

Covid-19 Risk Assessment

For opening up church for Christenings, Weddings & Funerals

Name of Church St. Andrew's, Holcombe	Assessment undertaken by Anne-Marie Cartwright, Churchwarden, Reg Perkins (Treasurer) and Gay Curtis (PCC Sec)
Date of Initial Assessment 22 nd July 2020	Assessment Review Date After first wedding/ funeral service

I was glad when they said unto me, "let us go to the house of the Lord." (Psalm 122 v1)

Re-opening our churches for public worship will inevitably be a time of mixed emotions – joy at being able to come together to worship in our church buildings; sadness for the loss or absence of some members of our church communities; uncertainty about what the future “new normal” may be. This guidance is written to offer support in enabling church buildings to be opened safely for public worship. The same basic principles of physical distancing, hygiene and safety that were outlined in the guidance for opening church buildings for individual prayer still apply. This guidance should also be read in conjunction with advice on cleaning and on detailed guidance for conducting services such as Holy Communion, baptisms, weddings and funerals available here.

The guidance below has been adapted from published Government Guidance for use by the Church of England.

For other denominations who use Church of England buildings to meet for worship we ask that adhere to the same advice (where relevant) including conducting their own risk assessment and ensuring compliance to physical (social) distancing, Public Health hygiene practices and guidance on music and singing for example.

Salient points for Christenings, Weddings and Funerals.

An advisory 'cap' of 30 has been set for weddings and other 'stand-alone' services such as baptism and confirmation if not conducted during 'routine communal worship'.

This number is confined to the officiant, bride and groom, witnesses, photographer and guests. It does not include staff or volunteers employed by the church such as vergers or churchwardens. Social distancing rules need to be maintained as appropriate to family (father of the bride etc) or not (bridesmaids) when wanting to walk down the aisle.

- Signing the register: All should sanitise their hands before signing and after completion.
- The minister does not have to touch the rings at the Giving of Rings nor has to touch the couple's hands as part of a prayer or blessing
- Hymns and singing are not advised as this may encourage droplet and aerosol spread
- Order of Service booklets or sheets must be put on pews 72 hours before the service.
- For funerals there will be a maximum of 30 mourners.
- For Christenings there will be a maximum of 30 attendees

There is no numerical 'cap' on other services, but social distancing and Public Health requirements must be met.

- The two-metre 'rule' applies for public worship except in situations where closer contact cannot be avoided; extra Public Health precautions must then be taken.
- Consideration should be given to keeping numbers below the maximum possible to further minimise risk.
- Wearing of face-coverings is voluntary.
- While those at extra risk and the 'clinically extremely vulnerable' should be advised of the risks of attending public worship, a decision to do so is theirs alone.

Covid-19 Risk Assessment

- Government guidance includes a request for names of attendees to be recorded and kept for 21 days to assist 'track and trace' if required.
- Singing, chanting and playing of brass or woodwind instruments are not recommended, but a further update will follow soon.
- Detailed instructions on 'consumables' suggest that services of Holy Communion can be held if specific guidance is followed, including the continued suspension of the Common Cup (see the guidance document on Holy Communion).
- Public worship guidance includes surrounding grounds (including churchyards, car parks and courtyards); meetings in other places should follow other guidance for people meeting in public spaces.
- Refreshments can only be served at tables if a café is included in the church or cathedral building.

Opening up for church use

Hazards/Risks	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
Airing the Building	Open up the doors for at least an hour to let the building air out. If the building has been closed during lockdown, there is a risk of excessive dust and mould. No one should be in the building during this time for safety reasons.	<i>Building to be aired with both doors open for at least an hour.</i>
Check Cleanliness of Building	Once the building has aired, check the general cleanliness of the building. Look for any leaks from pipes or animal waste (e.g. bats). Make a note of anything that needs to be included during a deep clean.	<i>The building will be cleaned before first use by professional cleaner.</i>
Electrics	If the electrics were turned off, these will need to be switched back on. Check the lights, light bulbs, emergency lights, fire alarms, security systems are in good working order There is risk of deterioration of portable electrical equipment caused by the damp and possibly mice while the buildings were closed. <i>It is recommended to carefully check all electrical appliances, preferably by having a PAT test.</i>	<i>Visual look over electrical items and appliances</i> <i>COMPLETED</i>
Heating	If the heating system was turned off, it is recommended to switch it on in order to check for leaks. It is also recommended to gradually increase the temperature as a high spike in temperature could affect any delicate fabrics or natural materials in the building.	<i>Hot water system to be turned on and checked.</i> <i>COMPLETED</i>

Covid-19 Risk Assessment

St Andrew's, Holcombe

Water Systems and Legionella	<p>Checked prior to opening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All water systems should be flushed on a weekly basis (ideally twice/week). • All hot water storage systems should be switched off (but not drained) and flushed to prevent the storage of hot / warm water. • All taps (hot and cold) should be run at half pressure for five minutes each at every flushing. • All toilets should be flushed twice at every flushing. • All hot water boilers should be run and flushed through at every flushing. <p>Because the buildings have already remained empty for a period of time, there is a small risk that the systems are already infected. Therefore, when flushing the systems ensure that spray and water particles are not breathed in (wear a mask or stand well clear of the running water and run showers heads into buckets or containers). If the building has been closed during lockdown, then it is recommended to arrange a test. These tests will take up to ten days to be analysed and during this time water outlets producing mist should not be used. If the test is positive for either bacteria, then a chemical flush can be arranged.</p>	<p><i>All water systems have been flushed regularly.</i></p> <p><i>Legionella test not needed due to advice from Bath & Wells: "As a small church, I would be confident in stating that flushing is adequate".</i></p>
Organ Maintenance	<p>For a church with a larger or mechanically complex organ, prolonged lack of use will result in longterm problems with its performance. If an organist is available in the neighbourhood to keep all the action parts moving, it is appropriate for them to do so in a manner consistent with Public Health guidance. The person performing maintenance needs to sign the register of who has entered the building and the surfaces need to be sanitised in line with Public Health England guidelines.</p>	<p><i>St Andrew's Organ has been, and will remain, unused for several years.</i></p>
Cleaning	<p>The building will need to be cleaned. If the building is listed, please refer to Historic England's Guide to Cleaning Historical Surfaces. Cleaning of some historic objects, such as stained glass, will need extra care. Please speak with the Conservation Officer for further guidance.</p>	<p><i>The building will be thoroughly cleaned before first use by professional cleaner.</i></p>

Social Distancing

Hazards/ Risks	Persons Affected	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
Social Distance	Anyone	2	2	4-6	Strict adherence to social distancing of at least 2 metres (3 steps) between individuals and households. For frequently used places mark areas using floor tape or paint to help people keep a 2m distance. People to sit on a chair with a service sheet.	<i>Signs to be displayed – 'Stay 2 metres Apart'. Both doors to be fully open for ventilation. People will sit in an allocated seat where a paper service sheet has been left 72 hours earlier.</i>
People queuing outside to enter building	Anyone	2	1	3-4	Queue management is important so the flow of groups in and out of the premises can be carefully controlled, reducing the risk of congestion or contact. Considerations should be made for how to manage those waiting outside a place of worship, including the introduction of socially distanced queuing systems.	<i>Guide welcomes people and encourages people to enter the building socially distanced at 2m. Markers/tape to indicate where people can stand to wait to enter the building..</i>

Covid-19 Risk Assessment

St Andrew's, Holcombe

Have two points of access so that an 'in' and 'out' system can be established.	Anyone	2	1	5	People will be asked to enter via main porch door and take a seat. Exit will also be via main porch door. People will be instructed to leave at different times. People should not re-enter the church building.	<i>The priest will instruct the congregation to leave in rows starting at the back of the church with small pauses between each row, making the way clear outside for people to follow at a social distance.</i>
Maximum number in the building	Anyone	2	1	3	In defining the number of people that can reasonably follow 2 metres distancing, the total floorspace as well as likely pinch points and busy areas should be taken into account (e.g. entrances, exits) and where possible alternative or one-way routes introduced.	<i>Laid out church for christening/funeral/wedding and a maximum of 24 people including the christening party babies and toddlers/bride and groom, in attendance. For a funeral number of the party will be 24 plus the coffin, undertaker and bearers who will not remain in church. For a Christening there may be no more than 24 attendees which includes all babies and toddlers</i> <i>Plan attached</i>
Babies and Toddlers						<i>All babies able to crawl and toddlers must be on leading reins</i>
Masks	Masks					<i>Everyone should wear a mask unless they have special dispensation</i>
Christenings	Vicar and Christening family					<i>Anointing will be done using an implement such as a cotton wool bud. The Baptism itself will be done with a shell, with a parent holding a baby or young child.</i>
Worship leader and Leader/ Preacher	Anyone	2	2	3	Worship leader to be physically distant of 5m from anyone if they are to sing. Service Leader to use one pulpit and Preacher to use another pulpit if they are different. Service Leader and Preacher to use different microphones. A microphone must not be passed around the congregation for example during testimony time.	<i>Guidance for service leaders, preachers and worship team to be agreed.</i>

Covid-19 Risk Assessment

St Andrew's, Holcombe

Singing in the service	Anyone	3	2	4	Hymns and singing are not advised as this may encourage droplet and aerosol spread. Recorded music should be encouraged as the next best option.	<i>There will be no singing. Recorded music will be played</i>
Communal Bibles/Service Sheets	Anyone	3	2	4	The use of communal Bibles or hymn books should be avoided. Orders of service could be placed on pews before the service and then taken away by mourners or safely disposed of.	<i>No Bibles or hymn books will be given out. Service sheets to be placed on chairs 72 hours beforehand.</i>

Cleaning

Hazards/Risks	Persons Affected	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
Cleaning surfaces and touch points	Volunteers opening the church	3	1-2	5	If the church building has been closed for 72 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for cleaning. If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating. Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray	<i>Volunteers cleans; door handles, chairs etc with sanitising wipes. All cleaners to be provided with gloves (ideally disposable). Volunteer to wash/sanitise own hands and take gloves home to dispose of.</i> <i>The church will be cleaned weekly</i> <i>If a christening/wedding/funeral take place within 72 hours of a normal worship then the church will have to have extra paid cleaning which will be charged to the christening/wedding/funeral party</i>
Weekly Clean Monthly Clean		2	1	5	A thorough clean will be made once a month and volunteers in-between the church being used.	<i>Contact local cleaner/volunteer for starting the weekly clean.</i>
Clean down chairs after each person has used it	Volunteers	3	2	5	Volunteer to clean over each chair/pew after each person has sat on a chair.	<i>Instruct volunteers to clean the chair/pew once someone has used it.</i>

Covid-19 Risk Assessment

St Andrew's, Holcombe

Toilets	Anyone	1	1	1	<i>For emergency use only. Ensure toilets are kept clean, use liquid rather than a bar of soap, and where possible, provide paper towels as an alternative to hand dryers in hand washing facilities. Antibacterial wipes to be available for cleaning surfaces before leaving the WC</i>	<i>If used in emergency: Wash hands on entry and exit and wipe down all surfaces with antibacterial wipe. Only one person in the toilets at a time.</i>
---------	--------	---	---	---	---	---

Good Hygiene

Hazards/ Risks	Persons Affected	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
Handwashing facilities	Anyone	2	2	5	On entering and leaving a place of worship everyone, attending wedding or funeral service including staff, should be asked to wash their hands with hand sanitiser.	<i>Hand Sanitiser available at entrance door and at point of signing register (to use after touching pen unless they bring their own)</i>
Masks	Anyone					<i>Everyone should wear a mask unless they have special dispensation.</i>
Sneezing/ coughing in the building	Anyone Volunteers	2	2	3	Have hand tissues available in the building and ask people to take away with them.	<i>Packet of hand tissues provided on each pew.</i>
Increase awareness of good hygiene	Anyone	1	1	1	Using signs and posters to increase awareness of good handwashing technique – reminding those in the building to catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and to avoid touching face, eyes, nose or mouth with unclean hands.	<i>Print and put up posters.</i>

Other

Hazards/ Risks	Persons Affected	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
All paper materials to be removed from back of church.	Volunteers	1	1	1	All hymn books, prayer books, cards or any other paper materials as the virus is able to survive on such surfaces for a while.	<i>All hymn books, lectionaries, bibles and kneelers have been removed. Service sheets will be placed on pews 72 hours before service.</i>
Issuing information to perspective people before they enter the building.	Anyone	3	2	5	How do people know how to use the building safely? 1. There is a one way system (depending on where you sit) to exit the building. 2. Don't touch any surfaces or pick up anything unnecessarily. 3. A register will be kept for 21 days to help track and trace.	<i>Before the building is open the christening/wedding/funeral party will be advised of floor plan and procedures. Inside the church posters will be displayed and a table will be equipped with hand sanitising gel, sanitising wipes, gloves and masks together with</i>

Covid-19 Risk Assessment

St Andrew's, Holcombe

						<p><i>a poster displaying advice.</i></p> <p><i>A register or Consent Form for 'collection of name and contact details for NHS Test and Trace' in compliance with GDPR legislation will be kept for 21 days.</i></p>
Volunteer/staff role	Volunteers	3	2	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To responsibly control access within the church's measured safe capacity limit, • To maintain social distancing between parishioners at all times and remind if needed, • To wipe down seats and all touched areas with antiseptic spray after each use, including the outside toilet if used (the diocese recommends that the toilet is not made available unless absolutely necessary, to minimise cleaning). • To keep a record of those attending, to assist contact tracers should a visitor later develop symptoms. 	<p><i>Issue information to volunteers.</i></p>

Likelihood
 1 = Low (seldom)
 2 = Medium (frequently)
 3 = High (certain or near certain)
Severity

1 = Low (minor cuts/bruises)
 2 = Medium (serious injury / incapacitated for > 3 days)
 3 = High (fatality or number of persons seriously injured) **Risk Rating**

1-2 = low priority
 3-4 = medium priority
 5-6 = high priority

Key principles for safely reopening places of worship for permitted activity

Venue managers are strongly advised to take action to minimise the potential for spreading of COVID-19 among worshippers, and those working/volunteering within the building and surrounding grounds. There should be a particular focus on protecting people who are clinically vulnerable and more likely to develop severe illness.

These actions should include:

- Religious leaders, lay people, family, volunteers, staff and members of the public, including children, staying at home and self-isolating if they have a new, continuous cough or a high temperature or loss of or change to sense of smell or taste. This is to minimise risk of spread of COVID-19 to friends, the wider community, and particularly the vulnerable.
- Individuals who are shielding should continue to follow the government's advice on shielding.
- If anyone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in a place of worship they should be sent home and advised to follow the stay at home guidance. If they need clinical advice they should go online to NHS 111 (or call 111 if they don't have internet access). In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. They should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.
- Other people who may have been in contact with the person who has become unwell should wash their hands thoroughly after the interaction, but they do not need to take any other specific action unless they develop symptoms themselves or are advised to do so by NHS Test and Trace.. If they do develop symptoms they should follow the stay at home guidance.

