

St Mary's Episcopal Church Hamilton shortlisted for most innovative church community project competition



St Mary's Episcopal Church, Hamilton, South Lanarkshire, has been shortlisted for a new competition to find the churches running the most innovative community activities made possible through the installation of new facilities.

'The Marsh Awards for Innovative Projects' are designed to show the positive impact that installing new facilities such as kitchens and toilets has on churches and local communities and on harnessing the energy and enthusiasm of volunteers. They are run jointly by the National Churches Trust and the Marsh Christian Trust.

The first winner of 'The Marsh Awards for Innovative Projects' will be announced by the Dean of Wakefield, the Very Rev Jonathan Greener, at the Churches Trust Forum Annual Conference at the Merchant Taylors' Hall in York on 19 May 2016, and will be awarded a £1,000 prize. A runner up will be awarded a £500 prize.

The 'St Mary's For All' project at St Mary's Episcopal Church has built an extension to connect the church to the church hall, creating a new space for hospitality and conversation. The Victorian church building needed alteration to be fit for different forms of worship. The construction of a linking space between the church and the church hall provides an informal gathering space, a café, a large kitchen, better access to the church, and parking.



The space is used by a variety of church and community groups, including Circle Lanarkshire, which provides support for families in challenging circumstances; a family mediation and counselling service; Women's Aid Hamilton; Girl Guiding; Beavers, Cubs and Scouts; the St Mary's Church Choir; Alcoholics Anonymous; Messy Church; and St Mary's children's groups. The space is also available for private hire, hosting baby showers and ceilidhs. The Diocese has used the space for its Ministerial Development programme, and has plans for conferences. The competition was open to any Christian congregation in the UK which is a member of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and which had seen new facilities installed in 2014 or 2015. The judges' criteria for the shortlist included a demonstrable social benefit, best practice in management and organisation, and project that serve deprived or marginalised communities. Judges for 'The Marsh Awards for Innovative Projects' are Emily Reeves, from the Marsh Christian Trust; Clare De Silva, from C Squared Consultants; and the Revd Canon Dr Mandy Ford, Canon Chancellor and Director of Ministerial Education for the Diocese of Southwark and Trustee of the National Churches Trust.

Claire Walker, Chief Executive of the National Churches Trust, said: "The National Churches Trust works to ensure that the UK's churches are in good repair and able to serve local people. The impressive shortlist for 'The Marsh Awards for Innovative Projects' demonstrates how churches can do invaluable work for communities if they have the right facilities available. I'd like to thank everybody who entered the competition and look forward to hearing the winner announced on 19 May at the Churches Trust Forum Conference in York by the Dean of Wakefield, the Very Rev Jonathan Greener."