

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR BAPTISMS – ST. NICOLAS CHURCH BOOKHAM

The purpose of this risk assessment is to help determine whether or not changes and adaptations in the preparations and procedures for the baptisms are sufficient to allow these to take place safely given the current restrictions as a result of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

The risk assessment follows the general order of preparation and procedures for baptisms pre Covid-19, which incorporate usual health and safety considerations to prevent incidents and accidents. **It does not consider baptism preparation courses and home visits by the minister and or pastoral assistant. Those require separate consideration should it be concluded that baptisms can be re-started. It is assumed that all of the safeguards set out in the risk assessment for services of worship are put in place and they are not repeated here.** This assessment should therefore be read in conjunction with the risk assessment for worship services.

The rationale for the risk scoring is based on a likelihood and impact model, as set out in Appendix 1. Individual decisions about attending services in Church will depend on their own vulnerabilities and decisions, on which a summary of government guidance is also provided in Appendix 2.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july>

Action No:	Actions	Comments	Risks	Risk Score < mitigation	Mitigation	Risk score > mitigation
1.	Setting up the church: bringing out the Easter candle; preparing the font; putting out towel by font; getting ready candle for child; placing reserved signs on pews for family; getting out service sheets; signing the baptismal certificate and baptism register. These tasks are carried out by a server and the baptismal visitor	Although the preparations are different from those for a 10 o'clock Sunday service similar precautions should enable the risks to be adequately minimised unless the church has been used for a service in the last 3 days – which would, of course, normally be the case for a baptism held at 12 noon on a Sunday.	<u>Person to person contact</u> Risk of contact between server and baptismal visitors and anyone else who may be in the church at the time	6	<u>Person to person contact</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church is closed whilst it is being set up for the service, thereby avoiding contact with members of the congregation who arrive early. <u>This would mean locking the church after a 10 o'clock service and re-opening it again if the baptism is at 12 noon on a Sunday.</u> 	3
			<u>Cross contamination</u> Anyone handling items that have been touched by others in the last 3 days is	9	<u>Cross contamination</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>If baptisms are held at 12 on a Sunday after a 10 o'clock service, pews,</u> 	3

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			at risk of cross contamination unless they have be thoroughly cleaned.		<p><u>door handles, the tower table and anything else that may be touched by those attending the baptism will need to be very thoroughly sanitised</u> (on the assumption that touching a surface that has been recently contaminated carries a very high risk of infection.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shell should be put by the font to be used to pour water over the child's forehead. • Disposable towels should be put out instead of fabric ones to dry the child after the baptism. • Hand sanitizer should be put by the font to be used by the minister before and after signing with the cross 	
2.	Service leader – action prior to service	Similar precautions are needed to those set out in the risk assessment for Sunday services <u>but extra precautions are needed if</u>	<u>Person to person contact</u> Risk exists as others will be in the building prior to the service.	6	<u>Person to person contact</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 metre social distancing should be observed • Enter church via door by choir vestry to avoid contact with congregation. 	3

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		<u>the baptism follows at 10 o'clock Sunday service</u>	<u>Cross contamination</u> Risks exist if anything used has been touched in the last 3 days.	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash hands in Church Room kitchen. Robing in choir vestry to avoid contact with server. Server puts microphones, service book and anything else needed during the service in the choir vestry. <p><u>Cross contamination</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If baptism follows a worship service earlier that morning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Choir vestry should be cleaned if other worship leaders have used it at the 10 o'clock service.</u> <u>The minister should not use equipment used by others without sanitising it thoroughly. If it cannot be sanitised thoroughly it should not be used.</u> 	3
3.	Arrival of congregation. Note that Government guidance limits numbers to 30. On the basis that people should	The same precautions as are taken for a 10 o'clock service should be taken for a baptism <u>except that the family</u>	<u>Person to person contact</u> It is usual to those attending a baptism to mill around in the aisles before	12	<u>Person to person contact</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks must be worn in line with Government guidelines. 	3

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	<p>not move around the church during the service, to allow everyone to have a view of the font from their seat we need to limit the congregation to 14 households (see attached plan of church). That is probably consistent with a maximum of 30 given that for a baptism the average household size is likely to be at least 2.</p>	<p><u>should be asked to compile a list of those invited to attend and to provide it to the person leading the service no less than 48 hours before the service</u> . This includes checking those on the list provided by the family at the tower door; dispensing hand sanitiser in the tower, and guiding people reasonably firmly to their pews.</p>	<p>the service greeting one and another. This carries a high risk of passing on the virus if anyone is infected</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guests meeting in the churchyard before and after the service are asked to abide by the social distancing rules set out in Government guidelines • Same procedures for checking off those arriving and dispensing hand sanitiser as for Sunday services. • At least one person needed in the nave to help people to their seats and discourage mingling in the aisle. This implies at least three people are needed to manage the arrival of the congregation; four would be more comfortable. If the pastoral assistant and server are happy to help with marshalling we would need two additional people, ideally a warden and an experienced sidesman. • To minimise the temptation to mingle in the aisles it is suggested that the doors are not 	

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					<p>opened until 5 minutes before the service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any toys/activities for children in attendance must be the children's own and they should not be shared with other children. Children should remain in the designated pews during the service. 	
4.	<p>Use of toilets As for Sunday services with access only via the main entrance to the Church Room.</p>					
5.	<p>Service Book and baptism register Filled in in choir vestry with same precautions as for Sunday services.</p>					
6.	<p>Conduct of service</p>	<p>CofE guidance stipulates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only clergy and parents should be at the font while godparents should maintain social distance. The child should be held over the font by one of their parents, not the minister. [I thought this was in the guidance but I haven't been able to track it down.] 	<p><u>Person to person contact</u> The normal baptism service involves a fair amount of movement with the minister and others being close to the family and godparents. This carries significant risk. The minister also touches the candidate, holding them if they are a child.</p>	<p>12</p>	<p><u>Person to person contact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family and godparents are seated in designated pews which are chosen so that they can make the promises standing in those pews without the need to move anywhere- see attached plan. Only the parents, child and minister move to the font for the baptism. 	<p>3</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minister should sanitize their hands before and after signing with the cross • Water should be poured over the candidates forehead using an implement such as a shell, not using hands. • The baptised person or their parents may wipe the forehead with kitchen roll which should be disposed of immediately. • The person presenting the lighted candle should sanitize their hands before doing so. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minister should wear a mask at the font. • Other members of the congregation, including children, must remain in their pews, although they may stand during the baptism. The pews used should be chosen to so that all have line of sight to the font. There might be a case for allocating particular pews to families with children so that they have a good view. • The child should be held at the font by their parents. • The minister should only touch the child when they sign them with the cross – and they should sanitise their hands before and after doing this. Water should be poured on the forehead using a shell, not cupped hands. • Pastoral assistant presenting candle should wear mask and gloves. <p><u>Cross contamination</u></p>	

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			<p><u>Cross contamination</u> A risk exists if others use the sacristy within 3 days before or after.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral assistant preparing candle for presentation should sanitise hands and wear gloves when preparing candle. • Kitchen roll should be used by parents to dry child's forehead, not a fabric towel, and the paper towels should be disposed of immediately. 	

APPENDIX 1: RISK SCORING MATRIX MODEL

Risk has been scored using a simple model of 'likelihood' and 'impact' with specific reference to transmission of Covid-19. It is recognised that risk of transmission cannot be eliminated, not least because of variables that are out of the direct control of those preparing for and supporting services in Church. In particular, if individuals choose to attend despite government guidance not to meet with groups indoors if they are among more vulnerable groups, as set out in Government guidance for places of worship, summarised in Appendix 2.

Covid-19 infections range from being asymptomatic with the vast majority being treated at home. Most do not resulting in serious illness requiring hospital admission, serious long term effects on health or death. The likelihood of increased risk of serious illness or death must be considered alongside Government guidance for vulnerable groups and individual decisions to attend services. For these reasons, it is not possible to attribute a full range of impact scores because of the multiple variables. An impact score of 3 has therefore been applied throughout the assessment.

- *Likelihood* = How likely risk is to result in cross infection (from minimal to extremely likely)
- *Impact* = The potential seriousness of an individual contracting Covid-19
- *Risk Score* = Likelihood score multiplied by Impact score

The matrix below provides a guide to assigning degrees of risk depending on the score.

		Impact				
		1	2	3	4	5
Likelihood	1	1	2	3	4	5
	2	2	4	6	8	10
	3	3	6	9	12	15
	4	4	8	12	16	20
	5	5	10	15	20	25

Risk score 1-7 – suggests that risks sufficiently minimised to proceed

Risk score 8-12 – suggests some further mitigation may be required or advisable

Risk score 15 and above – suggests that high risks persist unless significant mitigation is applied

APPENDIX 2: Government Guidance for Places of Worship and individual decisions to attend services

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

Vulnerable Groups

In Section 5, Government guidance reiterates general guidance for individuals aged 70 years and over attending a place of worship.

"Certain groups of people may be at increased risk of severe disease from COVID-19, including people who are aged 70 or older, regardless of medical conditions. Individuals who fall within this group are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if they do go out, to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their household. You should consider informing these groups in particular of the symptoms of COVID-19 and current stay alert and social distancing guidance."

The guidance also states in Section 5, that:

"Shielded patients are currently advised not to meet more than one person from outside of their own household, and therefore not currently advised to attend places of worship. From Monday 6 July, those shielding individuals may choose to gather in groups of up to 6 people outdoors and form a support bubble with another household, they will therefore still be advised not to attend places of worship indoors."

It goes on to say:

"Advice for both the clinically vulnerable and extremely clinically vulnerable is however advisory and they can choose how to manage their own risks."

The Government offers this as advice under the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 and not as legal requirements.

This risk assessment has been undertaken and appropriate measures to reduce risk of spread of infection to others introduced within St Nicolas Church. This includes reduced numbers of people to attend services and through a pre-booking system; provision of hand sanitizers; carefully considered advice prior to attending and on arrival to the Church; and systems for movement of people within and through the Church.

Individuals aged over 70 looking to attend places of worship should take this guidance into consideration together with local measures to minimise risk adopted by St Nicolas Church and consider how they should best manage their own risks. Each Sidesman and Welcomer volunteering to assist in preparation and during services has received a letter and invited to advise whether or not they wish to return to resume their duties now or in due course when they feel safe to do so. Individual decisions will be fully respected and return to rotas at a later date warmly welcomed. On booking places at services, each person receives confirmation that includes request not to attend if showing symptoms of Covid-19 or contact with anyone with symptoms in the previous seven days.

All considered, everyone must consider their own situation and make their own decision as to when the time is right to come to the Service in Church or to continue to enjoy the service online, and also when it would be appropriate for them to be involved in various roles once again.