

## 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> St. Barnabas Church	<b>Assessor's name:</b> Sue Gash/Pat Nash – Wardens  Sue Cady/Kirstie Dolphin - Clergy Nina Chandler – Parish Administrator (SG, PN, SC, KD, NC)	<b>Date completed:</b> 10/07/20	<b>Review date:</b>
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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>	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	Door by vestry	Churchwardens	19/6//20 SG
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Policy in place	Clergy and Churchwardens	15/6/20 SC/KD
	Buildings have been aired before use.		Churchwardens	19/6/20 SG
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.			19/6/20 SG
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.			19/6/20 SG
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.			19/6/20 SG
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.			19/6/20 SG

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard			N/A
<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.			N/A
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		Parish Administrator	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Insufficient numbers		N/A
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark			N/A
<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.			19/6/20 SG
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).		Churchwardens/ Parish Administrator to make notices	19/6/20 SG
	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.			19/6/20 SG/SC
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Numbers are small Warden/sidesperson to direct		Warden/sidesperson
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Double entry doors to be left open wide and windows	Warden/sidesperson	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Using paper service sheets printed each week to be handed out by warden/sidesperson wearing gloves. Encourage people to bring their own bibles	Ongoing action by Clergy in preparation and Churchwardens and sides-people on the day.	19/6/20 SG
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Plate at back for giving. Clergy to announce. Contents to be put in safe for 72 hours before counting	Clergy and Churchwardens	19/6/20 SG
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	removed		19/6/20 SG
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	isolated		19/6/20 SG
	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).	clear communication from clergy. One-way system for Holy Communion	Sidesperson/warden to guide congregants re seating/receiving Holy Communion	19/6/20 SG/SC/PN
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Chalk on floor in church and signs in place to maintain social distancing	Churchwardens	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Signs in place, communication from service leader and guidance from warden/sidesperson		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.			19/6/20 SG
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitiser at door on entry/exit	Churchwardens are looking at stand free automatic sanitiser	19/6/20 SG
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing			N/A
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.		Churchwardens / Parish Administrator to make notices	SG/SC 19/6/20
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Church cleaner and will have been closed for 72 hours	Churchwardens and sidespersons as necessary	
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.		Churchwardens	
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.			
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Disposable gloves to be worn by person handling waste		
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Clipboard for sidesperson to record name as people enter	Sidesperson, explaining necessary for track and trace	

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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.	will put risk assessments on website once approved by PCC and info in weekly news sheet and posters outside on church notice boards	Kirstie Dolphin and Parish Administrator	
<b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</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.	Church building will be closed for 72 hours between services		N/A
	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.	Cleaning immediately after use as per protocol displayed in church	Churchwardens and volunteers	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).			SG 19/6/20
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.			KD/SG 19/6//20
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Disposable gloves to be worn	Warden/sidesperson	
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	After every event	Warden/sidesperson	

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