

Frequently Asked Questions

How does the online return relate to schedules?

The Annual Returns site was launched in 2013 as a replacement to Schedules A, C and D and their respective supplements. Doing so means that the collected data can be more easily viewed by the Circuit and District and will also mean less repetition of information for the managing trustees.

Once all the data has been collected, then the Circuit and District will be able to generate reports on certain aspects of the return, making it far easier to spot any potential issues. There is no national scrutiny of the annual returns as they are intended purely as a check-list to help circuits and districts.

www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/property/consents-returns

When are the annual forms available?

A blank church property checklist is available all year round to download and print off. It is available in both PDF and Microsoft Word versions.

The screenshot shows a web interface with a navigation bar at the top containing tabs for: Property, Documents, Insurance, Safeguarding, Finance, General Administration, Carbon Footprint (Optional), and Sign Off. Below the navigation bar, the main content area is titled "Property Details" and includes the instruction: "Please click on 'Check Details' for each of the properties you are responsible for below to confirm their details". A message states: "The property checklist is now available to download." Below this, there are two sections: "Church Checklist" and "Circuit Checklist". Each section has two links: "PDF Version" and "Word Version". The "Church Checklist" section is highlighted with a red rectangular box. At the bottom of the content area, there is a link labeled "DOWNLOAD CHURCH RETURN FORM" followed by the text: "Please Note: You will still need to submit the information online".

The full annual return form is made available at the start of the new Connexional year in September. This means that the information entered for the previous year is archived and the online form is open for information entry again. Previous years' information can then be accessed via the left-hand panel under the **Print Reports** function via **Church Return**.

There is also an option to print off the annual church return form via the "[DOWNLOAD CHURCH RETURN FORM](#)" link. However, this is a dynamic form which means it is linked to the information currently displayed on the webpage. So when you download that form, you will see the information displayed on the webpage at that moment in time.

When is the return due?

The deadline for returns is set individually by the district, so you may need to check with your District Property Secretary. It is advisable to have it completed

by the end of May; however it is likely the church council or spring synod will set a much earlier deadline.

When I go to SUBMIT RETURN on the final page a pop-up prompt says that I am confirming that all the contents have been submitted to and approved by the church council. Our next church council is not until the spring. How should I proceed?

Returns can be submitted up to the end of May, so it might be best to wait with the submission until all the information has been collected and approved as stated. Alternatively, you may want to contact the council members with a copy of the return and make a decision via email ahead of the council meeting.

I cannot amend my church's return form – what do I need to do?

If the return has already been submitted, then all fields are locked. However, the [Web Support Officer](#) can also temporarily "roll back" a return if additional information needs to be entered. Alternatively, it may be due to insufficient access permissions. Your circuit office should be able to assist in this case.

Who do I submit the property checklist to?

This is required by circuits and Districts for Synod reporting and should therefore be submitted locally.

The website says that I have insufficient permissions to access certain churches or follow through with particular actions. How can I change that?

If you have more than one role, you will be asked to select which one you wish to use for completing the return upon entering the site. You can change roles at any time by clicking on the "Role:" display in the top right hand corner. If that does not resolve the issue, contact your Superintendent (for churches) or District Property Secretary (for circuits) to make sure that **Update** permissions have been set.

- **Managing Trustee** – This role will allow you to view and edit the local church returns for those that you have permission for. Please note that if you only have circuit trustee permission you won't be able to edit the circuit return; you will need the circuit level permission instead.
- **Circuit Trustee** – The Circuit Trustee role allows you to view all church returns within the circuit as well as completing the Circuit Return. You can also view reports on any issues that churches may have through the Property Issue Summaries.
- **District** – As a District user, you will be able to see the returns of all the churches and circuits within your district, as well as completing the District Return. You can also view reports on any issues that churches may have through the Property Issue Summaries.

Can I amend property details after the return has been submitted?

Information entered onto the returns site is saved against the property on a rolling basis. This means that you can amend property details at any point, even after the return has been signed off, by going in to the specific church and clicking **MANAGE** against the appropriate property.

When does a property appear on the returns site?

A property record is created the moment when a purchase project is raised via the consents site. However, the record shouldn't appear on the returns site until the purchase date has been entered by TMCP. So whilst you should see the property record on the consents site, nothing should appear in the returns list until the purchase has been completed.

Some of our properties do not appear on the returns site. How can I add them?

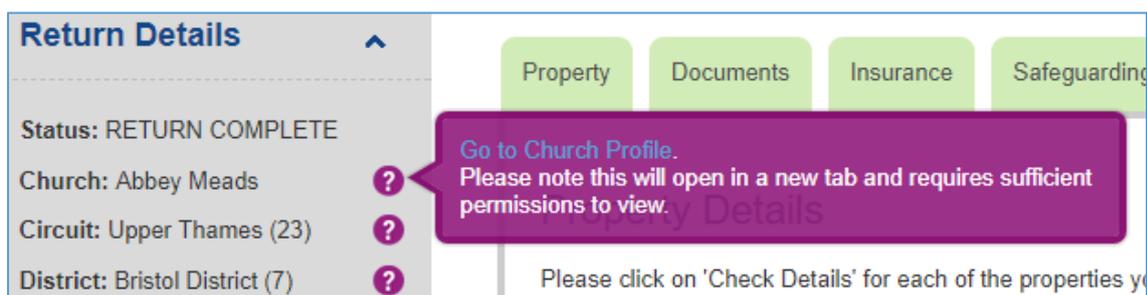
Properties may not appear because of incomplete information held on the Connexional Database (e.g. missing purchase year or incorrect trusteeship) or because TMCP had never been informed of the existence of this property. The [Web Support Officer](#) can amend or add records accordingly.

Where are manses and other circuit properties listed?

If you wish to complete the circuit return for circuit property, including the manses, please click on the purple button in the top left of your screen that says "Circuit Return". The circuit return is only complete if all tabs have been completed and signed off.

Our building is being sold and the remaining congregation will cease to meet. How do I start the process?

The closure of a church building is not the same as the "closure" of a church society. If a building closes and is sold, the sale needs to be recorded on the consents site and is dealt with by TMCP and the Consents team. The closure (cessation / becoming a class) of a society needs to be registered via the church profile page on the statistics site and is dealt with by the Conference Office and the Statistics for Mission team. These two processes, while ultimately connected via the Connexional Database, are independent from each other and need to be registered as such. The church profile on the Statistics for Mission site can be accessed directly via the sidebar of the returns site as shown in the screenshot below.



Our building has been sold. How can I delete it from the returns site?

[The TMCP Legal Team](#) are responsible for updating the database when a property is sold. Once this has been done, the record will disappear from the returns site.

Our society has ceased to meet but the church building will be used by the circuit or another church. How can I reflect this on the returns site?

When a society registers its cessation via its profile page on the Statistics for Mission site, the cessation is verified by the Conference Office and eventually results in the automated transfer of the trusteeship to the circuit. If the trusteeship of the relevant building is to be held by another society (e.g. if the former society becomes a class of another society and retains its building for worship as before), then the changes will need to be made manually by the [Web Support Officer](#).

On 1 September, our circuit will merge with another. Do I need to transfer all our properties to the new circuit?

No, this should happen automatically but it is worth checking at the end of August just to make sure all the changes as ratified by Conference have come through correctly. This applies to all sections of the Methodist Online Suite.

Our church has changed its name. How do I amend this on the website?

Any requests for name changes need to be submitted to the [Conference Office](#) and copied to the [Statistics for Mission Team](#).

I have entered information in a field and it's not accepted. Why?

Make sure that you enter numbers without £ signs into fields that require numerical information (Finance tab). If the answer is "none" or "not applicable", enter the number zero ("0").

The "Date of last Quinquennial" box is missing from my property return. How do I make it appear?

This field only appears when the property in question is listed as a model trust. Occasionally, the relevant box is not ticked when adding a property to the system. This can be rectified by the [Web Support Officer](#).

My church has several properties. Do I need to complete a return for each one of them?

The annual property returns is against the society as a whole. Specific questions are asked about the individual properties on the Property Tab (under **Check Details** [once all the properties listed have a **Y** next to them under **Return Completed** then you will be able to complete the rest of the Property tab]) and the Insurance Tab. However, for the rest of the return, the questions are against the society as a whole.

For example, take the question "Are there any Town Planning proposals or development plans which might affect the property?" on the Property tab. In this instance, you would be report any exceptions. So if one of the properties had a town planning proposal against it, then you would need to answer "Yes". The question is not looking for specific property information, but just asking about anything the trustees may have to contend with during the Connexional Year. Similarly, take the question "Does the property have any leases associated with it that are not recorded on the Property Consent site?" on the General Administration tab. Again, this question refers to the properties that the trustees are responsible for. If one property has but the others haven't then you will still need to answer yes to this question.

An exception report is then created on completion of the return, which may be followed up by the circuit or district.

My congregation is part of an LEP and worships on non-Methodist premises. Do I need to fill in a return?

As a member of an LEP, any Methodist congregation will have a Methodist Church Council, which is part of the Joint Church Council. It has the same responsibilities as a regular Methodist Church Council, and therefore all sections of the return need to be completed. For LEPs, the property details section is already reduced compared to "regular" Methodist churches. You might be able to respond to most of the questions with "no" or "not applicable", but the return still needs to be filled in.

The location of our church building is shown incorrectly on the returns site map as well as on the Methodist Webmap. How can I change this?

The property location can be changed by moving the red pin on the map which is part of the **Check Details** section of each property listed on the returns site. When new properties had been created in the past, they sometimes had an incomplete or no postcode, which resulted in the map pin being located at zero longitude and latitude, which happens to be in the Atlantic Ocean. Currently, sites with incomplete address details default to being located at Epworth Old Rectory in Lincolnshire. After correcting the location, do not forget to click **Save** at the bottom of the page. Changes are saved instantaneously on the returns site, and should be reflected on the Methodist Webmap after the regular weekly update (every Sunday).

Do I need to fill in a Notice of Disuse after a church building closes for worship?

This is a Local Authority matter and as such not directly related to the change of status / closure procedure as pursued by the Methodist Church. The registration of a building as a place of worship was started under the Places of Worship Registration Act 1855. Registration is a voluntary procedure, although a marriage cannot legally take place in an unregistered place of worship (Marriage Acts 1949 & 2013). Further information can be found via the links below.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/notice-of-disuse-form-77

www.gov.uk/government/publications/places-of-worship-registered-for-marriage

How do I obtain a list of Methodist property currently for sale?

Although all our buildings are owned 'corporately' by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes as custodian trustee, the local management and decisions are for the local trustees and it is these bodies any requests should be directed towards. We do not hold a list of properties which are, or will be, for rent or sale. Please also note that we are constrained by Charity Law which means that properties have to achieve the best value and that is often proved by advertisement on an open market.

Useful websites:

- Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes
www.tmcp.org.uk
- Online Suite (returns, consents, statistics)
<https://online.methodist.org.uk>
- Online Suite guidance (returns, consents, statistics)
www.methodist.org.uk/links/online-suite-and-guidance
- Property pages on the Methodist website
www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/property
- Managing Trustee guidance
www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/managing-trustees
- Property Matters newsletter
www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/property/property-matters
- Methodist Insurance
www.methodistinsurance.co.uk

Useful contacts:

- Web Support Officer: returns@methodistchurch.org.uk
- TMCP Legal Team: legal@tmcp.methodist.org.uk
- Facilities and Property Coordinator: fpc@methodistchurch.org.uk
- Conference Office: conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk
- Statistics for Mission Team: statisticsformission@methodistchurch.org.uk

Revised September 2017