

Enabling Development – What Happens If You Ignore the Opportunity?

Most of us who are members of churches occupy buildings handed down to us from earlier generations. They provided them for mission, not as memorials. These buildings suited society as it was then. They didn't know what we would need in the 21st-century.

So now we have this property to use for mission. What happens if we do nothing?

The parable of the 3 servants in Matthew 25 is fairly clear. 5 bags, 2 bags and one bag of silver given to servants respectively according to their abilities. The first 2 did well, investing them appropriately but the 3rd one buried his did nothing with it – just handed it back at the end of his time. If valuable property is just retained and handed on but not made useful for mission today, where is the benefit?

What has been achieved in a church with declining members sitting on real estate of great value, except of course for the worship and valuable fellowship of the small group? Could that have happened elsewhere as part of a reconfiguring?

So what might be being missed here? Fresh relevance to the community; blessing the community around us with useful spaces that they can borrow/rent/use; a new youth centre elsewhere; meeting a housing need; funding additional pastoral staff; heritage repairs; creating flat-floor flexibility for multi-uses; an audiovisual installation for services and many other events; a church plant elsewhere nearby or in the outer suburbs. Many things could be achieved by taking the “bags of silver” from some of the real estate value and investing them in mission.

However many churches default to the status quo, make no changes and think that it is a prudent approach. Or they put it off indefinitely. Visionary people leave.

Instead there is a need for visionary leadership that is willing to step out in faith to achieve mission. At the same time they need a support team to manage and control the risks. Isn't this attractive?

Next time - Enabling Development - How can we be responsible?



This church re-ordered its interior with a flat floor to enable it to be used for many different events and service layouts. Currently it is using an in-the-round arrangement with a central platform

More comments about the book: [Making Property Serve Mission - Rethinking the Church's Buildings for the 21st Century](#) from reviewers:

"This book ... would be a great source for a larger congregation considering revamping their space to suit changing communities.

There are many questions and considerations that would turn a church's building committee into an informed, considerate, and consultative group that looked at the needs and aspirations of many people and engage with the architect intelligently to achieve a common purpose.

Maggie Durran - Church Times UK

