

21st-Century Church: Better in a New Building or Heritage Building? Part 2 of 4: Encouraging Relationships

At St Aldates Oxford, the character of the heritage walls and roof have been made more apparent with lighting and paint, while the fully accessible new level floor is partly stone tiled and partly carpeted. Translucent blinds control the sunlight in front of the stained glass windows allowing the colour to be projected onto the blinds. These have improved the appreciation of the building's heritage and enhanced the sense of transcendence for worshippers. The arrangement of chairs allow people to see one another's faces across the room as they worship and the individual chairs seem to encourage people to stay and chat after the services. Some gather in the new entrance area and some in the garden outside. Connecting to the church's coffee shop alongside the entrance is the next stage of the project. The parish centre located in the nearby street has a basement youth centre and group meeting venues, offices and commercial kitchen.



At St Aldates translucent blinds control the sunlight in front of the stained glass windows

The recently built St Alfred's Church main foyer opens off the main entry doors and is large enough for people to stop and talk. This is the location for refreshments after church with its servery from the commercial kitchen and glass doors out to the barbecue area. Again the worship auditorium seating is in the round and the focus is towards the platform with a naturally back-lit cross above it set against a warm rammed-earth wall.



St Alfred's foyer opens off the main auditorium entry doors

Both encourage relationships through the character of the space, the furniture and the sequence of the rooms. They achieve it in different ways and have consciously been created to do so.

Next time:
Creating an
Entrance

St Aldates chairs seem to encourage people to stay and chat after the service.

