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## Eventization of Religious Heritage: Case Studies and Practical Considerations

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# Eventization of religious heritage: case studies and practical considerations

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This paper examines the role that events can play in promoting religious tourism to a specific destination, in this case, Malta. It introduces practical examples that present creative ideas and demonstrate good practice that can be adopted and adapted for future planning in this context.

The dramatic growth of events in our way of life, evidenced by their expansion as part of popular culture, in Europe as elsewhere, is mirrored by an increase in events across many different aspects of life. However, it should be remembered that events emerged from seasonal, life cycle, and celebratory religious origins. Throughout human history, societies have celebrated and mourned, coming together through the medium of events, and today millions of travellers visit destinations in order to participate in events that relate to religious practices, places, historical occurrences, and objects. Such tourists may visit from a religious motivation or be engaged from historical or other perspectives. Events may involve blurring the boundaries between the sacred and the non-sacred, and this is a key challenge for those involved in working with religious buildings, sites or artefacts. For example, what is an appropriate use of a religious site or building for events purposes? And what is inappropriate? How might activities and places be managed in order to respect the sacred elements, whilst providing practical facilities for visiting tourists?

This paper details specific examples of the use of events to promote faith-based tourism in the UK, that can provide lessons, ideas and processes for designing and developing meaningful programmes and events to attract religious tourism visitors, in different environments.

**Key Words:** venuefication, religious heritage, extended use of churches, events, eventization of faith

## Introduction

My first question is – what is an event? Why are we talking about events? Many presentations in many conferences have included contributors at some point, saying, ‘and then we had an event’. This is what makes it really exciting for me, as an events professional, and as an events management educator and researcher in the field that connects events with religious practice and sacred venues, such as churches. An event is transformational (Dowson & Lamond, 2017) and it is experiential (Crowther & Donlan, 2011). An event should be interactive – which means it is a two-way process. An event should be targeted at specific people. And an event is relational, which means it’s about us getting to know each other.

According to Crowther and Donlan (2011), the attributes of events are:

- **Experiential** – providing an experience or activity in which to participate
- **Interactive** – include social or technological interaction

- **Targeted** – at a specific audience or grouping
- **Relational** – involve building relationships and networks

And so the characteristics of events are:

- **Face to face** participation
- **A group of people** – bringing people together
- **Developing relationships** – building community
- **Networking** – building relationships
- **Providing a direct experience** (in this case, of a religious environment, place, object or community)

The increasing use of religious heritage places and buildings has brought about a new concept, of ‘venuefication’ (Dowson & Lamond, 2017), which means that it is possible for any building, space or site to become a venue for an event. However, there are some key considerations that should be made, and this article includes reflection on the following important aspects of such activities:

- operational requirements
- practical considerations
- things to watch out for
- disadvantages
- impacts on resources and ‘fabric’
- policies and processes
- organisational requirements
- collaboration between organisations and sectors
- use of resources
- how to design thematic programmes

At conferences, we drink coffee, eat lunch, and talk to each other. And maybe everybody doesn’t speak to everyone else, but that is what events are all about. So what is eventization? German academic Pfadenhauer (2010) wrote about Catholic World Youth Day that took place in Germany in 2005. Pfadenhauer labelled this the ‘eventization of faith’, because, in hosting such large events (there were 400,000 people attending the whole week, with a total of 1 million over the weekend), the Church was selling itself, marketing itself. I interpret this concept differently, and I might use a different word, ‘evangelism’, and I suggest that eventization of faith can be undertaken in different ways. Firstly, it might be seen through the example of the Lindisfarne Gospels which were sent from the British Library to Durham Cathedral in 2013. This conveying of the ancient gospel manuscript from its day-to-day closely-controlled British Library atmosphere, was treated as an event – and thousands of other events were built around it.

A second way of eventization of faith is when churches are promoted as venues for events. These might be religious or non-religious events, which raises their own issues. There are plenty of churches that focus strongly on hiring out their facilities for commercial gain, to host events, every day of the year. For example, in Yorkshire, there is an independent church, which from the outside as well as on the inside, does not look like a church building. It looks like a conference centre, and it has a maximum capacity of about 2,500 in its largest space. Its financial turnover each year for hiring out its space and facilities for events is about £1million. So this use as an event venue is another way in which churches might take part in eventization of faith.

A third way is that churches themselves have started running programmes of events for their own congregations and communities to participate in, and to

encourage other people to enter a church. Event ideas include thematic development; Rev. Stephan Meyer-Schuerg (2017) speaks about the idea of going on a walk or a tour – the churches install large crosses around a village, and then they hold walks between the crosses, and finally they move on to holding events around walking and the crosses.

So these four concepts contribute to my thinking on defining the eventization of faith:

- surrounding a sacred object or space with events to engage with a range of different groups
- commercial sales of churches and associated sacred spaces as venues for events
- churches developing programmes of religious-based events for their own congregations and for their surrounding communities to attend.
- event ideas include thematic development, building events around communal activities based around objects or places

Looking back through the last century and beyond, the religious origins of events have been and are key to the formation of society. In pre-Christian times, births, initiations, deaths, and harvest-time were celebrated as people came together – and that is events. Historically, researchers such as Morrison (2006), Durkheim (2008 [1912]), Turner (1982), and Turner & Turner (1978) studied such celebrations, and these celebrations were events. That is why events are really important. But a sociologist like Emile Durkheim or an anthropologist like Victor Turner would not have recognised an activity or celebration as ‘an event’ and would not have called it ‘an event’ either, but that is what it is. From pre-Christian celebrations, we get the idea of time that is sacred, and because there is time that is sacred, there is also time that is not sacred. So even the concept of time is connected to events and faith.

A question that emerges here is: what are the practical considerations of increasing the use of sacred buildings to attract new users and tourists? This is called ‘Extended Use’ (Dowson, 2012), by which existing sacred uses of religious buildings continue, alongside the development of new purposes, such as events. The increasing use of religious heritage places and buildings has brought about a new concept of ‘Venuefication’ (Dowson & Lamond, 2017), which means that it is possible for any building, space or site to become a venue for an event. And so, the street outside can be a venue. The swimming pool area can be a venue. The town square can be a venue; the church can be a venue. Local churches, cathedrals,

churches of historic interest, religious buildings and spaces, religious objects, or spaces that hold religious objects, can all become venues for events. All of this has implications for the use of religious space and its management. But, it is vital to recognise that the sites' primary purpose continues. Their primary role and function is still to be a church, it is still to be a holy space. Sometimes new buildings are constructed to adjoin the originally holy site; these may provide contemporary, state-of-the-art event facilities and spaces. Elsewhere, it may not be possible to adapt buildings and facilities or change anything, so communities have to use the resources they have, but ask themselves how they can make it practically, usable? All these considerations and developments work through partnership, through working together – you cannot do it on your own.

Churches which function as event venues continue to have their primary function as a church, with services and other activities – and whether it's a church or a sports stadium, such facilities still maintain their primary function. As a professional events manager, I used to run a lot of events in England, where football stadiums were a popular and economical venue choice. I recall booking a particular football club for an event. Ten days before the event was due to take place, the football club withdrew one of the rooms we had contracted to hire, as they needed to give the room to UEFA on the day we wanted it - they had an important football match scheduled there for the following day. As a client, this decision came out of nowhere, the priority was no longer ours; we were no longer the paying customer – so what did we do? Did we have our event there? No, we didn't. We walked. We found another venue somewhere else, even with ten days' notice. And that's a problem for churches too, because churches as venues have a higher priority – they continue as a church, as well as a venue for hire. A cathedral I know, hired itself out to a local vicar who wanted to use it to host a Christian concert, and who brought in a professional external sound engineering company. This sound company had equipment to install in the cathedral prior to the start of the event and needed a certain amount of time to do so. But they weren't allowed in the building because the choirmaster said his rehearsal took precedence. The choir could have rehearsed anywhere, but the choirmaster refused to allow the professional event staff into the building and so the event was delayed because the sound engineers had to set up for the concert. Such problems are very complex because the external hirer suddenly had no option but to abide by

the dictate of the choirmaster. No-one involved in taking the booking was on site to challenge the arrangements or explain the situation and importance of the hire. Such examples help us to form strategic considerations that churches and religious sites should consider prior to hiring out their facilities:

### *Acceptability*

Acceptability in theological terms relates to what is acceptable, not only in terms of the event itself (the activity), but also in terms of the organisation or individual who is hiring or using the space. The theology of space and place defines what is acceptable, and there is a breadth of theology and practice in the Anglican Church. The tradition and practice in the specific church depends on the local circumstances: on the tradition of the church, on the views and practices of the vicar and the PCC (Parish Church Council), as well as on the individual congregation member; where the activity takes place - within the grounds of the building, within the church itself, in the sanctuary, or in associated buildings; and finally, it depends on what the activity is. The theology of space and place may be related to the church tradition, to the leadership of the church, or even to individuals. Whether places are sacralised by actions (Grimes, 1999; Grimes, 2006), or whether they act as sacred in and of themselves (Smith, 1987), it is clear that church buildings are normally viewed as sacred. But what are the impacts of different activities taking place in what is regarded as a sacred space? In assessing the acceptability of the practical extended use of church buildings, tourism, pilgrimages and commercial activities, such as shops within the church building, are commonly considered. But there are also, increasingly, events.

### *Suitability*

Is it appropriate? Suitability relates to the use of the building by various organisations or individuals and here it is important to consider the following points. Does the organisation proposing to hire the building share the values of the church or religious building in which the event is being held? How do the values of the church fit with those of the organisation using the building? How do the values of the church fit with those of the event participants? Will participants be offended by having to come into a church building, whether it is overtly displaying Christian signs or not? This has to take into account the fit with the activity taking place – for example a boxing match might be deemed inappropriate by churches because of the undertones of violence. Another example of



unsuitability was the use of a building designed for church meetings that accepted a booking by defence contractors and arms manufacturers, which resulted in demonstrations by members of the public (politically-motivated church members) in protesting against the booking. Such a booking should have rung alarm bells at the enquiry stage. As an event manager and as a venue manager this should be to the forefront of your mind – not wanting to embarrass the church by such an overt accommodation of an organisation with opposing values and views. This demonstrates the thin line that churches tread when opening up for hire by external organisations.

### **Feasibility**

Can you do what you need to do? Many churches lack basic facilities including heating and toilets. Feasibility aspects include practical considerations and resource availability. Any booking has to fit with the timing of regular planned church activities e.g. Sundays and religious festivals. Often there is the need for internal and/or external reordering or more extensive remodelling to provide or enhance facilities to extend the use of the church and its associated buildings. In events management generally, the key venue-related problems are concerned with toilets, car-parking, cleanliness and food, and the provision of any of these aspects might affect the feasibility of the church as a venue, or of the event itself. For churches, there are complexities around the undertaking of temporary or permanent adaptations e.g. for a specific event. A non-church example was the temporary adaptation of a theatre for Christmas dinner events by installing a false floor that gave the room a level floor. The issues this

raises include cost, inflexibility, and having adequate time available for installation and break-down. An example of permanent structural developments can be found in a non-denominational church, the biggest church in the city, now seating up to 2,500 people on Sundays. The facility was purpose-built and initially made to look like a warehouse from the outside, so that when the church congregation grew too big, they could sell it as a warehouse. In the meantime, new facilities have been added - the original spaces seated 700 and 400 and a second building now seats 2,500, and houses a nursery, child-care facilities and classrooms. The church is used all day, every day, and hired out commercially as a conference and exhibition centre. So, is it a church? There are no visible signs of that as you enter the site, no crosses or other symbols to be found anywhere. At the back of the main hall there are colour photos that represent the values of the church – hope, for example. In contrast, many local parish churches cannot even rely on the heating to work or are limited by restrictions on seating and layout of wooden pews that they are unable to remove without undertaking a complex process to gain permission from their diocese and/or their congregations.

As a result of the above considerations, the model presented in Figure 1 is proposed to guide churches (as with any good model, there are four P's).

Thus, various practical aspects should be in place for churches and tourism organisations planning on increasing the use of sacred buildings to attract new users and tourists. These can be broken down into key areas for consideration:

**Figure 1 : Model to Guide Churches in Considering New Uses**

<b>Processes</b>	<b>Policies</b>	<b>Practical Resources</b>	<b>Problems</b>
Who decides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Management</li> <li>• Decision-making</li> <li>• Funding</li> </ul>	Need to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fit with Values</li> <li>• Congruence</li> <li>• Process for Agreeing, Communicating and Implementing policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff, with appropriate skills, experience and competences</li> <li>• Access to the space</li> <li>• Layout – the more flexible the better</li> <li>• Flexibility of approach               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◊ Furniture that is fit for purpose</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Appropriate equipment that works, with support               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◊ Adequate toilets, heating that works, accessible safe car parking, access to food and refreshments</li> <li>◊ Events Management skills</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	What to do in case of failure or inappropriate use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event planning and management</li> <li>• Review policies and processes</li> <li>• Risk assessments</li> <li>• Method Statements</li> </ul>

- operational requirements
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### **Churches as Venues – Design and Operational Considerations**

There are a number of key financial aspects that should be considered when proposing to enter the events sector as a venue. The following areas relate specifically to churches and religious sites.

Firstly, when considering venue design and operations, research the market size and conditions. If you’re thinking about marketing Malta, who else is thinking about marketing their location? Who else are they talking to? Because people don’t just have the choice of Malta and nowhere else; there are other options. What facilities exist within the area / region that might be in competition, and what impact might entering the market have on other locations? Models that help in reviewing the environment include PESTEL and Porter’s Five Forces (Johnson, Whittington, Scholes, Angwin & Regnér, 2017).

Secondly, review the new and ongoing costs. How much will it cost to develop or install new facilities, or even to open the doors in the first place? In terms of simply opening the doors of the building for hire, the cost needs to be clarified, which a surprising number of churches and cathedrals have failed to do, often undercharging for the facilities provided, and thereby making a loss, rather than funding their church activities through profitable events. Then there is the cost of coming together for a conference; by attending an event, participants are all doing something that is not part of their usual job, different from their day-to-day responsibilities. A participant might say that they cannot attend two days of a conference, ‘because tomorrow I have to go to work, to earn money.’ But today is work ... ‘Yes but I don’t get paid for that’. So that is a cost; it doubles the cost of coming to an event because participants are foregoing their main income

by attending a conference. They cannot afford to sit around chatting about stuff because they also have to make a living.

Thirdly, analyse the return on investment. What additional investment will be required, and how will it be paid for? How is it to be funded? How long does it take to pay for new developments and improvements, and what will the eventual cost be if interest is payable on borrowings to pay for improvements that might be entirely necessary, such as toilets? Many increased costs appear simply by undertaking more activity. The cost of promoting the venue needs to be calculated and considered – none of this is free, even if it is undertaken by volunteers.

And fourthly, consider aspects of efficiency to identify what the costs might be of unprofessionalism and mistakes? When I arrive at my church at 7.30 on a Sunday morning, I pray that it’s not cold, because sometimes the heating doesn’t quite work as it should, and instead of blowing out warm air, it blows out cold air. The heating is not reliable and even extinguishes the candles sometimes. You don’t want to do that service in the depths of winter. But if we’re going to hire out church buildings as venues, commercially, there are levels of quality that are basic threshold requirements, not optional elements. We need to make sure that the heating works; we need to make sure that people don’t come in and freeze.

In addition there are other important factors that should also be considered:

#### ***Use and Usability***

- Who will use the venue? What processes will be in place to decide whether an organisation is appropriate to hire the facility? Who will make those decisions? What impact will this policy have on marketing the venue?
- The flexibility of internal and external spaces can be vital. Fixed pews and other fittings may deter potential hirers. A growing number of churches in the UK are removing fixed pews and reordering churches, replacing pews with chairs that can be stacked and stored (Swerling, 2017).
- Current local, national and EU Safety Standards and Building Codes must be adhered to for all new developments.
- An Integrated Design approach involves engagement with all stakeholders in new

developments. According to Paramio, Buraimo, and Campos, (2008), Integrated Design should include:

*‘Various stakeholders, from governing bodies to managers and architects [who] have put more emphasis on fundamental issues. Such issues include innovative design, high standards of accessibility, safety, flexibility to adjust to all kinds of sporting and non-sporting events and above all, economic viability, all of which are addressed in the planning and operational process (Paramio et al., 2008:517).*

### **Location**

- Is there adequate access to and around the venue?
- What are the local and international transport options and connections like? If it takes an 11-hour layover for tourists to reach the destination, few will make the effort to come.
- What might the impact be on the local area and on other types of tourism?

### **Design**

- What is the visual impact on the environment?
- What are the sustainability and wider environmental impacts?

### **Operational requirements:**

- Different stakeholders have different operational requirements which all need to be taken into consideration
  - ◊ Clients (Different events have different requirements)
  - ◊ Staff (Technical Staff, Security, Cleaners, Caretakers, Venue Managers)
  - ◊ Performers
  - ◊ Promoters
  - ◊ VIPS
  - ◊ Users with disabilities and mobility issues
- Practical impacts on existing resources i.e. on the fabric and furnishings of the building
- Requirements for different furniture: Seating needs are different: an hour for a service (on Sunday) as opposed to a half- or one-day event in terms of comfort. Secure storage space is needed for furniture
- Cleaning: pre, during and post-event, all requires staff on site.
- Toilets: are there enough (John, Sheard & Vickery, 2013)? How many churches don't even have one toilet?

- Car-parking – on-site and on-street. How will the neighbours respond? How will the church regulate car-parking on-site and in the vicinity? How safe will cars be in the area?
- Local area – are there existing regular users of the church? What are the impacts on the local area in terms of road access, car-parking, public transport? How safe will event attendees be in the area?
- Heating – many churches are cold. What are the additional costs to the church of having to heat the building to a higher standard? What impact will the additional use have on existing (often ancient and temperamental) heating systems? Such support systems have to be fit for purpose, within or adjacent to the sacred space.
- What kitchen facilities are required? Who will be able to access them? They have to be accessible, appropriate and affordable to those responsible for developing, managing and maintaining the religious heritage buildings or spaces
- Signage – needs to be in place and kept up to date for each event.
- Managing the space – consider the practicalities and ethics of decision-making. Who can hire the space, what organisations, and for what purposes? How will you decide?
- Spiritual and values impacts – churches and other organisations / commercial
- Identifying the impact on other local community facilities, venues that might consider themselves as competitors. Don't steal their business, or undercut them. How can churches work collaboratively with other similar venues?
- Impact on the local community – the aim of many religious groups is to use church buildings as facilities to engage with the local community. How can a site approach the challenge of measuring cultural and community impacts of extended use.

### **The Event Experience and the Venue**

The venue plays a key role in defining and creating the event experience. Firstly, in terms of a sense of uniqueness and history. Preparing the Glastonbury Festival site (<http://www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk/>) is like building a small town in a farmer's field for the duration of the event. Glastonbury Festival is situated near to ancient spiritual grounds, and whilst the festival itself seems to have very little to do with the spiritual aspects, it uses the language of new age spirituality (Robinson, 2016) in what it promotes, even though when you get there, it's a music festival that is similar to lots of other music festivals – bigger perhaps, but there is little to connect it to its supposed spiritual

roots. On the other hand, Westminster Abbey (<http://www.westminster-abbey.org/>) is available for hire for corporate events and corporate hospitality, with or without an explicit connection to its religious purpose. So, you can have a venue where the meaning and connection with religion is implicit, but which may not actually exist at all in reality, and then you have another venue which is a spiritual space, a holy space, and yet we're letting people in to do almost anything.

Technical excellence adds a special quality to an event. We have a challenge of introducing modern technical equipment but keeping it consistent, consonant with existing ancient or traditional religious buildings. For example, an Anglo-Catholic monastery reordered their church, including the installation of a beautiful sound speaker system, and specially-designed lighting, but they had to replace the lights because one of them fell down shortly after installation. So the lights were in keeping with the building, they looked beautiful and were designed specifically for the venue, but they also have to work, and be installed safely. Specialist organisations exist such as D&B Audiotechnik (<http://www.dbaudio.com/>), a German sound company that operates around the world, supplying and specialising in houses of worship, developing sound systems for mega-churches globally. (A mega-church is defined as having a capacity or congregation of 2000-plus, and there are thousands of them). Many of these churches have better sound systems than many secular event venues – the fantastic quality of sound makes you ask, 'Wow! Am I in heaven?' So technical excellence is also important - because having inappropriate or poorly operated equipment can ruin the sound elements of a church service or an event in a church building just as much as having the right equipment can benefit the experience.

A recent example is the appropriate installation of a new sound system in an historic church in Sweden by D&B Audiotechnik in 2017 - Stockholm's Maria Magdalena church, which is one of the oldest and largest in the city. This was undertaken as part of an overall renovation project which began in 2013, with internal and external refurbishments. As part of this improvement programme, the church upgraded its sound system, to enhance the sound quality, as well as matching the building's religious architecture (<http://www.dbaudio.com/en/db/news/detail/article/xc-series-changes-the-course-of-historic-swedish-church.html>).

There are also challenges for ancient religious heritage and ancient religious buildings in relation to sustainability. You cannot automatically install access

facilities for wheelchairs, for example, and this is more expensive in heritage contexts. A 500-year-old parish church spent £180,000 building an accessible entrance pathway from the street to the church doors, to enable wheelchairs, prams and pushchairs can gain access without going up or down steps. Whilst the new access enhances the building, it meant digging up gravestones, not any easy task. And all of this is important because such matters are of little concern to those responsible for managing access to secular buildings. The heart of sustainability is to identify the impacts of the changes to be made.

### Potential Conflicts

The points above outline the importance of flexibility – but who is the flexibility for? There is an impact on existing users of multi-purpose spaces. If you are hiring out your church or associated buildings to external organisations, maybe the people who come to church services on Sundays or during the week, also want to come to events – what happens to them? This is where it is important to identify the stakeholders and their needs. Engaging stakeholders in all of discussions is really important. In the sports context, multi-user spaces increase efficiency, but audience experience can be affected (Feddersen & Maennig, 2009); why expect churches to be any different? When there are Multiple Users of a sacred space, who has priority?

A church recently reviewed their charging structure. They sat down and worked out how much it cost them to open the doors of the church, and they realised that they had quite a few regular clients who hired their building for half the amount it was costing them, just to open the doors. So they explained to a client that the fee had not just increased a bit – but had in fact doubled. The hiring organisation were very upset because they saw themselves as good customers who made a regular contribution to the church. But, in reality they were bad customers, as they cost the church money, every time they used its facilities for their meetings. The church was effectively subsidising the organisation every time they hired the space. So future use of the church space was dependent on paying the new economically sustainable rate. The church's biggest problem was that they didn't know they were losing money because no-one until that point had sat down and worked out the cost of opening up the building.

Hence, there are multiple users; for a 'normal' (secular) event in a secular venue, the list includes the kind of users that you might have. But, if



you add church into the mix, you're adding complexity. These groups all need to be taken into account and in particular their operational requirements considered. Churches need to have controls, procedures, processes and policies in place to address the complex issues they face when hiring out their space. Churches need to guard their reputation, as a church. You can't just turn around and say 'sorry you can't use the church today'. Policies and procedures mean that you can have a rationale for your decisions when communicating with people and organisations who want to use your building.

In practical terms, how do operational requirements (CIRIA, 2008) apply to ancient heritage or religious buildings? Can they apply to ancient heritage or religious buildings? These are all issues that need to be considered and worked through before making decisions about how the space will be used. The following lists various aspects that CIRIA (2008) suggest are important:

- Space Requirements
- Floor Surfaces
- Routes and Way finding including signage
- Security (Gates, Search Areas, CCTV, Communication)
- Disabled Users
- Storage Space
- Retailing Space
- Queuing and Ticketing (access)
- Vibration and Structural requirements

According to CIRIA (2008) the key stakeholder groups for most events and venues include the following:

- Emergency services (police, fire service, ambulance)
- Users, including
  - ◊ client and staff representatives,
  - ◊ user groups (including people with disabilities and impaired mobility),
  - ◊ national groups (such as the National Association of Disabled Supporters – NADS)
  - ◊ local groups
- Licensing authorities and regulatory bodies
- Local authorities
- Promoters
- Operators

- Maintainers
- Security
- Transport providers
- Neighbours, including businesses

However, the use of religious heritage buildings would have additional key stakeholder groups, including national and local tourism authorities and government, Church organisations, such as dioceses and national church hierarchies, as well as hotels and restaurants, and heritage groups.

The story of moving the Lindisfarne Gospels illustrates the complexity of working with religious objects, of historic spiritual significance. The work of one man, Aedfrith, in 8<sup>th</sup> century, the gospels were created to honour St Cuthbert and as an act of worship to God. The Lindisfarne Gospels are recognised as amongst the most beautiful medieval Christian treasures, especially in England. Vikings attacked the North East of England, where the gospels were held and the monks took them on a thousand-year journey, which included being shipwrecked (a bit like St Paul in Malta). Eventually, in 1753, they found a home in the British Museum in London, where they are now kept in specially adapted environmental conditions designed to protect this fragile object, in the right temperature and tightly controlled climatic conditions. In 2003, the technical possibility existed for the creation of facsimile copies, so the British Library produced a facsimile copy of the Lindisfarne Gospels, which was sent to Durham, with the message that it was just as good as the real thing. But is a facsimile just the same as the real thing when it's a highly significant historical religious object? In 2013, the real Lindisfarne Gospels were sent to Durham, to be kept on display in the strictly measured environmental conditions required by the British Library.

Durham Cathedral worked in partnership with Durham University, the local council and the tourist authority, along with the British Library and a whole range of other groups and organisations. The University had to build a special room that met the strict environmental conditions. These organisations, working together, developed a tour, but they also built a series of events around the visit. They eventized the visit of the Gospels to the North East of England. In the same way as selling tickets for a concert or other event, they turned the visit into an event, whereby people who wanted to visit the Lindisfarne Gospels exhibition had to buy a ticket for a specific time, and sold 95,000 tickets over a three-month period. 95,000 people came

to see this book. This was different from the way such exhibitions had been organised in the past, where people just queued up each day and waiting until they got in, with no regulation or guarantee that the crowd size would allow all visitors through. I interviewed the project manager of the exhibition who was responsible for opening up and closing the exhibition each day. I asked her what it was like, and she told me that it was her favourite part of the role. She had a team of people but she herself preferred to do this. She went in early, she volunteered to stay late. Why? Because when she was there early or late, she was alone with 'the book', and the book had special meaning. The book had a spiritual dimension, a spiritual presence that she could feel. She had a spiritual experience when she was with the book. How can a facsimile do that? It can't ever be the same as the book. Her experience was special, and we should not underestimate the spiritual aspects of what you in Malta are trying to achieve by opening up religious heritage sites to tourism and events. Because God is going to get involved. God is a stakeholder in this.

### Religious Buildings – Complications

There are challenges mixing and integrating the ancient and the modern, and one of the challenges for Malta is professional events management. Commitment to team working and partnership are vital for successful event planning and delivery, which involves engaging with a mix of stakeholders in building participative partnerships, taking collective action, and being committed to a shared objective. Trust between stakeholders – including competitors – to develop themes that will attract more visitors to a wider range of religious sites. In summary, key elements to consider are:

- Events and other tourist activities may involve blurring the boundaries between the sacred and the non-sacred, and this is a key challenge for those involved in working with religious buildings, sites or artefacts.
- What is an appropriate use of a religious site or building for events purposes?
- What is inappropriate use?
- How might activities and places be managed in order to respect the sacredness elements, whilst providing practical facilities for visiting tourists?

What's the difference between 'religious' and 'spiritual'? In September 2017, the National Centre for Social Research in the UK published a report on the social trends that affect the nation. Included each year

is a question that asks respondees 'Are you religious?' The published results indicated that in the 2016 research, some 53% of respondents said 'No, I'm not religious' (<http://www.natcen.ac.uk/news-media/press-releases/2017/september/british-social-attitudes-record-number-of-brits-with-no-religion/>). This is interesting. They are asking the same question as always. But if they had asked 'Are you spiritual?' many more people would have said 'Yes, sure'. My church is open every day, and every day people come into the church. They light a candle, write a prayer and place it on the prayer tree. But if you asked them if they were religious, they would say no. They would say that I am religious, because I'm a priest. I'm meant to be religious. So there is something about the language that we use that could engage with more people. Don't be restricted to the religious bit, because the spiritual tag is more important.

There was a discussion on Twitter recently when someone asked, 'Is it ok to have a beer festival in a church?' and I sent them a picture of one! Because there are activities and events that we think are inappropriate and there are things that we think are appropriate. It is up to each church, each organisation, each religious building to define what they are, to define what is right for them. A few years ago, a church with £1million turnover in venue hire had a call from an international sports broadcast company, offering them £1/4 million for one night's hire. And the church were amazed – a quarter of their annual income in one day! Fantastic! But when they asked what the sports event was – a boxing match – they turned it down. Why? Because they respected and valued the people at their church, and they knew that some of them had been in abusive relationships. They felt, therefore, that it wasn't appropriate to host an event of that kind. So they turned down £1/4million.

### Conclusion

In an island like Malta, it is possible to communicate and promote both the spiritual aspects unrelated to Christianity, and there is potential for people to come; there are people who pay thousands of pounds to go somewhere warm to do two weeks of yoga. Don't be trapped by thinking that it has to be religious, or that it has to be for Christians, because it doesn't. There are a lot of people out there who are searching for something, and they really don't quite know what it is. When they find it, when they connect with the spiritual, when they connect with the divine, then they understand.

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