

## **NEW STAINED GLASS IN WELSH CHURCHES**

### **A GUIDANCE NOTE FOR PARISHES**

The purpose of this document is to provide parishes with information on commissioning new stained glass in churches. It discusses design considerations, choosing a stained glass artist, creating a brief, keeping track of progress, applying for a faculty and welcoming your new window.

#### **Introduction**

Stained glass is an instantly recognisable art form that is especially associated with churches and cathedrals. Its use in Welsh churches has a long and distinguished history starting from the medieval period onwards, although most of the stained glass we see today dates from the nineteenth century. Its special relationship with the architecture of the building means it cannot be viewed simply as a “coloured window” that performs the same function as any other window. Yes, it should keep the weather out and let the light in, but it should also complement the existing windows and interior of the church. It is therefore vitally important to carefully consider the design and location of the new window and how it will fit in with the other elements of the building.

The following sections highlight the things you need to think about when considering the installation of a new stained glass window in your church.

#### **1. Why do you want a new stained glass window?**

What are your reasons for wanting a new stained glass window? Are you looking to replace an existing window that is damaged? If so, could it be restored instead? This would be an easier and possibly less expensive option than installing a new one with the associated costs of design, creation and installation. Maybe you are thinking of replacing an existing sound, but clear, window? If so, consider whether the church was originally designed to have clear glass windows (not uncommon in Georgian and 19<sup>th</sup> century churches). Replacing one of these could darken the interior of the church or disrupt its relationship with the other windows, especially if they remain clear. It is particularly important to identify, repair and retain 18<sup>th</sup> century glazing containing hand-blown plain glass, as its historic interest and quality are frequently unrecognised and overlooked. Any surviving historic ironwork that holds the window in place may also be of significance.

Sometimes parishes may want a new stained glass window because they have been left a legacy or donation. The donor may even stipulate that the money is to be used specifically for a new stained glass window. While this is a generous act on behalf of the donor it can create problems for the parish. What if there is no real need for a new stained glass window? The parish are then placed in a difficult position as there is no guarantee that permission will be given to replace an existing window to make way for a new one. It would

be better to discuss any potential legacies of this kind with the donor beforehand as the money may be better spent elsewhere in the church. This does not necessarily mean church repairs, but could be some other form of commemoration, such as a standalone artwork or item of furniture.

Occasionally the parish and wider community may want to commemorate a person who has done a lot for their local area by having a permanent reminder of their deeds in the form of a new stained glass window. Likewise, a special event that took place locally may want to be commemorated. Although a stained glass window would lend itself well to such things, you still need to consider whether it is right for the church and the local community. Again, perhaps some other form of commemoration would be more appropriate.

To determine whether a new stained glass window is the right course of action for the parish, consult the “stakeholders” ie. the people who have an interest in the project such as donors, community, congregation, etc. Discuss alternatives to a new window and the practicalities of each option. If at the end of the day you are all agreed that a new window is the right course of action, then you need to get together a small group of people to implement the project. This group should be made up from the wider stakeholder group plus (if possible) anyone who has experience of similar church projects, or who has some expertise with stained glass or the commissioning of artworks. This team will need to run the project but also report back to all stakeholders on a regular basis to advise of progress.

## **2. Design considerations**

This is probably the most important part of the project. You need to be sure that the design for your new window is appropriate for your church and that it will stand the test of time. So who chooses the final design? Is it the project group, parish or wider community, or do you leave it to the stained glass artist? There are various approaches you could take for this and they are discussed in Section 3 (*Choosing a Design and Artist*).

However, even if you leave the final design to the artist, they will still need a brief to work from, so you will also need some basic understanding of design considerations in order to be able to produce it. The following give some idea of the things that you need to think about and which could be included in the design brief.

### **a) Traditional or contemporary?**

Most of the stained glass we see today in Welsh Churches and Cathedrals dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century when many of the buildings were “restored” by the Victorians. Most depict stories from the bible, usually featuring major figures like Christ, the Virgin Mary, the apostles, saints and angels. These traditional themes continued to dominate window design in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although new styles and more contemporary themes, such as the First World War, also started to appear. By the middle of the century modernism started to influence window design, which not only gave the depiction of the traditional bible stories a new design twist, but also introduced more abstract imagery into windows.

In deciding whether a traditional or more modern window design would be appropriate for your church, you need to consider the architectural style of the building and how the new window will relate to it and the other windows, fixtures and fittings. Ideally, the new window should complement all or some of these elements. This doesn’t necessarily mean that there isn’t room for a contemporary window in a church that already has a set of “traditional” stained glass windows. You could, for example, incorporate the colours of

the existing windows in a new contemporary one that may be more abstract in nature, but still reflects a biblical theme (eg. the life of the saint to whom the church is dedicated). Or perhaps your new window could reflect the predominate style of the interior of the church (eg. the Arts and Crafts Movement) but illustrate a contemporary event that took place locally.

Try to visit other churches and cathedrals to generate ideas for your new window. What works and doesn't work? Look at the work of stained glass artists (see the *Resources* Section at the end of this guidance note). Aim for a design of high quality that will enhance your church. If you like a design, think about how it would look in your church. Perhaps you only like certain elements of the windows you see (the colour for example), but not the theme. Make a note of what you like as this can go into the brief for the artist. You may even be able to commission the same artist to do something similar if it is a relatively new window and their studio is still in business.

Another excellent starting point is to look at "*Stained Glass from Welsh Churches*" by Martin Crampin. This beautifully illustrated book contains full colour pictures of Welsh stained glass from the medieval period to the present day. There is also an accompanying website (see the *Resources* section at the end of this guidance note for details).

If you live in the South Wales region there are a lot of high quality modern stained glass studios in the Swansea area, thanks in part to the Swansea School of Glass, now at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (formerly the Architectural Stained Glass Department at Swansea Metropolitan University). These may be worth contacting directly to discuss their services.

### **b) Location and light levels**

Any stained glass window will reduce the amount of light entering a church, so it is important to consider this in the overall window design. The reduction can be a little or a lot depending on the colour scheme, materials used in manufacture or the location within the building (eg. north or south facing).

Traditionally, the window at the east end of a church or cathedral was the largest and grandest. This is the most sacred area in the building and its location took advantage of the early morning sun. Similarly, the west end of many larger churches and cathedrals have grand windows, although perhaps slightly smaller (due to the main processional entrances being at this end), but still able to take advantage of the late afternoon sun. Additional windows along the north and south of the nave or aisle walls, although generally smaller, also contributed to a fair amount of light entering the building as the sun moved around the sky. Many smaller churches were not so lucky. The west end was a popular location for the addition of a tower and most windows tended to be smaller, thus reducing overall light levels. If some of the windows contained stained glass, the light entering the building was even further reduced.

The location of your new stained glass window will obviously not be an issue if you are replacing an existing one. However, if you have a choice of location, for example if you are replacing a clear glass window with stained glass or are proposing to insert a new window in a new space (ie. where there hasn't been one before), then you need to give careful consideration to its location and the amount of light it will let into the church.

Some churches (often Georgian) were designed to have large clear glass windows, so replacing one or more of these with stained glass will not only reduce the amount of light coming into the building at that point, but will also affect the overall light levels. There may have been a good reason for clear glass in the first place eg. the church was overshadowed by other buildings or at the bottom of a valley. You should therefore give special consideration to the replacement of these types of windows as a new coloured one may affect the unique character of the church.

### **c) Fixtures, fittings and security**

If you are replacing an existing window, you and your architect or professional advisor need to decide which parts of it will remain. Stonework should be retained in situ and only in exceptional circumstances removed for repair. Tracery and mullions should be retained to provide a visual link with the original window, providing of course they are in a good enough condition to be re-used. Even if you are keeping some parts of the old window, they may still need to be removed for cleaning or repair, or even to facilitate the insertion of the new glass.

If you are removing the existing window in its entirety, how will the new one be fitted (and fastened) into the space left by the old one? What materials will be used? Are they compatible with the existing ones? Care needs to be taken not to damage any existing building fabric when inserting a new window, especially in a grade I or II\* church.

How can you ensure that your new window will be well ventilated to reduce the build up of condensation or damp on it? Are there any fixtures or fittings that need to be incorporated into the new window to improve environmental conditions in the church? Some existing stained glass windows for example, have vents in them that can be opened or closed to control the air flow through the building and thus reduce damp. Some even have “weep holes” in the sills that allow condensation run-off to be channelled to the outside of the building. Even if you cannot incorporate any of these features into the new window, would it be possible to site it in a well ventilated area such as near a door or another window that opens?

You may also need to consider some form of external protection for your new window. Several options are available. A mesh screen will keep the window well ventilated and protected against most vandal attacks and damage from nearby trees. However, it should be fine enough to allow as much light as possible to enter the building. A polycarbonate screen can also give protection from vandalism and trees but can become increasingly opaque with age. It can also encourage damp if not fitted in a manner which allows for ventilation of the space between it and the glass. Powder-coated stainless steel guards cut to each light and fitted to masonry joints are another option. Remember that care needs to be taken when fixing screens to churches to prevent permanent damage to the historic building fabric.

### **3. Choosing a design and artist**

There are several ways you could do this and each have their pros and cons. The following briefly discusses some approaches you could take.

#### **a) Open competition**

This is a great way to involve the local community as you can ask for submissions from anybody, whether they be school children, members of the congregation, professional artists, etc. However, you need to make sure that you provide some suitable guidelines for the design content (eg. it must depict a biblical story) and how the entries will be judged. If (as discussed previously) you have a project group made up from stakeholder representatives, they would be the logical choice to write the guidelines and choose the winning entry.

If you use this method of choosing a design, you need to make clear to the participants that their winning submission will be used as the *inspiration* for further development by a professional stained glass artist. Alternately, the winner could work with the artist to create the final design. In this way you can avoid any offence to the winner if the final design is not an exact replica of their submission.

#### **b) The community choose the design**

This is a variant of the open competition. Here, the winning entry would be decided by the community itself. This could be done by displaying all the submissions and asking people to vote on the one they like the most. The one with the most votes is the winner and the design will then go forward for inclusion in the brief. The project group would still need to supply the guidelines and arrange for the winning design to be made into a window.

The downside of this method is that an “unsuitable” design may well get the most votes. How do you then avoid disappointing the community? As discussed earlier, you could make it clear that any winning entry will be used as a basis for the design which will then be developed by a professional stained glass artist.

#### **c) The community choose the artist**

Here, a group of shortlisted stained glass artists are invited to submit examples of their work. The shortlist is chosen by the project group or community, and the invited artists are asked to present examples of their work. The community then votes on which artist they would like to use to create the new stained glass window. The successful artist (working from a well written brief) then creates the window.

Be aware that there may be a cost involved with this approach and you should check with the artists whether they will charge you for any expenses incurred. However, at this stage it is only an invitation to present examples of their current work and *not* a design specifically for your window.

The more costly option is to give a number of artists the brief (see below) and ask them to submit their designs which are then chosen by a community vote. You will be charged for all the artist’s designs regardless of who wins the commission.

#### 4. The design brief

When commissioning a stained glass artist you need to supply them with a brief describing what you want. The document needs to contain enough information for the artist to work from without bogging them down with unnecessary details. A good rule of thumb is to aim for one or two sides of A4 paper and to include the following:

- The reason for the commission (eg. commemorating a local person or event)
- What the church and community hope to achieve by it (eg. bringing the community closer together)
- What should be included in the window (ie. the key design elements)
- The dimensions of the window
- The location of the window within the church and its relationship with the other elements of the building (windows, furniture, architecture style, etc)
- Any theological considerations (especially important if the window will contain biblical references or iconography)
- A short background history of the church (dedication, architectural history, etc) and community (town or village, urban or rural, demographic, etc)

The brief should contain enough information to allow the artist to prepare a preliminary design which will then be presented to the project group (who are representing all the stakeholders) for approval. If the artist has not already visited the church, the presentation should be done there. This will give them and the project group a better understanding of how the design will look within the building. It is also easier at this stage to talk through any design changes and to have a preliminary discussion about costs, timescales, contracts, etc. Do not make any formal agreements with the artist at this stage until you have obtained faculty approval. Also, the costs of any preparatory work done by the artist will need to be met if the project does not go ahead.

#### 5. Applying for a faculty

The installation of a new stained glass window could affect the special character of your church. It is therefore vitally important to supply as much information as you can about your project when submitting the faculty application. Discuss your intentions with your Archdeacon and DAC Secretary at the earliest possible opportunity. Make sure you do this **before** you commission a stained glass artist. A few words with them may save you a lot of wasted time and money further down the line.

The DAC Secretary or Archdeacon may suggest a site visit from the DAC to discuss your project. This gives you the opportunity to talk through your proposals with knowledgeable people and enables the DAC Secretary to make sure that a stained glass expert will be present when the full faculty application is discussed at the next DAC meeting. Remember to include *Form D: Works to Stained Glass* with your application.

The type of documentation you need to supply with your faculty application (and at what stage you need to supply it) depends on many factors such as the size and complexity of the new window and the listing of your church. It is therefore extremely important that you check with your DAC Secretary what will be needed and when. As a general guide, be prepared to supply the following in support of your application:

- A plan of the church showing the location of the new window
- Clear photographs showing the area where the new window will be installed

- Detailed design drawings to include the dimensions, colours and materials to be used
- A design statement explaining the philosophy of the design
- A specification/schedule of works for the removal of the existing window and the installation of the new
- Statements of Significance and Needs

**Note:** You may not need to supply all of the above as this will depend on the requirements of your particular diocese. This is why it is important to speak to your DAC Secretary at the earliest possible stage of your project!

## **6. Keeping track of progress**

Once you have been given faculty approval, the window manufacture and installation can begin. At this stage you should already have agreed on costs and timescales for delivery, so make sure that you have a suitable contract (or letter of appointment) in place before any work that goes ahead with the stained glass artist and/or manufacturer. Staged payments are common with this type of work so you need to advise all parties upfront when payments will be made (usually when a certain stage of the project has been reached).

It is important to agree on how progress will be reported on. This doesn't just mean the project group receiving regular updates from the artist, but also how they will report back to the stakeholders, although this will be governed to a large extent by the size and complexity of the project. Receiving regular updates on progress may also be a condition of any grants you are in receipt of, so it is important to factor this in.

Monthly updates would seem reasonable for reporting to stakeholders and could be done in conjunction with other regular events such as PCC<sup>1</sup> meetings or coffee mornings. Likewise, the project group need to receive regular updates from the artist, so that any unforeseen items that need a decision by the client (ie. the project group) can be dealt with quickly. Site visits by both parties to discuss progress should also be considered, especially with a large commission.

Receiving regular updates not only allows you to ensure the project is keeping within its original timeframe, but also to plan ahead for any arrangements that need to be made in the church when the window is finally installed. For example, you may need to temporarily remove some pews or other items of furniture to facilitate the installation of the new window. You will also need to protect members of the congregation and visitors while the work is going on. This may mean erecting barriers or closing the church for the duration of the work.

## **7. Welcoming your new window**

This is an opportunity to say thank you to all those involved with the project and for the community to meet the "new arrival". There are many ways you could do this from a simple presentation by the artist talking about their inspiration for the artwork and the materials and techniques used in its creation, to a whole day celebration featuring presentations by all of those involved in the project, display boards or posters charting its progress and a community party. You could even invite the local press! At the end of the day it is your

---

<sup>1</sup> The term "Parochial Church Council" is used within this document to describe the local church trustee body responsible for the management of the church, hall and churchyard. These bodies may also be known as the Ministry Area Council, the Local Ministry Area Council, Rectorial Benefice Council, Mission Area Conference, or any other term designated by diocesan policies.

chance to show what can be achieved by working together and the benefit this has brought to the parish and wider community.

The new window could also form part of a wider education and learning collaboration with local schools, colleges and art groups. The provision of information leaflets, booklets, displays, etc, may even have been part of the original project plan, especially if it was grant assisted through public money. If this is the case, then you need to make sure there is a continuing program of public involvement. This needn't be a difficult or onerous task. Think of it as a further opportunity to show the positive benefits of working with the wider community.

## RESOURCES

The following websites and publications contain useful information on stained glass windows including a database of Welsh stained glass, selecting and commissioning an artist, writing a brief and welcoming your new artwork into the church. Resources for the care and conservation of stained glass and information on writing a Statement of Significance and Needs can also be found at the end of this section.

### **Stained Glass in Wales Website**

This contains a comprehensive database that can be searched by artist, manufacturer, subject (eg. saints, angels, etc), church and location. There is also a list of currently practising glass artists in Wales with links to their websites. The website can be found at: <http://stainedglass.llgc.org.uk>.

### **The Church of England**

The Church of England have produced an excellent guide on commissioning new art for churches that is aimed at both parishes and artists. This can be found in the advice and guidance section of their main website at: [www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org). There is also an additional guide specifically for stained glass, which can be found in the same section.

### **The Church of Scotland**

The Committee on Church Art and Architecture of the Church of Scotland have produced a guide about commissioning a new stained glass window and creating a design brief. Although it is intended for a Scottish audience, most of the sections contain information that applies equally as well to a Welsh audience! It can be found in the resources section on their main website: [www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk).

### **The Church in Wales**

Most dioceses of the Church in Wales issue guidelines in respect of faculty applications for the repair, replacement or creation of new stained glass windows in churches. Details will be available on individual diocesan websites or through DAC Secretaries. Links to diocesan websites can be found on the main Church in Wales' website at: [www.churchinwales.org.uk](http://www.churchinwales.org.uk).

## THE CARE AND CONSERVATION OF STAINED GLASS

The following websites and publications provide advice on the general care and conservation of stained glass.

### **The Institute of Conservation (ICON) Register**

The ICON Conservation Register website has a useful page regarding the care and conservation of stained glass which can be found in their guidance section at: [www.conservationregister.com](http://www.conservationregister.com).

The website also has lots of other useful information such as downloadable guidance notes and a database of conservators and restorers.

### **The Church of England**

The Church of England have produced two guides for the care and conservation of stained glass which can be found in the advice and guidance section of their main website at: [www.churchofengland.org](http://www.churchofengland.org).

### **Historic England (HE)**

HE has produced a series of *Practical Building Conservation* books covering a wide range of building materials. The *Glass & Glazing* edition contains a comprehensive section on stained glass, along with a good list of “further reading” publications.

### **The Heritage Council of Ireland (HCI)**

The HCI has produced a publication on the care of stained glass which covers advice for custodians, recommendations for conservators and damage protection. It can be downloaded from their main website at: [www.heritagecouncil.ie](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie). (type “stained glass” in the search feature).

### **The National Trust**

The *National Trust Manual of Housekeeping* has a short section on window glass which contains useful (and simple) advice on looking after historic window glass.

## **STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Installing a new stained glass window in a church will require a full faculty application. The mandatory forms for this include a *Statement of Significance* and *Statement of Needs*, which will need to be completed in full. In addition, suitable supporting documentation will also need to be supplied (as discussed earlier).

It is extremely important that an assessment of the impact of the works is also included with your application, and there is a section on the SOS form for this. Alternately, you, or your professional adviser, may wish to supply a separate SOS and Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) to support your application. Always speak to your DAC Secretary prior to starting the application as they can advise what information will need to be included.

The Church in Wales’ has produced a separate guidance document, *Completing a Statement of Significance for the Online Faculty System*, which can be obtained from the Property department by emailing [property@churchinwales.org.uk](mailto:property@churchinwales.org.uk) or by calling 02920 348200.

Tina Andrew  
Church Conservation and Support Manager  
The Church in Wales  
Updated 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019