

Wakefield Diocesan Advisory Committee

Fine Art

A function of the Diocesan Advisory Committee is to advise the Diocesan Chancellor as to the suitability of works of art petitioned for use or display in an Anglican Church. These works should convey the ethos of Anglican worship, reflect the worship of the congregation, be a suitable addition to the church and be of a high standard in terms of both design and craftsmanship.

Fine art that may be introduced into churches includes paintings, carvings, coloured glass windows, textiles (altar-frontals, banners etc), and ornaments. They may be secondary to worship such as memorials, banners and statues, or integral to worship such as an altar or font. The items may be purchased from catalogues, newly commissioned art works, acquired from other churches or similar institutions and donated items.

A function of the Diocesan Advisory Committee is to advise the Chancellor on the suitability of works of art for churches. It is essential to ensure that such items display Anglican beliefs and ideas of holiness and beauty. They should also reflect the worship style and dedication of the congregation whilst at the same time taking heed of the history and architecture of the church building.

Fine art items for permanent inclusion within a church need to be of a high standard. Artworks should be of sufficient quality, both stylistically and materially, to be worthy of their place in a Christian setting and to withstand the rigours of wear and tear and changes in taste.

Religious art has to a large extent relied on symbolism to convey its message. This is particularly noticeable in coloured windows, paintings and banners where, for instance, saints are to be recognised by the particular articles they carry. Whilst this was fairly easy for our predecessors to understand, it poses greater difficulties today when such symbols may not be known by the congregation or artist. It is essential therefore, to be sure that an artwork correctly signifies the sentiments desired. This does not mean that only

traditional styles must be followed – on the contrary, innovative work from qualified specialist artists and craftsmen will be encouraged.

Deciding on a work of art for your church can be a very exciting and challenging project, encouraging reflection on what your church and its artefacts really mean to your congregation.

Advice to churches

Representatives of the DAC will be pleased to offer advice from an early stage if you are considering introducing a fine art work into your church and would be happy to visit if you feel it would be helpful.

You may wish to have advice on the type of art to introduce (for instance, a coloured glass window or a new banner), or you may need confirmation that a particular item is suitable. If the new item is to replace an item of possible artistic merit, it is important to inform the DAC in order that such a work may not be innocently destroyed.

The DAC can help by advising you of points which will need to be considered at an early stage. Initially, you will need to consider several questions:

- What do we want and why do we want it?
- Where will it be placed?
- Will it replace something old and if so why do we want to replace it?
- What will it mean to this church and what will it 'say' about our congregation?
- What will it cost and how will we raise the money?
- What will it be like? This is an important question because it is not always easy to know what a work of art will be like on completion. You will have to consider whether you want a traditional or modern piece of work, abstract or figurative, which colours to choose, which materials (e.g. type of wood, fabric), what size you want it to be etc. Consultation may help, and the DAC will be flexible in helping you to work out your ideas.

Stages in applying for a Faculty for a fine art item

The **first stage** is to decide what you want and if it can be afforded. You may wish to ask the DAC for help with your decision at this stage, especially if this is a new venture for your church. However, the DAC cannot help with financial matters.

If the new item is to replace an existing work of art, a photograph of the item and full description including maker/designer (if known), size, age, whether a memorial and any other relevant detail may need to be included.

It is important to consult the DAC at this early stage since you may waste much money by taking matters too far without approval.

The **second stage** is to approach manufacturers, artists or crafts-person to enquire as to his/her qualifications and expertise in the kind of work you require. The DAC will need to be convinced that the work will be of a high standard artistically and materially. Ask to see examples of the artist's previous work. If you are unsure, please consult the DAC.

The **third stage** is to obtain catalogue pictures or to ask the artist or crafts-person to provide scale and possibly coloured drawings which must be submitted to the DAC along with photographs of the area where the item is to be placed. The DAC will consider these for their suitability for your church and may need to consult you further.

The **fourth stage** is to formally request a Faculty. The DAC will then consider the request and if approved, will recommend the Chancellor to grant a Faculty.

The **fifth stage** is to go ahead with your project.

It can be difficult to come to decisions regarding works of fine art because everyone has their own idea of beauty, style and spiritual essence. The DAC is very mindful of this. Please be patient with the DAC if the Faculty process seems long and arduous – the process is designed to help you obtain an item that is right for your church building and congregation.

Summary

Suggested steps for approval of work of art in churches:

Step 1

- The desire for a work of art is established.
- Guidelines for Works of Art in Churches consulted.
- A written statement (with preliminary sketches) presented to PCC.
- Written statement to express the purpose of the art work.
- Brief description, specification, sketches.

Step 2

- PCC to discuss the project with the DAC in order to establish the desirability of the work of art and the appropriateness of the initial design.
- If the work of art appears acceptable then general idea, specification and budget approved.
- Costs of fees and production costs assessed.
- Detailed design and budget prepared.

Step 3

- 2-3 artists/craftsmen approached with design, brief specification and budget limits and are asked to prepare detailed sketches or scaled mock-up together with costs. Be clear with those artists what you asking them to do, and whether payment will be expected for this early work.

Step 4

- Artists/craftsmen submit sketches, samples, fees quotation for assessment.
- Work, specification and budget approved by DAC.

Step 5

- Public consultation phase of Faculty process.
- Consideration by Chancellor of application and of any concerns raised by consultation.
- Chancellor gives approval (or otherwise).
- Contract approved by PCC.