# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public **Funeral services v1.1**

**Version Control**

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| Issue Date | Version Number | Issued by |
| 22ndMay 2020 | 1 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 8th June 2020 | 2 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |
| 12th 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 13thJune.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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july)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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

**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).

1. 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.
2. 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 For Funeral in Church**

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| **Church:**  **St Mark’s Heyside v1.1** | **Assessor’s name:**  **John Corbishley** | **Date completed:**  **20th July 2020** | **Review date:**  **27th July 2020 or after 1st funeral.** |

| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed – date and name** |
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| **Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or live streaming**  [General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches) | One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible | Notice “Clergy Only” on outer Vestry door and Church Vestry doors (3off) | JC |  |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | An example can be [found here](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf). N/A |  |  |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | 22nd June 2020 | JC | JC |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | 22nd June 2020 | JC | JC |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. **One cold water tap in vestry** | See [Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-organisations-on-supplying-safe-water-supplies?utm_source=a85cd421-5f76-4767-95f7-da69aa76fe3d&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)  22nd June 2020 | JC | JC |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | 22nd June 2020 | JC | JC |
| Holy waterstoups and the font are empty. | N/A |  |  |
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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. | Check opening times of the “Duke of York” public house to avoid multiple groups congregating on the car park | JC/DB |  |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. | N/A as we do not open for visiting public |  |  |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | Booking system via Church Warden in operation. Only those booked in will be admitted. | DB |  |
| If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | [Apply here](https://goodtogo.visitbritain.com/).  N/A |  |  |
| **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. | Notices to be posted to bar access to Vestry. | JC |  |
| Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below). | Our agreed practice of only opening for Worship on Sundays may be compromised by a mid week funeral. Cleaning may be needed if we cannot maintain the 72 (or 48 hours) required for the virus to disperse naturally. | TBC |  |
| *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 doors will be access in and out of Church controlled by Church Warden. Vestry door only to be used for Emergency exit.  ***Maximum number of 30 in congregation, numbered seating, instructions in pews.*** | JC/DB |  |
| *Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).* | Notices to be posted outside Church, advising of queuing maintaining Social distancing. | JC |  |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | Main doors to be pegged open throughout the service. | JC/DB |  |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets  Issue service folders to designated seating positions, to be left at end of service. Folders to be exchanged on Wednesday for others, allowing the 72 hours for virus to disperse.  Laminated Pew numberings and information should be wiped clean if we do not have 72 hours to next occupation. | Notices to explain this practice. JC | JC |  |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | Tape off : Chapel, Book of remembrance, Organ, book shelves, book case. | JC |  |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Removed, March 2020 prior to Church cleaning. | JC | JC |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Removed July 2020 | JC | JC |
| 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). | Seats to be numbered and allocated to individuals or households. | JC/DB |  |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | As above.  **Plus Keep clear adjacent centre Aisle.** | JC/DB |  |
| In the event of an unspecified number of people arriving together at Church we should prepare a waiting area with 2m distances marked out to remind parishioners of the need to social distance. | Notices and lines to be marked outside. | JC/DB |  |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Notices to be printed, laminated and deployed | JC/DB |  |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | As above | JC/DB |  |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. **Note : Sanitiser purchase and dispensers and bottles refilled.** | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Deploy in entrance and around Church, with Notices. | JC |  |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing  **Consider : anything to change?** | Consult [advice on gaining temporary permissions](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/20647). |  |  |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Notices to be printed, laminated and deployed. | JC |  |
| Covid Symptoms : parishioners to be reminded of the symptoms and warned to stay at home if they suspect they are exhibiting any (Dry Persistent cough, dry sore throat, change in sense of smell or taste)  If anyone develops these symptoms during the service they should leave and go home immediately, maintaining social distiches on the way out. | Include in the information sent out to parishi0oners for booking and display on posters round Church.  Attendees register to be printer, retained in folder for 21 days | JC/DB |  |
| Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitizer spray or disposable wipes.  One person to be identified with sanitizer to watch for surfaces being touched in general areas of Church. Also to watch for any encroachment on other peoples 2m social space and inform Church Warden. | Advice on[**cleaning church buildings can be found here**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.**  The Church will be vacated after the Service and left closed for at least 72 hours. After any access to Church, 72 hours will pass before Church is opened again.  **We should aim to have Funerals on Wednesday if possible** | Susan Corbishley |  |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. |  |  |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.  **Consider: Non-opening of Church hall toilets as cleaning will be required after every visit.** | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Hand cleaner and paper towels available in lower Hall Toilets |  |  |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Bin, liner and paper towels available for Church and Vestry. | JC |  |
| Parishioners to be informed to keep all personal belongings with them at all times in their pews., e.g. do not leave Umbrella’s in the porch, on tables or on window bottoms.. | Notice required. | JC |  |
| Congregations giving : Retain security of offerings and maintain a safe zone around the collection. | A box, lined with a plastic bag will be placed at the rear of Church. The Collection can be blessed by the Priest after the distribution of the wafers at the end of the service. Collection, in the plastic bag removed to the safe and left for 72 hours before opening to count and bank by treasurer. | JC/DB |  |
| If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days | Church wardens to record known worshippers whose details are known. Visitors should have booked in and will have data collected at booking with Attendance confirmed on the register. | JC/DB |  |
| 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. | Facebook, Website, A Church Near you and email to all known Parishioners. | JC |  |
| **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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | 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. | If basic cleaning is deemed necessary it will be undertaken on Wednesday to allow 72 hours each way. | JC/DB |  |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | 72 hours closure between services and openings is possible unless service pattern changes | JC/DB |  |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | N/A |  |  |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).  **Note: Gloves available if required** | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. |  |  |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. |  |  |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. |  |  |  |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | After every service | JC |  |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | Agreed | JC |  |
| 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.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings) |  |  |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | JC |  |
| **St Marks Specific Risk Assessment:**  **The preparation for, the Funeral service and the clearing of Church afterwards,** | Preparation. Church wardens and Verger normally prepare the Church.  Sanitise hands, clean surfaces and wear gloves to set our service cards, seating positions and instruction sheets.  Use gloves, masks and face shields as necessary to welcome mourners and direct to seats. |  | JC/DB |  |
|  | Priest will sanitize hands prior to starting.  Priest will enter from Vestry. They will remain in the Sanctuary at all times, using the lectern to deliver the service and readings. | The individual preferences of the clergy need to be discussed and agreed, maintaining social distancing of 2m at all times. Masks and shields provided in cases where 2m cannot be maintained. | JC/DB |  |
|  | At the dismissal, the priest will put on face mask and Face shield and sanitise hands.  They may accompany the coffin out of Church at their own discretion.  Mourners will be directed out of Church by the Funeral director starting at the front with all others remaining seated until advised to leave.  Mourners to be advised not to congregate outside Church and move away from doors as soon as practical.  Mourners should retain 2m social distancing from each other. |  |  |  |
|  | Those who are shielding should do so until 30th July. Those from this group who attend do so at their own risk. |  |  |  |
| **Congregation seating process** | See diagram of seating layout.  Maximum of 14 household groups.  The front pew will remain empty to safeguard the clergy.  The maximum number in each position will be 5.  Seats adjacent to the central aisle will be unoccupied.  Seats will be allocated by Church Warden as group arrives and is confirmed correct on Booking form.  Seats will be reserved for the immediate family at the front.  Congregation remain in seats until end of service.  Church Warden or Funeral Director will direct Congregation to leave from front first, in household groups. All other mourners remaining seated until told to leave. |  | JC/DB |  |

Note:

1. **Funeral directors must provide St Mark’s Church Wardens with:**
   1. **Adequate notice of the Funeral requiring the Church to be opened, the optimum day for Funerals is Wednesday.**
   2. **Full list of approved attendee’s 24 hour prior to the Service.**
   3. **A signed off Risk Assessment for their management of the Service at least 3 days prior to the service.**
   4. **That Risk Assessment must clearly identify how Clergy are to be safeguarded at any subsequent service (Crematorium or graveyard.**
2. **Flowers from Funerals will not be received back into Church after the funeral.**
3. **Clergy who do not drive, may need special arrangements to go to Crematorium or Cemetery.**

