

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 |

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

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------|
| Church: All Saints Hampreston | Assessor's name: Rev Sarah Pix | Date completed: 7th August 2020 | Review date: Ongoing |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------|

| 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 | Only one entry and exit available | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | NA | | |
| | Buildings have been aired before use. | Church open and used for private prayer | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | NA | | |
| | Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Not Applicable | | |
| | Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | Not Applicable | | |
| Deciding whether to open to the public | Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible. | Not applicable rural location | | 7 th August 2020 |

| Area of Focus | Controls required | Additional information | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|--|---|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. | | Helen Bifield | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | Discussed and arranged a list of attendees prior to worship | Standing Committee | 15 th July |
| | If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | NA | | |
| 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. | | Sarah & Bob | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below). | Cleaning undertaken after private prayer – 72 hours allowed between private gatherings | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | 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. | Only one entry and exit available | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | Arrow system in place | Sarah & Wardens | 3 rd July |
| | Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | Front door to be left open during worship | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets | Removed | Sarah & Wardens | 3 rd July |
| | Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | | Sarah & Wardens | 3 rd July |
| | Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Removed | Sarah and David Libby | 30 th June |

| Area of Focus | Controls required | Additional information | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|---------------|--|---|---|-----------------------------|
| | Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Removed | Sarah & Wardens | 3 rd July |
| | 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). | | Bob & Sarah to meet on 7 th August | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | As people arrive the wardens are to direct people to appropriate seats using 2m distance ruling Has to be 1 meter in from the aisle. | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | seat people from the front and service leaders to explain how to exit church. | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | Chancel, coffee area and small room roped off | Sarah | 3 rd July |
| | Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | In Porch | | 3 rd July |
| | Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | None | | 3 rd July |
| | Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Notices in place | Michael Dye | 3 rd July |
| | Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes | Following 72 hour rule prior to and after worship | | 7 th August 2020 |

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|-----------------------|---|--|---|------------------------------|
| | Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Toilet facilities unavailable | Helen to inform congregation of this prior to Sunday 9 th August | 4 th August 2020 |
| | Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | Toilet facilities unavailable | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days | | | 7 th August 2020 |
| | 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. | Letter sent out notifying of dates to resume 15 th July Letter to be sent notifying what to expect | Helen to send out letter | 4 th August 2020 |
| | Inform the congregation that face coverings are now obligatory and must be worn inside church. | Letter to be sent notifying what to expect A box of disposable face masks will be provided at the entrance to church. | Helen to send out letter Helen to order | 7 th August 2020 |
| During Worship | There is only one person allowed to sing as part of the worship team and they must be behind a clear screen | Screen Purchased and Worship team informed | Helen Sarah Pix | 12 th August 2020 |

| Area of Focus | Controls required | Additional information | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| | Social distance of 2 metres should be adhered to by the worship group. | | Sarah Pix | 12 th August 2020 |
| | Worship team - Using back-to-back or side-to-side positioning (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible. | | Sarah Pix & Ruth Cuthbert | 14 th Sept 2020 |
| | The minister in charge will give out covid -19 safety announcements at the start of each service | | Rev Sarah Pix or Rev Patches Chabala | 7 th August 2020 |
| | At the end of worship the minister in charge will give instructions to safely leave the church. | | Rev Sarah Pix or Rev Patches Chabala | 7 th August 2020 |
| Holy Communion Distribution | Minister preparing communion will sanitise hands prior to handling the wafers with an 80% alcohol based hand gel | | Rev Sarah Pix or Rev Patches Chabala | 14 th Sept 2020 |
| | If others assist in preparing the elements before or during the service, then hand hygiene and physical distancing precautions will apply. | | Rev Sarah Pix or Rev Patches Chabala | 14 th Sept 2020 |
| | People will come forward as directed by stewards and stand on the 2m spaced floor markings in the aisle, moving towards the minister whenever the space immediately in front of the Minister becomes available. The minister will wear a mask to serve. The congregation also wearing their mask will stand, extend their hands to receive the wafer. They will then take their wafer back to the pew, using the 1-way system marked out on the floor, where it will be consumed all together. | | Wardens / Rev Sarah Pix or Rev Patches Chabala | 14 th Sept 2020 |
| | The wine will be administered by the minister only on behalf of the congregation. | | Rev Sarah Pix or Rev Patches Chabala | 14 th Sept 2020 |

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| 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. | Plan to close the building 72 hours prior and post funerals. | | 7 th August 2020 | |
| | If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | N/A | | | |
| | Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | | | 7 th August 2020 | |
| | All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Provided | | 3 rd July | |
| | Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Provided | | 3 rd July | |
| | Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | | | wardens | 7 th August 2020 |
| | Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | | weekly | wardens | 7 th August 2020 |
| Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | | | 7 th August 2020 | |
| | 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. | | | |