

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: All Saints Whitstable	Assessor's name: Rev S Tillotson	Date completed: 14 th July 2020	Review date: 15 th December 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	Non public entry through church vestry	ST and CW	3 rd July 2020
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	In place	ST	3 rd July 2020
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Done	ST and CW	2 nd July 2020
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Done	Welcomers	ongoing
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Done	ST and CW	ongoing
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Done	ST and CW	ongoing
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Done	ST and CW	2 nd July 2020
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Done	ST	2 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.	N/A		
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Done	ST	2 nd July 2020

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Under review	ST	Ongoing
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark			
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.		ST	3 rd July 2020
	Review CoFE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below).		ST and CW	3 rd 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.		ST and CW	30 th June 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).	N/A		
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Done before each time church is open	Welcomers	Done each time church open
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Done	ST CW	25 th June 2020
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	Done	ST CW	25 th June 2020
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	N/A		

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	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Done	ST CW	2 nd July 220
	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).	Done	ST CW	2 nd July 2020
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Exclusion zone in place by children’s corner	ST CW	26 th June 2020
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	One way signs in place when church is open for private prayer	ST CW	26 th June 2020
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Noticeboard is stopping access to children’s area which should not be used at the moment	ST CW	26 th June 2020
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	At entrance, near place of communion, by altar	ST CW	26 th June 2020
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	N/A		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Done	ST CW	26 th June 2020
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Ongoing just before church is closed	All those acting as sidespersons and	On going

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			welcomers also Carol Sims	
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Done	All those acting as sidespersons and welcomers also Carol Sims	Ongoing
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Done	Lisa Crook	Ongoing
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Done	All those acting as sidespersons and welcomers also Carol Sims Lisa Crook	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	Diocesan form will be given out to all entering church for formal worship to complete and return at end of service	ST CW Sidespersons	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.		ST	Ongoing

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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		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Cleaning by welcomers and also more thoroughly on Mondays	ST and CW	Ongoing
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.		Servers Welcomers and Carol Sims	Ongoing
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Done	ST and CW	Ongoing
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Done	ST and CW	Ongoing
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.		Carol Sims	Ongoing
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Daily	Carol Sims Welcomers Sidespersons	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.	Noted		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Noted		

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	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Noted		
Church Service	Estimate seating numbers	47 single people, possibly rising to as high as 60 when seated as couples or family units	DCC	14 th July 202-
Church service And Distribution of Communion SERVERS SIDESPERSONS CLERGY CONGREGATOIN	<p>Only one person at any time to be in vicar’s vestry</p> <p>No more than three people at any time to be in choir vestry</p> <p>SERVERS</p> <p>Only one server to be on duty (or a couple if they live together)</p> <p>BEFORE THE SERVICE</p> <p>Use anti-bacterial gel on arrival</p> <p>Robe in vestry using social distance</p> <p>Please make sure you have again used anti-bacterial gel before doing the following and allow it to dry on your fingers. Then please wear a facemask before doing the following,</p>		Clergy, CW, Welcomers, Servers	Ongoing

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	<p>a supply of which are in the choir vestry. Then place wafers in ciborium on small table next to altar – add 30 for Sunday 8am and Thursday 10am and 50 for Sunday 9.30am service (there is likely to be a non eucharistic service at 11am on Sunday and some will probably attend Thursday and Sunday 8am who normally attend Sunday 10am – this is why numbers are higher than usual for 8am and 9.30am)</p> <p>Then with facemask still on place small amount of wine in chalice next to ciborium on small table next to altar. This is drunk by the priest on behalf of the congregation.</p> <p>Separate water jug for adding to the wine should also be placed by the chalice. Facemask can be removed after this is completed.</p> <p>Provide usual linen for priest suitable for him to wipe hands after drinking wine</p> <p>Provide linen cloth for the bread so that the priest does not breathe over the bread when consecrating elements.</p>			

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	<p>Ensure alcohol hand wash is available next to the elements. No additional water jug is necessary for the priest to wash his or her hands</p> <p>Light candles in church at least 10 minutes after using hand gel on your hands</p> <p>SERVERS DURING THE SERVICE</p> <p>Server can process in and out with the priest using two metre distancing or can sit in congregation and not robe if that is preferred (they are still performing valuable help by helping setting up and clearing away afterwards as this helps the priest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) to spiritually prepare for service without being over rushed b) to talk to congregation members using safe spacing after service <p>The Priest should do everything though the server may be asked to read the lesson at the 8am and Thursday 10am</p>			

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	<p>The priest will do all the usual hand washing and finish the wafers not consumed and drink the remaining wine using the water as usual. No need for server to assist here</p> <p>Money is not received during the service. A plate is left at the back of the church before the service.</p> <p>Please do not remove microphone and chasuble from priest at end of service</p> <p>SERVERS AFTER THE SERVICE (some of this is sidespersons duties but Servers should take note)</p> <p>Please return the silver and cloths to the vestry in the usual way</p> <p>Wash them and return to the usual cupboards and basket for cleaning</p> <p>All cash and envelopes should be placed in the safe for 72 hours and not counted till at least 72 hours after the end of the service.</p> <p>Make sure all candles are extinguished but allow 10 minutes if you have recently used hand gel</p> <p>Disrobe using social spacing</p>			

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	<p>SIDESPERSIONS</p> <p>Please ensure you use anti-bacterial gel on arrival</p> <p>Unlock church if this is your usual duty to do so (depends on which service this is)</p> <p>Only one person allowed in the vicar’s vestry at any one time and maximum of three people in choir vestry. One person includes couples who shared same household.</p> <p>Microphones should now be removed from the cupboards in the vestry by the priest to avoid overcrowding in the vestry. Please though continue to operate sound system if you do this. Those priests not trained in this will be shown how.</p> <p>Microphone stand should be kept out permanently in the church along with moveable lectern. As we are doing communion using a different system it will</p>			

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	<p>not get in the way of communion distribution.</p> <p>Service sheets can be used if they have remained in the church untouched for previous 72 hours. Simon will ensure this is the case. However these should not be handed to people. People should take them on arrival. Please inform them of this from a distance of more than 2 metres as you greet them with a friendly hello as usual.</p> <p>Service sheets and notice sheets: Dave Parry has agreed to print these wearing a facemask and using anti-bacterial gel. Any movement of notices to the church from the office and within the church must involve use of gel before touching the box with the service sheets in.</p> <p>Service books and sheets should be placed in single piles for the congregation to take rather than sidespersons handing them to them. No piling of service books one on top of other.</p>			

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	<p>We may have to use chairs to arrange service sheets before service if current table area is not large enough.</p> <p>Service sheets will need to be replaced in boxes/on shelves after use but it is important you use bacterial gel immediately after doing this</p> <p>Seats on which people can sit will be clearly marked before the service. We will have to work out a system of what to do when couples and families wish to sit together and how this affects the seating learning from the experience of other churches. Sidespeople enable congregation to safely take their seats.</p> <p>No collection of money or envelopes during the service. There will be a plate at the back of the church as people leave</p> <p>Monies and envelopes should not be counted after the service. All monies and envelopes should be left for 72 hours before handling. Servers should place monies inside the safe as usual but uncounted</p>			

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	<p>CONGREGATION and PRIEST</p> <p>Congregation should sit at 2 metre safe spacing as single people, or in couples and family groups. This should be easy at Sunday 8am, Thursday 10am (when central altar will be used), but some advanced planning may be required at Sunday 9.30am and Sunday 11am services when notice of attendance in advance may be judged as a good idea by the DCC</p> <p>The choir will not operate for the foreseeable future.</p> <p>The Peace is shared with everyone remaining stationary and smiling at each other.</p> <p>Communion is received not at the altar rail but through a 2 metre spaced “queue” system It will be one way and will need to be carefully managed.</p> <p>Communion is received in one kind only – bread – though the priest drinks the wine on behalf of the congregation and also has a priest’s wafer.</p> <p>There will be antibacterial gel for the congregation to use at the beginning of the queue which they should use.</p>			

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	<p>The priest will also use antibacterial gel before the service, before consecrating bread and wine, and before communicating congregation with the host (bread).</p> <p>The priest must not stand over the bread during consecration apart from the “priest only wafer” which he consumes himself and which can be held up in the usual way during the eucharistic prayer. A cover should remain over the congregation’s bread till the point of distribution</p> <p>The priest will be asked to wear a face shield at the point of distribution to the congregation after the eucharistic prayer has finished.</p> <p>When each member of congregation is communicated the priest wearing the visor must hold the bread away from visor not below visor to avoid contamination.</p> <p>No speech such as “The Body of Christ” “Amen” is to be used while each member of congregation receives the host, rather this is said before the congregation comes forward.</p>			

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	<p>Server may be asked to distribute the host (bread) if priest for health reasons is unable to. Important server is consulted about this</p> <p>Special prayer is said for those wishing a blessing. They will be invited to stand when this is said if they so wish but no pressure is said on them. Suggestion is this happens after bread is communicated but fact that this will happen is mentioned by priest before the eucharistic prayer begins so non receiving congregation feel included.</p> <p>No refreshments in the hall afterwards</p> <p>The churchwardens and clergy will not stand by the exit as the congregation leave but will be available to speak to people in the church or outside the church afterwards using 2 metre spacing.</p> <p>Some two metre spacing outside the church as the congregation leaves is permitted by the churchwardens and priest if they so wish.</p> <p>No hymns or songs can be sung but the music group can play providing no wind instruments are used and no singing takes place. Simon has bought a CD set with singing on it for us to follow during the services.</p>			

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	<p>There is no collection during the service. Instead people should leave their envelopes and money in a bowl on departure or consider taking out a bankers order if at all possible.</p> <p>Social distancing to maintained at all times.</p> <p>Church doors to be left open during warm weather to prevent people touching door handles</p> <p>Anti-bacterial spray to be used on surfaces after each service.</p>			
Garden church Service	<p>Chairs to be spaced out at 2 metres apart.</p> <p>One welcomer to give our service sheets wearing gloves and facemask</p> <p>Sufficient room for two blocks of 40 chairs in two different sections of the garden</p> <p>Social distancing to be employed by people arriving and leaving as well as during service</p> <p>Entry and exit by Shirley Hall car park with gate open to prevent contamination of door handles on small vicarage gates</p>		Sidespeople Clergy CW	Ongoing

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	<p>Hand gel to be available in various stations throughout Vicarage garden</p> <p>People encouraged to bring their own bottled drinks and sun hats if it is hot weather</p> <p>No refreshments to be served</p> <p>Church hall toilets to be available and cleaned afterwards</p> <p>No singing allowed or wind instruments</p> <p>Mains lead from electricity points is trip risk and means that those leading to service will have to set up in alternative area from one originally shown in video.</p> <p>Social interaction to be kept to two metres distancing.</p> <p>People can bring their own picnic for after the service if they so wish providing they maintain social distancing.</p>			
For all Services	First Aid responder to be on duty		First aid trained people	Ongoing

ST Rev Simon Tillotson