

**Neutral Citation Number: [2023] ECC Swk 8**

**IN THE CONSISTORY COURT OF THE DIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK**

**IN THE MATTER OF CHRIST CHURCH, GIPSY HILL**

**AND IN THE MATTER OF A PETITION BY REVD JONATHAN CROUCHER, MS JANET BOYCE AND RACHEL SKEATH**

### **JUDGMENT**

1. This is the petition of Revd Jonathan Croucher, Ms Janet Boyce and Ms Rachel Skeath. By it they seek permission to replace the gas fired cabinet heater in the church with a new condensing gas heater. By directions dated 19 September 2023, I directed that a faculty should issue for reasons which I should give later. This is that judgment<sup>1</sup>.
2. Church Church dates from 1867 and the tower indeed survives; but the body of the church was destroyed by fire in 1982 and replaced by a fine modern church in 1986. It has an efficient gas fuelled heating system which operates by blowing hot air through underfloor vents. It is very efficient and even on the coldest day the church can be warm in 15 minutes. The heating unit to provide the hot air has failed and the obvious solution is to replace it. But it is gas fuelled. Accordingly, the PCC have looked carefully at the alternative options. Heat pumps are not viable. It would be a possible alternative to install electric heaters but these would be very expensive to install, less energy efficient, unsightly and expensive to run. The PCC have decided that it would not be sensible to install them and the DAC agree. It has certified in accordance with rule 4.9 (7A) that the petitioners have considered the Church of England's net zero guidance; and recommended the proposals to me.
3. Accordingly I direct that a faculty do issue as prayed.
4. For the future the DAC suggest that, as the technology improves, heat pumps might become a viable option but given the efficiency of the current system one can see that this might be a situation where the Church would prefer to continue using a fossil fuel and achieve net carbon neutrality by paying for offsets.
5. In another judgment which I am handing down today<sup>2</sup>, I consider whether in circumstances where a faculty is granted to replace one fossil fuelled heating system with another, it is generally appropriate to impose a condition requiring the purchase of offsets. For reasons I gave in that judgment, I decided that it was not and I do not here repeat what I said there.
6. However, I made it clear in that judgment that I was not discouraging the purchase of offsets and, as I have noted above, the way that Christ Church achieves carbon neutrality by 2035<sup>3</sup> may be by purchasing offsets. In the circumstances, they will wish to consider whether they want to do so now or at least from 2025 when it is hoped that this will be possible through the parish buying scheme.

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<sup>1</sup> The matter had become urgent because if an order had not been placed at that time, the installation of a new system might not have been achieved before the winter.

<sup>2</sup> *In re St Mary & St John the Divine, Balham* [2023] Swk 7.

<sup>3</sup> The target in the Diocese of Southwark is 2035 and not 2030.

7. In my judgment in *In re St Mary & St John the Divine, Balham* I noted that churches in the position of St Mary & St John's might have other green projects that they wish to pursue, At Christ Church, they hope to install solar panels in due course. One always hopes in these situations that it is possible to do everything that is desirable but of course this is not always the case; so for the moment, the PCC may be choosing between progressing this project and paying for offsets. I know that the PCC are committed to the Church of England's policies to achieve carbon neutrality and that they will consider all these things carefully and prayerfully.

PHILIP PETCHEY

Chancellor

27 September 2023