

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 Barnabas Pimlico Road	Assessor's name: The Revd John Pearson-Hicks	Date completed: 3 rd July 2020	Review date: 18 th July 2020 or sooner if regs change.
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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	Yes, we have one access door that the public do not use.	No action required.	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here .	The parish priest is currently the only lone worker and is aware.	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	Buildings have been aired before use.		LF, LU, JPH Airing and cleaning the building.	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Remove nests	JPH	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies	JPH/DPH Weekly when we have been in	✓ JPH 03.07.20

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			to to check the building	
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Certs all up to date. Full run on 30 th May 2020	JPH	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.			
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	Signs still in place/ July 2020	JPH/DPH emptied and signs placed in the stoops	✓ 8 th March JPH
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.	No clash with the school. Pub does not open until after we have finished – keep an eye on this as it may change.	JPH	✓ JPH 03.76.20
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		JPH	✓ JPH 04.07.20
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	We have agreed on 25 people per service.	JPH/Wardens	✓ JPH 01.07.20
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here.		
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.		JPH	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	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.		
	Choose one point of entry into the church to manage flow of people and indicate this with	West doors in – South doors out. Trialled on 2 Sunday afternoons.	JPH/Sidespeople	✓ JPH 30.06.20

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	<p>notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different exit.</p>			
	<p>Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).</p>	<p>Lines on pavement may be required. Keep under review. Expected attendance around 12-15 currently (03.07.20)</p>	<p>Sidespeople</p>	<p>✓ JPH 04.07.20</p>
	<p>Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.</p>	<p>Doors to be kept open at all times whilst the building in being accessed for Private Prayer & Public services</p>	<p>JPH</p>	<p>✓ 18th June JPH ✓ JPH 04.07.20</p>
	<p>Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets</p>	<p>Cleared desktop and removed soft covering.</p>	<p>JPH</p>	<p>✓ 23rd March JPH ✓ JPH 04.07.20</p>
	<p>Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)</p>	<p>This needs to be changed in terms of the side chapel. Barrier placed in front of the chapel. Restricting access.</p> <p>Barriers in place for the Lady Chapel, Baptistry and Calvery Chapel</p>	<p>JPH</p>	<p>✓ 19th June JPH ✓ JPH 21.06.20 JPH 03.07.20</p>

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	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance		JPH	✓ JPH 04.07.20
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas		JPH	✓ JPH 04.07.20
	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).		JPH	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.		JPH	✓ JPH 04.07.20
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.		JPH	✓ JPH 21.06.20
	Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.		JPH	✓ JPH 21.06.20 JPH 03.07.20
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	JPH	✓ JPH 21.06.20 JPH 03.07.20
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions . Some additional moving of chairs and pews. But nothing major. Placing of a	JPH JPH/DPH	✓ JPH 21.06.20 JPH 03.07.20

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		temporary and portable Nave Altar for Sunday worship		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.		JPH	✓ JPH 21.06.20 JPH 03.07.20
	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.	JPH & those assisting Fr John	✓ JPH 21.06.20 JPH 03.07.20
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	JPH Additional resources put in place.	✓ JPH 21.06.20 JPH 28.06.20
	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 for procurement options.	JPH Additional resources put in place.	✓ JPH 24.06.20 JPH 03.07.20
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Lots of bin bags JH purchased additional bins Outside bins sorted.	JPH/DPH	✓ JPH 21.06.20 JPH 03.07.20
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	We will not be doing this at this time, but we will keep it under review.	JPH/Wardens	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	Give due notice of the resumption of use of the building to neighbours, congregation and wider	Newsletter Email circular	JPH	✓ JPH 04.07.20

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	community, ensuring that visitors and worshippers will know what to expect when they come.	Pew sheet\ Posters		
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.		Fathers JPH and SA	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.			
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Limit numbers of volunteer cleaners. Liaise with Melkites.	JPH	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Parishioner cleaning are currently purchasing their own gloves. JPH has some spare gloves.	JPH	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with Parish Buying for procurement options. Mild detergent and buckets.	JPH	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Mondays & Thursdays... There are other days if we take the bags to other streets/Orange Square.	JPH	✓ JPH 03.07.20

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	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Open twice a week (Sundays and Wednesdays)	JPH	✓ JPH 03.07.20
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.		JPH, Wardens and Melkites	✓ JPH 03.07.20
	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.	JPH plus volunteers	✓ JPH 03.07.20