

Reporting the changed status of a church – a step-by-step guide

Introduction and background

District approval is needed for a Methodist Society to cease to be recognised as such and for its associated Church Council to be dissolved. The relevant change of status of the Local Church then needs to be reported via the Statistics for Mission site.

The effect of “closing” a Local Church in this way means that separate membership and attendance statistics no longer need to be reported. It does not necessarily mean that the church *building* is closed (for example, it may become part of a multi-site church, which will include the former church’s membership and attendance statistics in its aggregate returns).

Separate district approval is required before a church building is “closed”, i.e. for public worship. **If a building has become unusable but the society continues to meet elsewhere, all you need do is notify us of the address of the new site.**

A change of church status also requires a **transfer of trusteeship**.

The Web Support Officer (statisticsformission@methodistchurch.org.uk) will be able to assist with this.

Step-by-step procedure

1) Go to <http://online.methodist.org.uk>.

If you are not registered, you will need to click REGISTER and follow the instructions.

The image shows two side-by-side forms. The left form is titled 'Login form' and contains fields for 'Email address:' and 'Password:', a 'Remember login details?' checkbox, a 'Retrieve Password' link, and a red 'LOGIN' button. The right form is titled 'Register' and contains the text 'If this is your first time on this site please register to receive your login details.', a red 'REGISTER' button, and a 'Help and Guidance' section with links for 'Statistics for Mission', 'Property Consents', 'Returns', and 'Logging in and Registering'. A green arrow points to the 'REGISTER' button.

If you are already a registered user, log in and choose the STATISTICS FOR MISSION option.

The image shows a vertical list of menu options, each with a right-pointing arrow: 'PROPERTY CONSENTS' (blue), 'STATISTICS FOR MISSION' (red), 'PROPERTY RETURNS' (purple), 'MANAGE USERS' (red), and 'CONTACT US' (blue). A green arrow points to the 'STATISTICS FOR MISSION' option.

2) Select your church via the SELECT A CHURCH / INITIATIVE button on the left-hand panel.

The image shows a grey button with the text 'Select a Church / Initiative' and a right-pointing arrow.

If you have access to only one church, you will be taken directly to your church’s WELCOME page.

3) Go to CHURCH PROFILE.

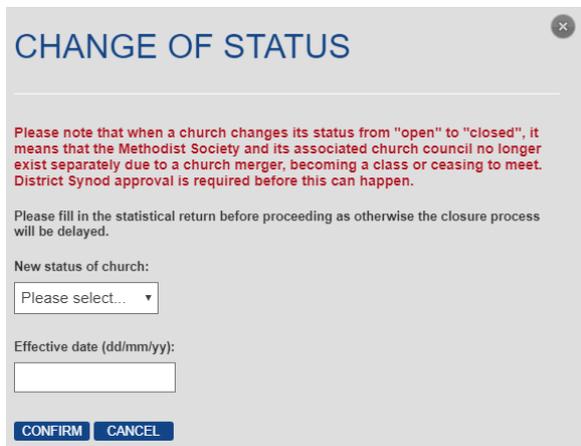
The image shows a horizontal navigation menu with four items: 'Welcome', 'Church Profile', 'Church Office Holders', and 'Statistics Return'. The 'Church Profile' item is highlighted with a dark background.

4) Click the REPORT CHANGED STATUS button.



NOTE: This function is active throughout the year, not just during the statistics collection.

5) A POP-UP BOX will appear.

A grey pop-up box titled "CHANGE OF STATUS" with a close button (X) in the top right corner. It contains a red warning message: "Please note that when a church changes its status from 'open' to 'closed', it means that the Methodist Society and its associated church council no longer exist separately due to a church merger, becoming a class or ceasing to meet. District Synod approval is required before this can happen." Below this is a note: "Please fill in the statistical return before proceeding as otherwise the closure process will be delayed." There is a section for "New status of church:" with a dropdown menu showing "Please select...". Below that is a text input field for "Effective date (dd/mm/yy):". At the bottom are two buttons: "CONFIRM" and "CANCEL".

To capture distinctions between different types of closures, a list of four options appears when you click the blue "Report Changed Status" button.

You need to **select the option** that best explains the new status of your church.

- **"Became a Class"**. Members continue to meet, but as a Class of another Methodist church. This may be where the membership has fallen to six or under, as per Standing Order 605;
- **"Ceased to Meet"**. Public worship is discontinued (there may be a last service to mark the event) and members cease to meet in the worshipping community: some may transfer on an individual basis to other Methodist churches;
- **"Ceased LEP"**. The Single Congregation Local Ecumenical Partnership is constitutionally dissolved or Methodist participation discontinued. Remaining members cease to meet or meet otherwise than as Methodist participating members;
If you choose this option, the Connexional Ecumenical Officer the Revd Neil Stubbens (stubbensn@methodistchurch.org.uk) needs to be informed as well.
- **"Merged"**. Members continue to meet, but as part of a scheme whereby the Local Church has been merged with another church: this may involve sharing the use of a building, or a church spread across more than one site.

Once you have selected one of these options, you then need to **report the effective date of change** (dd/mm/yy) in the appropriate box. This may be one of the following:

The date of Synod accepting the recommendation to cease worship (SO 943(1)), the date of the last church council meeting, the date of a resolution to wind up a Society, the date of the last service in a Methodist chapel, or the date of the adoption of a scheme for church merger.

6) Finally, click CONFIRM.

An automated notification email is sent to the Statistics for Mission Team and the Conference Office, who will get in touch with the Superintendent to verify the requested changes. A "Pending" notice will appear below the Blue Button.



Once a church closure (as defined above) has been confirmed, that church's entry will be removed from the data entry site as the church will not be required to submit any further statistical data or complete any separate property or financial returns.

However, we would like to ask you to fill in the statistical return before reporting your church's status as changed, so that the process can be completed without delay.