

**GUIDELINES FOR REOPENING OUR CHAPELS**

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**GUIDELINES FOR REOPENING OUR CHAPELS**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

On July 10 the Welsh Government announced that faith leaders could begin to gradually resume services when they were ready to do so safely.

Chapels are not obliged to reopen and should not reopen unless it is safe to do so. Services should be resumed gradually when the Trustees and Deacons deem that they are ready to do so safely.

As Baptists it is our tradition to gather to worship together but this guidance does not impose a duty or requirement on our places of worship to reopen. It will not be possible to open for a full range of activities for some time to come.  Some places of worship may choose not to reopen until a later date, open at a slower pace and/or continue to use online technology to carry out faith and pastoral activities.

We have an important role in providing spiritual leadership for many individuals, and in bringing communities together. However, the communal nature of our chapels also makes them places that are particularly vulnerable to the risk of spreading coronavirus (COVID-19).

This guidance aims to assist places of worship to re-open (should they wish to) for communal worship and weddings and funerals. When funerals and weddings are held these should continue to be by invitation only.

Trustees and Deacons will be expected to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus and:

1. take all reasonable measures to ensure a distance of 2 metres is kept between people on the premises and waiting to enter the premises (except members of the same household or extended household and any carers for any such members);
2. take other measures for that purpose; and
3. providing information to those on its premises on how to avoid the risk of exposure to coronavirus.

Each individual place of worship should apply this guidance to its own specific circumstances, including consideration of the size of the building, how it is organised, operated, managed and regulated. The persons responsible for the place of worship will have the freedom to decide when they consider it is safe to reopen. They should remain closed if they are not satisfied they are able to adhere to the requirements to maintain social distancing between people.

There are many factors to be taken into consideration and a thorough risk assessment should be undertaken. The following links provide the relevant guidance and will also refer to additional documents that should be consulted:

* Welsh Government: Guidance on reopening places of worship: coronavirus: <https://gov.wales/guidance-reopening-places-worship-coronavirus>
* <https://www.ecclesiastical.com/latest-news/opening-places-of-worship-after-lockdown/>
* https://www.ecclesiastical.com/church/coronavirus/
* Ecclesiastical Risk Advice Line: 0345 600 7531 (Please have your policy number to hand).

(If you are not insured with Ecclesiastical then please contact your own Insurance provider who will advise accordingly.)

1. **PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The decision to open the building for permitted uses lies with the deacons and trustees of each church. An assessment of the suitability of each building to comply with the current guidance/ regulations is required. Opening is not mandatory.

Gatherings to a maximum of 30 individuals are permitted outdoors should this be necessary, and the organiser should be able to control the outdoor space to maintain this COVID-19 security which means organisers should have exclusive use of the space for the duration of the event.

Those in charge of running church buildings should engage and communicate with worshippers and the wider community to explain what activity is permitted and what is still prohibited.

**Restrictions on Capacity**: The number of people permitted within the building will have to be assessed to allow 2m social distancing to remain between individuals and households. This of course will depend upon the size and layout of the premises.

In defining the number of people that can reasonably follow 2 metres distancing, the total floorspace as well as likely pinch points and busy areas should be taken into account (e.g. entrances, exits) and where possible alternative or one-way routes introduced.

A risk assessment should be carried out to identify points of high risk in the building and mitigating action. (Two examples of Risk assessment templates may be found at the end of this document).

**The following should be considered in assessing suitability in reopening for Public Services.**

* When will you open the building? Be realistic about what can be managed.
* Have you considered working with other places of worship to stagger opening times?
* Have you carried out the necessary actions to mitigate any risks identified in the risk assessment?
* What is the maximum capacity of the building to allow social distancing?
* Can Separate Entry and Exits be provided to alleviate pinch points?
* Can a 1-way system be introduced to allow free flow of persons?
* Should floor markings be provided to emphasise 2m social distancing?
* Practicability of closing off pews and limiting use of individual pews to individuals or households?
* Ease of providing and locating antibacterial hand gel at point of entry, and exit?
* Is access available to hand washing facilities with paper towels and receptacle for disposal? Anti-bacterial gel is widely used on its own in many public premises, and consideration should be given to the viability of keeping hand washing facilities clean.
* How many stewards will be required to manage the entrance/exit and interior?
* Would a booking system be required to reduce potential overcrowding?
* Can people queue outside safely if required?
* How will you engage with your membership/community in relation to times of services?
* How will you reassure those members who feel nervous about attending? Alternatives should remain in place for those who are isolating.

**3. PREPARATION OF THE BUILDING FOR REOPENING**

**(i) Airing Buildings**

It is advised to open windows and doors for a least an hour to allow airing of the building.

**(ii) Cleaning**

The building should be cleaned prior to opening, all surfaces especially frequently touched areas should be cleaned with standard cleaning products. Its recommended to wear suitable protective equipment such as disposable gloves, aprons and masks. Any potentially contaminated PPE should be disposed of by placing items used into two waste bags and disposing of them in the regular rubbish once cleaning has finished.

Clean hard surfaces with warm soapy water, then disinfect these surfaces with the cleaning products you normally use. Pay particular attention to frequently touched areas and surfaces, such as toilets, grab-rails in corridors and stairwells and door handles.

The whole building does not need to be cleaned between each use, but the following advice outlines the principal requirements:  *The general principle is that you should not touch anything which members of another household have touched. Doorknobs, and light switches are all potential sources of infection. Touching surfaces should be avoided wherever possible, and anything you do need to touch should be cleaned thoroughly afterwards.*

Once opened regular cleaning will be required, the frequency will depend upon the extent of use and this will need to be assessed by individual chapels.

Guidance on cleaning to an appropriate standard can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings

**(iii) Electrics.**

Check that the lights, light bulbs, emergency lights, fire alarms and security systems are in good working order.
There is risk of deterioration of portable electrical equipment caused by the damp and possibly mice while the buildings were closed. It is recommended to carefully check all electrical appliances.

**(iv) Heating**

If the heating system was turned off, it is recommended to switch it on in order to check for leaks.

**(v) Legionnaires’ disease**

Flush through hot and cold-water systems with fresh mains water for a period of 5 minutes.

Larger buildings with more complex systems, such as stored cold water and showers may need more extensive cleaning and disinfectant. Its recommended that they are inspected by a qualified plumber.

Please also refer to: www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/legionella-risks-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htmDrinking Water Inspectorate’s guidance on bringing buildings back into use after a period of disuse may be helpful.

**(vi) Fire Risk**

Review your procedures. Make sure your fire extinguishers are serviced and in date.

**(vii) Preparing the building up to ensure social distancing, appropriate hygiene procedures and other precautions.**

Every reasonable effort must be made to encourage strict adherence to social distancing. Reasonable measures include the following:

* Clear signage reminding people that social distancing must be maintained.
* If possible, have a separate entrance and exit, with a clearly defined one-way route through the building. This can be indicated with directional signage, floor markings, - the more complex the route the more signage will be required.
* Provision of Hand Gel at both entrance and exit should be provided and signage advising it to be used as a condition of entry. The most important step is that individuals wash their hands upon entering the building with soap and water or hand sanitiser.
* Where practical, non-fire doors should be kept open to prevent people from touching handles.
* Set out where people can sit whilst maintaining 2m social distancing.
* Taping off alternative pews should be considered to ensure social distancing.
* Ideally the toilet facilities should not be used, if they are, then regular cleaning is required. Hot water, soap, paper towels and a bin (preferably with a plastic bag insert), will need to be provided.
* Services should be concluded in the shortest reasonable time as this reduces the risk of transmission.
* Hymn books, bibles etc. will need to be removed or cordoned off to prevent usage.
* Physical contact, speaking in unison/chanting, singing are not permitted.
* Playing of wind instruments and organs that require the air to be pushed through the mechanism should be avoided. Piano, electric organs, recordings are permitted but should not be played at a level that make normal conversations difficult.
* One individual may be permitted to sing but the use of plexi-glass screens and physical distancing should be considered.
* At this stage it is advised not to conduct communion or baptism services.
* Kitchens should not be used and entry restricted. No food or drink is to be made available.
* You may consider restricting the opening times and operate a booking system if the demand is great during busy times.
* Offerings in cash should not be encouraged so as to minimize contact. Gloves should be worn to handle cash offerings where giving in this way continues.
* At the end of the service, worshippers should be encouraged to leave the chapel promptly so as to minimize contact.

**Suppliers:**

Touch free hand sanitizers/dispensers are available from local suppliers or nationally from the following.

PPEOnline Shop, <https://theppeonlineshop.co.uk/>

Tork Ltd. <https://www.tork.co.uk/>

ASAP Signs http://www.asap-signs.co.uk

Astral Hygiene ltd. <https://www.astralhygiene.co.uk/>

Signage can be purpose made by the chapels, although laminated signs are preferable. They are available from local sign makers/printers, or nationally from one of the following.

Safety Box UK. <https://safetybox.co.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-signs/>

Dragon Signs Ltd. <https://dragonsigns.com/ppe-products.html>

Safety Hazard tape for restricting area can be sourced locally or from the following national suppliers

Tool Station. <https://www.toolstation.com/>

Screw Fix. <https://www.screwfix.com/>

Barriers Direct. <https://www.barriersdirect.co.uk/>)

**(viii) Track and Trace**

The [**Welsh Government Test, Trace, Protect**](https://gov.wales/test-trace-protect-your-questions) strategy sets out the approach to tackling coronavirus, testing people with symptoms in the community, tracing those who have come into close contact with people who have tested positive for coronavirus and protecting family, friends and our community by self-isolating.

If it is possible to maintain a distance of 2 metres the Test Trace Protect strategy does not require a record of those who attend to be kept. However, there will be occasions, for instance as part of a marriage where this cannot be maintained. In those situations, a record of the time and date of the event and the names and telephone contact of those who have come within 2 metres of other households should be kept and handled in accordance with GDPR to protect the individuals’ privacy. These records should be kept for 21 days after the event.

**(ix) Who Should not Attend?**

* Those experiencing coronavirus symptoms:

New continuous cough

High Temperature

Loss of or change to your normal sense of smell or taste.

* Individuals who are self-isolating
* Individuals who are extremely vulnerable and shielding or in an at-risk group should continue to minimise their contact with others for their own safety. However, they may feel that for their own wellbeing it would be beneficial to attend.
* If anyone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in the chapel, they should be sent home and advised to follow the self-isolation guidance and to apply for a coronavirus test.
* Other people who may have been in contact with the person who has become unwell should wash their hands thoroughly after the interaction, but they do not need to take any other specific action unless they develop symptoms themselves. If they develop symptoms, they should follow the self-isolation guidance and apply for a coronavirus test.
* The areas used by these individuals should be thoroughly cleaned according to the guidance noted above.
1. **RISK ASSESSMENT**

There are five stages in a risk assessment. These are:

* Identify the risks that have a potential to do harm.
* Identify who can be hurt and why.
* Determine appropriate ways to eliminate or control the risk.
* Record your findings.
* Review and update as required.

Deacons and trustees have a duty of care to protect people from harm. This includes taking all reasonable steps to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 to those who use the building. This is called a risk assessment and it will help you manage the risk.

Attached are two examples of a typical risk assessment in relation to the reopening for Services.

A further risk assessment template is available from the HSE website: https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm

Example 1: Pages 6-9

Example 2: Pages 10-11

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| **Assessment undertaken by**  | **Name of Church**   |
|  |  |
| **Area of the building assessed** | **Address**  |
|  |
| **Postcode** |
| **Assessment Review Date**  | **Date of Initial Assessment**  |

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| **Likelihood**1 = Low (seldom)2= Medium (frequently)3= High (certain or near certain) | **Severity**1 = Low (minor cuts/bruises)2 = Medium (serious injury / incapacitated for > 3 days)3 = High (fatality or number of persons seriously injured) | **Risk Rating**1-2 = low priority3-4 = medium priority5-6 = high priority |

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| **Hazards/Risks***Think about the areas where contact takes place* | **Persons Affected***Think of anyone who might have contact* | **Likelihood** | **Severity** | **Risk Rating** | **Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk** *Think of what changes could be made in each scenario to reduce the spread of Covid-19\*If the building is listed, any changes need to be sensitive & reversible, please contact CADW/LBAC for further guidance.*  | **Action Plan***What needs to be done and by whom?*  |
| **Close contact at entrance and exits** **Close contact within chapel** **Over crowding** | Visitors/MembersVisitors /MembersVisitors /Members | 333 | 222 | 666 | Introduce queuing system, clearly defined externally, place notices advising the need for 2 m social distancing. Place decals/markings to show 2 m.Limit number entering chapel to avoid over crowdingUse separate entry access. Introduce one-way system internally, clearly marked. Signs placed to advise 2m social distancing, floor markings. Restrict access to alternative pews. (Alternatively, monitor entry and exit if only one door with one in one out system)Limit number of people in building to ensure social distancing, either by booking system, or monitoring entry by dedicated person.Restrict access to pews to ensure 2m distancing, with notices, tapes etc. | Trustees /Secretary. Responsible person. |

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| **Hazards/Risks***Think about the areas where contact takes place* | **Persons Affected***Think of anyone who might have contact* | **Likelihood** | **Severity** | **Risk Rating** | **Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk** *Think of what changes could be made in each scenario to reduce the spread of Covid-19\*If the building is listed, any changes need to be sensitive & reversible. guidance.*  | **Action Plan***What needs to be done and by whom?*  |
| Transmission of virus. | Visitors/Members | 3 | 3 | 9 | Provide Antibacterial gel /or washing facilities at both entrance and exit, with Mandatory use, Advisory signage.Clean building prior to opening with emphasis on surfaces regularly touched, such as tops of pews, door handles, light switches.Remove Hymn Books, books and other materials or restrict access.Advise people that material for worship will not be provided, although can be brought in and removed after worship.Singing not permitted due to higher risk of transmission.Level of music played to be restricted so not to encourage raised voices which may increase risk of transmission.  | Trustees/Deacons |

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| **Hazards/Risks***Think about the areas where contact takes place* | **Persons Affected***Think of anyone who might have contact* | **Likelihood** | **Severity** | **Risk Rating** | **Additional Covid-19 Controls – Reducing Risk** *Think of what changes could be made in each scenario to reduce the spread of Covid-19\*If the building is listed, any changes need to be sensitive & reversible.*  | **Action Plan***What needs to be done and by whom?*  |
| People attend who have symptoms of coronavirus | Visitors /Members | 2 | 3 | 6 | Stewards to be briefed to ask people if they believe they have symptoms and if so, respectfully decline entry to them. Clear signage reminding people of the symptoms of Covid-19 and of the importance of self-isolation.Door stewards to wear face coverings.Person asked to leave, advise to contact 111 and self-isolate, provide refuge in separate room if medical assistance required. Call emergency services if required.Property may need to be closed, to allow cleaning.Please refer to https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings | Trustees/Deacons |

| **EXAMPLE 2:** **Risk Assessment****RE-OPENING FOR WORSHIP** |
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| **Name of Chapel:** | **Address:** | **Date:** |
| **Area of Focus**  | **Control Measures***These are the main themes from the checklist and guidance. They may not apply in each case.* | **Detailed arrangements***Set out below the detailed arrangements you will implement under each control measure.* | **Action by?** | **Completed**  |
| PREPARATIONS | Service Times |  |  |  |
|  | Stewarding arrangements |  |  |  |
|  | Airing and Cleaning |  |  |  |
|  | Check services e.g. water, electrical, heating systems |  |  |  |
|  | Fire Risk Assessment |  |  |  |
| PHYSICAL DISTANCING | Stewarding arrangements including PPE |  |  |  |
|  | Signage |  |  |  |
|  | Entry and Exits |  |  |  |
|  | One-way system |  |  |  |
|  | Taped/barriered routes |  |  |  |
|  | Seating arrangements |  |  |  |
|  | Restricted areas |  |  |  |
| HYGIENE | Hand washing/ sanitising |  |  |  |
|  | Bibles/Hymn Books |  |  |  |
|  | Other items |  |  |  |
| CLEANING | Cleaning team |  |  |  |
|  | PPE |  |  |  |
|  | Cleaning regime |  |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Compiled By:** |  | **Date:** |