

## GDPR & PRAYER REQUESTS

Please note that **an individual who asks for prayers relating themselves, or immediate family is not covered by GDPR or the Data Protection Act 2018 because it has been asked in a personal capacity** and they may disclose any information they wish to be made public. The Working Party takes a pragmatic and sensitive approach the interpretation of GDPR and therefore includes 'immediate family' in the interpretation of 'personal capacity'. This should be limited to spouses, parent/child relationships and siblings only and includes civil partnerships and step parent/child/sibling relationships.

Similarly, **verbal prayer requests are not covered by the data protection legislation** because it is not written. However, the request, nor the prayer itself, should not be recorded in any way.

Where it becomes more complicated is where prayers are requested from non-immediate family members and reveals an individual's health information. In order to disclose this information, the consent of the individual concerned is required, or from their immediate family as described above if consent cannot be obtained from the individual themselves. Church members should bear in mind that not everybody is happy for their health information to be publicly known and that GDPR does not make any distinction between physical and mental health issues. They should also bear this in mind when verbal prayer requests are made by members of the congregation.

If you are unable to verify whether or not consent has been given then no health information relating to that person should be disclosed. If Minister's or preachers do not know who has made the prayer request, perhaps because the prayer book is open to general members of the public, then it is suggested that a notice is placed alongside the book. The notice should clearly state that health information should not be disclosed without the individual's consent and that by completing the prayer request, the Methodist Church will assume that the person making the request does have consent of the individual in question.

Also, regarding **written prayer requests**, in addition to non-disclosure of health information without consent, **prayer requests should be limited to Christian name only** in order to protect the individual as much as possible.