

## ST AUGUSTINE'S

## Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Version Control**

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
6 <sup>th</sup> August 2020	5	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

*This update includes risk factors around the requirement to wear face coverings in places of worship from 8<sup>th</sup> August.*

Churches and cathedrals have been legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13<sup>th</sup> June. House of Bishops guidance provided for churches to open for funerals from 15<sup>th</sup> June. Public worship, with measures in place for social distancing, are allowed from 4<sup>th</sup> July. Other activities, except for a few still prohibited by law, may also take place in churches, subject to the government guidance in place for the relevant sector.

The [government guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic](#) requires a COVID-19 risk assessment to be carried out for every building and site open to the public. This document provides a template risk assessment, with links to the relevant advice notes. It relates to opening up church and cathedral buildings to clergy and members of the public entering for any permitted purposes. As well as offering guidance on best-practice, it is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for any or all of these purposes or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context. You should read the advice on re-opening buildings and the guidance on public worship before completing this assessment. Both are available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Future versions of this document will be produced when there is any substantive change to the guidance on the safe use of places of worship.

A separate risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers is available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

## Carrying out a risk assessment

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
  - Private prayer (clergy only)
  - Livestreaming services (clergy only)
  - Private prayer (general public)
  - Public worship
  - Rites of passage services
  - Opening for visitors and tourists

2. Consider the hazards:
  - Transmission of COVID-19
  - Hazards arising from the temporary closure of the church
  - Hazards arising from now using the church in a different way

Read the guidance and think about how it relates specifically to your church. What constraints are there? Consider how people will arrive at the church, including if they will need to wait or queue outside; how people will enter and leave the church; circulation inside: from the entrance to the worship space and out again; circulation within the worship space; also access to other areas including the toilet(s).

3. Consider who might be harmed and how? Read the guidance and think about how the activities you are planning will affect different groups of people. The risks are not different for larger churches so long as they are properly managed, but having more people coming through your building makes the possible impact – for example of someone with COVID-19 coming into contact with others – higher than in smaller venues with fewer people. Consider your particular circumstances and adapt the checklist below as appropriate.
4. Using the risk assessment checklist below as a template:
  - add in mitigations for any risks that are particular to your circumstances that may not be on the list;
  - record what you need to do for each activity to go ahead safely;
  - consider any equipment you need and any temporary changes you might need to make to the church;
  - check back against your list of activities to confirm which ones can go ahead and when.

**Risk assessment template**

<b>Church:</b> St Augustine's	<b>Assessor's name:</b> Parochial Church Council	<b>Date completed:</b>	<b>Review date:</b>
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming</b>  <a href="#">General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.</a>	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	NE corner Exit: Porch and old Clergy Door	PP	n/a
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	<i>An example can be <a href="#">found here.</a></i>		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Yes, 1hour	PP	9/6
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Cleaned before reopening. Socially-distance cleaning to resume		
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See <a href="#">Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</a> Yes	PP	9/6
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Disconnected elects still off. Heating serviced and working	n/a	
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Font emptied. Water blessed at Vigil is in font: cover remains on	PP	
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	<i>See below</i>	1) PP 2) PP 3) PP 4)	23/5 23/5 23/5
	1) Extension lead along wall of S aisle 2) Mixing desk & mic in S choir: isolated. 3) Laptop on stand & Wi-fi dongle on ambo – Readers only enter ambo from south: OK			

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	4) Radio mic for responses.			
<b>Deciding whether to open to the public</b>	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	? n/a		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Done	PP	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	For consideration by PCC		
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	<a href="#">Apply here.</a> n/a		
	Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.	Mass sheet, emails, FB posts	pp	
<b>Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism</b>	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	Dusting and sweeping <del>to be</del> done by non-vulnerable volunteers.	Organised by Wardens	
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).	<i>Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a></i>		
	Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law requiring these for all except those exempt.	Signs produced. All complying	pp	
	Choose one point of entry into the church to manage flow of people and indicate this with notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different exit.	<i>See below</i>		
	Private Prayer: Use porch for both Entry and Exit; suggest that able-bodied leave via the old Clergy Door.  Mass: Before mass traffic is almost exclusively one way: IN, and spread over time. After mass, traffic is almost exclusively one way: mass structured so that people leave in ones and twos			

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	Use porch for both Entry and Exit; In warmer months, suggest that able-bodied leave via the old Clergy Door. Discourage leaving the building during mass.  Funerals & Weddings: Traffic is all one-way, both In and Out. Use main Porch. Remind to maintain social distancing. Discourage leaving the building during the service.				
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Queuing not likely.			
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	<i>See below</i>		Staffing	
	<u>Warmer Months:</u> Private Prayer, Wedding & Funerals: Leave both set of porch doors, and Lady Chapel windows, open Mass: As above. Also leave old Clergy Door, open, staffed by Welcomers. Place “Keep open” notices on open doors. <u>Colder months:</u> Heaters provide sufficient movement of air. Windows and doors can be closed.				
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Books and Literature removed		PP	28/6
	Turn book cup'd against books. Place Warden's pew fronts against remaining books. Superfluous literature removed from back of church, tract case closed				
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Pricket stands <b>moved</b> to inside communion rail			
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	<i>See below</i>			
	All removed to Lady Chapel. Personal cushions to be removed and brought on each occasion. Midweek masses – vinyl-covered chairs at altar rail (warmer months) and in Lady Chapel (colder months).				

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Secure at back of Lady Chapel		
	Walk through the church to plan for physical distancing in seats, aisles, at the altar rail, including safe flow of visitors. Remember 2m in all directions from each person (or 1m with risk mitigation if absolutely necessary).	<i>See below</i>		
	One-way system – down centre aisle, up side aisles. A5 self-produced one-way signs on pew ends. 3x floor signs at top of aisles; central nave markings at 2m intervals Exceptions: Funerals; Weddings – couple only to walk back up centre aisle. Lady Chapel: Space vinyl chairs to comply with Social Distancing. Place “Do not sit here” signs for 72 hours on used seats (NB Wi-fi available for midweek masses in winter months).			
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	<i>See below</i>		
	Self-produced “Sit here” signs blu-tacked to pews (see Signage Sheet) to ensure Social Distancing Barrier rope to easily facilitates excluded zones. Private Prayer, Weddings & Funerals: Restrict area of Nave to be used (1/3 or 1/2 of one side) by roping-off sections of Nave not to be used.			
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	One-way arrows on floor of porch		
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Cordon off central gap to communion rail as necessary.		
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Registered with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options. With Welcomer in porch; Communion Steward		
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult <a href="#">advice on gaining temporary permissions</a> . None identified		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	2m and Hand washing – Yes, self-produced. Porch & Toilets		
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	<i>Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a></i> Materials procured. Tops of pew ends, tops of chairs, altar rail and vulnerable surfaces wiped-down by those staffing	PCC Staffing	
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Registered with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options. Hand sanitiser at doors and Communion Steward, Toilets & Sacristy: towel dispensers provided		
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Registered with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options. <i>See below</i>		
	Paper towel dispensers in toilets. Liquid soap bottles marked; refill sachets/containers procured. All visitors to Toilets to be accompanied: ‘check what need cleaning, and check soap is available’ - and that soap remains. Collapsible bins in Gents’ & Ladies’.			
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Large one <b>moved</b> from Hall to by book cup’d. Rolls of liners to be bought.	Working party	
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days	NHS QR Code displayed Tick-box attendance sheets in use Data Protection Permission forms available on first visit		

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	Give due notice of the resumption of use of the building to neighbours, congregation and wider community, ensuring that visitors and worshippers will know what to expect when they come.	On St Augustine's FB page, Parish Group, email to all and post, with info on what to expect.	PP	17/7/20
<b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</b>  Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	If the church building has been closed for 72 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for extra cleaning to remove the virus from surfaces.	Suggest opening for private prayer only Wed pm/eve.		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	See above – n/a	n/a	
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	See above – n/a	n/a	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Registered with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options. See above - n/a	n/a	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	See above - n/a	n/a	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Whoever is staffing open period	Staffing	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Weekly and as necessary	Staffing	
<b>Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms</b>	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Yes		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	<a href="#">Public Health England guidance available here.</a>		
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>		