



Caring and Securing for our Church Buildings: advice for incumbents, churchwardens and PCC members

This document will be kept under review and updated as events develop.

It is with heavy hearts that we see our wonderful church buildings closed for the moment. Churches are often the oldest buildings in our communities, offering not only a place for worship but also a peaceful place of comfort and of shared history.

Key Principles

- We are following Government guidance for the safety of our nation as a whole
- This is important because Covid-19 is highly contagious and can be transferred by touching surfaces as well as by person to person contact.
- The closure of church buildings applies to the church building and to church halls
- This means that all regular, practical tasks usually carried out by churchwardens and other volunteers must be suspended until further notice
- Any planned but non-urgent work must be suspended until further notice
- Whilst our church buildings have had to be closed for now, this does not mean that the church is closed: God's people are still serving their communities, but we are doing it in some new ways

Some practical ideas:

Keeping an eye on the building:

- For those people who are doing the permitted daily exercise, someone could agree to incorporate the church on their walk and let you know if they spot (from the ground)
 - That lead has been stolen
 - That tiles or slates are missing
 - That anything else looks amiss e.g. trees down or in danger of falling, door open, window broken, dangerous headstones etc.

What to do if something is amiss:

- In case of a crime (e.g. lead theft, breaking in etc.) contact the Police and follow their guidance. Report any damage to your insurers, Archdeacon and church architect.
- In case of something amiss that might cause immediate damage to your building, get in touch with your church architect in the first instance.

Basic guidance for the building and churchyard during closure:

The guidance below should be read alongside any relevant manufacturer's instructions.

The [Church Buildings Council](#) has more detailed information.

Building

- Non-essential electrical equipment should be switched off to reduce any fire risks.
- Alarm systems should be set to work
- Boilers should remain switched on to prevent any pipes from freezing, should the temperature drop.
- Heating systems are best switched to the summer settings, given the time of year
- Water systems – consider whether it is necessary to leave the water supply on or whether it should be turned off. And be mindful of your own risk assessments regarding stagnant water.
- If any work on the building has had to stop before completion, liaise with contractors to ensure the building is left safe and that you have agreement on any costs like scaffolding. Inform your insurer and any funders of the situation. [Contact with the same groups is advisable for any work that has had to be postponed.]

Churchyard

- Open access to the churchyard can be maintained for pedestrians as it is an important public space but secure any large gates to prevent vehicular access
- Mowing done by volunteers should cease whilst the building is closed and whilst some might not like this, there will be a benefit to wildlife during this time. If concerned about long grass, you could consider asking someone with grazing animals to place one or two in the churchyard as this is a green and economical maintenance option.
 - Eco Church guidance on living churchyards
ecochurchsouthwest.org.uk/actions/living-churchyards/

Insurance

- Check with your insurer about how the closure of the building might affect the insurance, as this varies slightly according to insurer.

Faculty Applications

- Concerns regarding existing or new faculty applications should be emailed to Sarah Williams DAC Secretary sarah.williams@harris-harris.co.uk

Additional Support and Information

There is a [document](#) on the [Church of England's CBC website](#) with more detailed information on Covid-19 and church buildings and churchyards. [Ecclesiastical Insurance](#) also has useful guidance on their website.

These are likely to answer most FAQs but please do get in touch with your Archdeacon or Sarah Williams, at the Registry, if you have further questions. Emma Brown is currently on furlough: please get in touch with Julia Hill (julia.hill@bathwells.anglican.org) if you have any questions about her return.