# Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Version Control**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 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 |
| 1st July 2020 | 4 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |

Kirkby Malham version 4.1.4a

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](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) Already done
   * Livestreaming services (clergy only) Not anticipated
   * Private prayer (general public) Already done
   * Public worship This document
   * Rites of passage services Not needed yet
   * Opening for visitors and tourists Not needed yet
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**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Church:**  **St Michael the Archangel**  **Kirkby Malham** | **Assessor’s name:**  **EE approved by PCC 20/7/20** | **Date completed:**  21/7/20 | **Review date:** |

| **Area of Focus** | **Controls required** | **Additional information** | **Number** | **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.](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 | Entry by Main Door. Signs needed. These to include reminders about social distancing and use of hand sanitiser. | 1 |  | 18/6/20  EE |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | An example can be [found here](https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/lone-working.pdf).  . Lone working policy is in Safeguarding handbook. | 2 |  | Completed by CR when Safeguarding folder prepared. |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | Done for opening for Individual Private Prayer | 3 |  | 30/6/20  MD |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | Done for opening for individual private prayer. | 4 |  | 18/6/20  SB – South aisle and Lady Chapel |
| Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. | 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) | 5 |  | Water run for 5 minutes and toilets flushed. 4/6/20 EE  West end sink flushed 18/6/20 EE |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary. | Heating not be needed until September at earliest. Electricity never switched off. | 6 |  | No immediate action needed |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. | Done for opening for individual private prayer | 7 |  | MD before 10/6/20 |
| Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard | Livestreaming | 8 |  | AS to check before use. |
| **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. | Victoria Inn will be warned. No other close businesses | 9 | GP |  |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media. | Dates will be added to church website when agreed. | 10 | AS/EE |  |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services | Numbers anticipated at services does not require a booking system, however, people intending to attend services to be asked to inform AS/churchwardens so that appropriate seating can be arranged. | 11 | AS to ask for people intending to attend services to inform him so that appropriate seating can be arranged. Also asked to bring own pen if wishing to sign yellow envelope. | N/A |
| If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain ‘Good to Go’ standard mark | [Apply here](https://goodtogo.visitbritain.com/).  Not open to sightseeing visitors at this stage. | 12 |  | 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. | Most actions done in preparation of earlier stages of opening. Cleaning of rest of church needed. | 13 |  |  |
| 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)**.**  Only south aisle cleaned in preparation for individual private prayer, so, rest of church should be cleaned. Church will be split into 2 areas which can be quarantined for 72 hrs separately – a) nave chancel and north aisle, b) south aisle and Lady Chapel. | 14 | Cleaning of area ‘a’ before end of 24th July by MD, MB, GM, and SB | Cleaning completed 22/7/20 |
| 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. | Use main entrance for way in, Priests door for way out. | 15 |  | Notices prepared for private prayer |
| Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside). | 2m distancing signs to be placed on gate in Pig Lane and Lych gates. Numbers attending not anticipated to cause a problem, however, people intending to attend services to be asked to inform AS/churchwardens so that appropriate seating can be arranged. | 16 | EE to prepare signs.  See No. 11 |  |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation. | Main door and Priest’s door to be left open during use. This may be more difficult when the weather is cold. | 17 |  |  |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets | All books, leaflets and papers to be removed for temporary storage. | 18 | Keyholders | All paper and books removed 22/7/20 |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on) | Church does not have such devotional objects. | 19 |  | N/A |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance | Kneelers to be removed to one of the pews in the north east corner of the church. Cushions to remain in place because there will always be 72 hrs between use. | 20 | MO, MB, GM, SB to remove kneelers when cleaning before end 24th July | Kneelers removed 22/7/20 |
| Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas | All children’s resources to be placed in cupboard near children’s area or cupboard in West End room. | 21 | Keyholders | All children’s resources removed 22/7/20 |
| 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). | Box pews lend themselves to social distancing. Diagonal corners are 2m apart. Space for 20 in centre aisles. Need to work out how to deal with households. Will we need more than 20? | 22 | EE to prepare signs for seats not to be used. |  |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | In each pew put Service book at seat where to sit, and notice where not to sit. Service book to be left in pew for >48hrs quarantine. Pew sheets will be prepared for each week to be taken away with congregation. | 23 | Keyholders |  |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | In main door, out through Priest’s door. Notices to show flow, and 2m reminders. | 24 | EE |  |
| Limit access to places were the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed. | Vestry will not be used. Only disabled toilet accessible with hand sanitiser for use before and after opening toilet door. | 25 | EE to prepare notice for toilet hand sanitiser. |  |
| Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Entrance, Exit, for priest, after receiving Communion, Lady Chapel, Toilet entrance. | 26 |  |  |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Consult [advice on gaining temporary permissions](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/20647).  No temporary changes required. | 27 |  |  |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Notices in toilets and by hand sanitisers. | 28 | EE |  |
| 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)**.**  Minimize touch points by having doors open, and pew doors taped open. | 29 | Church will be quarantined for 72hrs so no additional cleaning is anticipated. |  |
| 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.  Check soap dispensers and towel dispensers are full, and bin has suitable liner and is emptied between periods on quarantine. | 30 | Keyholders |  |
| 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](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Check soap dispensers and towel dispensers are full, and bin has suitable liner and is emptied between periods on quarantine. | 31 | Keyholders |  |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Ensure all bins have polythene liners. | 32 | Keyholders |  |
| If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days | Sidesperson should record name and contact phone number of all people attending services. | 33 | EE to provide record sheets. – see 35 |  |
| 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. | Warn Victoria Inn that their car park may be used. | 34 | GP |  |
| **Actions needed for Communion Service** | Congregation supervision and attendance record. | One sidesperson should undertake the following. Remind people about social distancing, direct people to seats, record participants and contact details. No other sides-people are required. | 35 | Someone not in a vulnerable category. |  |
| General directions | At the start of the service, the Priest will tell the congregation how the service will work, and what is expected of them. | 36 | Priest |  |
| Music | There will be no singing until a change in Government policy. If the organ is played, it must be quarantined 72 hrs before and after use. Antiviral spray should not be used to prevent damage to electrical contacts on keyboard and timber. Because the church is going to be quarantined for 72 hrs before and after the service, and private prayer, organ practice can only occur before or after the service, or private prayer.  For August services, pre-recorded music will be used only before and after the service, and during communion. This will be reviewed before September and organists consulted on music to be used thereafter. | 37 | Organists need to discuss. |  |
|  | Preparation of bread and wine for communion Set up of Nave altar. | AS will use own chalice and ciborium/paten, and robe in Lady Chapel. Churchwardens will place wine, wafers, burse and stole etc in Lady Chapel on Wednesday after private prayer to allow 72hrs quarantine before the service.  Hands to be sanitised before touching wafers.  This will need to be reviewed if other priests take the service. | 38 | Priest  Keyholders |  |
| Consecration of bread and wine | During consecration the wafers must be kept in the ciborium/paten and covered with a lid or cloth. The priest should wear a face covering. | 39 | Priest |  |
| Administration of communion | Only the celebrant will take communion in both parts before inviting the congregation to receive communion in one part only. The wafer must be delivered by the priest wearing a face covering in silence and dropped into the hand. If there is any hand contact both priest and communicant must sanitise their hands immediately. The communicant should remove their face covering whilst communion is administered | 40 | Priest |  |
| Access to communion | The main altar and altar rail will not be used. The priest will stand in front of the Nave altar to administer communion, the congregation must form a line keeping 2m apart and return to their seat after taking communion by way of the north or south aisles. The priest will not be able to social distance whilst giving communion. | 41 | Priest |  |
|  | During and after the service | During the service there will be no physical contact whilst exchanging the peace or at any other time. After the service, there will be no coffee and the congregation must maintain 2m distancing whilst being encouraged to leave. | 42 |  |  |
| Readings and intercessions. | Separate microphones will be set up for readings and intercessions, one on the lectern and one free standing. |  | SB to ask for volunteers.  Churchwardens to set up microphones and leave in place. |  |
| Sound system | Because the church will be locked between the Sunday service and private prayer, the face microphone and lectern microphone can be left in place and the cupboard left unlocked with only the switch to be activated for the service. This to be set up on Wednesdays. | 43 | Churchwarden |  |
| Collection | There will be a box by the exit for collections. This will remain sealed for 72 hrs and counted and recorded on Wednesdays. Yellow envelopes and pens will be placed by the box, people will be encouraged to bring own pen and take envelopes for future use. | 44 | Churchwarden |  |
|  | Action to be taken if someone falls ill. | If possible, anyone falling ill should be asked to go home.  If person is too ill to go home 999 should be called.  If the ill person shows any of the coronavirus symptoms, then all people should be asked to leave and the church closed. The church will then be isolated for 72 hours followed by appropriate cleaning. | 45 | Churchwarden |  |
| **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. | After initial cleaning of church, always have 72 hour periods of strict quarantine before and after use for services and individual private prayer. No extra cleaning required. | 46 | Keyholders |  |
| **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)**.**  **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | Cleaning not anticipated, but if required for any reason, will ensure no-one in vulnerable group is involved. | 47 |  |  |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Hopefully, not required. | 48 |  |  |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Box of gloves has been purchased. | 49 | GP to buy more gloves to replace unsatisfactory gloves. | Gloves purchased 10/6/20 EE |
| 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.  Antiviral materials purchased. | 50 |  |  |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. | Will do. | 51 |  |  |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | Weekly in periods between quarantine | 52 |  |  |
| If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | This is the plan. | 53 |  |  |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms**  **Involvement of clergy or members of the congregation in any vulnerable category** | 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) | 54 |  |  |
| 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)**.**  No extra cleaning required. | 55 |  |  |
| Action required before any visiting clergy or members of the congregation participate in the running of services. | Anyone in any of the vulnerable categories as defined by HMG are to be fully appraised of the potential risks of involvement. They are to be provided with a copy of this Risk Assessment, and any concerns raised must be addressed before involvement. | 56 | AS for any priests, and churchwardens for members of the congregation. |  |
| **Bellringing** | Minimization of risk during access to ringing chamber | Prior to the first service, the Tower Captain will check the bells and belfry for safety.  Bellringers will be voluntary, and the Tower Captain will establish a list for each service. Only ringers will be allowed on the ringing floor.  For services, the bellringing group will assemble outside church (socially distanced) and be led in (and out) by Tower Captain, all doors and access points will have been previously opened. Hand sanitisers will be provided by bellringers and used before climbing stairs and possibly touching handrail.  Face coverings should be worn when accessing the church and during ringing. | 57 |  |  |
|  | Arrangements during ringing | Only 4 bells or fewer to be rung, for a maximum of 15 minutes prior to a service. No further ringing for at least 72hrs and no practices until further notice.  Bells 1,3,5 and 7 can be rung with at least 1.5m social distancing between ringers. Bells 1,3 1n5 5 to be left up and 7 raised and lowered by the Tower Captain before and after the session. | 58 |  |  |
| **Face Coverings** | **The House of Bishops strongly advise that face coverings should be worn by all those attending a place of worship, including ministers, worshippers, staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors, where there may be other people present.**  **From 8th August 2020, the wearing of face coverings in Places of Worship becomes mandatory.** | We encourage everyone to follow this advice when attending the church except those in the exempt categories, such as those with appropriate medical conditions, or where people are giving help with lip reading.  A supply of face coverings will be made available in church.  The priest will wear a face covering whilst administering communion, the communicant will need to remove the face covering only whilst receiving communion. | 59 | Churchwardens to ensure a supply of face coverings to be available.  Priest to encourage people to wear them. |  |