



26th March 2026

Caring for your church – news, advice and more. Sent to all Clergy, Readers, ALMs, LLMs, Churchwardens, Treasurers and Deanery Lay Chairs.

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With thanks for all you do to maintain our wonderful churches as places where people can encounter God, parishes can reach out in mission and local communities can be transformed. We wish you a Joyful Easter!

The DAC Team

Emma Critchley, *DAC Secretary*

Ann Wise, *Historic Church Buildings Support Officer*

Seamus McGibbon, *Pastoral and Closed Churches Officer*

Tom Abraham, *Net Zero Carbon Officer*

Mayra Shaw, *Team Secretary – Church Buildings*

Liz West, *Church Buildings Maintenance Officer*

Richard Jackson, *Local Church Income Support Officer*

DAC, Pastoral and Advisory Team

NEWS! Church of England Lead
Bishop for Church Buildings to be the
new Bishop of St Albans



Bishop Andrew Rumsey has been announced as the next Bishop of St Albans. He is currently the Bishop of Ramsbury in the Diocese of Salisbury and serves nationally as the Church of England's lead bishop for church buildings. Bishop Andrew has written extensively about the importance of place and is a trustee of both the Churches Conservation Trust and the National Churches Trust, describing church buildings as "a priceless legacy". We look forward to working with Bishop Andrew when he takes up his post in the autumn. Read the full announcement [here](#).

1. Information and updates

Energy Footprint Tool



The [Energy Footprint Tool](#) is open in the [Parish Returns Portal](#) for completion until 30 June 2026. The National Church's guidance on completing the tool is available [here](#) [The Energy Footprint Tool | The Church of England](#). The information you submit is invaluable in helping us understand the costs and carbon emissions associated with operating different heating systems and how our overall carbon

footprint is changing over time. Completion of the EFT is a pre-requisite for accessing both national church and diocesan funding streams related to decarbonising churches and halls, including funding towards replacement heating systems.

[Read more about the Energy Footprint Tool](#)

Welcome: Sally Ackroyd



Our aim to reach net zero carbon is ambitious with a broad scope covering our parishes, clergy housing and schools, and we have not been able to be as responsive and supportive to your needs as we would like. So we are delighted to welcome Sally Ackroyd as Net Zero Carbon Support Officer who will be working two days per week supporting Tom and other members of the DAC team so that we can better support you on your journeys. This includes supporting you to choose the most effective heating solution for your church that is affordable to run.

[Please get in touch with any questions](#)

DAC annual report



Have you ever wondered what the DAC does? Each year we produce an annual Report for the Diocesan Synod.

[Read the 2025 DAC Annual Report Here](#)

VAT and Climate Change Levy overpayments



If you are being charged 20% VAT and CCL (Climate Change Levy) on your energy bills—including electricity, gas, oil, LPG, and coal—you may be entitled to relief as a registered charity. You should contact your energy supplier to inform them of your charitable status and ask about their process for claiming this relief. Under the current rules you should be eligible for 100% relief on the climate change levy, and you should be charged VAT at the reduced rate of 5%. You can find out more about the CCL relief [here](#):

Exemptions from Climate Change Levy – GOV.UK

And find out more about the reduced rate VAT [here](#):

VAT for charities: What qualifies for VAT relief – GOV.UK.

It is worth checking that the right exemption is being applied as if the supplier has been applying a de minimis exemption and your consumption increases over certain limits then the standard rates may be applied. These exemptions currently apply to electricity, gas, LPG, heating oil, and solid fuels including coal. Hopefully there aren't any churches still heated by coal.

A new home sought for Crucifix and Stations of the Cross –designed by John Hayward



We hope the closed church of St Michael Letchworth will soon be transferred to another Christian church. As they don't have a tradition of using stations of the cross or a crucifix, these items are available for another church to acquire and collect for use in a church in the Diocese, subject to necessary permissions. There are also some other items of liturgical furniture. Please contact [Seamus McGibbon](#) or [Jenny Dart](#) for more information or if you are interested in making an offer.



Please note that the following four items are only available for Christian worship and arrangements for their removal will need to be made:

Main Altar, of Portland stone with a gold fishes and loaves design, please note that there is a chip on top which can be clearly seen in the attached photograph.

Lady Chapel Altar, of Portland stone with gold carved lettering.

Font, material unknown, note that the cover is missing.

Pulpit, panelled wood with steps rising at its sides.

Please email for more information

Candle sticks available

Two pairs of small altar candle sticks are available free of charge, from a former Chapel of Ease in the Parish of High Cross. Please contact the DAC team if you are interested.

Contact us

The Church of England: now on WhatsApp



You can now follow The Church of England on WhatsApp. This is a new channel which allows the Church of England to send one-way, public broadcasting updates such as prayers, stories and news from across the church. With around 80 per cent of the UK population using WhatsApp, it provides an opportunity to reach people who don't engage on other platforms. Follow the below link. Once you subscribe, you can find the channel in the 'Updates' section of WhatsApp.

Sucscribe to the CofE WhatsApp Channel Here

Hertfordshire Fire Service sets up a Christian network

A group of fire officers is setting up a Christian Network within the Hertfordshire Fire Service and they want to build bridges with local churches, attend services and give free fire advice to the communities and congregations in each church. If you are a Hertfordshire parish do find out more through your local fire service.

Could something similar be set up in Bedfordshire?

You may already have attended one of Ann Wise's emergency planning webinars, in which case you will know she always encourages parishes to get to know their local Fire Service.

Contact Ann Wise

2. Training and Resources

Top Tips for a successful application to the National Heritage Lottery Fund – online session

We are delighted to be joined by Judith Carruthers (Senior Engagement Manager) and Mary White (Engagement) from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to learn more about applying for a grant for this free online 2 hour session.

You'll be taken through the application process, how to secure funding and manage projects effectively. Attendees will be invited to send in any questions prior to the session. We will be recording the presentation so we can use it for further sessions.

More information and Book Here

Faculties, List B and how to apply for them – online sessions



In these one-hour online sessions, Emma debunks some myths and provides practical explanation about faculties and List B permissions and how to apply for them. Click the following links to book:

Saturday 16 May, 10am – Book Here

Monday 18 May, 10am – Book Here

Tuesday 19 May, 7pm – Book Here

Clergy training in person – Caring for your church and churchyard or church garden

The DAC team often offer parish workshops on aspects of the care and development of church buildings, but sometimes clergy find it difficult to attend if the dates are agreed at short notice. To make planning easier, we are setting up a programme of termly clergy training events in person. Dates for 2026 are *Thursday 21 May* and *Wednesday 30 September*.

Curates and clergy newly in post are particularly encouraged to attend as many sessions as possible, but all clergy or ministers in charge of a parish are very welcome. We already offer churchwardens training about churches and churchyards as part of the Archdeacons' termly programme.

The next event is:

Date: Thursday 21 May 10:00 – 12:30

Location: St Andrew's Kimbolton Road, Bedford, MK40 2PF

This workshop is an introduction to church maintenance, working with an architect or surveyor, quinquennial inspections, repairs and DAC advice.

More information and Book Here

Accessibility – supporting those in ministry and leadership in our churches



Many of you will have read the interview with Bishop Richard as he celebrates and reflects on 40 years of ministry. *At The Gates* is a book Bishop Richard refers to, full of reflections on the experience of people with a disability in the Church and challenges for everyone: *At The Gates Disability, Justice and the Churches* by Naomi Lawson Jacobs, Emily Richardson.

Celebrating 40 years of Ministry: Bishop Richard reflects

New Funds Available

There is a Diocesan Accessibility Grant that parishes can access, if they are wishing to make changes to the church building (or hall) to support those in leadership and ministry where access issues are a barrier. Visit this page to read information about the grant and for the application form.

Diocesan Accessibility Grants

New grant programmes are being rolled out nationally from the Church of England. Grant applications will be administered directly by the national team. Further support for applications and submission deadlines will be available over the coming months.

Church of England Parish Accessibility Fund

Save The Date – webinar

“Decarbonising Churches – Voices of

Experience"

Date: Thursday 30 April, 19:30 – 20:30

Location: Online (Zoom)

The Diocese of Ely are hosting a webinar on behalf of all dioceses in the East of England titled "Decarbonising Churches – Voices of Experience", where you can hear from parishes that have already decarbonised and switched to electric heating.

If you are interested in attending you can sign up here

If you are unable to sign up, email the team below and the link can be sent directly to you:

Email the NZC team

3. Environment

Community Payback projects – help with maintaining your churchyard



We want to encourage better engagement with probationers supervised by the Prison and Probation service. Community Payback is a good opportunity for churches to welcome the workforce and thank them for the work they have done and helping the people to feel valued. One way of doing this is to invite probationers to be involved in churchyard maintenance, ground clearance, etc. The Prison and Probation service says they "rely on these to help our People on Probation complete their UPW hours as painlessly as possible".

For Hertfordshire, please contact Nicolette Rawlings

nicolette.rawlings@justice.gov.uk

In Bedfordshire are Jacqui Layne, Bedford area Jacqui.Layne@justice.gov.uk or

Pam Gray, Luton area Pam.Gray@justice.gov.uk

The service is happy to receive project requests direct to them by email but here is the link for any Churches to nominate a project if outside of these areas or if it is easier for them to fill out the form on the web site.

Nominate a Community Payback project

Living Churchyards



The Living Churchyard Project aims to help churches manage their churchyards in a wildlife-friendly way, while being sensitive to the needs of all churchyard users, paying particular heed to the primary function as a resting place for the dead and a contemplative place for friends and relatives of those buried there.

Judith Evans has championed the Living Churchyard project for many years, providing surveys of churchyards and management plans for PCCs, often in conjunction with the Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire parishes, both County Wildlife Trust and provide resources. Eva Arulmalar will be working alongside Judith Evans to promote the Living Churchyard resources and approach, with a view to taking this over in a year's time.

Visit the Living Churchyards page here

Meadow management sign for 2026

Attractive posters can be downloaded free from the CfGA website which explain to the local community why areas of grass have been left uncut and how it is being managed.

Free meadow management sign available here

NEWS: Flowery Burial Grounds

Clifton Churchyard is a County Wildlife Site and is [now listed](#) as a Flowery Burial Ground. Discover UK burial grounds rich in wildflowers and biodiversity, with the best visiting period from late May to late July.

Find a Flowery Burial Ground

News from the Diocesan Environment Officer

Did you know that Rachel Johnston is the Diocesan Environment Officer? If you'd like to contact her please email environment@stalbans.anglican.org She's our 'go to' person for all things on how the environment can affect churches and works closely with the DAC to raise issues on biodiversity

Latest News from Rachel Johnston

External Oil Tanks



With the recent increase in fuel prices there is likely to be an increase in thefts of oil from oil tanks. This can lead to pollution as well as financial losses. As we are coming out of the heating season it is suggested that if at all possible parishes should refrain from topping up their oil tanks at present to minimise the risks of theft. Previously when there have been high oil costs tankers have been followed to identify oil tanks with the most fuel in to enable them to be targeted. It is also suggested that you regularly check that your oil tank has not been tampered with if this is something you don't currently do. If nothing else, make sure you keep churchyard gates closed as a deterrent.

CofE Security and Crime Prevention Advice

4. Maintaining your building

Recommended monthly tasks

Major restoration and improvement projects are important but routine checks and maintenance with small 'stitch in time' repairs are equally vital. They have proved excellent value for money, preventing much greater damage and costs in the future.

The tasks for the next few months, taken from SPAB's maintenance calendar are on our website check the link below.

Advice about caring for your church building

5. Grants and Funding

National Church Net Zero Carbon Grants

Information on the grant funding available from the national church towards projects that deliver net zero carbon in our churches will be available soon, and will be published on our website. We already know that two of the qualifying criteria will be completion of the Energy Footprint Tool, and being registered for Eco Church, so these are things you can be completing ready for when the funding becomes available. If you would like assistance with Eco Church please contact Rachel Johnston by email as per below link.

Email Rachel Johnston

Please email the NZC Team with any questions

6. Upcoming Events

2026 is Clothall Church Year of the Birds!



Details of Clothall, St Mary the Virgin church, East Window

There are a series of talks, concerts and creative events in honour of Clothall Church's Year of the Birds, including a children's bird art event in the Easter holidays, stained-glass workshops and a live jazz evening.

Clothall Church Year of the Birds

Going Deeper into God



Making New Disciples



Transforming Communities



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

In Beds, Herts, Luton and Barnet

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