# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**St Martin's Church Castleton Moor**

Agreed by St Martin's PCC on 21st July 2020 to be reviewed if advise changes

**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.

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| **Church:**  St Martin Castleton Moor | **Assessor’s name:**  Frances Guite (Sister Frances) | **Date completed:**  **21/07/2020**  **Date Revised:** | **Review date:**  When advise changes |

| **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 | There is only one point of entry for this church | SrF |  |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | Policy accessible in church  Always carry Mobile Phone | N/A  PW & SrF |  |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | Aired regularly whilst closed | Most recently by TP | 10/07/2020 |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | Checked | TP | 10/07/2020 |
| 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)  Flushed through 20 minutes | PW & SrF & TP | May 2020  June 2020  13/07/2020 |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | Systems running through lockdown  No reactivation necessary | N/A |  |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Font kept empty  Stoop empty | N/A |  |
| Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | Live streaming via Mobile Phone  Projector Cable secure  Sound System checked | SrF  N/A  SrF | June  07/07/2020 |
| **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. | Own carpark | N/A |  |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. | After Risk Assessment agreed by PCC | SrF | 22/07/2020 |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | Booking system for Sunday Eucharist is in place  Booking system will be extended to Wednesday Eucharist if needed | SrF | 12/07/2020 |
| If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | [Apply here](https://goodtogo.visitbritain.com/). | 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. | Confirmed | SrF | Done May 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | SrF & TP |  |
| 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. | Only one of entry  Notices printed indicating need to use hand gel and keep distance  Requested early arrival so entry can be staggered.  Same point of exit but exit staggered – leave immediately after received communion.  Priest goes to vestry after service until building otherwise empty and can lock up. | SrF | 15/07/2020 |
| Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | Not deemed necessary |  |  |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | All doors and window of the Worship area will be opened prior to, and during, the service | Stewards | Every Sunday worship |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets | Service booklets and hymn books taped off  Projector to be used instead | PW  SrF | 13/07/2020 |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | No devotional items | N/A |  |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Hassocks and cushions all removed | SrF | 12/07/2020 |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Boxed and taped off | PW | 19/07/2020 |
| 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). | Pews moved to allow 2 metre distancing  Pews in use numbered to facilitate seating plan, directing congregants to seats, and being called forward to communion  Seats without 'line of sight' of projector screen marked off  Aisle - tape on floor to ensure maximum distance kept when receiving communion.  Instructions issued to remain seated and remain facing forwards during service  Altar rail not in use  Standing communion station at sanctuary step  Congregants to leave after receiving communion | SrF, PW, PR | 15/07/2020 |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Excess pews taped off | PW | 13/07/2020 |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Aisles and corridor marked with tape | PW | 13/07/2020 |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | Not applicable | SrF | 14/07/2020 |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | 4 stations: lobby, at Track&Trace GDPR signing table, by area to receive communion, and at altar | SrF | 14/07/2020 |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | No changes to building  Pews moved | SrF | 12/07/2020 |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Notices in lobby and corridor  Information sheet to be distributed to all attending | SrF | 14/07/2020 |
| 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)  Church cleaned according to advice on cleaning church buildings document. | SrF  TP | 07/07/2020  10/07/2020 |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Paper towels holder required in one downstairs toilet cubicle  Paper towels and soap in toilets | PW  TP | ASAP  10/07/2020 |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | Adequate stock in cleaners cupboard | TP | 10/07/2020 |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Bin bags in place and stock in cupboard | TP | 10/07/2020 |
| If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days | GDPR Notice on display  Consent Forms available | SrF | wef 12/07/2020 |
| +D’s letter allowing volunteers who are clinically vulnerable to ‘undertake activities within church subject to agreement of PCC/Incumbent’  Letter also allows those who are clinically vulnerable to lead public worship. | Letter circulated to congregation over email  Clinically Vulnerable may undertake activities that they feel are safe for them to do  Those who are Extremely Clinically Vulnerable may not undertake activities or lead worship | AK  PCC | 21/07/2020 |
| 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. | Congregation surveyed about attitude towards opening church  Congregation to receive protocol (attached) via email or post (for those not on email) | Admin MT  SrF & AK | 14/07/2020  22/07/2020 |
| **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. | Building cleaned before public worship resumes | TP | 10/07/2020 |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | Cleaner is employed (not vulnerable)  Cleaner to be brought back under flexible furlough scheme  72 hr gap (between Wednesday & Sunday Service)  Cleaner will clean prior to Wednesday Service | SrF  SrF | 14/07/2020  10/07/2020 |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | **Monday morning** (Between Sunday Service & Warden working in church)  **Tuesday** (after Warden's work & before Wednesday Service)  Sanctuary is in use by Vicar for private prayer. Can be lightly treated with anti-viral spray if needed before services. | SrF & TP  SrF & TP | wef 20/07/2020 |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Gloves ordered | SS | 22/07/2020 |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Discussed with Cleaner | SrF & TP | 15/07/2020 |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | Cleaner | TP | ongoing |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | When cleaned | TP | 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. | If information regarding exposure received within 72 hours, church to be closed.  Revert to streaming from vicarage if necessary.  Services suspended for the rest of the for 72 hr period  If information regarding exposure is receive after 72 hours, no closure of church, but advise all who have entered the building during the 72 hour period that there may be a risk and to monitor for symptoms |  |  |
| 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) | SrF & TP | as needed |
| 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)**.** | TP | as needed |