



Alternative venues for regular worship in cold weather

There are circumstances where a church may wish to move worship during colder months to an alternative venue, such as a church hall or other building, which is easier or less costly to heat. This is an understandable wish but one that can only be taken forward after it has been fully explored against alternative solutions and taken into consideration the law, statutory guidance, and the possible missional impact of such a decision for the community.

The Bishop's permission will need to be given for worship to take place in an alternative venue. This is because Canon B40 does not permit a minister to celebrate Holy Communion elsewhere than a consecrated building within their cure or other licensed building unless they have the Bishop's permission or for communion for a sick or dying person (Canon B37). In addition, Canon B11 requires Morning and Evening Prayer to be said in at least one church in a benefice on all Sundays and principal feast days, and Canon B14 required Holy Communion to be celebrated in at least one church in a benefice on Sundays and principal feasts. The provisions of Canons B11 and B14 may be met by some benefices where these services can take place in churches other than the one seeking an alternative venue as long as that church will not be offering Eucharistic worship. Otherwise, a dispensation is needed under Canon B14a. This can be authorised on an occasional basis by the incumbent or priest-in-charge and the PCC of each parish in the benefice acting jointly. For dispensation on a regular basis, permission must be given by the Bishop acting on a request from the incumbent or priest-in-charge and the PCC of each parish in the benefice acting jointly. If you are considering asking the Bishop for permission, please discuss this with your archdeacon as soon as possible.

Statutory guidance has been issued by Church Buildings Council and can be found [here](#). Evidence that this guidance has been followed will need to be submitted with any application for permission to hold worship in an alternative venue. As the circumstances for every church will be different, the Bishop is not able to grant a diocesan-wide permission but will consider each case on its merits.

When requesting permission from the Bishop, your request should cover:

- The reason for the request and supply evidence for the need, for example anticipated heating costs for the church compared with those for the alternative venue.





- The necessary local resolutions of the PCC(s).
- Permission of the venue owner for it to be used for public worship.
- Insurance: permission from your insurer for the building not to be used (noting any conditions imposed) and consideration for any items being taken from the church to the alternative venue. (NB Items under faculty jurisdiction cannot be removed from the church without due authorisation.)
- How your building and its contents will be maintained while it not in use for worship.
- The suitability of the alternative venue – is it accessible; is it suitable for worship; can live-streaming continue; have the appropriate risk assessments been undertaken?
- How will you communicate the situation to your local community about where and when worship will take place (including online, where appropriate), whether the building will remain open to visitors and an assurance that the building will continue in use.

Note:

- Occasional Offices should continue to take place in the church building. This is a requirement for marriages. Banns may not be called in alternative venues that require this permission from the Bishop. In these cases, first discuss the situation with your archdeacon.
- The Bishop's permission does not mean that you are then required to move worship to the alternative venue. Should you feel it appropriate to hold worship in the church, you may do so – but ensure good communication with your community at all times.
- Permission will be time limited and will not be automatically renewed next winter.

Your archdeacon will be pleased to assist you with any questions you may have in this process.

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