

Rev Michael McHugh - Savernake Team Rector

**Fit For Purpose**

In the heatwave, we held a meeting in church because it was cooler than anywhere else. Truly fit for purpose if only in a heatwave.

In this quiet summer period, I would like to ask questions being raised by the worshipping community. How do we make churches more fit for purpose?

These beautiful buildings, constructed using ancient proportions, faced East and West to the morning and evening sun. They raise the soul heavenward. They represent an aspiration to that which is greater than ourselves. Theism is not required though desirable to get the most out of them.

Historically older medieval buildings were altered to a cultural ideal. Fittings were added that damaged both the grandeur and the usefulness of the building. Altering or not altering a church can be sacrilegious. Have you ever stood in an empty cathedral? Totally awesome! Put in benches (pews), it doesn’t work. Some large churches and most cathedrals have chosen to commit to artistically beautiful moveable pews, others to chairs. It creates a place fit for sacred and other use.

Strangely the greatest resistance to sacred change comes from those who are occasional visitors, those who do not understand the space.

Why use the whole church for services with small attendances? Could we not add the modern equivalent of a rood screen providing a warm ‘sacred space’? The rest of the church can be flexible.

How do we respect and make our church building more fit for purpose? Feel free to challenge us and yourself about architectural preconceptions but only if you are willing to commit to positive change. The church community has been living for 2000 years. Fossils don’t have beating hearts!

Every Blessing

Michael