

LIVE-STREAMING OR RECORDING IN METHODIST PROPERTY

FOLLOWING GOVERNMENT ADVICE FROM THE 13th MAY 2020

Introduction

Within its roadmap to lift restrictions step-by-step which took effect from 13th May 2020, the government confirmed that for now certain businesses and buildings remain closed. This still includes places of worship - its ancillary accommodation as well as worship spaces.

In the same guidance though, there is now some encouragement to commence certain activities which may mean the partial reopening of some parts of a Methodist property. These activities include early years educational provision, building repairs & maintenance, and construction projects, for which the Connexional Property Team has produced separate guidance [here](#).

As well as practical and social activities, it is important that churches can still provide spiritual support. This guidance is therefore to help Ministers, or others, who wish to use their church premises to undertake acts of worship either via 'live streaming' or recording for viewing on the internet or through other forms of media during this time.

Government Policy Basis

The government guidance is very clear that church buildings, although closed, can still be used for acts of worship by a limited number of people. The wording for this guidance is -

'Places of worship...

... A minister of religion or worship leader may leave their home to travel to their place of worship. A place of worship may broadcast an act of worship, whether over the internet or otherwise.'

For the full context of this guidance for church buildings, please refer to the link below -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close-guidance>

What does this allow?

Under this guidance it is suggested that the following can happen:

- A minister or other worship leader may access the church building for prayer and other acts of worship.
- This is to allow for recording or streaming via the internet or for distribution via other media.
- The individual should use a fixed camera/tripod or if assisted by one other person, this person must be a member of their household.
- This guidance should be read in conjunction with other current government guidance such as travel restrictions and social distancing.
- It should be noted that some guidance is only relevant to England, and that you should also follow the local guidance from the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales if relevant, as this could be different.

It is acknowledged that over this time many have found creative ways and locations to deliver spiritual support and continue to worship. This guidance is not intended to replace this, but to provide another alternative if individuals wished to consider this option and are comfortable with this form of communication. For an individual's safety during this time, it is still preferred that live streaming or recording are undertaken from home, but if undertaking this in a church building is clearly the more appropriate option, then it should be undertaken after careful consideration and strict adherence to the guidance outlined in this document.

Practical Considerations if using a Church Property for Live Streaming or Recording

Opening the Church Building for the First Time

During the previous phase of lockdown, churches were encouraged to carry out regular property checks, but we appreciate that this was not always possible or practical for some trustees. It is therefore crucial that churches adopt a formal process when reopening parts of their properties to ensure that they are safe and fit for purpose before allowing them to be used again under this guidance.

Where possible, the initial assessment for reopening a property should be undertaken remotely in association with your church property steward and the managing trustees or other church members and not one individual. This is to ensure an organised and planned approach which brings collective decision making to the process. The Connexional Property Team have produced detailed guidance and a printable checklist & risk assessment, so please refer to this for this additional information.

Other Matters to Consider to Allow Use

Once a building has been opened and initial checks completed, other matters must be considered and any adaptations implemented before it can be used. All of these are covered in the Connexional Property Team's Risk Assessment guidance. In addition, the following specific questions should be considered –

- Does using the building for this purpose conflict with other users who may now be using the building under the current policy changes – e.g. pre-school or contractors?
- If so, can an alternative entrance be used to minimise contact with other users?
- Can a room/space be used which is easily accessible from outside?
- Can a room/space be used which minimises door opening?
- Can a room/space be used which has easy access to handwashing facilities?
- Does using this property at this time, in this way, have any legal or insurance implications?

Procedures for Using the Church Building each time

It is important that you consider the following broad guidance in the context of your specific building and situation. If there are any specific property questions please contact a member of the Connexional Property Team at property@methodistchurch.org.uk

- Ensure you have a signing-in/signing-out sheet by the door being used for primary access (ministers bring own pen).
- Co-ordinate any property visits with church members who may be carrying out other activities e.g. the weekly property check. If any activities can be combined to reduce access to the building or essential travel then this is encouraged.
- If you are alone, ensure you are working in accordance with your church's lone working policy.
- Ensure you are using the building in accordance with church security & fire risk procedures.
- Any books, pens etc. to be used should be brought from home and taken back again afterwards.
- Ensure hand sanitiser is available at the entrance door for use on entry and exit of the building.
- Ensure that other hand washing facilities are stocked with soap, paper towels etc.
- Ensure that there are cleaning products easily available so that cleaning of surfaces which may be touched can easily be cleaned after using the room e.g. door handles, light switches etc.
- If for any reason others may be unavoidably using the building at the same time, please follow government guidance around social distancing and your church's own risk assessment provisions.