SHOPS IN METHODIST PROPERTY

1. Introduction
Under its roadmap to lift restrictions step-by-step, the Government outlined that under Step 2, if the 5 Tests were met, then they would move towards allowing non-essential retail shops to plan for phased reopening from 15th June 2020. We await government guidance on the actual opening dates.

It is acknowledged that some Methodist Properties may be affected by this, for example those who run charity shops or lease shop units to other retailers. The complete list is found in the Government’s guidance ‘Working Safely during Coronavirus (COVID-19),’ but includes the following:

- Charity shops
- Food retailers
- Hardware and homeware stores
- Fashion shops
- Indoor and outdoor markets
- Craft fairs
- Similar types of retail

Methodist Church property remains closed to worshipping congregations generally, although will be allowed to open for private prayer from 13th June 2020 – see separate Connexional Property guidance.

This guidance is intended to provide Managing Trustees with a broad overview of the requirements on them or for other groups who may potentially want to reopen their business which is run from Church property. This guidance may not cover every eventuality, and therefore we would recommend that Managing Trustees contact the Connexional Property team for further guidance if they run a charity shop or have a tenant within their church building who runs a business such as the ones listed above at – property@methodistchurch.org.uk

2. Government Policy Basis & Timescales for Implementation
‘Opening non-essential retail when and where it is safe to do so, and subject to those retailers being able to follow the new COVID-19 Secure guidelines. The intention is for this to happen in phases from 1 June; the Government will issue further guidance shortly on the approach that will be taken to phasing, including which businesses will be covered in each phase and the timeframes involved. All other sectors that are currently closed, including hospitality and personal care, are not able to re-open at this point because the risk of transmission in these environments is higher.’


This policy is part of the Government’s roadmap to lift restrictions step-by-step, and is part of Step 2 covering the area of Shops and Branches, which was applicable from 1st June 2020.

During this phase, the Government continues to update its guidance regularly with regards to which businesses can operate, or which buildings can open. The Connexional Property team will monitor this, but Managing Trustees should also refer to some of the main links below before considering reopening parts of Church property for other building users:

Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can’t do https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-qa…
3. **Considerations Prior to Reopening**

Managing Trustees should first plan and consider the impact of reopening a retail shop carefully in the wider context of its Church property. This should include the following:

- The impact on existing property users (e.g. if a pre-school or similar has reopened)
- The ability to limit the retail unit to the minimal part of a property needed to function
- The ability to manage any communal or common spaces or facilities which might arise
- The ability to implement social distancing for customers and the risks to staff

As stated elsewhere in the Connexional Property Covid-19 guidance, church buildings themselves remain closed (except for private prayer) and therefore any opening of church property should be limited to the areas occupied or needed by the shop unit and its ancillary areas where practical (and any other essential groups who have or will be using premises in accordance with Government guidance). This will ensure that once operational, clear monitoring of occupied spaces can be maintained for cleaning regimes and thereby reducing the potential spread of any virus.

This planning process is essential, as it checks and ensures that the church property can meet the requirements of the shop unit and its ancillary accommodation; or alternatively highlights what other considerations need to be discussed and agreed to make the shop safe to open. This is a shared process that should be ‘circular’ in process not linear i.e. each risk and action needs to be constantly reviewed over time so that processes can be monitored and changes made if needed to ensure the safety of all parties.

In considering the risks and action planning, whether as a Church project or landlords to a third party tenant, Managing Trustees should refer to the following Connexional Property guidance –

- Risk assessment with an Action plan
- Re-opening buildings
- Cleaning regimes

There is also detailed guidance provided by the Government in terms of how to implement changes within the shop unit itself which will apply if this is a Church project, see – https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches

If a Church property provides shop accommodation as a Church project, then Managing Trustees should make reference to this guidance in discussing arrangements and planning ahead with directly employed staff and volunteers.

Alternatively if the shop is leased to a third party, then it is expected that the tenants will also carry their own risks assessments, the details of which should be shared with Managing Trustees, and vice versa, to ensure a co-ordinated approach to risk and the action plans going forward.

In both case, this communication needs to ascertain what risks are associated with allowing people to work again in the property and whether all the requirements for safe working can be achieved.

4. **Undertake Consultations Widely**

In addition to consulting with those directly associated with the shop unit(s). It is important that Managing Trustees consult and engage with all those who use or access the building (stakeholders), to ensure that views and opinions are fully considered in the Risk Assessments with an Action Plan. These might include the following (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Church membership & Ministers
• Property Secretary or Property Stewards
• Any other staff and volunteers (if the responsibility of the Managing Trustees)
• Those who care for the building, particularly those who clean it
• Local community, particularly those others who use the building and its facilities

i. Lease and Other Legal Obligations to Consider
It is essential that TMCP are consulted in relation to any impact on leases or legal obligations. Please contact TMCP if you have any queries relating to the lease or licence under which a Third Party uses the Church premises. Specific information relating to COVID-19 and its impact on leases and licences can be found on the TMCP website in their Lease COVID-19 FAQs (FAQ 4 to FAQ 8 inclusive) and their Licence COVID-19 FAQs (FAQ 1 to FAQ 3 inclusive).

Please note:

• If managing trustees want to allow a Third Party to use more of the Church building than is currently used under the current lease or licence (to allow for social distancing) then this would need to be documented very carefully. Please contact TMCP so that full guidance can be provided depending on the circumstances.

• Any requests from tenants for rent concessions in view of COVID-19 must be considered and documented very carefully. Please refer to the guidance in the Non Residential Leases – requests from Tenants to a rent concession article on the TMCP website.

• Please bear in mind that the ability to limit rights that a Third Party exercises over communal areas will depend upon whether they are using Methodist premises under a lease or a licence. In relation to leases, please refer to TMCP’s Lease COVID-19 FAQs (FAQ 7.1). Managing Trustees have more flexibility with licences but will need to consider whether the terms of the licence require formal change. Please contact TMCP for guidance.

• Please consider any services provided to a Third Party under a lease, e.g. cleaning, very carefully bearing in mind not only the Government’s guidance and guidance issued by the Methodist Church relating to COVID-19 but also their legal rights under the lease. Please refer to TMCP’s Lease COVID-19 FAQs (FAQ 7.1).

ii. Insurance Matters
It is important that you consult your insurer on any matters relating to property insurance. Methodist Insurance has provided a comprehensive set of Covid-19 guidance on their website.

5. Main Considerations for Managing Trustees in Reopening parts of their Building
Managing trustees need to be aware that controls within different users’ ‘separate environments’ may be easier to manage with clear guidelines and controls. It is very important that in any planning and proposed changes that equal consideration is given to the interfaces between different occupiers/rooms/properties and within any communal/shared areas. This may be very different for church run shop project, as opposed to third party run shop units. It is essential that any critical areas of contact between building users are risk assessed, action plans are clear and practical, and then processes are managed and controlled very carefully so that clear plans and areas of responsibility are allocated to a particular user to a shared, agreed standard (e.g. cleaning regimes). For example, such areas might include for example:

• Entrance doorways
• Corridors
Washroom and WC facilities
Kitchens
Halls/Larger Rooms
Outside spaces

This situation is especially relevant if temporary accommodation changes are being made, beyond the arrangements set out and agreed under an existing lease or licence agreement. It is important that if any changes are made, even temporary, to existing agreements then this is checked with TMCP – refer to their guidance set out in Section 4i above.

The following practical guidance is intended to assist managing trustees when they are considering everything from their risk assessment & discussions with those running the shop provision through to implementing changes to the property (in co-ordination with their shop provider if relevant). It is not intended as a definitive list, as each property should be assessed and changed accordingly to suit site and provider requirements.

Managing trustees should also be aware that they will have a greater responsibility for some of these considerations where this is a church run project, as opposed to one run by a third party. The points raised should therefore be carefully considered depending upon the specific situation:

i. **Property Access, Limitations, Security & Means of Escape Matters**
As part of the planning, safe means of access and egress for every building user is essential. This should be considered in the risk assessments and action plans, and the following points should be considered:

- Limit the number of key holders to the building to ensure control access.
- Ensure that if a church member is unlocking then they do not fall into ‘at risk’ categories.
- Limit access to the other parts of the building not opened; this will ensure management of any virus transfer and therefore implications on cleaning regimes.
- Ensure that everyone who accesses the building signs in and co-ordinate with the shop units the personnel on site to ensure that social distances can be maintained.
- Work with your shop staff or shop tenant to ensure that any access or areas in use do not have compromised fire escape routes or means of escape to external areas.
- Work with your shop staff or shop tenant to ensure that any access or building limitations do not compromise security for the open parts of the buildings or other parts of the building.

ii. **Moving around the building**
- Limit movement between different user group areas within the building(s) to maintain social distancing as much as possible.
- Limit the number of people who use lifts or stairs if possible/relevant.
- Reduce the number of people in high traffic areas, particularly if these are used more regularly by shop staff or customers as part of a temporary circulation regime.
- Mark areas using tape to help people keep a 2m distance.
- Consider introducing temporary pedestrian walkways to allow people to maintain social distancing when moving around – this is particularly relevant in external areas for customers.

iii. **Common areas**
Agree how communal or common areas are used, such as kitchens, toilets or changing facilities. The following needs to be considered:

- Physically moving tables/chairs so they are 2m apart.
• Staggering use times, or introducing a rota so that people are not using spaces at the same
time – this should be more carefully considered depending upon the specific situation
relevant to the Church building and how it is used.
• Where this is not possible, creating additional space for people to take their breaks in.
• Marking areas using tape to help people keep a 2m distance.
• Using outside areas for breaks if the locations are suitable and it is safe to do so.

Where you cannot keep a 2m physical distance, you need to think about how to keep common areas
clean and prevent transmission by touching contaminated surfaces. You should think about:

• How frequently you need to clean the common areas.
• Identifying objects and surfaces that are touched regularly and decide how frequently you
  clean them.
• Setting clear guidance and line of responsibility for the use of kitchens, toilets or changing
  facilities to make sure they are kept clean.

iv. Cleaning and Hygiene
• Follow the COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance.
• Ensure that sufficient handwashing facilities are available that provide running water, soap
  and paper towels. Where a sink is not nearby, provide hand sanitiser in shared spaces –
  particularly in entrance areas.
• Use signs and posters to increase awareness of good handwashing technique.
• Provide regular reminders on avoiding touching your face and to cough/sneeze into your arm.
• Set clear guidance for the cleaning of toilets, showers and changing facilities to make sure
  they are kept clean.
• Set clear guidance on how to handle and store cleaning materials/products safely (COSHH
  Guidelines) and when cleaning procedures need to be followed.
• Clean surfaces such as doors, sinks, toilets, light switches, bannisters, more regularly than
  normal in areas under the church’s responsibility.
• Ensure that bins are emptied throughout the day.
• Where possible, all spaces should be well ventilated using natural ventilation (opening
  windows).
• Prop doors open, where safe to do so (bearing in mind fire safety and safeguarding), to limit
  use of door handles and aid ventilation.
• Work together with other Churches or building users to ensure proportionate supplies of
  soap, anti-bacterial gel and cleaning products for all areas of the building are available.

v. Information and guidance
• Provide all users of the building with information on procedures & guidance that have been
  introduced. This could include signs or notices.
• Consider how you will pass information and guidance to people who don’t have English as
  their first language and others who may struggle with written and verbal communication or
  have disabilities such as visual impairment.
• Holding conversations with any interested parties, listening to and acting on their concerns
  through recording and responding to these at the risk assessment stages and then reflection
  stages during implementation.
vi. **PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)**

- Ensure that PPE is available to church members/employees if risk assessments suggest this is necessary when visiting the property, please refer to the following link for more details.

6. **Considerations once a Shop has Reopened**

The type of shop units covered by this guidance will vary greatly and therefore guidance for Managing Trustees and their tenants in terms of running the premises once it is opened is not easy to define. It is therefore advisable initially to consult the Government guidance. This provides clear guidance which we suggest Managing Trustees make reference to, or ensure that their tenants are aware of and putting the necessary actions in place -

**Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) – Shops and Branches**


If Managing Trustees have specific queries relating to their shop unit(s), then please contact the Connexional Property team at property@methodistchurch.org.uk.