



ANGLICAN FUTURES

THINKING TOGETHER

OUTSIDE THE BOX: CHURCH WITHOUT WALLS

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Gafcon UK provides hope and a home to all who affirm the 2008 Jerusalem Declaration.

Anglican Futures is one way in which we equip faithful Anglicans by encouraging us all to:

- Think Ahead (in the light of today's evidence)
- Think Afresh (in the light of eternal truth)

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Outside the Box: Church Without Walls

1. Learning from the Experts: Push and Pull Factors

When people migrate from one place to another, geographers describe their reasons for moving in terms of push and pull factors.



Push factors are reasons to leave one place - and pull factors draw you to another place.

In our Anglican Futures discussions revealed that both push and pull factors were at work as churches considered when and how to operate outside their traditional buildings

Push Factors - tended to be pragmatic and often related to some restriction, which meant the church could not meet inside the building. For example:

- It's being renovated
- The boiler is broken
- It's too small - particularly - now we have to socially distance
- We're not allowed to meet there
- The cost of maintaining the building will overwhelm us

Pull Factors - tended to be principled decisions, related to a desire to meet those who wouldn't normally come into the building. For example:

- A desire to raise the profile of the church - surveys/ handing out leaflets in the High Street or other public place.
- Opportunity to connect with new people.
- Allowing people to observe 'church' without having to come through the doors.
- Creating a more interactive environment - which makes it easier for some children (and adults) to engage.

One of the most exciting aspects of the Anglican Futures conversation was the passion for evangelism that this conversation provoked. Though most joined the conversation for pragmatic reasons, often associated with managing the Covid-19 restrictions, all left inspired to think about how moving outside their building in different ways, at different times, might help proclaim Christ faithfully in their communities.



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2. Responding to Covid-19: Meeting outside the box

Churches are finding a number of different ways to gather together - despite the restrictions in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19. here are just a few examples:

Church in the Churchyard/ Car Park

Some churches have made use of their large churchyards (separate from the graveyard) or car parks. This has allowed more people to gather for a socially distanced meeting than would have been possible in the church building.

In some cases, services have been similar to what would have taken place inside the building - offering people an opportunity for people to 'see' what goes on inside on a 'normal' Sunday. Others have seen the change of venue as an opportunity to do something completely different.

Drive-In Church

A number of churches, and groups of churches, have organised 'Drive-in' church services. Christian Concern have produced a video, which explains the steps Newquay Wave Church took to ensure that their service was Covid compliant - including coping with unexpected motorbikes!

<https://christianconcern.com/resource/how-to-organise-a-covid-compliant-drive-in-service/>



'Festival' Church

Other churches have hired sports grounds or farmer's fields, so that there is plenty of space to socially distance. Using a 'neutral' venue, setting up the meeting for a relaxed feel and encouraging families with young children to 'mark out' space with rugs or gazebos, help to create a 'festival' feel. A shorter service and children's activity bags seem to be popular with those running outdoor services.



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3. Learning from the Experts: Covid-19 legislation

England

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2020¹ is the key legal document for church gatherings, whether inside or outside, in England.

The key sections - 5(1),(2) and (3) - say that, at the time of writing 1st August 2020:

Gatherings of more than 30 people are not permitted in private dwellings (including gardens), vessels not used for public transport, or public land which is not operated by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic institution or a public body as a visitor attraction.

Gatherings of more than 30 people are permitted if:

- a) It is not in a private dwelling or garden;
- b) It is organised by a business, a charitable or benevolent institution, a public or political body;
- c) The gathering organiser has carried out a risk assessment which would satisfy the requirements of regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999; AND
- d) The gathering organiser has taken all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the coronavirus

Things to consider for a risk assessment include how you avoid those with Covid symptoms entering your gathering, how you will manage social distancing, sanitising etc, and how you will manage Track and Trace.

The Church of England have produced their own guidance² which notes that churchyards can be used if managed by the PCC. Singing is restricted.

Wales

In Wales, the regulations do not allow gatherings of more than 30 people unless you are providing childcare or summercamps.³

Scotland

In Scotland all worship services are limited to 50 people. However, there may be room for larger outdoor gatherings if organised by a charity and “provided they take reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of transmission, in line with COVID-19 secure guidance and including completion of a risk assessment.”⁴

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/684/contents/made>

² <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches#na> and <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/COVID%2019%20Outdoor%20Worship%20and%20Churchyards%20v3.2.pdf>

³ <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance#section-39241>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household-from-4-july>



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4. Connecting with People Where They Are

One pull factor that takes churches outside their building is the opportunity to connect with those who wouldn't normally come through the doors of the church building. For some lockdown was the trigger - for others it was just what they've always done



Amazing Grace

Take a PA, a recording of Amazing Grace and vicars who want to reach their parishes and it doesn't matter what the 'value' of the postcode - it was great to hear stories



of churches seeking to reach out to their communities during lockdown. A brief message, a song and the Lord's prayer was all it took to speak to thousands of people, locked in at home.

The Street Church, Hartford CT

Admittedly this example comes from the USA— but what would it look like to not just reach out to the homeless but accept that the homeless community need a church too? "It's about building a community around people who feel like no one cares about them."

<https://newwineskins.org/blog/2018/3/26/church-on-the-street>



Standing on the Street

"We got permission to be on the street as the new football ground opened - and we gave away free books, free leaflets, free sweets for the kids - just to make connections with people"

As we talked, there was a recognition that there were people who would never be reached by church members of social media. So, whether it's a football ground or a farmer's market - it works to go where people are.

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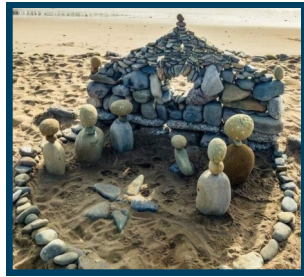


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5. Connecting with People Throughout the Year

One aspect of the Anglican Futures discussion that really inspired people was thinking about how they could make use of yearly events to reach their communities.

Christmas

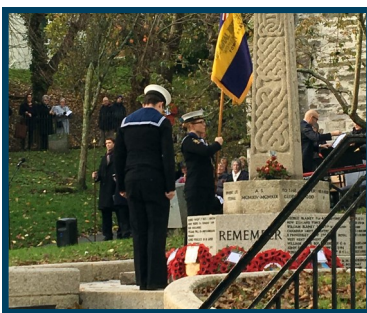


Christmas is often thought of a time to invite people into the church building but this year that might not be so easy - and with our mission-minded approach how do we reach those we might not know, or who are put off by coming into a church building? Those taking part in the Anglican Futures event had several tried and tested ideas. A live nativity at a local farm, a carol service in a local park (possibly with an après-ski/ alpine/ German market) theme, carol singing at a local supermarket or door-to-door or formal links with local events such as switching on the Christmas lights or Santa Runs.

Key to the success of many of these events was offering something 'free' to people who have no concept of grace. This simple act opens up all kinds of opportunities to talk about Jesus to people who may have thought the 'church' was not for them.

Other Times of Year

Whether it is moving the Remembrance service outside to the Memorial, or planning for an



Easter sunrise service (where you can see the sun rise) - doing something different will often attract new people. Some churches make the most of local carnivals, festivals or sporting events, or they mark going back-to-school or the end-of-year, and seek to take 'church' to those involved. Others celebrate summer with an outdoor service at the beach or in the local park. It is not hard to find 5-6 reasons to meet outside the box each year - which might just reach a new group of people in your community.

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6. Connecting with people through the outdoors

Don't worry we are not suggesting any pagan rituals. It's just a case of recognising that some people, particularly children (or the parents' of wriggly children) feel more comfortable outdoors. For some it allows them to observe 'church' without the feeling of being trapped in a building and a culture they don't understand - for most the outdoors is more neutral territory.

Forest Church

Some may feel a little uncomfortable with some of the ideas espoused by the official Forest Church organisation but the basic idea of a short outdoor service with time for fun activities and time to get to know the families involved is a good one. One church¹, involved with Anglican Futures, were faced with a number of families who brought children to be baptised but struggled to attend church regularly. For them a monthly Forest Church service was the answer - and it now reaches 50-60 people in a small rural community.

It begins with a short (15 minute) service with a worship song, confessional liturgy, a bible story and a short talk. This is followed by activities which the parents are encouraged to join in, such as building a hedgehog from leaves, imaginative walks, cooking marshmallows on whittled sticks over an open fire or sparkler prayers and time to for folk to meet and chat. It would be great to hear of examples of this style of outreach in an urban environment.



Chalk Walks

Another idea, born out of lockdown, was to use the churchyard as an invitation for people to explore the Christian faith using a 'chalk walk'. Using words and simple pictures drawn with chalk, people are able to explore aspects of the Christian faith - the Easter story, the Lord's prayer, the prodigal son - at their own pace. In a culture that is becoming increasingly hostile to the Christian faith, such opportunities to consider the claims of Christ anonymously can be a helpful first step. Leaving a web site address or another way to connect with further information allows people to take another step.

¹ <https://kairosconnexion.org/forest-church/>





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ANGLICAN FUTURES WILL RETURN IN SEPTEMBER

If you have joined one of our online events and have not yet given us feedback - please take the time to complete our short survey - your opinions matter to us.

<https://forms.gle/Kjiv2knD7rcCFVXK7>

If you would like to be informed about future events or have ideas of topics that you would like us to explore, or would like further information about any of our previous discussions...

please contact Susie Leafé by email: susie@gafconuk.org

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