

## Risk Assessment Template for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

**Note: This version of the St Gabriel's Pimlico risk assessment has been revised to reflect the new "Plan B" measures introduced by the Government from 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021 onward, which are aimed at slowing the spread of the new Omicron Covid variant. It also reflects new Church of England guidance issued on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and the new Government guidance for places of worship issued on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021.**

### Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
10 <sup>th</sup> December 2021	10.1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

*This update has been reviewed to reflect the new restrictions contained in Plan B implemented by the UK government. As Plan B adds restrictions to people entering places of worship it is recommended that risk assessments currently in place are re-run to ensure they fit the new circumstances. The Church of England's [guidance](#) may be a helpful reference point.*

*It is recommended that you carry out a separate risk assessment for each activity type e.g. public worship, use by community groups, concerts etc. and that these are regularly reviewed with reference to local Covid infection rates and other relevant circumstances. You may decide to have different mitigations or safety measures in place for different events. Where activities run simultaneously or back-to-back, each iteration of the risk assessment should address the shared or consequential risk.*

*Please note while the NHS COVID pass is mandatory for entry into venues where large crowds gather, **this requirement will not apply to places of worship when they are being used for Communal Worship, Weddings, Funerals and other ceremonies to mark key life events.** Concerts or other non-worship events will need to comply with the new requirement but only where 500 or more people are involved in indoor venues.*

*More information is available on the [Church of England Coronavirus page](#) and on the Government's [website](#).*

## Carrying out a risk assessment

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
  - Private prayer
  - 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
  - Formal childcare or where part of a school
  - Essential voluntary and public services
  - Use as a vaccination or testing centre
  - Community and support groups
  - Provision of youth services
  - Opening shops/cafes
  - Opening for visitors/tourists/educational visits as a heritage attraction
  - Opening for concerts, plays etc
2. Consider 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)

Read the guidance and think about how it relates specifically to your church. What constraints are there? Consider 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).

3. Consider who might be harmed and how. Read the guidance and think about how the activities you are planning will affect different groups of people. The risks are not different for larger churches as long as they are properly managed, but having any significant numbers of people coming through your building makes the possible impact – in particular someone with COVID-19 coming into contact with others – higher than in smaller churches with fewer people. Consider your 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. Consider whether you need to consult your wider membership and users.

4. Using the risk assessment checklist below as a template:

- add in mitigations for any risks that are particular to your circumstances that may not be on the list;
- record what you need to do for each activity to go ahead safely;
- consider any equipment you need and any temporary changes you might need to make to the church;
- check back against your list of activities to confirm which ones can go ahead and when.

**Risk assessment template**

<b>Church:</b> <b>St Gabriel, Pimlico</b>	<b>Assessor's name:</b> <b>Vicar and Churchwardens</b>	<b>Date completed:</b> <b>December 2021</b>	<b>Review date:</b>  In light of changing circumstances.  Regular review of H.M. Government and Church of England Guidance to ensure RA is up-to-date
<b>Event or service this assessment relates to:</b>		<b>Parish Mass and other regular services</b>	

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)</b>	<b>Additional information</b>	<b>Action by whom?</b>	<b>Completed – date and name</b>
<b>Aerosol or droplet transmission of Covid-19</b>	Increase ventilation in your building: natural ventilation by opening doors, windows and vents or mechanical ventilation if appropriate/necessary.	Ventilation in the church is generally good. The clerestory windows are normally kept open. The main west door is open at the start and end of services, and for periods during services when the weather permits. Other doors are also opened when appropriate.	Vicar and churchwardens	Ongoing

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available.	N/A		
	Remind people that it is now mandatory to wear a face covering, unless exempt, when inside your building. You may also consider asking congregations to continue to wear face coverings for exempt activities that increase risk of aerosol spread such as singing.	Since 10 December 2021, members of congregation have been informed of the new law on mask-wearing in church via posters, e-mails and in face-to-face communication. It has also been made clear that, under the new law, they are free to remove their masks during singing if they wish (but they do not have to), and that the law does not apply to eating and drinking in designated areas. Spare masks are provided for those who need them.	Vicar, churchwardens and sidesmen	
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing	The average numbers in the church for the main services mean the congregation is fairly well socially-distanced in normal circumstances. In addition, a special area of the church is set aside permanently for those who wish to maintain extra social distancing, and alternative	Vicar, churchwardens and sidesmen	

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		such arrangements are made for particular services where larger numbers than usual may be expected.		
	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.	The West door is the main entrance point for the congregation during services. Emergency exits are clearly marked. For hirers of the church or vestry hall, the entry and exit points are specified when bookings are taken.	N/A or hirers	
	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. Where a non-worship activity with over 500 people is involved such as a concert or other event an NHS COVID Pass may be required for attendance.	This will be communicated to hirers. See above re social distancing arrangements: a special area of the church is set aside permanently for those who wish to maintain extra social distancing, and alternative such arrangements are made for particular services where larger numbers than usual may be expected.	Administrator	Kept under review
<b>Surface transmission of Covid-19</b>	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.	The new suite of lavatories, including a disabled-access cubicle, has significantly expanded capacity. Multiple	Vicar and Church Wardens	Kept under review

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		hand-sanitisers are provided at the West end, at the front of church for the communion queue, at the altar, and at the broadcasting station, and replenished from 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.	Done. See above re open doors. Routine parish communication done by e-mail. See below re liturgical materials.	Vicar and Church Wardens	N/A
	Good hygiene and cleaning of the building.	Done	Regular cleaners	N/A
	Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people.	Arrangements are in place to ensure each individual touches only one service sheet, service booklet or hymn book. The service sheets are one-use only.	Vicar and Church Wardens	N/A
	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.	Done. Members of the congregation are invited to hand-sanitise before picking up individual booklets, hymnbooks etc (see also above)	Vicar and Church Wardens	N/A
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on).	Done to the extent necessary	Vicar	Kept under review

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	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).	Children’s toys and materials are used once for the Sunday School, and kept in a special cupboard for a week before re-use.	Sunday School	N/A
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Done – see above re lavatories	Regular cleaners and administrator	Ongoing
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.	Done	Regular cleaners and administrator	Ongoing
<b>Visitors are unclear on requirements for attending church or visiting the building for other purposes, or anxious about attending.</b>	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.	Since July 2021, the maintenance of a register has not been required by Government guidance. However, a QR code is prominently displayed in several locations at the West end of the church.	Wardens and sidesmen	Ongoing
	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.	Done, including via e-mail communication to the congregation	Vicar and administrator	N/A
	Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired.	Done	Vicar and wardens	Kept under review
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services.	Such a system is used for services where particularly	Vicar and wardens	Kept under review

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
		large numbers may be expected, in order to manage occupancy levels.		
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures.	Done	Vicar and wardens	N/A
<b>Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms</b>	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.	Will be applied if necessary	Vicar	Kept under review
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	<a href="#">Public Health England guidance available here.</a>	N/A	N/A
	If the building has been quarantined for 48 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here.</a>	N/A	N/A