consultancy based in Churchdown in Gloucester "had been recommended to us as someone who had experience dealing with church building". No further details were provided as to what experience, where, or with the Faculty jurisdiction their proposed designer had. In the original petition there was no estimate of the costs of the proposed works as "estimates [were] not yet sought". Now this, in itself is understandable in that many churches want to proceed cautiously with such a re-ordering, for this is what this scheme really is. This is not a minor tinkering of the interior of this church. The Petitioner had then not consulted any of the statutory amenity bodies. Petitioners sometimes want to "test the water" before committing themselves to substantial expense. In any event the petition states that they hope to have the requisite funds raised by the end of 2016. In passing, looking at the advertisements within the church, fund raising so far appears to be going very well, and given the nature and enthusiasm of the churchmanship of this Church, I have no doubt that such funds as are necessary will be forthcoming. Nevertheless the necessary delay in finalising the proposals will give the extra time necessary for me to be assured that the total scheme can be funded. Again in the documents before me is one of 24 pages undated which is submitted: *"in support of the proposed works to Grade II listed Mariners Church...the proposals are for minor internal works to enable it to better respond to the needs of its congregation....the proposals are focused on the addition of disabled access and the much needed toilet provision .....and to encourage the increased use of the building"*.

There then follows a short resume of the history of the Church as set out in the 2013 document.

26. These proposed works are not clearly detailed on the Faculty Petition. However there is an undated unsigned document which set out in more detail what appears to be proposed. This document says that it incorporates part of a document prepared in 2013 by Roberts Limerick Architects as a

“Heritage Statement”. This muddle of documents made it unclear just how and when plans evolved. It now seems that these documents were used when dealing with the civil planning authorities. By now, in this later document the overall plans had been worked up:-

- A glass door was to be installed at the entrance with a door leading off the entrance lobby into a newly constructed lavatory
- The dais at the altar was to be boarded over to make one level and carpeted and the screen behind the altar was to be covered over in tongue and groove panelling and painted so that at some future date it might be restored.
- The Commandment boards at the altar end of the church, described as not representing “a contemporary feel and [as being] visually intrusive” are proposed to be moved to the back of the church on the North wall above the kitchenette
- The Creed board together with the Lord’s Prayer are proposed to be re-sited on the entrance wall

*I should say that the Lord’s Prayer Board appears to have been crudely chiselled off the wall and replaced by a TV screen with trailing electrical wires. Its re-siting would place it above the lavatory.*

- The flag holders on the south wall are proposed to go. *The flags of the Royal Navy Association and Royal Navy Auxiliary Service were laid up there. These have disappeared into storage in the church hall (or maybe the vestry.)*
- The heaters and lighting should be dismantled and replaced by 4 new chandeliers which would incorporate heating and lighting in one unit
- The kitchen area of the present vestry would be completely refurbished
- The altar/table and the lectern are described as “dated and impractical” and not conducive to a contemporary look”. It is proposed to replace them with something in lighter material. A proposal to store them in the church hall basement “or preferably to dispose of them” is proposed and a new altar table is proposed in a variety of designs
- The present TV monitors are proposed to be removed and it is proposed to re-site them above a new front screen covering in the place of the Commandment Boards
- Sound speakers are to be replaced being suspended from the front roof beam

- The church is to be repainted and carpeted throughout , and the banner logo over the altar “Praise the Lord “ is to be removed
  - The pews are to be removed and replaced with chairs
  - The dedicatory wall plaques are to be removed and stored with the flags and some other plaques, and the First World War memorial plaques are to be removed
  - More storage area is need for sound systems etc.
  - A lavatory, disabled accessible, should be installed, entered from the porch in the opposite corner to the current vestry.
27. A DAC site view took place on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2016. Much of what was proposed met with agreement, but the proposed removal of the pews, it was said, “needs to be justified”, but overall the scheme was said to be “generally acceptable but the need for a coherent matching design, with commissioned, not just catalogue furniture and fittings, was stressed. Sensible, given the potential costs of this project, the Church held a question and answer session about these proposals in October 2016. The petition was considered by the DAC on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017. The Faculty was further considered by the DAC at a meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017 (following an addendum to the faculty to remove the reredos paneling) when the key element was the replacing of pews by chairs (supported by the DAC), so the building could be used for “meetings, café style worship, exhibitions and other activities”. They considered the comments of the amenity societies (which I deal with below). On balance, the DAC was supportive of the proposals, subject to agreeing the carpet and details of the light fittings.
28. It was not until 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017 that the certificate of Public Notice was displayed until 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017. This was following the understandable delay when the church had to shift its application from the state planning to the faculty jurisdiction.
29. There were objectors. From the parish was a detailed and thoughtful letter from a Mrs. Mason, who had researched the history of the pews. She produced evidence that tended to show that the pews (or at last a number of them) were contemporary with the building, and was concerned that the Victorian Society had been misinformed. Her objections were based on “historical significance, heritage preservation considerations and whether the alterations are necessary or desirable”. She draws my attention to a reported authority, *St Anne Chasetown in the Diocese of Litchfield* 15<sup>th</sup> June 2013, which involved the proposed removal of utilitarian miners pews, of which some were ordered to be retained. Mrs. Mason has concerns that the Victorian Society may have been (inadvertently) misled as to the provenance of these pews. In response, the Church had Mr. Ian Serjeant produce a

detailed report on the pews, from his experience in re-ordering Methodist Church buildings and previously working for the Diocese of Gloucester. Having read his report and re-examined the pitch pine pews I accept Mr. Serjeant's opinion that such pitch pine pews were not common until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and are not as early as 1849. By reason of the lack of continuity if the numbers stenciled on them they are not in what may have been their original position on a floor regularly renewed. He suspects they may date from the 1904/05 redecoration. Umbrella holders had been fitted and removed, the screw fittings only remaining. The style of the pews he considers as similar to catalogues of church furnishings of the late 1890s. I am satisfied that these pews are not original to the original furnishings of the building. The original pews may have been replaced by these, equally simple. Now they show signs of damp and beetle attack. I prefer the evidence of Mr. Serjeant, but it was absolutely right for Mrs. Mason to raise this point for further investigation. I find that the pews are not original, albeit simple and in keeping with the building. Their provenance is uncertain.

30. Mrs. Mason also objected to the sound system proposals as being unnecessary in such a tiny church. She questioned the need for such space as might be created, the difficulty (and unsightliness) of storing the chairs and the change to the historic look of the Church. One of her main objections is that the proposals for these alterations are to make the Chapel more flexible for functions other than church services and celebrations.
31. I noted when I visited the church in late January that a few days later there were advertisements to a gig with a stand up-comedienne. I was originally concerned that such an evening was to take place in the church itself. I was wrong. It might have been somewhat uncomfortable for those who came to this kind of function to sit facing the Ten Commandments, the meaning of which would, I would have thought, have been as clear to that audience (however uncomfortable) as it was to bargees. However, I was assured that such an evening was arranged to encourage non-church goers into a social session in a local pub with church goers whom they might otherwise not have met. On reflection, there is little difference between this and the Victorian barrel organ playing hymns on the dock side to entice an audience to the Gospel. The church members of the Mariners put on various evenings of "special interest" for non- church goers, sports events, comedy nights and the like. It cannot be easy to attract the interest and engagement of the unchurched at a level beyond food handouts. The Mariners congregation is succeeding to do this. I think it right to reflect that the amount of steady work put in by the Mariners' congregation (often unappreciated) has borne fruit, in contrast to the congregation of seven when the Church was gradually decaying and empty in its (not quite) original

state. Few came then to appreciate it. Successful congregations are apt to forget that their artistic heritage can only continue to be supported and sustained by an active congregation. However impressive its architecture a church needs people (and money) to survive unless it is to become an empty un-used shell. If a church is closed or abandoned, then it would fall to local heritage groups to finance the building's survival, unless a local council takes it on. Heritage groups must appreciate that if congregations did not keep a church open, who would? There is no "them", only "you".

32. Perhaps both groups need each other and a working arrangement has to be come to, otherwise a congregation declines or leaves a building which they have outgrown (if they are not allowed to alter it sensitively). Many deserving churches buildings may not receive the necessary financial support from non-church going people, who thought a church building "sweet" or "picturesque" but only visited for a daughter's wedding or a Christmas carol service. Visiting a Church once on holiday and writing in the visitors' book "So peaceful ..so English" does not deal with the gutters and the damp or the bats. Tourists do not rod drains. Churchwardens do. Churches, even architecturally impressive ones, do close and are decommissioned if they have no ongoing active support. It is no good complaining when the closure comes. What did you do? Even for a non- Christian, helping a "Friends" group (properly managed and working with the Church itself) would be something. If active Christian church communities fail to keep /build up their worshipping members, and financial support, on a broader base, the ecclesiastical use of a Church building will cease. The whole local community will lose out when it may be too late. If people disagree with sensible and necessary re-ordering of an existing church building to keep it in use, then they should think what redundant churches have been turned into: a supermarket, climbing walls, dance studios, or even demolition.
33. As I have said before, and not entirely facetiously, it must have been dispiriting to have been the last Druid (if such there were) at Stonehenge.
34. As I have already mentioned this congregation at the Mariners has happily and successfully outgrown this church. They have a large hall and basement (suitable for youth services) round the corner. Mrs. Mason says that the Rev'd. Mr. Osmond told her the cost of redeveloping that was going to be some £100,000 as against £86,000 for the church. Having seen the church hall and the use to which it is being put, I prefer the argument put forward by the Petitioners as to the utilisation of all available space. Mrs. Mason also makes the well-rehearsed arguments with which I am all too familiar about the usefulness of pew seating itself.

35. Another parishioner, Mr. Stanley also objected in part. He agreed to the changing of the lights and heating, and the installation of the inner door and to the toilet. He complains that no ballot was taken in respect of parishioners' views. (I bear in mind that because there are, it would seem, no PCC elections, the parishioners here cannot reflect any objection by voting on or off member so their church council). He objected to the costly and unnecessary sound system and the effect of carpeting (though that last item has now, sensibly, been jettisoned). He also queried the need for these alterations overall. Some months later he wrote to withdraw his objections, but gave no reason for so doing. I trust no pressure was put on him to do so.

## **CONSULTATIONS AND OBJECTIONS**

36. As well as lay objectors, other bodies had to be consulted. In the documents before me is an undated document which appears to emanate from a note from the local authority planning authority. To which is typed the name of Charlotte Bowles-Lewis, described as the Local Authority representative and Principal Conservation and design Office at Gloucester City Council. It is not clear to me, as her document is undated, at what point this document evolved in this whole process, but presumably it was when the Church were in negotiation with the local planners. In the event Ms. Bowles-Lewis's comment can be summarised as follows:-

- Approval for the insertion of glazed entrance doors, as this “will assist in opening up views of the chapel from the docks public realm
- The toilet is justified but ventilation and extraction vents will need careful thought to ensure there are no visible extracts or vents”
- The change to the flooring needs to consider any issue in change of levels and to ensure the protection of floor tiles in the main entrance
- The minor relocation of plaques.....is not objectionable and the loss of the flag holder is not of concern
- However, her major concern is the loss of all the pews, which may or may not be original (she wants this to be determined) She makes the point that the loss of all the pews and their replacement with chairs does not add any extra seating, but only allows a more flexible use of the remaining space “which is already provided at their premises on Llanthony Road”
- She requires further information on the provenance of the pews, and additional details on the ventilation/extraction details for the toilet.

37. The Victorian Society were also consulted, and replied on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2016: ***“we do not object to the majority of the work proposed, such as the removal of the pews and the installation of a toilet... nor to the type of chairs proposed”***. They did object to the proposed carpeting. They recommended a good wood or stone floor, which would leave the area of encaustic tiles round the altar exposed. The Church have agreed and do not pursue carpeting .
38. On 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016 Historic England also replied having been referred to the 2013 Heritage Statement prepared by Robert Limbrick {sic} though the photographs in that document did not reflect the current state of the church. However, they, too, did not object to the proposals for the ***“dais and screen, lobby, new toilet and replacement floor”***. They considered that the removal of the pews ***“also has logic”***, but urged the retention of some sections to define the line of sight through the aisle in particular. They also wanted the DAC to review the proposed light fitting and heaters.
39. The Ancient Monuments Society also commented. Their concerns being as follows:
- ***The proposed removal of the pulpit with its ship's wheel “ ...a charming evocation of its original use. It is unkind to that memory and it should stay***
  - ***They urge that the panelling behind the altar should stay, being of simple blind gothic design, rather than installing tongue and groove paneling***
  - ***They are very concerned about the Commandment Boards being moved from the front of the church, where they were placed to balance the altar and emphasise the truths conveyed by the altar, to the back***
  - ***They urge that the projector screen planned for the front end be capable of being rolled up when not in use to reveal the Commandment Boards and the Clayton and Bell glass in the lancets.***
  - ***They object to the erasure of the “Praise the Lord” banner above the altar***

There is much of note in these objections. The Church do now agree that the pulpit with its maritime wheel should stay. I regard this as an essential reflection of the church's history. As I have said it can stay tucked quietly and inoffensively into its present corner. I completely agree with the AMS



comments on the retention of the pulpit. I also take the view that the "Praise the Lord" painted banner should stay. Photographs show it is not original but it reflects earlier decoration. It is harmless, and removal would just be for the sake of it. I am (as were the Church council members) puzzled by the AMS objections to a "projection screen". That, apparently, was never proposed. This church wants their TV monitors.

In respect of the removal of the panelling behind the altar, it is clearly not original and has been somewhat crudely fixed by screws at an indeterminate period. This fitting is really a gesture towards a backing for the altar table. One cannot call it a reredos. It serves no great purpose, and could be improved. In discussion the Church agreed that the Credence boards and the Lord's Prayer should be re-inserted, but they could be rehung along the liturgical south wall i.e. at right angle to the liturgical east (front) wall. They are attractive pieces, match both the architecture and the churchmanship, and do no harm being on the wall. They should be moved but re-instated.

40. It is of note that matters seemed to be developing independently. The petitioners had already taken the opportunity of replying to these objections. They had made some concessions in the course of discussions: good quality wooden flooring rather than carpet, covering but not removing the tiles round the altar table, removing the ship's wheel from the pulpit and keeping it, removing the wooden backing to the altar table. As I have set out above even more concessions from their wish list was achieved. The pulpit stays. It was common ground that the entrance draft porch could be reconsidered. All agreed that the original outer door stays, then there will be a glass door. The church agreed to go back to their designer to reconsider and reconfigure the inner draft door, which is large, ugly and intrusive, especially if the surrounding improved kitchen and toilet are to be redesigned.
41. What should now be done? Can this church be improved/altered in a way which may be reversible? Given the legal tests I have to apply, this reordering is necessary, and much of it is uncontroversial. The Church are (in conjunction with the DAC) not just fully there yet. The lighting can be improved. Many items required can be accommodated, but I will want to see far more detailed plans than at present before me, and matters such as lighting and heating must be approved by the DAC, as I have only the sketchiest of details, nor full clarification of the costings. I also want to be reassured about the electricity and mortaring, and the damp problem in the floor. No objector wanted a Consistory Court hearing, but were content for the matter to proceed on written submissions.
42. I visited the church on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018, and again on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2018. The apparent lack of sensitive and sensible oversight which the Faculty

jurisdiction would have imposed was painfully obvious. As I have said, the Board which contains the Lord's Prayer had been crudely chiselled from the wall, leaving an un-plastered gap on which was a TV monitor with a trailing electric cable had been hung to match one on the opposite wall. Flags of the Royal Naval Association, Gloucester Branch, and the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service were laid up, but have been removed. Only the flag holders remained. I am told that the latter had been disbanded. The flags, are apparently, rolled up in the church hall. I was initially surprised by this, especially as the headquarters of the former were within minutes' walk of the Church. It seemed churlish just to remove flags, deposited, within living memory, with reverence, in this church, just to produce a different ambience. Many countries in the world currently have the freedom to practice their Christian faith by the exertions of bodies like the Royal Navy. I was really very concerned on my first visit on my own to this church. I had thought that, at the least, these bodies should be offered their flags back for safe keeping, and/or to decide where they may be placed in another church prepared to honour the war dead of the City. However, the reality of the situation, as was later explained to me was somewhat different. The flags had been moved off the wall as their hung height blocked the congregation's view of the tv screens. The flags were placed in the unused pulpit. Unfortunately they were seized by a drunk who ran round the local streets waving them until they were rescued by the Gloucester town crier and returned to the church. They are being held safely in storage until, in the re-ordering they will be hung high out of harm's reach at the back of the Church. A note explaining the absence of the flags might have, with a little more thought, have been placed by the flag holders because passing visitors might have been rather saddened by their absence. As it happens, these flags will return and be rehung high on the back wall of the Church after the re-ordering.

43. Similarly, the credence boards and the Lord's Prayer Board can be replaced and rehung. They do not in any way affect or restrict the number of worshippers who can be seated in the church or stand or move about or sing or dance. I am now informed that they will all be rehung, albeit moved to a different side wall. It appears that it might be considered an embarrassment to have a congregation sit facing a wall with the Ten Commandments displayed. I was told they gave out a negative image. It is as if, by placing these boards at the back of the church, they are out of obvious sight and mind. It may well be, but, for merely one example, that to sit facing a board on which: "thou shalt not commit adultery" was written might serve some Christian purpose for a new worshipping body of people perhaps more accustomed to soap operas on television.

44. The extraordinary justification for such a requested move was that “the {Commandments} are overpowering and in archaic English that is anachronistic to most people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. I would have thought that somewhat insulting to visitors and congregations alike. The Church now appears to accept that they all should be rehung, albeit moved to a different wall.
45. However, in outline only, I do approve the following:
- The introduction of a glass outer door
  - The relighting and reheating of the church subject to DAC approval of the detailed designs
  - The installation of a new kitchen unit/servery where the vestry is at present. Perhaps additional storage might be inserted in that?
  - The installation of a toilet, disabled accessible, and entered from the porch
  - The introduction of suitable monitors and sound system into the church with advice being provided by the DAC ‘s relevant advisers, with specific approval for the rewiring
  - The rehangng of the flags higher up on the back wall
  - The repainting of the church, and the laying of a good quality wooden floor (on the assumption that damp will not continue to be a problem)
46. I do not approve of the following:
- The repainting over of the remaining banner motto, for which no justification has been given
  - The re-siting of the Credence Boards and Ten Commandments to the back. Indeed, The Lord’s Prayer Board must be reinstated in its original place. In fairness at the site meeting the church committee appeared to accept that these could be moved to a side wall
  - The pulpit (and adjacent captain’s chair) can remain as now tucked in a corner. I had tried the pulpit and did not find, as alleged, that it was unstable. They both reflect the church's history. The Church now accept that the pulpit can stay in its present un-obtrusive corner



- Heating and damp have got to be properly and thoroughly investigated and the inappropriate use of Portland cement on the outer mortar joints resolved
- Arguments are made for a light contemporary look, but more detail is required to assess the effect.
- The Church is also going to consider a re-figuring of the internal entrance door porch. A glass outer door is non-controversial. Perhaps something a little more attractive than the present internal arrangement could be worked up while the toilet/kitchen alterations are being considered.
- The pews can go although the Church might wish to retain a few as an historic reminder, and because, a few placed round the walls still might be useful, but the DAC must approve the design of any replacement chairs.

47. I would wish to stress that I have considered the objections raised in this matter and the Petitioners' replies. Had this been a church on the edge of redundancy which the Gloucester Council wanted to take over as a tourist site, it might have stayed in its present (but not totally original state), used only occasionally then alteration, other than necessary maintenance then it might have stayed but this church is a living entity and its users want change. There should be a full photographic record of its present state before any new work starts.
  
48. There is much to be funded in the above, and time can be given for that. However, more worked up detail is required. What I have approved so far will allow this church to continue its work in an improved, less messy atmosphere. The Church now also wants to remove their stone font, and will have to amend their petition for that, and provide justification and proposals as to what will happen to it.
  
49. For the moment I will grant in effect outline planning permission for this scheme. Its full details and funding must be further worked up, in discussion with the DAC and then approved by me, but fund raising for this work can now proceed.

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018

June Rodgers

Chancellor