
POLICY – HALL AND BUILDING LETTINGS – FEES AND TIME

Realities

We are obliged by law to make the best use of our resources for the aims and objectives of our charity – which we would describe as the mission of the church. This means that, under charity law, we are bound to make a fair return from our resources and that any discount or funding needs to be in line with our mission. There is also the obvious reality that, without charging for the use of our facilities, we will not be able to maintain them for the use of any group, church or community.

Charging, then, is a necessity; but, the system by which we charge, and any decisions about discounting and funding need to be done in such a way that it is equitable between groups and evidently in line with our aims and objectives. Allied to this, we also need to ensure that choices about whom we let to, and how we share out the limited resources of time and space reflect the church's aims and objectives. Both fees and time will need to work to the same set of principles.

Making Choices – Models for Reflection

If church members ran a business from the hall, they could argue for a discount: they're members, give time and money to the church, they draw people into church. They might even argue the church should have a policy of enabling business (work contributes to the wellbeing of people and community) perhaps with a discount for new starters and church members. In some economic climates this would be an amazing project; but there are greater needs in the community and the church. We can conclude though that we do need to make choices – a good idea does not mean it's the right choice at this time.

If church members started a model aeroplane club, they could argue for a discount much like the business owners above. They could add to their list fellowship, creativity, enabling potential; but what if they added...

- We want to open it up to the public, with the aim of creating a Christian Fellowship that prays for the faith journey of those who come, intentionally looks for ways of inviting non-church members into the worshipping and discipleship life of the church and, as relationships grow, invite and accompany people on Alpha, Emmaus, Pilgrim, etc.

OR

- We want to approach our schools to invite young people who they see as 'going off the rails' to participate and, with the agreement of carers and children, intentionally setting up mentoring relationships.

Clearly, either of these would be much more closely aligned with the aims and objectives of the church. Our choices about time and fees need to lie with the activities that are more fully in line with the church's mission. It's not that other groups are not important, simply that with limited resources, we need to prioritise those that are most aligned with our mission. Even being a church group is not enough, it's about how much they fulfil the aims and objectives of the church.

- What if it were a non-church group are doing the work with young people? This still remains in line with the church's mission, better that someone develop a creative mentoring project than no one do it.
- After some years, circumstance or choice meant that they were no longer fulfilling their mission role. A history with the church does not, of itself, give the group a missional status, it is about what its activities are at the moment.
- Another group wants to launch, mentoring young people but making model boats. The church would need to decide whether we genuinely have the time/need to host a group so similar; but a group with similar aims but different method e.g. rock school; or similar method, different aims e.g. learning-disabled adults; may well get support.

Charging Policy

Core Activities - free

These are activities at the core of our mission – worship, occasional offices (baptism and marriage preparation) and evangelism. In addition, the launch establishing of fellowship, discipleship and outreach activities; and, by agreement, the enabling of external community groups and small businesses to get started (this doesn't include groups moving venue).

Mission and Discipleship Activities – 50% discount

These are activities which are linked broadly with those things that were a priority for Jesus – e.g. children and youth, healing, social justice in line with the values of the Kingdom of God, the poor, the marginalised.

We need to be careful here. As in the model aeroplane club illustration – simply being a church group that draws people from the community does not make it a group that is reaching out to serve and to heal or to enable people to hear the Gospel.

Non-church groups can be considered for this rate where their activities are in line with the outreach aims and objectives of the church. e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous, uniformed youth organisations, homelessness group, debt counselling, carers group.

Fellowship Activities – 25% discount

Whether it is church members throwing a party, or interest groups run by the church, these have an important place in the life of the church and the wider community. For these groups to qualify for the 50% rate, their activities would need to have a mission priority at the core of what they are doing. e.g. model aeroplane club that took wide a range of children, but as a core activity was actively including and supporting children struggling to stay in education.

Community Groups and Businesses – Full Rate

All other groups and individuals, so long as their activities are not contrary to the values and mission of the church.

Conclusion

We have an amazing facility and resource available to us and to the community. It is our responsibility under God and in Law to manage these with good financial responsibility and in line with our church mission, aims and objectives.