A Festival Church is a church building which is not used for weekly worship, but is valued and required by the community for local events and for Festivals of the Church and for Rites of Passage (Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals).

As your church eventually and perhaps gradually re-opens after the Covid-19 crisis, it might be a good opportunity to consider if the Festival Church model could suit your purposes for a period of time. A regular pattern of services can then be resumed at any time if desired, or the experiment continued.

The following guidance explains how this can be done, and the possible benefits.

What is a Festival church?
A Festival Church is a church building which is not used for weekly worship, but is valued and required by the community for local events and for Festivals of the Church and for Rites of Passage (Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals).

These Festivals include Christmas, Easter and Harvest Festival, but also local festivals, Saints’ days, Mothers’ Day, Remembrance Sunday, Rogation Days, etc. A list of festivals and appropriate material is available here.

A Festival Church can also accommodate more secular events, for example a beer festival. See here for how somebody was attracted to church this way.

The Festival Church model is both simple and flexible and boils down to two fundamental changes in the way the church operates:

- **Worship** - doing less but doing it better: Festival churches no longer hold regular formal worship, but will instead concentrate on fewer "festival" services.
- **Management** - more people to be involved: Festival Churches will adapt their management structures to enable anyone with an interest in the building to take on an active role in its care.

### Association of Festival Churches

The Association of Festival Churches has been set up to give support and advice to parishes, dioceses and churches looking at the Festival Churches model. The Chair of the Association is Sir Tony Baldry, and Nigel Mills has recently been appointed as the Festival Churches Development Officer.

The Association is developing a range of resources that will showcase what Festival Churches are currently doing, which will help you decide whether the Festival Church model is right for you.

To discover more about their work and about Festival Churches in general visit the Association’s website [www.festivalchurches.org.uk](http://www.festivalchurches.org.uk) or contact Nigel Mills directly.
Legal aspects

The defining feature of a Festival Church is the ability to vary the service pattern as needed and valued by the community. A Festival Church can remain legally “open” as a parish church, while embracing this flexibility. The Church Buildings Council recommends a minimum of six services per year. The Bishop should be informed of the PCC’s intention, as expressed in a formal resolution following a wide consultation.

The relevant templates for a PCC resolution and letter to the Bishop can be found here and here. The Church Buildings Council recommends that such a PCC resolution is only considered after wide consultation within the local community, benefice and deanery and always with the knowledge and support of the Archdeacon.

Forms

- Form of resolution under Canon B 14A seeking dispensation from holding services on a regular basis
- Form of letter requesting Bishop to authorise minister and PCC to dispense, on a regular basis, with the holding of services in a parish church

Complementary uses

A Festival Church can also accommodate appropriate complementary uses (community, cultural and commercial), which gives opportunities to reconnect the church building and congregation with the community if this connection has been weakened or lost. This is, therefore emphatically not about “mothballing”, or in any way a sign of failure – it is about using these buildings in a way that is appropriate to its community, and makes the most of the opportunities the building has to offer.

Common other features of a Festival Church may, therefore include:

- Open during the day for visitors and worshippers
- Increased use of church building for community needs
- Release of energy for outreach and mission activity
- Insurance and maintenance responsibilities may be delegated/pooled / outsourced
- A Trust (local, diocesan or national) might manage these responsibilities on behalf of the PCC
Also of interest

How we manage our buildings

From Ecclesiastical Exemption (faculty process) to secular permissions

Make your building sustainable

Find out how you can act to help the environment

Source URL: https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/strategic-planning-church-buildings/festival-churches