

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
- Terms and Conditions for the use of the church building for events (also given as Appendix 1)

The following administrative forms do not form part of this policy and are available as separate documents. They will be updated to reflect use and updates to this policy from time to time.

User hire form (one-off event)

Regular User hire form

Fees

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 section 4 and 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, to give out safety instructions at the start of the event and ensure that the building is cleared and locked at the end of the event.

This person would also act as the church's Fire Officer for the event. The hirer will also be asked to identify a named individual to work with the church representative in the event of fire.

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

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

In addition, for hires for plays, concerts or exhibitions, the hirer will provide written confirmation that they have read and understood the *DIOCESAN BISHOP'S DIRECTIONS REGARDING PLAYS, CONCERTS, AND EXHIBITIONS OF FILMS AND PICTURES IN CHURCHES AND CHAPELS IN ACCORDANCE WITH CANON F16(2)*, (copy available from the Church

Administrator) and that, to the best of the hirer's knowledge, the proposed play, concert or exhibition would not contravene these directions. This written assurance will be required before approval for the event can be given.

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.

4. Terms and Conditions for the Use of the Church Building for all Events by a Third Party

A copy of the Terms and Conditions given in Appendix 1 will be issued as an attachment to all hire forms, and a copy retained by the user. The detail of these Terms and Conditions form part of this policy and will be kept under review.

APPENDIX 1

TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR ALL EXTERNAL HIRES (ONE-OFF OR REGULAR)

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.

These Terms and Conditions will be supplied with every booking form and must be signed by the lead user before use of the building and reviewed on every occasion that the church building is used.

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 AV equipment, (which must be tested and deemed safe to use in accordance with current edition of the IET Code of Practice for In-service Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment, formerly known as PAT testing) 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. Decorations used must not pose a fire risk and the use and placement of lighted candles will be subject to the agreement of church personnel. 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.

Disabled access

The church has ramps suitable for wheelchair users and children's pushchairs, however these are not suitable for large mobility scooters. Please contact church personal to discuss options if you are expecting a guest with a mobility scooter. The church does have a disabled WC which is signposted.

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.

The hirer will provide written confirmation that they have read and understood the *DIOCESAN BISHOP'S DIRECTIONS REGARDING PLAYS, CONCERTS, AND EXHIBITIONS OF FILMS AND PICTURES IN CHURCHES AND CHAPELS IN ACCORDANCE WITH CANON F16(2)*, (copy available from the Church Administrator) and that, to the best of the hirer's knowledge, the proposed play, concert or exhibition would not contravene these directions.

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 The Music Licence from 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.
