Foundations

Church Growth Trust's Magazine

Autumn 2026



Honouring the Lord

Serving faithfully in every aspect of church life

Plus...

Access, belonging and the Great Commission

Under his wings you will find refuge

Bearing fruit through good practice

church growth trust

Welcome
from our
Chief Executive



Giles Arnold

Chief Executive
Church Growth Trust

giles.arnold@churchgrowth.org.uk

church growth trust

Honouring God in the detail

At Church Growth Trust we are keen to see churches meet their obligations in terms of the compliance and legal issues that they have to deal with. However, we often hear church leaders and trustees say things like, "why do we have to keep to all these regulations?" or "this all seems like the government interfering with what we are trying to do".

This edition of Foundations magazine is all about compliance issues, but rather than it being a dry and legalistic matter, we are trying to help churches think about this with a different perspective. The apostle Peter encourages us to submit to those in authority over us (1 Peter 2:13) and therefore we are required to meet the regulations and laws of the land.

Rather than just meeting the letter of the law, we believe that as God's people and to be good witnesses to Him, we should do the best that we can, rather than the minimum we can get away with. This is honouring to the Lord for a number of reasons. Firstly, we are required to be wholehearted in what we do, as this reflects the character and generosity of God. Secondly, it demonstrates that we care about people, in terms of their safety and welfare. Thirdly, we should want to make our buildings and activities fully accessible to as many people as possible, so that everyone has the opportunity to hear the Gospel and to be an active part of the Body of Christ. Lastly, we want to demonstrate the infinite love of God by pleasing Him and by loving others.

My prayer is that you will be inspired to look at compliance issues in a new light and will be encouraged to honour the Lord in new ways. If there is anything that we can help you with, please do not hesitate to contact us.

In His Service,
Giles

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Discover how God's grace transforms Christian service from obligation into a joyful response to His love.

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QR codes

We include 'QR codes' in Foundations to make it easier to access more information online. Just open your mobile phone camera, point the camera at the QR code image, tap the link that appears on your mobile screen and follow any instructions that will take you to the relevant website.

Our latest CGT news in brief

Our new website is here

Finding the right help from Church Growth Trust should now be much simpler. Our new website has been designed around the questions churches come to us with, making it easier to find information, practical guidance and the right person to speak to.

The new site has clearer routes for churches that:

- Own a church building and need help thinking about its future
- Are looking for a church building
- Are planning a building project.

You can explore Church Property Help to understand different trusteeship options, browse church buildings that are currently available and find out how Church Growth Trust can support building projects and improvements.

There is also a growing Resources area bringing together our Practical Guides and other useful information for church leaders and trustees.

And if you want to keep up with the latest CGT news, you can sign up through the website to receive our email updates and free Foundations magazine.



Scan the QR code to visit the new website

Share your good news with us

Church Growth Trust is always looking for good news to share. If you have an encouraging story about the ministry in your area or a building project you are working on, please contact our Communications Manager.



Sharon Short
Communications Manager
01536 201339
sharon.short@churchgrowth.org.uk

Included with this issue: Church Compliance Checklist

There is something extra tucked inside this edition of Foundations.

Our Church Compliance Checklist is a simple practical tool designed to help trustees and church leaders review some of the key responsibilities involved in running a safe and well managed church.

It covers areas including safeguarding, insurance, fire and electrical safety, accessibility, risk assessments and the safe use of your building.

Rather than trying to tackle everything at once, use the checklist with your trustees or leadership team to see what is already in place, identify anything that needs attention and agree who will take responsibility for the next steps.

Need more copies?

Additional printed or electronic copies are available free of charge.

Simply email: enquiries@churchgrowth.org and let us know what you need.


Church Compliance Checklist

church growth trust

This checklist is designed for church trustees, leaders and anyone responsible for managing or maintaining a church building.

It provides a practical reminder of the main legal responsibilities and good practice checks that your church may need to consider.

Building safety

- Annual gas safety certificate checked and renewed (carried out by a Gas Safe approved engineer)
- Electrical fixed wire test completed within the last five years (carried out by a qualified electrician)
- Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) carried out in the past year
- Fire extinguishers tested and serviced annually by a qualified engineer
- Fire alarm and emergency lighting tested annually by a qualified engineer

Policies and governance

- Safeguarding policy reviewed annually
- Finance policy reviewed
- Data protection policy reviewed
- Employment policies reviewed
- Media and communications policy reviewed

Risk assessments

Food safety

- Food safety requirements checked and followed for all activities where food or drink is provided.

Copyright

- Copyright licences reviewed and renewed for projecting, reproducing, livestreaming and performing music
- Copyright licences checked for the playing of pre-recorded music during services and events

First aid

- First aid kit checked and expired items replaced
- If the church employs staff a first aid kit is in place as required by law
- First aid training certificates checked and renewed (every three years)

Insurance

NEW RESOURCE

Churches at a crossroads

Church Property & Trusteeship Guide

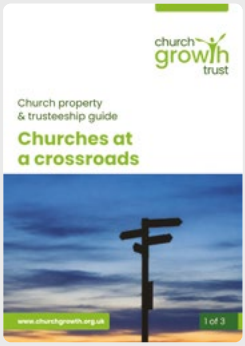
What happens when long-serving trustees retire? Who legally holds your church building? And are the arrangements that have worked for many years still right for the future?

Our new Church Property & Trusteeship Guide – Churches at a Crossroads has been created to help churches begin these conversations before decisions become urgent.

The guide provides a straightforward introduction to how church property can be held and explains the main trusteeship options available. It also considers some of the questions churches commonly face as circumstances change.

Turn to **Building for the Future on pages 18–19** to explore why thinking ahead is an important part of stewarding church buildings for future Gospel ministry.

Scan the QR code to download the guide and share it with your team.



From obligation to opportunity



A grace that motivates service

By Giles Arnold

The apostle Peter encourages church leaders in the fifth chapter of his first letter to be shepherds of God's flock, not out of obligation but out of a willingness.

It is not serving people because we have to, but doing so because we want to. Paul's letters are full of the theme of law verses grace; the law that we know that we need to obey but ultimately end up failing to do so, and grace where we enjoy the freedom of living under the completed work of Jesus, of enjoying our loving relationship with Him and wanting to please Him in all we think, say and do.

There was a story of a wife whose husband was harsh and dictatorial and rarely showed his affection for her. Each day, he would give her a list of jobs that he expected her to complete before he returned from work. Her life was miserable. She was surviving in a loveless relationship, striving every day to meet her husband's demands.

After a few unhappy years, her husband died and she later married again, but her second husband poured out his love on her and never required her to do anything in return. She blossomed and flourished in this new

relationship. One day she came across one of the old lists that her first husband had drawn up for her. As she looked down the list, she realised that she had been doing all of these things, and more, for her second husband. But now she was doing them with joy and freedom, in response to the love that he had showed her.

This is a picture of grace. Because God has lavished His love upon us, we do not do things out of obligation, but out of a response to that love. As we grow closer to Him, that compassion that He has shown to us flows out of us. Because we are saved by grace rather than works, so our lives demonstrate this grace, as we love others, care for those in need, forgive those who offend us and bless those who persecute us.



Church volunteers

Our walk with the Lord is also transformed, as we do not pray, read our Bible, have fellowship with others and serve because we have to, but we do so because we want to. Why would we not want to spend time in the presence of our loving Creator and heavenly Father; why would we not want to spend time reading, meditating on and inwardly digesting the greatest love letter ever written; why would we not want to spend time with our brothers and sisters in Christ who we can mutually bless and build up; and why would we not want to serve others that the Lord has put on our heart.

Augustine said, "Love God and do what you like". This is not a licence to pander to our own comforts and sensualities; this is freedom. If we truly love God, then we will speak His love language of obedience and only want to do what pleases Him and is in line with His will. We will be constantly listening for His voice, enjoying His presence and knowing His pleasure. And out of that will come a greater desire to bless Him and to serve others around us. We will want to do our best and this will bring glory to God.

"Because God has lavished His love upon us, we do not do things out of obligation, but out of a response to that love. As we grow closer to Him, that compassion that He has shown to us flows out of us."

This will not come out of obligation and legalism, which is ultimately dry and life-sapping. This comes as living waters from deep within. We can try to keep up our religious practices, moral codes and determination to love and serve others, but unless this comes from a deep life-giving relationship with God, a full understanding of the Gospel of grace and a reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit, it will eventually grind us down and leave us feeling like failures (or puffed up with pride).

Lord, renew our first love of you and teach us afresh what grace means, so that we are more motivated to love and serve and pour out Your grace on others.



Written by

Giles Arnold

Chief Executive, CGT

Giles has headed Church Growth Trust since 2010, having previously worked for Stewardship.

01536 647164

giles.arnold@churchgrowth.org.uk



Access, belonging and the Great Commission

Removing barriers so everyone can encounter Jesus

By Katie Budd

It has been said that 'in order to belong, you need to be missed.' This insight, attributed to Professor John Swinton ('Becoming Friends of Time', Nomad Podcast), captures something profound about the heart of God. In Scripture we see Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who seeks, welcomes and cares for every individual.

Psalm 100 and Luke 15 reveal a Saviour who pursues us with love, not wanting anyone to be lost or excluded from His Kingdom. This is the Good News entrusted to the Church.

The Great Commission is for everyone

Jesus commissioned His followers to share the Gospel with all people and all nations. Yet, statistically disabled people remain one of the most unreached groups in global mission. Research suggests that of the estimated 1.3 billion disabled people worldwide, only 5 to 10 percent will hear the Gospel during their lifetime (*Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization*).

For Through the Roof, this reality serves as both a challenge and an opportunity. The Great Commission includes us as disabled people, not only as recipients of the Gospel but also as evangelists, disciples, leaders, missionaries and disciple-makers.


Katie at Just Love

Through the Roof's vision

Through the Roof is a Christian disability charity working across the UK and internationally to equip churches to transform lives through Jesus with disabled people. Through training and support, we help churches develop disability champions, known as "Roofbreakers", who encourage accessibility and inclusion within their congregations.

Its vision can be summed up in three words:

Access – everyone knowing Jesus, with disabled people fully welcomed into Christian life

Belonging – everyone growing together as the family of God, with disabled people flourishing in community

Commission – everyone reflecting Jesus, with disabled people making disciples, to the glory of God.

Accessibility is more than buildings

When we think about accessibility, we often picture ramps, accessible toilets, hearing loops, parking spaces or sensory resources. These practical adaptations are all vitally important because they form the basis of legally mandated requirements for all public buildings, including church buildings. More than that though, the thought that goes into putting these measures in place, communicates a welcome before someone arrives. They are reflecting the heart of our God who anticipates and seeks us out, before we come to Him.


Katie leading Cardiff event

However, accessibility is about more than physical changes. It also involves attitudes, relationships and a commitment to ensuring everyone has the opportunity to encounter Jesus. A good example of this was a church that I attended in my 20s. Whilst having a building that was 800 years old and limitations around how much could be physically changed to improve accessibility, they embraced me, as a wheelchair user, as part of the body. There was always someone with a smile to welcome me and help with the temporary ramp on a Sunday morning. There were people willing to offer lifts, cups of coffee and to build friendship with me. They offered me opportunities to serve and be part of them; they became my community in a city where I didn't previously know anyone. Over time, funding was secured and physical

changes were implemented, which is great, but it is their welcome that stays with me.

Access and belonging. What is the difference?

Access is about removing barriers that prevent participation. This may include physical adaptations, accessible communication, practical support or flexible approaches to activities and services. Belonging goes deeper. It is the experience of being known, valued and missed when absent. A person may be able to attend a church and participate in activities yet still feel isolated or overlooked. For churches seeking to become more welcoming, access is the starting point, but belonging (to God and with others) is the destination.

A Biblical vision of inclusion

Throughout Scripture, we see a commitment to welcoming and restoring those whom society overlooks. Jesus consistently moved towards people on the margins. He saw individuals rather than labels and challenged assumptions about status, value and worth. The Psalms speak of the fact that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God and that God has a plan for each one of us.

The Church is described in 1 Corinthians 12 as one body with many parts, each uniquely gifted and necessary. When disabled people are absent from church life, the whole body is diminished. When their gifts are recognised and encouraged, the entire church is strengthened.

Disability inclusion is therefore not simply a matter of hospitality. It is an essential expression of the Gospel and of the Church's identity as the Body of Christ.

Recognising and removing barriers

Many church barriers are unintentional. Some are physical - steps, inaccessible toilets, unsuitable seating or difficult entrances. Others involve communication. Information

> *"Belonging goes deeper. It is the experience of being known, valued and missed when absent."*

may only be available in one format, spoken announcements may be difficult to hear, or church terminology may create confusion.

Sensory barriers can also affect participation. Bright lighting, amplified sound, crowded spaces and unpredictable environments can make attendance difficult for some people.

Many disabilities and health conditions are not immediately visible, including hearing loss, visual impairments, chronic pain, epilepsy, mental health conditions, as well as different neurologies such as autism and ADHD. People often face the exhausting task of repeatedly explaining and advocating for their needs.

Churches can help by listening carefully, remaining flexible and supporting people without requiring them to disclose more than they are comfortable sharing.

Practical steps for churches

Becoming more welcoming does not always require major budgets or building projects. Small, intentional changes can make a significant difference.

Churches can:

- **Appoint** a volunteer disability champion or "Roofbreaker".
- **Prioritise** relationships and genuine friendships.
- **Think about accessibility** to the whole of church life not just weekly gatherings, encourage social events to be arranged with accessibility in mind, provide prior information about small group accessibility; think about how pastoral care outside of church

gatherings is provided.

- **Ask people** what they need rather than making assumptions.
- **Use inclusive language**, such as "Please stand if you are able".
- **Speak** directly to disabled people rather than only to carers or family members.
- **Recognise and encourage** the gifts of disabled people in ministry and leadership.
- **Improve accessibility** through clear signage, chairs with arms, building guides and better communication about facilities.
- **Consider sensory adaptions** like by providing visual prompts, service outlines, movement breaks and sensory resources.
- **Learn** from organisations experienced in disability inclusion.
- **Seek** regular feedback and make changes accordingly.
- **Celebrate** stories of inclusion and participation.

A key principle is ask, don't assume. Every person's needs, preferences and experiences are different.

Progress, not perfection

Some churches feel overwhelmed by the challenge of accessibility. Limited budgets, ageing buildings and competing priorities can make progress seem difficult. However, creating a culture of welcome usually happens through a journey of many small steps rather than one major project. Every effort to listen, adapt and include communicates value and reflects the love of Christ. It's not about achieving perfection. It is about faithfully taking the next step.

A shared discipleship journey

The Great Commission is incomplete without disabled people. Jesus' call to reach all people includes disabled people both as those who



Alive Conference

hear the Gospel and as those who share it.

Disability inclusion is ultimately about more than access. It is about discipleship, mutual ministry and recognising the image of God in every person. When churches become places of access, belonging and commission, they reveal the Gospel in action and reflect God's heart for His people.



Written by

Katie Budd

Katie leads Through the Roof's 'Roofbreaker' project, equipping volunteer disability champions in churches and ministries across the UK. A wheelchair user with Cerebral Palsy, she brings experience in health and social care law, and NHS and charity sector disability advocacy.



Opening doors for mission

How good stewardship creates opportunities

Good stewardship does more than help churches meet their responsibilities—it builds trust, strengthens relationships and creates opportunities for Gospel ministry. When churches care well for their people, buildings and governance, they are better prepared to serve their communities and respond when new doors open.

Church leaders rarely set out to improve governance, review safeguarding policies or update risk assessments because they hope it will lead to new ministry opportunities. Usually, they simply want to do the right thing. Yet faithful stewardship often has wider benefits than we first imagine.

Trust matters

The ability to share the Gospel is built on relationships, and relationships are built on trust.

People are more likely to engage with a church where they know children and vulnerable adults are cared for well. Parents are reassured by good safeguarding. Visitors appreciate a safe, welcoming environment. Volunteers are more willing to serve when expectations are clear and responsibilities are well managed.

Most people will never ask to read your safeguarding policy or health and safety procedures, but they will experience the confidence that good stewardship creates. In a society where trust in institutions is often fragile, churches have an opportunity to demonstrate integrity through the way they conduct themselves.

Good governance inspires confidence

Many organisations choose who they will work with based not only on shared values but also on good governance. Whether applying for grant funding, hiring out your premises, partnering with a local school or working alongside another charity, people want to know that a church is well led and responsibly managed.

Questions about trusteeship, safeguarding, insurance and financial oversight are not obstacles designed to discourage churches. They are ways of establishing confidence. Good governance says:

"We take seriously what God has entrusted to us."

Accessibility is an invitation

Accessibility is often discussed in terms of legislation, but its purpose is much greater than legal compliance. Every barrier that is removed makes it easier for someone to hear the Gospel. That might mean providing step-free access, offering hearing assistance or thinking more carefully about the needs of people with hidden disabilities. These changes communicate something powerful before a conversation begins: *"You are welcome here."*

Accessible churches are often more welcoming for everyone—not just people with disabilities. Parents with young children, older people and first-time visitors all benefit from environments that have been thoughtfully designed.

Well managed buildings serve the community

Church buildings are valuable resources for ministry, but they also represent a significant responsibility. Buildings that are well maintained, safe and appropriately managed are more likely to be used throughout the week by community groups, charities, schools and local organisations. This is a good witness and more likely to attract people to God. Good stewardship helps ensure that church buildings remain places where ministry and mission can happen for generations to come while demonstrating that the church is committed to serving its community well.

Ready when opportunities arise

Opportunities for ministry or mission do not always come with plenty of warning. A grant programme may open unexpectedly. A local school may be looking for a trusted community partner. A council may be seeking organisations to deliver a new project. A neighbouring Christian charity may approach your church about working together to reach the community with the Gospel. When those opportunities arise, churches are often asked the same questions.

- Are your trustees properly appointed?
- Are your safeguarding arrangements up to date?
- Is your building safe and well maintained?
- Do you have appropriate insurance?
- Can you demonstrate good governance?

Churches that have invested in these foundations are better placed to respond with confidence. Rather than rushing to update policies or resolve outstanding issues, they are free to focus on the opportunity itself. Faithful stewardship does not guarantee new opportunities, but it does ensure that when doors open, your church is ready to walk through them.

Stewardship that serves the Gospel

Good governance, accessible buildings and safe practices are not ends in themselves. They help churches build trust, welcome people well and be ready to respond when new opportunities arise. As we faithfully steward what God has entrusted to us, we strengthen the foundations from which Gospel ministry can flourish.

Good stewardship does not distract us from mission—it helps make mission possible.

Is your church ready?

If you are not sure where to begin we have included a free Church Compliance Checklist with this issue of Foundations.

If your copy does not include the checklist, or for additional copies, please email enquiries@churchgrowth.org and tells us what you need.



Written by

Sharon Short

CGT Communications Manager

sharon.short@churchgrowth.org.uk

01536 201339

Under His wings you will find refuge

Caring for people by planning ahead

By Ruth Leigh



As followers of Jesus, we are called to welcome, to model love and compassion and to be ready to share our faith. Over the past few years, Church Growth Trust (CGT) has worked with churches as they make their buildings more accessible, open and visible.

Glass has replaced brick walls, large welcome areas have superseded brick porches and church leaders and their congregations have reached out into their communities in new and proactive ways. However, as the political climate becomes more volatile, CGT realises that it is important to offer sensible advice on managing risk and protecting people, while remaining welcoming and accessible.

With the implementation of Martyn's Law, following the Manchester Arena bombing, occupiers of public buildings need to be aware of practical steps they can take to keep people safe. With that in mind, Ruth Leigh spoke to two churches who are doing just that.

The Bridge Christian Fellowship in Golders Green sits in a particularly multicultural part of the capital. The population is mainly Jewish with a growing Iranian community. There is a synagogue on either side of the church property. Over the past year, there have been two anti-Semitic incidents close by, although the church itself has not come under threat. However, deacon and trustee Daniel Bishop is aware that they are a potential target by proximity and location.



Bridge Lane Chapel, Golders Green

"We are known to support Jewish people and the Gospel going out to all people groups, which could make us a target, but by God's grace, we have been safe so far. We have Iranian and Jewish members, many of whom have been baptised and it's amazing to see them praying together, unified in Christ. All of that said, we have put measures in place, including changing the locks, strengthening the windows, increasing the height of the fence in the garden and installing CCTV. We want to be welcoming

to all, but it's a balancing act. Our Sunday school meets in a hut in the garden, so we have the CCTV monitoring it on Sundays, with a dedicated person sitting next to the livestream. We also have foghorns to raise the alarm."



Ladyfield Evangelical Church, Chippenham

The church is taking sensible precautions and praying God's protection over themselves. "We've done an unexpected fire drill when the children were still in church so that everyone had a real experience of evacuation. It shows everyone we take security seriously. If one of our welcome team smells alcohol on a person, or they seem on edge when they come in, they alert the others and offer prayer. My advice to other churches would be to pray, be honest about potential threats and look at your resources. We are quite a small church, so we are mindful about being organised. If you have multiple meetings during the week, ensure that everyone knows their roles. We can do minor things which have a big impact."

In Chippenham, **Ladyfield Evangelical Church** is located on a post-war housing estate. Andrew McFarlane, deacon and trustee, has a professional background in security.

"The Health and Safety at Work Act says you need to reduce risk as far as is reasonably practical. Using available resources, do what you can until the cost and impact is grossly disproportionate to the benefit. It's all about balance. One of our trustees is a primary school head teacher so is familiar with dealing with risk. We've been talking about how we manage potential threats for a while, but it was the introduction of Martyn's Law which really got us thinking about it.

We have a lovely glazed foyer which means that everyone can see into the church building, but if we needed to invacuate because of a security incident, the only routes out are through the foyer or a fire escape, both leading on to the road. We are considering creating an emergency exit from the worship hall into the internal courtyard at the back of the building. There is no perceived threat locally, but we want to be ready and prepared."

Andrew believes that churches can still be welcoming and accessible while planning for emergencies. "Be risk-aware, not risk-averse, reduce that as far is practical and just get on with things."

Find out more...

To find out more about Martyn's Law, you can read our new Practical Guide. Scan the QR code to download and share it with the team.



Scan...



Written by
Ruth Leigh
Ruth is a novelist and freelance writer who works with a number of Christian charities. She lives in beautiful East Suffolk with three children, one husband and a cat.



Creating a safe church culture

Safeguarding as an expression of Christian love

By Sue Harrison

Safeguarding is about much more than policies and procedures. Sue Harrison from Christian Safeguarding Services explores how churches can build a culture where caring for people well becomes a natural expression of Christian love – and why small, practical steps can make a real difference.

At its core, safeguarding is about people – protecting them, honouring them and creating church communities where everyone feels safe, valued and cared for. When churches embrace safeguarding as a ministry of love rather than an administrative obligation, they begin to cultivate a culture that reflects the character of Christ.

At Christian Safeguarding Services (CSS), we believe that if churches meet the standard set in Scripture around caring for people well, they will exceed the standards of best practice set by government.

What does a healthy safeguarding culture look like?

A healthy safeguarding culture is one where safety is woven naturally into the life of the church – it's part of the church's DNA. It is visible in the way leaders speak, the way volunteers serve, how members treat each other and the way newcomers are welcomed.

In such a culture:

- People feel able to raise concerns early and without fear
- Leaders model humility, accountability and transparency
- Children, young people and adults know they will be listened to
- Safeguarding is seen as part of discipleship, not a separate compliance activity.

This kind of culture is not created overnight. It grows through consistent, intentional practice – small steps taken faithfully over time.

More than preventing harm

Safeguarding is often associated primarily with children's ministry, but a safe church culture must also embrace adults who have care and support needs, visitors, those receiving pastoral care and anyone who may be at risk.

Churches regularly encounter people experiencing loneliness, mental health challenges, domestic abuse, financial hardship, bereavement or spiritual distress, as well as families and individuals for whom life can be challenging because of drug or alcohol dependency.

A safe culture protects adults from exploitation, manipulation or coercion by church leaders or other members. It means pastoral conversations are handled with sensitivity, visitors are welcomed warmly but safely and those with additional needs are supported with dignity and respect.

Caring well for adults

Churches can care well for adults by embedding simple but meaningful practices.

Pastoral support should be offered by trained individuals who understand confidentiality and safe boundaries, with clear ways for people to seek help or disclose concerns. Churches should also be attentive to signs of distress or vulnerability in adults, not just children, while creating environments where visitors feel safe without feeling scrutinised.

The role of church leaders and trustees

Leaders and trustees play a crucial role in shaping culture. Their attitudes, decisions and behaviours set the tone for the whole church.

A safe culture requires leaders who champion safeguarding as a ministry of caring for each other well. That means encouraging open conversations about safety and wellbeing, supporting and resourcing the Designated Safeguarding Lead and modelling accountability. It also means ensuring safeguarding is integrated into mission, worship, governance and pastoral practice.

Small steps make a difference

Small steps can make a dramatic difference to safeguarding:

- Review how newcomers are welcomed and supported.
- Ensure all leaders and volunteers complete appropriate training.
- Embed safeguarding messages in preaching, prayer and leadership meetings.
- Encourage a culture of early reporting and open communication.
- Regularly reflect on how safe people feel within the church community.

Growing a safer culture

Many churches worry that they are behind or not doing enough. The good news is that safeguarding culture is built gradually. Every improvement – no matter how small – strengthens the safety and wellbeing of the church family.

What matters most is a willingness to learn, grow and care well for people. Safeguarding is not about perfection; it is about faithfulness. It is about reflecting God's heart for justice, protection and compassion.

When churches embrace safeguarding as an expression of Christian love, they become places where people flourish.



Written by

Sue Harrison

Sue Harrison co-founded Christian Safeguarding Services with her husband, Paul. Both grew up as pastors' children, giving them a deep understanding of church life. Together, they are passionate about helping churches develop safe, healthy and biblically faithful safeguarding practices.

Building for the future

Stewarding today's buildings for tomorrow's Gospel

By Sharon Short

Church buildings are more than bricks and mortar. They are places where people have come to faith, communities have gathered and generations have worshipped God. Caring for these buildings and planning wisely for their future, is an important part of faithful stewardship.

When we think about stewardship, it is easy to focus on today's needs. The leaking roof. The ageing boiler. The next church event. Yet good stewardship also asks a different question:

"How can we ensure this building continues to serve the Gospel long after we are gone?"

For many churches, that question becomes increasingly important as trustees retire, congregations change and responsibilities become more complex.

Thinking about the future is not a sign that something is wrong. It is simply part of caring well for what God has entrusted to us.

Looking beyond today

Many churches have faithfully served their communities from the same building for decades, sometimes well over a century. Those buildings have witnessed conversions, baptisms, weddings and funerals. They have hosted children's clubs, youth groups, community events and countless conversations about faith. But every generation



has also inherited the responsibility of passing that legacy on. The buildings we enjoy today are only here because previous generations made wise decisions on behalf of those who would come after them. Now it is our turn.

More than maintaining a building

Stewardship is not simply about repairing roofs or decorating halls. It is about ensuring that the practical foundations of church life remain strong enough for ministry to flourish.

That includes maintaining the building, keeping accurate records, understanding how the property is held and ensuring that trusteeship arrangements remain appropriate as circumstances change.

These things may not always feel like ministry, but they help protect places where ministry happens.

Planning before a crisis

Many churches only begin asking questions about trusteeship when circumstances force the issue.

Perhaps a long-serving trustee retires. Perhaps important property documents cannot be found.

Perhaps no one is quite sure who the legal trustees are. Or a church simply begins asking what will happen to the building in years to come. These situations are more common than many churches realise, and they develop gradually over many years. Taking time to review your current arrangements before problems arise gives churches more options for the future.

Planning for the future does not mean expecting the worst. It means recognising that every church will experience change. Good stewardship means asking whether today's arrangements will continue to serve tomorrow's ministry. Sometimes the answer is yes. Sometimes small changes can make life much easier for future church leaders. The important thing is to ask the question before decisions become urgent.

You do not need have to navigate it alone

One of the biggest concerns churches express is simply not knowing where to begin.

Questions about trusteeship, property ownership and legal responsibilities can feel unfamiliar, particularly for smaller churches led entirely by volunteers.

The good news is that you do not need to have all the answers before starting the conversation.

Many churches find that simply understanding how their property is held brings reassurance and helps them plan more confidently for the future. Taking time to explore the options available can prevent unnecessary difficulties later.

Stewarding a legacy

Every generation inherits the faithful work of those who have gone before. Our responsibility is not simply to care for today's church building, but to ensure it remains a place where future generations can hear the good news of Jesus Christ. That is faithful stewardship. And it is one more way we honour the Lord in all we do.

Church Growth Trust's new guide, Church Property & Trusteeship helps churches understand their property and trusteeship arrangements, explore their options and plan for the future.

Scan the QR code to download your free copy.



Written by

Sharon Short

CGT Communications Manager

sharon.short@churchgrowth.org.uk

01536 201339







Bearing fruit through good practice

How good stewardship makes a lasting difference

By Ruth Leigh

Church Growth Trust (CGT) is privileged to work with chapels and church buildings all over England. Complying with various safety standards and regulations is a significant part of stewarding properties for the Kingdom. Ruth Leigh spoke to four churches who have recently carried out work to keep their properties compliant, modelling good stewardship to their communities.



Stage in worship area, Rock Church

Rock Church Bideford moved into its new premises in March 2025. A month later, pastor Peter Simpson began project managing a significant programme of accessibility improvements with oversight from CGT, including a new access ramp, lift and a


Main worship area before...


...and after, Rock Church

replacement heating system. The work began last spring and the church aims to have it completely finished by the end of September. CGT produced detailed drawings for the project as well as advising on grant applications.

"Jonathan told us that we had five years to install the lift," explains Peter. "However, we have a member of the congregation who is wheelchair-bound. We started the work straight away and now the lift is used constantly. A core group of church members and two tradesmen linked to and in our congregation have done a vast amount of work. My wife is an interior designer and has used her skills to make the interior welcoming, homely and pleasing to the eye. We saved a lot by doing much of the work ourselves, although we used contractors for complex jobs like installing the lift, accessible toilets and electrics. A company connected to a church member provided much of this work."

The local community is really engaging with the project and the building can now be used for all sorts of events, services and activities in the coming years ahead.

"Everyone has worked incredibly hard, but at the end of the day, it's all about God's grace and being persistent. We waited 14 years for our own building. We've done the work with all our hearts and it has given us so many new opportunities to tell our community about Him."

Jonathan Bennett is the Property Manager at Church Growth Trust. "It was complex getting the ramp in on the small frontage and sourcing the lift on a sensible budget. We had to think about the aesthetics and get approval for the Building Regulations, but Peter project managed and kept an eye on everything."


Bethany Chapel, Wolverhampton

Bethany Chapel in Wolverhampton is a small fellowship in a building constructed in 1962. With a congregation of 12-16, financial resources are limited. But the Lord has always supplied every need, as Pastor Gary Edwards explains.

"Over the years, we have had to do various repair and compliance work. God has always gone ahead of us and the money has been found. When CGT did a survey recently, the fire risk assessment revealed that we needed to install a fire alarm. We got various quotes, some of which were extremely high, but found a local tradesperson who had worked with other churches we knew. CGT offered us a loan, but we didn't need it. They are incredibly proactive and supportive to us which is a great help."

The chapel sits on a large plot across which people would often walk. The quote for a fence was very expensive. "My wife is an avid gardener, and she said, 'Gary, just grow a hedge.' So we did."


New hedging at Bethany Chapel



Church entrance before work, Welby Lane

In Leicestershire, a church with a storied history has made changes to their building to provide a welcoming and accessible space. **Welby Lane Mission Church** in Melton Mowbray started life as a tent mission in the 1930s. A philanthropic local Christian bought a generous plot of land on which the original wooden church hut was built. Over the years, new extensions were added until in around 1990, the hut was demolished and a new brick central room added. In the days of the tent and the wooden structure, accessibility and compliance were not at the forefront of anyone's mind. All of that changed when the Deacon responsible for the building, Chris Jordan, came to the church 10 years ago.

"I had been there for a fortnight when the man who was in charge of the property came to me with the keys in his hand, told me he couldn't do it anymore and handed me both keys and responsibility! I hadn't even become a church member at that point. Over the next few years, I worked hard to re-establish the building as an asset, but it was the realisation that we were not accessible that drove us to start investigating compliance."



New frontage, Welby Lane

The porch doors opened inwards and there were three steps up to the building, the interior needed work and the ceilings and floors were long overdue to be replaced. Chris knew where to go when it was time to start planning the project.

"I said we should approach Church Growth Trust to get an assessment for the way forward. Jonny Heaney provided the building plan for us, giving us as much extra space at the front as possible. To our amazement, when we put the planning application in, it was accepted with no objections. We now have a glazed entrance space with bifold doors which has given our building a more open and welcoming aspect and opened us up to our community. We are on a busy road, opposite a T-junction, so people are constantly walking past. Since we did the work, several new families have joined us and we are now fully accessible."

CGT were able to signpost the fellowship towards grants which helped with the project expenses. Chris has good advice for any

churches considering this kind of work. “Dip your toe in and see what you can do. Be adventurous. You may be surprised at what can be achieved with God’s help.”

Waterloo Road Chapel in Birmingham found themselves in a similar situation to Bethany Chapel. Like them, they have a small congregation of around 16 but regularly welcome up to 40 people to their weekly coffee morning. Having carried out a fire risk assessment and electrical safety inspection, they undertook a substantial programme of fire and electrical safety improvements. Jonathan Bennett was impressed by the church’s commitment to completing the recommended work.

“The chapel prioritised the necessary actions when urgent items were flagged up and just got on with it. They chose to invest some of their resources into work which had to be done and met the challenge with grace and proactivity.”

Elder Richard Beresford takes up the story.

“CGT gave us the number of someone who could carry out the fire risk assessment, and we are fortunate to have two very handy trustees who did some of the work themselves. We used a trusted local tradesman for the bigger jobs and were very blessed to have the financial resources to meet the costs of the work we had to do. The Lord knew it was coming and prepared us. We had to put in some fire doors, replace glass, spray our dried flower arrangements with fire retardant, buy fire horns, put up emergency lighting and fire exit signs, change some of our elderly wiring and fuse boxes and put up more smoke detectors. We also connected our fire alarm system to my phone, so I get a notification if there is an issue.”



Above: *Emergency lighting and smoke detectors, Waterloo Road Chapel*

Richard has advice for churches who find themselves in this kind of position.

“Trust in God. It has to be a joint effort. We all pulled together and we wanted people who come to our building to see that we are safe and compliant for everyone.”

These four churches have faced compliance challenges and met them, with the help and support of CGT and through trusting the Lord. If you need help with a compliance issue, CGT can help.
Email enquiries@churchgrowth.org.uk or call 01536 201339 to speak to one of our team.



Written by
Ruth Leigh



Ready to welcome

What churches can learn from welcoming 3,200 young people

By Bekah Winstone

With unstoppable love at its heart, SPREE South West brought thousands of young people together for a joyful weekend of faith, friendship and belonging — and no one was left out.

More than 3,200 children, young people and leaders from churches across the South West gathered this summer for SPREE South West, a festival for 8-17 year olds. An incredible weekend for building friendships, exploring faith and having fun through a wide variety of activities – from fairground rides and sports tournaments to axe throwing and craft workshops there was plenty for everyone to get involved with and create lasting memories.

The event is run by South West Youth Ministries (SWYM), a charity with a vision to see every child and young person across the South West encounter Jesus, come to know Him and make a choice to live for more.

This year's programme centred on the theme 'God's Unstoppable Love', with young people engaging in worship and exploring the book of 1 John together. It was an inspiring weekend, with 250 children and young people making a first-time commitment to following Jesus. The impact of the weekend could be seen in deeply personal moments. One group leader recalled: "One child described prayer by saying they felt 'a warm blanket' of God's love over them. Our group also saw two children give their lives to Jesus."

A highlight from this year was launching a new space called Belong, a venue during the main session times specifically for children and young people with acute additional needs. Recognising that the larger venues are not accessible for everyone, the team created a

welcoming and inclusive environment where the weekend's theme could be explored in an engaging and appropriate way. Nearly 20 young people signed-up for the weekend, and outside of session times the venue became a sensory space for any children or young people who needed some time to regulate and rest. This space was highly appreciated and the team are excited to grow this in the years to come.

For families, the difference made by Belong was profound. One parent shared: "One of the things I valued most was that my child was able to worship—but so was I, as their parent and carer. That was hugely appreciated."

On top of the dedicated venue we also had sensory spaces in all six main venues for children and young people who needed space to regulate using a variety of sensory resources and then encouraged to engage back in the main session. In all these spaces and the Belong venue we had things like water beads, coloured rice with resources added to them to create a space for story telling. We had graphic bibles to support those for whom reading is more challenging and some quieter acoustic worship and creative prayer activities using bubbles, scarves and air-dry clay so people could pray and worship with their hands as well as their voices. Finally we had an British Sign Language interpreter all weekend and visual timetables to help children and young people know the structure of the seasons and what was coming next.."

The thoughtful provision made a tangible difference. One parent reflected: "Our daughter came home from a big event without being dysregulated for the first time, which was such a blessing. She loved the new sensory space." The team also saw encouraging moments of connection, including a selectively mute child who engaged with the Belong team in remarkable ways. SPREE is only possible due to the generosity of volunteers giving up their time to serve and support us across the weekend. This year we had 256 people helping, stewarding, cleaning toilets, leading activities, speaking, or overseeing venues. Each volunteer played a vital role in creating a safe, welcoming and memorable experience for everyone who attended. We provide training for all volunteers on safeguarding, health and safety and safe prayer ministry as well as exploring SWYM's values to create a safe and serving community over the weekend. Every adult on site was safer recruited and we have a dedicated Safeguarding team over the weekend to manage and support youth and children's leaders with any issues or concerns.

SPREE returns in 2027

Next year SPREE South West 2027 will be held at Westpoint Showground, Exeter, on the 25-27 June 2027 and we are exploring a BELONG village to provide space for parents/carers of those with acute additional needs and those who have been fostered/ adopted to camp together and be supported by the Home for Good/Safer Families.

We simply want to make sure every child and young person can feel welcome, included and belong in a Christian event with no one left out. Scan the code or visit www.swym.org.uk/spree-sw for details.



Written by

Bekah Winstone

Bekah is Communications Coordinator for SWYM, a charity with a vision to see every child and young person across the South West encounter Jesus, come to know Him and make a choice to live for more.

Church outside the building



Taking the Gospel to the heart of the community

In Dawlish, Mark and Jo Jones are discovering what can happen when church moves beyond its walls—building friendships, sharing meals and bringing the love of Jesus into everyday life.

Dawlish in South Devon has all the things you might expect from a seaside resort. Away from the postcards, buckets and spades, however, the town has issues around social isolation, debt, social and food poverty and like many seaside communities, an historic Class A drugs problem.

Mark and Jo Jones know all about the less positive side of Dawlish.

"It's a smaller town which attracts none of the urban priority funding. Mental health problems are endemic and there are rising problems with anti-social behaviour."

The Joneses helped to set up the charity **Redeeming Our Communities (ROC Dawlish)** in 2017, working together with other churches. Jo says, "We started with an after-school club and now run multiple projects in all the local schools, along with family mentoring and the Dawlish Community Larder. We work with everyone – the local MP, police, charities, local counsellors and the teaching staff at schools. Goodwill is rife."

ROC Dawlish is seen as a 'trusted friend' in the town, since they rolled their sleeves up during Covid and helped in a practical way.

"ROC Dawlish is an interface between the church and the community," explains Jo. "We want to draw people in the church out of their comfort zone and into our town, while at the same time forming intentional relationships. We've seen wonderful things happen in that space."

Alongside ROC Dawlish, they also help run MC Family which doesn't have a building or a traditional church model. It is a missional

community (MC), a fresh expression of church based around meals, parties and gatherings, Jesus-style. “We’re not a house church, or just Christians sitting together doing Bible studies, although we’ve got nothing against that,” says Mark. “We are friends of the lost and hurting, out in our community actively befriending people. Like the early church, we meet in each other’s homes a lot. During Covid, our hearts were yearning to be more involved with people in Dawlish and we recognised that there was a significant relational gap between community and church.”



Baptism in the river

Amidst their drop-in café and intentional social events, Mark and Jo look on themselves as missionaries to Dawlish. Mark explains: “We’ve met all kinds of colourful characters and learned the intricacies of their language, so we can translate the Gospel into their vernacular, just like good missionaries should. In fact, they’ve shown us how to live effectively in the ‘jungle’ of 21st century life. MC Family goes out to love and welcome some unexpected people, earning the right to share our faith. We’re also seeing some crossover from ROC Dawlish, with our first larder client having been baptised, and some have gone from clients to volunteers, or even members of our core team.”

Mark and Jo met one family through tragedy, taking the funeral of a 23 year old who died of an accidental overdose. “His mother then got lung cancer. We took her to multiple medical appointments and visited her in hospital, building a relationship with the whole family. When we first met, she said to us, ‘I’m not religious. I’d never come to your house.’ But she did, because we did our best to love her like family. She started praying just before she died, and she was baptised in hospital with the whole family around her. We are now in intentional relationships with everyone in her family.”

Mark, Jo and the team are learning how to share the Gospel in a culturally-relevant way in their community. They are pioneering, using mostly dialogue, not monologue, creating a context where people can receive the Gospel in a language they understand.

“We live this way because that’s what Jesus did. He was always on the ‘other’ side of town with the ‘other’ kind of people. When we see Him in the gospels, he was either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming away from a meal. We want to live the same way, offering radical Christian hospitality. It’s essentially friendship evangelism with the whole Gospel gone wild. We’re training people to go further out to reach more people – a Gospel multiplication movement, if you like.”

Essentially, like the early church, the team at MC Family are going out into their community, spreading the good news and loving their neighbours with Gospel intentionality.

Discover more

Find out how MC Family is building relationships, sharing Jesus and creating a missional community beyond the walls of a traditional church.

Visit **www.missionalcommunityfamily.org**



Written by

Mark and Jo Jones

Mark and Jo Jones live as a family on mission for Jesus, helping people in their community find love, hope and faith through shared meals and celebrations. They are unsalaried and live by faith. To support their work, visit: www.stewardship.org.uk/partners/markandjojones.

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Get support on the ABC journey of disability inclusion





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Chief Executive: Giles Arnold

Operations Director: Garryl Willis

Property Manager: Jonathan Bennett

Trustees:
Neil Walker (Chair), Richard Canham, Simon David, Richard Jones, Kevin Russell, Susanna Sanlon, Mark Wallace, Paul Withams.

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Your experts in church properties

We help independent churches grow by providing professional property support, from trusteeship and architectural advice to ongoing management. Through our links with Counties and GLO Europe, we also support church planting and revitalisation.

Our aim is to help churches thrive at the heart of their communities by keeping church buildings in Gospel use and fit for purpose. We bring practical support, professional expertise and a passion to serve the Church and see God's Kingdom grow.

Church Growth Trust
The Barn, 1 Manor Farm Barns, Baines Lane, Seaton, Oakham, LE15 9HP
01536 201339 • enquiries@churchgrowth.org.uk
www.churchgrowth.org.uk

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