# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Version Control**

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| Issue Date | Version Number | Issued by |
| 22nd May 2020 | 1 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 8th June 2020 | 2 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 12th 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july) 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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

**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).

1. 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.
2. 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**

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| **Church:**  **Holy Trinity Tidworth** | **Assessor’s name:**  **Rev’d Tim Laundon** | **Date completed:**  **20/07/2020** | **Review date:**  **October 2020** |

| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed – date and name** |
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| **Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming**  [General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches) | One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible |  | PCC | PCC, 7th June |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | An example can be [found here](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf). | PCC | PCC, 7th June |
| Buildings have been aired before use. |  | JH | JH, 8th June |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. |  | JH | JH, 8th June |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | See [Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-organisations-on-supplying-safe-water-supplies?utm_source=a85cd421-5f76-4767-95f7-da69aa76fe3d&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) | TL | TL, 16th June and every Tuesday since |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. |  | JH | JH, 8th June |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. |  | n/a |  |
| Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard |  | TL | TL, 20th July |
| **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 | TL, 20th July |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. |  | TL | TL, 14th July |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services |  | n/a | TL, 20th July |
| If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | [Apply here](https://goodtogo.visitbritain.com/). | n/a | TL, 20th July |
| **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. |  | TL | TL, 20th July |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | PCC – normal cleaning procedures because low numbers of visitors therefore means that there is a low risk to general public but we want to minimise risk to cleaners | PCC, 7th June |
| 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. |  | PCC | PCC, 7th June |
| Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). |  | n/a | TL, 20th July |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. |  | TL | TL, 20th July |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets |  | n/a – they are unlikely to be used and will in any case be unused for 72 hours after | TL, 20th July |
| 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 |  |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance |  | n/a – they are unlikely to be used and will in any case be unused for 72 hours after | TL, 20th July |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas |  | TE | TE, ??th June |
| 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). |  | TL | TL, 20th July |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. |  | n/a – this will be done verbally | TL, 20th July |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. |  | n/a – this will be done verbally | TL, 20th July |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. |  | n/a – we are reducing the risk by not reducing the area available | PCC, 7th June |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | TL | TL, 16th June |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Consult [advice on gaining temporary permissions](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/20647). | n/a | TL, 20th July |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. |  | n/a – this will be done verbally | TL, 20th July |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | Person opening the church will leave door open and turn on all lights to ensure there are no high-risk surfaces | PCC, 7th June |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | n/a – toilets not open to the public | PCC, 7th June |
| 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](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | n/a – toilets not open to the public | PCC, 7th June |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. |  | n/a – no bins in church and toilets not open to the public | PCC, 7th June |
| If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days |  | JH | JH, 8th June |
| 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. |  | TL | TL, 12th July and 19th July |
| **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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | 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. |  |  | YES agreed by PCC, 7th June |
| 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. |  | n/a |  |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | n/a |  |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | n/a |  |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. |  | n/a |  |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. |  | n/a |  |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. |  |  | YES agreed by PCC, 7th June |
| 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.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) | n/a |  |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | n/a |  |

**Towards Re-opening Church Buildings: Covid-19 Risk Assessment Checklist for Parish Churches**

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| 22nd May 2020 | 1 | The House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group |

*This document provides a template risk assessment, with links to the relevant advice notes. It relates to situations where there is limited access to church buildings the purposes of private prayer, livestreaming, construction, carrying out of contractual work, building maintenance and cleaning. This template relates exclusively to Covid-related risks, not general risks. If you would like more information about your responsibilities under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations then information and templates can be found on the* [*HSE website*](https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/controlling-risks.htm)*.*

*A further version of this will be produced when small services such as weddings and funerals are allowed, then for private prayer, then for some form of public worship. At present no public access is permitted to church buildings under government guidance.*

**Risk assessment Holy Trinity Tidworth**

| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information** | **Action by who?** | **Completed – date and name** |
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| **Preparation of the Church for:**  **- private prayer and/or livestreaming by a single member of the clergy (and a member of their household if needed)**  **Advice on access for the clergy** available here. | One point of entry to the church building clearly identified. |  | Yes, agreed by PCC on 7th June 2020 |  |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted | An example can be [found here](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf). | Clergy – yes  Cleaners – yes |  |
| Buildings have been aired before use. |  | Jimmy – week beginning 8th June |  |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | See the advice note on keeping church buildings clean. | Jimmy – week beginning 8th June |  |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | See [Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-organisations-on-supplying-safe-water-supplies?utm_source=a85cd421-5f76-4767-95f7-da69aa76fe3d&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) | n/a |  |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. |  | Jimmy – week beginning 8th June |  |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. |  | n/a |  |
| **Preparation of the Church for:**  **- construction workers and/or professional contractors**  **Advice on access for construction workers** and **advice on access for contractors** available here. | Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building. |  |  |  |
| Confirm that each contractor has carried out their own risk assessment (for themselves and their staff and sub-contractors) and has employers and public liability insurance in place. | Ensure they have included any work equipment, emergency equipment (such as fire extinguishers), ventilation systems and access routes. |  |  |
| Have hand sanitiser available for people to use on entry and exit of the church building. | [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) will launch procurement routes for supplies for church use on 28th May. | Tim – delivery expected 10th June  Julie Walker – poster explaining hand sanitizer, social distancing, purpose for recording contact details of everyone who uses the church for private prayer |  |
| Confirm who has responsibility for locking and unlocking the building. |  | Person supervising church |  |
| Confirm whose responsibility it will be to carry out cleaning, including:   * Toilets * Kitchen/servery areas if it is necessary for these to be used * Frequently touched surfaces e.g. doors | See the advice note on keeping church buildings clean.  Leave door open and some lighting on to avoid public needing to use frequently touched surfaces | n/a  n/a  Person supervising church to wipe light switches and door handle at beginning and end of each day |  |
| Whoever has responsibility for toilets, ensure a supply of soap and disposable hand towels will be available. |  | n/a |  |
| Confirm who is responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste e.g. hand towels from the site. | No bins in church | n/a |  |
| All waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk of those responsible for removing them being exposed | No bins in church | n/a |  |
| Prepare a suitable form to record contact details of people entering the building. |  | Person supervising church can write a list or we could use slips of paper, a pen and a sandwich bag next to hand sanitizer with instructions |  |
| Confirm evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency. |  | Exit via entrance agreed by PCC on 7th June 2020 |  |
| Direct all users to leave the building by one exit only, avoiding bottlenecks. |  | Yes, agreed by PCC on 7th June 2020 |  |
| **Cleaning the church after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)** | Check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. |  | Yes |  |
| Check PCC/Chapter liability insurance is up to date. |  | Yes |  |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable) to protect their skin from exposure to cleaning materials. | [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) will launch procurement routes for supplies for church use on 28th May. | Normal cleaning procedures continue |  |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | See the advice note on keeping church buildings clean. | Normal cleaning procedures continue |  |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. |  | Yes, agreed by PCC on 7th June 2020 |  |
| If 72-hour quarantine is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. | [**Public Health England guidance** available here.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) | n/a |  |
| If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning. | See the advice note on keeping church buildings clean. | Normal cleaning procedures continue |  |