

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 the Virgin, Witney	Assessor's name: Jeremy Lasman	Date completed: 13 th July 2020	Review date: 31 st August 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	The public will enter via the West Door. This entry point will be roped off to create entry and exit lanes. The North Door will be used by clergy, wardens and vergers. Access to the Parish Office is only permitted for clergy and officers of the church. Notices have been put on the North Door to advise the public to enter via the West Door.	Jeremy Lasman/Michelle Bailey-Wells	Michelle Bailey-Wells 17 th July 2020
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	The Witney PCC Health and Safety policy agreed in 2019 includes a section on lone working in all of our buildings. This remains applicable through the current pandemic.	Completed 2019	Agreed Witney PCC 8 th October 2019

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Buildings have been aired before use.	The West Door, the doors into and out of the Winchester Room and the Toilet block will be opened for an hour, prior to the public entering, to air the building - all clergy and vergers have been made aware of this requirement.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14 th July 2020
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Completed. The church has been cleaned regularly through lockdown. There is no evidence of animal waste in the building.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14 th July 2020
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	The water system has been used regularly through lockdown as part of the process to clean the church. A further precautionary flush through of the water systems will be carried out while the church is being aired - all clergy and vergers have been made aware of this requirement.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14 th July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	To be completed as above. Heating not required during summer months. Will be further checked after the PCC meeting to be scheduled at the end of August 2020	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14 th July 2020
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Done at start of lockdown. A final check was completed to support risk assessment sign off.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14 th July 2020
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Where equipment is brought in from outside of the building, this must be cleaned prior to use and only used by the owner. Equipment must be manned at all times to minimise the trip hazard.	Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh Lucas 22 nd July 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.	Not applicable		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.			Kayleigh Lucas 20 th July 2020
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not applicable – where Baptisms, Weddings or Funerals are due to take place track and trace information will be gathered in advance.	Michelle Bailey-Wells	Michelle Bailey-Wells 13 th July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark	Not applicable – we are not opening to tourists currently.		
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.	As part of sign off	Jeremy Lasman	Kayleigh Lucas 22 nd July 2020
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).	Done	Jeremy Lasman	13 th July 2020
	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.	The West Door has been set up with a one-way system for entry and exit with rope divider and floor signage.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14 th July 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).	The West Door has been set up with a one-way system for entry and exit with rope divider and floor signage. As the area outside of the West Door is public thoroughfare the public will be requested to queue to the right-hand side of the West Door along the railing. Guests will be advised to take into account members of the public who may be passing by.	Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh 22 nd July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	The West Door, the doors into and out of the Winchester Room and the Toilet block will be opened for an hour, prior to the public entering, to air the building - all clergy and vergers have been made aware of this requirement.	Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh Lucas 22 nd July 2020
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Completed. Signage has been produced to request that users dispose of single use materials themselves (to cover the small amount that remains in the church)	Jeremy Lasman/Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22 nd July 2020
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Completed	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 7 th July 2020
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Cushions and Kneelers removed to the chancel	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 7 th July 2020
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Not applicable; Junior Church materials stored in cupboards in the Winchester Room as a matter of course		

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	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).	Chairs have been laid out in the nave of St Mary’s observing the 2m rule, tape has been laid out to indicate the distance between rows. We will allow people from the same household to bring their chairs together on the understanding that they remain responsible for the veracity of this claim.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 7 th July 2020
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	The Nave of St Mary’s is the area that we have identified for seating. The side chapels have been roped off. We will use the North and South Aisles as exit routes.	Jeremy Lasman/Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh Lucas 23 rd July 2020
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	We envisage a flow into the church up through the centre of the nave, turning left or right to access the socially distanced seating. Exit Flow will then be out via the respective Aisles to the West Door, where a one-way system is in place. Floor markings are laid out to this effect.	Jeremy Lasman/Kayleigh Lucas/Michelle Bailey Wells	Kayleigh Lucas 23 rd July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Completed for the St George’s chapel, All Saints Chapel and the Chapel of the Annunciation, leading into the Winchester Room	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 7 th July 2020
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Hand sanitisers have be placed at the West and North Doors and inside the Toilet block	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14 th July 2020
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Not required.		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices have been put up to remind visitors. An informational video has also been created.	Jeremy Lasman/Kayleigh Lucas/Michelle Bailey Wells	Kayleigh Lucas 22 nd July 2020
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes.	The current planning assumption is that we will space events in the church by 72 hours. Vergers will be informed to wipe all door handles as they exit the building.	Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22 nd July 2020
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Hand sanitiser is available at all entrances and exits. Vergers will be instructed to check levels and top up as required prior to opening to the public.	Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh Lucas 22 nd July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Toilets will not be open to the public during this time. Hand sanitiser is available at all entrances and exits.	Jeremy Lasman	Jeremy Lasman 14 th July 2020
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Already part of existing provision. Melissa is aware of the requirement for all bins to have liners.	Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22 nd July 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	For Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals, a Track and Trace form, which includes all guests, will be completed and returned prior to the service. This will be held in the Parish Office for 21 days.	Michelle Bailey-Wells	Michelle Bailey-Wells 20 th July 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.	Following PCC decision to open for Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals an update was distributed to the congregation, posted on the website and shared on social media.	Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh Lucas 22 nd July 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 .	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.	This is our agreed approach		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	An external cleaner is hired, they are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	No further action required.	

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	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Melissa’s current cleaning schedule has been reviewed to reflect booked Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals	Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22 nd July 2020
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Disposable gloves available. Melissa is aware of the requirement to use them.	Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22 nd July 2020
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Cleaning products are already sourced that meet these requirements.	No further action required.	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Confirmed with Melissa that she this as her responsibility (see below)	Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22 nd July 2020
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	A schedule has been agreed with Melissa that reflects timings of Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals, such that waste removal takes place within 24 hrs of the event. Low risk at present as we are intending to keep the toilets closed for such events.	Michelle Bailey Wells	Michelle Bailey Wells 22 nd July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	This will be our preferred approach. Track and trace forms are completed for all visitors. Should we be alerted to known exposure the church building including the Parish Office would be closed for 72 hours with no access and all visitors contacted.	Jeremy Lasman/ Kayleigh Lucas	Kayleigh Lucas 23 rd July 2020
	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.		

Approved by:

Rev. Toby Wright, Team Rector
Kayleigh Lucas, Churchwarden
Jeremy Lasman, Churchwarden

23rd July 2020