

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

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
1st July 2020	4	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

St. George's Church, Benenden

Issue: 1

Date: 4th July 2020

Churches and cathedrals have been legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13th June. House of Bishops guidance provided for churches to open for funerals from 15th June. Public worship, with measures in place for social distancing, are allowed from 4th 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 - “Public Worship” – Issue 1

Church:	Assessor’s name:	Date completed:	Review date:
St. George’s Benenden	Revd David Commander	4 th July 2020	10 th July 2020

<p>Abbreviations:</p> <p>DJC – David Commander</p> <p>DC – David Collard</p> <p>TC – Tracy Claridge</p> <p>JH – Jacqueline Hewitt</p> <p>RKvW – Rosemary Kobus van Wengen</p> <p>CH – Colin Hayman</p> <p>CON – Charlotte O’Neill</p> <p>CB – Cathy Baker</p> <p>MLT – Ministry Leadership Team</p> <p>RL – Rod Lebon</p> <p>SP – Sides-people</p>
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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	4 doors to church but only 1, the north door, to be unlocked. Door handles (int & ext) to be cleaned daily when church is opened. Confirm the Key Rota team are happy to do this.	Key Rota team	DC 26/6
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Write a simple “Lone Working” Policy	DJC	DC 26/6

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	Buildings have been aired before use.	Leave entrance door open/ajar. (Unless northerly wind blowing into porch!) (Leaving the door open/ajar reduces risk of virus transfer.)	Key Rota team	DC 26/6
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	DJC - after Morning Prayer (Mon, Wed & Friday) DC – Tues & Thurs TC – Sat & Sun	DJC/DC/TC	On-going action
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies No water storage tank in church. Flush through water heater in kitchen before first use. Only necessary once “refreshments” can be served once more	TC	No action needed at present.
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Check heating (if needed) before church opened for worship.	DC	Ambient temp too high for heating to come on!
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Font is empty. Water stoup not used.		10/6, DJC
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	No livestreaming.		3/7, DJC
Deciding whether to open to the public	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical	No nearby venues/businesses open that will cause compatibility issues		3/7, DJC

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	arrangements for using the church are compatible.			
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Website and Facebook updated daily	DJC, CB	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	“Footfall” and “regular events” does not warrant a booking system in our church.	No action	3/7, DJC
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark	Apply here.		
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	All completed except the “Lone Working” Policy. Not req’d for “worship”		3/7, DJC
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here. Door handles cleaned daily. Church cleaned weekly. Pew ends and shelves cleaned after a service.	Key rota. JH DC/TC/DJC	
	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.	All enter through North door. Open North door. Exit by North door – to avoid pinch-point of path from West door.	DC/TC	On-going
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	The need for “queuing” is extremely low. No special arrangements necessary.	DJC	3/7, DJC
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Internal doors (where not kept locked for security) to be left open/ajar so the handles do not	DC/TC/DJC	On-going

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		need to be touched. Clergy Vestry door to be unlocked for a service and locked again after.		
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Lectern Bible to clergy vestry. Print off L/P readings on A4 paper; place on the lectern. (“Daily Office” books to be kept in the Clergy Vestry)	DJC/MLT DJC	
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	No “devotional objects” in reach by public	DJC	3/7, DJC
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	DJC/DC/TC reviewed; not considered to be necessary; leave in place. Pew cushions to be used to “block off” alternate pews for services.	DC/TC/DJC DC	
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Children’s resources removed; play area cordoned off.	DJC	26/6, DJC
	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).	“Signage” when open for private prayer and funerals. Additional signage, seen from pews, as reminder of 2m distancing during services.	DJC	26/6, DJC
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Use of pew cushions to restrict pews access.	DC	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Sides-people to direct/advise. “Steward” at top of centre aisle for Communion.	DC/TC/SP	

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	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	“Open area” at back cordoned off; Clergy Vestry locked, except during service and setting up.		26/6, DC/TC/DJC
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitisers in porch and inside main door, and at west door. Notices to use hand sanitisers on entry and exit. (+ E45 moisturiser.) DJC/DC/TC to check/fill daily. DJC to re-order as necessary. (Likely to be a long-term requirement.)	DJC DJC DJC/DC/TC	On-going
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . No “temporary changes” requiring permission thought to be necessary at this stage.		26/6, DC/TC/DJC
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Hand sanitising (in/out); social distancing; “Catch it/Bin it/Kill it”	DJC	26/6, DJC
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here . Pew ends and shelves, door handles, light switches: clean before/after service	DC/TC	
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	DC	

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		Liquid soap and paper towels in kitchen area. DC to check and replace as necessary.		
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Toilets to be open. Will need cleaning before and after the funeral service. “2m” signs required at toilet entrance.	DC/JH DJC	
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		DC	On-going
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days	“Register” to be kept (for 21 days) of names of those attending Sunday worship	DC/TC/DJC	On-going
	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.	Information for be put on church website once agreed by the PCC.	DJC	
	Use of church building for worship	Services to alternate between the two parish churches. (Mission Church not open yet.) Sunday 5 th : 8am St. Nicholas; 10am St. George’s.		

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		(Swap over the following Sunday. Repeat through July; review for August.)		
	Numbers/Capacity (N.B. The maximum limit of 30 is for occasional services. i.e. Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals)	Using alternate pews, and 2m spacing of “households”, the capacity of St. George’s is estimated to be 60.		
	Singing / Organ	No singing at any public worship. Organ can be played before, during and after the service (Geoff Davison available for 5/7) Organ will not have been touched for 72hrs, so cleaning not required.		
	Refreshments after service	We cannot provide refreshments, and the associated fellowship time after the service.		
	2m Social distancing, hand sanitising; notices	Sides-people to instruct everyone to hand sanitise on entry and exit; and to sit in alternate pews. (Pew cushions used to restrict every other pew.) Maintaining 2m social distancing between “households”. Additional notices to “stay alert” req’d	SP	
	Service to be conducted in shortest reasonable time	Shorter Address and Prayers; no hymns.		
	Service books Hymns books	Quarantined for 48hrs before use. Sides-people to hand sanitise before making service booklets available	SP	

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		for pick-up. Everyone to hand sanitise before collecting service booklet. Booklets to be returned to a basket and quarantined for 48hrs after the service. No singing at present, therefore no hymn books. Review once singing permitted.		
	Covd-19 symptoms	No one should attend a service who has symptoms. Signs in porch to remind. If anyone develops symptoms within 7 days: inform Churchwardens and/or Incumbent.	DJC	26/6, DJC
	“High Risk” categories	To be advised of the risks, and the guidance to “stay at home”; but that the decision is theirs. The wearing of face masks is voluntary.	DJC	
	Collection	Contactless payment not possible – no internet connection at church. Use “collection Plate” rather than bags. One “counter” after service. To wear gloves or hand sanitise after handling money.	DC/TC	
	“Notices”	Service leader to advise on 2m distancing, hand sanitising, and	MLT	

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		“staying alert” at the start of the service		
	Communion – minimising the risks	<p>Sacristan to hand sanitise before/after setting up & clearing away.</p> <p>Set up to be done immediately before the service. (Or after the church is locked if the day before.)</p> <p>Conduct service using the portable altar at the Chancel step.</p> <p>Do not process the elements; set everything up on the altar.</p> <p>Priest to hand sanitise: on entry; before E/Prayer; before and after distributing bread to congregants; on leaving church. (And if accidentally touch congregants hand during administration.)</p> <p>Only the priest to receive bread and wine. Congregants only receive the bread (wafer)</p> <p>Priest to wear a face visor during distribution.</p> <p>Steward at top of centre aisle.</p> <p>People receive, standing, in front of the portable altar.</p> <p>Return to seat via the north and south aisles – as directed.</p>		

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	Recording of service	The live service will be recorded and made available on-line later in the day for those unable to attend.		
	Bell ringing	Bells to be rung for 15 mins before the service, if the guidelines specific to bell ringing can be adhered to.	RL	
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.	The church is open 7-days a week		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Check	JH	14/6 JH
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	“Spring cleaned” in readiness for 15/6. Weekly clean.	JH JH	14/6 JH
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Procure disposable gloves. Advise cleaners to wear gloves. (Disposal face masks also procured for anyone who wishes to wear one.)	DJC JH	10/6, DJC

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	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Investigate the advantages of procuring and using a “fogger”. (JH speak to DC!)	DC DC/JH	19/6, DC
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	DC to check and remove as necessary	DC	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	DC to remove weekly. DJC/DC/TC to check daily and empty if necessary.	DC	
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	If we hear of someone having entered the church with Coronavirus the building will be closed for 72 hours.	DJC/DC/TC	19/6, DJC/DC/TC
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Public Health England guidance available here.		
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.		

Revd David Commander (Incumbent)

Mr. David Collard (Churchwarden)

Mr. Tracy Claridge (Churchwarden)

Date: 4/7/2020

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