# Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Version Control**

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| 16th July 2021 | 10 | The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group |

*This risk assessment reflects step 4 of the* [*roadmap to ease restrictions*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021-summary) *issued by the UK government and coming into effect from 19th July onwards. As step 4 sees the easing of all legal restrictions we have reviewed our risk assessment dated 18 June 2021 and replaced it with this one. We have had regard to the Church of England’s* [*guidance on step 4*](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/24767) *which is a helpful helpful reference point.*

*This risk assessment will be regularly reviewed with reference to local Covid infection rates and other relevant circumstances. Fundamentally the mitigations already in place will remain largely in place to reflect high infection rates and understandable concerns on the part of those who attend our church.*

**This risk assessment**

1. Details the activities we are planning for:
   * Public worship with or without congregational singing
   * Funerals, weddings, baptisms, ordinations
   * Livestreaming or recording services
   * A choir or music group singing indoors as part of a public, livestreamed or recorded service
2. Considering the hazards:
   * Transmission of COVID-19
   * Hazards arising from using the church in a different way to usual
   * Shared or consequential risks of activities running simultaneously or back-to-back (eg crossover of people at entry/exit points)

We have read the guidance and thought about how it relates specifically to our church. **As already stated, the existing mitigations to be found in our risk assessment of 18 June 2021 (available on request) will largely remain in place to mitigate and limit the potential** **for spread of Covid-19 within our church, although it is in fact the case that restrictions have been lifted**. **Please see paragraph 5 for an overview of our approach.** We have considered 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. We have considered who might be harmed and how. We have read the guidance and thought about how the activities we are planning will affect different groups of people. We have considered our particular circumstances and adapt the checklist below as appropriate. Gathered congregations and major services may attract people from far afield, which is likely to add to the risk profile, although in practice this is not an issue for us. We have considered whether we need to consult our wider membership and users. We have concluded this is not necessary.
2. Using this risk assessment checklist below we have:
   * added in mitigations for any risks that are particular to our circumstances;
   * recorded what we need to do for each activity to go ahead safely;
   * considered any equipment we need and any temporary changes we might need to make to the church;
   * check back against our list of activities to confirm which ones can go ahead and when.
   * created separate Risk Assessments setting out the provisions for the 1045 am family service and, most particularly, for children and young people. These deals with the C&YP in their groups either using the halls or going outdoors. Where there is an All Age service the C&YP remain in church and this Risk Assessment governs that service.
3. We will inform the congregation of planned changes by our weekly mailer and also confirm details of the changes at services. As is set out in this Risk Assessment there are 6 broad areas where we will take gradual steps towards easing the mitigations. We will start with number 1 and move gradually to number 6, subject to local and national developments.
4. Singing.
5. The Peace.
6. Face coverings.
7. Chair layout.
8. Ventilation.
9. Receiving Communion.

Please note:

TF: Reverend Tim Fox

CJG: Charles George

WP: Wendy Pearce

AL: Andrew Little

**Risk assessment template**

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| **Church:**  **St Paul’s Church, Boundary Road, West Bridgord** | **Assessor’s name: Charles George (Church warden)** | | **Date completed:**  **27 July 2021** | **Review date:**  **End of August 2021** |
| **Event or service this assessment relates to:** | | **Sunday and Wednesday services and Life events** | | |

| **Risk** | **Controls to consider** | **Additional information** | **Action by whom?** | **Completed – date and name** |
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| **Aerosol or droplet transmission of Covid-19** | Increase ventilation in our building: natural ventilation by opening doors, windows and vents or mechanical ventilation if appropriate/necessary. | Consult HSE [guidance on identifying poorly ventilated areas](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/identifying-poorly-ventilated-areas.htm)  Do not prop open fire doors.  All doors from the main door and into the church, fire exit and door by the sacristy (the exit) will be opened before the service. During the service, the roof vents will be opened, as well as window louvres – and external doors in the church – to aid ventilation. Where possible internal doors will be left open to minimise touching of door handles and door plates by worshippers. | CJG/WP | On service days – CJG/WP |
| Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available. | 1. For C&YP groups 2. Final songs/hymns at each service. 3. Provision of refreshments (review in September). | Ongoing |  |
| Requesting people to wear a face covering, unless exempt, when inside your building. This may particularly apply to activities that increase risk of aerosol spread such as singing. | We will continue to ask the congregation to wear face coverings, including during any singing except for any singing outdoors. This recognises other’s vulnerabilities and concerns about enclosed spaces. We have a stock of face coverings, if needed. | TF/CJG/WP | Each service |
| Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing | 1. We have retained the increased gap between rows of 50 inches. However, if those attending wish to sit next to someone not from their household or bubble that is in order providing they have asked them. We must respect a wish to maintain a gap of 1 or 2 chairs. 2. Sharing of The Peace: We will continue to ask the congregation not to move from their chairs when sharing the Peace thereby avoiding the risk of physical contact save for with those from the same household or bubble. However, we anticipate a minor change soon to allow possible shaking of hands within the immediate vicinity of one’s row or seating and the verbal sharing of The Peace. | CJG/WP | Each service |
| If practical in your building, 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 door for exit. | Current arrangement continues: Entry will be by the main door, as usual for services, into the foyer and then into the church**.** Exit will either be through the main door, or by the door next to the sacristy (priest’s side door). We do not think a “one-way system” is required but recognising a pinch point through the internal doors to the foyer an alternative should be available. A notice is in place to show the alternative exit route. Hand sanitisers will be available on entry and exit. | CJG/WP | Ongoing |
|  | Celebration of Holy Communion | This will continue in its current format; namely, by way of simultaneous administration, an option available in line with CoE guidance. It is premature and too great a risk to return to the Common Cup. The procedure will remain unchanged – that is the congregation is invited to apply hand sanitiser should they choose (in position for use at the 4 communion stations – see below); words of distribution said once to all before distribution (consideration to be given to use of words rather than silent distribution by the priest who will be wearing a face covering); wafers “dropped” into hands. There will be no queuing. There will be 4 marked areas along the raised dais (2 Ms apart) to receive communion which communicants will be invited to use. Instructions will be given, and CJG/WP will supervise to aid socially distanced movement to and from chairs. Key message: Only move from seat when a “station” has been vacated | TF/CJG/WP | Ongoing |
|  | Singing and/or playing of instruments  RISK: Aerosol spray from singing and playing wind instruments. The risk remains although now allowed in church. | We will progress cautiously beginning with one or more songs or hymn sung behind face coverings and review. We will have a concluding hymn outdoors, conditions permitting, which we recognise creates a much lower risk of catching or passing on the virus. | CJG/WP/TF |  |
|  | Consider lighting of candles. | A large candle will be lit in a prayer bowl to the right-hand side (children’s corner not currently in use) within a circle of socially distanced chairs set up for prayer group use. Worshippers can light a single candle whenever they choose, allowing 3-4 minutes to pass after applying a hand sanitiser. There is a warning notice with the bowl. The risk of multiple handling is removed. No queuing to use the bowl. Instruction to go to the bowl one at a time. | CJG/WP | Ready for the beginning of each service. |
|  | For events where the building is likely to be especially busy, or the activity is particularly energetic, pay particular regard to the need for additional mitigations such as social distancing and face coverings. | This will be done, as necessary as we review service provision. |  |  |
| **Surface transmission of Covid-19** | Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can’t wash their hands. | Register with [Parish Buying](https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/) for procurement options.  Hand sanitisers are available inside the main door (on 2 separate tables), by the toilet in the foyer and by the additional exit. More hand sanitisers are on a table within the church. Sanitisers will be provided for the C&YP groups. | CJG/WP | Ongoing  AL buys stocks as necessary. |
| Identify where you can reduce the contact of  people with surfaces, e.g. by leaving open doors that are not fire doors, using electronic documents rather than paperwork. | Doors are left open as necessary.  Projection is used at all services – but see below for the 9am Sunday service and also the Wednesday service. | CJG/WP |  |
| Good hygiene and cleaning of the building. | Advice on[**cleaning church buildings can be found here**](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)**.**  The site is subject to daily cleaning by Willow Cleaners; Mondays to Saturdays to include the halls, toilets and alternate weeks in church. We have a separate rota of volunteers for the church.  Also note:   1. The church is cleaned using antiviral sanitiser/disinfectant spray between the 9 and 1045 services. This focuses on high-risk surfaces and touch points. 2. We make available disposable gloves for anyone cleaning. | CJG/WP/AL | Ongoing. AL responsible for stocks. |
| Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people. | With is a manageable risk for those who wish to use Orders of Service and Bibles at the 9am service and on Wednesdays, although projection is provided. Worshippers leave them on their chairs after the service from where they are collected and quarantined until the next service. | CJG/WP | Ongoing practice. |
| If providing single-use service sheets or prayer cards, either place these on sheets or ask people to sanitise hands before picking one up, and request that people take these home with them. | If this happens this will be carried out. |  |  |
| Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on). | Not necessary. |  |  |
| Put in place a cleaning rota/system for children’s materials and toys, and consider providing cleaning materials for these if safe to do so (keeping all such materials out of the reach of children). | Not an issue. The children’s corner is not in use with all the contents taken out of the church. | CJG |  |
| 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.  Toilets will meet the necessary sanitary requirements. They will be cleaned after services. | CJG/WP | Checked both before and after services. |
|  | Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them. | Confirmed. | CJG/WP | Bin by sacristy to be used and emptied each week. |
| **Visitors are unclear on requirements for attending church or visiting the building for other purposes, or anxious about attending.** | Display an NHS Track and Trace QR code, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system. Encourage visitors to use one or other of these options. | Consult [advice on Track and Trace](https://www.churchofengland.org/media/21016).  We will keep a record of attendees in service registers. This will assist NHS Track and Trace. We will keep a record of names (we have contact details) and retain for 21 days on a rolling basis. All attendees will be invited to sign a consent form. In addition, we have an NHS Track and Trace QR Code. | CJG/WP | Ongoing use of registers. |
| Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media with information for visitors. Communicate details on requirements or requests such as bringing a face covering and options for those who may be anxious. | Confirmed.  Aside from website the church mailer is a key way of communication. | CJG/WP/AL/TF |  |
| Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired. | We will keep this under review. |  |  |
| Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services. | Not necessary as our current experience is that we have adequate safe space. |  |  |
| Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary. | Not an issue for us. |  |  |
| Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures. | We have notices in prominent places in the entrance foyer. | AL | Ongoing review. |
| **Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms** | If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted. | Confirmed. We will follow PHE guidance. In the office we have displayed the Covid-19 “early outbreak management” notice. | CJG | No specific steps required. |
| If 48-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) |  |  |
| If the building has been quarantined for 48 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/media/24767) | CJG/WP | No specific steps required. |