

The Methodist Property Office - Resourcing Mission

New to Property? – A Brief Introduction for Property Stewards

We are delighted to hear that you have agreed to take responsibility for some, or all, of the property aspects of your local church or other property. As you can imagine, we get numerous queries from those newly appointed to this task, and we therefore set out below some of the background information that we hope you will find helpful.

1. Trustees Responsibilities

As a member of the Church Council, you are a managing trustee, and carry the same responsibilities as the trustee of any charity. In particular, you are personally responsible for your actions as a trustee, and you must ensure that you manage the trustees' affairs prudently, and take proper professional advice where you feel that you are not yourself competent. For further information please see our information leaflet on "Managing trustees and their responsibilities".

2. Contact Us

We are always pleased to hear from you, but please do bear in mind that we often have a heavy workload and it may take some while before we can reply (particularly in the periods after the Spring and Autumn Circuit Meetings!)

If you have a simple query, please phone, but if your query is more complex, or relates to a scheme already submitted, it is better to write or e-mail us, so that we have an opportunity to look in the file before contacting you.

Contacts are as follows:

For technical questions:

the Technical Officer, e-mail:

tech-cons@property.methodist.org.uk

For listed buildings and conservation areas:

the Conservation Officer

e-mail: tech-cons@property.methodist.org.uk

For legal questions: please write to the Legal Officer, legal@tmcp.methodist.org.uk

For funding, grants, etc: please write to the Funding Manager, email: mpfo@property.methodist.org.uk

The office address is:

The Methodist Property Office, Central Buildings, Oldham St, Manchester, M1 1JQ, Tel: 0161 236 5194

Our web site: A good deal of information is available on our web site, including "Property Points", information leaflets and examples of completed schemes.

If you are not familiar with our web site, why not try it: www.methodist.org.uk, then go to "Church Life" and "Resourcing Mission".

3. Duties of Property Stewards

The duties of Property Stewards are many and varied, and should be periodically confirmed at Church Council meetings. The specific term "Property Steward" is not mentioned in Standing Orders, but SO 941 describes their general duties. There may also be a property committee, if the Church Council considers this necessary, and property stewards will then report to this committee.

SO941 – Particular Responsibilities. It shall be the responsibility of the Church Council to ensure that either the council itself or officers or committees appointed for that purpose:

- i. obtain regular reports on the state of the local property and undertake renovations and repairs as necessary;
- ii. after every quinquennial inspection consider the findings and recommendations of the inspectors and take any action required in consequence;
- iii. prepare and consider the annual property schedules, both of accounts and investments and of the state of the property, and take any action required in consequence;
- iv. consider such matters as the purchase, sale, extension or alteration of the property and take appropriate action;
- v. appoint or employ a caretaker of the premises, if required, and supervise his or her work;
- vi. open and maintain a log book for retention of the annual schedules of property, quinquennial inspection reports and other relevant material, and periodically examine the log book and ensure that records are up to date;

- vii. present an annual report on the local property to the Circuit Meeting and after every quinquennial inspection include in that report details of all action taken or to be taken by the Church Council to implement the recommendations of the inspectors.

Schedule A (and supplement) should be downloaded in the Spring, to enable it to be completed in time for the Autumn meeting of the Church Council (item iii above), and this schedule, together with a property report, is normally prepared by the property stewards.

4. Property Office Information

We have produced a considerable amount of background information to help you understand property matters more thoroughly. Our main communication with circuits and local churches is through Property Points, published twice a year every Spring and Autumn. Earlier copies should be kept in the logbook. Property Points since 2002 are also available on our website and can be downloaded (for instructions on accessing our website information please see point 2 above). Property Points contains information on a wide range of topics, including brief updates of new legislation. In particular, you may find it helpful to look at the following items:

- **Asbestos:** Property Points 2005, Part 1, page 6
- **Electrical Services:** Property Points 2003, Part 1, page 3
- **Electrical Work in Manses:** Property Points 2004, Part 2, page 3
- **Legionella:** Property Points 2004, Part 2, page 4
- **Property Risk Assessments:** Property Points 2002, Part 2, page 5
- **Working at Height Regulations:** Property Points 2004, Part 1, page 3

5. Information Leaflets

We produce a number of information leaflets, all of which are available on our website. These include:

- Electrical Services – Inspection & Testing
- Property Risk Assessments
- Disability Discrimination Act
- Fire Risk Assessments
- Asbestos risk Assessments
- Renewable Energy

6. Property Scheme Approvals

We are often asked when Property Office approval is needed. Essentially, the information is set out in Standing Orders 930, but this can be difficult to interpret. So please bear in mind the following points:

- Is the building “listed” or in a conservation area? If so, we **always** need to be notified beforehand of any work, including repair.
- All other buildings: if the work is fairly routine repair and maintenance, and is being paid for entirely from the local church’s own bank account, we do not usually need to be notified. If, however, you are obtaining any grants (including from the Circuit Advance Fund, or funds not already in your local church’s own bank account) or if any legal issues are involved, or if there is to be any new building or structural work, then we do need to be notified.
- Only in exceptional circumstances (eg for emergency repair) is it possible to give approval after any work has started on site; Standing Orders make no provision for retrospective approval.

The above comments are only intended as a general introduction – if in any doubt, please contact us.

7. Listed Buildings and Buildings in Conservation Areas

Please remember that if your building is “listed” or in a conservation area, more stringent procedures apply.

Please contact our Conservation Officer, for further information, as noted in point 2, above.