

The following guidance has been uploaded to the website on - <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/coronavirus-guidance-for-property/>.

As well, please note the TMCP have added FAQ's about Coronavirus on their website - <https://www.tmcp.org.uk/news-hub/new-covid-19-faq-available>.

The Property Support team are contactable and available for support.

Updated 24th March 2020

During this time, the Methodist Church is providing general guidance to churches through its main website. This has specific reference to Covid-19 measures in its 'Coronavirus Guidance' section which is regularly updated, and can be followed here:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus-guidance/>

In the latest guidance, it has been announced that –

*“The Methodist Church is announcing a closure of all its church buildings for the foreseeable future. The only exception will be for churches that are offering essential social outreach such as foodbanks, soup kitchens and night shelters, but these must be carried out closely within Government guidelines.”*

The Property Support team are liaising with other members of the Connexional Team, TMCP and Methodist Insurance to support managing trustees during this period, particularly with the ongoing responsibilities for their church property. As the overall government guidance during this period is very changeable, it should be born in mind that any government guidance should take precedence over any other guidance suggested below. The current list of government guidance can be found at - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>.

Owing to the potential length of time properties may be empty for, where practical it is suggested to make reference to the good practice outlined by Methodist Insurance for normal 'Empty Churches' in any ongoing monitoring of the church property. This suggests a few simple steps to take to ensure the ongoing security, safety and condition of the property during this time. The property team suggestions at this stage these are:

- Arrange within the property team for an individual or individuals on a rota basis to visit once a week to make an external inspection only. This is bearing in mind the guidance around limited travel or movement outside your own houses. It should therefore should only be carried out as part of a daily exercise regime or en route to pick up basic essentials from local shops not a specific trip; it is important that the travel to do this is limited to local individuals if practical and entry onto the site itself is limited. Note: This advice has to be in accordance with the government guidance at the time;

- Be aware of lone working practices and government guidance on social distancing when undertaking this;
- Ensure that communication is maintained between parties and that local Circuit and District policies during this time are adhered to;
- Ensure that all doors, windows and other points of access are secured;
- Although we are moving into Spring, it might be beneficial to ensure that some heating is retained in the building to avoid any issues with pipes bursting if there is a cold snap;
- Ensure that all perimeter fences/railings/gates, security lighting and other deterrents to thieves (particularly lead theft) are maintained or repaired;
- Ensure that all CCTV is working and notices are in place;
- If possible, for smaller rural churches see if local neighbours, neighbourhood watch or wider CCTV coverage can be asked to also monitor the property where practical.
- Please liaise with your District Property Secretary or Circuit Property Steward and don't hesitate to contact the Connexional Property Support Team if you have any queries or concerns.
- This advice should be adhered to until further government or Connexional advice changes and movement or use of property restrictions are lifted or updated.

Similar guidance is contained in the Methodist Insurance website pages below:

<https://www.methodistinsurance.co.uk/risk-management/unoccupied-buildings/>

On wider property matters regarding legal issues such as leases, licences etc. please refer to the TMCP website. TMCP are providing a 'live' FAQ's section during this period to answer any queries and concerns from managing trustees – these can be found at -

<https://www.tmcp.org.uk/news-hub/new-covid-19-faq-available>

Please note that despite the closure of the property team offices based in London and Manchester, the team are still available to provide support, but some contact details have been changed slightly, please refer to:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/property-support/>, for updated contact information.

Thankyou

The Connexional Property Support Team