

July 2020

PROPERTY MATTERS

The Methodist Church

Welcome to the July edition of Property Matters with a focus on updates on guidance during the Covid-19 pandemic. If you have any feedback, please email the [Property Support Team](#).

Covid-19 Guidance - New Format

We have been working hard to keep our guidance in line with recent government announcements. As a result, we have amended the format of the [Coronavirus Guidance for Property](#) page in an effort to make it more accessible. Here are a few suggestions about how to get the most benefit from the guidance:



Step 1 - Think Missionally

Look at the [Guide to Re-Opening & Managing your Church Building](#) for guidance on thinking about how the new normal might look like for your church.

Step 2 - Plan thoroughly

It is important to ensure that the building is safe to use. Refer to the [Re-Opening a Building Checklist](#) and the [Covid-19 Risk Assessment](#).

Step 3 - Consult widely

Speak with members, other users, the local community, property stewards, cleaners [TMCP](#), [Methodist Insurance](#), etc. about your plans to re-open.

Step 4 - Think Holistically

A Covid-19 Risk Assessment should be filled in with the user group or specific activity in mind. It would be normal for a church to have multiple Covid-19 Risk Assessments, depending on the number of activities and/or users.

Step 5 - Safety First

There is specific guidance that will help managing trustees think through the details of how each activity and/or user might use the building.

Worship activities could include:

- [Guide to Using Your Worship Space](#)
- [Guide to Outdoor Worship](#)
- [Guide for House Groups & Small Gatherings](#)
- [Guide for Weddings](#)
- [Face Coverings](#)

Other user groups could include:

- [Guide for Shops](#)
- [Guide for Cafes](#)
- [Guide for Other Community Users](#)

Please note that we acknowledge that restrictions in Scotland and Wales are being lifted and we are reviewing the specific guidance for the separate devolved administrations with a view to publish soon.

Food for Thought

Have you seen this [video](#) from St Nicholas' in North Walsham, Norfolk? It shows how they are accommodating private prayer with social distancing measures. Although this is a Church of England church, it might give you some food for thought on opening your church.



If you would like to submit a similar video of how your church is adapting, please do [get in touch](#). We would love to see more examples!

New Test and Trace Record available

The Government has requested that Churches in England assist the NHS Test and Trace service by keeping an accurate temporary record of visitors to church premises for 21 days. This request raises immediate concerns about data protection and TMCP have produced a new Focus Note to help Managing Trustees understand what steps they need to take to comply with this request and how to ensure compliance with data protection legislation. Click [here](#) to read more and view the template.



Licenses and COVID-19 precautions

As our church buildings are gradually being allowed to re-open for more activities, managing trustees are understandably raising questions as to where responsibility for Covid-19 safety falls. Some of these questions focus on cleaning, some on matters identified in risk assessments and some on whether amendments will be made to the Standard Licence. Click [here](#) to read more on the questions that apply in the context of third party use of Methodist buildings.



Keeping Count

"We hardly get any visitors" can be something of a refrain from churches. The truth is they sometimes don't actually have a record of their visitor numbers. But by using a simple battery-driven digital counter, now they can. Click [here](#) to read more about how 54 churches in Horncastle Deanery, Lincolnshire encouraged visitors and then counted visitor numbers.



Charity Commission Annual Returns

All registered charities are required to provide an annual return to the Charity Commission and keep their registered details up to date. Failing to do so would be in breach of charity law and damaging for the reputation of an individual charity and any wider association.

The Charity Commission has recently issued [this guidance](#) reminding charities of their obligations and stating that the Commission intends to get tough with those who have repeatedly failed to fulfil these.

Accordingly, please can we ask that everyone who is a registered charity takes heed of the Charity Commission's advice and ensures that they are submitting their annual returns promptly. Please note that if you are currently struggling to sign-off and complete your annual accounts or charity return due to Covid-19 restrictions and the inability to hold physical meetings, there is currently a facility to apply for a 6-month deadline extension. To apply for an extension, please [email the Commission](#).

Further guidance on charity law and registration requirements is available from the [Legal & Constitutional Practice Team](#).

Church Heros

Churches continue to work to ensure that the most vulnerable people in their communities continue to be supported and that morale is kept high. [Click here](#) to read some examples of news from local churches. See if you can recognise the Methodist churches!

The work of [National Churches Trust](#) continues, but in accordance with the latest Government advice, all their staff and volunteers are now carrying out their duties from home. If you are concerned about the impact the outbreak could have on your grant offer or grant application, feel free to [contact us by email](#).



International Bat Night

For those who are bat enthusiasts, the annual celebration of bats will be on **Saturday, 29th August 2020**. There will be bat events for the public taking place across the country. Find out how to get involved and download the International Bat Night Pack from the [Bat Conservation Trust website](#).



Listed Building Advisory Committee

Meeting dates:

- 6 October 2020 - Deadline for papers - 15 September 2020
- 19 January 2021 - Deadline for papers - 22 December 2020

Property Matters is a monthly newsletter focused on giving updates on property related guidance and legislation as well as providing information and links to related subjects. We cannot know about everything that's going on, so please do [email us](#) if you have any feedback or ideas for items to include.

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