

WORK TO FACILITATE THE RE-OPENING OF CHURCHES FOR PRAYER

In order to facilitate the re-opening of churches for prayer during the currency of the current health emergency, churches will be making some temporary changes to their buildings. Because of the fact that they are temporary and are modest in nature, most of these will not require approval by the grant of a faculty by the Chancellor. Thus temporary signs, tapes to indicate social distancing and the temporary moving of furniture will not require a faculty.

In the discussions, one item has cropped up which will require a faculty, namely the temporary installation by physical fixing of a hand sanitiser dispenser. However there can be no objection to the installation on a temporary basis of a hand sanitiser dispenser where the fixing does not harm the historic fabric of the church and where the work to install it is reversible. The Chancellor will grant an interim faculty for such work where the incumbent or churchwarden can tell him that there will be no damage to the historic fabric; that the work is reversible; and that, if appropriate, the sanitiser and its fitting will be removed at the end of the emergency. A simple e mail to the Registry is all that will be required by way of application. The Registry can be contacted at registry@wslaw.co.uk

There may be other items of temporary work that, like the physical fixing of a hand sanitiser, require a faculty. The Chancellor will treat such items in similar way to hand sanitisers.

The imperative at the moment is to facilitate the re-opening of churches and the Diocesan authorities are committed to ensuring that no unnecessary impediments to this happening are erected. Any paperwork (albeit electronic) is to be regretted but it is hoped that the arrangements here set out will not prove unduly burdensome. What is required above all is the application of common sense. Cases of doubt, as always, should be referred to the Archdeacons.

It is not known for how long the current emergency will continue and it may be seen that churches could wish to make temporary provision permanent – an obvious example may be that of hand sanitisers. However what was appropriate as a temporary measure may not be appropriate as a permanent one. The re-assurance that can now be given is that as the emergency passes (sooner, we hope, rather than later), churches will not suddenly be required to remove what was installed on a temporary basis.

There may also be works, the need for which has been prompted by the current emergency, but which are intended to be permanent. Equipment used to enable church services to be streamed might fall into this category. Petitions for interim faculties for works of this kind (which are likely to vary in their impact) will be viewed sympathetically and considered on their merits. What everyone will be seeking to do is to avoid is the possibility of the need to alter works once they have been installed.

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Chancellor
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