

Coronavirus: Guidance on re-opening Baptist church buildings

The government has announced that from 4 July 2020, Places of Worship in England will be permitted to open again for services, in addition to being open for private prayer which has been permitted since 13 June 2020. This guidance leaflet is intended to help churches work through the practicalities of re-opening. Please note that whilst much of this leaflet is generally applicable it has been written primarily with a view to re-opening churches for worship services.

Churches in **England** should refer to government guidelines (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-from-4-july>) and ensure that they operate within these as a minimum. These should be regularly reviewed as they are updated frequently. These should be regularly reviewed as they are updated frequently. Please note that reference to "Venue Managers" in the Government guidance should be interpreted by Baptist churches as being the church charity trustees, who carry the legal responsibility for the general control and management of the administration of the church.

For churches in **Wales** the regulations are different and can be found at <https://gov.wales/guidance-reopening-places-worship-coronavirus>

These guidance notes are intended to help Baptist Church trustees/leaders/deacons to work through the issues involved in practicalities of re-opening their buildings and interpreting the guidance in a Baptist context. These notes are not a replacement for the Government guidance and should be read in conjunction with that guidance. If you identify any conflict between this document and the government guidance, the government guidance prevails.

A separate leaflet *[Coronavirus: Guidance on Church Worship](#)* has been written to help churches consider the choice on whether and when to re-open and the conduct of those services.

This guidance has been put together with the support of Ellis Whittam as Health & Safety Consultants. They have a specific Coronavirus Advice Hub available at <https://elliswhittam.com/covid-19/>

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30/06/2020	1.1	Link added to Risk Assessment template
30/06/2020	1.2	Link added to Government Guidance on Multi-Use Community facilities
01/07/2020	1.3	Link added to Risk Assessment templates
02/07/2020	1.4	Added Appendix 6 – Contractor Checklist and paragraph about management of contractors into section 2. Added reference to collection of posters. Made clear that face coverings are not required under government guidance where 2m distancing is possible, but still recommended

Introduction: Critical First Steps

Conducting a risk assessment

It is an essential requirement that prior to re-opening your building you carry out a risk assessment of the risks in relation to transmission of Coronavirus. [A template for this risk assessment](#) is provided alongside this guidance. Once completed this must be reviewed by the Church Trustees collectively to ensure that they believe as a group that appropriate measures have been taken to manage the risk prior to re-opening. It is not sufficient for one or two Trustees to carry out this alone on behalf of the Trustees without it being reviewed by the whole group.

The remainder of this document goes through a set of practical guidance that you might should consider when dealing with the risks identified in the risk assessment. We suggest you read this document prior to conducting your risk assessment and then again once your risk assessment is complete, to decide on the exact actions that you will take.

Implementing your plans

We strongly recommend that your action plans and procedures are put in writing so that you can use them to demonstrate the action you have taken should this ever be queried by your members, a member of the public or statutory authorities. This is also helpful in sharing your plans, thereby ensuring that everyone is aware of what is to be done.

However, having a documented plan is only a first step. Plans must then be communicated in appropriate detail to all who need to know about them, including ministers, leaders, stewards, members, attendees etc.

Part of this communication will be putting in place appropriate signage. We have put together a [collection of posters](#) churches may find helpful in doing this.

Plans must then be implemented, by ensuring everyone knows what they are responsible for doing and confirming that they have carried out their tasks. Implementation should be monitored so that tasks are completed.

Fantastically documented plans are no use unless they are put into action!

Section 1: Legal Issues Relating to Re-opening

Legal Duties

The main piece of health and safety legislation is the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 ("the Act"). It sets out the general duties which employers have towards employees (including appointed ministers for the purposes of the act), volunteers and members of the public. This legislation applies when a church is an 'employer' because it has at least one paid employee. In many churches the only 'employee' will be the Minister. Where a church has no employees, it is still good practice for them to provide volunteers and members of the public with the same level of health and safety protection as they would in an employer/employee relationship. The Act says that you must do what is 'reasonably practicable' to ensure the health and safety of all who come, or are likely to come, onto church land or premises, even if they are trespassing; it is clearly appropriate to try to do all that we can to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of other people and would be reckless to do otherwise.

As well as employers, the Act can also apply to any church which has control of premises used as a workplace; this can include, for example, a landlord who retains control of the common parts of a building.

Churches have a legal duty to assess the risks which exist on their premises and to reduce them as far as reasonably practicable. This is the responsibility of the charity trustees. Any risk which cannot be entirely removed should be mitigated until it can be described as a small risk.

During the pandemic there are additional regulations which govern the purposes for which places of worship are able to open. These are the Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020. Our guidance is designed to assist your church in preparing to open for these permitted activities.

More general guidance on health and safety can be found in guideline leaflet [L10 Health and Safety and Fire Precautions](#) and our [L18 Coronavirus Legal Issues](#) leaflet contains more information about churches acting as landlords.

Your Liability as a church

Health and safety law is mostly enforced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or the Local Authority and carries criminal sanctions. If you meet your responsibilities under health and safety law, you will also considerably reduce the risk of being found negligent under civil law. Under civil law, if someone has been harmed, injured or made ill through your negligence, they may be able to bring a claim for damages or compensation against you.

More detailed information about issues of liability can be found in guideline leaflet [L16 Legal Liability of Church Members in a Baptist Church](#)

Insurance for legal liability

It is impossible to eliminate all risk in a church context and health and safety incidents can be reduced by undertaking comprehensive risk assessments and putting appropriate safeguards in place. However, in most cases, insurance will be available to a church to provide cover in the eventuality of a claim arising against the church.

Churches which are employers must have employers' liability insurance. This will enable you to meet the cost of compensation for your employees' injuries or illness. It is a criminal offence if you do not have it. Some specialist insurers will treat volunteers as employees for the purpose of insurance.

It is also very important that churches have adequate public liability insurance, which covers your church if it is held legally liable for injury to a member of the public who is harmed or injured whilst on church premises. Public liability claims may take a number of years to emerge, so it is wise to consider an appropriate level of cover with your insurer and to keep all records of your insurance cover indefinitely. Trustee indemnity insurance is often included as an extension to public liability cover and protects the charity trustees for wrongful acts whilst acting in their capacity as trustees which results in a legal liability to pay damages and costs. This will not cover acts of a reckless, dishonest or criminal nature.

(Please note that the types of insurance cover described above are distinct from buildings insurance).

Section 2: Management of Church Buildings

Preparing for re-opening for the first time

After an extended period of closure, it is important that the building is checked over to ensure it is safe in advance of opening to the church staff, volunteers, members, congregation and/or the general public. The building should be thoroughly checked over for any safety hazards using the '*Reoccupation Checklist*' template (Appendix 1). You may also need to bring up to date any routine maintenance that may have been paused during lockdown (e.g. servicing of fire extinguishers).

Checks prior to each service, gathering or event

It is important that prior to each event you have in your premises that you check that your church building is in an appropriate state and that you have the team and procedures in place to be able to manage the event safely. We recommend that you develop a pre-event checklist. A template for such a checklist is provided in Appendix 2 to this document

Building controls and ventilation

In some church buildings careful use of the controls on heating, air conditioning and ventilation, where such controls are available, can help to reduce the risk of disease transmission. We recognise that there are a huge range of different church buildings within the Baptist family, ranging from modern premises with sophisticated controls to historic listed buildings with very limited controls.

Generally, ventilation is helpful to disperse any particles carrying infection, so any ventilation systems should be used to maximise ventilation available. The church should open windows and doors frequently to encourage ventilation where possible, bearing in mind any security concerns that might arise and maintaining a comfortable temperature.

Where a controlled ventilation system is in place these should be set in line with recommendations from heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers. You are likely to find that the organisation contracted to maintain such systems will be able to advise you. As an example, it is likely to be appropriate to set ventilation systems so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels.

Cleaning practices

It is well understood that good cleaning practices are very important in reducing the transmission of disease and this is the same for Coronavirus. The infection risk from COVID-19 following contamination of a surface decreases over time, and it is not yet clear at what point there is no risk. However, it has been demonstrated that the virus can survive on some surfaces for up to 72 hours. Cleaning is aiming to ensure that where a surface has been contaminated with Coronavirus that such virus is killed so that nobody can be infected from that surface. Fortunately, Coronavirus can be killed using ordinary cleaning products when used in the appropriate cleaning regime.

The government has produced specific Coronavirus guidance on cleaning and decontamination in non-healthcare settings, which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>. Churches should follow this guidance. Churches with historic buildings, including but not limited to buildings that are formally listed should also refer to the Historic England guidance on cleaning historic surfaces - <https://historicengland.org.uk/coronavirus/historic-places/cleaning-historic-surfaces/>

Cleaners should wear suitable PPE, which means disposable or washing up gloves and aprons for general cleaning tasks. Hard surfaces are to be cleaned with warm soapy water using a disposable cloth, paying attention to frequently touched areas and surfaces (e.g. doors, toilets, stair rails). Avoid creating splashes and spray when cleaning.

For any areas of heavy contamination where there may be bodily fluids, such as toilets, will be cleaned as mentioned but with the PPE for protection for the eyes, mouth and nose (e.g. a face shield) as well as gloves and aprons.

Any PPE, cleaning waste and disposable cloths are to be double bagged and stored securely for 72 hours before being thrown away in general waste. Use the *'Daily Cleaning Checklist'* template (Appendix 3) to record the cleaning schedule and for additional guidance.

Generally, it will be sufficient to clean the premises prior to any event. However, in some cases there may be high-touch surfaces that need to be cleaned during the period of opening, such as handrails on stairs, where this is practical. You will need to ensure that someone is designated to do this and has the appropriate materials and PPE to undertake this cleaning.

Dealing with Contractors

To safely operate a church building, you will almost certainly need to use contractors to maintain systems (e.g. boilers, fire alarms) or to do work on the premises. These contractors are potentially at risk of bringing Coronavirus into the building or contracting Coronavirus on site. We recommend using the *Contractor Checklist* (Appendix 6) to ensure that they are taking appropriate precautions to prevent these.

Section 3: General practices for attendees

Social Distancing

From 4 July, the government social distancing requirement changes from 2 metres to “1 metre plus”, which means one metre plus “mitigations” (which are additional measures put in place to reduce the risk of transmission, such as face coverings). 2m social distancing remains the ideal situation and should be observed wherever possible. We particularly recommend that it is observed in seating arrangements because this is where attendees at the church will spend the majority of their time.

Where 2m social distancing is not practical, one metre or more may be used as the social distancing policy but with suitable measures such as face coverings, installing fixed barriers or asking people to face away from each other must be put in place. Churches must consider whether the measures they are able to put in place are sufficient to allow the distancing within their building to be reduced below 2m, and decide what distance is suitable in your circumstances given the mitigations that you are able to put in place. **This distance must be no less than one metre.**

Please note that in an emergency such as a fire or accident, people do not have to stay socially distanced if it would be unsafe. People involved in the provision of assistance to other should pay attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards, including washing/sanitisation of hands.

Hygiene practices

Good hygiene practices can prevent transmission from an infected person to a non-infected person, either directly or via a surface. You should ask everyone attending the church premises to demonstrate good hygiene practices including:

- All attendees to wash or sanitise hands on entry. We recommend provision of hand sanitiser at all entrances and exits to enable this.
- Management of coughs and sneezes – cover mouth and nose with tissue or sleeve. Dispose of used tissues immediately.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds or more. Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available.
- Do not touch eyes, nose or mouth.
- Minimising unnecessary hand contact with surfaces such as doorknobs.
- Avoid multiple people handling the same objects, such as pens, books, service sheets, chairs, etc. Where this cannot be avoided, ensure that hands are cleaned prior to handling such objects.
- Individuals should be requested not to touch or kiss anyone outside their household group.

Use of PPE in services

To minimise transmission risk, we recommend asking all attendees to wear a face covering while in the church building to reduce transmission risk. This is one factor which can help to reduce risk where you cannot operate with social distancing of 2m (see section on Social Distancing). If you are maintaining 2m Social Distancing then a face covering is not essential under the government guidelines, but we suggest it will give attendees enhanced confidence in their safety in the church.

You may wish to make disposable face coverings available at the building entrances, however it is important to provide instructions on how to use these correctly to ensure that they do not become a mechanism for disease transmission themselves. Attendees should be encouraged to:

- Wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it.
- When wearing a face covering, avoid touching their face or face covering, as it could contaminate them with germs from their hands.
- Change their face covering if it becomes damp or if they have touched it.
- Continue to wash their hands regularly.
- Continue to practice social distancing wherever possible.

Bins should be provided to allow for disposable face coverings to be disposed of safely.

Face shields that provide an impermeable shield for the eyes, nose and mouth, and other PPE not needed for the general users of the premises, but you may find some attendees wish to use them.

Gloves are generally only needed for cleaners and can be counter-productive if not changed regularly as gloves can transmit diseases similar to the skin. Regular hand washing is likely to be more effective than use of gloves.

Fixed screens may be useful in some circumstances to separate attendees from church volunteers. For example, if you have a church office or a "welcome desk" or stewards in fixed locations. However, this will not be suitable in many circumstances.

Use of toilet facilities

You should try to discourage use of the shared toilet facilities in a church building by asking your attendees to use private facilities at home before and after the service if possible. However, this is unlikely to be completely workable, so it will be necessary to have toilet facilities available in order to open your church.

Toilets are likely to present an elevated transmission risk and so need some careful management. We recommend the following practices

- Toilets should certainly be thoroughly cleaned before and after every service.
- Hand sanitiser should be made available before entering the toilets.
- Shared cloth towels should certainly not be used as these present a high risk of virus transmission.
- Single use paper towels should be provided in dispenser that means person only touches their own paper towel.
- Electric hand dryers can be used as an alternative to paper towels
- Provide foot operated lidded bins for disposal of paper towels
- Even where a toilet facility has multiple cubicles, we recommend that only one person at a time should enter to ensure social distancing around hand-wash areas etc.
- If possible, provide cleaning wipes or suitable cleaning products to allow the toilet seat to be cleaned between users (noting that these should be suitable for non-professional use and suitable instructions on use and disposal should be provided)
- Signage should be provided to explain the rules for toilet use, promote good hygiene practices (such as 20-second hand washing) and promote social distancing.
- Suitable temperature hot water should be provided to allow for hands to be cleaned properly.
- We suggest that children under 11 are accompanied to the toilet by an adult from their household to ensure compliance with good hygiene practice and social distancing. Seating arrangements and seating capacity

Seating arrangements and seating capacity

A group from a single household should sit together but must be separated from all other household groups in line with social distancing requirements (see section on Social Distancing above). One of the challenges is that you are unlikely to know the size of household groups for your service and this can have quite an impact on seating capacity.

The following is a suggestion of how you might manage social distancing with seating using conventional rows of chairs or pews, but you may find something that works better for you. Alternative arrangements of chairs other than in rows may be more suitable for smaller groups such as prayer groups or bible studies.

If your church has moveable chairs, we suggest you measure distance between rows and ensure occupied rows are sufficiently separated to ensure people one behind another are socially distanced. Remember that individuals are likely to move somewhat in their location, so you will need to make allowance for this in separation. You can then measure the seat width and ensure that appropriate

number of seats are left empty between household groups. E.g. if seats are 60cm wide, you need to leave gap of 4 seats to achieve 2m distancing.

If you have a choice of chairs to use for your service, we recommend that you select the chairs that are easiest to clean (e.g. hard surface or a plastic surface that can be cleaned with a cloth).

If your church has fixed pews, you may wish to mark sufficient rows out of use between rows in use to ensure distancing. We then suggest you make a temporary mark (e.g. with masking tape) at 50cm spaces and then tell people to leave a certain number of marks between household groups (similar to the chevrons sometimes seen on motorways).

Once you have decided on the appropriate arrangements for your church you should ensure that your stewards are fully briefed, and you provide signage to explain how you wish them to ensure social distancing.

Special measures for the clinically vulnerable and those who are shielding

Those who are clinically vulnerable (those over 70 or with certain medical conditions) should be encouraged to consider if it is appropriate for them to attend, as they are advised to stay at home as much as possible. Anyone concerned should consult their GP for advice.

Similarly, those who are shielding should be recommended to continue to follow government advice and not attend.

However, the government guidance does make clear that these decisions are for the individual, because the risk is to them and they do not present any higher risk for other attendees.

Section 4: Managing Arrivals at the Building

Checks for Symptoms on Entry to the Church

We recommend that churches ask anyone attending the building to confirm that they do not currently have any of the key symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, persistent dry cough and loss of taste or smell) and have not had such symptoms for 14-days, or have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Track and Trace. This may be best managed by a steward at the main entrance.

We do not recommend carrying out temperature checks as the proximity involved (even with a contactless infra-red thermometer) brings transmission risk. Temperature is also not a particularly accurate way to assess risk of COVID-19 as it is possible that some will be contagious but have no fever. By the same token, a raised temperature is not necessarily indicative of COVID-19 (e.g. running can raise skin temperature), meaning you may decide to exclude someone who is perfectly safe to attend.

Recording attendees in the building

You should record the name and contact details of anyone who enters the building, with details of the time of their visit. This will allow NHS Track and Trace to follow up with attendees should a COVID-19 case be identified as having attended the church at a later date.

This needs to be done in compliance with data protection legislation which means that you should make a specific privacy policy made available when taking details. Records should be kept securely and disposed of after 21 days. You may find a paper attendance register used by a steward on the door is the easiest way to achieve this. A sample privacy statement that could be given to attendees is provided in Appendix 4

You should ask people attending to notify the church if they show symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 so that you can take appropriate action.

Managing arrivals, departures and traffic flow through the building

Management of traffic flow can assist in reducing the risk of people inadvertently breaching social distancing guidelines. One-way systems are often helpful in reducing risk of people coming into

close proximity. You should consider how any changes will affect disability access and make arrangements to ensure equal access can still be achieved.

You should consider where the pinch-points might be in your building where people are brought together into close proximity such as entry and exit points and circulation spaces. You should consider how you will reduce this risk. It might involve signage, how your 1-way system is directed, stewarding or staggering arrivals.

We recommend that you actively manage people departing too at the end of any event to minimise the risk of social distancing issues. This might involve asking people to leave one row at a time, starting with the rows nearest the exit and working back.

We recommend using floor signage to assist in social distancing. This should include marking pathways through the building with arrows showing the expected direction of flow and markers showing fixed spacing to assist people in judging distance. Please make sure that these markings are securely affixed to the floor and not a trip hazard or they could cause more harm than good.

You should also consider how you might be able to minimise the need for attendees to touch surfaces. That could include leaving doors open. However, please consider how this works particularly in relation to fire doors that should be kept shut in general. If you have a suitable alarm system, systems are available to prop open fire doors that release automatically if the alarm sounds (e.g. Dorguard). If you use these, they should be regularly tested before live use. Alternatively, you may be able to develop operational practices that sufficiently mitigate the risk, such as having stewards briefed on shutting fire doors in emergencies.

Leaving some doors open will clearly not be appropriate (e.g. toilets), so consider what provision may be made for regularly cleaning any high-touch surfaces during any period of opening.

Managing Seating Capacity

How to manage your seating capacity is a complex practical issue that you need to consider in the context of your church congregation, building and circumstances. If you have a large enough building to accommodate all who will attend with social distancing in place it may not be an issue, but churches with capacity constraints will need to think through this issue. This may include streaming the service to another room.

In determining the capacity of the building for services you should not only consider how many people can safely be seated but how they can safely flow through the building.

You may wish to test an approach and assess and develop your approach over time as circumstances evolve and you gain experience of what works or not in your context. Some options to consider:

- Invitation only – this is probably best where potential attendance far exceeds capacity and you can pro-actively manage the best use of the space you do have.
- Pre-booking – similar to invitation only but requires individuals to be pro-active. There is likely to be considerable administration involved in handling bookings and cancellations. This is also some complexity in working out how the bookings fit with your available space.
- Close doors when capacity reached – This is the more reactive approach requires careful stewarding and potentially results in appearing inhospitable when the doors are shut. It may also result in queuing at the door that is hard to manage in line with social distancing.

Section 5: Operating Church Services and Church gatherings

Drinks & catering

Food and drink should not be served or made available on a self-service basis.

We recommend that food generally should not be consumed in the church although for health reasons some persons may need to eat or drink during time on the premises. If this is the case, they should be asked to bring what they need and take away any rubbish, containers or leftovers.

Singing, instrumentalists and music

Congregational or choral singing is not permitted as it is considered that this enhances risk of virus spread. Similarly brass or woodwind instruments should not be played. Other instruments may be played but instruments must not be shared between instrumentalists. These restrictions apply to rehearsals as well as the service.

If it is essential to an act of worship a soloist may sing but a plexi-glass screen should be used to protect others from them. This should be cleaned after the service.

The volume of music should not result in people having to raise their voices or shout to be heard. This is particularly important before and after a service.

Use of hymn books, bibles and other similar materials

The ideal situation is to use a projector to display of any content needed for the service, such as bible verses, order of service etc. If this is not possible single use printed service sheets should be used and households should take their own home to dispose of. We recommend these are put out on chairs in advance of the service by someone who has washed their hands thoroughly prior to putting them out in order to prevent transmission via this mechanism.

Reusable materials, such as bibles or hymn books should not generally be used, but if they are, they should be quarantined for 48 hours before they can be used again. Attendees should be encouraged to bring their own bible if they wish to have one. Ideally these should be removed from public spaces, but if this is not possible, they should be clearly marked as not in use unless a quarantine system is in place.

Speaking from the front

Raised voices are considered a transmission risk so a PA system should be used for amplification if more than a normal speaking voice is required to make voices heard. Handheld microphones and other equipment that is touched should not be shared between participants. This may give risk to some practical challenges that churches need to consider if they have more speakers than microphones available.

A lectern microphone may be shared provided that it is not touched by users. If a lectern or music stand or similar is used by more than one individual, it would be good practice to clean it between uses to ensure that it is not a transmission risk. If this is not possible, users should be strongly discouraged from touching it.

If you have multiple people coming up to the front (e.g. to share a word or lead prayers or give a reading), please consider how they can maintain social distancing moving from their seat to the front. For example, you may need to make sure they are sat on the end of a row, so they don't have to move past other household groups.

Length of Services

As a general rule, services should be concluded in the shortest reasonable time as the longer they are the greater the risk of disease transmission occurring. The lack of singing at this stage is likely to mean that services are naturally shorter in any case. Also, with children likely to be in the service, it would be wise to keep services shorter.

Offerings and collections

We recommend that you encourage giving by direct bank transfer or online giving mechanisms as this removes any risk of virus transmission. However, if this is not appropriate for your circumstances then you can consider have a collection box or plate but ask people to take care not to touch it if possible. There should be no passing of an offering plate or bag in services.

We recommend you leave any cash offerings isolated for 72 hours before handling. Alternatively, use disposable gloves to handle cash and dispose securely after use.

A contactless card terminal may be a suitable way to take payments, although you will probably need to supply with antibacterial wipes to clean the terminal after each use.

Social Interaction before, during and after services

The government guidance advises that social interaction in churches should be limited wherever possible, so we advise against holding times of fellowship before or after church services to minimise virus transmission risk. We suggest you encourage attendees to leave promptly after any event.

Similarly, we would advise against encouraging any moving around during a service (e.g. breaking into small groups for prayer). We suggest that it is best for people to remain in their seats or standing by their seats throughout any service, in so far as practical.

Handling multiple services (including tenant congregations)

Ideally you should leave the building empty for 72 hours between each use, which would significantly reduce the risk of any virus remaining on surfaces. However, this may not be practical if you have multiple services, guest congregations or mid-week activities you wish to run. If this is the case, a thorough cleaning of all surfaces should be completed between uses in line with the guidance provided above.

If you have surfaces that you feel you are unable to clean appropriately (e.g. fabric covered chairs) then we recommend that these surfaces are taken out of use for 72 hours.

Handling Children and children's activities

Generally, we recommend that children should stay with their family group and not do separate children's activities unless social distancing can be managed.

For babies and toddlers it is likely to be best to ask parents to care for their children. If you can, you may wish to provide a room where the service is relayed where they can sit with their own children. Social distancing arrangements will need to be observed, so you should ensure the space is large enough to allow this.

Depending upon the space you have available, it may be possible for secondary school age groups to be run in a socially distanced manner where children can be expected to understand the instructions provided, but it is likely this will not be possible for younger children. The government advises that the principles in general guidance from the Department of Education (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/education-and-childcare>) should be followed for separate children's activities being organised alongside or within a service. However, this is not easily translated into a church setting. We will be raising this issue with the Government.

We recommend that you do not provide toys for children that would be shared between household groups as they may be a transmission risk. It is likely to be easier if parents are asked to bring their own toys. If toys are provided, they should be thoroughly cleaned after use with a suitable disinfectant (e.g. Milton Sterilising Fluid). No soft toys or soft furnishings for children should be provided as these cannot be easily cleaned.

Taking Communion

We realise that Communion is an important, biblical practice that many churches wish to resume. However, this presents particular risks and challenges that need to be considered. You may find it easier not to restart communion at first. Specific guidance is available in our leaflet [*Coronavirus: Guidance on church worship*](#)

Weddings, Funerals, Baptisms

Separate guidance is available on the conduct of Weddings and Funerals in our leaflet [*Coronavirus: Guidance on church worship*](#)

At the current time the government advise that full immersion Baptism is avoided. We will seek further clarification on this.

What to do if someone develops symptoms whilst in the Church

You should have a written Emergency Action Plan in place as to what to do in these circumstances. This should be shared with those leading and stewarding any service or gathering. A template for this is provided in Appendix 5.

We recommend that anyone coughing or showing other clear COVID-19 symptoms should be asked to leave the church immediately, along with their household and contact NHS 111 for advice on isolation and testing. We recommend that cleaning carried out of any surfaces that may have been contaminated as soon as possible, in line with the cleaning guidance (see above), and those who have had any contact with the individual should wash their hands. If you feel it is appropriate you may wish to bring the service to an end.

Section 6: Other Uses of the Church Building

Use of the church office

Working from home remains the preferred position and this should be followed where possible.

If you do wish to re-open the church office, then this should be considered in line with the government guidance on use of office premises (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>). You should ensure that you conduct a specific risk assessment for the use of the office.

In general, you should:

- Review layouts and processes to allow people to work further apart from each other.
- Use floor tape or markings to help workers maintain social distancing.
- Only where it is not possible to move workstations further apart, arrange for people to work side-by-side or facing away from each other rather than face-to-face or use screens to separate people from each other.
- Manage occupancy levels to enable social distancing is achievable.
- Avoid the use of hot desks and spaces, where this is not possible cleaning and sanitising workstations between different occupants, including shared equipment (phones, keyboards, mouse).
- Use remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.
- Restrict attendance at meetings to those who absolutely need to attend and maintaining social distancing throughout.
- Avoid transmission during office activities, such as sharing pens, mugs, kettles, cutlery and other objects.

Use of the church for other activities

You are permitted to host some non-church activities. The following are definitely allowed:

- A registered pre-school
- Work with the homeless
- Blood donation and
- A food bank.

You must first check to ensure that a particular use is permitted. Some activities are specifically prohibited at the current time, including include indoor soft play, indoor fitness and indoor performances in front of a live audience. The full guidance as to what is permitted from 4 July is at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/opening-certain-businesses-and-venues-in-england-from-4-july-2020>. Specific guidance for multi-use community facilities, which will be relevant to many Baptist churches that are normally used for non-worship activities during the week, can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi->

[purpose-community-facilities/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities#permitted-activities-in-multi-use-community-facilities-signposting-to-relevant-guidance](https://www.baptist.org.uk/resources/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities#permitted-activities-in-multi-use-community-facilities-signposting-to-relevant-guidance).

Church trustees should also satisfy themselves that those running any activities (whether they are part of the church or not) are following the relevant guidance for these activities to be safe.

You should conduct a specific Risk Assessment for the activity to document the risk control measures to be introduced within the church for its use for other activities to control the spread of COVID-19. Ensure that the Risk Assessment has been briefed to all employees/workers, so they fully understand the controls that are implemented. Ensure the Risk Assessment is reviewed and updated to incorporate any changes to government guidance.

Where you are considering allowing external organisations to use your premises, you should refer to our leaflet L18 on legal issues during the Coronavirus pandemic: www.baptist.org.uk/resources/L18

Section 7: Risk assessment for staff and volunteers returning to work in church offices and buildings

As you re-open your building for worship, you will likely need employed staff, appointed ministers and volunteers to operate the building and services. You have a duty of care to these individuals so you will need to look at planning for their safe return to working in the church building.

Ministers

Please remember that any work that a minister does on behalf of your church, including prayer, teaching, pastoral visiting, Sunday services, is considered to be 'work' for health and safety purposes so needs to be reviewed as part of your risk assessment process. [Specific guidance for ministers for pastoral visiting](#) is available on our website.

Volunteers

Any volunteers returning to work in the church should be risk assessed in the same way as staff as the church has a duty of care to them even if they receive no remuneration.

Thinking about risk

Before you invite anyone to return to work in your church office or building you will need to carry out a specific risk assessment, looking at the issues that affect all staff, and consider any points that are specific to each individual. This risk assessment should be done in writing and will need to consider a wide range of factors. We have produced an [Employer Risk Assessment in relation to the health and safety of staff as they return](#).

You should also read the [Coronavirus: A Guide for Churches as Employers](#) which covers these and other issues.

Who should go to work?

Currently, the government are still encouraging employers to allow workers to work from home wherever possible. If you have been able to manage well during lockdown, think carefully before you start to invite staff to return to work.

Some staff will be unable to return immediately because of shielding requirements or because they or someone in their household, or someone they have recently been in contact with, has had Covid-19. For more information on how to respond to these specific situations, please follow the government guidance at

Government guidance on risk assessment

The government has produced an updated guidance leaflet for employers that works through each section of potential risks in terms of allowing staff to return work in offices or indoor buildings. Risks in each potential area of concern are listed so that those with responsibility for the safe return of staff can work their way through this in a systematic way. If you employ more than 5 people you

are required to document the results of your risk assessment. If you have less than 5 staff, documenting your risk assessment is not a legal requirement, but we strongly recommend that you keep a written record to show that you have considered all relevant risks.

The government guidance can be found using the following link and you may choose to read this alongside this BUGB document.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb97e7686650c278d4496ea/working-safely-during-covid-19-offices-contact-centres-240620.pdf>

Section 8: Safeguarding considerations for churches planning to re-open their buildings.

It goes without saying that your church's safeguarding policies and procedures need to stay in place during lockdown and as you start to re-open your church buildings. However, before you re-open, we would encourage church leaders, including the church's Designated Person for Safeguarding, to take time to review your current safeguarding procedures and to consider whether any adaptations or additions are needed to reflect the way in which you plan to provide activities and services in the coming months.

For example, you may want to consider, decide and record your decision on the following questions.

- *If we intend to work in different ways in the coming months, have we carried out a safeguarding risk assessment for any new or altered activities?*
- *Can we provide adequate staffing for each activity or event? Have we checked this against our agreed ratios, particularly for work with children?*
- *Have there been any safeguarding concerns or allegations during the lockdown period that need to be dealt with before staff or volunteers recommence work?*
- *Have we considered whether any of our church members or attendees are now more vulnerable than they were before lockdown? How might we provide support and care?*
- *Many of our elderly church members and attendees will have been shielding since March, increasing their feelings of isolation and loneliness. How might we adapt our pastoral care to reflect this and what extra safeguarding steps might we take to ensure that they are not taken advantage of?*
- *Bearing in mind the increased reporting of domestic abuse, the sharp rise in offences involving viewing or distributing indecent images of children, and the high volume of calls to organisations like ChildLine and The Samaritans, are we ready for a higher number of concerns and support needs over the coming months? If not, how might we prepare for this?*
- *Suicide rates have continued to rise during lockdown. Have we equipped ourselves to respond to and care for those who are considering or who have attempted suicide?*
- *Have we updated our social media guidelines to reflect the increased use of social media as a key channel to contact and engage with children and young people, as well as adults, in our church?*
- *How might we best support our pastoral carers, including our minister(s), who are likely to be tired and possibly overly stressed after the demands of caring for our church during lockdown?*

You can find guidance on the safeguarding impact of Covid-19, on the main coronavirus pages of our website, including:

- guidance on use of social media with young people
- the need to review existing safeguarding contracts
- resources for young people

If you have questions on how to apply your safeguarding policy and procedures to new activities, or how to adapt to fit in with limitations on staff or volunteer numbers, please contact your Association Safeguarding Lead in the first instance.

Appendix 1: Reoccupation Checklist

Use this template to record important checks of your premises before returning to work after lockdown. Stay alert to government announcements on return to work and complete **before** reoccupation.

	Yes	No	N/A	Action Required
Statutory Checks				
Is the five-yearly fixed wiring (electrical installation condition report) within date and rated as satisfactory?				
Is the gas safety certificate(s) in date for annual review?				
Plant rooms: Has all plant and equipment been suitably serviced?				
Has PAT testing been completed where relevant?				
Have all pressure vessels been examined as per the scheme of examination?				
Fire Safety				
Have you reviewed your Fire Risk Assessment (FRA)?				
Are boiler rooms and electrical cupboards free from combustibile storage?				
Are skips and bins a safe distance away from your building(s)?				
Have you informed your Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) of your re-occupation (where necessary)?				
Has the fire alarm system been serviced within the timescale outlined by the contractor?				
Has the fire alarm been tested weekly during the lockdown period?				
Is the fire alarm functioning correctly?				
Have all fire doors, maglocks, acoustic closing mechanisms and other associated equipment been checked for functionality?				
Are all fire extinguishers in place and free from defects?				
Have all fire suppression / sprinkler systems been suitably maintained and checked for sufficient pressure (where appropriate)?				
Have fire dampers been maintained (within the last 12 months)?				

Have the automatic smoke vents been maintained (within the last 12 months)?				
Has the lightning protection been tested and maintained (within the last twelve months)?				
Emergency Lighting				
Has the emergency lighting system been serviced (within the last 12 months)?				
Has the emergency lighting been tested monthly during the lockdown period?				
Is the emergency lighting system fully functional?				
Building Security				
Is there any damage to the structure, roof, windows or fixtures?				
Is the CCTV system functioning correctly?				
Is the intruder alarm functioning correctly?				
Contractors				
Have contractors been re-engaged (where possible)?				
Can contractors be controlled on site?				
Have measures been put in place to ensure contractors (and other visitors) with identified symptoms are not permitted entry to your premises?				
Water Safety				
Has your Legionella Risk Assessment been reviewed?				
Is there a re-commissioning plan (where necessary)?				
Has weekly flushing of all unused/little-used outlets (including external taps) been completed during lockdown?				
Have temperatures been checked against acceptable ranges?				
	Recorded temperature			
Cold water storage tank (maximum 20°C)				
Hot water storage tank (minimum 60°C)				
Sentinel tap (furthest tap from the boiler – minimum 50°C)				
Have all spray fittings been removed, descaled and replaced?				

Is Thermostatic Mixing Valve (TMV) maintenance up to date?				
Has the system been disinfected/chlorinated (including water tanks) where necessary?				
Utilities				
If any utilities have been temporarily shut off, have these been turned back on?				
Equipment				
Are all first aid kits in place, in date and fully stocked?				
Has the defib(s) been checked for safe operation?				
Has all equipment been switched on and checked for correct function?				
Are all necessary guards in place / undamaged?				
Has equipment been serviced or maintained as necessary by a competent person?				
Have the annual services been completed on all oil / electric boilers?				
Have all six-monthly LOLER checks been completed by a competent person?				
Have all window restrictors been checked to ensure they are in place and safe?				
Staffing				
Have risk assessments and plans been reviewed and agreed with vulnerable persons?				
Has your Lone Working Risk Assessment been reviewed?				
Are there sufficient staff on site to undertake safety-critical roles e.g. first aiders, maintenance, fire wardens?				
Is there sufficient supervision and support of staff?				
Does re-occupation need to be staged to maintain social distancing?				
General				
Has a pest control contractor visited the premises recently and are suitable controls in place?				
Is any asbestos likely to have been disturbed during lockdown?				
Has the insurance company been informed of the recommencing of activities within the premises?				
Has re-occupation been considered within the Business Continuity Plan?				

Can social distancing measures be observed, where reasonable, at all times?				
Has a COVID-19 Re-occupation Risk Assessment been completed to ensure controls are implemented to protect staff?				
Has the risk assessment been communicated to all staff to ensure their awareness of requirements?				
Have all areas to be occupied been deep cleaned?				
Do you have sufficient cleaning staff, stock and processes in place to ensure that your premises remain safe?				
Are there sufficient hand-cleaning facilities made available, such as soap and hot water or hand sanitiser?				
Do trees and boundary walls within your grounds appear visually safe?				
Have you reviewed your last General Risk Assessment (GRA)?				

Summary of actions identified

Action required	By	Priority	Time scale	Completed

Appendix 2: Pre-event checklist

This checklist is to be used in conjunction with the most up-to-date government guidance during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It should be completed prior to the event day starting and should be fully communicated to all team members. It is the responsibility of the Church Trustee to ensure that the site is safe to open and that controls are put in place.

Leader name: Date:/...../.....

Item	Y or N	Comments	Reported to
Has the latest government guidance been checked and followed?			
Have any members of team reported any symptoms of COVID-19?			
Has the Cleaning Checklist been completed and cleaning materials put in place?			
Is there adequate hand soap, paper towels and running water in place?			
Has hand washing facility or sanitiser been provided in all locations needed			
Are bins available for disposal of any rubbish?			
Is the plan for managing traffic flow for social distancing in place and floor/wall signage in place			
Are stewards briefed on agreed procedures for arrivals, departures and emergencies?			
Have chairs/pews been laid out and marked in line with social distancing requirements?			
Procedures in place to record names and contact details of attendees			
Building ventilation set in line with recommendations to maximise air flow			
Is there any other information to consider?			
<p>After carrying out the above checks, please sign below.</p> <p>I have carried out the above checks and found the site to be following the current government guidelines in line with COVID-19.</p>			
Leader signature:		Date:	

Appendix 3: Cleaning checklist.

Premises:	Date:	Completed by:
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The infection risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) following contamination of the environment decreases over time. It is not yet clear at what point there is no risk. However, studies of other viruses in the same family suggest that, in most circumstances, the risk is likely to be reduced significantly after 72 hours.

Action	Guidance	Completed (tick)	Comments
Confirm PPE worn before cleaning commences	Where possible, wear disposable or washing up gloves and aprons.		
Hard surfaces have been cleaned prior to disinfecting?	Clean hard surfaces with warm soapy water using a disposable cloth.		
Disinfect all surfaces with usual disinfectant	Pay attention to any frequently touched areas and surfaces, e.g. doors, toilets, stair rails and phones.		
Clean any areas of heavy contamination (bodily fluids, or sleeping areas) as above using additional PPE where possible	Additional PPE would include protection for the eyes, mouth and nose, as well as gloves and apron.		
Any PPE used is double bagged and to be stored securely for 72 hours before being thrown away in general waste	Use plastic bin bags where possible.		
Hands washed with soap and water for 20 seconds, after removing PPE	Hand wash using warm water after cleaning and regularly throughout the day.		

Additional guidance, information and instruction when cleaning:

- Use disposable cloths or paper roll and disposable mop heads to clean all hard surfaces, floors, chairs, door handles and sanitary fittings, with one of the following options below:
- A combined detergent disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1,000 parts per million available chlorine (ppm av.cl.); or
- A household detergent followed by disinfection (1,000 ppm av.cl.). Follow the manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants.
- NB: If an alternative disinfectant is used within the organisation, this should be checked and ensure that it is effective against enveloped viruses.
- Avoid creating splashes and spray when cleaning.
- Any cloths and mop heads used must be disposed of and should be put into waste bags as outlined below.
- When items cannot be cleaned using detergents or laundered (for example, upholstered furniture and mattresses), steam cleaning should be used.
- Any items that are heavily contaminated with body fluids and cannot be cleaned by washing should be disposed of.
- If possible, keep an area closed off and secure for 72 hours. After this time, the amount of virus contamination will have decreased substantially, and you can clean as normal with your usual products.

Laundry

- Wash items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest water setting and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an unwell person can be washed with other people's items.
- Do not shake dirty laundry – this minimises the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
- Clean and disinfect anything used for transporting laundry with your usual products, in line with the cleaning guidance above.

Waste

- Waste from cleaning areas should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full.
- The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied.
- It should be put in a suitable and secure place away from children. You should not put your waste in communal waste areas until the waste has been stored for at least 72 hours.

Appendix 4: Example privacy statement

.....Baptist Church Privacy Notice for collecting contact information from church attendees.

This privacy notice is an addendum toBaptist Church’s main privacy statement and notices. The Charity Trustees ofBaptist Church (as Data Controller)* can be contacted by ringingor emailing

We are collecting your name and contact details in order to fulfil our responsibility to provide a safe environment in which those attendingBaptist Church can pray and worship during this COVID-19 recovery phase. We will only use this information to contact you in the event that we believe you may have come into contact with a suspected case of COVID-19 at Anytown Baptist Church and it may be necessary to share your details with NHS Test and Trace if they are requested for contact tracing and the investigation of local outbreaks. Your name and contact details will temporarily be securely stored [please provide detail of how details will be stored and kept secure]. They will be retained for a period of 21 days in line with government guidance and then disposed of within the following 7 days.

Please inform Baptist Church as soon as possible if you test positive for coronavirus or develop any of the following COVID-19 symptoms:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

Data Protection legislation allows us to process this information as we regard it as being in the church’s legitimate interest. The Information Commissioner’s Office has published guidance on data handling during the pandemic. Please see www.ico.org.uk/coronavirus.

*please note – if your church is a CIO or CLG, the data controller will be the church, acting through its Trustees.

Appendix 5: Example Emergency Action Plan

Church Building:

Coronavirus Emergency Action Plan

Should someone attending the church display symptoms of Coronavirus the following steps will be taken:

- 1) The person will be asked to leave as soon as possible, return home and seek guidance from NHS111 as to self-isolation and testing.
- 2) Anyone known to have been in close contact with the case advised to wash their hands as soon as possible
- 3) Any surfaces likely to have been contaminated cleaned in line with cleaning guidance.
- 4) Consider whether to bring the service to an early conclusion.
- 5) Consult Health & Safety Executive website as to whether the event should be reported.
[https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/riddor/.](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/riddor/)

Appendix 6: Contractor Checklist

COVID-19 Contractor Checklist – Site Safety			
Church Site Name		Name of Church representative	
Contractor Name		Date	

A – Specific Hazards
Hazards specific to the task:
Hazards specific to the premises:
Who may be harmed?

Assessment Checklist	Yes	No	N/A
Information			
Have employees been advised on the latest government guidance on COVID-19, including what to do if they become ill?			
Have employees received appropriate training in minimising the transfer of COVID-19 at work?			
Has a call to site been undertaken to establish their COVID-19 policy?			
Personal protective equipment (PPE)			
Has a risk assessment been undertaken to determine what level of PPE is required for the task to protect from COVID-19? (e.g. single-use gloves, disposable overalls, face masks, eye protection, etc.)			
Is the PPE identified in the risk assessment available?			
Have employees received training in the appropriate use of the PPE?			
Welfare			
Are there suitable handwashing facilities on site?			
Are employees provided with hand sanitiser where handwashing facilities are unavailable?			
Is there a suitable area to take rest breaks?			

Have employees been instructed not to eat/drink/smoke/touch face without first washing their hands?			
Site arrangements			
Can any of the work be done off site to minimise exposure?			
Can the work be moved outside or to a location where there are minimal persons?			
Can barriers be used around the work area to maintain a safe distance between employees and others in the vicinity?			
Do any tools/equipment used on site need to be decontaminated due to potential COVID-19 exposure?			

B Assessment Rating		
The current risk assessment rating is considered to be:		Tick
High risk	Fatal or major injuries or irreversible health effects to one or more people are highly probable.	
Medium risk	Serious injury or ill-health effects are possible.	
Low risk	Minor injury or reversible minor health effects may occur.	
Insignificant	The activity presents no greater risk than those associated with life in general.	

Action required	By	Priority	Timescale	Completed

Church representative signature		Print name		Date	
Contractor representative signature		Print name		Date	

This is one of a series of Guidelines that are offered as a resource for Baptist ministers and churches. They have been prepared by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and are, of necessity, intended only to give very general advice in relation to the topics covered. These guidelines should not be relied upon as a substitute for obtaining specific and more detailed advice in relation to a particular matter.

The staff at the Baptist Union of Great Britain at Baptist House will be very pleased to answer your queries and help in any way possible.

Contact Address and Registered Office:

Baptist Union of Great Britain, Baptist House, PO Box 44, 129 Broadway, Didcot, OX11 8RT
Telephone 01235 517700 email supportservices@baptist.org.uk website
www.baptist.org.uk

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