

TITLE **POLICY ON THE USE OF THE CHURCH BUILDING FOR EXTERNAL EVENTS**

PURPOSE

This policy documents the requirements to be met when the church is used by a third party for events, so that the PCC meets its obligations to its insurers, ensures the safety of event attendees and protects the sanctity of the church building.

CONTENTS

This policy covers the following aspects:

- Background
- Suitability of events
- Requirements to be met before the event and at the event

BACKGROUND

St Peter and St Paul Church is at the heart of Wadhurst village and is one of the few spaces in the village able to accommodate larger audiences for events.

Following recent upgrades, the church is equipped with a refreshment point (not a full kitchen), toilets (including disabled provision and baby changing), multiple access points with ramps, Wi-Fi, and an emergency land line.

The PCC wants the church building to be used by third parties as an event space for the benefit of the whole community.

However, this must be in a way that complies with relevant regulations, insurance requirements and diocesan guidance, which also ensures the safety and enjoyment of the attendees and protection of the building.

The insurance company notes three basic aspects to consider:

Planning for the event – to be proportionate to the scale of the event and the degree of risk associated with it

Planning for incidents and emergencies – to allow a prompt and appropriate response, dependent upon the level of risk presented by any event

Managing the event so that it runs safely – ensuring adequate coordination of the activities; training for employees and volunteers; monitoring of the precautions in place and so on.

POLICY

The management of third-party events should include the following steps:

1. Determination of Appropriateness of Use

In the event of an organisation or individual wishing to use the church premises, consideration should be given as to the appropriateness of the event. Before assuming the event can take place, the event organiser will be asked to gain 'in principle' agreement from the Incumbent and Churchwardens, who would consider if the planned event is in line with the building being a place of worship, or if the planned use could bring the name of Christ or the church into disrepute. The event organiser will be advised of the decision by email with any conditions included.

2. Prior to the Event - Completion of a User Hire Form

If the event is deemed to be of an appropriate nature, the user should complete a User Hire Form, confirming how the building will be used and how safety will be ensured.

The User form will also include the Terms and Conditions under which the church is being allowed to be used (see Appendix 1).

The person responsible for the event will sign the User form which will be countersigned by a Churchwarden or the Incumbent.

A copy of the signed form will be given to the event organiser together with a document '**Use of the Church Building for Events**' outlining a plan of emergency exits, site of emergency phone and fire extinguishers, and site of the accident book.

3. Supervision of the Event

A named person from the church will be in attendance to welcome the users and to give out safety instructions at the start of the event.

This person would also act as a Fire Officer (unless the event organisers already have a person identified for this role) and would ensure that the building was cleared and locked at the end of the event.

It is the responsibility of the event organiser to provide formal first aid cover if required.

If the hirer wishes to make use of the church AV equipment, a request should be made at the earliest opportunity. This equipment may only be operated by suitably trained church volunteers but there is no guarantee that such volunteers will be available. Hirers may use their own AV equipment subject to prior agreement.

Attention is drawn to the requirements for Safeguarding in the Terms and Conditions.

APPENDIX 1 (a) USER HIRE FORM

To be completed and returned to the Church Office

RESPONSIBLE PERSON

Name of lead user:

Telephone no:

Email address:

Name and contact details of volunteer responsible for H&S and fire safety etc:

EVENT

Description/name of event:

Date of event:

Date of any rehearsals:

Time of event:

Access required:

AV EQUIPMENT

Church Audio Visual equipment requested (subject to availability of church operator):

YES / NO

If use of Hirer's own AV equipment is requested, please provide brief details of type of equipment to be used:

Please confirm that all Hirer's AV equipment is PAT tested (current for the date of the event):

REFRESHMENTS

Plans for refreshments:

Expected number of attendees: _____

I confirm that I have read and agreed to the terms and conditions of hire:

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

FOR OFFICE USE:

Hire Agreed: Y N Fee agreed: _____

Hirer informed (date): In Diary:

Church representative at the event (name): _____

APPENDIX 1(b) – TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR THE USE OF THE CHURCH BUILDING FOR EVENTS

To be issued with Hire form and a copy retained by user

The Church's insurers make it a condition of their cover that people and organisations who make use of the church building for events other than church services, should sign an agreement so that they are aware of their responsibilities when they use the church building.

This agreement must be signed by the lead user before use of the building and reviewed on every occasion that the church building is used.

The form will be retained by the church administrator and a copy retained by the user.

Areas permitted for use

The area around the communion table (altar and sanctuary) may not be used without the express permission of the vicar.

Supervision

The user shall, during the period of use, be responsible for supervision of the premises, the fabric and contents; the care and safety from damage and the behaviour of all persons using the premises in whatever capacity. The church will not be responsible for any loss or damage to any user's property on church premises.

Use of movable property

Any tables, chairs or other furniture moved by the user must be replaced at the end of the event. The church must be left in a clean and tidy state.

Use of AV equipment

The user understands that they are not permitted to operate or use any of the church AV equipment, which may only be operated, with prior agreement, by appropriate church volunteers, if available. There is no guarantee that it will be possible to provide such a volunteer for the event. In this case it may be possible for the Hirer to use their own PAT-tested AV equipment, subject to prior agreement.

Damage and Loss

The user shall make good or pay for any damage (including accidental damage) to the premises or the fixtures, fittings, or contents or loss of contents. Such loss or damage is to be reported to the church administrator on the first available opportunity.

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Accidents

Users are reminded that they are responsible for any accident or injury that arises out of their activities whilst using the church. An accident book is located in the first aid box in the lobby of the vestries. An accident occurring must be recorded in this book at the time it occurs.

Fire Precautions

Fire Exits and escape route maps are clearly marked in the church building. All points of exit from the church must be kept free from obstruction and immediately available for public exit. A minimum width of an escape route is 1m, so no chairs may be placed in the main aisles. Doors to the vestries must be kept unlocked during the event and both the East and West doors of the church unlocked and then left on the Yale lock, to enable instant exit from the building. A fire safety announcement should be made before the start of any event.

Church Safety precautions

Note should be taken of the *Use of the Church Building for Events* document, and it should be shared with appropriate personnel on the event planning team.

Health and Safety

A Health and Safety risk assessment must be carried out by the hirer and a copy lodged with the church administrator along with a copy of this signed form. The church reserves the right to request amendments to any H&S provision if it is considered that the event will not be safe as planned.

Safeguarding

Where the church is to be used as a venue for activities organised by an individual, the Hirer will be required to ensure that any children who attend their activities are accompanied by either a parent or a responsible adult nominated by a parent, and to keep a record of those who accompany children.

Where the church is to be used as a venue for activities organised by third party organisations, the organisation must demonstrate in advance of the hire that it has appropriate people, procedures and controls in place to ensure proper protection for any unaccompanied children and/or vulnerable adults who may attend these activities.

Sale of alcohol

The church is not licensed for the sale of alcohol, nor may alcohol be offered with a donations box or included in the price of a ticket. Completely free alcohol may be offered. If users wish to sell alcohol, application must be made to Wealden District Council for a

Temporary Event Licence form. If granted, there is a cost involved and the licence lasts for 7 days.

Other licences

The hirer is responsible for obtaining any other relevant permissions for the activity taking place eg PRS, copyright etc. Copies should be given to the church administrator in advance of the event taking place.

Public liability insurance

Public liability insurance will be required to be held by the hirer.

Security

Discussions should be had with church personnel (vicar, churchwardens, administrator) to determine who will be responsible for locking the church at the end of the event.

By *signing this form, I confirm that:*

- *I have read and agreed to the terms and conditions of hire*
- *The planning of this event is in line with a risk assessment that we have performed*
- *Public liability insurance for this event is in place*
- *There will be at least one identified volunteer in attendance who will be the named person to assist in any health and safety issue, will act as fire officer or who will call the emergency services in the event of an emergency.*

Named volunteer:

Contact details:

- *We have contacted the appropriate council authorities for a temporary licence, if we are intending to sell alcohol*
- *We agree to be responsible for any other licenses and /or permits as necessary*

Signed

Date

APPENDIX 2 – Fees

The hire of church premises will incur some costs to the PCC. (eg utilities, cleaning, supervision etc) A contribution toward these expenses will be requested in accordance with the below:

Hire of whole church:

Hire period	Suggested contribution
Morning (9-12)	£20
Afternoon (2-5)	£20
Evening (6-9)	£20
All day	£60

Hire of meeting room (eg The Foley Room)

Hire period	Suggested contribution
Morning (9-12)	£10
Afternoon (2-5)	£10
Evening (6-9)	£10
All day	£40

Additional fees might be payable for use of the church outside of these hours. *

Discounts may be offered to individuals or groups connected to the church, or those making regular bookings by prior agreement of the Churchwardens.

Hirers may also wish to make an additional donation towards the work of the church. This may be based on a percentage of takings for the event, or some other parameter agreed in advance with the Churchwardens.

**There may be a need to levy additional hire costs while winter fuel prices are so high. Looking at the bills for Dec 2022, an appropriate increase would be in the range of £40 per session (morning or afternoon) for the hire of the church and about £9 - £10 more for the hire of the Foley Room.*