

# dialogue

The twice-yearly newsletter from the Methodist Insurance Company

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## A warm welcome from Methodists

It's no secret that the United Kingdom is going through a cost-of-living crisis – nor that the poor and disadvantaged are hardest hit.



But in hard times, Methodists – and those of other denominations and faiths – come together to help others. In September, in partnership with the ChurchWorks Commission and other charities, many of you supported the Warm Space initiative.

The scheme turned church buildings into warm, comfortable spaces where people could escape the winter chill – and the fear of their heating bills – over tea and coffee, biscuits and perhaps proper meals, while socialising with others.

And there was no doubt it was needed: at Methodist Insurance, we teamed up with The Bible Society and other partners for a major survey which found that a quarter of churches were providing warm spaces and

a third were running foodbanks. Some 37% expected to have difficulty affording their own heat and light. Thankfully, last winter was relatively mild, and demand for warm spaces was not as high as it might have been. But valuable lessons were learned for the future.

The congregation at Broad Street Methodist Church in Spalding, Lincolnshire, is one of many throughout the UK who have worked hard to help the most needy in their communities.

'East Anglia is home to much of the country's agricultural production,' said Bryn Chappell, treasurer at Broad Street. 'Spalding has more than its share of people working for very low wages, so poverty is a daily reality. We started last autumn, with grants

from Methodist Insurance, and others from our local district and council, and donations of food from lots of local companies.

'Initially we did sandwiches and tea and coffee, but latterly we started serving hot lunches, and now we've been joined by students from the local college trying to help people cook on a budget.

'I'd say we have about 25 regular attendees – luckily, we had a reasonably mild winter, or it might have been different – and they come in to play Scrabble or dominoes, and just have a chat.

'I actually think the socialising is more important than anything – people in this area have been made resilient by generations of fairly hard life, but they still need the human contact which our Warm Space and others in the town have provided.'

Going forward through the warmer months, the project will be rebranded as a 'Welcome Space' – until the winter approaches again and the Warm Space will return to Spalding.

To find out more about warm spaces, visit: [methodistinsurance.co.uk/warm-spaces](https://methodistinsurance.co.uk/warm-spaces)



**Read Dialogue online**  
[methodistinsurance.co.uk/dialogue](https://methodistinsurance.co.uk/dialogue)



## Dates for your diary

This year, we are sponsoring and will be attending:

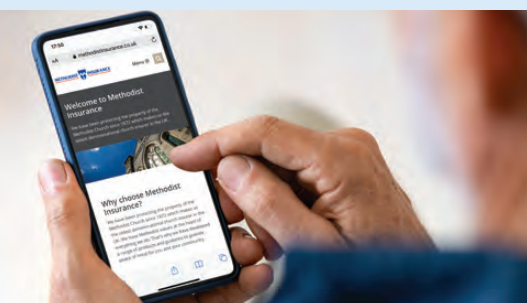
- **Superintendents' Conference**  
17–19 May, 5–7 June
- **The Methodist Church in Ireland Conference** 8–11 June
- **The Methodist Church Conference**  
22–29 June
- **District Property Lunch**  
12 October



## Are you signed up to receive our monthly e-news?

It features topical risk management guidance, fundraising materials, grant information and other useful tips for your church.

Visit: [methodistinsurance.co.uk/signup](https://methodistinsurance.co.uk/signup)



## Your feedback is valuable



We welcome your view on Dialogue, we would like to check in with you that this newsletter is meeting your expectations. Please scan the QR code or use the link

to complete five questions. This will only take a couple of minutes. Thank you!

Visit: [methodistinsurance.co.uk/feedback](https://methodistinsurance.co.uk/feedback)

# Award-winners' stories

## Making the 150th Celebration Award donations count

We marked our anniversary in 2022 in a special way, by giving 15 awards of £1,500 – one for every decade since our foundation – to church and community ventures that are really making a difference to those around them. Six months on we see how two of the churches are using their donations.

### Bridgeway Hall Methodist Church –

A 'skills café' in an under-used space in the church, to share cooking, gardening, and repair skills.

The award money has enabled the 'skills café' to open at the start of December 2022 as the Cosy Café. Sharing knitting and cooking skills, doing jigsaws together and growing plants to restart work on the community garden when the weather warms up.

The cooking skills included, putting together a lunch each week using

supermarket surplus food and items from the foodbank that are likely to be put in food parcels.

Dave Shaw, Pioneer at Bridgeway Hall, commented, 'The number of people attending the Cosy Café has increased week on week and we are now up to 25. This has enabled us to recruit two new volunteers and we are currently seeking further funding to enable us to continue providing our café throughout 2023 and beyond'.







**St Ives Methodist Church** – Bringing parents and their children together over televised sports that would otherwise be too expensive for them to afford.

St Ives church launched their Sports Church, with an aim to reach out and engage with those in the local community.

The award money enabled them to launch in November with the World Cup. The church provided food, decorated the room and welcomed all those who wanted to feel part of something together. Minister Nicholas Witham commented, 'We had a great time



watching the football and welcoming the refugee community that is in the town. We ate together and shared together while watching the beautiful game.'

Since then, they have set up a Wednesday football club for anyone who wants to come and play. Also, a running club on a Saturday morning – with the challenge to move from couch to running a 5K (3-mile) Park Run. The award money has enabled them to pay for the hire of the pitches, footballs and equipment, and pay for running T-shirts.

Looking to the future, St Ives are planning a number of family 'Have a Go' events over the next few months, and these will include badminton, fishing, and tennis. They are also planning for youth drop-in events showing live sports and sporting challenges. The grant money will go towards paying / subsidising the hire of courts / licences, pitches and necessary equipment.

**Visit [methodistinsurance.co.uk/150awards](https://methodistinsurance.co.uk/150awards) to read their full stories.**



## A History of Methodist Insurance

Commissioned to celebrate our 150th Anniversary of Methodist Insurance – the book tells a tale of perseverance against the odds, and spans two World Wars, and vast social and economic change.

**Get hold of a copy – visit Amazon and type: [A History of Methodist Insurance in Britain](#)**





# Spring ahead safely!

For many of us, spring is our favourite time of year – it brings us the Easter celebration, the blooming of new life, and the promise of warmer, sunnier times ahead. But the lighter nights and dancing daffodils can distract you from managing risks.

Here's our handy guide to what to watch out for as we head towards summer.



## Check out your trees

It's important to take care of trees on your land. Storms can bring down branches – especially as deciduous varieties return to full leaf – and damage neighbouring properties.

Each new year of growth adds to the size of the roots, which can cause everything from serious subsidence to slip-and-trip hazards on pavements and other surfaces.

Depending on your circumstances, you may have to make sure that people are not exposed to any risk from the trees on your land. This does not mean that all trees have to be individually examined on a regular basis; make a decision that is reasonable for your circumstances.

For more advice, visit [methodistinsurance.co.uk/trees](https://methodistinsurance.co.uk/trees)

## Take care with events

As the winter chill fades, people are keener to come out to church events, and it's fantastic to welcome them.

Depending on the event it's important to consider and manage the risks; so whether it's venue suitability, staff or volunteering requirements, provision of welfare



facilities, emergency planning or licensing considerations you need to think about, we're here to help with our useful events guide: [methodistinsurance.co.uk/events](https://methodistinsurance.co.uk/events)

We want everyone to be able to relax and enjoy these events safely and with the help of our guide we hope you can do just that!



## Beware fire

Many of us are custodians of beautiful buildings, and it's hard to imagine anything worse than a fire in a church. It's a legal requirement for you to carry out a fire risk assessment to ensure that people using your church and hall are kept safe. This should be reviewed on a regular basis.

Among other things, that means being aware of ignition sources – from candles to the electrics and heating system – and having fire alarms, extinguishers, and emergency escape routes in place, along with correct signage.

If you have near neighbours, be aware of the effect any blaze could have on them – and take account of the safety of any attending firefighters.

If that all sounds daunting, don't worry – there's a really useful and far more comprehensive guide at [methodistinsurance.co.uk/firesafety](https://methodistinsurance.co.uk/firesafety)



## Risk Advice Helpline

Our Risk Advice Helpline is available 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (except bank holidays) and puts you in touch with our risk experts and surveyors. They are on hand to help you, to answer your questions and provide guidance.

**Call: 0345 600 7531**

Email: [risk.advice@micmail.com](mailto:risk.advice@micmail.com)

# Housing charity celebrates 75 years of 'sanctuary' for retired clergy



As we come to the end of our 150th Anniversary, our customer, the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society (MMHS), is in full swing celebrating their 75th. See how they are celebrating their anniversary year.



Pam Rhodes interviews Revd Alan Taylor



The national housing charity kicked off their festivities at the recent Daffodil Day rally – which drew 600 people to Methodist Central Hall, Westminster (MCHW). MMHS had been invited as guests to this 'spring festival for Christian encouragement and renewal'.

MCHW presented a spectacular mix of powerful choral music, joyous gospel songs and inspiring operatic solos. Amid this packed programme, CEO of MMHS Mairi Johnstone gave a video address to mark MMHS's anniversary. Their Chair of the Board,

Reverend Alan Taylor, was also interviewed on stage by Songs of Praise presenter Pam Rhodes.

'We provide much more than a house – we provide a home,' Mairi said. 'Your home is your sanctuary.' Mairi shared plans for the anniversary, including – an online service, celebration event and a specially written song.

In the three-minute video, Mairi spoke of how they appreciate people's gifts, legacies and bequests, which all help support the

work of housing ministers in their retirement. 'We're also hugely dependent on people praying for us,' she added.

Mairi said residents express their gratitude in personal notes on Christmas cards. 'Christmas comes into its own,' she added. 'I would encourage our ministerial residents to keep on sending in those Christmas cards – you've no idea how important they are!'

Alan said they accommodate 700 presbyters and deacons in houses and flats – 'Spread all the way across the UK on every point of the compass'. He added, 'The needs can be diverse, but we have a small team that go the extra mile to meet those needs.'

Both Mairi and Alan spoke about the history of MMHS – founded at the same time as the NHS and the Welfare State – and the future challenges the charity faces.

The team also attended Daffodil Day to represent the charity and to engage with visitors at their new exhibition stand. The display featured some MMHS residents who are celebrating their own special anniversaries at the same time as the charity.

MCHW Superintendent Minister and Team Leader Revd Tony Miles thanked MMHS for taking part. 'The work you do is so essential,' he told MMHS Communications Manager Clive Price. 'There are many people that just haven't got a home at the end of their ministry, having served many years.'

'It's a joy for me as an active minister to be able to visit some of those ministers in homes you've provided. So, thank you and God bless you in the work that you do.'

Also taking part in the rally were Neresia Maye of the London Community Gospel Choir, international tenor Anando Mukerjee, Lord Mayor of Westminster Hamza Taouzzale, Methodist Conference Vice President Anthony Boateng, London District Chair Revd Nigel Cowgill and President of Methodist Women in Britain Ruth Parrott.

You can read residents' stories, listen to podcasts and watch videos all about this important work on their website – [mmhs.org.uk](http://mmhs.org.uk)

## Responsibilities of a church to its volunteers

It takes a collection of people in various roles to run a church; volunteering is at the heart of any church and its mission. Volunteers make an invaluable contribution to the Church – as Trustees, Deacons, Elders, Sunday School Teachers and in many more varied roles.

It is, therefore, important that your church remains a safe place for volunteers. You may

need to check any arrangements you need to make for managing their health and safety and the precautions you have in place to protect against risks.

Any action you take needs to be proportionate depending on your circumstances. This will reflect the size of your church; the numbers of employees, volunteers or visitors you have; and the nature of the activities involved there.

We offer guidance on what to consider when people are on your church premises. Visit [methodistinsurance.co.uk/volunteers](http://methodistinsurance.co.uk/volunteers) to find out more.





# Making insurance count

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\*Methodist Insurance customer opinion survey 2022 – 333 responses from customers.

\*\*Methodist Insurance customer opinion results 2022, based on 147 responses from customers who have had their claims settled.

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MAKING IT COUNT

# Michaela keeps things running smoothly

We pride ourselves on our personalised and expert claims service – and Michaela Sparey is a vital cog in that smooth-running machine.



As the Methodist Direct Claims Team Manager, Michaela and her team of specialist handlers speak every day with customers who have experienced a loss.

'We are talking directly to the people who have experienced the flood, or fire, or other incident,' said Michaela, who enjoys listening to audio books and walking the

hills of Gloucestershire with her husband and their dog, Dudley, at the weekend.

'It can involve some emotional moments, and we all get tremendous satisfaction out of helping at what can be a really traumatic time. Being that close to the matter at hand also ensures we have a good understanding of what has happened, which in turn helps us to achieve one of our main aims – to settle the customer's claim as quickly as possible.

'I like to think it's that personalised touch – and Methodist Insurance's years of collective experience in insuring churches – which makes us different from many other insurers.

'These days, I don't get to talk to customers as often as I'd like – though I do as much as I can to stay involved – but luckily I have a dedicated, passionate team who are there in that hour of need to listen, support and manage the customer's claim from the beginning through to the end.

'I have to say that when I joined Methodist Insurance this was my dream job, and it hasn't disappointed!'



## Making a claim

Our claims team are on hand to provide advice and support if you need to make a claim. You can register a new claim 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Call: 0345 606 1331**

or email us at [methodistclaims@micmail.com](mailto:methodistclaims@micmail.com)



# 96%

**of customers are very or extremely satisfied with their claims experience <sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Methodist Insurance customer opinion results 2022, based on 147 responses from customers who have had their claims settled.



# Could your church benefit from a Methodist Grant?

## Take a look at some of the recent successful projects

Over £460,000 made its way to 10 Methodist churches in a recent wave of Methodist Grants. The funding is supporting building development projects that will bring church growth, increased community engagement, and improved accessibility.

Here are a few of the inspiring projects to benefit from this funding boost:

### Grange Methodist Church, Cumbria

Grange Methodist Church is a well-used building in the centre of Grange over Sands in Cumbria.

The church provides a foodbank, children and youth groups, a men's breakfast group, lunches for older people and hosts an AGE UK drop-in and Mind mental health sessions.

To keep growing these vital support services, the church is undergoing a transformation. A £100,000 Methodist Grant will help to create a new accessible extension and rework of the current interior. The new space will be eco-friendly and will include new toilets and a kitchen.

### Wesley Road Methodist Church, Wiltshire

Trowbridge is an area where there are a number of needs within the community. Wesley Road Methodist Church wants to help address these needs and provide a safe space for people from all backgrounds.

The church is currently looking tired and not fit to provide necessary community services. Having already raised 75% of funds, £40,200 from Benefact Trust's Methodist Grant programme will give the church the money it needs to create a welcoming, fit-for-purpose space. The redevelopment will include fully accessible toilet facilities, improved community halls and kitchen facilities, and a disabled access entrance.

### Darley Methodist Church, Yorkshire

Darley Methodist Church is a beautiful chapel set in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales. The church has a thriving congregation and an active programme of outreach.

A £1,900 Methodist Grant will enable Darley Methodist Church to provide an environmentally friendly and inclusive base to increase its community outreach



by replacing the doors and windows with heat-saving alternatives, making the building warm and welcoming.

### The Avenue Church, Devon

The Avenue Methodist Church is a vital building within the community with nothing else offering the same size and space. Sadly, the building currently has limitations which means it can't be used to its full potential. For example, the largest meeting room on the first floor has no toilets attached, which means vulnerable people don't have access to basic facilities.



A £28,800 Methodist Grant will help to improve the accessibility of the church and will open-up the building to more than 350 people per week.

**Recent changes to the Methodist Grants Programme means it now supports repair and maintenance projects (not just building development initiatives) that are essential to the mission and ministry of your church.**

**Interested in finding out more?**

**Visit: [benefacttrust.co.uk/methodist-grants](https://benefacttrust.co.uk/methodist-grants)**

## Fundraising in less-affluent areas

Many churches are located in less-affluent areas and in this economic climate, fundraising is even more challenging in communities in need. Our guide to fundraising in less-affluent areas is designed specifically for challenges such as these.

Read our guidance to re-energise you in your efforts to bring vital funds to your community.

**Visit: [methodistinsurance.co.uk/church-fundraising](https://methodistinsurance.co.uk/church-fundraising)**

