

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](#).

Risk assessment template

Church: Church of the Epiphany	Assessor's name: Janet Taylor	Date completed: 18/6/2020	Review date:
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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	Curate and warden use main entrance	Curate and warden	
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here . PCC to produce a LWP	PCC	
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Done	Wardens	ongoing
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Done	Wardens	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	Wardens	Ongoing run through weekly
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed.	N/A as not turned off		
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	These were emptied before the lockdown as instructed	Wardens	14/3/2020 Janet
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.	Done	Curate and wardens	18/6/2020
	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 .	Wardens	

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	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.	Entry is via the single door, emergency exit at the front of church. Exit will be by the double doors at the back. The additional emergency exit will be unlocked situated by the vestry	Wardens	16/6/2020
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Doors will be fastened open	Whoever is opening for prayer	ongoing
	Remove from use all books (inc. hymn books and Bibles) plus leaflets except single use material that will be removed by user.		Wardens	13/6/2020
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items	Votive candles at the back of church barred off	Wardens	18/6/2020
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Kneelers have been removed from all chairs	Wardens	13/6/2020
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	Toys and books removed	Wardens	18/6/2020
	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.	Chairs removed and repositioned to 2m. One way into/out of church to avoid crossover.	Wardens	18/6/2020
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Seats that have been used will be marked by a red cross left by the user	Whoever is supervising	ongoing

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	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Indications for one way flow will be by arrows. Notices on door to indicate entry and exit	Wardens	20/6/2020
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Altar rail in place to deter access to Lady Chapel.	Wardens / curate	On the days the church is open to the public - ongoing
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitisers will be available on entry and exit	Wardens / whoever opens for private prayer	ongoing
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions .	N/A	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices will be at entry point	Wardens	20/6/2020
	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.	Wipes and spray available to clean surfaces including chairs and door handles	Whoever opens for private prayer	ongoing
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	No handwashing facilities for public use. Soap etc available for “staff” use	Wardens	ongoing
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Hall toilets to be used in emergency not advertised. Unlocking and locking to be done by person opening for private prayer. Provisions	Whoever opens for private prayer	ongoing

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		checked		
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	All bins have bags in.	Wardens	ongoing
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.	Planned opening is less than 72 hours apart		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Ensure anyone offering to clean knows this and is aware of the risk assessment	Wardens	ongoing
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Whoever opens is responsible for cleaning down before leaving. Including wiping door handles and padlock on way out.	Whoever opens up	ongoing
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Gloves available	Wardens & cleaners	ongoing
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Use as provided	Wardens & cleaners	ongoing
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Cleaners to place in the green wheelie bin	cleaners	ongoing
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Remove any bags that have been used	Cleaners	ongoing
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	If closing put up notices to advise when reopening	Wardens	ongoing

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with Coronavirus symptoms	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.	Wardens	ongoing
	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.	Wardens / cleaners	ongoing