

YR EGLWYS
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THE CHURCH
IN WALES

THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES

Covid-19: Keeping People Safe

**A Self-Assessment Toolkit for
re-opening Churches**

EDITION 2.1: AMBER PHASE

Re-opening - private prayer and communal worship

EDITION 2: AMBER PHASE Re-opening for private prayer and communal worship

Introduction

This guidance has been produced to help those responsible for managing churches assess their buildings and activities and develop a risk assessment to manage the risks posed by Coronavirus Covid-19.

Places of Worship have been closed by law since March 2020 and the Welsh Government has set out a broad framework for re-opening based on a 'traffic-light' approach as public health advice indicates the restrictions can be eased. The traffic lights are:

Lockdown:	Closure of places of worship with exceptions for funeral and cremations
Red:	Opening of places of worship for private prayer under physical distancing
Amber:	Limit services and size of congregations linked to ability to ensure physical distancing
Green:	All places open with full range of services alongside physical distancing

The details of re-opening in terms of precisely what will be permitted to happen in a place of worship at each stage will be defined under protocols being developed by Welsh Government.

By law, those responsible for places of worship are required to take all reasonable measures to ensure that a 2-metre distance is maintained between persons on the premises. Physical distancing is the most fundamental principle in re-opening any church building. Other risk management measures relate to hygiene (hand washing, sanitising, personal protective equipment) and premises and equipment cleaning though the need for these will vary depending on the activity being undertaken.

PART 1 (page 2) of this guide is a checklist to help you to consider your situation and the appropriate steps to manage the risks presented by Covid-19. It has been developed to be a document that grows as each stage of relaxation is clarified. Take time to work through each of the questions, using the notes provided to help you answer them.

PART 2 (page 14) is a risk assessment template to enable you to record your proposed actions from the checklist. This should be approved by your Archdeacon (or other nominated person) and shared with your team so all are aware of the arrangements.

Please Note: This guidance is to assist local churches with re-opening their building and reflects but does not substitute, Welsh Government legislation and guidance. Please see the link to Welsh Government guidance on the Church in Wales website.

PART 1: CHECKLIST

AMBER PHASE:

OPENING OF PLACES OF WORSHIP FOR PRIVATE PRAYER AND COMMUNAL WORSHIP UNDER PHYSICAL DISTANCING

This phase of re-opening gives the legal right for churches to be opened for individual or households to visit places of worship for:

- Private prayer
- Communal worship including led prayers, devotions or meditations
- Holy Communion subject to appropriate risk mitigation measures (see checklist below) and separate guidance on this is available.
<https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/guidance-celebrating-holy-communion/>
- Baptisms subject to appropriate risk mitigation measures (see checklist below) and separate guidance on this is available.
<https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/guidance-conducting-baptisms/>
- Funeral and marriage services (for invited guests only) can be undertaken and separate guidance on this is available.
<https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/covid-19-guidance-conducting-marriages-and-funerals>

The following gives a list of key steps to consider in preparation for this phase (but will largely be relevant to future phases). The local trustee body (PCC, MAC, LMAC) responsible for each place of worship has a legal responsibility to do all that it reasonably practicable to prevent people from coming to harm from Covid-19 (or any other hazard).

SECTION 1: PREPARATIONS

NB: Clergy, contractors and authorised volunteers of the PCC/MAC/LMAC are permitted by law to enter the building to make preparations for re-opening.

	Question	Notes
1.	Do you need to open the church under this phase?	There is no obligation to open your church. You should only do so when you consider it is safe to do so. Your place of worship should remain closed if you are not satisfied that you are able to adhere to the requirements to maintain social distancing regulations. <u>The risk control measures you will need to consider to open your church under this phase are substantial.</u> There may be other churches (including other denominations) in your area better able to do this. <u>You need to carefully consider clergy attending services at multiple churches</u> and seek to minimise this where possible. You should discuss the principle of opening with your Archdeacon at an early stage as they will need to approve your risk assessment and opening arrangements. You will need to show a comprehensive approach to managing risks.
2.	What opening arrangements will you adopt?	You need to decide when you will open the building. You should define which hours and days each week that the building will be open for private prayer and/or when services will take place. This will be closely linked to your ability to implement the risk control measures required. Do not be over-ambitious as it is vital that risk control measures are robust and workable. Remember that short hours will increase foot fall per hour, but long hours will require more volunteers. Advertising needs to be carefully considered so that you don't create a demand you cannot manage. Services should be concluded in the shortest reasonable time and participants should be encouraged to return home promptly. Fellowship e.g post service coffee is not permitted.

3.	Are there sufficient and suitable people to open the church safely?	The single most important risk control measure is maintaining a 2-metre physical distance between persons. You need to consider how you will ensure that is achieved. Whilst this will vary depending on the circumstances of each church, generally, the best way of ensuring this is to have stewards present to monitor and remind people. They can also provide a warm, Christian welcome. It will be necessary for people to open/close the building, direct people and undertake cleaning etc. Lone working should normally be avoided. The risks for any lone workers should be assessed and mitigated. You will need to check that none of your team are in a vulnerable group or are self-isolating. Please note: • No one should feel obligated to return to a place of worship, even if they have a volunteering role that they would normally fulfil. • PCCs/MACs should assess the vulnerability of volunteers/staff to Covid-19 using the Government's advice at: Covid 19 Extremely Vulnerable People and Social-distancing-guidance. • Those in the Extremely Vulnerable Group are advised not to consider employment or volunteering outside their homes. • Those in other 'at-risk' groups should discuss their situation with the MAC to decide the type of work or voluntary activity they are able to perform. If the vulnerable person (e.g someone over 70) feels they are in good health and would wish to volunteer, it is reasonable to accept their service but careful thought should be given to appropriate duties, PPE etc These might include roles that have maximum social distance or minimal direct contact with people. The Government has provided a workforce assessment tool; whilst this is for a healthcare setting, steps 1 and 2 may help you think about the vulnerability of individuals. It is available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-06/covid-19-workforce-risk-assessment-tool.pdf <i>Continued</i>
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		You should put in place arrangements to confirm that each person involved in the opening of the church confirms they are (a) symptom free and (b) not subject to UK or Welsh Government advice to self-isolate. It is vital that all your team are fully trained and briefed on your management arrangements. Working through this checklist with them and sharing the risk assessment will be key.
4.	Have you reviewed Test, Trace and Protect?	Welsh Government are developing their approach to tracing contacts of people who contract Covid-19. Review their guidance at: https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-your-questions and https://gov.wales/contact-tracing-your-questions Further details of requirements will be posted on the Church in Wales website.
5.	Have you aired the building?	If the building hasn't been visited often it is likely to be stuffy and musty. Arrange to open doors, vents etc and give the building a thorough airing.
6.	Have you checked for general cleanliness or other maintenance issues?	The building may have built up dust and other debris including animal waste. Whilst clearly the risk of Covid-19 virus being on surfaces is very remote because the building has been closed, you should arrange for a thorough clean of surfaces etc. Check the grounds are tidy and safe.
7.	Have you checked water systems?	These must be thoroughly flushed through before use to reduce the risk of legionella. See https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/legionella-risks-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm
8.	Have you checked electrical and heating systems?	These should be switched on and checked. If feasible, it would be a good time to get a suitably qualified contractor to undertake annual checks and servicing. Fans systems will circulate the air and therefore, potentially, any airborne virus, so use of these should be avoided.

9.	Have you a stoup or font?	These should be emptied of water. Specific guidance on Baptisms is set out below.
10.	Have you checked your fire risk assessment?	Review your fire procedures in the light of your proposed opening. Make sure fire extinguishers are serviced and in date.
11	How many people can attend a service/visit the church?	The numbers of people attending a service will depend on the capacity of your building to accommodate people whilst maintaining two- metre distancing. There is no legal limit on numbers, but numbers must be controlled to ensure two-metre distancing is maintained.
12	Do you intend celebrating Holy Communion?	Holy Communion should be in one kind only (bread). Those giving and receiving should wash/ sanitise their hands before and after exchange and avoid contact between the parties where possible. The person administering the bread should release it into the hand only in such a way as to avoid any contact or wear gloves. If contact occurs, hand cleansing should be undertaken immediately. Detailed guidance is available at: https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/guidance-celebrating-holy-communion/
13	Do you anticipate conducting Baptisms?	Government guidance confirms that only small volumes of water should be used and that full immersion should be avoided. Where practical others present should move out of range of any potential splashing and there should be no general sprinkling of water. Physical distancing should be observed where possible. Where an infant is involved, a parent/guardian or members of the infant's regular or extended household should hold the infant. All individuals involved should thoroughly wash their hands before and after the baptism. Detailed guidance is available at: https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/guidance-conducting-baptisms/

14	Worshipping Outdoors?	It is now possible to hold worship outdoors for up to 30 people but only within church grounds under the control of the PCC/MAC. Such worship must still comply with 2 metre physical distancing requirements and hygiene arrangements as if the worship were within the building. A risk assessment should still be prepared if outdoor worship is contemplated.
15	Bellringing	Bell ringing is permissible, but bell ringers should observe two-metre physical distancing and hygiene and cleaning regimes should be implemented. Careful consideration of how bell ringers will access the building suitably distanced from other attendees needs consideration e.g different entry points or staggered arrival times. Bellringing arrangements should comply with guidance available from the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers at https://cccbr.org.uk/coronavirus/

SECTION 2: PHYSICAL DISTANCING

	Question	Notes
1.	How will you keep people apart when they enter / exit the building?	You must make every reasonable effort to encourage strict adherence with physical distancing from the moment people arrive on church grounds including car parks. Clearly, you cannot completely prevent people from deciding to get closer than 2 metres apart but you must use reasonable endeavours to do so. Reasonable measures might include: • Clear signage on arrival into the grounds and around the church that two-metre distancing must be maintained. A standard template sign is available from the Church in Wales website. https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/re-opening-churches • Signage reminding people who are symptomatic or have a member of their household who is symptomatic, to stay at home. A standard template sign is available from the Church in Wales website. • The entrance/porch and exit doors are likely to be ‘pinch’ points. Stewards should be stationed at the entrance/exit to encourage compliance particularly where numbers of people are likely to be more than 10. • Can you use different doors to enter and exit? Consider access for disabled people alongside this. • Direct people to use different paths through the churchyard for entry and exit (if reasonably safe and accessible).
2.	How will people keep apart when they move around the building	• A one-way system around the church is a good way to help maintain distancing. • Use floor tape or simple barriers to keep people apart where they may be passing each other. • Create waiting areas (with floor tape) where people can stand to wait whilst others pass. • Restrict access to smaller or unused areas of the church so you don’t create bottle-necks or dead-ends.

3.	How will you seat people to maintain 2 metre distancing?	This is likely to be a challenging area for many churches. • 2 metre distancing is necessary in all directions around someone. • For a church with pews, this could mean one person in every three or so rows. You will need to carefully measure your church's layout to plan where people sit and the numbers of people your church can hold accordingly. • It is worth stating the maximum seating capacity on a sign at the entrance to a church to remind everybody. Entrance stewards should keep count (use a clicker) of how many people enter/exit the building. • Households can, of course, sit together. A pew or row of seats filled by a household may throw out your calculations over distance to other seat places. It could be worth designating an area of the church or certain pews for 'household' seating. • Seating positions will need to be clearly marked. You could place signs on pews, use labels or perhaps space hassocks on pews to mark where not to sit. • If you have moveable chairs, it will be easier to plan positioning of seats to maintain distancing. Consideration needs to be given if a household wishes to sit together and making sure seats don't get moved as they are used. • In placing seats or marking pew seat positions, you will need to think about how people will move to and from the seat.
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SECTION 3: HYGIENE

	Question	Notes
1	Can you provide hand sanitiser/ washing facilities?	It is vital that all people entering and leaving the building should wash/sanitise their hands. Provide hand sanitiser stations for all visitors. https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/index.php/categories/covid-19-supplies is one possible supplier. Toilets can be opened providing that physical distancing and hand hygiene guidance is followed. These areas should be cleaned between uses using normal cleaning products with particular attention to areas that are frequently touched such as door handles and taps. Suitable handwashing facilities should be available including running water and liquid soap. Drying should be by paper towels or hand dryers (not communal towels). Paper towels should be in a dispenser and disposed of carefully. Toilets may be needed for stewards etc but cleaning regimes should be put in place. See cleaning section below. Clear signage instructing people to sanitise their hands-on entry and exit should be erected.
2.	What personal protective equipment will you provide?	It is recommended that stewards be provided with disposable gloves (non latex) and that they have access to sanitiser too. Gloves should be bagged at the end of each session and disposed of with waste collections. A flip-top pedal bin with liners is useful. With regard to masks and face coverings see https://gov.wales/face-coverings-frequently-asked-questions#section-43640 <i>PPE for cleaners is set out in the cleaning section below.</i>

3.	Do you have votive candles?	This is clearly a potential area of shared contact so should not be available at this time. Not only are they a point of shared contact and potential gathering but alcohol-based gels and naked flames do not mix.
4.	Do you have devotional or similar communally handled objects?	Individuals should be prevented from making contact with such objects. Use barriers and signage.
5.	Do you have displays, play or other equipment etc that might involve contact?	These should be removed or placed out of reach. The church can only be open for prayer so remove the temptation for other activities. Consider visitor books, shared pens, prayer cards, guides etc – these can all be handled by multiple people.
6.	How will you provide prayer books/service sheets?	Books, reusable or communal resources should be removed from use. It is recommended these are single use sheets of paper located after the hand sanitising area. If you have projection facilities, this could be a good alternative. People might be encouraged to bring their own service books from: https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/publications/order-books-online/ . You might consider lending service books to regular attendees so they can bring their own each time.
7.	What about food and drink?	No food or drink should be made available during or after the service.

8.	Do you intend seeking donations from visitors?	Cash giving is discouraged at this time. Use online giving (Gift Direct), see: https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/en/clergy-and-members/gift-direct/ where possible. Consider contactless card readers. See https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/categories/giving-and-payments If cash payments are made, they should be handled wearing gloves and regular cleaning and hygiene maintained.
9.	Ventilation?	Where practicable, non-fire doors and windows should be opened to improve ventilation.
10.	What about music?	Welsh Government guidance states that activities such as singing or chanting should not take place given the increased risk of infection from these activities. Recorded music may be appropriate as an alternative to hymn singing. Music should not be at a volume that makes normal conversations difficult. Welsh Government guidance also states that no blown instruments should be played; this includes organs (other than electronic organs). Another instrument such as a guitar or violin could be played. A pipe organ may be played for practice or maintenance purposes when the building is closed to the public. We are working to convince Welsh Government that organs may be safely played in connection with services too. It is permissible for an individual to sing at a service where it is an essential part of the service. Such a singer should sing behind a plexi-glass screen to protect guests. Physical distancing should be observed at all times. It is possible for more than one individual to sing over the course of the service, but this should not be more than one at a particular time and there should be separate arrangements to protect from transmission e.g separate plexi screens or cleaning of screens between each use.

SECTION 4: CLEANING

	Question	Notes
1.	What cleaning regime should you adopt?	Cleaning helps minimise the spread of Coronavirus Covid-19 so frequent cleaning of all surfaces especially those most frequently touched is important. Government guidance is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings The guidance describes the cleaning required, the appropriate disposal of materials, the cleaning of equipment and hard surfaces and the PPE that should be worn. Cleaning should take place after each occasion the church is opened. Focus should be on hard surfaces where people might make contact particularly door handles. Soft furnishings should be minimised where possible as these are more challenging to clean.
2.	Who undertakes your cleaning?	This is likely to be a rota of volunteers. You will need to check that none of your team are in a vulnerable group or are self-isolating. This might be an opportunity to put a call-out in your community for new volunteers to help.
3.	What PPE will you provide for cleaners?	Follow the Government guidance at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings The minimum PPE requirement is disposable gloves and an apron but the guidance should be carefully considered especially where there may be a greater risk of contamination.

4.	What cleaning materials will you use?	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. A possible supplier is: https://www.parishbuying.org.uk/index.php/categories/covid-19-supplies Welsh Government recommend the following guidance on the cleaning of historic surfaces and materials at: https://historicengland.org.uk/coronavirus/historic-places/cleaning-historic-surfaces/?dm_t=0,0,0,0,0
5.	What if a confirmed Covid-19 case has visited?	The building should be closed for at least 72 hours after which the building should be thoroughly cleaned in accordance with government guidance. See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings Promote a clear point of contact for anyone who develops symptoms after a visit to the church.

PART 2: RISK ASSESSMENT: RE-OPENING - PRIVATE PRAYER AND COMMUNAL WORSHIP

Having worked through the checklist, complete the risk assessment proforma available from the Church in Wales website:

<https://www.churchinwales.org.uk/re-opening-churches>

The completed form must be sent to and approved by your Archdeacon.

RISK ASSESSMENT RE-OPENING FOR PRIVATE PRAYER AND COMMUNAL WORSHIP

EDITION 2: AMBER PHASE

Name of Church:	Address:		Date:	
Area of Focus	Control Measure <i>These are the main themes from the checklist and guidance. They may not apply in each case.</i>	Detailed arrangements <i>Set out below the detailed arrangements you will implement under each control measure.</i> <i>The boxes will expand as you complete them.</i>	Action by?	Completed
PREPARATIONS	Defined Opening Times Proposed services and times			
	Staffing arrangements			
	Airing and Cleaning			
	Check services e.g. water, heating system			