

Shrink the footprint to zero

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Back in 2013 the Church of England came up with a strategy called "Shrinking the Footprint" it has now decided it needs to shrink the footprint to zero. The original strategy said this; *The free, easy to use toolkit from Shrinking the Footprint, the CofE's national environmental campaign, enables all church buildings – historic and modern – to understand and reduce energy use and costs along with cutting their carbon footprint* and that the strategy would, *"identify buildings that require additional support"*. This in my experience is probably almost all of them. My record of visiting or attending different churches suggests almost all them are cavernous places, built with no regard to energy use or even making the congregation feel warm (or comfortable although that's another issue). Now the Church has decided it needs to shrink the footprint to zero by 2045. It does seem to realise this is going to be a challenge. Particularly as regards cathedrals. To my mind why bother trying to heat these anyway? Having said that, in 2015 when we went to Paris for the climate change talks we went to meetings at St Merries, near the Beauborg Centre and St Denis Cathedral. Both were huge. I don't feel the cold easily but I've rarely been so cold in my life. I've never been able to decide whether the buildings were unheated all the time or whether they had just switched the heating off so as not to be embarrassed. Its difficult to worship when you're freezing. I went to Canterbury more recently and I think they had heated it to an extent although it was not exactly baking. I don't really know what the solution to all this is. We've had a think about it in our church. We put insulation in the roof (we can - many cannot even do this). but then it will escape through the walls and stained glass windows (we have underfloor heating). We looked at getting more secondary glazing an tried to get a grant for it. We failed and it wasn't economic to do without one, although gas prices have at least doubled since. Our energy use is enormous, partly due to the size of the building - which although not a cathedral is well on the way to the footprint of some of the smaller ones. Also because the building is in almost constant use. The first thing is identify your current energy use. Then model its current patterns (of course these may change), then start to develop a long term strategy. This will probably involve solar panels and heat pumps since these seem to me the technologies that are most suited to onsite generation. One of our current interns is doing the first bit of the above as we speak. I expect though in winter we are going to have to wrap up well in future to shrink the footprint to zero. Neil

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