

## Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

### Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
8 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	2	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
12 <sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> June. House of Bishops guidance provided for churches to open for funerals from 15<sup>th</sup> June. Public worship, with measures in place for social distancing, are allowed from 4<sup>th</sup> 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 for Sunday morning services**

<b>Church:</b> Christ Church Moreton Hall	<b>Assessor's name:</b> Heather Lovell, Churchwarden	<b>This version completed:</b> 18th Sept 2021	<b>Review date:</b> End Oct 2021
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming</b>  Our Stepping Stone licensee and Parish Nurse are using the building, plus occasional access by vicar, wardens and cleaners. Other groups will resume using the building from April 2021. A separate risk assessment will be created by those using the building for these other purposes.	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	West door entrance		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Yes – aired regularly now		
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	The cleaners resumed work on 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2020 (and will be cleaning weekly on Weds). They will maintain general cleanliness and they would spot animal waste, having alerted us to mice previously!	Cleaners	weekly
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Yes. And building now used regularly again	Cleaners and all users	weekly
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.		JC	Done
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard		JC, as needed	

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<b>Deciding whether to open to the public</b>  We have consulted with the congregation to get their opinions and ideas on re-opening.	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	No longer an issue.		
	Update your website and any relevant social media.	We will update the website and Facebook page to let people know about services. Also, posters outside church and church newsletter	SL/JF/JC/HL	ongoing
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	From 19 <sup>th</sup> July, more people can fit into the church for services. We are still maintaining 1m distancing between seated individuals/ groups. Email booking system to be discontinued from 5 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2021.	HL	ongoing
<b>Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism</b>	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.		JF and wardens	
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).		JF and wardens	
	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.	West door entrance (front door and main church door propped open, steward to direct people through foyer). South door exit (steward to open and direct people out)	Service leader and stewards	

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Steward stationed in the foyer area before service – they will monitor safety.	Service steward	
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Air building (open windows and south door), weather permitting, before and during services.	Service leader/stewards	weekly
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Leaflets and booklets now used as appropriate. These have plenty of time to be hygienic before use the following Sunday.	From Aug 21	
	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 Chairs and table in foyer removed	JC	Early July 20
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Pens/paper and play bags to be available for children now – there is more than sufficient time between services for these to be safe.	stewards	ongoing
	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).	From 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2021 there is much greater flexibility here, but we still want to help keep people as safe as possible. Chairs are in pairs, 1m apart all round. Chairs can be moved along rows to make larger groups. We do not want anyone to feel obliged to sit in a group, however.	JC/HL  Service stewards	July 2021

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	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	N/A now		
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	We will continue with entrance through the west door and exit through the south door.	Stewards	ongoing
	Limit access to places where the public does not need to go, maybe with a temporary cordon if needed.	Main door, church door and south door to be propped open, weather permitting.	JF/ wardens/ service leader and stewards	ongoing
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Sanitiser at entrance and exit, if people wish to use these. Clear information is displayed re good handwashing.	JF/ wardens/ service leader and stewards	12/7/20 ongoing
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing, close toilet lid before flushing etc.	Yes	JC	16/7/20
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Dettol spray and wipes and paper towels easily accessible on foyer shelf. Stewards will be asked to wipe over key touchpoints before and after services (no longer a formal cleaning schedule).	HL	July 2021
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Yes	HL/ stewards	ongoing
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Yes, and extra supplies available in cupboard in ladies' toilet.	HL	ongoing

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.	Liners must be used in all bins (cleaners have also been informed of this) Liners provided on shelf in foyer. Stewards asked to empty bins at end of service	HL  Cleaners/ service stewards	July 2021  ongoing
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	The stewards keep a list of those attending services	Service stewards	ongoing
	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.	N/A now		
<b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</b>	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.	Cleaners come each Weds. Service stewards and group leaders are asked to clean key touchpoints before/after each service/group.	Cleaners  Service stewards/ all church users	ongoing  ongoing
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Key touchpoints will be cleaned before and after the services.	Service leader and stewards	ongoing
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Cleaners have their own cleaning protocol.  Disposable gloves are provided for all cleaning the church, as required.	Cleaners  HL	ongoing  ongoing

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.	Spray, paper towels, wipes, liners all on shelf in foyer	HL	ongoing
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Bins in foyer, toilets and kitchen are lidded and lined	Cleaners Stewards	Weekly After service
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Toilet bin and foyer bin to be emptied after services. All bins to be emptied by the cleaners midweek. Groups are asked to take their own waste away with them.	Service stewards and group leaders. Cleaners.	As needed
<b>Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms</b>	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.		JF and wardens	As needed
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.		JF and wardens	As needed
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.			

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Children’s and family service	Physical distancing	<p><b>Chairs to be moved along rows into family groups. Families can bring own picnic blankets for seating on floor if preferred.</b></p> <p>Chairs can be moved to make larger groups. We do not want anyone to feel obliged to sit in a larger group, however.</p>		
	Activity times	<p><b>Multiple activity tables to be set up.</b></p> <p><b>These can be used by children/guardians of mixed family groups.</b></p> <p><b>These will be larger tables with aim of 2m distancing.</b></p> <p><b>Facemasks preferred for adults.</b></p> <p><b>Hand sanitiser on all tables for use before/after.</b></p> <p><b>Count made at start of service and additional tables to be put out if needed by stewards according to numbers.</b></p> <p><b>No obligation for families to join an activity table, provisions made for activity(s) to be taken to family group area if preferred.</b></p>		

### Important additional notes:

An instruction sheet is available for all those helping at services (leaders, stewards, musicians...) See [ccmh.org.uk/docs](http://ccmh.org.uk/docs)  
This is also pinned up on the noticeboard in the foyer.

All people should stay a suitable distance away from others, except those from their household/ social bubble, bearing in mind that others might still be very cautious of close contact. The use of face coverings is now no longer mandatory, but we would like people to continue using these where possible, especially when singing. Service leaders/ musicians do not need to wear a face covering whilst leading the service (but are encouraged to wear a face cover whilst not leading).

Collection bowls will be available near the entrance to the main worship area and at the exit, if people would like to donate money this way. At the end of the service, if the money is not to be counted that day, stewards should count the amount given in notes (to give us a rough idea of how much has been received) and note this on a dated envelope, before money is placed in the safe for counting later on. Then hands/surfaces should be well washed/sanitised.

### **Music at church**

Congregational singing is now allowed, though we would like the congregation to wear face coverings for the time being.

Musicians need not wear face coverings while playing/singing, so the following safety measures are still in place:

- Clear screens in front of each musician/singer, to protect the congregation (we have 4 screens – therefore 4 people maximum)
- Musicians/ singers themselves to remain as far away as possible from each other on the stage (at least 1m).
- Musicians/ singers need not wear face coverings during music, but these should be worn at all other times to help protect others on the stage.
- If the saxophone is used, this must be with its special protective attachment, and the musician should direct all playing behind their screen.

### **Stage microphones**

- Tie mics should only be used by one person per service. Once used, they should be sterilised with a Dettol wipe if they will be used by someone else that same day.
- Static mics (which may be used by more than one person – though not at the same time) should not be touched. If possible, one mic should only be used by one person per service. If this is not possible the lectern area should be cleaned with a Dettol wipe after each use.

**Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19 (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of/ change in their normal sense of taste and smell) should not attend the place of worship due to the risk that they pose to others; they should self-isolate at home and arrange a PCR test. We also strongly recommend that anyone feeling unwell (especially with cold-like symptoms) does not attend a service, to err on the side of caution, and help protect us all.**

If anyone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in our building they should go home immediately and self-isolate with other members of their household. They should contact NHS Test and Trace to arrange a test. Others at church should wash their hands thoroughly after any interaction with this person, but they do not need to take any other specific action unless they develop symptoms themselves or are advised to do so by Test and Trace.

The church website contains all key church COVID-19 safety documents (people have been directed to this in church newsletters): the most up-to-date risk assessment, information on GDPR/Test and Trace, Guidance for all attending services and Information for those helping with services. There is also an updated letter about Covid-safety to all groups using the church. See [ccmh.org.uk/docs](https://ccmh.org.uk/docs)