Standing Order 054 Guidance for Churches

Baptismal Registers and Records

Each church must have a **Baptism Register** which records the names of all those who have been baptized**.** A register is a formal historic document, traditionally in the form of a hard-backed book. It will be kept in the church safe and is intended to be kept forever. Registers will eventually be sent to the County Records Office.
For easier reference a church may also keep an informal **record** of children who have been baptized. Baptismal records may be electronic records, or they may be physical records.
Such records should be limited to the name of the baptized person, the names of their parents or guardians, their date of birth, the date of Baptism and their address. They should be held only by the minister and baptismal roll secretary or equivalent officer.

Display of Baptismal Records

The data protection legislation makes it almost impossible lawfully to display records of baptisms. It is therefore recommended that churches no longer display records of baptisms. Any remaining records, such as cradle rolls, should be removed from display. Unless those records are of historical importance they should be securely destroyed. Any records which are retained should be stored securely and shown only to those with a legitimate interest in seeing them.

Thanksgiving Records

A church which holds services of thanksgiving for the births or adoptions of children, may keep records of the names of those children, on the same basis as for baptisms above.

Confirmation Register

Each church or circuit must, in the same way that it keeps a register of baptisms, keep a register of the names of persons who have been confirmed.

Membership Records

The Pastoral Committee (or Church Council if no Pastoral Committee is appointed) must record, either by way of a paper or an electronic record, the names of all the members of the Methodist Church belonging to the Local Church and prepare the annual return of membership.

Please note that it would be continuing best practice for the presbyter in pastoral charge, or such other person as appointed by the Church Council or the Circuit meeting, to report to the Chair of District the numbers set out on the membership record.

Community Rolls

A Church is required to keep, in addition to a record of the names of all the members of the Methodist Church belonging to the Local Church, a Community Roll, which is a list of adherents. An adherent, for the purpose of this guidance, is someone who is closely connected to the church. The reason for having a Community Roll is to keep in pastoral contact with people.

Please note that it would be continuing best practice for the presbyter in pastoral charge, or such other person as appointed by the Church Council or the Circuit meeting, to report to the Chair of District the numbers set out on the community roll.

Review of Members' Rolls and Community Rolls

The Pastoral Committee (or Church Council if a Pastoral Committee is not appointed) should, in accordance with the requirements of SO 054 (5) and (8), review at least annually the Members' Rolls and Community Rolls to ensure that they are current and up to date. As SO 054(10) requires the number on the Community Roll, including members, to be recorded in the minutes of the Church Council after each annual review, the reviews could conveniently be carried out together. SO 054 (8) together with SO 054 (11) require the removal from the Community Roll of the names of any non-members who have severed all connection with the local community of the church.

Access to Members' Rolls and Community Rolls

Only those persons who have a legitimate interest in using the information in a Community Roll or a Members Roll may have access to it. Those persons are likely to be limited to the minister, the Secretary of the Pastoral Committee (or Church Council Secretary if a pastoral committee has not been appointed), and any church administrator. Pastoral visitors or class leaders, will be entitled to be provided with details of the people under their pastoral care. Any documents compiled using information gleaned from either of these rolls should be destroyed as soon as use of that document has been made. It is important that the information in the rolls is kept securely, that it is not left where it may be seen by others, such as in printers, or where it might come to the attention of the public.

Obtaining information

Any record which contains information about an individual is personal data. No personal data may be obtained or kept unless there is a legitimate reason for keeping that data or consent has been given for the data to be kept. The church is an organisation made up of its members. It thus has a legitimate reason for keeping a record of its members and may keep a list of members without seeking the express consent of each member. It also has a legitimate reason for keeping a register of members who have been confirmed. Reception into membership usually takes place at the same time as confirmation. The Register therefore records the time and place when it is likely that a person became a member of the church. If a church wishes to keep any other record about a non-member, and it does not have legitimate interest for retaining that data, it must first obtain the consent of that person (or the consent of the parents or guardian of a minor not capable of giving their consent). To assist managing trustees , a list of 'processing activities' is contained within the Annex of the Managing Trustees' Privacy Notice , which sets out the lawful basis for processing the data, including whether there is a legitimate interest for processing the data or whether consent is required: Managing Trustees' Privacy Notice - Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes. Where consent is required, TMCP's Consent Form template, a link to which can be located at Annex 1 below, should be used to obtain this consent.

A record of Consent must also be retained and a link to TMCP's record of consent template is also located at Annex 1 below.

Keeping information

No personal data may be kept unless there is a legitimate reason for doing so, or unless the consent of that person (or the consent of the parents or guardian of a minor not able to give their consent) has first been given for that information to be kept. TMCP's Consent Form template for managing trustees, as mentioned above, records consent for the church to retain information where consent is required. Any personal data which is kept should be safely and securely stored. Any document which gives consent to data being kept should also be retained until the

information to which it pertains is no longer needed and then securely destroyed, along with the relevant data.

The Church Council should note that Consent however does not last indefinitely and will need to be renewed periodically. This could be for as long as the information is required but in any event should be no longer than two years.

Making use of information

The church has a legitimate reason for using information about its members and adherents and thus may contact them to carry out its charitable purposes. If it is proposed to use the information held for any other reason outside of its charitable purposes, such as sending birthday cards, consent must first be obtained to use that information in that way. Only those persons in the church with a legitimate interest in using personal data retained by the church may be provided with it. The Minister, pastoral secretary and some administrators would have need to use any of these records. Pastoral visitors and class leaders would only be entitled to be provided with such personal data as may be necessary to enable them to carry out their pastoral duties.

Review of information

The Church Council should ensure that any information which is kept by a church is regularly kept under review and that information, which is no longer needed, or for which it does not have consent to retain, is securely destroyed. Reviews must be held regularly and must be held at least annually.

Information which may no longer be retained

When a church ceases to have a legitimate interest in retaining information, or when it ceases to have consent to retain it, that information should be securely destroyed.

Annex 1 - Link to TMCP's Consent Form and Record of Consent Template

Data Consent Form - Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes

Consent Record for Managing Trustees - Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes