PROCEDURES INVOLVED IN CLOSING A CHURCH (SOCIETY AND BUILDING)

Closing a Methodist society

* Local Church Council meeting decision to request cease worship / close (SO 605.2)
* Circuit Meeting permission / agreement given to Request cease of worship at Local Church (SO 943.1)
* District application form completed and sent off requesting to Cease Public Worship
* District permission, if granted by DPC, then worship can cease (in theory worship should continue on the plan until permission granted) (SO 943.1)
* Ceasing public worship / final service & celebration (SO 943.2)
* Notification via 'Church Closure' button on Statistics for Mission site (if closure is after the Stats. For Mission web-site is closed for new information, then email Connexional Team to notify)
* Notification to General Register Office via local County Registration service to cease authority for Registration of Public Worship; and if applicable for Solemnization of Marriages. If the building also has been granted Authorised Person authority to Register weddings, then arrangements to be made with local County Registration service to return both register books and certificates.
* Notification to insurers – and associated procedures if building is now going to be unused/empty; and insurance premiums will normally be met by the Circuit and Circuit to ensure all terms of the insurance are met
* Church Treasurer to complete Standard form of Accounts as soon as possible and to be independently examined; then local church financial resources to be transferred to the Circuit.

Closing and selling a Methodist building (When the above action has taken place – the building is under the immediate Managing Trusteeship of the Circuit)

**[At what point does the Church Council cease having responsibility and the property become the responsibility of the Circuit Meeting? i.e. at what point does the church cease to exist as a local church….? When District Policy Committee agree to Cease Worship and form is returned to Superintendent by District Property Secretary]**

When building under Circuit Trusteeship – the Circuit Meeting must decide to sell building or to retain it:

If retained by the Circuit – the Circuit Meeting becomes Managing Trustees and all expenses and legal liability rests with them

If decision is to sell the property: (consult fully SO 943: 1 – 4)

* Begin the Consents process by creating new scheme / project on the Consents website. Make certain that the property concerned has been entered on the list of “Circuit properties” (e.g. Manses, other Circuit property like cemeteries, and the closed chapels)
* Contact TMCP Legal regarding Guidance notes both for Qualified surveyor and Solicitor
* Appointment of selling agents / surveyor. Also contact your local authority and possibly an architect since Guidance Notes from TMCP will advise on how to obtain best price, which could be change of use. If change of use to residential is possible this will drastically increase the value
* However this may take many months depending on the nature and status of the building and the willingness of the local authority (and also if any local objection) to support the proposal
* When the permitted use of the building is determined send the QSR report to TMCP Legal to seek their permission given to advertise for sale. This is not always confirmed via Consents process (only if the Conservation Officer needs to pass comment) so share outcome of correspondence from TMCP with District Property Secretary. Even when DPS gives Consent, the Managing Trustees must still obtain full permission from TMCP first before entering into any legal agreement or contract
* Instruct Circuit Solicitor at an early stage since matters such as Rights of Way and access may need to be dealt with
* Clearing of building; utilities' contracts to end. After final service the power supply can be terminated but check with electricity board that this has been done correctly if not standing charges may still apply. On day of sale details of suppliers will be given to new owners [*during this period*]
* Marketing of property and when satisfactory offer obtained QS must issue best price certificate and be agreeable to TMCP
* Solicitor will draw up Conveyance and contract which must be agreed by TMCP and follow their guidance re legal issues till permission granted to exchange contracts
* Exchange date agreed and payment made to TMCP
* Connexional levy is taken off sale price (20% on first £100.000 and 40% on amount above); also any connexional property grants awarded to the church in the past will be taken off price e.g. Standard Property grants (SO 945) (SO 972)
* Agreed expenses are taken off before the levy calculated e.g. Legal fees, surveyor and architect fees, disbursements (cost of Insurance and any utilities do not qualify)
* Balance is transferred to Circuit Model Trust Fund (SO 945)