



Hello

I may already have been in touch with you, or this may be an opportunity for me to introduce myself as the Churches Conservation Trust's Local Community Officer for your area. For those of you who already work with us, I would like to thank you for everything you do to support us in sustaining worship, events and community activities in CCT churches across the region.

With Easter approaching we would like to encourage you and your parish to make use of your local church in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT). The Church of England, Government and CCT view CCT churches as a valuable resource for parishes and local communities. Easter is a great time to bring these communities together. Also at Christmas time, when it is cold outside it is lovely to see these churches used for Christingle services, candlelit carol services or any other opportunities for worship and connection.

We would be delighted for you to hold services at our churches at any time of year and hope the following information will answer any questions you may have. Additionally, there are some legal restrictions that govern the use of our churches we would like to make you aware of, along with some of our organisation's policies.

What do I need to do to hold a service in a CCT church?

The incumbent (or other nominated representative) should contact your Local Community Officer (LCO), to complete a short booking form, the latest copies of which are attached to this email. We also ask that you provide copies of your risk assessment and insurance details prior to a service taking place. Do let your LCO know if you have any questions.

We continue to have a variety of uses for our churches, either through hire, our fundraising events, educational use or even Champing™. We also carry out regular maintenance and conservation works. It is important that we know about all services and events that take place in our churches so that we can reserve the space for you.

Do we need to pay for use of the church?

We would like to see our churches used for their intended purpose of worship, and as such **we do not charge a fee** for Sunday or other services. However, a fee is chargeable for weddings, baptisms, blessings, and funerals – please see details below under 'what type of services are allowed'.

At services in our churches, we request that you mention the church is in the care of the CCT and we require that a collection is taken up at all services towards the work of the CCT. As the CCT bears the full cost of repairing and maintaining its churches, money received from service collections goes towards our work and activities to care for over 350 churches across England. Whilst we receive funding, this does not cover the full amount needed, and we greatly appreciate the contributions made by local communities using the church for worship.

Proceeds from the collection can be sent to our regional office (see address below) as cheques made payable to 'Churches Conservation Trust' or transferred by BACS. Your LCO can provide BACS information at the time of booking and gift aid envelopes to use with the collection, to enhance the amount we receive. Please let us know if these are required.

What type of services are allowed?

Occasional Services

The Trust will normally permit any number of occasional weekday services a year and a maximum of six Sunday services. These may be services arranged by the local parish church or by another recognised Christian Church.¹

'Occasional' means 'not regular' or occasional to the normal activities of the worshipping church or the regular use of the Trust church. For example, a parish church may hold outreach services at a CCT church, but these would be occasional to the parish's main activities; likewise, the CCT church used mainly as an arts centre may accommodate worship but this would be occasional to the use of the building.

A variety of services take place at our churches. In addition to the Christmas services, we welcome evensong and services to mark Easter, harvest festivals and Armistice Day, or special services to celebrate saint's days or even for the blessing of pets. If you have any questions about what services you can hold, please contact your Local Community Officer for advice. We can also promote your service on our website (www.visitchurches.org.uk) and social media so please do get in touch as soon as possible about any services you are planning.

Weddings, baptisms and funerals

As with services, we require booking forms to be completed, copies of which are attached to this email. The Trust receives a fee for the use of a church for these services. The table below shows the fee from 1st January 2024.

Type of Service	Fee
Wedding	£550
Blessing	£550
Renewal of Vows	£350
Baptism	£100
Naming Ceremony	£100
Funeral	£250

¹ Section 11.13 of the Code of Practice to the 1983 Measure gives further guidance. www.cofe.anglican.org

Weddings:

As you may be aware a wedding in a CCT church requires a Special Licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Registrar. The issue of a Special Licence is subject to rules laid down by the Archbishop of Canterbury, which require the couple to have a 'demonstrative connection' with the church and an application for a Special Licence can be made only with the support of the incumbent and Bishop.

Ideally, the incumbent manages the application process to the Archbishop's Registrar (1 The Sanctuary, London, SW1P 3JT) for the couple which includes the relevant assurances of support from you, as well as confirmation from CCT staff that the church is available. When a wedding takes place in a CCT church it must be recorded in the register of the parish church.

We ask that anyone wishing to marry in our churches completes a booking form and pays their fee to the CCT. This fee is in addition to the usual fees payable to the officiating minister and for the Archbishop's Special Licence.

Blessings/Renewal of Vows:

A service of blessing following a civil marriage does not require an Archbishop's Special Licence, but does require your permission, agreed with the Diocesan Bishop and there are no legal fees for these services. We also welcome those who wish to renew their vows.

It should be noted that CCT churches cannot by law be registered for Civil Weddings and Civil Partnerships.

Baptisms:

When a baptism in a CCT church is agreed to by the incumbent we ask that it is recorded in the register of the parish church.

Funerals:

Funerals may take place in CCT churches. The CCT must be consulted to ensure there is no clash with other activities or buildings work at the church. Due to the shorter timescale with arranging a funeral, you may wish to call the Regional Office in the first instance to check date availability.

We recognise that in some circumstances, the incumbent or Bishop may decline the use of a Trust church for any such events if you consider such use to be detrimental to the role of the parish church. We ask that you consider the vital funds these provide to maintain these historical buildings that are an asset to their local communities.

You may want to agree a general policy favouring the use of CCT churches for such events with the Diocesan Bishop and inform the CCT. Any policy should be within the framework permitted by Canon Law or other legal Measures of the Church of England.

Can the church/churchyards be used for burials and memorials?

Burials:

If a church is vested with the CCT, it does not always follow that the churchyard is also vested with us. In addition, some churchyards in which the CCT's churches stand have been legally closed for burials whilst others remain open. If you are unsure who owns the churchyard and whether it is open or closed, please contact your LCO. Where the CCT is responsible for a churchyard that remains open, we will indicate the part of the churchyard in which an interment may be made.

The Trust receives a fee for the use of a church for a funeral (see above) and a fee for burial which is in line with parochial fees. All burials must be recorded in the register of the parish church.

Memorials in the churchyard:

The Trust has a responsibility to ensure the churchyard surrounding one of its churches is an appropriate setting for the listed church. Please contact our regional office for a copy of the CCT's guidelines for memorials and gravestones in CCT churchyards. No memorial may be erected without the CCT's prior permission.

Memorials in the church:

If there is a request for a memorial within the church itself, please contact the CCT for guidance as this will be considered on an individual basis. Due to the listed status of the churches, we need to consider if additional memorials are suitable for a church, and if any legal permissions need to be applied for.

What is the Legal Framework?

Churches vested in the CCT remain consecrated buildings. As they have been withdrawn from regular worship by the Church of England their use is restricted by law. However, the Pastoral Measure 1983 (Section 44, paragraph 7) allows:

'...use of a church or part of a church vested in the Trust for such worship (including worship by persons belonging to other Christian Churches) as may be authorised by the bishop after consulting the incumbent or priest in charge of the benefice in the area of which the church is situated.'

Religious use of CCT churches must receive the consent of the Diocesan Bishop after consultation with the incumbent and must conform to the policies of the Church of England and – with regard to weddings – to civil law. Where requests for religious use come from others, the CCT will always endeavour to follow the advice of the local incumbent.

Can the church bells be rung?

Where bells can be safely rung the Trust encourages ringing for occasional services, local events and by visiting ringers. Please consult with us to determine if bells at individual churches are suitable and in a safe condition for ringing. We can also supply a Code of Practice on the ringing of bells in a Trust church.

Supporting Documents

Please let us know if you would like copies of any additional documents or policies:

- Candles Policy
- Open Church Policy
- Memorials Guidelines
- Code of Conduct for Bell Ringing

Please Keep In Touch

The details for the Local Community Officer for your church are:

Name: Isobel Milne

Email: imilne@theccct.org.uk

Phone: 07900 214199

Our Regional Office contact details are:

Email: west@theccct.org.uk

Phone: 0117 929 1766

Post: St Thomas' Church, Thomas Lane, Bristol, BS1 6JG

You may also like to go to our website to find out more about our work: www.visitchurches.org.uk

If you moving on from your role, we ask you to notify the CCT of change in circumstances, and if known, pass on details for the new incumbent to insure we are able to keep them up to date with information from the Trust.

We hope the guidelines provide all the information you need to enable you to plan services at a Trust church near you. Should you require any additional information or have any queries, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Church Plans

The Churches Conservations Trust's strategy is to empower and support communities to care for historic places of worship, for the benefit of all. A sustainable CCT church is well used by its community(ies), generates sufficient funds for the maintenance that keeps it in a good state of repair, and is able to raise funds for specific repair and improvement projects. Local Community Officers facilitate this through their work with the community to co-create Church Plans.

Church plans are a living document which combines information on the church's history, significance, maintenance and repair needs and the current use of the church, with feedback and recommendations from the community, and concludes with an action plan setting out agreed short, medium and long term goals to support the sustainable use and care of the church.

If you are not already involved in church plan meetings, please do contact your LCO to attend the next one and for a copy of the church plan for the church(es) you are connected to.