Guidance for Registering Churches and Circuits with the Charity Commission – Part 1

Introduction

0.1 Application of this Guidance

This guidance is designed to demonstrate the process of registration with the Charity Commission for Local Churches and Circuits within the legal jurisdiction of England and Wales who have a gross annual income of over £100,000.

If your income does not exceed £100,000, you do not need to register as a charity.

This means that Methodist charities whose gross income exceeds £100,000, even if this is for one year only due to a one-off event (such as receipt of a large legacy or grant), now need to register with the Charity Commission.

Methodist charities in Scotland and Shetland are all registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). OSCR | Home

Charity law and regulations are different in the Channel Islands and Isle of Man. In the Isle of Man, Methodist charities are exempt from registration, under the Religious Charities Regulations 2023. Religious Charities Regulations 2023

In Jersey, since 1 January 2019 any Jersey entity styling itself as a 'charity' must be registered. Therefore Methodist charities in Jersey should register with the Jersey Charity Commissioner in order to claim entitlement to certain charitable tax reliefs. Jersey Charity Commissioner & Register of Charities

In Guernsey, Methodist charities need to register with the Guernsey Registry if they have a gross annual income of over £5,000 or gross assets or funds of over £10,000. States of Guernsey – Charitable Organisations

In Malta there is a simple process for applying to be recorded as a voluntary organisation. Please see the separate guidance note, which is available here Enrolling with and Submitting Returns to the Commissioner for VOs | MaltaCVS .

0.2 Before you begin

0.2.1 Meet

It will be prudent to discuss registration with the Charity Commission with the whole of the Church Council or Circuit Meeting. A small group should be appointed to oversee the registration with one person being responsible for actually completing the form or a member of staff can fulfil the administrative task of completing the form under the guidance of the small group.

0.2.2 Reading

Every member of the Church Council and Circuit Meeting need to have read the following Charity Commission Guidance:

- Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees – use this link
- Finding new trustees: What Charities need to know - Finding new trustees - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Public Benefit: Running a Charity – PB2
- The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

0.3 What is included within Gross Annual Income?

Gross Annual Income is calculated in relation to the previous tax year. The tax year for Methodist Local Churches, Circuits and Districts is the same as the connexional year: from 1 September to 31 August.

Gross annual income includes, but is not limited to:

- Donations
- Bequests
- Weekly Giving
- Grants
- Loans received by the charity
- Loan repayments made to the charity
- Monies received from the sale of the charity's assets including the sale of property; investments; or other capital assets
- Gift Aid Income
- Gifts and Donations from building schemes (where applicable)
- Rental Income
- Charging for services
- Any receipt from endowment funds

0.4 Trustee Eligibility Declaration Forms

In order to complete the registration it will be necessary for the trustees (the members of the Church Council or Circuit Meeting) to complete and sign a Trustee Eligibility Declaration form. Practically this form should be signed before you commence the registration process. Forms are available from the Charity Commission website here.

Do NOT submit the Church's 'in-house' trustee eligibility declaration form when registering. This is for internal purposes only.

A trustee eligibility declaration form is a legally binding statement in which a trustee confirms that they are 18 or over and fit to serve as a charity trustee.

You will need to attach a signed copy of the trustee eligibility declaration form later in the application process.

0.5 – Interpretation

This guidance document is designed to be used by both Church Councils and Circuit Meetings intending to register as charities in England and Wales.

Last updated 22/10/2026

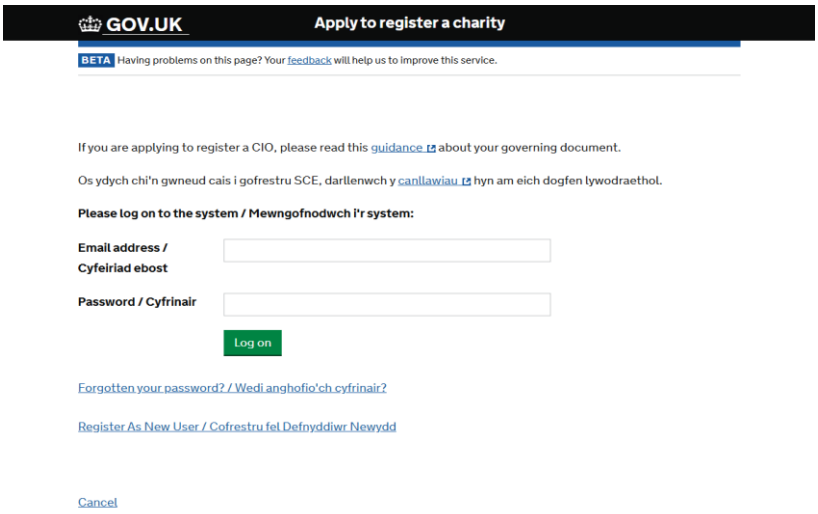
The word “charity” is used interchangeably to refer to both a Circuit and a Local Church.

How to Register with the Charity Commission

Stage 1 – Sign In & Commencing the Application

1.1 Signing in

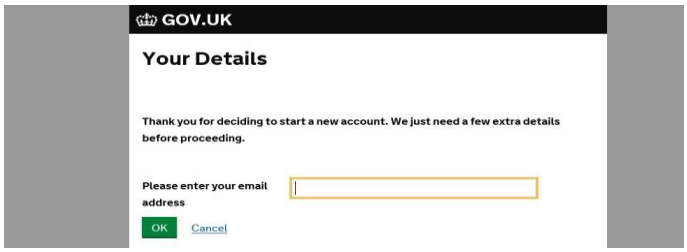
In order to register with the Charity Commission you will need to go to the Charity Commission Registration form web page. Doing so will bring up the following web page:



If you already have an account with the Charity Commission you should sign in typing your email address and password into the text boxes. (Skip ahead to 1.2)

OR

If you have not created an account before you will need to click on the [Register as new user] link. Selecting this link will bring up the following page:



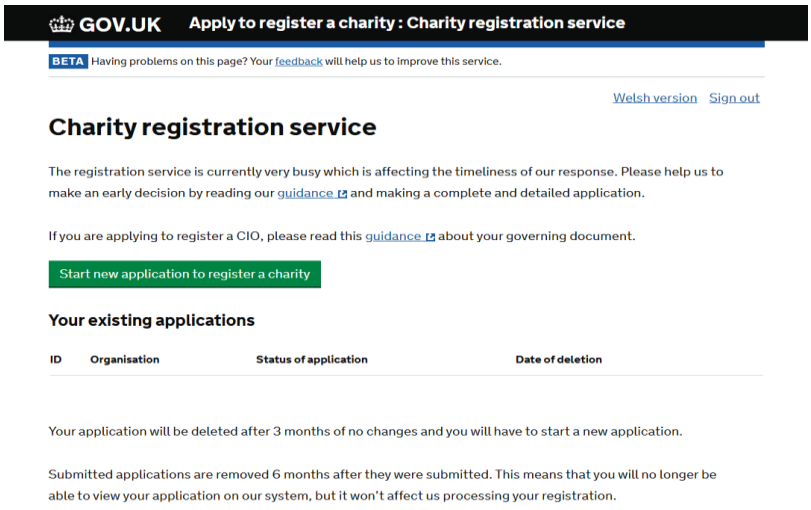
If you have an email address dedicated to your position in the church or Circuit insert that email address. Alternatively if the Local Church or Circuit has its own email address, use that address. If there is no email address for the charity or for your position within the charity use a personal email address. You will be sent to a confirmation page. This page will tell you that an email has been sent to you providing you login details.

- Check your emails to confirm receipt of this email and make a note of the password or copy it. The confirmation email may be caught by anti-virus software or may be sent to a “Junk” or “SPAM” box.
- Click [Okay] on the confirmation webpage and you will be returned to the initial sign in page.
- Sign in using your email address and new password.

1.2 Welcome Page/ Charity registration service

This page will warn you if the Charity Commission is experiencing high volumes of work which will affect its response times to queries.

If you have previously registered a Local Church or Circuit or if you have started an application previously, more than one entry will appear in the grid at the bottom of the page. Click on the relevant application [Continue] or if a new application click [Start new application to register a charity]

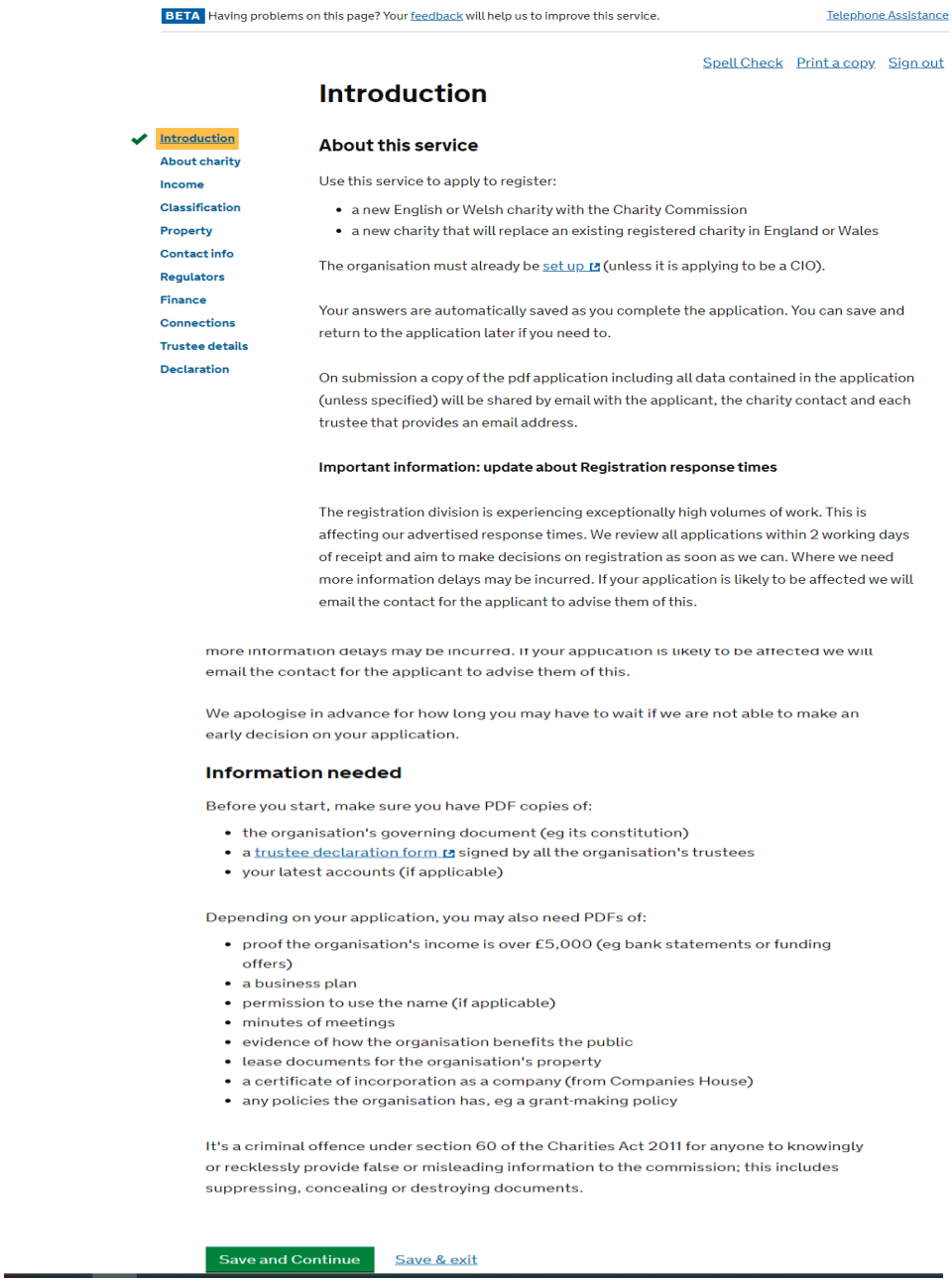


1.3 Starting Your Application

Read the page you are brought to. This provides vital information about your application and provides details of how you may log back in and resume your application if you chose to stop and return to it later.

Take note of the documents which will be required in PDF form to complete your application (see “Information needed”).

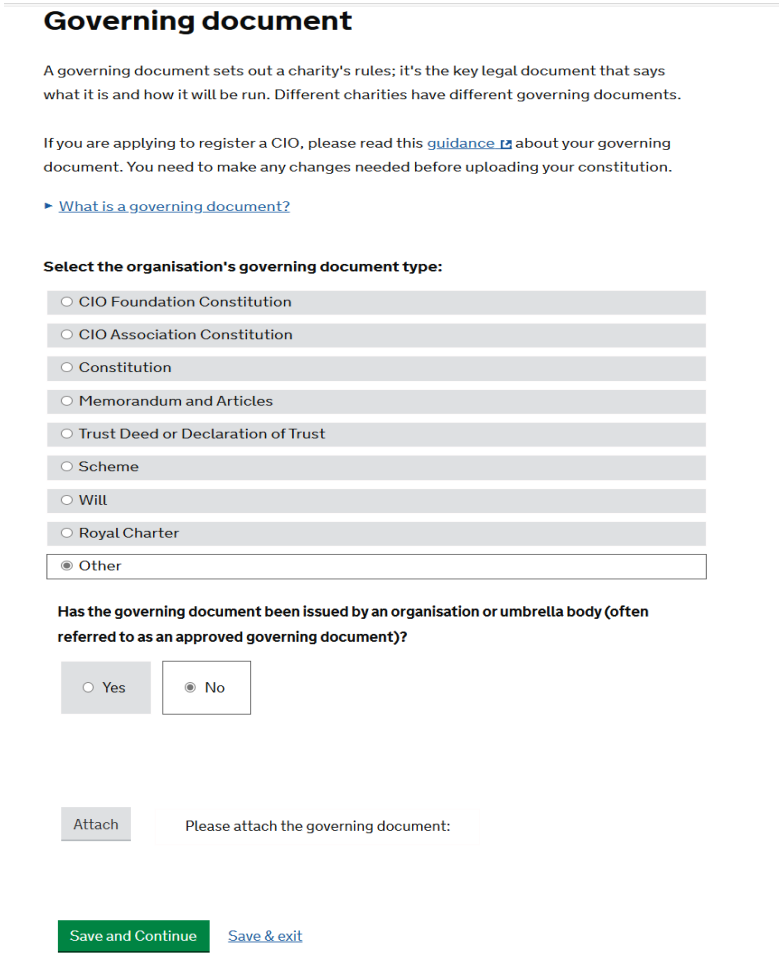
You will note that it emphasises that providing false or misleading information to the Charity Commission is a criminal offence under section 60 of the Charities Act 2011.



Stage 2 – About charity

2.1 Governing Document

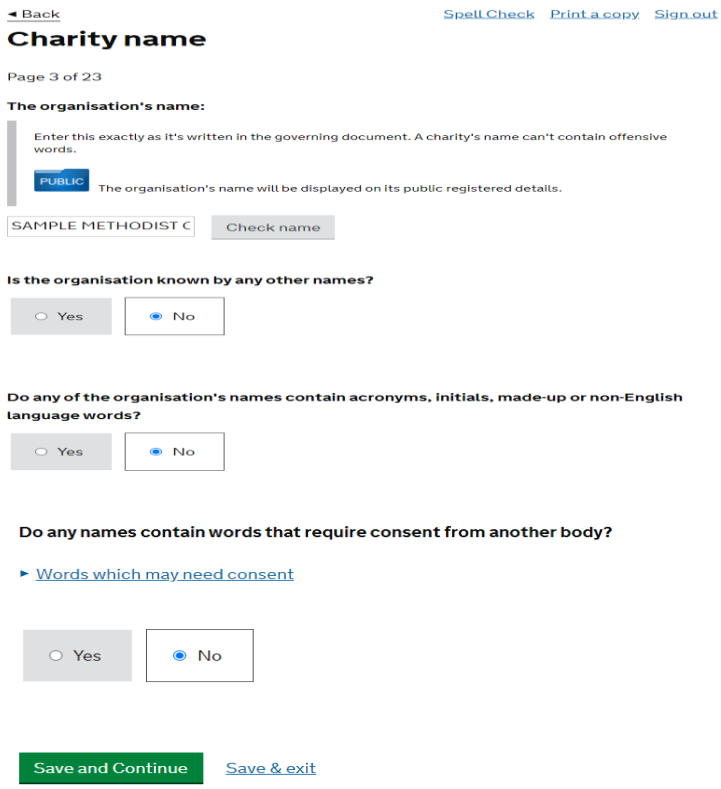
You will be brought to a page asking for the governing document for your charity. You should select the option “Other” and attach the governing document i.e. the Deed of Union (1932) and Methodist Church Act (1976) **or** attach a PDF document that states:
The Church / Circuit / District (*delete as applicable) is governed by the Deed of Union (1932) and Methodist Church Act (1976). A copy of the governing document is held centrally by the Charity Commission and is not required to be submitted with each individual application.*



Once you have attached the governing document or a PDF document as outlined above, click [Save and Continue]

2.2 Charity name

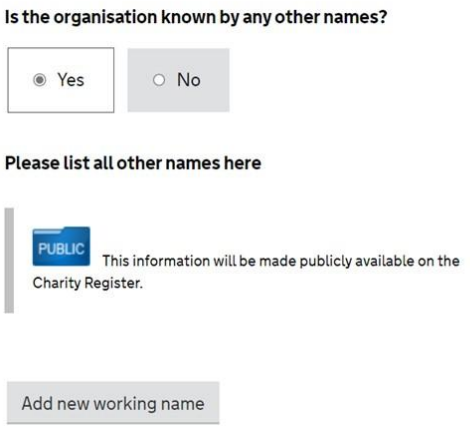
Type the name of your Local Church or Circuit into the “The organisation’s name” box. You will need to press [Check Name] to ensure that there are no existing registered charities with a similar name to your Local Church or Circuit. If the Local Church or Circuit does not go by any shortened name select “No” to all questions and press [Continue].



If the charity also goes by an abbreviated or shortened name, select "Yes" to "Is this organisation known by any other names?"

Selecting "Yes" will bring up another section asking you to "List all the other names." The guidance makes it clear that these names will be publicly available on the Charity Register. – Click "Add new working name" and insert the name(s).

Please see an example below:



Once you have entered any working name(s), complete the remaining questions on the page and click **[Save and Continue]**.

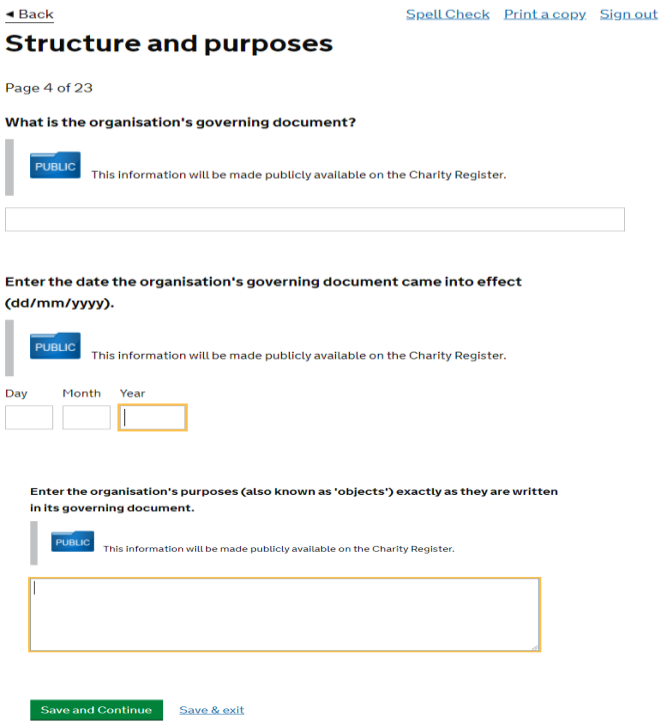
2.3 Structure and Purposes

In response to the question “What is the organisation’s governing document?” write the following:
DEED OF UNION (1932) AND METHODIST CHURCH ACT (1976)

Then insert the date **26/10/1976** as the date on which the governing document came into effect.

The next question asks you to enter the organisation’s purposes (also known as objects) as they are written in the governing document. Please copy and paste the following text into the form:

THE PURPOSES OF THE METHODIST CHURCH ARE AND SHALL BE DEEMED TO HAVE BEEN SINCE THE DATE OF UNION THE ADVANCEMENT OF – (A) THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DOCTRINAL STANDARDS AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH; (B) ANY CHARITABLE PURPOSE FOR THE TIME BEING OF ANY CONNEXIONAL, DISTRICT, CIRCUIT, LOCAL OR OTHER ORGANISATION OF THE METHODIST CHURCH; (C) ANY CHARITABLE PURPOSE FOR THE TIME BEING OF ANY SOCIETY OR INSTITUTION SUBSIDIARY OR ANCILLARY TO THE METHODIST CHURCH; (D) ANY PURPOSE FOR THE TIME BEING OF ANY CHARITY BEING A CHARITY SUBSIDIARY OR ANCILLARY TO THE METHODIST CHURCH



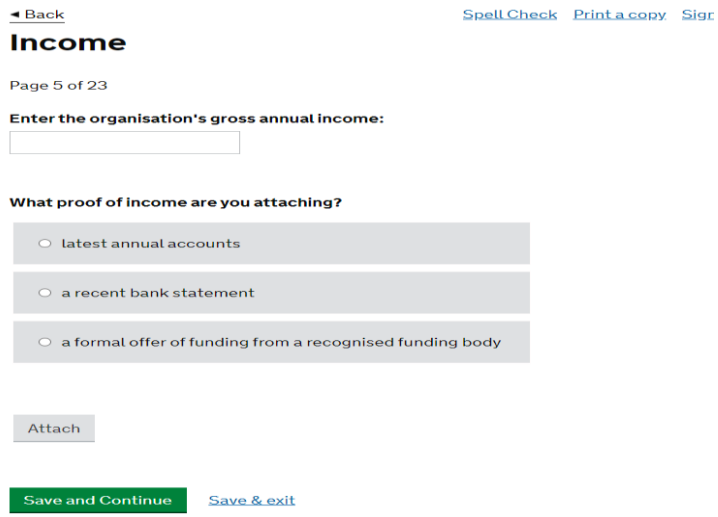
Click [Save and Continue].

Stage 3 – Income

3.1 Income

You must enter the gross annual income of your Local Church or Circuit into the box, click the box [latest annual accounts] and attach with it a PDF copy of your annual accounts. The tax year for the

purposes of all Local Methodist Churches and Circuits runs from the 1 September until the following 31 August.



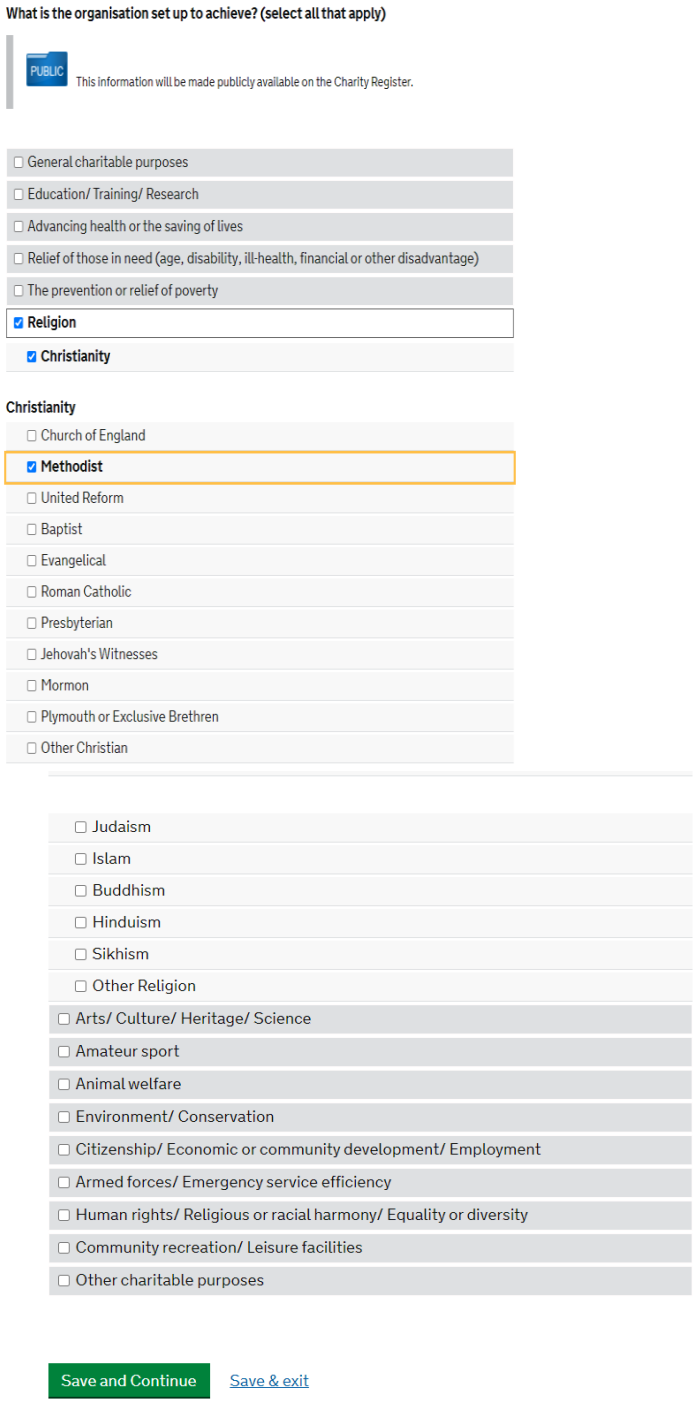
Once you have entered the information, press [Save and Continue].

Stage 4 – Classification

4.1 – Classification: What

Select as many of the following as apply to your charity.

At least “Religion” must be ticked, this will bring down a sub list, select “Christianity” and from the subsequent sub-list “Methodist”. If you tick other boxes then other boxes may generated by the online form. For example, ticking the box education/training/research will bring up further sub-categories.



Once all applicable boxes have been ticked, please press [Save and Continue].

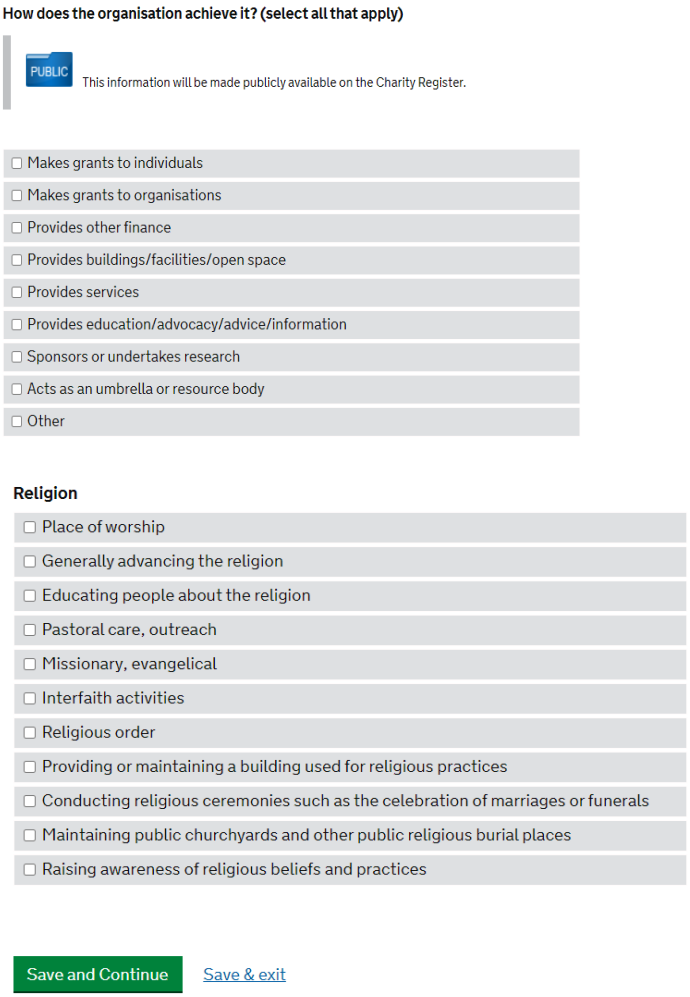
4.2 – Classification: How

Select as many of the following boxes as apply to your Local Church or Circuit. At least one box in each category must be ticked.

In the first category a Local Church should at least tick [Provides buildings/facilities/open space] and, as a minimum, a Circuit should tick the same and [Acts as an umbrella or resource body].

In the “Religion” Category, select as many of the statements as apply to your Local Church or Circuit.

Please note that the sub-categories you tick in the Religion Category will then prompt further queries from the Commission. If you do add additional sub-categories then there will be further questions surrounding these options later on in the registration form (please see section 5 for examples).

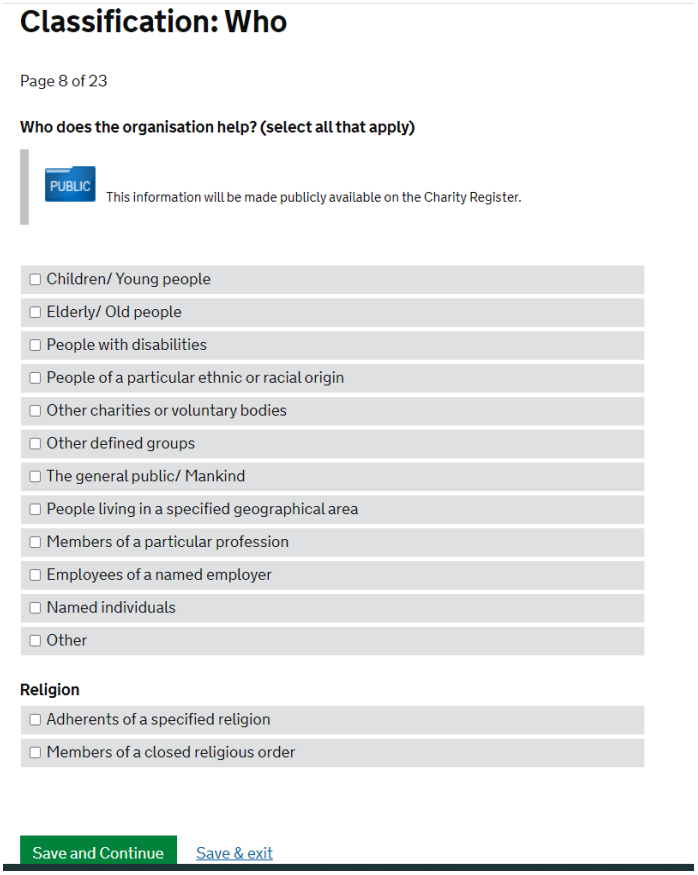


Once you have selected all applicable statements press [Save and Continue].

4.3 – Classification: Who

Select as many classes of person to whom you provide support.

At the very least “The General Public/Mankind” should be selected.

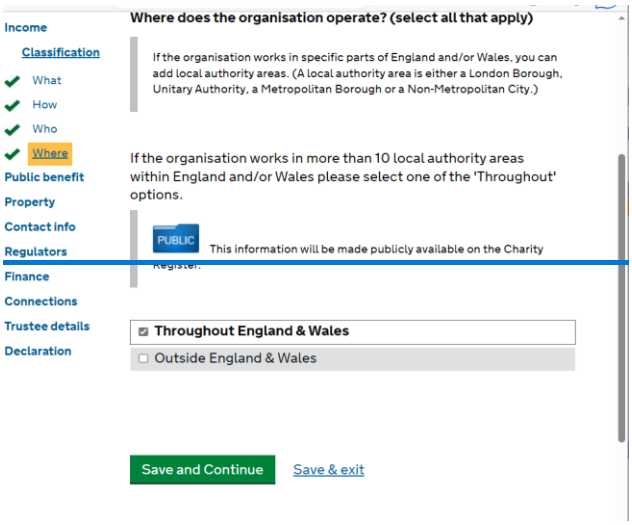


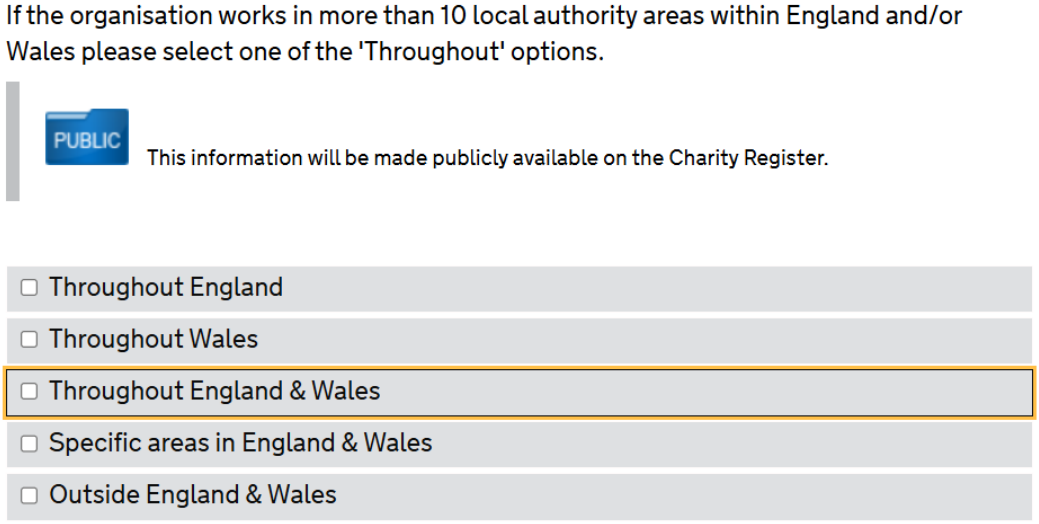
There is no requirement for any person to be a member of the [Name of Local Church/Circuit] to partake in the activities of the charity or benefit from them.

It is necessary to select at least one option under each sub-heading. For the “Religion” sub-heading select “adherents of a specified religion”. If you have selected additional charitable purposes during stage 4.1 more sub-headings will appear and at least one option under each sub-heading must be selected.

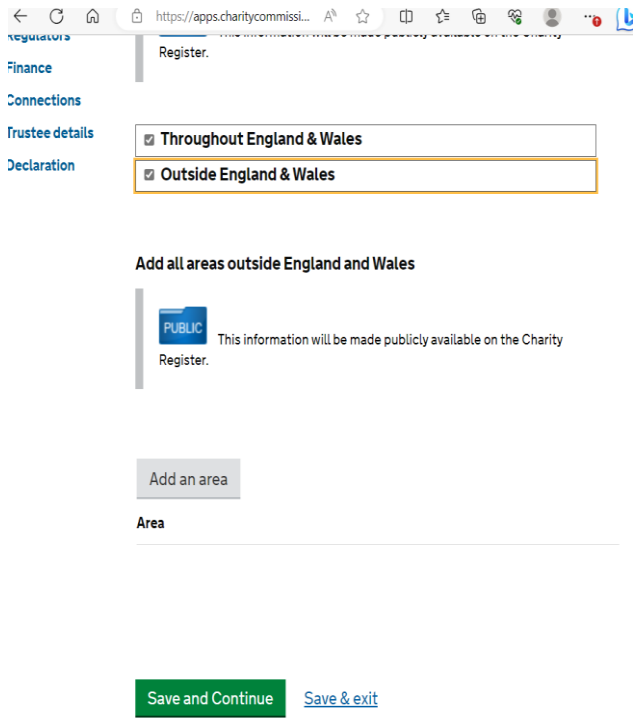
Once all categories have been selected press [Save and Continue].

4.4 – Classification: Where



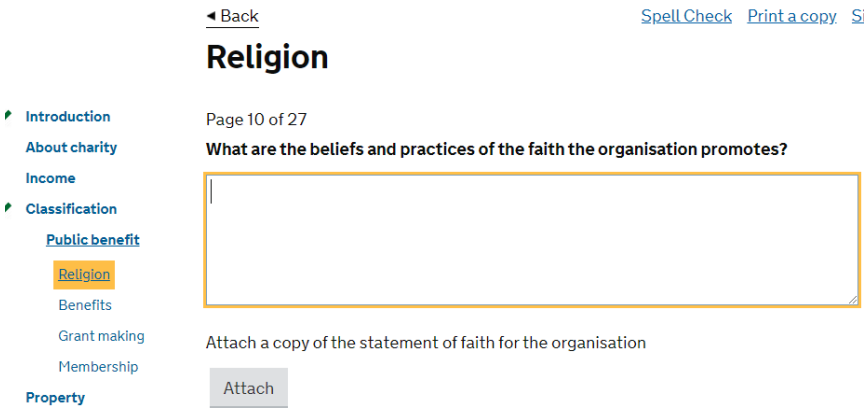


Select any one of the five options that is applicable. If your Circuit operates in both England and Wales and also outside England and Wales then select both options and add the relevant country where the Circuit also operates via the add an area option.



Stage 5 Public Benefit

5.1 – Religion



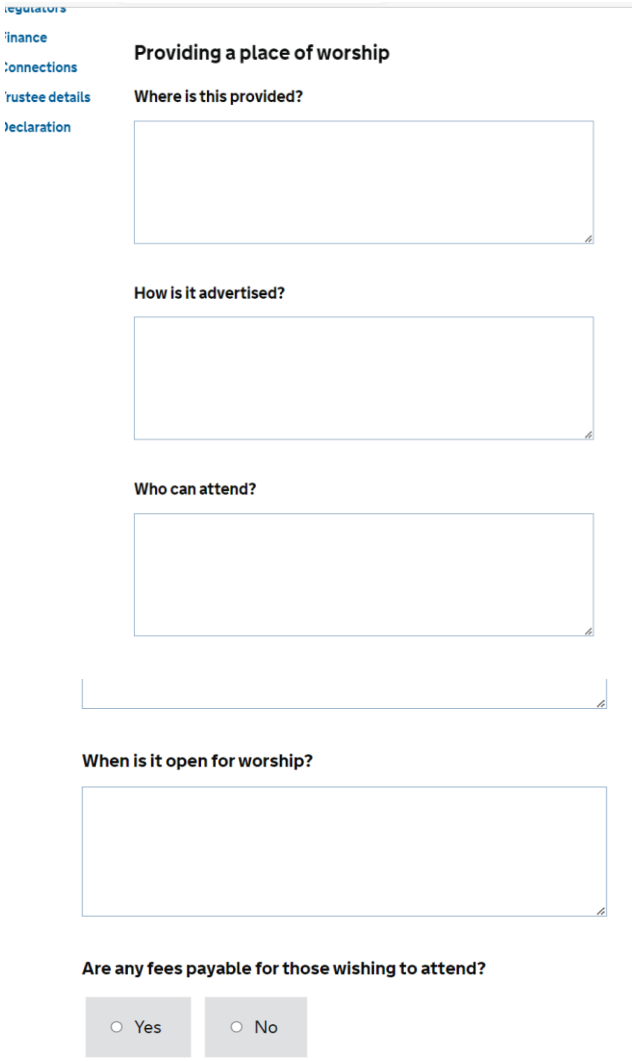
In response to the question "What are the beliefs and practices of the faith the organisation promotes?" state that "*The Methodist Church does not have a separate moral or ethical framework but its moral and ethical standards are established by the doctrines of the Church. The moral and ethical beliefs of the Church are founded upon the teachings of Christ.*"

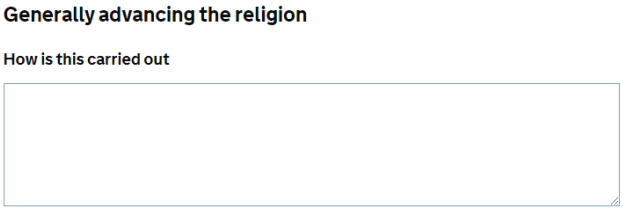
You will need to add a PDF copy of clause 4 of the Deed of Union (see below) to the application as 'the statement of faith for the organisation'.

Clause 4 Deed of Union 1932:
The doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church are as follows:
The Methodist Church claims and cherishes its place in the Holy Catholic Church which is the Body of Christ. It rejoices in the inheritance of the apostolic faith and loyally accepts the fundamental principles

of the historic creeds and of the Protestant Reformation. It ever remembers that in the providence of God Methodism was raised up to spread scriptural holiness through the land by the proclamation of the evangelical faith and declares its unfaltering resolve to be true to its divinely appointed mission.
The doctrines of the evangelical faith which Methodism has held from the beginning and still holds are based upon the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The Methodist Church acknowledges this revelation as the supreme rule of faith and practice.
These evangelical doctrines to which the preachers of the Methodist Church are pledged are contained in Wesley's Notes on the New Testament and the first four volumes of his sermons.
The Notes on the New Testament and the 44 Sermons are not intended to impose a system of formal or speculative theology on Methodist preachers, but to set up standards of preaching and belief which should secure loyalty to the fundamental truths of the gospel of redemption and ensure the continued witness of the Church to the realities of the Christian experience of salvation. Christ's ministers in the church are stewards in the household of God and shepherds of his flock. Some are called and ordained to this occupation as presbyters or deacons. Presbyters have a principal and directing part in these great duties but they hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to all the Lord's people and they have no exclusive title to the preaching of the gospel or the care of souls. These ministries are shared with them by others to whom also the Spirit divides his gifts severally as he wills.
It is the universal conviction of the Methodist people that the office of the Christian ministry depends upon the call of God who bestows the gifts of the Spirit the grace and the fruit which indicate those whom He has chosen.
Those whom the Methodist Church recognises as called of God and therefore receives into its ministry as presbyters or deacons shall be ordained by the imposition of hands as expressive of the Church's recognition of the minister's personal call.
The Methodist Church holds the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and consequently believes that no priesthood exists which belongs exclusively to a particular order or class of persons but in the exercise of its corporate life and worship special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are required and thus the principle of representative selection is recognised.
All Methodist preachers are examined tested and approved before they are authorised to minister in holy things. For the sake of church order and not because of any priestly virtue inherent in the office the presbyters of the Methodist Church are set apart by ordination to the ministry of the word and sacraments.
The Methodist Church recognises two sacraments namely baptism and the Lord's Supper as of divine appointment and of perpetual obligation of which it is the privilege and duty of members of the Methodist Church to avail themselves.

If you have added any additional categories from the 'Classification section – How' (see section 4.2) these will be included here. As examples we have added "Providing or maintaining a building used for religious practices" and "Generally advancing the religion".





If your Local Church or Circuit provides any of the following activities and you have not added these to the form in other sections, then we would suggest including these under the question 'Generally advancing the religion' (if this box is present due to your other selections in this form as boxes which appear can vary due to selections made previously in the form).

Examples of what a Local Church may do	**Examples of what a Circuit may do**
Organise and hold regular services available to all who wish to attend	Equip Churches for mission.
Offer pastoral support	Support & Train local preachers to spread the word of God

Run pre-school or parent & toddler groups	Provision of Manse(s) and Stipend(s) for Minister(s) to enable them to perform ministry.
Provide Food Banks	Maintain properties
Provide social support to elderly	Provide support to churches in fulfilling financial, legal and safeguarding obligations
Provide food for homeless or elderly	
Support local activities or groups (street pastors)	
Provide space for youth groups at reduced cost or for free (Guides, Scouts, Brownies, St. John's Ambulance etc)	
Have a space available for prayer, reflection and worship (daily?)	

Providing or maintaining a building used for religious practices

What exactly is the building being provided or maintained and where is located?

> for example is the building a house, a hall, a church

On what basis on it is used and maintained?

How and when is the building open to the public?

Who can use the building?

Conducting religious ceremonies such as the celebration of marriages or funerals

Where is this provided?

How is it advertised?

Who leads the ceremony and how are they selected for that?

Educating people about the religion

Where is this provided?

How is it advertised?

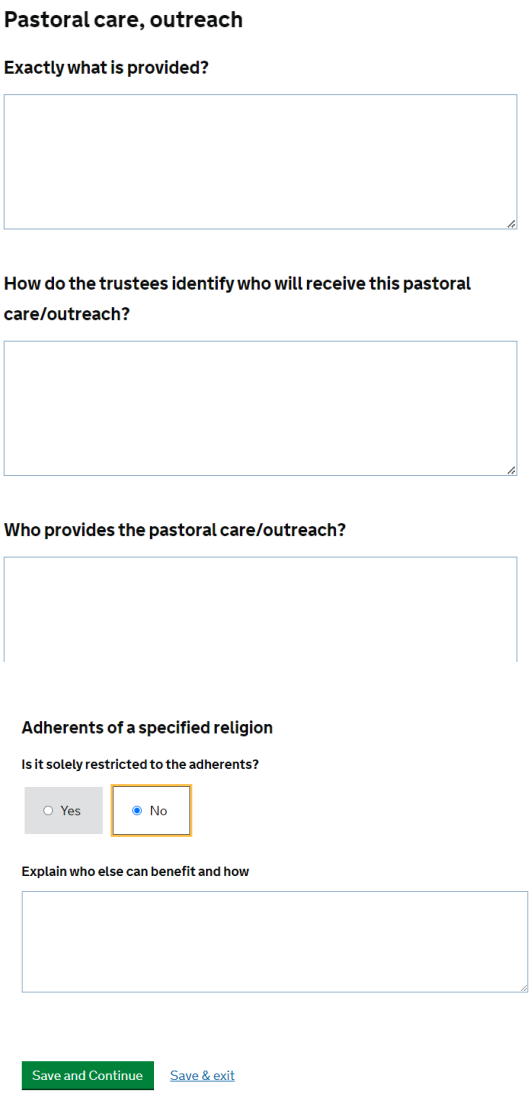
Who can attend?

How often is it provided?

Are any fees payable for those wishing to attend?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

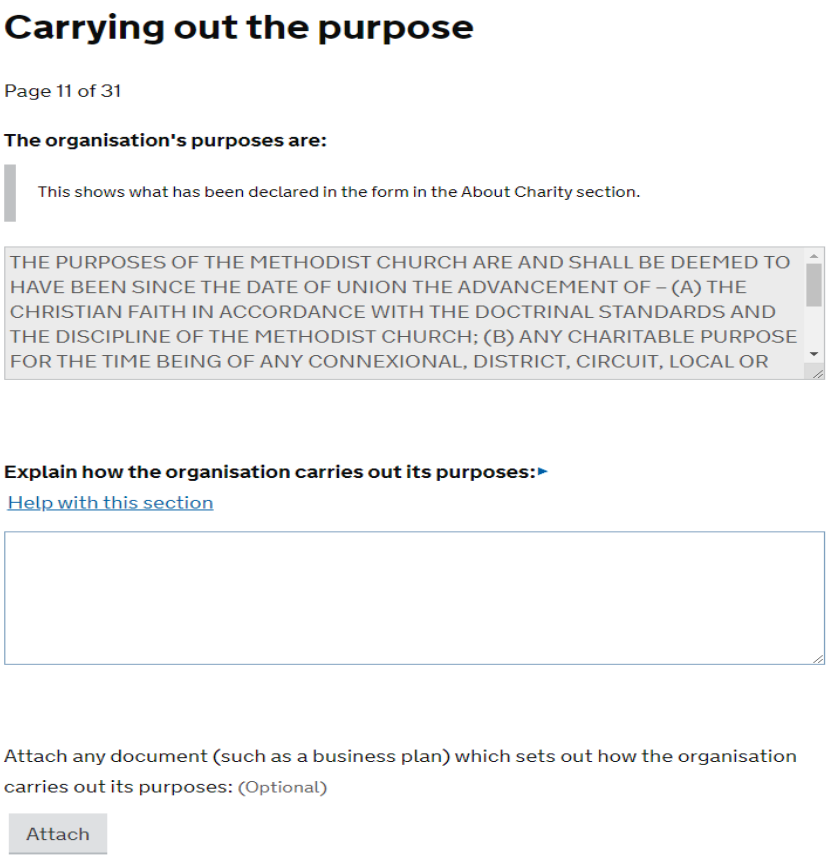
Who provides the education?



You will also need to confirm that the activities of the Local Church or Circuit are not restricted to adherents or that the 'order' is not a 'closed' one. You should confirm that anyone is welcome to benefit from the charity's activities in any subsequent box which may appear and asks 'explain who else can benefit and how'

5.2 Carrying out the purpose – Note – this section will NOT appear if you only selected "Religion" in the Classification section

If you have selected categories other than Religion in the Classification: 'What section', then the following questions will appear.



Carrying out the purpose

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The organisation's purposes are:

This shows what has been declared in the form in the About Charity section.

THE PURPOSES OF THE METHODIST CHURCH ARE AND SHALL BE DEEMED TO HAVE BEEN SINCE THE DATE OF UNION THE ADVANCEMENT OF – (A) THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DOCTRINAL STANDARDS AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH; (B) ANY CHARITABLE PURPOSE FOR THE TIME BEING OF ANY CONNEXIONAL, DISTRICT, CIRCUIT, LOCAL OR

Explain how the organisation carries out its purposes:

Help with this section

Attach any document (such as a business plan) which sets out how the organisation carries out its purposes: (Optional)

Attach

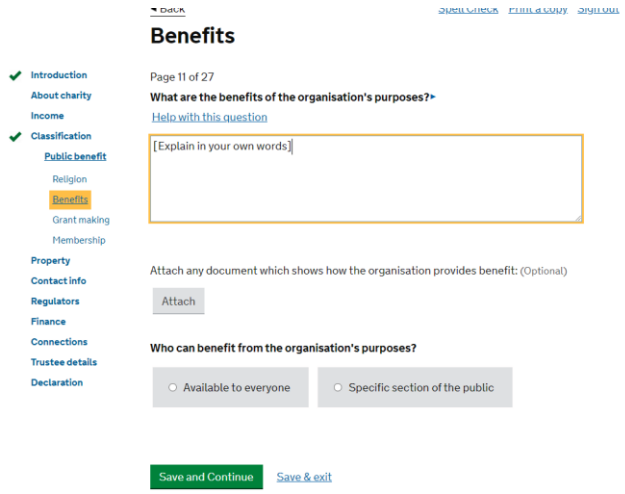
The purposes which you inserted at the section “Structure and Purposes” (see step 2.3) will be added by the Charity Commission automatically.

Using your own words, explain how your Local Church or Circuit advances the Christian faith. Common examples include:

- Holding services of worship
- Outreach projects
- Food banks
- Fundraising
- (Circuits) providing training, support and resources to equip churches for mission
- (Circuits) providing Ministers with a manse as a base for ministry

At the end of the page there is an option to attach an additional document. It is not necessary to attach anything. However, if your Local Church or Circuit has a mission policy document or any document which explains what the charity does it may be appropriate to attach a copy of that.

5.3 Benefits



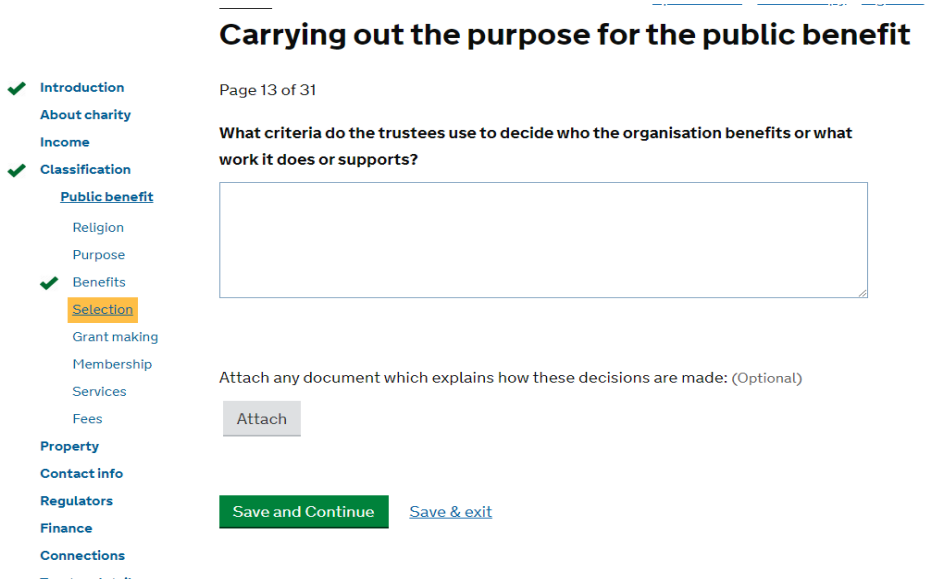
You will also need to explain in your own words how and why the purposes of your Local Church or Circuit are beneficial and to whom.

Examples for Local Churches		**Examples for Circuits**	
Purpose	**Benefits**	**Purpose**	**Benefits**
Provision of Services, Provision of pastoral support	People who are experiencing [financial hardship or bereavement or loss] have received pastoral support.	Nurturing people's faith, enabling people to become better disciples of Jesus	People grow in their Christian faith which has mental, spiritual and physical health benefits
Nurture people's faith, enabling people to become better disciples of Jesus	People grow in their Christian faith which has mental, spiritual and physical health benefits	Helping people to learn & grow as Christians	Make a better society in which we live together in peace
Challenge injustice	Fairer world		
Offering a safe place	People feel safe		
Transform peoples' lives by knowing the love of God	Inherently knowing God is a good thing and promoting the faith.		

Any document that explains how the activities of the Local Church or Circuit benefit the public may be attached. This is not essential.

In answering the question "Who can benefit from the organisation's purposes?" select the option "Available to everyone".

5.4 Carrying out the purposes for the public benefit



Suggested answer (amend as appropriate):

All are welcome to attend services and [activities] in the [Church/Circuit]
Decisions relating to the offering of financial support will be determined by a vote of the [Church Council]/[Circuit Meeting]. Pastoral support will be offered at the discretion of the Minister with pastoral charge of a Local Church but generally pastoral care will be offered to anyone who seeks it.

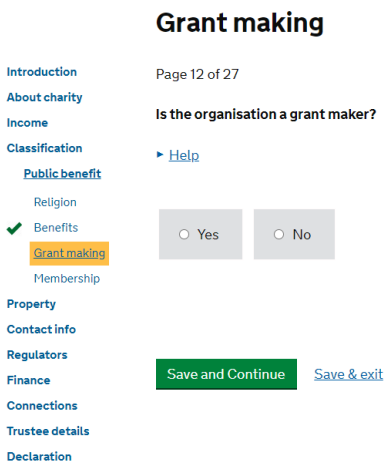
Also explain how your Local Church or Circuit decides which projects to carry out or support.

i) If your Local Church does not support other projects put [N/a]
ii) If your Local Church/Circuit does support other projects, but has no set criteria, it will normally be that the decision whether or not to support a project, will be based on whether the project furthers the mission of the Local Church/Circuit. If that is the case you should say so.

If your Local Church/Circuit has a policy or criteria for supporting other projects, insert a link or provide details.

5.5 – Grant Making

5.5.1 – Non-Grant Making Charities

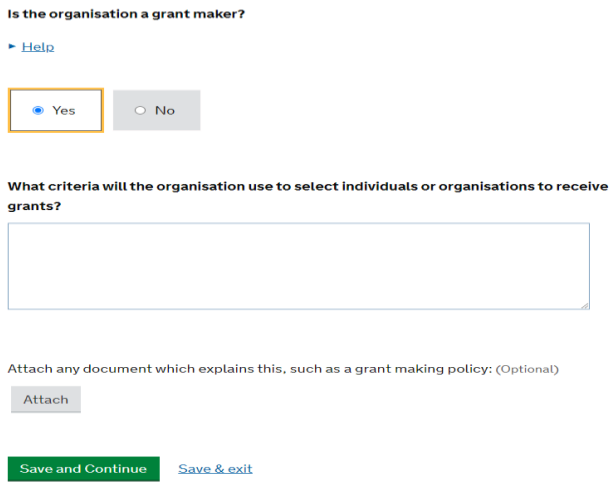


If your Local Church or Circuit does not make grants simply click “No” and continue to step 5.4

5.5.2 Grant making charities

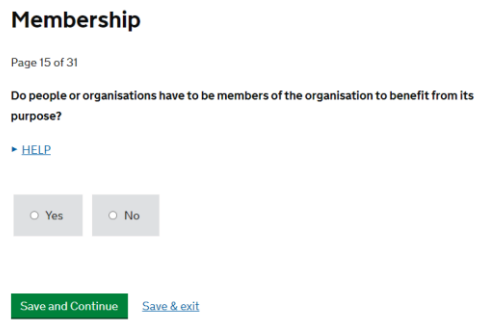
If you click [Yes] you will need to confirm the criteria that will be applied when assessing a grant. Suggested wording could be as follows:-

There are no set criteria. Each grant proposition is presented in writing to the secretary of the Church Council at least two weeks before the next meeting. The members of the Council consider the proposal on its individual merits. To approve the grant a majority of at least two thirds of the members of the Council present must vote in favour.



5.6 Membership

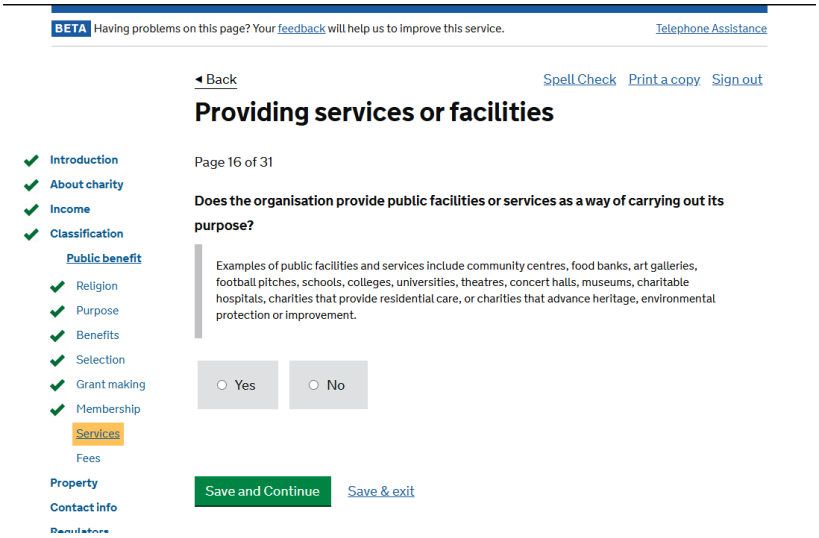
There is no requirement for a person to be a member of a Methodist Church in order to benefit from its purposes so click [No].



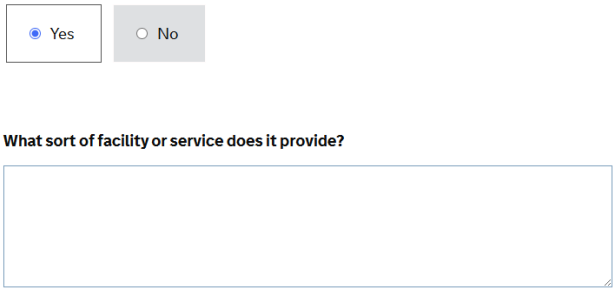
Depending on your above selections, you may have a further two boxes to complete below.

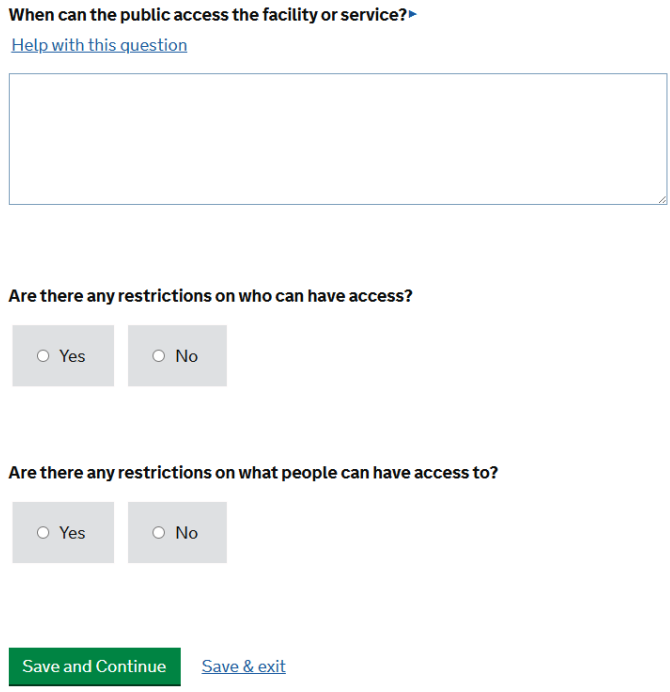
Please provide the details of the services or facilities which you can confirmed you provide.

5.7 Providing services or facilities



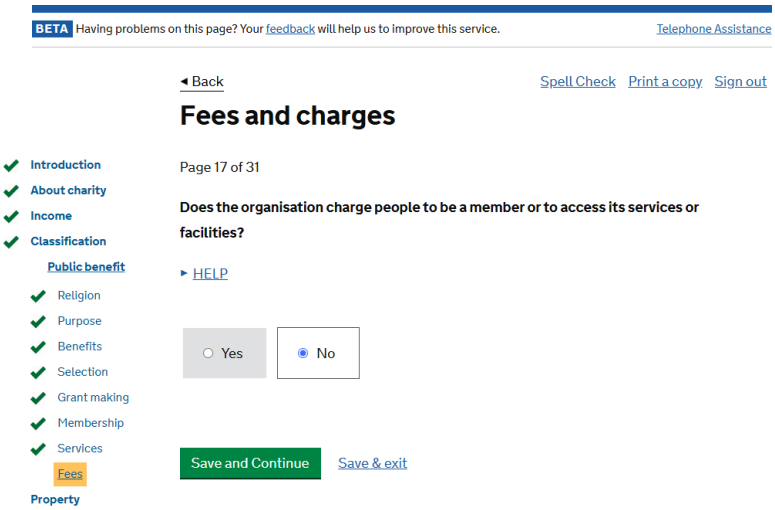
If yes:





If you have confirmed that you charge fees please complete this section accordingly.

5.8 Fees and charges



To enable effective upload and download, this guidance document has been split into two parts, Stage 6 commences in Part 2.