

Church Buildings – starting to re-open...

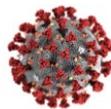
Local Churches are starting to re-open their buildings and, so far, twelve have obtained approval to do so. There is a good deal of thought, prayer and work involved in moving forward and it is important that Churches – and ministers and preachers too – do not feel rushed or pressured into re-entry. Please consult together with your minister and with me as Superintendent as I will need to sign-off your completed Risk Assessments.

Any gathering of our people will inevitably present challenges. Gatherings in the kind of numbers we would normally expect for acts of worship in most of our Local Churches - even if legally permitted - cannot be without risk even if those risks are mitigated by strict adherence to safety guidelines. I would urge Local Churches to make sure that everything is still as safe as possible in the light of any new guidelines...

Opening-up our buildings is a part of our outreach and I pray that, as we make the first tentative steps to this end, God will keep us safe and help us begin to restore those aspects of our common ministry and mission which are still bound by COVID-19 restrictions.

There will be no Circuit Plan until the December 2020 Quarter when we will have responded to resumed restrictions in response to a 'second wave'; will finalise which Local Churches are - or plan to be - operating from their buildings; will have consulted again with Local Preachers and Worship Leaders in respect of safety, availability and vulnerability; will have begun to appraise and advance our work together as a Circuit through a new Ministry & Mission Strategy; and will start to bring together and co-ordinate as a whole existing informal arrangements including *Zoom* and *YouTube* Services into a recognisable Plan.

Safety is paramount and Connexional and HM Government guidance must be followed assiduously. The latest guidance is to be found as follows:

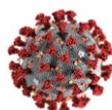


Methodist Church COVID-19 Guidance

Please note the Coronavirus Page on the Methodist Church website:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus/>

There is a dedicated page on the CPO website for those who wish to purchase PPE with a 15% discount: www.cpo.org.uk/methodistppe



HM Government Guidance

COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic

The following table sets out where it is advisable to limit the number of people within a place of worship due to the potential for increased spread of COVID-19.

Activity	Advised gathering limit
Communal worship, including prayers, devotions or meditations led by a Minister of Religion or lay person.	Limits for communal worship should be decided on the basis of the capacity of the place of worship following an assessment of risk (see Section 5 ‘Restrictions on Capacity’). Social distancing should be strictly adhered to (see Section 5 ‘Social distancing’).
Marriage ceremonies	Marriage ceremonies should have no more than 30 people in attendance. Attendance should also be within the capacity limits of the premises so that social distancing can be strictly adhered to. See more detail in the guidance for small marriages and civil partnerships during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic .
Funerals	Funerals should have no more than 30 people in attendance. Attendance should also be within the capacity limits of the premises so that social distancing can be strictly adhered to. In some cases that may be less than 30 people. See more detail in the COVID-19: guidance for managing a funeral during the coronavirus pandemic .
Other life cycle ceremonies (definition in Table 2).	Other life cycle ceremonies should have no more than 30 people present, unless the life cycle rite takes place during routine communal worship. Consideration should also be given to the capacity limits of the premises in order that strict social distancing can be adhered to (See section 5 ‘Social distancing’).

This guidance applies to places of worship when being used for a religious purpose or in preparation for a religious purpose.

<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>