

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Adapted for Grace Church Dulwich, using material from the Baptist Union Risk Assessment written for Churches without ownership of their own building.

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
6 th August 2020	5	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

This update includes risk factors around the requirement to wear face coverings in places of worship from 8th August.

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 (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: Grace Church Dulwich	Assessor's name: Ben Jones, Warden	Date completed: 13th August 2020	Review date: 31st 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			
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	An example can be found here.		
	Buildings have been aired before use.			
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.			
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies		
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.			
	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			

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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.			
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.	Website to be updated with various pieces of information regarding booking, policy and risk assessment	Vicky Widdows, Jake Tasker	
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	This would help managing the number of people attending a service through ticketing and only having essential people there to run things (preacher, leader, tech, welcome and maybe one or two others) Booking to be done through Ticket Tailor and administered by Vicky Widdows. One row of seats to be kept free for visitors	Staff Team. Vicky Widdows	
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	Apply here. No tourists as such, but would be helpful for visitors	Vicky Widdows	
	Include details on requirements such as bringing a face covering and your own Bibles/service sheets in communications.	To be explained on communications with church members and on the website for visitors. If possible, we will use a screen so that everything		

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		people need can be projected		
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.			
	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.		
	Read the CofE guide on face coverings and produce signage or other relevant materials to indicate compliance with the law requiring these for all except those exempt.	Face coverings are currently mandatory in places of worship and church halls for congregation members, but not for the leader and preacher. This to be made clear communication with church members. And signage clear.	Vicky Widdows	
	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.	Entrance to be from the back of the hall from the car park where there is a ramp and steps. Exit from the front, behind stage then turning left past the (unused) toilets and back down the steps into the car park. Signage at various points from the car park, including ‘no	Vicky Widdows	

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		<p>entry' and 'one way only' signs.</p> <p>For those for whom this route would cause issue due to physical disability, exit from the back of the hall to the playground. Those people to leave the hall last.</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>A socially distanced queuing system to be put in place, making use of the car park area.</p> <p>Visitors instructed not to gather in groups, except with members of their own household, inside or outside the building.</p> <p>This will be maintained on exit as well as entry</p>		
	<p>Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.</p> <p>This also reduces contact with door handles</p>	<p>Doors will be open at all four corners of the hall.</p> <p>The windows at the top of the hall to be open if possible.</p>		
	<p>Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets</p>	<p>Congregation asked to bring their own bibles and liturgy will be displayed on the</p>		

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		screens [or people asked to print out their own service sheets at home].		
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)			
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance			
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Creche will remain closed at this time. Sunday Club groups will not meet. All children to sit with their parents at all times.		
	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).	<p>Chairs placed in groups of five – three - five with a 2m gap between them. 6 such rows of 13 chairs and two aisles with the rows facing the stage. For those on their own, sitting at each end of a row of five will ensure a 2m spacing.</p> <p>For couples or families, they will, as a bubble, make use of the whole group of five or three. For larger families they can add to the row of four with a spare chair at the</p>		

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		outside edge. A visit to be made to Rosendale in the days prior to reopening to check all measurements		
	Capacity monitored and entry stopped when capacity reached	Online booking also ensures we know numbers expected and that we won't be turning people away on the day. A row of 13 at the back could be kept back for visitors, all of whom leave contact details		
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	As above		
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	<p>One way system in place with directed stewarding.</p> <p>A strict 'fill-up from the front' and 'leave from the front' policy and communication.</p> <p>People to be asked to arrive around 10 minutes before the service starts to minimise time spent in the building.</p> <p>People to be reminded not to gather with those outside their household in the playground or car park but to</p>		

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		leave the premises immediately.		
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	In agreement with the school, we will limit access to the hall, toilets, and access routes to these areas. Church members will not be permitted access anywhere else. Signs / cordons to be in place.		
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	Congregation encouraged to bring their own hand sanitiser where possible. Hand sanitiser provided at the entrances and exits as well as outside the toilets.		
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Temporary signage and barriers in place to stop people accessing non-approved areas of the school.		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Signage outside and inside the building See poster library: Coronavirus poster library		
	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.		

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		<p>Toilets and surfaces to be cleaned after each service.</p> <p>Doors will be propped open however door handles will be wiped between each service.</p> <p>Assurance to be given from the school that this had been done before we arrived.</p> <p>Rosendale to be responsible for cleaning before and after we arrive. We will clean between the two services.</p>		
	<p>Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.</p>	<p>All toilets have soap, paper hand towels and bins provided. Grace Church to provide these.</p>		
	<p>Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.</p>	<p>As above</p>		
	<p>Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.</p>	<p>As above</p>		

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	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days	All attendees must register before coming into the church. An online form will collect information which will be kept for 21 days. Visitors asked to fill in a form on arrival. Pens placed in a ‘dirties’ pot after use to be sanitised later (For GDPR purposes, we need to ensure the correct wording on the disclaimer).		
	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.	Email communication to the church family with regular updates to the website		
	No singing during services (although live music can be provided)	A small band will be able to be used, 2m at least away from the front row. Congregation reminded not to sing		
	Speaker to be at least two meters from front row	To be marked on the floor		
	No serving of food and drink items prior to, during or after the service.	People reminded not to bring their own food and drink		
	Microphones and other equipment kept to the minimum possible number of individuals	The leader and speaker can share a microphone. Use by others kept to a minimum,		

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		and everyone reminded not to touch it		
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)	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.	NA		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	It is our expectation that the building will have been cleaned by Rosendale School prior to arrival on Sunday morning. We will wipe chairs, door handles between services. Cleaning is carried out by Volunteer members of the church congregation. Rosendale School will clean after our services.		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	One or two people to be on the rota for cleaning between the services each week and they will be properly trained and equipped.		
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	A separate cleaning kit to be made available for volunteers to clean between each service. A laminated step by step guide will also be provided.		

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	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	A cleaning box to be made available each week		
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Bin bags to be provided inside toilet cubical. Removed and disposed of by a volunteer.		
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	To be done at the end of the second service. All rubbish placed in a strong bin bag and taken home by a volunteer to place in their home bin.		
	Ask people to spray clean toilet after use			
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	As this is a School building this will not be possible.		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	To be completed by Rosendale School.		
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	As above		

Extra to Church of England Risk Assessment

Area of Focus (Extra to Church of England Risk Assessment)	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Coronavirus entering the premises and potentially infecting users of the building	Ask everyone symptomatic not to attend	By e-mail beforehand		
	All attendees asked to follow government guidance on self-isolation after symptoms and/or positive test/contact tracing/returning from foreign travel.	By e-mail beforehand		
	Verbal symptom checks on entry	By the welcomer outside		

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	Ask vulnerable not to attend in person	By e-mail beforehand		
	Action Plan in place in case and communicated to leaders as in event of Coronavirus case known to enter premises	All current Government Track and Trace guidelines to be followed. In addition, all attendees notified by e-mail, and Rosendale informed.		

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Transmission of Coronavirus when meeting away from Rosendale School – Eg Staff Meetings and Growth Groups	Use remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.	Church Council meetings and Growth Groups to continue on Zoom		
	Restrict attendance of individuals at meetings to those absolutely necessary and maintain social distancing throughout.	Staff meetings limited to staff. Meetings can happen outside socially distanced in a garden while the weather allows.		
	Avoid transmission during meetings, for example, by avoiding sharing pens and other objects.			
	Provide hand sanitiser in rooms used for meetings.			
	Hold meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.			