

GUIDE FOR PASTORAL VISITS

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1. Introduction

This Guide is part of STEP 5: Safety First in the process for reopening and managing your church building. Although not directly related to Methodist buildings, it provides specific guidance for Pastoral Visits for those who wish to undertake valuable work to support those who cannot return to their church building for whatever reason at the present time.

2. Specific Considerations for Pastoral Visits

There is no specific Government guidance on this area of church fellowship, it is suggested that as the Government lifts restrictions, pastoral support can be delivered in a number of ways –

- i. Remotely: where possible, pastoral support offered remotely via telephone or other form of remote communication is recommended to reduce the risk of transferring the virus. This is particularly important where people fall into a clinically vulnerable group or are shielding.
- ii. Outside: pastoral visits conducted outside can reduce the risks of virus transfer as opposed to meeting indoors. Government guidance suggests that up to 6 people can meet in this setting. In the case of pastoral support this could be in a public space such as a park or a private space such as someone's garden. It should be noted though that if carried out in a public space, the activity should not be such as to encourage gathering beyond the parties involved. There are obviously some limitations to this form of meeting, particularly if the person has mobility issues or is vulnerable.
- iii. Inside: meeting someone inside is allowed, but should be restricted to the household concerned and the person providing pastoral support only, as outlined in - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do-after-4-july>.

In all settings where there is direct contact, the following basic principles should be applied:

- i. Contact the person concerned in advance to check how they are and if they have any specific requirements or concerns about the visit so that you are prepared.
- ii. Do not meet if either party is displaying COVID-19 symptoms or if you have been advised to isolate by NHS Test and Trace or other alert system.
- iii. Ensure that social distancing is followed at all times.
- iv. If required, wear gloves or face mask; ensure you have access to these in case requested.
- v. Ensure you have access to hand sanitiser for regular hand hygiene, particularly if undertaking a number of visits; although it is recommended to limit consecutive visits to avoid any potential virus transfer.
- vi. If possible, try to avoid using any toilet facilities within a person's house.
- vii. Ensure you have and use tissues when sneezing and dispose of safely; washing your hands afterwards.
- viii. Do not accept food and drink, to avoid any transfer of the virus.

Other Information: The Faith and Order Committee have produced a detailed document to support the Act of Holy Communion and this practical guide should be read in conjunction with this.