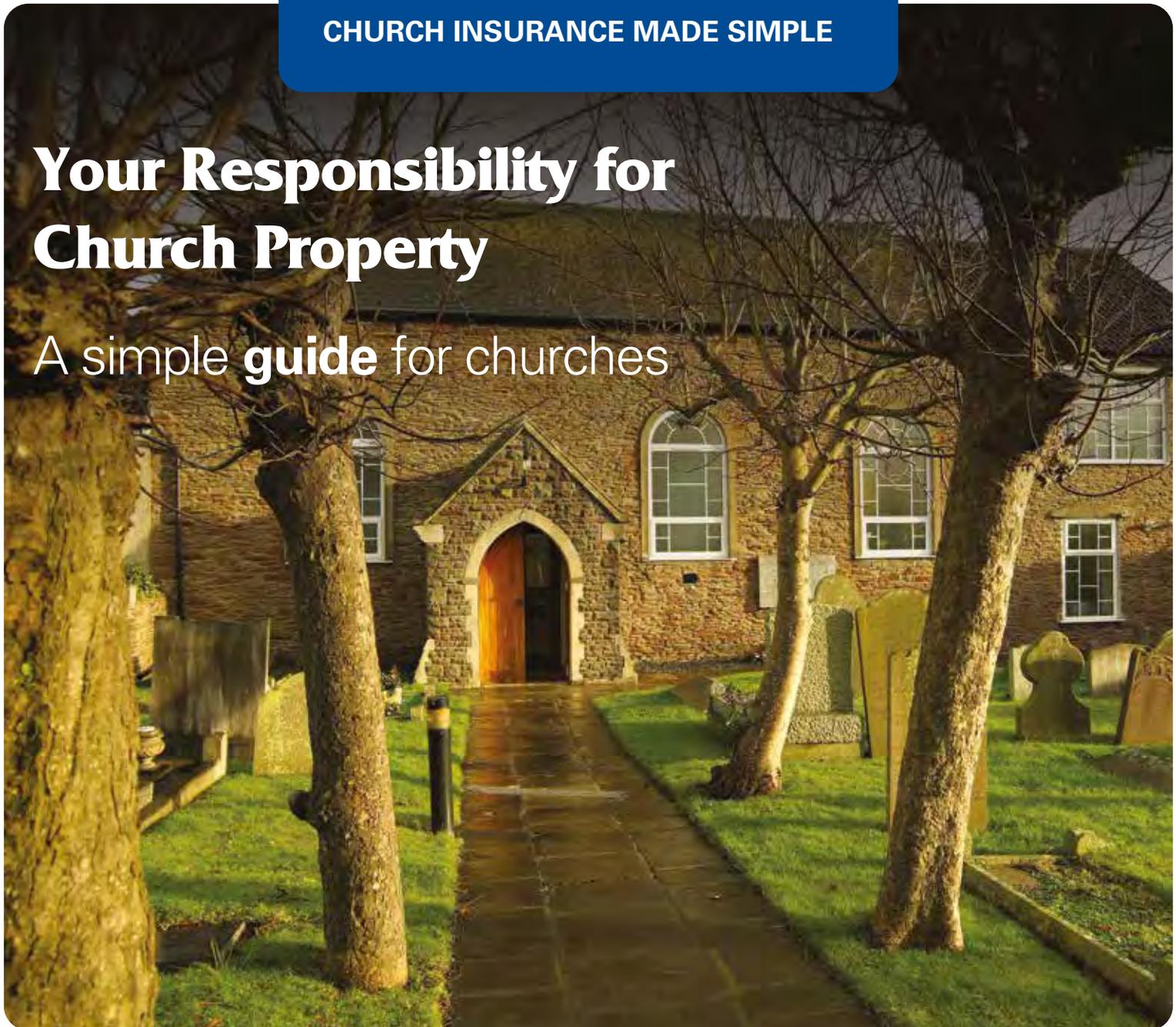


Your Responsibility for Church Property

A simple **guide** for churches



Introduction

Welcome to our short guide to issues to consider regarding your church property and its contents. It is useful for the church to understand how to help reduce the risk of loss or damage to both your church property and its contents.

In this guide, based on over 150 years' experience of looking after churches, we examine some of the issues that can affect your church property and what you can do to avoid or limit their impact.

For help, call our dedicated customer services team (please have your policy number available) on

0345 606 1331

(Monday to Friday 8am-6pm excluding bank holidays)

Email us at

enquiries@micmail.com

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For more information and guidance, go online at

www.methodistinsurance.co.uk



Find out more information on our website when you see this symbol

What issues affect church property?

We have compiled a summary of the key issues that can lead to damage at churches. To help protect your church, we summarise below some of the things you can do and provide details of where to get more information.



You can find more information on these issues in our Risk Management section of our website

Storm damage

You can't change the weather, but good building maintenance will help to minimise the damage storms can cause. You should have contingency plans in place to deal with the worst that could happen so that the effects can be minimised and the church kept open. Here are some things you can do:

- sign up for severe weather warnings at www.metoffice.gov.uk or keep up-to-date with the latest weather news using local TV or radio stations
- maintain trees properly, based on regular tree surveys by a suitably competent contractor. This will help prevent damage to your own or neighbouring properties
- secure doors and any loose objects to prevent problems in high winds.



Take a look at our advice for preparing bad weather

Flood

Similarly to storms, flooding in your church and associated properties can cause inconvenience and heartache to your church community. It's impossible to flood-proof your church properties completely but there are some simple actions you can take to reduce the damage a flood may cause:

- put together a flood plan to make your church more resilient and reduce the impact of water entering the building
- find out if you're at risk of flooding, the Environment Agency (EA – England and Wales) and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) offer an online postcode search to see if your local area is at risk
- form barriers against flood water getting into your church or other properties such as using flood barriers/defences or sandbags.



Read our flood checklist

Theft of metal

While metal theft has declined since it peaked a few years ago, it remains a serious issue and churches are still being targeted. To reduce the chance of metal theft happening at your church:

- remove all means of easy access to roofs such as water butts, waste bins and ladders
- ask neighbours to report any suspicious activity to the police.

To help protect churches, we make it a condition of your theft of metal cover to apply SmartWater (or an approved alternative forensic marker). Remember you need to:

- apply the forensic marker
- register your kit
- display your warning signage prominently.



Read more on our website

Fire

Fire in churches can cause devastating damage to the property as well as serious injury and loss of life. Fires can happen for a number of reasons including faulty electrical wiring, heating systems and risks caused when repairs and restorations take place. Here are some precautions you can take to reduce the chance of a fire:

- check fire extinguishers are suitable and regularly serviced and ensure people are trained in their use
- make sure there are evacuation procedures in place.

Every church must have a fire risk assessment.



Find out about fire risk assessments on our website



Electrical wiring

Numerous church fires can be attributed to faulty electric wiring or apparatus. A programme of regular inspection, testing and maintenance of electrical systems, including wiring, switchgear, any fixed machinery and portable electrical appliances should be in place in order to prevent danger.

Electrical wiring needs to be inspected, tested and updated to ensure it is safe every five years. Only electrical contractors with full scope registration or membership to work on commercial installations with the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC), The Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA) or The National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers (NAPIT) should be employed.



Portable appliance testing

Any electrical equipment connected to the mains by a lead and a plug is a portable appliance. You should conduct regular examinations of portable appliances for signs such as frayed wires, scorch marks and broken plugs. We suggest you engage a competent person to carry out inspection and testing regularly, keeping records as you go.



To find out more, see our website

Theft

Theft does not always involve a forcible entry and is often opportunistic. The following can help minimise the risks:

- make sure you lock the church building when it is not in use
- remove valuables from sight when the church is open
- fit strong locks, intruder alarms and good external lighting
- security mark valuable items.



Malicious damage

Malicious damage is basically vandalism. Attacks are usually opportunist in nature and churches are particularly vulnerable whilst unoccupied. Security measures should be introduced to reduce the opportunity for attack, with the aim of deterring vandals before damage is caused. You can also:

- maintain any existing perimeter walls and railings and consider introducing security lighting and ensure doors to church buildings are secured
- restrict vehicular access using gates or security bollards
- secure outbuildings which may contain valuable tools/equipment.

If intruders manage to gain entry to the building, an effective intruder alarm system will raise an alert and help mitigate damage and theft losses from inside the church.



For more information, see the security page of our website

Escape of water

Water escaping from burst pipes can do immense damage to the fabric of a church. Here are some things you can do to prevent it:

- before cold weather sets in, check your pipes are properly insulated
- ensure employees and volunteers know where to locate the church's stopcock
- consider fitting boilers with frost thermostats which automatically switch the heating on if the temperature falls to freezing.



Lightning

With up to one million volts of electricity in a single bolt, lightning has the power to destroy masonry, start fires and burn out electrical systems. Tall buildings, such as churches, can attract lightning and a well-maintained lightning conductor is a strong defence. This should be checked regularly by a competent lightning engineer.



Damage to underground services

Tree roots and soil movement can damage underground pipes and cables. If you think you may have a problem, contact our claims team who can refer you to a specialist contractor. The contractor should be provided with a plan of where pipes and cables are located if one is available.



Slips, trips and falls

Slips and trips are the most common causes of injury in churches. Whilst most of these are minor, others can be quite severe and in some cases disabling.

Slip and trip hazards are not only present inside the church itself, but are common outside it too – for example, in car parks.

Most slips occur in wet conditions, frequently as a result of weather conditions or spillages. Commonly, trips are caused by worn paths, steps or floor coverings (e.g. carpets, rugs) and where cables trail across the floor.

In many instances, straightforward precautions can make a real difference.



Maintenance

Make sure your church has a programme of routine maintenance to address the issues that may cause future damage. While your insurance is there to protect you against the unexpected, it does not cover you for damage caused through lack of maintenance or if the church is not kept in a good state of repair. For example,

- ensure that your gutters and drainpipes are cleaned regularly, especially in the autumn when there are falling leaves
- check your roof, loose or missing slates and tiles may mean that water is getting into the roof
- cleaning off any graffiti quickly to make sure the church doesn't become a target for more vandalism.

What should I consider if we carry out building works or repairs?

Where the church has agreed a contract making them responsible for insuring any loss or damage to the works or unfixed materials then we automatically include cover up to £150,000. If any of the following apply, please call us:

- works are for over £150,000
- the church is closing during the works
- scaffolding will be needed
- hot works are involved e.g. welding

If you do need to call us, make sure you have ready:

- date of the work
- cost estimate
- type of work
- details of any contract

We may need to ask you to complete a Building Works Questionnaire.

Please contact us for guidance if you are having scaffolding erected as you will not be automatically covered for metal theft while scaffolding is in place.



Read the guidelines to church repairs on our website

Visit our website for more information

1. Products

You can find more information about your Church Shield policy including downloadable policy wordings and summaries of cover. You can also find out about our charity and community group insurance products for small church related charities and community groups. As well as information about our home insurance.

Did you know, when you take out a Methodist Insurance Home Shield policy we'll give you back 20% of your first year's premium for the charity or church of your choice. On average it's around £40*.

*Terms and conditions apply

2. Risk Management

We have produced a range of helpful risk management guidance and advice to help you with your church. The information is divided into:

- Security advice to keep your church secure
- Fire guidance so you can meet the legal requirement to have a fire risk assessment
- Health and Safety including a template Health and Safety policy to help with regulatory requirements
- Storms and Bad Weather with advice about how to protect your church.

3. News

You can find the latest copy of our newsletter, Dialogue news stories and a link to the resources centre which has articles and useful documents that provide practical, up to date insurance advice and guidance.

4. About us

Find out more about Methodist Insurance, the oldest denominational church insurer in the UK. We are a Public Limited Company owned by shareholders and independent of the Methodist Church.

How to contact us

How do we make an insurance claim?

Please call **0345 606 1331** to speak to our claims team. You can also email **methodistclaims@micmail.com** or visit our website to request or download a claim form.

For property claims, we'll need to know:

- your policy number
- what loss or damage has occurred
- when, how and where the loss or damage occurred
- your VAT status (if applicable)
- your bank details for settlement, if applicable.

If your claim involves theft, malicious damage or accidental loss, we'll also need to know:

- when you notified the police
- your crime reference number (where issued)
- details of the police station that's dealing with the incident.



Personal injury claims – What do we need to know?

Any organisation runs the risk of having a claim for personal injury brought against it. At Methodist Insurance, we can help you make sure your church is prepared for any claims, and that you know exactly what to do should it happen to you. Please do not wait for a claim to be made. If you are aware of a serious injury occurring for which you may be responsible, please tell us about it as soon as possible as there are strict time limits for handling these claims – as soon as someone makes a claim, it needs to be acknowledged within 24 hours. So please pass any claim onto us immediately.

If you need any help or advice, please contact our claims team on 0345 606 1331.



What do we need to know about Safeguarding?

Churches need to ensure that they have adopted and applied the recommendations contained in the Methodist Church policies on Safeguarding. The Methodist Church website contains more details including policy, training information and District safeguarding contacts.



How do we make a claim for legal expenses?

The insurance is arranged by us in conjunction with DAS Legal Expenses Insurance Company Limited. You must contact the DAS Commercial Claims Department before taking any action. DAS can be contacted on

0345 601 2791



For further information, call us on

0345 606 1331

(Monday to Friday 8am-6pm excluding bank holidays)
We may monitor calls to improve our service.

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Or visit

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