

GUIDE FOR PASTORAL VISITS

Version 1	14 July 2020	First Published
Version 2	29 Sept 2020	Updated to reflect Government policy changes

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. **General Considerations**

1. It is anticipated that many pastoral visits will be undertaken in a domestic setting and not a place of worship. Nonetheless, there are useful principles it is worth reviewing when planning a pastoral visit, as they can provide a framework for how this is conducted safely for all those involved. This includes the guidance for reviewing whether an environment can be made [COVID-19 secure](#)¹, which means they meet the [7 Steps for Working Safely Together](#) as outlined in the Government guidance.
2. Again, it is assumed that a pastoral visit will involve a small number of participants, but be aware that as this is a domestic setting, the visit will be governed by the rule of 6.²

3. **Specific Considerations for Pastoral Visits**

There is no specific Government guidance on this area of church fellowship, so in addition to the above, it is suggested that Pastoral visits can be undertaken, but with caution and awareness of the safety of all parties concerned. Pastoral support could 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. 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 falls within a vulnerable group.
- iii. Inside: meeting someone inside is allowed, but should be restricted to the household concerned and the person providing pastoral support only, as outlined above.

¹ England -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/903464/staying-covid-19-secure-2020-230720.pdf

Wales - <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/keep-wales-safe-at-work-five-key-steps.pdf>

Scotland - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-general-guidance-for-safer-workplaces/>

² There are some useful FAQ's which can be found at

In England - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

In Scotland - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-what-you-can-and-cannot-do/>

In Wales - <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance>

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

- i. Contact the person concerned in advance to check how they are, if they are displaying any Covid-19 symptoms, and if they have any specific requirements or concerns about the visit so that you are prepared.
- ii. Risk assess the visit in advance to ensure that all issues have been considered by both parties.
- iii. Do not meet if either party is displaying COVID-19 symptoms or if you have been advised to isolate by NHS Test and Trace.
- iv. Ensure that social distancing is followed at all times.
- v. Both parties should wear a face covering, and if applicable gloves, as well as hand sanitising before entering the property.
- vi. 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.
- vii. If possible, try to avoid using any toilet facilities within a person's house.
- viii. Ensure you have and use tissues when sneezing and dispose of safely; washing your hands afterwards.
- ix. 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.