

Considerations for churches before allowing filming



Occasionally film production companies will contact churches asking to film in their buildings. Allowing a film crew to use your church as a filming location can bring several practical, financial, and community benefits. However, there are risks involved which as well must be considered.

Questions to ask about purpose and nature of the filming

- What is the purpose of the production — news, documentary, drama, advertisement, or feature film?
- Does the content align with the church's mission and values?
- Will any scenes or dialogue take place within the church that might be irreverent, controversial, or misleading about Christian belief or practice?
- Ask to review the relevant script sections or treatment before agreeing.

Authority and permissions

- The incumbent and PCC (or in the case of an interregnum, PCC and churchwardens) must approve any filming on church property.
- For complex or commercial projects, consult the Diocesan Office or Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC).
- If the church is a cathedral, permission will come from the Dean and Chapter.
- If the building is listed or contains valuable historic fabric, additional oversight may be needed.

Impact on worship and church life

- Ensure filming will not disrupt services, pastoral activities, weddings, or funerals.
- Confirm whether the building will need to close to visitors during filming.
- Think about how filming may affect the church's spiritual atmosphere and community use.

Location agreement

- Always require a written agreement outlining:
 - Dates and times of filming
 - Spaces used (nave, churchyard, vestry, etc.)
 - Access for setup and breakdown
 - Behavioural standards on site
 - Liability, insurance, and health & safety responsibilities
 - Financial arrangements (fees or donations)

Fees and Donations

- Consider charging a location fee appropriate to the scale of production.
- For small-scale, community, or educational filming, a donation may be more suitable.
- Check whether extra costs (e.g., heating, lighting, supervision) should be covered.

Insurance and Risk

- The production company must provide evidence of public liability insurance.
- Ensure adequate cover for any damage, accidents, or loss.
- Agree clearly who is responsible for reinstating or cleaning the church afterward.

Respect for the Sacred Space

- Make clear that the church is a place of worship, not a general film set.
- Filming must not involve:
 - Disrespectful use of the altar or sacred objects
 - Alterations to fixtures or fittings
 - Inappropriate costumes or behaviour
- Supervision by a church representative is recommended throughout filming.

Privacy and Safeguarding

- If the filming involves the public or church members make sure consent is obtained for anyone (especially children or vulnerable adults) appearing on camera.
- Ensure compliance with data protection and safeguarding policies.

Publicity and Credits

- Confirm whether the church will be named or identifiable on screen.
- Decide if and how the church wishes to be credited.
- Agree on whether the church can use the finished film for promotional or historical record purposes.

Post-Filming Review

- Inspect the church after filming to ensure no damage or disruption remains.
- Confirm that all agreed fees/donations have been paid.
- Record lessons learned for future filming requests.