

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
6 th August 2020	5	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
9 th January 2021	6	

This update includes risk factors around the requirement to wear face coverings in places of worship from 8th August and to address use of Holy Water for sprinkling.

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 – HOLY COMMUNION
 - Rites of passage services - OCCASIONAL OFFICES (BAPTISMS, WEDDINGS, FUNERALS)
 - Use of Holy Water for sprinkling
 - 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.

Church: ST MARY'S, PRESTWICH	Assessor's name: ADELE McKIE/STEWART BARNET	Date completed: 19 SEPTEMBER 2020	Review date:
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PLEASE NOTE:

- **IT IS MANDATORY FOR FACE COVERINGS TO BE WORN IN ALL PLACES OF WORSHIP UNLESS THERE ARE SPECIFIC EXEMPTION CIRCUMSTANCES**
- **THOSE ATTENDING MUST MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING AT ALL TIMES BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE BUILDING AND MUST REMAIN IN THEIR HOUSEHOLD BUBBLES.**
- **ATTENDANCE NUMBERS WILL BE CAPPED AT THE ASSESSED OR LEGAL MAXIMUM APPLICABLE TO THE PARTICULAR SERVICE.**

Current policy with regards to acts of worship / occasional offices

Private Prayer – will be held on Wednesdays between 12noon and 1pm

Sunday Worship – Eucharist services will be held at 8am and 10.30am

Baptisms – will be held at 12.30pm on Sundays.

Weddings – will be held at times and dates as agreed with the officiating clergy.

Funerals – will be held in church for congregation members only at times and dates as agreed with the officiating clergy. Otherwise, crematorium funerals will be offered.

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	Clergy will enter the church via the lower vestry	Clergy	Ongoing
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	n/a – clergy will not be alone in church at the times that church is open to the public.	n/a	n/a
	Buildings have been aired before use.	The building was aired prior to opening for private prayer on 1 July and doors will remain open when the building is open to the public.	Clergy / wardens	Ongoing
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Building was checked prior to opening for private prayer on 1 July	Stewart	Completed 30.06.2020
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	completed prior to opening for private prayer on 1 July	Stewart	Completed 30.06.2020
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	completed prior to opening for private prayer on 1 July	Stewart	Completed 30.06.2020
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Font emptied prior to lockdown. Font relocated to tower room. UPDATE SEPT 2020 The font will remain empty and stored in the tower room other than	Stewart	Completed 30.06.2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		when is use for Baptism services.		
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	n/a	n/a`	n/a
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.	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Website to be updated prior to reopening for public worship.	Stewart	18.07.20
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not anticipated that this will be needed initially but to be reviewed regularly. Notice to be put in pews news asking parishioners to indicate intentions re attending on 19 July. UPDATE SEPT 2020 E-mail booking system introduced due to increasing demand. Bookings can be made 2 weeks in advance (i.e. for the next and following Sunday) by emailing Susie Mapledoram.	Clergy/ wardens Carole / Catriona Susie	Ongoing Completed 05.07.2020 ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Bookings are accepted on a first come first served basis up to the maximum agreed capacity (see below)		
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here. n/a	n/a	n/a
	Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering in communications.	UPDATE SEPT 2020 Booking confirmation email includes clear guidance on remaining covid secure and states that face coverings are mandatory.	Susie	ongoing
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.	Confirmed	Clergy / wardens	ongoing
	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. Guidance reviewed. Cleaning products purchased and available. Planned opening times for midweek private prayer and sunday public worship allow for 72 hour period of closure in between.	Clergy / wardens	ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Surfaces will be wiped immediately prior to opening. UPDATE SEPT 2020 With effect from 4 October 2 services will be offered for Sunday worship. All surfaces and touch points will be wiped between services. Where occasional offices are held and the closure period is less than 72 hours all surfaces and touch points will be wiped before re-opening.		
	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.	UPDATE SEPT 2020 Guidance issued via each booking confirmation email Signage to be put up	Susie Stewart	Completed 27.09.2020
	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.	Entrance: North porch Exit: North porch + South porch. Congregation will be asked to exit the building via the door on the side	Wardens	Completed 30.06.2020 ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		of the church they have been seated on.		
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Doors will be opened at least 30 mins before the start of the service to minimise the need to queue.	Wardens	ongoing
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Doors to remain open during times of public opening	Wardens	Ongoing
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All removed and placed in cupboards.	Stewart	Completed 30.06.2020
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	n/a congregation will be asked to remain seated throughout and to minimise movement to entrance to and exit from the building	Wardens	ongoing
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	All seat covers and kneelers removed and temporarily stored in tower room.	Clergy / wardens	Completed 30.06.2020
	Remove or isolate children's resources and play areas	All children's resources stored in tower room.	Clergy / wardens	Completed 30.06.2020
	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 (or 1m with risk mitigation if absolutely necessary).	Assessment done of maximum capacity UPDATE SEPT 2020 Maximum capacity 50 people seated in the pews from a maximum	Stewart	Completed 05.07.2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		<p>of 27 households plus clergy, wardens, organist and choir (see below for risk assessment for choir numbers)</p> <p>For occasional offices i.e. baptisms, weddings and funerals the maximum number in attendance will be determined by the national and local lockdown guidance in force at the time of the service.</p> <p>Plan agreed for direction of movement to and from allocated seats.</p> <p>Congregation will be shown to their seats using only the aisle nearest to the allocated seat for both entering and exiting the pew. Seating will be filled from the front first and</p>	<p>Clergy / wardens</p> <p>Wardens</p> <p>Wardens</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		<p>vacated from the back first.</p> <p>Lay readers and intercessors will be seated in the front pews and will come forward to use the lectern or use the hand held mic and remain seated.</p> <p>UPDATE SEPT 2020</p> <p>Face coverings may be removed when reading / leading prayers but must be replaced on return to the pews.</p> <p>Communion will be taken to the congregation in their seats by the clergy to minimise movement.</p> <p>UPDATE SEPT 2020</p> <p>The clergy will administer to one side of the church each and will avoid the need to pass each other in the aisles.</p> <p>Communion and blessings will be given silently (so as to avoid</p>	Clergy	ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		breathing / talking over the consecrated host) UPDATE SEPT 2020 Face coverings will be worn by the clergy during administration of communion and at all times when social distancing cannot be maintained (e.g. when baptising)		
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Available seating indicated with laminated signage.	Clergy / wardens	Completed 30.06.2020
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	See above	Wardens	Completed 05.07.2020
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Access not permitted to Tower room and Kitchen. Access to vestry restricted to clergy, wardens and organist. Access to the chancel and sanctuary restricted to the clergy.	Clergy / wardens	Completed 30.06.2020
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Clergy / wardens	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Hand sanitisers located at north and south porch doors and lower vestry door. Handwashing facilities available in toilets and in upper vestry.		
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . n/a .Seating is not moveable	n/a	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices in place UPDATE SEPT 2020 Reminders are given by the clergy during the announcements before the start of the service.	Stewart Clergy	ongoing
	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 . All high risk surfaces / touch points to be sanitised immediately prior to opening.	Clergy / wardens	
	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.	Stewart	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Handwashing facilities available in toilets. Soap, single use paper towels and bin with disposable liner in place		
	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. See above	As above	
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Disposable liners in all bins	Stewart	completed
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	<p>UPDATE SEPT 2020 Details of those attending Sunday public worship are recorded by Susie Mapledoram.</p> <p>Details of those attending private prayer are recorded by Carole Barnet.</p> <p>Details of those attending occasional offices (baptism, wedding, funeral) will be recorded by the officiating member of</p>	<p>Susie</p> <p>Carole</p> <p>Clergy</p>	ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		<p>clergy. Wherever possible, in order to ensure that legal maximum attendance in force at the time, is not breached, this information will be collected and provided to the officiating clergy in advance of the service by the baptism visitor, the wedding couple or the funeral director as appropriate.</p> <p>All attendance records will be retained in line with track and trace guidance, best practice and GDPR requirements.</p>		
	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.	Website to be updated	Susie	18.07.2020
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)	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 times for midweek private prayer and Sunday public worship allow for 72 hours closure in between.	Clergy/ wardens	ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.		See below for occasions when this is not possible.		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	<p>UPDATE SEPT 2020 Planned opening times for midweek private prayer and sunday public worship allow for 72 hour period of closure in between. Surfaces will be wiped immediately prior to opening. With effect from 4 October 2 services will be offered for Sunday worship. All surfaces and touch points will be wiped between services. Where occasional offices are held and the closure period is less than 72 hours all surfaces and touch points will be wiped before re-opening.</p>		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	<p>UPDATE SEPT 2020 Cleaning between / before services will be done by clergy / wardens.</p>		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		A team of volunteers will undertake a monthly deep clean on the first Saturday of the month		
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. UPDATE SEPT 2020 These are available		
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. UPDATE SEPT 2020 These are available	Stewart	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	See below	Clergy / wardens	ongoing
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Waste will be removed following each service and disposable bin liners replaced with new.	Clergy / wardens	ongoing
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Noted		
	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. Noted		
	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.		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Noted.		
Re-introducing choir practices and worship	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.	UPDATE SEPT 2020 Planned opening times for Sunday public worship allow for 72 hours closure in between. See below for occasions when this is not possible.	Choir master	ongoing
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then additional cleaning will be required.	UPDATE SEPT 2020 Choir practices will take place in the empty Lady Chapel or in the choir stalls in bubbles of 6 in a socially distanced manner. Time elapsed between choir practices and Sunday worship is less than 72 hours. Individual choir members will be responsible for cleaning their own area before re-using. Surfaces will be wiped immediately prior to opening. All surfaces and touch points will be wiped between services.	Gary/choir members	Ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Social distancing will be maintained at all times	UPDATE SEPT 2020 Choir members will take their robes home. They will robe in groups of no more than 6 at a time. They will then take their seats in the choir stalls. There will be no processing at this stage.	Choir members	Ongoing
	Singing – congregational singing is not permitted. Singing by choirs is subject to adherence to the rules	Face coverings will be worn unless singing. Only responses and anthems will be sung. New versions of the responses will be used and no hymn singing will take place so that congregation members are not encouraged to join in.	Gary	Ongoing
Use of Holy Water for sprinkling	Fresh water to be placed in either the font or the aspersion. The Priest will sanitise their hands before blessing the water and before sprinkling. Water to be removed immediately after use.	UPDATE JANUARY 2021 Attendees will be advised of the intention to sprinkle Holy Water in advance of the service. Water will be blessed by the Priest. Their hands will be sanitised immediately afterwards and before	Clergy	10 th January 2021/ongoing as necessary

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		using the aspergilium to sprinkle congregation. All vessels will be moved to a socially distanced place after use.		