



Open Church Security

Churches suffer significant risk exposure to theft, vandalism and arson. Insurance provides monetary compensation, but cannot compensate for the loss of heritage features or emotional impact.

Keeping your church open

We are often asked whether churches should be kept locked at all times. Provided the right precautions have been taken, churches kept open can have a positive effect on security.

Keeping churches open outside of services of worship is a vital element in the link they have with the community they serve and for historic buildings can also generate tourist revenue.

However, we do recommend where possible that a supervisor be in attendance during opening times or be available to check the building periodically during the day.

TIPS FOR BEING OPEN AND SECURE

Churches wanting to be open need to find the right balance between accessibility and security.

THIS MEANS TAKING A FEW KEY STEPS:

- Carry out a full risk assessment.
- Ensure local residents know that the church is operating an open door policy, so that they can observe activity.
- Encourage local people to pop into the church while passing by.
- Draw up a rota of volunteer stewards to be present in church – but don't forget to consider their personal safety for example, they might be alone in a church at any time.
- Create a secure storage area in which all valuables can be locked.

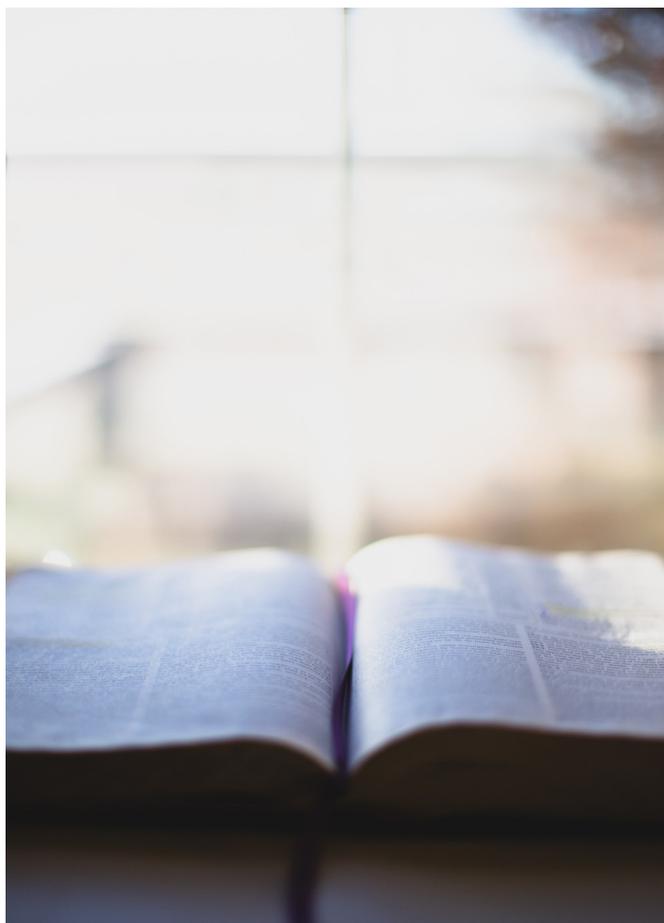
Personal safety

Keeping yourself safe is about taking common sense steps to protect yourself when you might

be in vulnerable situations such as being alone in a church, or locking up after an event or service.

We do not want to alarm church employees and volunteers but we do have simple advice about what can be done to minimise the risks to your own safety and that of others.

In many churches, people may have followed the same practices for many years without



incident but this does not mean that they are safe. It is worth reassessing your procedures and practices for peace of mind, if nothing else.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Look out for any situations where there is potential for someone to be harmed – for example when alone in a building.
- Establish what the risk is – what is the likelihood of someone being harmed, taking into account the measures you already have in place to limit the consequences.

- Assess what additional measures are necessary and how these new measures are to be implemented.
- Ensure any church stewards have a form of quick communication such as a mobile phone.

Important security steps

- Lock church after dark – unless there is a service, group activity, or someone present. Also, close and lock perimeter fencing gates and secure driveway access.
- Keep keys safe – with an official, or in a secure place away from the Church. Maintain a key register and record the current list of key holders.
- Protect high-value items – chain items to the floor or wall (being mindful of heritage restrictions) or replace items with cheaper alternatives when services are not taking place.
- Protect money, silver, brass and pewter items in a safe or in a secure area.
- Divide responsibility for money – appoint different officials for collecting, counting and banking. Ensure no-one is left alone to count money.
- Ensure you have external lighting security operated by motion sensors. Check regularly that both sensors and lights are operating.
- Ensure all waste bins are secured to fence posts away from the building.

Will being open affect insurance cover and premiums?

There is no impact on the church insurance premiums if a church is open during daylight hours and proper risk assessments have been completed.

There is however a duty of care that must be exercised to protect your property. So long as the above steps are put in place then you should have no insurance concerns. We recommend your church put in place a written procedure of how you will manage risks associated with your open church policy.