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

**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 |

***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](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

**Risk assessment for opening for private prayer only on Wednesdays between 10.00 – 12.00**

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| **Church: St John the Baptist Hove** | **Date completed: 17.6.2020** | **Review date: 25.6.2020 after first opening on 24.6.2020** |

| **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. | Rear porch door | Priest in charge Earl Collins (EC) | Each Sunday  EC |
| A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. | Doors locked to prevent entry while priest is in private prayer. Priest in Charge has copy of the guidance for Wed Sitters. | Priest in charge | Each Sunday  EC |
| Buildings have been aired before use. | Height and age of the building and prevailing weather conditions largely make this less necessary. | Priest in charge | Each Sunday  EC |
| Check for animal waste and general cleanliness. | See above – no other access to church between his visits. | Priest in charge | Each Sunday  EC |
| 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) Water systems are also connected to Hop 50 and used by Flowerstand, so not stagnant. | Priest in charge | Each Sunday EC |
| Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. | See above. | N/A | N/A |
| Holy water stoups and the font are empty. |  | N/A | N/A |
| **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. |  | Priest in charge | Each Sunday  EC |
| 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)**.** | Wardens | 17.6.2020  Wardens |
| 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. | Contingency plan dated 9.6.2020  North door In  East Porch door Exit | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| Where possible, doors and windows should be opened to improve ventilation. | Both doors remain open during private prayer | Stewards |  |
| Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets. | All books, pamphlets, gift aid envelopes etc removed and bookshelves covered. | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed. | All removed | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| 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. | Safely distanced seats and direction of travel through the church to minimise pinch points marked, Ditto queueing arrangements outside the North Door. Altar rail not to be used. | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| Determine placement of hand sanitiser available for visitors to use. | Entrance & Exit points | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing | Removal of extraneous loose furniture and equipment to reduce pinch points. Removal of candles from candlestand to discourage gathering and touching. | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing. | Completed | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements. | Completed | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc. | Internal and external notices sent to all congregants in advance and visible to queue as well as in the church. | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes | Rota of stewards issued with instructions and resources obtained. | Stewards | Each Wednesday |
| Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. | Weekly check by Wardens and Stewards – not available to worshippers. | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. | See above | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk of those responsible for removing them. | All in place | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| **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 cleaning. | Noted. 6 days between each opening | N/A | N/A |
| If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. | Noted. 6 days between each opening | N/A | N/a |
| Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements. | Rota of stewards issued with instructions | Stewards | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). | Gloves procured and available | Wardens | 17.6.2020  BB & MWT |
| Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. | Sanitiser and cleaning fluid procured and available | Wardens | 19.5.2020  BB & MWT |
| Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site. |  | On-duty steward | Each Wednesday |
| Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal. | Weekly | On-duty steward | Each Wednesday |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted. | This is straightforward at present whilst the church only opens 1xper week. | Priest in charge and Wardens | When situation demands this |
| 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) | Priest in charge and Wardens | When situation demands this |
| 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)**.** | Priest in charge and Wardens | When situation demands this |