



## Re St Anselm's Church, Kennington Cross

Southwark Consistory Court: Petchey Ch,

25 September 2023

[2023] ECC Swk 6

*Major re-ordering – disposal of large paintings – church treasures*

Jack Stuart

Barrister, Ropewalk Chambers, Nottingham, UK

This petition concerned proposals for major re-ordering works to this Grade II listed church, consecrated in 1933. Of particular interest was the fate of two substantial paintings based on Pilgrim's Progress by Norman Adams, installed in 1972, whose removal was required by the main works proposed. Each painting covered a substantial part of one side of the church above the nave arcades. They were described as being of national importance.

The court held that the murals were part of the church and of high quality, but sat uncomfortably within the church, as they detracted from the intended austerity of the building. Accordingly, their removal would both harm and benefit the interior of the church as a building of architectural and historical significance. The benefits of the scheme could not be achieved without the loss of the murals, and the faculty would therefore issue.

In approaching the murals as 'church treasures', the court commented that any faculty in respect of them would need to have conditions protecting their future. Because no alternative home could be found for them, the court ordered that the removed murals must be stored (for which there would be an annual cost) until further order. They would remain subject to the faculty jurisdiction, and the court remained hopeful that someone might rehome the murals in due course, suggesting that offering a 'dowry' may make their procurement more attractive.

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