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

**Version Control**

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| Issue Date | Version Number | Issued by |
| 22nd May 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 |

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](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic/covid-19-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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

**Risk assessment template**

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| **Church:**  **St Peter’s Stratton** | **Assessor’s name:**  **Sarah Woods** | **Date completed:**  **18/6/2020** | **Review date:**  **18/7/2020** |

| **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 livestreaming**  [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 | Only one practical entrance to the church | No action required | N/A |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | No lone working due to isolated nature of the building. | No action required | N/A |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | Not practical due to limited means of ventilation | Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | Volunteer opening the church | Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | Not applicable.  Toilet and kitchen to be locked except under controlled use by volunteers. | Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. | Not in use during closure. Monitored for maintenance purposes only. | Briefing notes by SW/JH |  |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Not in use. | N/A |  |
| **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. |  |  |  |
| 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**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.** | Routine of church before opening by Chris and Ron Rodgers |  |
| 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. | Only one practical entrance | N/A |  |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | Limited ventilation due to building layout- visitors and volunteers to be advised to wear homemade (non-PPE) facemasks | Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| Remove from use all books (inc. hymn books and Bibles) plus leaflets except single use material that will be removed by user. | No use of books permitted. | Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items | N/A |  |  |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Pew runners and kneelers to be placed in back pew by Keith Abrahams on 22/6/2020 when he checks the solar panel meter.  Kneelers are surface cleanable so can be left in place.  Volunteer manning the session will need to wipe down if used. | JH to contact KA to instruct on this.  Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | Lady Chapel and children’s toy area to be cordoned off | Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| 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. | Use alternate pews with 1 person/ household group per pew. | Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Coloured paper to indicate where people can sit. | Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | only 1 entrance/ exit. Volunteers manning will have to supervise movement to ensure that distancing going through the proch is maintained | Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | Toilet, kitchen to be locked | Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Will need 1 hand sanitiser dispenser at the entrance/ exit of the church. Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | Chris Rodgers to see if can purchase locally, if unable will need to be ordered through parish buying.  Briefing notes by SW/ JH regarding placement and use of sanitisers |  |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | N/A | N/A |  |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | To be included on briefing notes for volunteer greeting attendees at porch.  To be included in notices advising public of church opening | Briefing notes by SW/ JH  Notice of church opening by SW |  |
| 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. | Advice on[**cleaning church buildings can be found here**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.**  **Volunteer on closing the building to wipe the door handles and all surfaces with disinfectant wipes** | Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | N/A | N/A |  |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | N/A | N/A |  |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Will need a binbag for disposal of disinfectant surface wipes. | Chris Rodgers to procure disinfectant wipes, disposable gloves and binbags  Briefing notes by SW/ JH |  |
| **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. | Building will be closed for 72 hours between opening as routine.  Opening for private prayer on a Sunday, funerals on a Wednesday or Thursday to be considered. | N/A |  |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. |  | N/A |  |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Will need usual cleaning | Cleaning rota by Chris and Ron Rodgers |  |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options. | Chris Rodgers to procure disinfectant wipes, disposable gloves and binbags |  |
| 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. | Waste to be removed by volunteer at end of opening | Briefing notes by SW/JH |  |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | **Building will be closed for 72 hours between openings as a routine** |  |  |
| 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) | N/A |  |
| 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)**.** |  |  |