

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 Michael at the North Gate	Date completed: 2nd July 2020	Review date: 9th July 2020
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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	Entry from Ship Street for private prayer.	Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace 15/06/20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Lone working policy circulated to staff and volunteers.	Church Administrator	Myriam Frenkel 14/06/20
	Buildings have been aired before use.	In our plan for reopening	Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace 15/06/20
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace Every day
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace Every day
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace Every day
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Livestreams carried out outside of church opening times and/or in separate part of the church	Vicar	Anthony Buckley Several times a week
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.		Vicar	Anthony Buckley

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				15/06/20, 05/07/20
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		Church Administrator	Myriam Frenkel weekly
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services		Church Administrator, Church Caretaker, Vicar	Myriam Frenkel, Rachael Peace, Anthony Buckley 04/07/20
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here.	n/a	n/a
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.		Church caretaker	Anthony Buckley 15/06/20
	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.	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace 15/06/20
	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.	Entrance and exit through South door, to avoid congestion and confusion at the main entrance with Fairtrade.	Fairtrade volunteer at main entrance, signs at main entrance, volunteer or staff member inside south	Rachael Peace 15/06/20

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			entrance to manage entry	
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).		Church Administrator, Church Caretaker	Myriam Frenkel, Rachael Peace 15/06/20
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	South doors to remain open at all times	Volunteer or staff member on duty	Rachael Peace 15/06/20
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	To be stored in tower room	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace 10/06/20
	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	n/a
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	We have signs advising our kneelers should not be handled	Church caretaker, Vicar, Church Administrator	Rachael Peace, Anthony Buckley, Myriam Frenkel 12/06/20
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Parish area not currently in use	n/a	n/a
	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).		Church Caretaker, Church Administrator	Rachael Peace, Myriam Frenkel 12/06/20

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	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.		Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace 13/06/20
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.		Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace 13/06/20
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.		Church Caretaker	Rachael Peace 13/06/20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Church Caretaker, Church Administrator	Rachael Peace, Myriam Frenkel 10/06/20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions .	Church Caretaker, Church Administrator	Rachael Peace, Myriam Frenkel 09/06/20
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.		Church Caretaker and Administrator	Rachael Peace 13/06/20
	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 .	Church caretaker or deputy	Rachael Peace Every day
	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.	Church caretaker or deputy	Rachael Peace Every day

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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.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Church caretaker or deputy	Rachael Peace Every day
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace Every day
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days		Vicar	Anthony Buckley weekly
	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.		Church Administrator, Vicar	Myriam Frenkel, Anthony Buckley, weekly
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.	n/a	n/a	n/a
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.		Church Administrator	Myriam Frenkel 12/06/20
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Cleaning is part of normal maintenance for our caretaker.	n/a	n/a
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace Every day
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace Every day

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	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace Every day
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Part of normal maintenance	Church caretaker	Rachael Peace Every day
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.			
	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.		
	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.		
Additional risk assessment specific to St Michael's				
Too many people attempting to enter the church at one time	The morning daily email and a notice on the website asks for people to let Anthony know by email if they plan to attend.		Vicar & Administrator	2 nd July onwards Anthony & Myriam
	Anthony to be positioned by the door before the service to keep an eye on the path and direct people to wait as need be		Vicar	5 th July Anthony
	Clear signage on paths and pavements		Caretaker	15 th June Rachael
Too many people wanting to come to the service. We think we can fit 40 under	If numbers look to be too large, an additional said service at 9am may be added to split the congregation across two services. Some would be		Vicar	5 th July Anthony

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current social distancing guidance.	encouraged to come back then. (A reserve of about ten places will be held for unexpected additional congregants, including those who do not tell Anthony ahead that they wish to attend.)			
	Anthony will keep in good communication with expected attendees and those who arrive		Vicar	4 th /5 th July Anthony
People sitting too close to others	People sitting in specified places, as already marked for Private Prayer. Anthony to direct as need be.	People will be sat in the Nave, and possibly the choir stalls. If really necessary the Lady Chapel	Caretaker for marking Vicar for directing	15 th June Rachael 5 th July Anthony
Coins/notes passing hands	There will be no collection.	Anthony will announce that people who wish to give are encouraged to do so online. Any who nevertheless wish to give cash can do this by placing money in the collection box which is fixed at the back of church. They will be asked to sanitize their hands before and after doing so, and the cash exclusively counted by the Finance Manager, who will wear gloves	Vicar & Finance Manager	5 th July Anthony
Multi-touching of books and leaflets	There will be no leaflets. People will be encouraged in the emails and website to bring their own prayer books if they have them. Pre-quarantined (at least 3 days) books will previously		Vicar & Administrator	3-5 th July Anthony

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	be placed in pews, by someone with clean hands, for those without their own. At the end of the service these books will be left in the same place, collected and put back into quarantine (at least 3 days)			
Breaking social-distancing when coming forward to receive Communion	Clear announcements at the beginning. A one-way system of coming forward and returning. People will receive standing, waiting behind each other. They will have been reminded of appropriate distancing		Vicar	5 th July Anthony
Shared touching of the altar rail	People will receive standing, waiting appropriately behind each other. No-one will kneel at the rail.	If anyone cannot come forward, Anthony will go to them	Vicar	5 th July Anthony
contact through receiving the elements of Communion	Only wafers will be distributed. The wine will not be shared. Anthony will sanitize his hands immediately before the prayer of consecration (and before getting out the Communion vessels before the service). The wafers will remain covered until Anthony completes the Eucharistic Prayer. He will not say the words of administration individually and will avoid touching the hands of recipients		Vicar	5 th July Anthony
mingling and chatting at the back afterwards	A reminder at the end of the service to observe social distancing and to move on relatively quickly, whilst giving each other space as they leave the pews.		Vicar	5 th July Anthony

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contamination in parish rooms area	A reminder if need be that we are only using (and have only prepared) the worship area for use. If someone needs the toilet, we will make it available, but we will not advertise. If it is used, it will be cleaned immediately after the service.		Vicar & possibly Caretaker	5 th July Anthony & Rachael
Presence in the service of someone with symptoms	We will remind people in our communications that anyone with symptoms should not attend. There are also signs outside the church which remind people not to come in if they have symptoms. If anyone enters who seems to have symptoms of the virus, or if anyone develops symptoms during the service, Anthony will ask them to return home and seek medical help, pointing them to the appropriate Government guidelines.		Vicar and Administrator	3 rd -5 th July Anthony & Myriam
Not knowing who is attending if we hear later that someone present has the virus and we need to be part of “track and trace”	Anthony will quietly note who is present. If there are new faces, he takes their details, with their permission, at the end. These collated names are added to a document in the vestry immediately after the service. The document will be dated, kept in a locked drawer (administrator and wardens will know where) and destroyed after 21 days, in line with government guidance		Vicar	5 th July Anthony