



*St Mary the Virgin, Lowgate, Hull, HU1 1EJ*  
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[www.stmaryslowgate.org.uk](http://www.stmaryslowgate.org.uk)

Priest-in-Charge – Reverend Paul Burkitt

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**ELECTRIC FENCE.**

As Priest-in-Charge of this ancient Parish and as Chair of the Parochial Church Council it falls to me to have the lead of and, oversight over, all things pertaining to the life of the community, be they spiritual, cultural or practical.

You will have noticed from the proposal by Annabel McCourt the amazing congruence of this artistic work in prospect with the work of the church in actuality.

I ask you to read this short anecdotal reflection please:

*In the Nineteenth century the poor of the parish were required to come to the north door of the church and effectively beg for a loaf of bread. They had to produce a paper from the workhouse master which said that they were ‘deserving’. The Vicar would pontificate and judge. The north door of the church is the ‘beggars door’. It was a door that could be either opened or shut; it was an ambivalent boundary, at once a welcome and a potential threat of exclusion, judgement, discrimination, dislike or even hatred.*

*At the same time the church might be nicely celebrating its own ‘boundaries’ in the traditional ‘Rogation Sunday’ service, with flowers and cakes abounding! God is asked to bless the seeds of the fields. ‘Ask’ is the key word; it comes from the Latin ‘rogare’; to ask is close to begging when you are on the fringes, and there is another word, ‘inter-rogate’. How many today turn up at doors and fences with open hands, only to receive interrogating torture from the self-appointed possessor of the territory on the other side of the fence.*

Hopefully we can comprehend the interconnectedness and relevance of this proposed work. I categorically state my full support of the project. To assure those who need to know we do have full public liability insurance and are compliant with Health and Safety regulations and risk-assessment.

On a wider note, the unique location of St Mary’s Church remains a wonder. It is Hull’s ‘Mesopotamia’, between the ‘river flows’; literally as the Hull flows into the Humber; as the Legal industry flows into the tourist zone; as the spirituality of the church flows into the cultures of side-lined poverty, of under resourced care for the neglected and abused, of human rights campaigners, activists over gender injustices and mental health management; into the cultures of those who are edged beyond the zone of comfort.

The Parish and Church of St Mary’s is a veritable hub of interactive satellitic communicants. There is a worship team, a care team, a fundraising team, a bell ringing team, a team of artists in residence (fine art, music, poetry, photography), a social and cultural events team, a communications team. It has been variously been called, ‘Hull’s Hidden Gem’, ‘The Village Church of the City’ and the ‘City Cloister’; in any respect St Mary’s exudes and requires excellence and sincerity and a purity that the stone in prayer expresses in the unsurpassable acoustic ambience. The Church is a serious meditative, reflective corrective to the manic modern digitally driven world.

Seven hundred years of culture have been experienced on this hidden treasure of a site.

Pilgrims, tourists, those in need, regular devotees and families come visit and stay a while. The quest for freedom has always been a heartfelt prayer and desire of us all and somehow St Mary’s is able to ratify that desire. William Wilberforce for one began his life in the slavery of

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the High Street when slums stretched round the church down to the river and the rat infested quayside.

As all of that is part of our heritage we were moved to find families who have relatives who were buried in extreme poverty and lie unmarked graves in the City. There are countless thousands; we have a memorial book and a stone erected in Northern Cemetery. Annually we remember all who have died in road travel accidents with a dedicated book; as the Arctic Corsair is also in the parish, we also have a memorial book for all trawler men lost at sea.

Churches nationwide are restoring themselves to places of cultural relevance and St Mary's is well advanced along that progressive path. At this very point of writing I am working alongside the clergy and people of St Martin-in-the-Fields in a networking project called 'Heart and Edge'; it concern people who work and have their being with heart and at the heart of communities where there are those who remain behind the barricades of fear and prejudice.

That quest continues; surrounding St Mary's the slums are replaced by 'state of the art' solicitors' offices, law courts and the home of local power, the Guildhall. Once imprisoned by soul-full material poverty, the church is now imprisoned with a soul-less material wealth.

The poor and the rich, the pilgrim and the tourist, many there are who amble through that unique pavement archway without knowing they are treading on holy ground.

Suffice to say that '*Electric Fence*' would be an absolute gift to the City of Culture, for the venue stands at the heart and at the edge of humanity.

I do hope this is of help in processing the application.

Yours sincerely,

*Paul*