

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: St Mary's Baldock	Assessor's name: Emma Wilkinson (Church Warden)	Date completed: 4 th July 2020	Review date:
-------------------------------------	---	---	---------------------

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	Entry through the vestry door, ensuring sanitise hands	EW	4/7/20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	EW	June
	Buildings have been aired before use.	The building is well ventilated	AH	on-going
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	These checks have already been carried out for opening for private prayer	AH	
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	AH is running the water for at least 10 minutes every week	AH	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Systems have been checked. Where possible the lights will not be switched on, and if they are only one person will do this.	AH	
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	all empty	AH	
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard. Ensure guidance is followed for recording the Eucharist –	Recorder to be positioned in the front left pew. Using tripod but battery operated camera so no trailing cables or wires. Made	EW DM AH	4/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	<i>If such services of Holy Communion are recorded or live-streamed to others, it will be important that those watching can see the president receive the bread and wine, emphasising the Anglican principle that the sacramental meal is always to be consumed.</i>	aware of requirements in the guidance. Clicker to be used with laptop so that no-one is touching AH computer		
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.	Only near neighbour is The George – need to find out their opening hours	PD	3/7/20
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	When we have decided what is actually happening EW and AM to do this	EW/AM	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Unlikely to need this due to the numbers that will be attending. Total number that can be safely accommodated to be displayed.	EW/AM to keep under review	
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark	Apply here . Suggest do not open for “tourism”/ visitors at the current time.	PC	
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.	This has been signed off in preparation for opening for private prayer	PC	June 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 .	EW	June 2020
	Choose one point of entry into the church to manage flow of people and indicate this with	South porch door to be the only point of entry for worshipers.	EW	4/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different exit.	North door to remain closed, but unlocked in case of fire.		
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Markers to be placed along the side of the building and towards the lych gate for people to queue whilst waiting to enter church. Sidesperson (wearing hi-viz) to direct people forward and ensure social distancing and also record attendance.	EW AM	signs put up – need to monitor to see if we need markers 4/7/20
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	South doors to remain open throughout the service	EW	
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	All books have previously been removed. Data projection to be used for all liturgy. Clicker to be used if someone other than AH moving the powerpoint on	EW/AH	4/7/20
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	All items have been removed and should not be replaced at this time	EW/PD/AH	4/7/20
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	All pew cushions need to be removed from the side aisle where they were put on a temporary basis.	PD Left in far aisle as these are not be used	4/7/20
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	All items from the children’s area have been removed. Worship boxes CANNOT be given to families.	EW/PD/ Sidespeople	4/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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).	Every other pew to be used in the main aisle – 4 on each side. In the south and north transepts 3 pews to be used (alternate and opposite to the main aisle) 2 pews to be used behind the crossing. Floor markings to remain, but generally be ignored (except during communion when people will be directed to the front in accordance with the markings in the main aisle) as people will be directed to seats and asked not to move around during the service. At the end of the service, people to be let out one pew at a time to ensure social distancing	PD Total number 54 individuals Sides people need to be aware of the flow that is to be used to ensure no queuing and to limit the amount of people who pass each other	4/7/20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Pews to be marked with where people can safely sit, if not in a bubble – no more than 2 to a pew at 2m distance. Areas not in use to remain roped off. Ropes to the main areas will need to be reinstated before the	PD Ropes have been	4/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		church can open again for private prayer	changed to make it easier to take them up and down, Areas are on service instructions	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	No additional markings required	PD/EW	4/7/20
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Keep temporary cordon in place for the side chapel, High Altar, carpeted area and area by north door	AH/EW on service instructions	4/7/20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitiser on the way in and way out and also at the altar for priest to use, by vestry for any one coming in through the vestry door because they are participating in the service. Hand sanitiser to be available to use before and after receiving communion as recommended	EW on service instructions to remind congregation	4/7/20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	No changes other than markings on the floor required	PC	4/7/20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Additional notices have been put up in the main building and in the hall to ensure people are	EW/AM	4/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		aware of the protocols which must be followed		
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Before anyone comes into worship, door handles, light switches if being used, pew doors (if not able to be propped open), Pulpit, Eddie,	AH Sides people	
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Ensure soap and paper towels in the vestry and a suitable bin.	EW	4/7/20
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Disabled toilet to be the only toilet in use. Check made before service that there are adequate provisions. Bin to be emptied at the end of the service. Cleaning materials to be in the toilet so that anyone using it cleans it after they have used it in accordance with current procedures. Hall to remain locked during the service and anyone needing to use the toilet to be escorted by a sidesperson. Areas in the hall to be cordoned off so that people only go to the disabled toilet area.	EW/AM Bin still required in here	4/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	All bins to be lined	cleaning team	4/7/20
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	Awaiting further advice on how to do this – at present suggest just write down names as we have been doing for the zoom services as most peoples details will already be on record. Ask visitors if they mind leaving a telephone number. This could be done as people are queuing to come into the building. Spreadsheet to be drawn up to keep a record of this information in case of the need to track	AM	4/7/20
	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.	Detailed information to be sent out to all parishioners with the pewsheets before opening, put on notice boards and the main doors. Risk assessment to be put on the websites and a hard copy kept in church	EW/AM need to print out hardcopy for vestry and entrance	4/7/20
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.	Other than the pews used for private prayer, the other pews will not need to be cleaned as they will not be being used for 72 hours. Church not to reopen for	Cleaning rota AH to advise when additional cleaning is	4/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.		private prayer until Monday morning. IF IT IS TO BE USED WITHIN 72 HOURS ALL PEWS WILL NEED TO COLEANED	required due to the building being open	
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	The front four pews, the two pews in the crossing, altar area, aisles, door handles, pew ends etc to be cleaned at the end of the service before the church is opened again for private prayer. Ropes to be put back, cordoning off areas which are out of bounds. All bins to be emptied at this point. All furniture that has been moved to be replaced. Data projector to be taken down and stored in the vestry. Must not be touched by anyone other than AH	AH/EW on service schedule AH	4/7/20
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Cleaning schedule to continue as is for private prayer	AM/EW	4/7/20
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Gloves provided with the cleaning materials and cleaners instructed to wear whenever cleaning.	AM/EW	4/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Suitable materials provided in the cleaning pew.	AM/EW	4/7/20
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Trudi to remove black dustbin sack for the main bin in church when she cleans the hall.	AM to check it is happening	4/7/20
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Small bins emptied every day and put into the main bin. Trudi to empty twice a week. Bin may need emptying after the main service as well.	Cleaners	4/7/20
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Church to be closed for private prayer and / or services if this happens for 72 hours.	EW/PC	4/7/20
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	There should not be a reason not to close the church if this situation occurs.	EW/PC	4/7/20
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Cleaning schedule to be reinstated when the church re-opens	EW/PC	4/7/20
Additional aspects specific to St Mary's Church				
People participating in the service	Ensure touch points are identified and risk mitigated	All readers and the person leading the prayers to be advised to wear gloves and to not touch surfaces. Use a paper copy of	AM/AH EW to check on arrival	4/7/20

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		the reading which they bring to church with them People on the front pews to be kept to a minimum		
Offering	Plate at the back of church for people to put offering in on the way into church	Sidesperson bringing the offering plate to the font to wear gloves and to put the plate on a table at the front when it has been blessed rather than pass to another person. Money to be put in an envelope and then the safe by someone wearing gloves and left for 72 hours before being handled.	AM/EW Steve needs to be advised of this	4/7/20
Communion	Risk of passing on infection	Priest to ensure elements are covered whilst the Eucharistic prayer is being said. Priest to sanitise hands before distributing communion Priest to wear a face mask when distributing the wafers Priest to stand in one position at the front of church and communicants to be ushered forward, without queuing in the aisle. Wafer to be dropped into hands	AH Sides people	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		Communicants to sanitise hands before and after receiving communion All guidance in C of E document to be followed.		
Bells	Ringing bells for services	Tower captain has advised that we cannot ring our bells at the present time as it is impossible to fulfil the guidance that has been issued by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers https://cccbr.org.uk/coronavirus/ The single bell to call to worship is permitted.	Email 3/7/20	4/7/20

Parish Communion	All the measures outlined above MUST be adhered to in order to ensure the safety of all attending.	Social distancing and enhanced hygiene to be followed at all times. Regular reminders that those in vulnerable groups and over seventy are strongly discouraged to be attending services.	EW/PC	4/7/20
Wednesday morning communion	All the measures outlined above MUST be adhered to in order to ensure the safety of all attending. This service is the same as parish communion.	Social distancing and enhanced hygiene to be followed at all times. Regular reminders that those in vulnerable groups and over seventy are strongly discouraged to be attending services.		As church wardens we would prefer that this service does not re-start until we are certain that the measures outlined above work.
Morning Prayer	Where will it take place – needs to be in main body of the church How will the pews be cleaned before the church opens for private prayer? Track and trace record will need to be kept hand sanitising and social distancing will need to be maintained at all times No books or paper materials can be used unless they are owned by the person using them	NEEDS FURTHER DISCUSSION		
Evening Prayer	Where will it take place – needs to be in main body of the church	NEEDS FURTHER DISCUSSION		

	<p>Who will clean the pews if the cleaning for the day has already happened?</p> <p>Track and trace record will need to be kept</p> <p>hand sanitising and social distancing will need to be maintained at all times</p> <p>No books or paper materials can be used unless they are owned by the person using them</p> <p>No singing</p>			
Funerals	<p>All the published guidance for funerals will need to be adhered to.</p> <p>Maximum number in church to be kept to 30 as in the guidance</p> <p>Church will need to be cleaned if going to be open again within 72 hours</p>			
Weddings	<p>All the published guidance for weddings will need to be adhered to.</p> <p>Maximum number in church to be kept to 30 as in the guidance</p> <p>Church will need to be cleaned if going to be open again within 72 hours</p>			