



**GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT THE COMPLETION OF A RISK ASSESSMENT ON RE-OPENING OF CHURCHES FOR INDIVIDUAL PRAYER.**

In order to maintain a COVID-19 safe environment and demonstrate our duty of care to parishioners, the Government requires that you demonstrate compliance through the completion of a Risk Assessment. This guidance is to assist with the completion of the risk assessment for the activity of individual prayer only.

**THINGS TO DO PRIOR TO OPENING YOUR CHURCH**

In preparation for the re-opening of the churches, the following tasks must be undertaken:

- Carry out a full site inspection to ensure the site is safe prior to opening for use and ensure all the mandatory Health & Safety checks are up to date.
- Air/ventilate the Church.
- Ensure all water outlets are thoroughly flushed prior to opening. Run water for a minimum of 10 minutes to flush out any stagnant water and so reduce risks associated with Legionnaires.
- If contractors are required to visit site you must ensure they have RAM's in place which address their COVID-19 strategies to remain safe.

**PLAN THE STEWARDS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES**

In order to re-open the Church you will need to ensure you have adequate staff or volunteers to support the process. Members of your team should be deemed healthy and fit for work and should not be in the group classed as clinically vulnerable (over 70 years or specific pre-existing health conditions), self-isolating or shielding. The size of your team will vary depending on the size of the church.

**Stewards**

- Plan your team to have a steward to cover the entry point, the nave and the exit point.
- The stewards must ensure that numbers do not exceed the maximum capacity of the church.
- If you have a Rota for the volunteers, where possible, keep your team in groups, i.e. the same group of people working together on any given day.
- Guidance should be given to stewards on social distancing, 'catch it, kill it, bin it', effective hand hygiene and actions to take in the event of a First Aid emergency. (Separate guidance).
- Stewards must not physically interact (shake hands, hugging etc.) with parishioners with the exception of an emergency situation

**PLAN AND PURCHASE OF SUPPLIES**

To ensure you remain COVID-19 secure, you must source sufficient supplies and undertake a planned cleaning regime.

**Hygiene resources**

- Hand gel of no less than 65% alcohol;
- Adequate welfare products for all volunteers in terms of hand wash facilities – soap and paper towels. These could be available in the Sacristy.
- Protective equipment for stewards – single use gloves.
- Protective equipment for cleaners – rubber gloves and aprons. (Rubber gloves if used **must not** be shared between cleaners).
- Cleaning materials – detergent, sanitiser, disposable cloths or paper towels.
- Tape to mark out social distancing.
- As best practice it is recommended that you display a **Staying COVID-19 Secure Poster**.

Supplies can be sourced from **Churchmarketplace** (Please see email from Nicola Atkinson dated 27/05/20) Stewards and cleaners may also use their own protective equipment.

**PREPARATION OF THE CHURCH**

Prior to opening the Church for individual prayer you must devise a plan that will facilitate the 2m radius social distance requirement. In doing this you must:

**Capacity**

- Identify areas of the church to be used:
  - You may decide to use different sections of the Church each day
  - Or you may need to close the church on alternate days etc. to facilitate cleaning.
- Confirm your maximum numbers allowed in the Church at any given time in order to keep social distancing

	If you are live streaming mass the Church should not be open for individual prayer during this time.
<b>Social Distancing</b>	Identify your entry and exit points. This may involve using a dedicated emergency exit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify your one-way system throughout the church and put signage arrows in place.</li> </ul>
	Cordon off areas of the Church that will be out of bounds and pews that are not to be used;
	Cordon off statues, icons etc. if possible, by 2m to ensure they are not being repeatedly touched.
	Ensure the Holy Water stoups remain empty.
	Mark out the required 2m radius social distance on the floor, pews and in the narthex if required.
	Stagger seating to ensure 2m radius distance is maintained. Depending on the length and formation of your pews you may consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using every second or 3<sup>rd</sup> pew.</li> <li>Stagger seating to zig zag/ chequerboard formation.</li> </ul>
	If queuing is required to enter the Church, there should be 2m markers on the area leading to the Church entry.
	Draw up a new floor plan of the Church and display at the entrance to inform Parishioners.
	Set up hand sanitiser stations at entry and exit points and post signage.
	Review your emergency evacuation procedure to ensure it will still be effective.
<b>Access</b>	Ensure the sacristy, flower rooms and confessionals are closed to all visitors.
	Ensure WC's remain locked at all times.
<b>Votive Candles</b>	Provide hand sanitiser by votive candles for parishioners to use after lighting candles. Be mindful that hand sanitiser is alcohol based and therefore is flammable. Standard Health & Safety precautions should be followed including provision of a Fire Blanket. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alternatively, you may consider having a steward allocated to lighting the candles.</li> <li>As best practice encourage parishioners to use lighted candles as their source of ignition.</li> </ul>
	Parishioners will be prohibited from bringing their own candles to Church.
<b>Collection Plate</b>	The collection box/basket should be removed to the sacristy at the end of each day. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protective equipment should be used when handling the collection box and its contents.</li> <li>As best practice, contents should be bagged and stored safely for 72 hours before being counted.</li> </ul>
<b>Printed Materials</b>	Remove all shared printed materials.
	Only single use printed material should be available and kept to a minimum. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parishioners will be instructed to take the printed material with them and where this is then not removed by the parishioner it must be discarded.</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Items</b>	Any personal items left behind by Parishioners must be removed to lost property. It should be bagged up, dated and not handled again for at least 72 hours.
<b>PLAN THE CLEANING REGIME.</b>	
The cleaning of the Church will vary depending on frequency of use and number of visitors.	
<b>Cleaning</b>	Cleaners should be reminded of the required of 'catch it, kill it, bin it' and the importance of effective hand hygiene. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separate guidance document should be shared with volunteers.</li> </ul>
	Churches must have a thorough domestic clean at least once each day or more regularly if necessary depending on number of visitors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In general, cleaning with soapy water for a minimum of 20 sec. to break down the virus followed by disinfecting the area will be sufficient, however you are advised to refer England <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/">https://historicengland.org.uk/</a> for guidance on cleaning of historic elements and artifacts.</li> <li>Do not use any products which contains chlorine.</li> <li>Use non-ionic conservation-grade detergent or if you experience difficulty sourcing this use sensitive washing up liquid with distilled water.</li> <li>Use disposable cloths or paper towels.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please click on link for guidance on cleaning: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings</a></li> </ul>
	<p>Areas of frequent touch will need to be cleaned more regularly throughout the opening times of the Church.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This includes door handles, push plates, collection boxes, railings etc.</li> <li>As the weather is getting warmer it may be possible to leave doors in the open position to reduce the level of frequent touch areas.</li> <li>You must also be mindful of the areas used in isolation by the volunteers.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cleaners must wear rubber gloves and aprons when cleaning. These should be washed daily after use in temperature above 60°C. If rubber gloves are used, they <b>must not</b> be shared between cleaners.</li> <li>If disposable gloves and aprons are used, they should be disposed after use. (Double bag and dispose in general waste after 72 hours).</li> <li>Cleaning equipment such as mops, mop buckets, brooms etc. must be sterilized between users. Alternatively, have separate supplies of cleaning equipment for your cleaners.</li> </ul>
	<p>Where bins are made available for use in the church, the following must be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bins should have lids with contactless opening mechanism.</li> <li>All bins should be fitted with bin liners.</li> <li>The contents should be double bagged, stored safely and disposed of in general waste after 72 hours.</li> </ul>
	<p>Cleaners should be advised of the benefits of bathing/showering before socialising with members of their household.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please see separate guidance document for more details on this.</li> </ul>
<b>Viral Transfer</b>	<p>Where it is known that there has been potential viral transfer in the Church, the Church must be closed for 72 hours and have a domestic clean before being opened to parishioners again.</p>

The above information is to assist with the completion of the Risk Assessment to re-open your Church for individual prayer. If you do have any concerns or require further guidance and clarification, please contact:

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