

## 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**

|  |   |                                     |  |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Church:</b><br>Church of the Epiphany | <b>Assessor's name:</b><br>Janet Taylor | <b>Date completed:</b><br>17/7/2020 | <b>Review date:</b><br>20/7/2020 (comp)<br>26/7/2020<br>8/8/2020<br>15/8/20<br>19/9/20 |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|

| 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><br><br><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 |  |                 | See previous RA           |
|   | A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.  | An example can be <a href="#">found here.</a>  |                 | See previous RA           |
|   | Buildings have been aired before use.   |  |                 | See previous RA           |
|   | Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.   |  |                 | See previous RA           |
|   | Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.  | See <a href="#">Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</a> |                 | See previous RA           |
|   | Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.    |  |                 | See previous RA           |
|   | Holy water stoups and the font are empty.   |  |                 | See previous RA           |
|   | Ensure safe use of equipment needed for   |  |                 | See previous              |

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|  | livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard  |   |                    | RA                        |
| <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 the church are compatible.   | We are a not in an area that will impact other venues   | Wardens            | 17/7/20                   |
|  | Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.  | Details of first service and guidelines to be put on all social media                             | Curate and Wardens | 17/7/20                   |
|  | Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services  | At this time we are not going to operate a booking system   | Wardens            | 17/7/20                   |
|  | If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark   | N/A   |                    |                           |
|  | <b>Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.</b>  | Notice on weekly sheet and website.   | Wardens            | 19/9/20                   |
| <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.   |   |                    | See previous RA           |
|  | 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>                            |                    | See previous RA           |
|  | <b>Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law requiring these for all except those exempt.</b>           | Signs at the entrance to church and hall.<br>Face masks available for those that don’t have them. | Wardens            | 19/9/20                   |
|  | 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. | Entry will be by the main doors. Exits will be open. Public to leave by nearest exit.             | Wardens            | 17/7/20                   |

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|---------------|--|--|-----------------|---------------------------|
|               | Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).  | Don't see there being a need for a queueing system however barriers and cones are available if needed  | Wardens         | 17/7/20                   |
|               | Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.   | Doors will be left open throughout the service   | Wardens         | 17/7/20                   |
|               | Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets   | Only service books will be left on the seats (72 hours+ before next use) and sheets to take away.  | Wardens         | 17/7/20                   |
|               | Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)  | Votive candles cordoned off  | Wardens         | 18/6/20                   |
|               | Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance  | Kneelers have been removed   | Wardens         | 13/6/20                   |
|               | Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas  | Toys and books removed   | Wardens         | 18/6/20                   |
|               | 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). | Distancing and chairs were reviewed on the 18/6/20. 16/7/20 seating and distancing re-reviewed and alterations made. Removed one-way system. | Wardens         | 16/7/20                   |
|               | Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.   | Seats rearranged   | Wardens         | 16/7/20                   |

| Area of Focus | Controls required  | Additional information  | Action by whom? | Completed – date and name   |
|---------------|--|---|-----------------|---|
|               | Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Signs reminding people to keep 2m distance.   | Wardens         | 16/7/20   |
|               | Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.                            | Door to vestries closed with sign stating toilets located in the hall.  | Wardens         | 19/7/20   |
|               | Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.  | Sanitation points located around the church clearly labelled  | Wardens         | 16/7/20   |
|               | 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.        | Signs about distancing and hand hygiene in place<br>Sign asking public to leave promptly after service rather than talk at the back of church.<br>Poster informing congregation that they should not have more than 6 in a group if talking outside and to socially distance. | Wardens         | 16/7/20<br><br>Updated after review<br><br>Updated at review after new guidelines 19/9/20 |
|               | Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes              | See previous RA.<br>This is ongoing   | Wardens         | Ongoing   |
|               | Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.             | Toilets in hall being used.<br>Liquid soap and hand driers in place. Wipes and hand sanitiser available.  | Wardens         | 16/7/20   |

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|               | 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. See above  | Wardens            | 16/7/20                   |
|               | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.    | See previous RA.  | Wardens            | See previous RA.          |
|               | If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days | Forms completed and dated each week. To dispose of if the worshiper has not been for 3 consecutive weeks  |                    | 15/8/2020                 |
|               | Consider the use of masks during worship.<br><br>(added following review after 19 <sup>th</sup> July service)                               | It is mandatory for members of the public to wear masks while inside the church, unless exempt.<br>Warden to wear mask when inviting public to take communion.<br>Readers and intercessors can remove masks to perform this role.<br>Priest to wear mask whilst distributing communion.<br>Communion to be received with mask on and in silence (organ music playing) Remove mask to consume then replace and sanitise hands. | Wardens and priest | 8/8/2020                  |

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|   | 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. | Notice on church door.<br>Information on social media                           | Wardens         | ongoing                   |
| <b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</b><br><br>Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a> | 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.                             | More than 72 hours between. If extra services are planned this will be reviewed | Wardens         | Ongoing                   |
|   | If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.   | See previous RA.  |                 | See previous RA.          |
|   | Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.  | Cleaning will be done after the service.  | Wardens         | ongoing                   |
|   | All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).   | See previous RA.  |                 | See previous RA.          |
|   | Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.  | See previous RA.  |                 | See previous RA.          |
|   | Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.  | See previous RA.  |                 | See previous RA.          |
|   | Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.   | See previous RA.  |                 | See previous RA.          |

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| <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.  | See previous RA.       |                 | See previous RA.          |
|  | If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. | See previous RA.       |                 | See previous RA.          |
|  | If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.      | See previous RA.       |                 | See previous RA.          |