Introduction

“When toilets and a kitchen are in a church the building is used much more frequently”. The report on Rural Churches “Released for Mission” made recommendations on how to remove barriers to mission and growth in the rural church and included this statement.

The provision of basic facilities to enable anyone using the church to be welcomed with a cup of tea and have a toilet available is recognised as a reasonable requirement in any church building in regular use, even a highly-listed historic church. Some imagination may be needed to find the most appropriate way of providing such facilities and this leaflet looks at the issues involved and gives some ideas of possible solutions.

Water supply

Many churches already have a water supply, even if it only goes as far as a tap in the churchyard. If there is no mains water, a first step will be to investigate whether a mains connection is feasible and affordable.

- If a connection is to be made into a neighbouring property, a legal easement should be obtained to protect the arrangement for the future.
- A possible option is harvesting rainwater from the roof and storing it in a tank, for use for washing up or for a toilet; not however as drinking water, which would have to be brought into the church as required.

Drainage

Drainage is normally needed from a sink used for washing up tea cups etc and from a toilet.

- If the only waste water is from occasional washing-up, it may be permissible to run the drain into an existing rainwater (surface water) drain.
- Mains drainage can be explored for feasibility and cost. If a connection is to be made into a neighbouring property, a legal easement should be obtained to protect the arrangement for the future.
- Some churches install a chemical toilet in the churchyard as a short- to medium-term measure. The location needs to be discreet and possibly screened by fencing and/or planting, but also close enough to a road to allow access for emptying.
- Eco or composting toilets are another solution that can be considered. There is a composting toilet outside Stondon church.
- Other drainage solutions include a cesspit or septic tank in the churchyard or on church-owned land nearby. A septic tank needs to be accessible from a road for emptying.
- For rural churches with low usage, a trench-arch drainage system provides an effective and less invasive solution than a cesspit or septic tank. A porosity test is needed to identify whether the soil conditions are appropriate. Trench-arch systems have been in use for at least 5 years at Turvey, Willington and Carlton.
- Where the introduction of water-supply or drainage involves excavation in the churchyard (trenches for pipes, cesspits, septic tanks, etc.), or where pipework has to be routed through the fabric of the church building, an archaeological survey may be required.
Toilets

Smaller churches and larger churches with a nearby hall will probably only need one toilet, which ideally should be accessible to wheelchair users. This could be within the existing church building; in a small extension to the church; in a detached building in the churchyard.

Considerations include:

- The pattern of use of the church for services, concerts, weddings and funerals, Messy Church, village events, etc
- Whether the church has a traditional layout with the east end as the liturgical focus, in which case it may be best to have a toilet towards the west end in the context of welcome and hospitality
- Any additional building will usually cost more to construct, maintain and repair than an enclosure within the church
- Ease of access for wheelchair users to the proposed location and space in the location to provide a toilet enclosure at least 1500 x 2220 mm (but there may be situations in a listed church where a reasonable compromise is needed)

Some possibilities are:

- Within the base of the tower (e.g. Cockayne Hatley)
- At the west end of an aisle (Haynes; Marston Morteyne)
- In a vestry (Wheathampstead)
- In a small extension, often via an existing north door (Sundon; Stagsden; Little Amwell)
- In a separate building in the churchyard (Meppershall – converted shed; Eversholt – new building)
- Composting (Stondon)

Tea points/kitchenettes

Most churches need somewhere to prepare and serve drinks and items such as cakes and ploughman’s lunches prepared off-site. [A small number of churches require a full catering kitchen which must comply with current food safety/hygiene requirements for commercial kitchens.]

Points to think about:

- If possible, locate the kitchenette/tea point close to a circulation/gathering space
- If there is not much room available, just have a cupboard for crockery/concealed sink/water heater and serve onto a trestle table - this can be easier than tucking the kitchenette away in the tower base and having lots of people crowding round trying to serve and be served
- Where will a water supply come from and drainage run to?
- An instant water heater avoids the use of urns or kettles, which produce moisture that can affect timberwork and cause condensation

Generally

It is often a good idea to visit some other churches to see what they have done and to find out how well the arrangement works in practice. Do have a look at the examples below – churches can be contacted using details in the On-line Directory on the diocesan website: http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/diocesan-directory/. For further information and guidance on your project, please contact the DAC Team:

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Examples

Cockayne Hatley
Toilet in tower base

Haynes
Toilet at end of aisle

Porch toilets:

**Sundon** (left - in porch, with adjacent mower store)

and

**Stagsden** (right, in extension)

Meppershall

Toilet in separate building (left and right)
Furneux Pelham

“North porch” extension with kitchenette and toilet

Campton

West enclosure for meeting room with toilet adjacent

Ashwell (left)

Enclosed kitchen and

Watford, Christ Church (right)

Open unit

Open kitchenettes at Harrold (left) and Chalgrave (right)
Kitchens in cupboards:

**Boxmoor** (left);

**Sundon** (right);

**Aldenham** (below left);

**Dunstable Priory** (below right)

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**Meppershall**

Servery (left) and kitchenette (right)

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**Northaw** – just a cupboard? (left)

No – a fully-functioning tea point (right)
Marston Morteyne (left) and Bedford St Paul (below)
Mix and match – kitchenettes and mobile servery units – (also useful for leaflets)