



# The Methodist Church

## Warm Spaces Summary

You can watch a 60-minute recording of the webinar, 'Offer a warm space this winter,' which took place on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022, here: <https://youtu.be/UnP3ZDCezuQ>

If you plan to offer a warm space, please sign up at [www.warmwelcome.uk](http://www.warmwelcome.uk) once registrations open (see details below).

### Why are we doing this?

As Christians we believe everyone should be able to live with dignity, knowing their intrinsic worth and value. Poverty contradicts the will of God, and robs people of their dignity, sense of worth and value. Providing a warm space must be a temporary response, alongside campaigning for people to live with dignity, which includes a warm space in their own home.

### Practicalities:

- **Keep it simple.** No one is expecting all bells and whistles. Work out what you are in a position to offer and offer that. If you can only make cups of tea and coffee and provide some biscuits that is good enough. If you can offer a bowl of soup or a warm snack as well, great. If you can provide a couple of simple activities to keep people occupied while they are there, e.g. a couple of newspapers/magazines, board games, books etc then that is helpful. Having one or two people available to simply be a listening ear may also be a great gift.
- **Collaborate** with other churches/community groups who might be able to offer space and be able to form a rota if needed.
- Ask your congregation to **pray** for the Space.
- If you are serving any kind of food, make sure you are complying with up-to-date **food safety and hygiene regulations**. This is part of making it a safe space.
- **Set your space up as informally and comfortably as possible.** People need to feel welcome and comfortable. If you have comfy chairs or sofas available, make use of them; if not, put chairs in circles around tables or coffee tables. Be aware, though, that some people may wish to sit on their own, so make sure some spaces make that possible rather than every table expected to take 4-6 people.
- Think about having a designated quiet/silent space.
- Make sure you have someone on the door to **welcome everyone** who comes in and lets people know what is available, how the Space works etc. (It could be helpful to have the same people wherever possible to build relationships with people).
- Be aware of power dynamics. We are often unaware of hidden power dynamics when we offer help to others. These are often unconscious but making ourselves aware of them can help us avoid saying and doing things that can make people feel more shame, fear, and lack of dignity.
  - Prioritise partnership
  - Resist being seen as the 'provider'
  - Encourage participation
  - Make it easy for people to contribute
  - A way of receiving feedback, e.g. 'this space is good because...This space could be better if...'
- It may be that people who attend regularly wish to help serve teas and coffees, clear up etc. Although, as churches, we are often used to doing everything "for" people, allowing others to contribute and become host as well as guest can help them feel valued, less shameful, useful etc. If they do help, keep your safeguarding procedures clear as you do for any other volunteer.

## Networking:

- **Warm Welcome** is an initiative from the Churchworks Commission (The Methodist Church is part of the commission). People can sign up at [warmwelcome.uk](http://warmwelcome.uk). Currently the website is only taking pledges, but this will change in the near future to allow for full registration. Signing up to warm welcome is a commitment from churches to provide a free warm welcome this winter. They will receive practical advice and access to resources to assist in the process of setting up a church as a warm space. We will be notified of any Methodist Church that registers (as long as they clearly identify as Methodist) and we are currently looking at ways of offering financial support to registered Methodist churches.
- **Talk to people who may need the provision.** We can often make assumptions about what people need and when it needs to be provided. If you have contact with local people who may well need this kind of provision, maybe through regular groups in your building, Foodbank, through other local organisations, ask what would be helpful, what would make a space feel welcoming, what time would be most beneficial etc. You may have limitations about when you can offer the space due to volunteer availability and other activities in your building etc., but where you can offer a choice before starting, do so. People living with the challenges of financial hardship, poverty and destitution often have very few choices available to them and feel unheard. Listening and asking can go a long way to reducing some of the indignity associated with poverty.
- Speak to your **ecumenical partners** – they may also have plans in place or funding. In one example in Gateshead, the Methodist Church are hosting the Warm Space and the local Anglican church have decided to offer volunteers rather than set up a separate space. Working together may well be a good way forward.
- Check what is happening in your local area. There may be **other community groups**, spaces and organisations who are also considering being a Warm Space. Can you **work together**, share learning etc. and collaborate?
- Check with your **local Council / Citizen's Advice Bureau** about signposting for other help.
- Check with nearest **Foodbank** about their referral processes in case you have guests who may need to access it.
- Check out where any local provision for low-cost food is available, e.g., Fairshare, community pantries and larders, cafés and supermarkets offering free or low cost food for children.

## Safeguarding:

- Warm Spaces need to be Safe Spaces. Safeguarding procedures help us to ensure that those who volunteer and host the space are safe as well as those who come along as guests. Make sure all volunteers are familiar with your church **Safeguarding policy** and that you have appropriate **volunteer recruitment forms** completed. It is also wise to complete a **Risk Assessment** for the new activity to ensure you have thought through any potential risks to guests and hosts and the building. Please send a copy of your Risk Assessment to your **District Safeguarding Officer** who will also be able to give you advice if needed.
- It is really important that people feel safe and part of that means they should expect that their **attendance is kept confidential**. Please ensure your volunteers know not to talk about who was present to friends and family after a session, especially if they know individuals attending. No one wants to have to access a Warm Space, having people know you needed it adds to the indignity.
- This safety also comes from ensuring that **no one is judged** as to why they are there. Some people may be there because they need to keep warm, but some may come because they need company or for other reasons. Do not make assumptions about people's income, resources, and situation.
- If you are allowing people to charge their mobile phone and you use extension cables, make sure you use one that is **PAT tested** so they are safe.

### Funding:

- All local Councils have been given a **Household Support Fund** in response to the energy hikes. Each Authority can use the funds however they deem appropriate. Many are now using some of this fund for Warm Spaces. In the Spring Statement, further funding was pledged for the winter but this will need to be confirmed by the new Chancellor once appointed. That money, if it comes, will be from Oct 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Some **Circuits and Districts** may wish to use some of their funds to support churches who are in the right place to offer a Warm Space but finance may prevent them from doing so.
- There may be some additional funding available through the Methodist Church link with **Warm Welcome** (see above)
- **Where possible, make the refreshments free.** Providing at least one of the refreshments as free for all will allow people to stay as long as they need. If your budget does not allow you to provide everything for free, consider making any hot food as **pay-as-you-feel** so that people can pay something but not be priced out. You might also find people in your congregation or local community would be willing to **pay-it-forward**. That means they give you a small donation to cover the cost of someone's refreshments in advance so it can be used to cover the cost of anyone who cannot pay but needs it. This may be a way of people helping the Warm Space if they cannot help in any other way.

### Ending the need for Warm Spaces: We want to remember that everyone should be able to live with dignity, which includes being warm in their own home

- As well as responding to this immediate community need, think about how you can join in campaigning for people to be warm in their own homes.
- Consider write to your MP and joining the JPIT campaign <https://jpit.uk/>

### Helpful Resources:

- a) Methodist Church Safeguarding: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/policies-procedure-and-information/policies-and-guidance/>
- b) Incorporate this activity as part of your Mission Planning: [www.methodist.org.uk/missionplanning](http://www.methodist.org.uk/missionplanning)
- c) Join the Methodist Church at the (economic) Margins program: [www.methodist.org.uk/churchatthemargins](http://www.methodist.org.uk/churchatthemargins)

## **Suggestions in Zoom chat during 5<sup>th</sup> September webinar:**

### *Practical suggestions*

Maybe also hot water bottle/ flask filling

and free WiFi

We offer the 'Conversationater' game (a tin filled with folded paper with random questions) in our cafe and it is brilliant to get people talking

Let schools, GPs etc know

### *Partnerships*

I believe Gateshead Council ran training sessions for those who are wanting to start up warm spaces

Lancashire County Council have asked what our barriers/concerns might be as churches/organisations offering warm spaces and are currently collating these in order to offer support

Our Churches together are exploring using the pubs

Using pubs as warm spaces might help keep them open

We are working with our local Age UK and community hub. They are applying for funding for each warm space, to help cover our heating costs. I am not sure what the grant is but we certainly find that working with our local groups makes a big difference.

Use national networks like Carers Matter

churches in circuits should pool together rather than trying to go solo

Our foodbank are giving us beans and bread so we can offer beans on toast.

### *Prophetic challenge*

The rising tide of neoliberalism - impacting more and more people - including those, who just a few years ago, would never have dreamed they would be in this position. But you are so right Paul, for the community we work amongst, this is not a new crisis - it is a continuation and exacerbation of a lifetime, and in some instances, generations of experience. We need as the church to engage, not just in treating the symptoms but in engaging in a prophetic-political analysis of the causes in enacting systemic change - the risk otherwise is that we add to the justification of the systems of causation.

is there not a danger that the new "government" will see what we're doing, they will sit back and put their feet up, saying the "big Community" is working after all.

Like foodbanks! Stuff the government, there is a need and we need to respond

Totally agree... but we do also need to be putting pressure on the government that it's wrong that we have to do this.

### *Prayer*

We need to think about how we make it easy for people to ask for prayer, without any pressure. Easy ways of discovering people want to pray without people feeling coerced in any way. e.g., in this room we're praying at 8pm you are welcome to join us if you wish.

Use a prayer tree or prayer box?

Yes I just thought about prayer leaves

At our Food Bank we have our Light & Life team there each week. We offer hand massage and often end up praying with people. It is about building relationships and people feeling safe.

### *Safeguarding*

I feel it could be rather naïve to just open a warm space and feel that people will just come and sit. There will be people with huge issues and needs which the "volunteers" may be ill equipped to meet. Risk assessments? Safeguarding issues? Coping with outbreaks of violence?

All Warm Spaces will need to do a safeguarding risk assessment. We'll send links to some guidance after the session and see if we can get a pro forma created.

Perhaps we can advise the Community Policing teams in our locality of when and where our warm space is to happen.

Safeguarding should start with the "Safer Recruiting Policy" which is a good starting point.

### *Funding*

Heating costs for churches will go up 400x -that's the latest estimate for ours. Will prob mean closing down the rest of the plant and keeping one space open for this.

It may be helpful to let your Council know that by offering grants of £500 to every space that applied they have been able to support 52 Warm Spaces for £25,000 which is relatively small.

We think our local authority might offer some grant assistance even here in the south east

There is a lot of mention of Council - what level of Council has the funds ie. Parish/town, Borough or County?

Every Council was given a Household Support Fund for use for this kind of thing so it is held centrally.

As a councillor in Hackney, East London, I agree with Jane's comments. All council's have a discretionary support fund . We have a church leader's group and a Faith Forum to work through.

Just found this in one of my emails from Newcastle Council recently - Note the applications closing date though! Connected Voice is working with the NHS to support smaller VCSE organisations with their increased running costs during the cost of living crisis. We have £285,000 to allocate in grants of between £2,000 - £4,000 to VCSE organisations with an income of under £600,000 per year, who are feeling the pressure of increased running costs due to high inflation, energy price increases, and other financial pressures. Organisations should be improving the health and wellbeing of local people in Newcastle and/or Gateshead, must be based in Newcastle or Gateshead, and we are prioritising those organisations working in areas of higher deprivation. We would like to get the grants out quickly and we will make some grants before the fund closes on the 15th of September 2022, so we are encouraging groups to apply as soon as possible. You can find out more about the fund and how to apply here: <https://www.connectedvoice.org.uk/services/support-and-development/funding/vcse-cost-living-crisis-fund>

#### *Other comments*

Seems like there are some potential commonalities between Warm Spaces and Renew Wellbeing spaces.

Has there been any link up between warm spaces and places of welcome?

My concern for those who are saying they will switch everything off is that in the absence of heat, properties will become damp with condensation, growth of mould etc and a detriment to health of inhabitants.