

## Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

### Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
8 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	2	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
12 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	3	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
1st July 2020	4	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

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>	<b>Assessor's name:</b>	<b>Date completed:</b>	<b>Review date:</b>
St Thomas' Church High Lane	Shan Alexander	07/08/2020	4 <sup>th</sup> September 2020

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	Completed	*Church Wardens and Verger and the Vacancy team	* 15 <sup>th</sup> June and 7 <sup>th</sup> August 2020
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be <a href="#">found here</a> . Not Done as we do not have anyone working alone.		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Completed		
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Completed		
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See <a href="#">Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</a> Completed		
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Completed		
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Completed		
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Completed		
<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	PCC has discussed and agreed to open the church on the 6 <sup>th</sup>		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	the church are compatible.	September 2020		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Updated on church web site		
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Discussed at length. With an ageing congregation not sure how many will attend. We took a straw poll with those attending the Zoom Service and 14 out of 40 said would attend church Service in September 2020. At this point there is no need for a booking system.	Church Wardens.	9 <sup>th</sup> August 2020
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark	<a href="#">Apply here</a> . Not Applicable		
<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.	All Completed		
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here</a> . Deep clean has been carried out by cleaners on 24 <sup>th</sup> July and the 7 <sup>th</sup> August 2020 for a wedding due to be conducted on the 8 <sup>th</sup> August 2020.		
	Choose one point of entry into the church to manage flow of people and indicate this with notices, keeping	Completed. A one way system to be marked.		

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	emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different exit.			
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Sides persons will be in charge of safe distancing and checking the wearing of masks.		
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Two front doors will be kept open during the service		
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All removed. Individual weekly Service Sheets will be provided for worshippers and they will take them home with them. Service booklets will be retained and quarantined.		
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Pews cordoned according to 2 m social distancing and taking into account support bubbles of families		
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	We have considered this and have agreed to leave the cushions on the seats due to the aged congregation. We have now heard from the Archdeacon and we can keep the cushions which are glued to the seats and spray them after use. All kneelers will be removed.	7 <sup>th</sup> August 2020. Written to Archdeacon. Reply now received.	15 <sup>th</sup> June 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	All toys, books, crayons and other resources have been removed		15 <sup>th</sup> June 2020
	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).	2m distancing in seats have been done. There will be no one walking up the aisle other than the clergy, readers and those leading in prayer.		7 <sup>th</sup> August 2020
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	All seating clearly marked		
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	One way system in place. Entering through the front door and exiting via the hall and the back door.		
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Completed		
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options. We have already purchased items locally.		15 <sup>th</sup> June 2020
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult <a href="#">advice on gaining temporary permissions</a> . N/A		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Work in process.		
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here</a> . <b>Church has been deep</b>		

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		cleaned on 24 <sup>th</sup> July and 7 <sup>th</sup> August including the church Hall and toilets in preparation for the wedding on the 8 <sup>th</sup> August 2020.		
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options. Already done		
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options. Yes there is adequate supply of soap, gels and towels		
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Yes		
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	There is a book at the entrance for worshipers to enter their details. According to GDPR these record will be destroyed after 3 weeks.		
	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.	Notices will be in the Parish magazine, website and notices on the notice boards outside and inside the church building		
<b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone</b>	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.	Noted		

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<b>with Coronavirus symptoms)</b>  Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Noted		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Noted		
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options. Cleaners bring their own gloves and face coverings.		24 <sup>th</sup> July, 7 <sup>th</sup> August 2020,
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options. All cleaning materials will be provided to the cleaners.		24 <sup>th</sup> July 2020, and 7 <sup>th</sup> August and ongoing
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Church wardens and Verger		
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	As above		
<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.	<b>Noted</b>		
	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> <b>Noted</b>		
	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> <b>Noted</b>		



- \*All actions have been taken by the Church Wardens and Verger and the cleaning has been done by our cleaning contractors. After opening for private prayers a team carries out the cleaning. We have had full discussion with Rev Ann Hyde and Anthony Berry our Reader. Stuart Scoffins has also completed the government Health and Safety Executive's Risk Assessment for clarity and the process of thinking.
- \*All actions taken before we opened the church for private prayer on the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and reviewed regularly; then again by the 7<sup>th</sup> August before opening the church for the wedding.