

Covid-19 Risk Assessment

For opening up church for Sunday and Midweek Services

Name of Church St Andrew's Holcombe		Assessment undertaken by Anne-Marie Cartwright, Reg Perkins and Gay Curtis
Date of Initial Assessment 22 July 2020		Assessment Review Date After first services -

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

- 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'
- 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.
- 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 by opening both external doors for at least one hour before the service</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 professionally cleaned before first use</i>
Electrics	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>A full check on all electrical appliances, boilers and other utilities will be made before first use - 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>Ditto above</i>
Water Systems and Legionella	Checked prior to opening: 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. 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). 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.	<i>Ditto above</i>
Organ Maintenance	For a church with a larger or mechanically complex organ, prolonged lack of use will result in long-term 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	<i>The organ in St Andrew's has been out of use for some years.</i>

Opening up for church use

Hazards/Risks	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
	who has entered the building and the surfaces need to be sanitised in line with Public Health England guidelines.	
Cleaning	The building may 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.	<i>The building will be cleaned before first use.</i>

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 2m distance. People to sit in households or 'bubbles' only.	<i>Signs advising vigilance to hand cleaning, social distancing and wearing of masks, to be displayed at entrance. Both doors will be fully open for ventilation and people (one person/one household/one bubble) will sit in pre-marked seating</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>Volunteer to welcome people outside church door and ensure social distancing of 2m and no crowding occurs. Another volunteer will greet inside the building to advise on hand sanitizing, social distancing and seating.</i>
Entry and exit into the church building	Anyone	2	1	5	People will be asked to enter and exit via main porch door People will be instructed to leave at different times beginning with the back pews.	<i>The leader of the service instructs 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 social 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>Maximum seating with 2m distancing is 24 seats.</i>

Social Distancing

Hazards/Risks	Persons Affected	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
Babies and Toddlers						<i>All babies able to crawl and toddlers must be on leading reins.</i>
Worship leader and Leader/Preacher /Reader & Prayers	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 different people. Service Leader and Preacher to use different microphones. A microphone must not be passed around the congregation .	<i>Worship Leader alone will occupy Vestry, set up Communion Table and be socially distanced at all times. Readers and Prayer will remain in, and read from, their pew. There will be one bible reading and the Gospel reading. If microphones are needed separate ones will be used</i>
Singing/shouting in the service - virus spread	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>Digitally recorded music will be played before and after the service as well as during Communion.</i>
Communal Bibles/Service Sheets	Anyone	3	2	4	The use of communal Bibles or hymn books should be avoided. Orders of service will be placed on pews before the service and then taken away by the congregation to safely dispose of.	<i>Lectionaries, Bibles and Hymn Books have been removed and stored. Service sheets will be placed on pews 72 hours before service. If there has been a christening, wedding or funeral beforehand the church will have been cleaned after that event and the service sheets will be put out by someone wearing protective gloves.</i>
No 'cafe' in church so no refreshments will be served.	Anyone	3	2	4	Refreshments can only be served at tables if a café is included in the church or cathedral building.	<i>No refreshments will be served</i>

Cleaning

Hazards/Risks	Persons Affected	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
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Cleaning

Hazards/Risks	Persons Affected	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
Cleaning surfaces and touchpoints	Volunteers opening the church	3	1-2	5	<p>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.</p> <p>Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray</p> <p>Cleaning with gloves are potentially contaminated so in order to control the risk of cross contamination from the gloves they should ideally be bagged as contaminated waste as they are removed and the hands sanitised immediately after this in case there has been any transfer from the outer surface of the gloves whilst they are being removed. The bagged gloves can then be taken home safely and disposed of as general waste.</p>	<p><i>One hour before first use a volunteer, using disposable gloves (to be disposed with after use), will arrive at church to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Open external doors to air building</i> • <i>Clean with sanitizing wipes switches, door handles and touchpoint surfaces at and near the entrance, and the vestry.</i> • <i>Check hand sanitizing station is equipped with sanitizing wipes, sanitizing hand gel, masks,</i> • <i>The kitchen waste bin with liner is beside station for used wipes/tissues.</i> • <i>The liner is removed from the building at the end of the service.</i> <p><i>72 hours will fall between Thursday morning's service and Sunday morning worship.</i></p> <p><i>A local cleaner will be employed to clean the church once a week.</i></p>
Toilets	Anyone	1	1	1	<p>To be used in emergency only. Use liquid not bar of soap and paper towels</p> <p>Antibacterial wipes to be available in toilet</p> <p>Check toilet clean before leaving the building following a service and lined waste bins empty.</p>	<p><i>People using the toilet in an emergency will be encouraged to wash hands on entry and exit to toilet and to wipe down touched surfaces with antibacterial wipe.</i></p>

Good Hygiene

Hazards/Risks	Persons Affected	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
Handwashing facilities	Anyone	2	2	5	Provide hand sanitiser stations at main door.	<i>Hand sanitizer available for use on entering and leaving the building</i>
Masks						<i>Masks must be worn by everyone unless they have special dispensation.</i>

Good Hygiene

Hazards/Risks	Persons Affected	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
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>Packets of tissues available in each pew and users to take away with them</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 display posters</i>
Cash donations	Anyone	1	1	1	cash donations to continue but cheques, online payments or bank transfer to be encouraged	<i>Yellow envelopes to be provided for cash donations on plate at back of church and left for 72 hours.</i>

Other

Hazards/Risks	Persons Affected	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
Paper Materials/hymn books/bibles	Volunteers	1	1	1	All hymn books, prayer books, cards or any other paper materials to be removed	Hymn Books, Lectionaries, Kneelers have been removed. Service sheets to be left on pews 72 hours before service.
Issuing information to perspective people before they enter the building.	Anyone	3	2	5	How do people know how to use the building safely? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please keep 2m socially distancing in and around the buildings. • Please use hand sanitiser upon entering and leaving the building. • If the toilet is needed in emergency it should be used one person at a time recognizing 1+metres distance. Wash hands before and after use and wipe down all surfaces touched. • Sit where you are allocated and remain seated during the service. Don't wander around the building to talk to others. Leave the building and the churchyard as directed by the Worship Leader. • A register will be kept to inform you if we are aware of a 	<i>Before first use information and rules</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Will be made clearly set out and circulated on the weekly newsletter.</i> • <i>Will be displayed by posters outside and inside the church</i> • <i>Will be given by volunteers welcoming parishioners to the service.</i> <i>Register: A form of the Electoral Roll will be used to record by the volunteer greeting people outside the church door. They will also be asked whether or not they would like to receive communion.</i> <i>NHS Test and Trace Data Consent Form available for wedding guests/mourners to</i>

Other

Hazards/Risks	Persons Affected	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating	Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk	Action Plan
					<p>Covid-19 infection has occurred with the users of the building during the time you were present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you feel ill, stay at home. 	<i>complete in accordance with GDPR and destroyed 21 days later.</i>
Volunteer/staff role	Volunteers	3	2	5	<p>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 keep a record of those attending, to assist contact tracers should a visitor later develop symptoms.</p>	<i>Issue information to volunteers.</i>

Likelihood
 1 = Low (seldom)
 2= Medium (frequently)

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 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 prio

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.

ENTER CHURCH AND GO TO ANY AVAILABLE MARKED SEAT
 EXIT CHURCH STARTING FROM THE REAR.

