

**In the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Derby**

**In the Matter of Alvaston, St Michael and All Angels, and**

**In the Matter of a Petition dated 16th August 2017 and signed on 20 March 2019 by Rev John Whitney, Vicar, Tony Berry, Churchwarden and John Byrne, PCC Treasurer.**

**JUDGMENT**

1) **Introduction** The petition and supporting documentation were forwarded to me with a covering letter from the Registry dated 15th January 2020. The Schedule of Works or Proposals recites: *This proposal is following the temporary permission for removal of the pews during installation of our new heating system. To permanently remove the majority of the pews, and to re-introduce the 7' pews into the south aisle to create an open side chapel area for prayer and smaller services, and to fill in the gaps between radiators in the north aisles whilst utilising flexible seating in the remainder of the nave.* The chief difficulty presented by the petition lies not in relation to the proposals it contains, but in the effect of other permissions that have been given.

2) Having regard to the apparent tardy presentation of the documentation, and to the fact a number of photographs provided, indicated that the original pews and pew platforms were no longer in their former positions, and that the whole of the nave and aisles and chancel were covered with a grey coloured carpet, and further, that a significant number of wooden framed chairs with a striking green upholstery on the back and seats were placed in the central area of the nave, it seemed advisable to carry out a site visit. In effect it seemed as if a comprehensive re-ordering of the nave and aisles and chancel had already been effected without faculty permission in this Grade II Victorian church.

3) Consequently, the Registrar and I visited the church on 18th February 2020, and were welcomed by Mr Whitney, Mr Berry and another member of the church, who was much involved in the practical everyday functioning of the building as a place of worship and meeting place for groups in the community. The immediate impact of the interior was of a warm, open and welcoming space, suitable for various activities, with signs of the many things that go on in a busy and well-used church, with the chairs being a 'stand-out' feature.

4) **History** Alvaston is a suburb of Derby lying several miles to the south-east of the city centre. According to a church guide, which has been regularly updated, there is a history dating back at least to Norman times, when links were established between its small Chapel and Darley Abbey. From 1279, the parishioners and the Abbey jointly maintained the fabric. In 1497 the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (in whose diocese Alvaston was then situated) decided the Chapel should have its own chaplain, who is traditionally appointed by the parishioners subject to the permission of the Bishop of the Diocese, now the Bishop of Derby, of course. A church building with spire and tower stood on or close to the present site from the late 15th or early 16th century. The structure fell in 1775, and the church was subsequently re-built. There is an early photograph of that church available, showing a conventional arrangement of tower, nave and chancel, both apparently with flat roofs, and a porch on the south side.

5) In the mid 19th century it was decided the seating was too limited, as it provided accommodation for 179 only, and it was decided to add a new aisle. Inspection revealed the building was in poor condition and the proposed enlargement would be unsafe. The church was closed in February 1855 and was quickly demolished, although part may have already collapsed. The church was re-built in the decorated style on the same site in the following year to designs by the architect, H.I. Stevens, at a cost of £2200, with help from a local landowner, given on condition that the re-built tower should be 60' in height, somewhat taller than the one replaced.

6) The new building consists of a nave with broad side aisles, extending over three bays, the whole forming an area approximately 40' by 40' square, together with a comparatively narrow chancel and sanctuary. The original seating layout is shown on a plan which indicates the interior was crammed with pews, arranged in

the nave and aisles in four blocks on platforms, extending right up to the side walls. There were two side aisles and a central aisle to allow movement. From the exterior, the heightened tower, and tall, steeply sloping nave roof with its clerestory level, and the chancel roof, give a somewhat 'bunched up' appearance, whereas the lower height of the building it replaced, whatever its structural failings, seemed more comfortable on the eye. (This at least was how it appeared to me.) There is some evidence of cracking apparent in the present structure above the arches in the nave on the south side, but I was assured this was historic movement. The only stained glass is in the east window, the window in the south wall of the chancel and the west wall of the south aisle, close to the font, and the interior is light and open. The organ is set within the tower on a balcony, with elaborate casing. The new church could accommodate a much larger number of worshippers, apparently up to 373, but only those in the two central blocks of pews, which extended to the area beneath the tower itself, seem to have afforded a comfortable view into the chancel and sanctuary. Perhaps in days when Holy Communion was generally celebrated less frequently, that was not considered important. Certainly everyone in the nave would have a good view of the preacher in the pulpit which is set by the north side of the chancel arch.

7) There have been numerous changes to the seating layout over the years, so that prior to 2015, a large proportion of the 1855 seating had been removed. In 1958, the furnishings for the clergy and choir in the chancel were replaced with new furniture (I believe in memory of a former incumbent), which is free-standing. In 1961 a new pulpit and lectern were introduced, and in 1965 a side chapel was created in the south aisle. (This was later removed but subsequently re-introduced.) The area under the tower was cleared of seating and became a choir vestry, although that is now a storage area, following, presumably, the demise of the choir. In the late 1990's the former vestry (set in the angle between the north chancel wall and east wall of the north aisle) was substantially enlarged to provide a disabled toilet, a clergy vestry, and a meeting room with basic kitchen facilities.

8) A later plan of the church shows that some of the seating in the north and south aisles had been removed, all the original seating west of the aisle leading from the south porch into the body of the church had gone, including that under the tower, together with the seating at the front of the nave and side aisles. An estimate given to me is that only 41% remained. Although much reduced in extent therefore, the pews that remained were still arranged in four solid blocks in the body of the nave and aisles, set on their platforms, producing many changes of level to the floor area, with resulting trip hazards. This represented the position as at 2015.

9) In addition, over the years, various other works in the space below the floor and platforms had resulted in pipework and cables being laid, somewhat haphazardly I gathered, so as to pass through and weaken joists and supporting structures of the pew platforms, and the floor areas, now cleared in many places of the original pews, were generally in a poor condition. At all events, just as an example, when Mr Whitney was installed as Vicar in late 2015, the heel of one of the Registrar's shoes went through the floor where she was standing. The large heating pipes around the nave area were close to the side walls and threaded through the underneath of the pews abutting the side walls.

10) **More recent history** The heating system as a whole was failing and soon after his arrival, Mr Whitney oversaw the introduction of a new and efficient heating system, pursuant to **the faculty** of 12th January 2016. It was a condition of the faculty that proposals for the further re-ordering of the interior be presented by 31st December. The parish had already obtained a Licence for Temporary Re-Ordering from the Archdeacon in October 2015 to facilitate the projected changes to the heating system, and also '*to consider the re-ordering of the church*'. This allowed the pew seating to be moved, and the pews were variously stored in a large container in the car park, and in the case of the longer ones, in the space beneath the tower. In this way, the whole of the interior was effectively cleared of the fixed seating which still remained from the building of the church in 1855. In addition permission was given by the Licence for the acquisition of 60 chairs at a nominal cost from a church in the Winchester diocese where they were no longer needed. The original pews are of course about 160 years old, they are of pine or other softwood, and there is some degree of deterioration through age or otherwise in many of them. They are of a simple design with vertical or near vertical backs, the seats are narrow, and they were originally all placed so close together as to be uncomfortable for the taller or broader members of today's congregations.

11) **The Archdeacon's Licence** under Rule 6 of the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2015, was dated 28th October 2015. The Licence clearly set out that the permission granted thereby expired on 26th January 2017 (i.e. after 15 months), and that not later than two months before the expiry date, the parish - that is, Mr Whitney (and the

PCC) - should consult the DAC and submit to the Registrar a petition for a faculty for an extension of the changes, with or without any alterations thought advisable (after this period of experiment), and exhibit Public Notices in respect of their permanent proposals. If they did that, the original 15 month period continued to run until the petition was determined. If they failed to take these steps, then when the 15 months expired, they were under obligation to put everything back to the position it had before the licence was granted.

12) The time limit to submit re-ordering proposals (imposed in the 'heating' faculty) expiring on 31st December 2016, came and went without compliance. The expiry of the Licence after 15 months, on 26th January 2017, had not elicited any steps to seek a permanent faculty or restore matters, despite reminders from the Registry. Thus, to date, the pews that have been cleared out, have remained out, save for a handful (see paragraph 16 below). Some temporary 'inserts' were also put in place at some later time to fill in the walkways of the central and side aisles, between the tops of the slightly higher pew platforms, so as to do away with the numerous potentially dangerous changes of level, and to create a level floor until a more permanent solution was found.

Once the Licence period has run, Rule 8.3 requires the Archdeacon to contact the parish to enquire whether a faculty has been applied for, or the changes have been restored to the original state within the building. If not satisfied as to the position, the Archdeacon must take steps to ensure the position is restored to the state existing before the scheme for temporary minor re-ordering was implemented.

13) I ought to say something more about the chairs, which are not at all in line with the CBC guidance on replacement seating for historic buildings, being heavily upholstered. They are wood-framed, and although the photos sent to me seem to show the frames are black, on inspection they are stained a dark olive green. They are upholstered on the seats and the backs (front and rear) in a green material, somewhat darker than emerald. They seemed comfortable enough, giving good support to the back, although I rather suspect it was their availability at an attractive price which led to their being acquired from the church in the Winchester diocese, and being transported up to Alvaston. They are stackable though not to any great height, and quite heavy. They can easily be arranged in different layouts, if that is desired. Photographs taken from the organ loft in the tower illustrate well how they appear when set out together, in contrast to the grey-fawn carpet.

14) **List B works** Following the Licence and the 'heating' faculty, the parish sought and obtained written permission from the Archdeacon for a series of further works, under the List B procedure. In order, these were '*works of routine maintenance and repair affecting the fabric of a church*' on 6th March 2019, being '*minor repairs and over boarding of parts of floors with T&G floor planks to remove numerous trip hazards*'. According to the contractor's estimate for £8100, this work involved laying an area of 215 sq m. of 3/4 inch boarding, with extra supports where needed, new bearers under the chancel area, and the creation of some ramped sections (probably including a slope at the main entrance up into the church from the porch, leading up to the font area to the new floor level).

15) Next, on 21st May, the parish was given permission under List B to replace the old and worn blue **carpet** that had been laid on the central and side aisle walkways, and at the front and rear of the nave and side aisles. The new carpet was also to cover the recently (and temporarily) cleared pew platforms and also the chancel area. The carpet chosen is basically a light grey with some warm fawn or pale brown colouring, and approved by Dr Janet Spencer, the DAC's adviser on fabric and furniture matters, and herself the former chair of that body. It is presumably about 215 sq. m. The old carpet had also been laid in the chancel and the sanctuary. There is a useful plan of the interior of the church, showing where the new carpet was to be laid in previously carpeted areas, where previously uncarpeted areas were to be covered, the small area round the communion table where there is Minton tiling, previously covered by the earlier carpeting, and the two areas where the floor was to remain unaffected, namely in the tower storage area and the 1999 extension lying off to the north-east of the main body of the church.

16) The third List B permission granted by the Archdeacon was also dated 21st May 2019 and is again described as '*works of routine maintenance and repair*' and involved uncovering the decorative **Victorian tiling** in the sanctuary and cleaning it. The tiling looks very good and the area is immeasurably more pleasing than when covered with carpet. Tastes change, but it is difficult to understand why the tiling was covered with carpet in the first place.

17) As the wording of the present petition indicates, it was not intended to remove all the pews, for which some members of the congregation had expressed affection, not least because they made the interior 'look like a church'. Five have already been re-erected in the south aisle facing east, as a chapel area, but set a little distance away from the south wall where the new radiators are positioned. In addition, three have been placed in line with the north wall between the new radiators now positioned there, but again set a little distance from the wall.

18) **The problem** Summarising matters thus far, the church interior has been effectively re-ordered over a period of several years, since the new heating was put in under faculty in 2016, without a clear, final and timely resolution of the condition in the 'heating' faculty, or the conditions under the Archdeacon's Licence for temporary re-ordering, granted in October 2015 for a limited period of 15 months. The fixed pews have been removed, with a handful now relocated in different positions. There has been a levelling of almost the whole floor area so as to cover the pew platforms with T&G boarding and so do away with changing levels and trip hazards, (caused mainly by the pew platforms), together with the making good of the defective floor surface. Carpet has been introduced over almost the entire area and the chairs brought into use.

19) It is against that background that I am asked to approve the permanent removal of almost all the pews from the nave and aisles, and the retention of the green chairs. These significant changes have been effected by a series of limited steps without the normal stages for a permanent and radical re-ordering, DAC advice carefully complied with, and perhaps most significantly, Public Notices which would enable parishioners to indicate any objections, or resolution of the objections registered by Historic England or other amenity bodies. However exactly this state of affairs has come about, it is concerning, not least because it appears, whatever the reality may be, that the normal procedures and constraints for implementing such changes, have been at least circumvented. *That is not a final conclusion on these issues, and I will say more about it later.*

20) The various changes have been under consideration for an extended period. Representatives of the DAC made a site visit on 13th February 2017, apparently as a result of the submission of a faculty to remove the pews, although I confess I do not follow the sequence of events. The petition document I have was initially (part) completed on 16th August 2017, (about 7 months after the latest date when it should have been submitted under the directions on the Licence), and it went through the usual DAC and Public Notice procedure, before apparently there was delay in having it completed fully, and it was eventually signed by the petitioners in March 2019. (For whatever reason, the petition and supporting documentations were only submitted to me in January 2020.)

21) The **Report on the Site Visit** indicates the aim of the proposals outlined at the visit was to create a more flexible and accessible space usable by the church and wider community throughout the week, both for worship and other events. The pews had initially been removed to allow for the installation of the new heating system in 2015. The chairs were described as 'heavy' but 'very stable' which was appreciated by the more infirm members of the congregation and other visitors. The temporary 'inserts' between the pew platforms were standing on the old and degraded vinyl flooring from the 1960's. I understand many of these pre-dated Mr Whitney's arrival. The DAC were anxious to determine the nature of the ground beneath the pew platforms, but recognised finance was tight and the cost of actually removing the platforms would be prohibitive, so recorded that it was desired to level the whole floor at their existing height. The DAC also noted the existing (blue) carpet at the front of the nave and extending into the chancel did not blend well with the newly acquired green chairs. Suggestions for various floor coverings were given. Future possibilities discussed including creating a kitchenette and further toilet accommodation under the tower, which is still in contemplation, and moving the font a few feet closer to the main door. (Mr Whitney told me this latter idea was no longer being pursued.)

22) **The Statement of Significance** This document gives a brief description and something of the history of the present building. It suggests the interior of the nave and aisles is 48' by 80', measurements I am not able to reconcile with other figures given me, with the chancel extending a further 20'. The area of the nave and aisles together appears roughly square in shape.

23) **The Statement of Needs** The church has two services on Sundays, Holy Communion and a later Family Worship. A crèche is provided at the front of the north aisle. Bible studies are held at the vicarage during the month, and a 'Messy church' in the nearby church hall. This building is heavily used during the week,

especially for parish activities which are seen as part of St Michael's overall ministry. The church has been anxious to improve access for wheelchairs and mobility scooters within the body of the church; chairs will allow greater choice for those using such aids. Greater flexibility and comfort than the rigid seating is required to encourage people to use the seats in imaginative arrangements for mission, community engagement, worship, and fellowship. It is anticipated the new arrangements will be more attractive to newcomers. Removal of the pews under the Licence has shown that greater flexibility results in, and has allowed, a greater variety of events to take place. The Remembrance Day service had greater access to the war memorial after the pews were removed. If the faculty is granted efforts will be made to dispose of the surplus pews. Overall, the proposals will allow greater community engagement and help to draw people into the life and worship of the church. Families will be better served, especially parents with strollers and prams. Funds are nonetheless tight. The significance of the building will not be harmed! I have to say that removal of the dominant feature identified by Heritage England as having such an impact is a bold submission.

24) The PCC approved the proposals on 20th March 2019 without dissent.

25) The Statements were submitted in August 2017, and the proposals considered in June 2017, when the DAC did not object. Architect members had previously pointed out the need for the floor to be levelled if the church were to be used for a wider range of activities. The DAC affirmed its assessment on 25th November 2019. Public Notices were displayed between 18th June and 18th July 2017, and notice went on the website in July 2017. No objections or comments were received. I have considered ordering fresh notices having regard to the undoubted delay in the parish submission of the relevant paperwork or on line application, but unhappily there has been other delay, and I cannot see any purpose would be served thereby. There is no suggestion anyone in the parish has complained about the proposals.

26) **Historic England** Letters were received as part of the consultation process on 26th June 2017, and 8th January 2020. Initially HE had recommended retention of the pews in the nave, as they believed them to be *'of reasonable quality, complete and forming part of the 19C rebuild. The pews add structure and interest to the character and appearance of the church interior and contribute to the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed church'*. They advised that consideration be given to retaining some rows while opening up space at the west end of the nave. The permanent loss of (all) the pews was considered harmful to the significance of the church. They suggested mounting some pews on castors. The chairs were *'not considere(d) appropriate aesthetically'* for this church and diminished *'its special interest and character'*. They considered *'carpets tended to create a domestic appearance, could be visually distracting and (were) at odds with the beauty of the ecclesiastical interior'*.

27) The later letter concentrates on the unsuitability of the chairs and the benefits of the CBC recommendation for un-upholstered seating, and the contribution it can make to a historic church interior. These lack suitable *'gravitas'*, and their colour will be *'unduly prominent and eye-catching'* and *'extremely incongruous'.....'being better suited to an office or waiting-room'*.

28). In a lengthy but undated response, the parish challenged HE's assertions about the condition and completeness of the remaining pews, and showed there had already been many alterations of layout and many removals. The two latest QI's showed the pews were no longer *'fit for purpose'*. Their construction rendered them too narrow and too tall to utilise castors without the latter intruding into the spaces between the pews for the sake of stability. There was evidence of beetle damage. The particular features identified as being of significance for listing purposes did not include the pews, but older items from the earlier churches. (I appreciate listing particulars are not exhaustive, by any means.) It is contended that the changes proposed are the only way of achieving continued practical use of the building, namely by the creation of a modern multi-use space, that can be utilised in different formats on different days.

29) **Discussion** I have already recorded my disquiet at the way the parish has reached its present state, by the steps that have been taken, but *I recognise that approvals were sought and given at various stages*. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but I detect two separate areas where things could and should have been dealt with differently.

30) First, Licences for Temporary Re-ordering are intended only for approval of *temporary* and *minor* works. They are usually used to test out experimental layouts and things of that kind. It is a useful provision. Such a

Licence effectively shuts out possible objectors from registering their concerns and having the Chancellor rule on the proposed changes for a period up to 15 months. (The 15 month period is increased from April 2020, to no less than 24 months.) The Licence procedure does not require the Applicants to publicise their proposals widely at an early stage, possibly thereby attracting further opposition. That is the advantage, it gives the PCC time to test-drive their ideas. The time limits are intended to ensure those who may be unhappy, are not *unduly* delayed in registering their concerns and having them ruled on. What has happened here, in the neglect of the condition in the 'heating' faculty, or the terms of the Licence, to bring the period of experiment to a clear and timely conclusion, is a flagrant disregard of the basis on which consents were granted.

31. Second, I have great difficulty in accepting that the Licence related to works that were both *temporary* and *minor*. Stripping out the remaining pews, was a major project, and standing back, could it convincingly be portrayed as temporary? My recollection from my visit, is that the original heating pipes ran round the exterior walls, not down the aisles or elsewhere, but I may be mistaken in that memory. At all events any request to strip out *all* the original seating for some allegedly temporary purpose relating to replacement heating, should be viewed with more than a degree of suspicion. Any concern whether a request for a Licence under Rule 8 exceeds the power to grant one, can be resolved by referring the Applicants to the Chancellor for the grant of an Interim Faculty under Part 15 of the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2015. Again, was the introduction of such a large number of wooden upholstered chairs realistically a short-term issue, or was it a clear signal '*these are here to stay*'? Did the Archdeacon realise what they were like in terms of their nature and appearance, especially the colour of the upholstery? However, I recognise these things are a matter of judgement, on which reasonable people may differ, and, as I say, hindsight is a wonderful thing.

32) Third, and I think this is perhaps the most concerning issue, consents to the List B requests in respect of boarding over the whole floor (as well as other joinery works), and carpeting the nave, the side aisles and chancel, were given when the condition in the 'heating' faculty, and the requirements under the Licence, had not been complied with at all. The issue of whether the pews should be returned was unresolved, and on any view the work for which the List B consents were being given, involved a not inconsiderable expense, and would necessarily have a serious impact on the outstanding issue of the pews. To put it the other way, the return of the pews would be likely to have a serious effect on the new flooring and carpet. It is impossible for a busy Archdeacon, with his many other responsibilities and concerns, to have in mind the details of all the work going on in the churches of the Archdeaconry, at any one time, but when faced with a request for extensive List B work, it would be wise to ask the Applicants directly, something along the lines: *Is there any condition which is still outstanding from any previous Faculty or Licence or List B Consent, on which this request may have an impact?* As I say, hindsight gives 20:20 vision.

33) Turning now to the outstanding issue of the pews, are they to be returned? There is something rather unreal about trying to imagine the interior of the church with the remaining pews still in place, without the new flooring and carpet, and seeking to come up with an answer. Nor can I ignore what the interior state of the church is now, however exactly that occurred. I recognise the concerns raised by the amenity bodies about the part played by the remaining pew seating in relation to the heritage value and significance of this church, but I think it overstated, in regard to the quality of the pews and their positive impact. Worn and largely degraded fittings - as I judge them to have been - however much they have done a good job in the past, are no credit to a church today.

34) In applying the so-called **Duffield Questions**, which I do not intend to set out in full, I think I would have considered the loss of almost all the remaining pew seating as causing harm to the significance of this Grade II listed building, but would have judged it at most on the **Low side of Moderate**. The fact so much of the original had already been removed cuts both ways. It does tend to raise the value of what is still left, but does mean the full contribution of the original seating to the building has already long gone. Earlier removals of so much seating are at least some indication of what has been considered beneficial in the past. It helps to set a direction of travel. The fact a number of the shorter pews are being retained and are already in their new positions, means there will be a continuing reminder from which regular worshippers or visitors will be able to gain some idea of what the original interior was like. As to the benefits to place on the other side of the scales, I am persuaded that the original pews would have proved uncomfortable for many, both in relation to their size and proximity, one to another, and there is limited evidence that some at least were showing their age, and had deteriorated. The parish wanted a cleared space, available to be used more widely and in flexible ways for the benefit of the community as well as the worshipping body. That has now been created, and I really

do not think if I could go back in time, that I would have required a significantly larger amount of the 1855 seating to be replaced in or near its original position. Any return of the pew seating at this stage would be likely to cause damage to the carpet or the new underlying floor, and both those changes were approved by the Archdeacon before they were carried out. It would be wrong to go back on those consents.

35) I appreciate there is a clear burden on petitioners to justify their proposals, and also indications in a number of authorities that any interference should be limited to what they want to achieve, and go no further. However in this case the retention of more of the pews would not help. The number is not required for seating purposes, either in regard to regular worship or at other times of particular pressure of numbers. And how would the above principle operate - removal of all but 7 or 8 rows, or 5 or 6, or just 1 or 2? I am satisfied that this is a small congregation with links into its surrounding community, anxious to increase its contacts and satisfied the way ahead is to provided space for worship and many other activities in a warm, attractive, open and cheerful space. The few remaining pews are a sufficient reminder of what has been, its time has now passed.

36) **The carpet** is to my mind entirely acceptable. The floor was levelled, and the interior required a floor covering to finish it off. The parish took advice from the DAC through Professor Spencer and followed it, with the approval of the Archdeacon. The carpet is not entirely plain in colour, and the fawn or brown colouring alongside the basic grey, lifts the warmth of the whole. That leaves **the chairs**. These did not meet with Professor Spencer's approval at any stage, just as HE has objected strongly. She felt the parish had sought to pressure her to change her mind, when she had already indicated her disapproval of their nature and appearance. The lady was definitely 'not for turning'. I have only seen them in the context of the cleared interior, and against the grey/fawn carpet. I was told the congregation as a whole liked them, though it is not clear how far Mr Whitney or the PCC really appreciated what they were like *en masse* until they arrived. They are certainly not compliant with the statutory guidance given by the Church Buildings Council for replacement seating in historic buildings, which strongly leans against any upholstery in favour of wooden seats and backs. I am unaware exactly what the parish paid for them, doubtless a small amount compared with the flooring and new carpet, but cost cannot be the main criterion.

37) However there is no point seeking to disguise my own view of the matter. Despite the strong views of the DAC adviser, and the wholesale failure to follow the CBC guidance, I have to say the appearance of the chairs with their green colouring and dark woodwork, against the basic grey/fawn colour of the carpet, is, perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, very pleasing. It is peaceful, not disturbing. The strong colour contrasts with the relatively cool colours of the stone walls and pillars, and the carpet itself. There is little woodwork save the differently coloured furnishings in the chancel, and on the deeper colour organ casing at the west end. There is not a great amount of stained glass in the church and the chairs provide some strong contrasting colour. This is certainly apparent on visiting the building, but also apparent from the photographs supplied. There are a number of potential layouts illustrated on plans of the interior, but this merely confirms that the use of the chairs can be changed as desired, which is hardly a surprise.

38) In my view the advantages of the open and flexible space have been adequately demonstrated, and outweigh such limited benefit as the historic seating contributed. It was apparent from conversation and the way various items had made their way into the interior, that there was considerable activity taking place in the church during the week, as well as the worshipping community on Sundays. The interior was warm and inviting, and I am sure that the present layout will be of considerable benefit to this church in pursuing its mission within the local community. **I grant the petition**, and as there seems nothing left to do, (as opposed to possible further steps in the area under the tower), I give a nominal 3 months to complete any outstanding work. I confirm that the petitioners may retain the chairs introduced under the Archdeacon's Licence, and they are at liberty to dispose of the pews removed, which have not been re-introduced.

John W Bullimore  
Chancellor

14th April 2020