

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

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 nd May 2020	1	The House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group
8 th June 2020	2	The House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group

THIS IS A PLANNING DOCUMENT ONLY. IT WILL BE UPDATED AND CONTENT MAY CHANGE ONCE GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE ON REOPENING PLACES OF WORSHIP HAS BEEN PUBLISHED. We are awaiting clarification from government on the extent and nature of what 'supervised individual prayer' means and what exactly will be required. We will update this document as further information becomes available.

On 7th June the government announced that places of worship may open for individual prayer in line with social distancing guidelines from 15th June. The government 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 small services such as weddings and funerals with limited numbers are allowed and then for different forms of public worship.

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](#).

Risk assessment template

Church: St Nicolas Great Bookham	Date completed: 10 June 2020	Review date: 10 September 2020
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Action	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.	Tower door is already accepted as the single point of access. No action needed on this		
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant.	St Nicolas has a lone working policy but this is not relevant to re-opening for private prayer.		
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Not a major issue for St Nicolas as the building is so draughty. However, on the first day of opening the building will be opened from approx. 8 am to allow for airing in advance of it being used for private prayer. The South door (but not the iron gate) could also be opened for the first hour to facilitate airing.	Catherine	
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.	The building is to be cleaned in advance of opening	Catherine/Angela Stevens	

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	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use.	Toilets are not to be made available at this stage. However, they have been flushed weekly during lockdown as part of the regular health and safety checks. No further action needed.		
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed.	The electrical system has been on throughout (as is necessary to maintain the lighting system). The heating has been switched off and will not be switched on until the autumn.		
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.	Not relevant to St Nicolas.		
Preparation of the Church for individual prayer	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.	Confirmed.		
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the ‘cleaning’ section of this risk assessment (below).	Advice reviewed. No action needed beyond what is planned and referred to elsewhere in this document.		
	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.	As already noted, the Tower door is the accepted single point of entry.		

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		<p>It has not been the practice to open other exits when the building is open for private prayer but no services are planned as the numbers in the building at any one time and the risk of fire are both very low. No case for changing this unless significantly larger numbers use the building.</p> <p>Similarly the use of a separate exit is not warranted given the relatively small numbers expected to use the building for private prayer: social distancing with one entrance and exit should not be a problem particular given that the doors and screen are glass</p>		
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened to improve ventilation.	It is intended to leave the external Tower door and the two glass doors in the Tower open when the church is open. Experience suggests		

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		that this will produce more than adequate ventilation.		
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets.	This has been/is being done	Catherine, Carole and Gordon	
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed.	These are being removed	Gordon	
	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.	Alternate pews are being roped off and access restricted to the main nave area.	Catherine and Neil	
	Determine placement of hand sanitiser available for visitors to use.	Scope for fixing sanitiser dispenser in prominent position on wooden screen in Tower is being examined	Neil	
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing	Not needed as roping off seating and parts of the church should secure social distancing.		
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	This is being achieved by roping off alternate pews and parts of the church	Catherine and Neil	
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	The entrance and exit route are both through the Tower and the main aisle so flow markings would not add value. Social distancing will depend on people moving to one side to allow others through – as they now		

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		routinely do on pavements in the village. No action needed		
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	Notices are being prepared	Neil	
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes	Those locking the church on the daily rota will wipe down the accessible pews, door handles and other surfaces that may have been touched when they lock up each afternoon.		
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels.	Not relevant as the toilets are not to be opened to the public at this stage.		
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Not relevant as the toilets are not to be opened to the public at this stage.		
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk of those responsible for removing them.	The only waste should be wooden splints used to light candles. The container for used splints will be emptied daily by the person locking the church who will wear gloves and empty the container directly into the wheelie bin.		

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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 .	If the church building has been closed for 72 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for cleaning.	Noted – but this is not planned to be the case.		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	A professional cleaner is being employed to clean the church. She is not in a vulnerable group.		
	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Daily cleaning of surfaces will be carried out by those locking the church. The professional cleaner will clean the church on a weekly basis		
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable).	Check arrangements with professional cleaner. Those locking and unlocking will provide their own gloves.	Catherine, Angela	
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned.	Check arrangements with professional cleaner. Paper towels and anti-bacterial spray will be available in the Tower cleaning cupboard for use by those locking the church each evening	Catherine, Angela	
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	The only waste should be wooden splints used to light candles. The container for used splints will be emptied daily by the person locking		

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		the church who will wear gloves and empty the container directly into the wheelie bin.		
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Daily by those locking the church		
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Noted		
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	Noted		
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Noted		