

In the matter of All Saints Winterton

And in the matters of faculty 3839 and 3808.

Judgement

Summary

1. By their Petition number 3839, the Petitioners sought a faculty to carry out extensive reordering work at All Saints, Winterton. I have issued a faculty for these commendable proposals, with certain conditions which are set out in the Order that I have made. In essence I have granted them the Faculty they have sought save in respect of one aspect: the application to bury the Edwardian font beneath the re-sited mediaeval font. I see no reason why the Edwardian font has to be buried in this way. I would be content for the Edwardian font to be placed elsewhere in the church (on the understanding that it is not to be used as a font) , or if this is not possible then for it to be placed in the diocesan store or some other suitable arrangements made for it. I invite further submissions about this and will give any necessary directions .The DAC should be consulted.

The issue

2. The medieval font was thrown out of the church, it is assumed, during the time of the Commonwealth in the 1650's and was lost until 1952 when it was found in a local garden and given back to the church. This font is currently located in the south transept mounted on a Romanesque capital. The font is 13th century and octagonal. It has been used for baptisms since 2000.

3. At the time of the Restoration a new font was commissioned in 1663 and this font was used until 1903 when Miss Fowler donated a new font and the 17th century font was given away. The Edwardian font has local significance because it was donated by a parishioner, and of course has been used for baptisms for about 100 years. The view of the Petitioners is that the steps on which it is mounted are a hazard.

4. The proposal is that the medieval font will be moved from where it is currently used to the west end of the Nave after the Edwardian font has been removed (together with the steps). A fresh mount will be provided for the medieval font.

5. I am unable to find reference to the plan to bury the Edwardian font beneath the medieval font within the February 2014 Submissions. However, in the letter of objection from the Victorian Society dated 25 April 2014 they object to the destruction of the Edwardian font in this way. They also object to the Edwardian font being moved altogether, suggesting that one or both plinths could be removed from the base area. I am satisfied that the proposal to move the medieval font into that position and remove the Edwardian font is justified, however I agree with the Victorian Society's objection to the Edwardian font being destroyed in the process.

6. There is no Canon or rule of law which prevents there being more than one font in a church, although one is normal. In Re St Barnabas Kensington 1991 Fam 1 it was held by Chancellor Newsom QC that there was no objection to there being two fonts – one being a baptismal pool and the other being a 'conventional' font for baptism by affusion for infants. In that case both fonts were continuing to be used for baptisms and it could be thought that this practice might give rise to certain anxieties, based on a misconception, that baptism in the pool rather than the font (or vice versa) was the only valid method of baptism. In Re St Nicholas Gosforth 1998 1(5) Ecc LJ 4, the contrary view to St Barnabas was enunciated namely that there should be only one font in a church because there was only one baptism. Certainly, the liturgical norm is that there should be only one font at which baptisms take place. Bishop David Stancliffe's article in EccLJ 1993 on this topic is apposite.

7. However, in the instant case these issues do not arise, because it is not proposed that the Edwardian font should continue to be used as a font. The Medieval font is to continue being used as the font as it has been since 2000, and it is to be moved to the current location of the Edwardian font. Proposals could be worked up to place the Edwardian font in another location in the church where it would not be used as a font but could 'co-exist peacefully' per The Victorian Society 25 April 2014 with the medieval font. If such a proposal was not practical or desired then new plans could be placed before me for the removal of the font from the church to store or to another church. I leave this to the Petitioners to reflect upon with the advice of the DAC before further directions are sought from me.

7. A consequence of this decision is that an earlier Faculty that I granted (Faculty No 3808) dated 27 March 2014 in which other aspects of this reordering were granted a Faculty, needs to be reconsidered. This is because within the schedule of works proposed in that petition was the proposal to bury the Edwardian font, which forms part of the current Petition, too. This earlier Petition predates the letter from the Victorian Society to which I have referred in this judgement . I am grateful to them for drawing my attention to this issue by their letter.

8. In the light of this judgement, I direct that in respect of Faculty 3808 that part of the Schedule which states ‘and Edwardian font to be buried within the church’ shall be deleted from the Schedule of works authorised. This is done pursuant to my powers under FJR 2013 19.3 (1)(a) in that it appears to me just and expedient to do this.

9. I would like to congratulate the Petitioners on the preparation of an outstanding reordering proposal which I am sure will be a most successful enhancement of all that the church can offer the community. I enjoyed my visit to the church in January and was greatly impressed by all that I saw then. I wish the project well.

Mark Bishop

Chancellor

24 July 2014