

## Temporary Closure of Church Buildings Due to Cold Weather

Updated 16 November 2022

This advice note reproduces the [statutory guidance](#) of the Church Buildings Council and contains an application form to the Bishop in cases where it is beneficial for worship to cease mainly or wholly in a church building due to cold weather. Such permission may be sought where it is not practicable, or beneficial, to continue to worship in the normal building licenced for that purpose.

### Background

The cost of living crisis, the rise in the cost of energy to heat church buildings, and environmental concerns have made some congregations seek permission to worship elsewhere in the coldest winter months. The Church of England Environment programme and ChurchCare have produced guidance with practical suggestions to help parishes save energy and money. See [Practical Suggestions to help Parishes save Energy and Money](#).

Moving non-worship activities outside the church building to a venue easier or less costly to heat can be decided locally by a parish, but is subject to the law concerning parish worship, and may require the agreement of the Bishop. There are legal, pastoral, missional and reputational issues to moving worship elsewhere, so it is a decision that requires careful consideration. Depending on the local situation these may be weighted differently and may have both positive and detrimental outcomes but, whatever the decision, it will have an impact on the perception of the church and its mission in its community. If there is a smaller area of the church that is heatable which would serve the purpose, consider using this. Another option is livestreaming worship, so more vulnerable congregants can join from elsewhere.

Moving either some or all worship to another building may be decided as the best option after others are considered. This may be justified by the pastoral and missional, as well as stewardship, benefits of such a move. Any permission to relocate worship will have a timescale for a return to the church, with some monitoring and support over the return to church or as a route to a well governed decision about a more permanent change. A building not used for worship can still be left open to visitors and should be visited weekly to check all is well. The response to church buildings being closed during Covid has reminded us of the pastoral benefit of the church buildings being open.

If an occasional office, major festival or regular well-attended event that normally happens in the church falls when worship is taking place elsewhere it is almost certainly appropriate to go to church for it as usual (e.g. Advent and Christmas).

### Communicating your decision

The community should be kept up to date with where to attend worship, in person, online or both. The information should be available where it is easily found and in more than one format, for example a notice at the church as well as online. Also, if worship is not taking place in the church it needs to be clear whether the building will still be open for independent visits.

### Further Advice

If you need any further advice, please contact your Archdeacon.