

## GUIDE FOR CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS DECORATIONS & ACTIVITIES

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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 Christmas season. 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.

Please consider this specific guide in the wider context of current Government guidance for the [Safe Use of Places of Worship](#)<sup>1</sup> and the [Guidance during the Christmas Period](#)<sup>2</sup>. Please be aware of, and adhere to the [Local Tier Restrictions](#)<sup>3</sup> for your area.

### 2. **Considerations for Christmas Celebration decorations**

There is a need to discourage items in church which cannot be properly cleaned and therefore could retain and transfer the virus between parties. The following is where practical and safe to do so:

- 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.
- Do not use ends of pews or chairs as this has the potential to be a transfer surface and cannot be cleaned.
- It is possible to decorate other areas of the church in areas where there is restricted access to the main congregation.
- It is also suggested that displays should be set up at least 72 hours before any service.

### 3. **Considerations for Christmas Services**

From 2 December, you can attend places of worship in all tiers. The rules on who you can meet with whilst at places of worship will depend on your tier. Please [check the rules for your tier](#) and refer to the government guidance on the [Safe Use of Places of Worship](#) and the [Guide for Using Your Worship Space](#).

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<sup>1</sup> In Wales – [Guidance on reopening places of worship: coronavirus \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#), In Scotland - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Phase 3: guidance for the safe use of places of worship - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Wales - [Making a Christmas bubble with friends and family | GOV.WALES](#), In Scotland - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for festive period - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#), Isle of Mann - [Covid19 \(gov.im\)](#), Channel Islands – [Jersey & Guernsey](#)

<sup>3</sup> In Wales - [Coronavirus regulations: frequently asked questions | GOV.WALES](#), In Scotland - [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): local protection levels - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

- The rules on attending events, including performances and Christmas or other festive lighting ceremonies will depend on your tier. The rules might be different for indoor and outdoor events. Please [check the rules for your tier](#).
- Between 23 and 27 December, people may also attend a place of worship with members of their Christmas bubble. This applies in all tiers.
- 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.
- If your church runs a formal café etc., then the Government suggest this can operate as long as it meets the requirements for [Working Safely in Cafes](#).
- Suggestions for a hosting a safe Christmas service include:
  - a. Have tickets/booking system to control crowds and adhere to the rule of six
  - b. Offer multiple services if resources allow
  - c. Stream the service online or pre-record to share online
  - d. The Evangelism and Growth team have produced a webinars on [Have Yourself a Pioneering Christmas](#).
  - e. Participate in [#GodIsWithUs](#): the first national Christmas campaign brings Methodist churches and charities together.

#### 4. **Considerations for Christmas Fairs**

From 2 December, depending on the tier, there are different rules for indoor shops and outdoor markets. Please [check the rules for your tier](#). If local restrictions allow, a Christmas Fair could take place if precautions are taken. Please refer the [Guide for Shops](#) (found under the *Guide for Other Property Users* tab) and the government guidelines for [Working Safely in Shops and Outdoor Markets](#).

- Santa's grottos are able to open in all tiers if the venue is allowed to open under the tier level restrictions. Venues should put in place appropriate [COVID-secure measures](#), including social distancing.
- Suggestions for a hosting a safe Christmas fair include:
  - a) Book a timeslot for groups of 6 (depending on the tier level)
  - b) Create a one way system
  - c) Prepare ready made boxes of food that are pre-ordered and can be consumed at home.
  - d) Refer to the [Guide for Offerings](#) (found under the 'Guide to Using Your Worship Space' tab) for guidelines when handling and storing money.

#### 5. **Carol singing and Carol Services**

From 2 December, carol singing and carol services can take place if all attendees follow advice in the suggested [principles of safer singing](#) and [Guidance for the Performing Arts](#). This applies to those performing/rehearsing in both professional and amateur choirs as well as part of a supervised activity for under 18's.

- For adult amateur performances and rehearsals, you should consider the case for proceeding (or not), given the wider health context in your area and the context of your participants, particularly if vulnerable individuals are involved.
- If you do proceed, you should follow [performing arts guidance](#) and will be subject to local gathering limits. This means that if more than one group of six (in tier 1) or household (in tier 2 or 3) is performing or rehearsing indoors, they must not interact, 'mingle' or otherwise socialise together. You should maintain social distancing between groups or households at all times, including when entering or leaving the building or in any breaks. Direction can continue to take place during the activity i.e. between a conductor and a group, but other physical and social interaction is prohibited.

### **Indoor performances**

Professional and amateur choirs may perform in any indoor venue permitted to open, as per the restrictions in each tier and should follow the rules outlined above.

- Based on public health advice for indoor performances, the audience or congregation should not participate in any activity that can create aerosols, including singing, shouting and chanting. The maximum number of people present should take into account the area of the space and the requirement to maintain 2m social distancing at all times. This follows the advice generally for the [Performing Arts](#). Particular attention should be paid to how participants can arrive and leave the site safely while maintaining social distancing.
- Attendees should walk or cycle to the event and avoid public transport or sharing a car with anyone outside their household in line with [safer travel advice](#).

### **Outdoor performances**

Professional and amateur choirs may perform outdoors in any venue permitted to open, as per the restrictions in each tier and should follow the rules outlined above.

- Where a performance is held outdoors, an audience or congregation may join in with singing and should follow [performing arts guidance](#).
  - a. This means that audience or congregation members should follow social distancing of 2m and event organisers should ensure this is maintained.
  - b. Attendees should remain seated where possible.
  - c. The maximum number of people present should take into account the area of the outdoor space and the requirement to maintain 2m social distancing at all times.
  - d. Particular attention should be paid to how participants can arrive and leave the site safely while maintaining social distancing.
- Door-to-door carol singing can take place in a group(s) of no more than six participants. If there are more than six people in total, each 'group' must not interact, 'mingle' or otherwise socialise. Participants should adhere to public health advice, including to ensure that you maintain at least 2m distance from anyone you do not live with and the threshold of any dwellings.
- Attendees should walk or cycle to the event and avoid public transport or sharing a car with anyone outside their household in line with [safer travel advice](#).

**6. Nativity plays and Children's Activities**

From 2 December, performances by pupils, such as nativity plays and other seasonal events, should take place within existing school bubbles and avoid mixing across groups. Those who are planning a performance should consult the [guidance on music, dance and drama](#) and the [performing arts guidance](#).

- Whether audience members, including parents, are permitted to attend festive performances will depend on the tier in their area.
  - a. In Tiers 1 and 2, audiences are permitted to attend, subject to the appropriate safeguards being in place.
  - b. In Tier 3, audiences are not permitted. In these areas, schools can use alternative methods such as live-streaming and recording performance.
- Supervised activity for children is exempt from limits on gatherings in every tier. This means children's choirs and other out-of-school settings can continue. Providers who run community and other out-of-school activities for children should follow the [protective measures guidance for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings](#).

**3. Considerations for Food Donations**

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 Christmas food donations.

- In terms of food donations brought to church, 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 service, as this will increase the movement of people through the worship space, as well as increase the risk of contamination through the donation itself.

**8. Considerations for Volunteering**

Where possible, you should volunteer from home. If you cannot do so, you can volunteer outside your home. You should also follow advice on [how to volunteer safely](#).

9. **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](mailto:property@methodistchurch.org.uk).