

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public: individual prayer and funerals

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 nd May 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
8 th June 2020	2	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
12 th June 2020	3	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

Churches and cathedrals are legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13th June. House of Bishops guidance provides for churches to open for funerals from 15th June.

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 individual private prayer. As well as offering guidance on best-practice, it is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for individual private prayer or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context.

Future versions of this document will be produced when different forms of public worship and access are allowed.

A risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers forms part of an updated document giving advice on access for these groups. This can be found on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Church: St. Mary's, Lower Swell	Assessor's name: Jolyon Grey	Date completed: 18 July 2020	Review date: First review 20/07/20
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	North Door to be used, clergy to have key	JG	
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Not relevant	JG	JG - 16/07/20
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Done	JG/HJ	JG/HJ 18/07/20
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Done	JG/HJ	JG/HJ 18/07/20
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Done	JG	JG - 18/07/20
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed.	Done	JG	JG - 18/07/20
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Checked	JG	JG - 18/07/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Preparation of the Church for individual prayer and funerals	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.			
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).	Done	JG/HJ	JG & HJ - 18/07/20
	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.	Will be South door to church, notices to be posted when opening date/s decided	JG	
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Done	JG/HJ	JG/HJ 18/07/20
	Remove from use all books (inc. hymn books and Bibles) plus leaflets except single use material that will be removed by user.	To be placed in off-limits area	JG/HJ	JG & HJ - 18/07/20
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items	Not relevant		
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Pew cushions and kneelers to be placed in off-limits area	JG/HJ	JG & HJ - 18/07/20
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Not relevant		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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.	Stickers to be used to mark out appropriate distancing	JG	JG - 18/07/20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Done	JG	JG - 18/7/20
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Stickers to be used	JG	JG - 18/07/20
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Cordon off North chancel	JG	JG - 18/07/20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Place on table by South door	JG	
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Considered, not necessary	JG	JG - 16/07/20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices procured, placement when opening date/s determined	JG	
	If the church has been used in the last 72 hours ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes.	Not likely to occur under current provisions for use		

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	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Checked	JG	JG - 18/07/20
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Checked, see above	JG	JG - 18/07/20
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Liners available	JG	JG - 18/07/20
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms) Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.	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.	Church will be closed for at least 72 hours between openings, except for sole clergy visits. Cleaning to be carried out prior to openings, in accordance with advice points set out below. Any contaminated waste to be removed after an opening.	JG/HJ	
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.			
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.			

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	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).			
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.			
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.			
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.			
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	In order to address the position where it is reported that someone with Coronavirus symptoms has visited the church, a list of names and contact details of visitors is to be taken at door on church openings.	JG/HJ	
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.			
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.			