

Judgement

1. This is an application for a faculty for ‘an oak altar in the Casewick Chapel’ in accordance with details that have been submitted on behalf of the PCC. The specification has been recommended by the DAC on 26 February 2014 . The plans show it to be a chapel table polished to match existing oak to be 2 m wide by 0.6m by 1 m high. There is a lower shelf at the base of the table which is open sided but there are to be no decorations on the legs or rails as had been anticipated in the specification.

2. In terms of the table being suitable in design to serve as an altar there could be no objection and I would be pleased to authorise it on the basis. However, I cannot permit a Faculty to be issued if the purpose of the table is to be used both as an altar and also as

“table will be used for serving refreshments’. (letter Rodney Yates dated 10 July 2014)

3. In the ‘Statement of Need’ it states:

“..for the provision of an oak table for Casewick Chapel which may occasionally be used as an altar.

Following the refurbishment of the Casewick Chapel an increasing number of events are taking place in the chapel which require the serving of refreshments. For this a table is required and the shelving underneath will be used for storage. However whenever a Service is held the table will be used as an Altar”

4. In the Canons of the Church of England F2 The Holy Table it states:

“1. In every church and chapel a convenient and decent table of wood, stone or other suitable material, shall be provided for the celebration of Holy Communion, and shall stand in the main body of the church or in the chancel where Morning and Evening Prayer are appointed to be said. Any dispute as to the position where the table shall stand shall be determined by the Ordinary

2. The table, as becomes the table of Lord, shall be kept in a sufficient and seemly manner, and from time to time repaired, and shall be covered in the time of Divine Service with a covering of silk or other decent stuff, and with a fair white linen cloth at the time of the celebration of the Holy Communion”

5. It would be completely inappropriate, and contrary to Canon F2(2) for an altar to be used occasionally for the celebration of Holy Communion, but more frequently ‘for the service of

refreshments'. The obligation of the Churchwardens is to ensure that the Lord's Table is kept in a 'sufficient and seemly manner' and I am quite satisfied that what is proposed does not amount to that.

6. In reaching this conclusion I need go no further than Canon F2(2). However I remind myself of the judgement of the Court of Ecclesiastical Causes Reserved Re St Stephens Wallbrook 1987 Fam 146 in which the nature of eucharistic sacrifice was discussed.

6. The design of the table as an altar is commendable. The storage of toys on a low shelf beneath the altar hidden by a suitable cloth, as seems to be proposed, would be acceptable; but an interchangeable use for the altar as contemplated is most certainly not.

Mark Bishop

Chancellor

16 July 2014