Re-Opening of Building Checklist

Introduction

Under the updated government guidance, some churches will be required to partially open their building(s) to undertake the activities now allowed by this change in government policy. Please note that churches generally remain closed at this time.

During the previous phase of lockdown, churches were encouraged to carry regular property checks, but we appreciate that this was not always possible or practical for some trustees, or certainly not the weekly checks as suggested. 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 by members of the church or third parties. The guidelines below are generalised, to try to cover every eventuality, but we appreciate that all buildings are different and therefore any specific queries not addressed by this guidance should be directed to the Property Support team in writing at property@methodistchurch.org.uk as these will be used as the basis for future FAQ’s to assist everyone in the Connexion.

Please note, this guidance is produced to follow current government guidance. Please ensure you read this in conjunction with the current government guidance, which can be found here.

Organisation of Pre-Visit Process

Where possible, there should be a risk assessment for re-opening a property in association with your church property steward and the managing trustees or other church members. This is to ensure an organised and planned approach which brings collective decision making and safety to the process. In terms of who actually carries out the initial inspection, please refer to the government guidance around vulnerable groups and working within social distancing restrictions, etc. This risk assessment for opening the building can be a joint visit or alternative means of ensuring the safety of the person going through the checklist.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Church</th>
<th>Checklist undertaken by</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Address</strong></td>
<td><strong>Area of the building accessed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Postcode</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Date of Initial Assessment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review Date (if applicable)</strong></td>
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Checks to be Made

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<tr>
<th>Checks to be Made</th>
<th>Completed</th>
<th>Any further action?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Airing the Building</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Open up the windows and doors for at least an hour to let the building air out. If the building has been closed during lockdown, there is a risk of excessive dust and mould. No one should be in the building during this time for safety reasons.</td>
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<td><strong>2. Outside the Building Checks</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>While the building is airing out, you could check the outside of the building.</td>
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<td>Check the gutters, flashings, downpipes and gullies are not blocked/damaged from ground level and where practical.</td>
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<td>Check for any break-ins or vandalism.</td>
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<td>Ensure that all perimeter fences, railings or gates, security lighting and other deterrents to thieves are in good working condition.</td>
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<td>Ensure that all CCTV is working and notices are in place.</td>
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<td>Look over the churchyard and check for loose headstones.</td>
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<td>Check to see if any trees, shrubs or climbing plants, which might pose a security, safety, or damaging effect on the building or walkways are cut back.</td>
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3. Check Cleanliness of Building

Once the building has aired, check the general cleanliness of the building.

Look for any leaks from pipes or animal waste (e.g. bats).

Make a note of anything that needs to be included during cleaning.

4. Electrics

If the electrics were turned off, these will need to be switched back on.

Check the lights, light bulbs, emergency lights, fire alarms, security systems are in good working order.

There is risk of deterioration of portable electrical equipment caused by the damp and possibly mice while the buildings were closed. It is recommended to carefully check all electrical appliances, preferably by having a PAT test. More information can be found [here](#).

5. Heating

If the heating system was turned off, it is recommended to switch it on in order to check for leaks.

It is also recommended to gradually increase the temperature as a high spike in temperature could affect any delicate fabrics or natural materials in the building.
**6. Water Systems and Legionella**

Legionella is a bacteria that can form when water is stagnant for a long period of time. If the water systems were flushed as recommended in the weekly inspections, then another flush of the systems should be sufficient.

Here is the checklist of what should have been done:

1. All water systems should be flushed on a weekly basis (ideally twice/week).
2. All hot water storage systems should be switched off (but not drained) and flushed to prevent the storage of hot / warm water.
3. All taps (hot and cold) should be run at half pressure for five minutes each at every flushing.
4. All outside taps should be run at half pressure for five minutes each at every flushing.
5. All toilets should be flushed twice at every flushing.
6. All showers should be run for five minutes each at every flushing (ideally run these into a bucket to prevent mist and droplets being breathed in by the tester).
7. All hot water boilers should be run and flushed through at every flushing.
8. All dishwashers should be run and flushed through at every flushing.
9. Any other water appliance should be flushed (i.e. washing machines).
10. If a church has air conditioning and condensers then they should take separate advice from their maintenance contractor.

11. All inspections and flushing operations should be recorded on a register.

Because the buildings have already remained empty for a period of time, there is a small risk that the systems are already infected. Therefore, when flushing the systems ensure that spray and water particles are not breathed in (wear a mask or stand well clear of the running water and run showers heads into buckets or containers).

If the building has been closed during lockdown, then it is recommended to arrange a test. These tests will take up to ten days to be analysed and during this time water outlets producing mist should not be used. If the test is positive for either bacteria, then a chemical flush can be arranged.

For more information, please refer to HSE's Guide on Legionella for Duty Holders.

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<th>7. Organ Maintenance</th>
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<td>For a church with a larger or mechanically complex organ, prolonged lack of use will result in long-term problems with its performance. If an organist is available in the neighbourhood to keep all the action parts moving, it is appropriate for them to do so in a manner consistent with Public Health guidance.</td>
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If an organist is not available, then the person performing the weekly inspection could carrying out the following steps:
1. Switch the organ on (consult with your regular organist, as every instrument is different)
2. Pull out all the stops (or press them down, if the instrument has stop tabs)
3. One at a time, press every key (black and white) on each keyboard of the instrument, and all of the pedals. Note that the organ operates differently from a piano; keys should be pressed rather than struck.
4. If any faults occur, such as notes not sounding, or continuing to sound after the key has been released, make a note and consult with your organist or organ tuner.
5. Cancel all stops by pushing them in (or up for stop tabs).
6. Switch off the organ.

The purpose of this is to run through all the stops on all keyboards, and the pedalboard to keep leatherwork from sticking and keep electrical contacts clean.

The person performing maintenance needs to sign the register of who has entered the building and the surfaces need to be sanitised in line with Public Health England guidelines.

7. **Cleaning**

The building will need to be cleaned. Government guidelines on keeping the workplace clean can be found [here](#). If there is a suspected Covid-19 case, the government has listed out special [cleaning requirements](#).

If the building is listed, please refer to Historic England’s [Guide to Cleaning Historical Surfaces](#). Cleaning of some historic objects will need extra care. Please speak with the [Conservation Officer](#) for further guidance.

After these initial checks, there will most likely need to be further changes to suit the reasons for reopening the building. This may include items such as setting up a register to track who enters the building, more frequent cleaning of door handles & switches and adapting hand-washing facilities. Please go through the Covid-19 Risk Assessment form to determine what changes need to made.