

Guidelines on carpets

Carpeting may unify the place where the liturgical assembly gathers, can reduce noise, and can contribute to a feeling of warmth and intimacy.

However, carpeting can adversely affect the acoustics of a church building and, where an unsuitable choice is made, can seriously detract from the interior as a place of prayer and worship.

When considering the carpeting of a church, or an area of the church, the following points need to be borne in mind:

- 1) Carpet can be an asset in a church, but too much carpet does not always enhance the look and feel of the building. Some areas are best left uncarpeted simply because the flooring is not suitable for a covering of carpet. Some areas will look better showing the stone, wood or tiled floor. Don't always assume that 'more carpet' is best.
- 2) The carpet is not a feature in its own right, but a background upon which the colour and movement of the liturgical action is set. Strong colours and patterns are therefore discouraged. Neutral colours are more appropriate than strong colours.
- 3) Durability and ease of cleaning are important considerations in selecting a suitable carpet, as churches will need carpets to look good for a number of years.
- 4) Where carpet is being used with the specific intention of people kneeling on it (for example, at a Communion rail) care should be given to ensure that the type of carpet and its backing are sufficiently comfortable for kneeling.
- 5) Carpet tiles may appear to be an attractive proposition but seldom give a satisfactory result.
- 6) Before laying carpet, the floor area in question should be tested for rising damp,

and the backing chosen accordingly. Rubber-backed carpet and other types of carpet can prevent the floor 'breathing', and create many ongoing problems. Your inspecting architect's comments should be sought as to what kind of carpet backing is appropriate to the floor surface.

- 7) Carpet needs to be laid on clean, sound and level surfaces. The area to be carpeted should be carefully examined to assess what work needs to be done before carpet is laid, and any work to level the floor should be included as part of the Faculty application.
- 8) An excellent advice booklet 'Church Floors and Floor Coverings' is available from Church House Publishing (ISBN 0715175637).
- 9) Some floor coverings, when involved in fire, may react to produce large volumes of heat and smoke, thereby presenting a hazard to the means of escape. Floor coverings should comply with British Standard 5287, and if in doubt, expert advice should be sought.
- 10) Make early contact with the DAC if your church is uncertain whether its choice of carpet will meet these guidelines.