

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public: individual prayer and funerals

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 |

Churches and cathedrals are legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13th June. House of Bishops guidance provides for churches to open for funerals from 15th June.

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 individual private prayer. As well as offering guidance on best-practice, it is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for individual private prayer or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context.

Future versions of this document will be produced when different forms of public worship and access are allowed.

A risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers forms part of an updated document giving advice on access for these groups. This can be found on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Risk assessment template

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| Church: St Luke's the Evangelist York | Assessor's name: Elaine Hill Church Warden | Date completed: 14.06.2020 | Review date: as new guidance emerges |
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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 | Main door will be open and monitored by designated volunteers. | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | A minimum of two people will be present to support the church while it is open | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Buildings have been aired before use. | Church doors will be open for a minimum of one hour prior to the actual opening of the building | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | Health and safety check to be completed prior to the opening of church and cleanliness checked. | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | All systems will be flushed in line with guidance | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. | Heating has been in use during lockdown. A visual check will be taken at the time of health and safety check | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |

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| | Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Font is empty. Stoup N/A | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| Preparation of the Church for individual prayer and funerals | Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building. | Health and safety checks completed before anyone else accesses the building | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | 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. | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | 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. | Main door will be open and monitored by designated volunteers. Additional doors will be unlocked to enable emergency exit and monitored by volunteers | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | Door will be open during private prayer to enable ventilation | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Remove from use all books (inc. hymn books and Bibles) plus leaflets except single use material that will be removed by user. | All removed apart from resources that will be single use and removed by the attendee | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items | All devotional items are stored away from public access apart from the high altar and Lady Chapel altar. The altar rail will remain closed during private prayer and a volunteer will be | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |

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| | | positioned near both areas to re-direct the public | | |
| | Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | All removed | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | All removed | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | 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. | Walk through completed, chairs positioned and signage for 2m rule on display. Only 30 people will be allowed into the church at any one time this includes using the choir pews for families | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Seating positioned at 2m rule | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Flow of people will be monitored by volunteers. The volunteers will ensure people don’t stand and chat, but move outside to social distance. | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | Areas accessible to the public clearly marked. Volunteers will be present to monitor compliance and guide the public | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |

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| | Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Hand sanitiser available at the entrance and monitored by the designated volunteers | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | No changes required to the building | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Signage used where necessary, hand sanitising, keeping distance etc | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | If the church has been used in the last 72 hours ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes. | Frequently touched surfaces in church will be cleaned at start the end of the private prayer session | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Church hall will remain closed. | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | Church hall will remain closed. | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | A designated volunteer will empty the bins, the bins will be lined with a liner. The volunteer will wear gloves and not touch the contents of the bag. The bag will be sealed and placed in a separate bag with the gloves dropped into the second bag | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |

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| | | and tied up. The date is written on the outside of the bag and stored in the choir vestry for a minimum of 72 hours, | | |
| 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. | Church will be open once a week, any contractors or other visitor e.g. funerals will be timed to allow the 72 hour gap where possible | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | Only designated volunteers will clean and anyone who is vulnerable or self-isolating will not be allowed to clean | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Identified on the checklist for before and after the church opening | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Disposable gloves provided | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Cleaning materials provided suitable for surfaces that need to be cleaned. Advice to be sought if not sure which products to use | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | Identified on checklist | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |

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| | Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | Identified on checklist. Guidance is to keep waste for 72 hours before putting in general household waste. This will be bagged at the end of each session and stored as per checklist | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | Church will be open once a week, any contractors or other visitor e.g. funerals will be timed to allow the 72 hour gap where possible | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | 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. | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | 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. | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |

Additional information produced by St Luke's for local use

| Area of focus | Controls required | Additional information | Action by whom? | Date completed |
|---|---|---|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Management of vulnerable and shielding people attending for private prayer and funerals | The church is prepared as per risk assessment in relation to cleaning, social distancing, availability of hand sanitiser and flow of people through the building | Due to the limited numbers allowed in the church at anyone time (30) and the preparation and management of the time in the church, provides as safe a space as is reasonably practicable to mitigate against needing a separate session for vulnerable at this time. Those who are shielding should follow government guidance and not attend church at this time | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| Wearing of face coverings | There is currently no requirement to wear a face covering in church. Anyone attending church in a face covering will not be asked to remove the covering | Review changing guidance and update as needed | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| Cash handling | A brass plate will be supplied at the back of church for any cash donations. The plate will be emptied and placed inside a plastic bag and stored in the safe for 72 hours before counting | After 72 hours the bag will be counted and recorded. Gloves to be worn and the cash stored ready for banking. | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| Lighting of candles | The candle stand is situated safely and a 2m square identified around the stand. A designated volunteer will light the candle and step out of the 2m zone to enable the person who wanted the candle to step into the zone. | The lighting of candles must be managed to ensure no queue forms. People will need to stay in their seats until the area is free | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |

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| Preparation of the Church for: - construction workers and/or professional contractors | Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building. | Health and safety checks to be completed before contractors are allowed in | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| Advice on access for construction workers and advice on access for contractors available here. | Confirm that each contractor has carried out their own risk assessment (for themselves and their staff and sub-contractors) and has employers and public liability insurance in place. | Confirmed with contractors prior to attendance | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |
| | Prepare a suitable form to record contact details of people entering the building | Complete a record of contactor details – form stored at the back of the H&S file in the vicars vestry | Vicar and church wardens | 14.06.2020 |