

## Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public - St Paul's Church Withington

Last updated 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021

### Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
8 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	2	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
12 <sup>th</sup> June 2020	3	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
1 <sup>st</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> June. House of Bishops guidance provided for churches to open for funerals from 15<sup>th</sup> June. Public worship, with measures in place for social distancing, are allowed from 4<sup>th</sup> 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 (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).

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**

<p><b>Church: St Paul's Church, Withington</b></p> <p><b>Re-opened for public worship on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2020 after 1<sup>st</sup> Lockdown.</b></p> <p><b>Closed again in November 2020 and re-opened December 2020.</b></p> <p><b>Closed again January 2021</b></p> <p><b>Re-opening 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021</b></p>	<p><b>Assessor's name: Revs Hils and Mike Corcoran</b></p>	<p><b>Date first completed: 18<sup>th</sup> July 2020</b></p>	<p><b>Review date: 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020</b></p> <p><b>Last updated: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021</b></p>
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming</b>  <a href="#">General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.</a>	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	Clergy to use front door if need access.	Hils and Mike	On-going
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	Hils and Mike have been visiting the church to do security check together. Other key-holders to let Hils and Mike know when they are visiting the building and ensure they have a mobile phone to contact people in an emergency.	Hils/Mike	On-going
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Establish a ‘set up’ time possibly the day before opening. Building to be aired then.	Hils/Mike/ Church Wardens	Set up to be completed w/c 8 <sup>th</sup> March – Mike, Churchwarden and Assistant CW
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	Arrange for deep clean to be carried out.	Church hall cleaner	Deep clean commenced w/c 1 <sup>st</sup> March and completed
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	See <a href="#">Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies</a>	Mike to carry out during ‘set up’ time.	To be completed w/c 8 <sup>th</sup> March

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	Carry out during 'set up' time	Mike/Hils/ Church Wardens	Thermostat just needs turning up as heating was left on low during lockdown.
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	N/A		
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard	N/A		
<b>Deciding whether to open to the public</b>	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.	N/A - no nearby venues/ businesses.	N/A - no nearby venues/ businesses.	
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media, and newsletter.	Update website, social media, ACNY		To be completed by Hils w/c 8 <sup>th</sup> March
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Not needed.		
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark	N/A		

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism</b>	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	Confirm at the end of ‘set up’ time	Hils and Mike	To be completed w/c 8 <sup>th</sup> March Mike and Hils
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here</a> .	Review undertaken by Hils and Mike	To be completed w/c 8 <sup>th</sup> March Mike and Hils
	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 and exit through main door, with both doors open. To produce signage to indicate direction of Entry/Exit.	Carry out during ‘set up’ time.	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by ‘Set up’ volunteers
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Ideally to have a steward outside front doors during service times to guide and manage thoroughfare.	Stewards - to provide stewarding rota	On-going from 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by Stewards
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Unable to open windows, but to open both front doors and both sets of double doors into the main church area.	Stewards	On-going from 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by Stewards
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Hymn books / bibles to be cordoned off.	Carry out during ‘set up’ time.	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by ‘Set up’ volunteers

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	To remove votive stand. Replace with single candle for reflection.	Volunteers to carry out during “set up time”	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by ‘Set up’ volunteers
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	To remove kneelers from underneath chairs.	To move, alongside excess chairs during “set up time”	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by ‘Set up’ volunteers
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	To cordon off part of Narthex where Children’s area is situated.	Volunteers during set up time	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by ‘Set up’ volunteers
	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).	To rearrange chairs in groups of 4 to accommodate individuals / family groups. To have signage indicating this. Remainder of chairs to be stored in Narthex area. See enclosed plan.	Hils/Lea to organise floor plan. To implement during Set up time.	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by ‘Set up’ volunteers

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	To have signage indicating seating arrangements	To ask Noel to produce signage  Mike and volunteers during “set up time”	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by ‘Set up’ volunteers
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Entrance through left hand side (as you enter the church), exit through RHS. Marked on floor by footprints / arrows	To ask Noel to produce laminated arrows. Fix to floor during “set up time” - velcro / blu tack	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by ‘Set up’ volunteers
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	Temporary cordon off Chancel, side chapel and RHS of Narthex, as well as kitchenette area.	Mike/ volunteers to cordon off with rope and signage during “set up time”	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by ‘Set up’ volunteers
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use.	To order hand sanitisers. Placed in Narthex as people enter, outside toilet, before communion table (in queuing area) and at communion table for priest to use.	Hils to order sanitiser. To set up during “set up time”	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by ‘Set up’ volunteers



Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	We don't feel that these are required other than moving of furniture.	N/A	
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	To place posters on main door, Narthex door and around walls of church. To also provide information leaflet for people to read and take away.	To ask Noel to produce signage re hand washing and distancing.  Hils and Mike to produce leaflet	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by 'Set up' volunteers
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Deep clean to take place before church is opened. To organise team of cleaning and volunteers, and rota. To identify high risk touch points and provide a list to brief volunteers.	To ask Lea to produce list of touch points for the cleaning rota.	To be completed w/c 8 <sup>th</sup> March Mike and Hils
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Kitchenette will be cordoned off. Toilet facilities will need to be checked before each service.	Hils to source liquid soap and paper towels for toilet (see below) To check before "set up time"	To be completed w/c 8 <sup>th</sup> March Mike and Hils, CW and Assistant CW

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	To order liquid soap, paper towels, bin for toilet, and bin liners.	Hils to order gloves, liquid soap, bins and bin liners. To ensure they are in place during “set up time”	To be completed w/c 8 <sup>th</sup> March Mike and Hils CW and Assistant CW
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	To have bin in toilet and Narthex area to replace liners every Sunday . To double bag paper towels before disposal.	Hils to source polythene bags for bins - to set up during “set up time”	To be completed w/c 8 <sup>th</sup> March Mike and Hils CW and Assistant CW
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day’s record for 21 days	Steward in Narthex to record the names of regular worshippers as they come in. For those who are visiting, give them a wipeable clipboard with a form for contact details to fill in. Wipe pen and clip board after use. Information only to be kept for 21 days.	Hils and Mike to provide.	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by ‘Set up’ volunteers

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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.	To produce leaflet to explain safety procedures in place - send to congregation members as part of weekly email / letter, as well as having available in church. To advertise on social media / website / ACNY as to measures required. Place details of this risk assessment on the church website and a copy on the noticeboard in the Narthex.	Hils and Mike	To be completed w/c 8 <sup>th</sup> March by Hils. Risk assessment to made available.
	Provide means by which people can make donations, minimising risk of contamination	remove collection plates, replace with box with slot, which can then be removed by someone wearing gloves, placed in a safe place for 72 hours and then counted and stored.	Carry out during 'set up' time.	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by 'Set up' volunteers
	Wearing of face masks	Worshippers (including clergy) advised to wear face coverings if they wish	To have a box of face masks upon entry to church, to highlight on instruction leaflet	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by 'Set up' volunteers

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)</b>  Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here</a> .	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 only 10.30 service will be running initially, no need for cleaning other than wiping surfaces, cleaning toilet and emptying bins.	Provide cleaning rota, (see below)	Deep clean commenced w/c 1 <sup>st</sup> March and completed
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	See below.	See below	
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Invite church members to be on cleaning rota, to wipe surfaces, cleaning toilet and emptying bins. Vacuuming when necessary.	Hils/Mike with support from Lea, to identify list of tasks for cleaners after each surface.	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by Hils and Mike
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	Hils to order from Office Depot.	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by Hils and Mike

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	Cleaning materials ordered for deep clean. To order hand sanitisers, liquid soap, hand towels, bins, gloves, masks and antibacterial wipes from Office Depot.	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by Hils and Mike
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	People on the cleaning rota should store any potentially contaminated waste bin bags in one of the cupboards in the Narthex until regular bin collection establish with MCC for church and church hall.	Hils/Mike (with support from Lea) to identify instructions for people on cleaning rota.	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by Hils and Mike
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	To arrange for waste collections from Manchester City Council or other refuse company.	Churchwarden /Assistant Churchwarden	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by Churchwarden /Assistant Churchwarden

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms</b>	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.		Church will normally be closed after 10.30 service initially.	On-going evaluation
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	<a href="#">Public Health England guidance available here.</a>	Hils and Mike to lead	On-going evaluation
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	Cleaning volunteers	On-going evaluation
<b>Holy Communion</b>	Measures will be put in place to ensure that the preparation of Communion and its distribution are Covid-secure. These controls include; no sharing of the Peace, no sung responses, the Priest to sanitise their hands before preparing the altar, the consecrated wine will not be distributed, the use of tweezers to distribute the wafers, and the priest to distribute Communion to the congregation where they are sat. A full copy of the Communion Policy will be attached to this document and members of the congregation will be given a written guide.	Holy Communion will be reintroduced during Holy Week.	Hils/Mike	Review measures w/c 29 <sup>th</sup> March 2021

<b>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Controls required</b>	<b>Additional information</b>	<b>Action by whom?</b>	<b>Completed – date and name</b>
<b>Weddings</b>	Measures will be put in place to ensure that wedding ceremonies can take place safely. These include guidance about face coverings, and the need for those involved in signing the marriage register to sanitize their hands. A full copy of the Wedding Policy will be attached to this document and given out everyone attending the wedding or enquiring about a wedding in the future.	First wedding under these measures to be held on 19 <sup>th</sup> September 2020	Hils/Mike	Hils/Mike 15 <sup>th</sup> September 2020
<b>Contractors</b>	From time to time, contractors will need to visit the church building (and the church hall) to carry out maintenance work or annual health and safety checks. Contractors will be advised to maintain social distancing, wear gloves and masks and clean down any surfaces that they touch following their visit. Longer visits due to the complexity of the work will require a more detailed risk assessment.	These measures apply to work both outside and inside the church building.	Hils/Mike/ Esther	Reviewed by Mike 10 <sup>th</sup> November 2020
<b>Singing</b>	Congregational singing is currently not allowed. A small choir may sing as long as they maintain social distancing, and the wearing face-masks as they move around the building.	Choir to be reintroduced from Easter	David Cane	Review measures w/c 29 <sup>th</sup> March 2021
<b>Capacity</b>	Following an analysis of the space available in the church building in July, it was determined that our capacity (taking account of social distancing) is a maximum of 40 people.	40 remains our capacity until social distancing measures are relaxed by the Government	Mike, Hils and Lea	Completed 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 by Hils and Mike





