

November 2023

PROPERTY MATTERS

The Methodist Church 

Welcome to the November edition of Property Matters with a focus on property-related updates and guidance.

For the latest property guidance, please refer to the [Property pages](#).
[Meet the Property Support Team](#)

Energy Buying Update

Business Solutions Made Simple!

Proud Partners of the Methodist Church



As Christians we are called to care for God's creation and to work for justice in the world. We are currently living in a climate emergency which threatens much of the life on earth and disproportionately affects those people who did least to cause it.

The Methodist Church in Britain has set a target of net zero by 2030. This will require action in a number of different areas and contexts, but crucial to achieving this aim will be ensuring that the energy we use is green, renewable energy. Moving to using green electricity not only ensures that the energy we use does as little as possible to contribute to the climate emergency but also allows us to demonstrate collectively that we, as a Church, want to see the building of greater capacity for renewable energy.

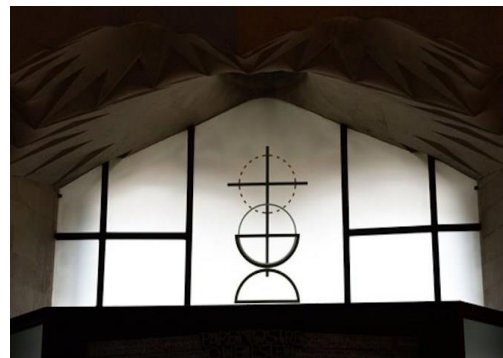
As well, we are aware of the concern that churches have regarding rising energy costs. One possible option for managing trustees to consider would be to get in touch with an energy broker who may be able to fix your rates for a period of time. Although it is not always guaranteed that the rate is cheaper, there is a level of security of having a fixed rate. Managing Trustees could also contact other churches in their circuit and/or district to see if they might be interested, as sometimes brokers can offer deals for a cluster of churches. Here is a message from [Switch365](#), the new energy partner for The Methodist Church:

Our goal is to streamline the energy renewal process for all Methodist Churches. Whether your current contract nears expiration or extends into the future, we invite you to reach out.

Our account managers can explore tailored plans designed to meet your specific needs and to introduce sustainable energy practices for your church. Together, we can embark on a journey towards a greener and more cost-effective energy future. [Click here to fill in an online enquiry form.](#)

Updated Guidance on Closed Church Buildings

When a church ceases to meet, there are various steps that need to be taken as part of the closure process. [The Guidance on Closed Church Buildings](#) was created collaboratively by the Conference Officer for Legal, Constitutional Practice, the Law and Polity Committee, TMCP, the Property Development Committee, the Heritage Committee and the Property Support team. The aim of the guidance is to provide useful information, including a checklist and templates, to assist with this process.



[Click here to view a pdf version of checklist](#) or [click here for a Word version.](#)

Additionally, [click here for further pastoral support on Endings.](#)

Charity Commission Quiz (England and Wales)

The Charity Commission has launched the next phase of its trustee campaign which aims to increase charity trustees' knowledge and drive a positive change in charities' governance.



[The Charity Trustee Quiz](#) is designed to engage trustees with a variety of questions based on everyday scenarios that they may encounter at their charity. It has been designed to help identify knowledge gaps and is an ideal refresher for trustees at all levels of experience.

Research shows that the majority of trustees feel confident in their ability to manage their charities, however there may be areas of knowledge they can improve on. The quiz is intended to encourage trustees to think again about what they know, to inspire upskilling.

The quiz takes around three minutes to complete and gives busy trustees an interactive means to quickly check what they know and help them uncover potential knowledge gaps they may not have been aware of - such as conflicts of interest and safeguarding. [Click here to test your knowledge and take the quiz.](#)

[Click here](#) for further guidance and information for Methodist managing trustees.

Charity Commission updated guidance (England and Wales)

Access to the Charity Commission's online services has changed. From 31 July 2023, previous charity login details will no longer work. Users need to have [set up their own](#)



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

[My Charity Commission Account](#), using an individual email address and password, to access services on behalf of a charity. Those who have already set up your new

account, with personal login information, can [sign in to submit their charity's annual return](#).

[Charities must submit their annual return within 10 months of the end of their financial year](#). (For example, if a charity's financial year end was 31 December 2022, the deadline for submission is 31 October 2023.)

Rural church is national awards finalist

[Providence Methodist Chapel](#) at Throwleigh, in the Plymouth & Exeter Methodist District, is one of the finalists for this year's National Church Awards. Each year, the National Churches Trust rewards six churches that have amazing stories to tell.



It took just a few years for Providence Chapel to reinvent itself and become a lively rural church. "Providence is the creation of a very successful model. We needed to put energy and passion into it. We started with four people but it has now grown into so many more," says Revd Chris Jackson, superintendent for the West Devon Methodist Circuit.

Located in the middle of Dartmoor, the chapel's isolation is only broken by a couple of houses, a pub and farms. Its location meant Providence had seen a steady decrease in attendance over the years, making the closure of the chapel a real possibility. [Click here to read the rest of the story](#).

Yorkshire North and East District shortlisted for Community Energy Award

In 2020, the Yorkshire N&E Methodist District embarked on a transformative journey, pledging to achieve Net Zero by 2040. Spearheaded by an in-depth assessment conducted by Prof Simon Pringle, the district set out on a mission to explore sustainable energy solutions across its 200 Methodist Churches. The district's flagship project, 'Tea and PV,' stood as a testament to their dedication. Through the generous support of the Energy for Tomorrow programme by Centrica and expertise from D3 Associates, seven churches, frequented by 160,000 visitors annually, were equipped with solar panels and battery storage.

[Click here to learn more.](#)



Plymouth Central Hall shortlisted for National Churches Trust Maintenance Award

Plymouth Central Hall was converted in 1940 from the Ebenezer WM chapel of 1815 in Eastlake Street. It was the last such hall to be opened, its interior completely redesigned. After the destruction of the Guildhall during the blitz, it served as a temporary Civic Centre.



Here at PMCH our passion is to see the lives of people, communities and the city of Plymouth transformed. To that end we offer a range of programmes and activities for all ages and we seek to be a welcoming community where everyone can thrive and grow. We are one church on two sites, with our congregation gathering for worship at PMCH and serving there and at our community outreach centre Plymouth Foodbank Hub. [Click here to read more.](#)

Methodist Insurance Updates

New edition of Dialogue now available

You can now read Dialogue in a brand new format. Read stories about Methodists going green, a thought-provoking cross made of knives, successful grants and updates on risk and fundraising guidance.

[Read Dialogue online](#)



Providing warm spaces this winter

Many churches from all faiths are opening their buildings to provide a warm space to people experiencing fuel poverty. Learn more about setting up warm spaces at your church.

[Warm spaces](#)



Valuing your home and contents for insurance

It's important to make sure your sums insured are adequate to cover the full cost of a claim. We recommend that you check each year, making sure to include any home improvements such as extensions or conservatories. Calculating the value of your household contents is also important as it can add up over time.

[Learn more about calculating values](#)



Terrorism cover

Terrorism cover is an optional extra that you may or may not have chosen to add to your policy. Terrorism cover premiums were reduced in 2022, with the extent of the reduction varying according to your geographical location. You can call us for a quotation for your church.

[Read more](#)



Fundraising for rural churches

We know fundraising can be a struggle for churches with small communities and few volunteers.

Read our ten top tips to rural churches looking to boost their fundraising.

[Ten tips for rural churches](#)



Flood safety

Climate change is resulting in more extreme weather events. Though it's impossible to fully flood proof your church properties, you can take some simple actions to reduce the damage caused.

[Find out more](#)



Benefact Trust's Methodist Grants Programme

We're committed to continuing to do all we can to support the mission and ministry of the Methodist Church, particularly as it looks to respond to increasing community need in these challenging times. Our donations support Benefact Trust's Methodist Grants Programme. Find out more, apply for funding, and look at some case studies from churches that have benefited from a grant.

[More about grants](#)



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The advertisement features a photograph of an elderly man and a young girl sitting together, holding a small dog. The text is overlaid on the image.

HSE Update

Make sure you know your COSHH essentials

A variety of harmful substances are found in our working environments – knowing how to control these safely is key to safety and protection from harm.



If you work with hazardous substances, HSE's [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\) website](#) can help you understand the actions you should take to stay healthy. The [COSHH Safe Handling Chemicals poster](#) also provides crucial guidance on how to handle chemicals safely (including cleaning products) in your workplace, including a useful hazardous signs check.

Make sure you have the right workplace facilities

Employers must provide welfare facilities and a working environment that's healthy and safe for everyone in the workplace, including those with disabilities.

This means you must have:

- welfare facilities
- a healthy working environment
- a safe workplace

Find out in more detail what you [must provide for a safe and healthy workplace](#).

Employers are also required to provide enough toilets and washbasins for those expected to use them. Follow HSE's [guidance for toilets and washing facilities](#).

Bats in Churches

Five years ago, thanks to a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the hard work and support of all of their partners - Bat Conservation Trust, the Church of England, Natural England, Historic England and The Churches Conservation Trust - [the Bats in Churches project](#) set out to help 100 ancient churches around England with their resident bats. Now, the delivery phase of the Bats in Churches project comes to an end.



As the project draws to a close, they are celebrating achieving both of these goals. To date they have worked with more than 125 churches around England helping with their bat populations through mitigation, funding, surveys, information and advice, help with cleaning and much more.

Further information can be found on [Bats in Churches website](#). It is packed full of information, advice and resources will remain post-project and we encourage you to stay involved with your local church bats by volunteering to help a church, joining your local Bat Group, and getting involved with your local Wildlife Trust or through conservation organisations like Caring for God's Acre.

For any bat-related issues involving a specific church please do contact the National Bat Helpline on 0345 1300 228 for information, advice and support, or [visit our website](#).

Does your church have a landline?

Landlines in the UK are going digital. As part of an industry wide switch, by December 2025, old analogue landlines will be replaced with a digital home phone service. No one will be left disconnected; there will be a solution for everyone that still depends on their landline.

[Click here to watch a video from BT.](#)



BT will be contacting their customers about the switch to their digital home phone service, Digital Voice, regionally. The rollout started in summer 2023 and people in the East Midlands, Yorkshire & Humber and Northern Ireland have already been contacted, with the rest of the UK to follow on a month-by-month basis. [Click here to see a list of regional events.](#)

[Further information can be found here.](#)

Green Church Awards

The Church Times has launched the 2024 Green Church Awards in recognition of the urgent environmental crisis and the efforts being made by Christian organisations and communities, churches and church schools, of all denominations, to care for creation.

[Click here to learn more.](#)



Winter's coming - Get your roofs and gutters checked and cleared

Winter's coming - Get your roofs and gutters checked and cleared

Need help finding a contractor?

- [Maintenance Booker](#) offers a range of contractors that have been approved by the National Churches Trust
- You could ask other churches in your local area or circuit for recommendations
- Contact your District Property Secretary (or equivalent for recommendations)



Leaking gutters or drainpipes are often the cause of damp walls. © Historic England Archive. DP169342

Guidance on Annual Property Inspections can be [found here](#). As well, Churches for Cumbria Trust has created a useful [Maintenance Checklist](#) to assist those looking after church buildings.

Grants for Building Energy Audits (England)

Why get an energy audit for your church building?

Energy audits are a useful tool for learning how best to make to church buildings more sustainable, both in terms of energy efficiency and in terms of reducing energy costs. More grant providers, such as [the](#)

[Benefact Trust](#) and [National Churches Trust](#), are offering grants that support energy efficiency adaptations. An energy audit is a useful tool for giving evidence to support grant applications.



The new £10million [Community Energy Fund \(CEF\)](#) will initially be based upon the same criteria as the previous Rural Community Energy Fund, although will be opened up to applicants from urban areas. The aim of the fund is to help kick start projects including small-scale wind farms and rooftop solar partnerships, as well as

battery storage, rural heat networks, electric vehicle charging points, and fuel poverty alleviation schemes - all proposed, designed and owned by local people.

[Click here to learn more.](#)

Lastly, for churches in Greater London, there is a fund for Eco-Audits, which set out ways organisations can be more sustainable and reduce their carbon footprint.

They are free and available to all eligible organisations.

[Click here to find out more.](#)

[Listed Building Advisory Committee \(LBAC\) Meeting Dates:](#)

- **23 January 2024** - Deadline for paper is 31 December 2023
- **23 April 2024** - Deadline for paper is 22 March 2024
- **16 July 2024** - Deadline for paper is 14 June 2024

Supporting the Methodist Connexion

Methodist Insurance has been protecting the property of the Methodist Church since 1872. We are a Public Limited Company owned by shareholders and independent of the Methodist Church. The company operates like a mutual by returning most of our profits back to our community in the form of a significant financial contribution to the Methodist Connexion. [Find out more.](#)



Property Matters is a monthly newsletter focused on giving updates on property related guidance and legalisation as well as providing information and links to related subjects. To view the most current content, please refer to the [Property pages](#) on the website. 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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