

GUIDELINES FOR ARRANGING THE USE OF HALLS

1. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland recognises that it can be desirable that congregations make their premises available for use by bodies other than the congregation itself, or by individuals other than the members of the congregation. This may be as part of the wider ministry of the Church to the local community, or to allow congregations to use their premises to augment the income of the congregation.
2. Before making church premises available to any person or body who is not known to the Kirk Session, the Kirk Session should satisfy itself that such person (or body) is a fit and proper person (or body) to use church property and will not engage in any activity which could result in reputational damage to the congregation or the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in general.
3. The method to make premises available to others is by a **Licence**, in which the congregation as **Licensor** permits a body or person, the **Licensee**, to use the premises. If the Licence is for the use of the premises on a single occasion, it should specify the particular day and time on and during which the premises may be used by the Licensee. If the Licence is for a recurring use, it should contain a provision for the termination of the Licence by one month's notice, and should not be completely open-ended.
4. Where the approval is for a recurring use, the Kirk Session should review the situation annually to ensure that its terms and conditions are appropriate.
5. Approval for use should provide for the right of the congregation to suspend the agreement on any particular day or days should the congregation need the premises for the use by the congregation itself or by one of its members.

6. The Congregation has in place a statement of its Equality Policy for licensing the use of its premises.
7. Subject to the overriding principle that the premises of a congregation must not be used for any purpose which would compromise the Christian ethos and the doctrine and testimony of the Church, a congregation which proposes to allow outside bodies to use its premises must not engage in unlawful discrimination and shall act in accordance with its Equality Policy.
8. In order to seek to avail of the protection afforded by the Fair Employment & Treatment Order 1998 (Northern Ireland) against allegations of discrimination on the ground of political opinion, congregations must not use the services of an estate agent to seek potential licensees.
9. Congregational premises must not be used for the following purposes:
 - 9.1 The sale and/or consumption of alcoholic liquor on the Premises;
 - 9.2 The sale and/or use of any illegal or mind altering substance on the Premises;
 - 9.3 The raising of money on the Premises by ballot, raffle, lottery, or any similar activity which involves any form of betting or gambling;
 - 9.4 The holding of any meeting organised by a Political Party, for that party's political purposes;
 - 9.5 Any inappropriate secular use on a Sunday. [Therefore, the Church Halls will, on Sundays, be reserved for activities linked to congregational life];
 - 9.6 Any event or activity the purpose of which is advocating or promoting a course of action or belief system which is contrary to the doctrine, testimony and ethos of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland;

- 9.7 Any event or activity which is contrary to the Guidelines or The Code of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland;
and all approval shall contain express provision prohibiting the use of congregational premises for the foregoing purposes.
10. The Congregational Committee will ensure that any hall or rooms at which entertainment is to take place enjoys an entertainment licence from the district council in which the congregational premises are situated.¹
11. The Congregational Committee will ensure that their fire/property damage insurance policies and their public liability insurance policies permit them to do so without invalidating those policies.
12. Additional insurance must be taken out by the Licensee where appropriate eg the use of Bouncy Castles, and proof of insurance documentation submitted with the application. All licensees must comply with PCI's safeguarding policies i.e associated supervision levels.
13. New bookings for recurring use must be agreed by Kirk Session. Ongoing arrangements for single use bookings are devolved to the person designated by the Congregational Committee, currently Mr Eric Cooper.
14. A schedule of regular users within congregational activities should be maintained.

¹ This clearly applies where entry to the entertainment is by ticket sold for a fixed price. Rather more difficult is the case where those attending are asked to make a "voluntary contribution". If those attending are asked to make a "voluntary contribution" of a recommended amount, this could be construed as an admission charge, particularly if the so-called "voluntary contribution" is collected on entry. In such event, the better advice is to ensure that there is an entertainments licence. If a voluntary contribution, with no recommended amount, is sought as on a retiring basis, that would probably not be regarded as an admission charge

15. Any potential clashes between congregational bodies should be sorted amongst those concerned.
16. Additional congregational activities, of which more than two months' notice should be given, will have precedence over outside agencies.
17. Occasional or regular use by private individuals may be approved subject to being revoked by the Kirk Session in the event of other congregational activities.
18. Such occasional or regular use should appear on the schedule.
19. A Licence fee for rental should be set at:
 - (i) Single use: £50 for the Brann Memorial Hall and Coulter Hall; £30 for the Coulter Hall or Boyd Room; both fees including the use of the kitchen and facilities, for up to 2 hours, with an additional charge of £10 per hour thereafter.
 - (ii) Recurring use: £10 per hour for the use of the Halls, subject to a daily maximum of £50. The fee is reduced to £5 per hour for groups of 10 or less.
 - (iii) The Kirk Session, as Trustees, reserve the right to waive any fee at their discretion (e.g. such as for charitable use).
20. The Congregational Website should, as well as giving information on the Halls and their use, include access to a Church Hall Rental Enquiry Form which will allow a Licensing Form to be sent out if appropriate.

