

Coronavirus Risk Assessment

This document considers the risks presented by novel coronavirus, COVID-19 in the location specified below. It documents the risk control measures that must be introduced to control the spread of the virus. There has been no attempt to categorise the level of risk. It has been assumed that if the virus is passed from one person to another, while many survive infection, some may die from the disease. All sources of transmission are therefore considered high hazard. I.e. they have a high “potential” of causing harm. A key factor that will influence whether this potential is realised is how stringently the risk control measures are enforced.

If all of the control measures are applied the resulting risk is considered to be sufficiently low to allow people to return to the location. It is imperative therefore that all clergy, employees, volunteers, contractors and members of the public follow the risk control measures and those with responsibility for the location insist and ensure that they do so.

To understand the risk control measures required it is useful to consider how the virus spreads.

- Droplet spread following a sneeze by an infected person. The Government advises that locations should be set up so that a 2M distance can be maintained between people and that good respiratory etiquette should be practised
- If an infected person touches their nose or mouth and then touches a surface; the virus could survive on that surface for several days if not disinfected and could be transferred to others who touch the surface

This risk assessment and the resulting risk control measures have been based upon current HM Government and World Health Organisation guidance. This has been supplemented by further information from the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. (The UK professional institute for health and safety practitioners.) It will be updated if guidance changes or infection rate changes. This document will be shared with clergy, line managers and those with responsibility at the location as appropriate so that it is clear why the control measures are needed. The risk assessment will inform a location specific protocol which provides clear instructions about how people can safely return to the location and how they must carry out their activities. In this way everyone can be confident that they can return to a COVID secure environment.

Location: Generic Assessment – All churches	Date Assessed: 12 th June 2020	Assessed by: Michael J. McElroy
Task/Activity: Return of congregations to church buildings	Review Date: As updated guidance becomes available. (or September 2020 at latest)	Reference: Generic – 190620 v6

Activity	Hazard	People at risk	Controls required	Site specific controls
<p>Establish which members of the clergy should return to church</p>	<p>Contact with persons suffering from coronavirus</p>	<p>Clergy who have been confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable.</p>	<p>This group of clergy are shielding and are deemed to be very susceptible to an adverse reaction to COVID-19. In consultation with the Vicar General and the Episcopal Vicar for Care for the Clergy, these clergy must not return to service until they receive a communication from their health professional or HM Government's advice rescinds the requirement to shield.</p>	
	<p>Contact with surfaces where live virus may be present</p>	<p>Clergy who have been confirmed as clinically vulnerable.</p>	<p>Some clergy, including those aged 70 and over and those with specific chronic pre-existing conditions are clinically vulnerable, meaning they are at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus.</p> <p>As we begin to ease restrictions, this group who are clinically vulnerable should continue to take particular care to minimise contact with others.</p> <p>If it is agreed that they should return to service they should consult with the Vicar General and the Episcopal Vicar for Care for the Clergy to explore if extra risk control measures should be put into place to allow them to return safely.</p>	
		<p>Clergy who are living with another member of the clergy who is clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable.</p>	<p>This group of clergy need to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their home.</p> <p>As above, these clergy may return to service but they should discuss their return with the Vicar General and the Episcopal Vicar for Care for the Clergy.</p>	

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Suspected case of COVID-19	<p>Contact with persons who may have been exposed to coronavirus</p> <p>Contact with surfaces where live virus may be present</p>	Clergy, parish employees and parishioners.	<p>Clergy who are suspected to have coronavirus (High temperature, new persistent cough, lack of taste or smell) or who are living with someone else who has or is suspected of having coronavirus, are to self-isolate in accordance with HM Government guidance and contact the online 111 service to arrange for testing.</p> <p>Clergy who have returned from overseas should review the latest guidance from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Depending on which country they have returned from, they may need to self-isolate, even if they do not show any symptoms.</p> <p>Clergy who have returned from overseas should self-isolate if they start showing symptoms of coronavirus.</p>	
Confirmed case of COVID-19	Contact with persons suffering from coronavirus	Clergy, parish employees and parishioners.	<p>If a clergy member tests positive for coronavirus, they should contact the Vicar General and the Episcopal Vicar for Care for the Clergy who will, in conjunction with Curial employees determine which of the following measures are appropriate.</p> <p>All surfaces that the person has come into significant contact with must be cleaned, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All surfaces and objects which are visibly contaminated • All potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as door handles, telephones, etc <p>Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time in (e.g. corridors) but which are not visibly contaminated do not need to be specially cleaned and disinfected.</p> <p>If a person becomes ill within the church it should be cleaned using disposable cloths, and sanitising liquid as soon as possible. The individual must contact 111 for advice on isolation and testing.</p>	

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<p>Coming to church and leaving church for both individual prayer and services</p>	<p>Contact with persons suffering from coronavirus</p> <p>Contact with surfaces where live virus may be present</p>	<p>Clergy, parish employees and parishioners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A means of controlling the numbers attending church will be established, considering the reduced seating capacity available. This could be 20% of the original capacity. Posters will denote the capacity • HM Government states ‘Shielded patients are not advised to meet more than one person from outside of their own household, and therefore not currently advised to attend places of worship’ • If you are living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, HM Government advises that you should do what you can to support the person who is shielding by following the guidance which can be found by clicking here • Individuals who fall within the clinically vulnerable group, including those aged 70 and over, are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if they do go out, to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their household. Please click here to see HM Government Guidance on Covid-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic • If possible, parishioners should be contacted before the church opens to inform them how they must use the church to remain safe • Encourage parishioners to avoid using public transport to come to church. Parishioners should be advised to walk, cycle or use personal vehicles and avoid car sharing with anyone outside of their household. If they need to use public transport they must wear a face covering. Face coverings may be used in church for reassurance • Establish a process of queuing outside of church to maintain 2M distancing prior to processing into church. Floor tape must be used to mark the 2M distance • The entrance/exit doors (and windows where possible) must be left open for the duration of individual prayer and services. This will avoid the need to touch the doors and aid air circulation • The Holy Water stoops, confessionals and choir lofts must not be used • Hymn books, Mass cards and all piety goods must be removed • Printed newsletters may still be collected but must not be left in church • Stewards welcoming parishioners attending church should inform them about the controls in place in the church to keep them safe and direct them to another steward who will lead them to a seat. At least 1 of the stewards must be DBS checked 	

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<p>Coming to church and leaving church for both individual prayer and services</p>	<p>Contact with persons suffering from coronavirus</p> <p>Contact with surfaces where live virus may be present</p>	<p>Clergy, parish employees and parishioners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending upon the size of the church, at least 2 stewards must be present at all times. • Volunteer stewards and cleaners must not be drawn from the clinically extremely vulnerable group who are currently shielding. Those who are clinically vulnerable, including those aged 70 and over, could be at a higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. Those from this group who still wish to volunteer will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood the Diocesan Handbook for Re-Opening of Churches and HM Government Guidance on Staying alert and safe (social distancing) which can be found by clicking here • Volunteer stewards must wash their hands regularly and avoid eating or drinking unless they have washed their hands immediately beforehand. All cuts or grazes must be covered with a waterproof dressing • Hand sanitiser must be provided at the entrance and exit points and all parishioners will be required to use it upon entry and exit. If a suitable second exit is available it must be used to help to avoid parishioners coming into close contact with others • Parishioners with cold or flu-like symptoms must be asked not to enter • Once capacity has been reached, parishioners must be held outside the church 	

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<p>Moving around the church during individual prayer or for Mass services.</p>	<p>Contact with persons suffering from coronavirus</p> <p>Contact with surfaces where live virus may be present</p>	<p>Clergy, parish employees and parishioners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters will be used to remind volunteers and parishioners about risk controls • Social distancing will be achieved by isolating sufficient rows of pews/seats to attain a 2M distance in all directions and parishioners will be required to sit 2M apart in the remaining pews/seats unless they are from the same household. Low-adhesive tape may be used to indicate the seating positions within the pews • Access of parishioners into the main body of the church will be controlled by volunteer stewards acting as ushers. The pews/seats will be filled from the front and moving towards the back of the church • As parishioners leave the church they must do so whilst maintaining social distancing from other worshippers. Ushers will guide incoming parishioners to the spaces by a suitable route to maintain social distancing • Some main routes will be defined by floor markings which indicate 2M distancing • Votive candles may still be lit, but shared matches, tapers or lighters must not be used. Candles must be lit from existing lit candles • Statues and relics must not be touched or kissed. This instruction will be displayed on posters next to the statues • Toilets will not be available for use by parishioners • A single toilet or toilet block must be identified for volunteer stewards and cleaners who must sanitise their hands before entering the toilet and wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds afterwards. This area must be cleaned daily • If the toilet has not been used recently, it must be flushed and both taps run for 2 mins • Children must be closely supervised to reduce the likelihood of them touching surfaces • Ushers will control the exit of parishioners from church following services on a row by row basis, so that social distancing can be maintained • Before the first admission of parishioners an extended cleaning regime will be instigated using appropriate cleaning materials and following the Diocesan cleaning protocol • Cleaning of the church will be carried out after each day of use • Where a church is used more than once in a single day, a limited clean of the “touch points” must be carried out between sessions 	

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Celebration of Mass	<p>Contact with persons suffering from coronavirus</p> <p>Contact with surfaces where live virus may be present</p>	Clergy, parish employees and parishioners.	Further detailed advice will be issued in due course when public worship is safe to re-commence.	
Whilst in church	Contracting and spreading of infection	Clergy, parish employees and parishioners.	<p>Basic infection controls should be followed as recommended by HM Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze • Put used tissues in your pocket or bag and take them home with you • Wash your hands with soap and water often – use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available • Try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell • Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean <p>People worried about symptoms should use the online NHS 111, only call if they cannot get help online, and NOT go to their GP or other healthcare centre.</p> <p>Clergy must talk to their parishioners regularly to provide reassurance.</p>	

Further guidance regarding safeguarding and pastoral considerations associated with the re-opening of churches is available in the Diocesan Handbook for Re-Opening of Churches.