

It All Came Out of Lockdown (And a Bit of Spare Time)

The Rev Les Ireland, Rector of St Cyprian's, Lenzie, writes about his lockdown experiences of upcycling a pallet into a prayer desk:

It all came out of lockdown, and a bit of spare time...

Make a prayer desk! Make a prie dieu!

As a hobby, I upcycle old pallets into all sorts of things – garden planters and seats, post boxes, stools, planters in the shape of aeroplanes, and boats, and lorries, and trains; book racks, hall racks, candlesticks, dominoes. But then, thinking, having run out of inspiration, I hear a “voice!” Make a prayer desk. Out of a pallet. Just like Noah had to build an ark not knowing what it was all about, you make a prayer desk. Well, it is an idea, so I start, and wonder why I am doing it... But in the making, the thoughts rolled in!

I have always been uncomfortable being part of a church which worships God in buildings full of riches. Like the saying says – we worship the Son of Man who had nowhere to lay his head, in buildings filled with gold! Churches generally have a lot of prayer desks, mostly taken for granted, used regularly, made of beautiful oak, or pine, or beech, or other, beautifully carved and beautifully constructed by amazing craftsmen. The cheapest I could find online cost £336, and that was definitely the budget model! Generally, they were over a grand! In our church, I can think of at least three. So why make another one? Well, maybe we can say – we don't need expensive stuff to have beauty...

The Church has become really concerned over recent years by the environment, and the overuse of the world's resources. For many people, recycling has become incredibly important. Not only do we do it, we expect others to do it. Maybe there is a way to make a statement about recycling; not just recycling, but upcycling.

It is very easy as churches to become precious about the things we have, the beautiful things that are part of our buildings, and left in our buildings. Sometimes our desire to protect that beauty means that the things we have are only permitted to be used in special ways, in safe ways. What if we had furnishings that could be simply used as is practical?

So the voice said – make a prayer desk. Out of an old pallet, and think – if it is being used, the statement you will be making.

We will be telling the world that we don't need riches to worship, we can worship just as profoundly and deeply from something that is poor, humble, something that is the work of our own hands.

We will be telling the world that we are concerned about the environment, and believe in recycling,

and upcycling, and creating our own things.

We will be telling the world that we aren't bothered to protect what we have. We will come and worship and pray wherever we have the chance, irrespective of what we have.

And the voice said – Les – the prayer desk you make out of that old blue pallet, simply to be thrown away, and you'll be saying all that! And a lot more beside!

Does anyone want a prayer desk made out of an old pallet?

