

GUIDE FOR HARVEST CELEBRATIONS DECORATIONS & FOOD DONATIONS

Version 1	17/09/2020	Issue of original guidance
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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 property itself, it provides specific guidance as we move towards the time of Harvest, which for many is a time of celebration and thanks for God's goodness and generosity. It is also traditionally a time when many make food donations to those in need. In this season we all find ourselves in, it is perhaps more important than ever to do this, and therefore this guide is to assist Managing Trustees in planning for some aspects of this celebration safely on a practical level.

2. Specific Considerations for Harvest Celebration decorations

- i. Please consider this specific guide in the wider context of current Government guidance for the safe use of places of worship - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>
- ii. For the celebration itself, there remain Government restrictions on the consumption of food and drink generally unless part of the service (e.g. Holy Communion). This will therefore preclude food or drink at the beginning or end of a service, even within this celebration.
- iii. There is also a need to discourage items in church which cannot be properly cleaned and therefore could retain and transfer the virus between parties. In the case of this celebration, traditionally, this could include items such as flower displays and decorations, fruit and vegetable decorations or donations.
- iv. The following is therefore suggested where practical and safe to do so:
 - a. It may be possible to modestly decorate the front of church only and ensuring there is restricted access to the main congregation.
 - b. Do not use ends of pews or chairs as this has the potential to be a transfer surface and cannot be cleaned.
 - c. Ensure that displays are positioned so they are distant from the potential for people coughing etc. and contaminating surfaces and there is little chance of people then brushing against them or handling them – a minimum 2m is suggested as for social distancing generally.
 - d. It is also suggested that displays should be set up at least 72 hours before any service.

3. Specific Considerations for Food Donations

- i. A number of churches may have continued to run a food bank, or similar projects relying on donations, from their property during the Covid-19 restrictions. It is therefore assumed that these Managing Trustees will have established processes and procedures in place. If this is the case, then it is suggested that the same process for accepting, sorting and distributing donations are employed in the case of Harvest celebration food donations.
- ii. In terms of food donations brought to church and displayed as part of a Harvest celebration, the following should be considered where it is safe and practical to do so:
 - a. Ask people to only donate food in packages and tins which can be cleaned if needed.
 - b. All donations should preferably be received at least 72 hours before a service and multiple items should be brought in bags to avoid handling too many individual items.

- c. If donations are brought on the day of worship, then they should be left for at least 72 hours before being passed on to the selected food charity.
- d. In both cases b and c above, all bags should be stored in a safe and secure space away from other building users – refer to the [Guide for Offerings](#) (found under the ‘Guide to Using Your Worship Space’ tab) for a similar process.
- e. Anyone handling donations should wash their hands regularly or better still wear disposable gloves and a face covering.
- f. It is not advisable to have donations brought to the front of the worship space as part of the celebration, as this will increase the movement of people through the worship space, as well as increase the risk of contamination through the donation itself.

4. Further Guidance

This is general guidance as it is not possible to address every property situation, so if there are any queries arising from this guide, please contact the Connexional Property Support team on property@methodistchurch.org.uk.