

## Health and Safety Risk Assessment – Reopening of Churches – COVID-19

<b>Church</b>	All Saints Presbyterian Church, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, NE1 2ES	<b>Assessment No.</b>	1
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<b>Subject of Assessment</b>	Reopening church on 5 July 2020 to regular congregation and members of the public for the purposes of services of public worship.		
<b>Assessed by</b>		<b>Date</b>	1 July 2020
		<b>Review date</b>	Ongoing
<b>Details of activity</b>	Service of public worship including administration of the Lord's Supper.	<b>Persons Affected</b> <i>(Who may be harmed)</i>	
		Congregants (including church workers)	

Hazards and Risks	Control Measures	Risk Level <i>(Very High, High, Medium, Low)</i>	Further Actions <i>√IX (If √ See Actions)</i>	Residual Risk Level
1. <u>Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to interaction with a person who has symptoms of the disease, a person who may be asymptomatic, or someone unaware that they are infected</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church has informed congregants not to enter the church if they are displaying any symptoms of coronavirus (following the COVID-19 guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection).</li> <li>• Congregants have received detailed guidance on protocols for attending church services at ASPC i.e. should wash or sanitise hands when they enter the building and subsequently; wipe down their seating area; avoid contact with communal service books; only enter toilets one at a time or as a family unit; remain at least 2m apart from others at all times.</li> <li>• Congregants have been individually consulted about particular health issues and ensure that planning for their safe return has been made accordingly.</li> </ul>	Medium	Continued congregational engagement.  Responsible: elders  Safety briefings: elders and deacons	Low

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The congregation has been briefed and consulted on church procedures and plans for reopening the church. This briefing has taken the form of a congregational meeting in which the procedures were fully explained, the receipt of a detailed written briefing and the circulation of a practical video highlighting what to expect when they return to church.</li> </ul>			
2.	Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to lack of social distancing measures <u>on arrival</u>	<p><b>Entry to the church:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usual rules for parking at or near the church apply. Most congregants will use public parking in the Quayside car park.</li> <li>Congregants who are dropped off can do this in the usual way.</li> <li>Congregants must enter via the designated, signed (specifically for this time) entrance to the building. Three separate external doors are in use and congregants will have been told ahead of time which door they must enter and leave by.</li> <li>2m markers will be on the path/steps leading to each entrance to ensure appropriate social distancing if congregants have cause to queue.</li> <li>Entrance doors are held open, reducing the number of occupants touching the doors.</li> <li>Hand-wash stations are located at the entrance to the church. All congregants are required to wash their hands (hand sanitiser) on entry to the church. Each family is given a bottle of sanitiser to keep for the duration of the pandemic.</li> <li>Good hand washing signage to instruct congregants how to do this effectively is displayed.</li> <li>Congregants are given a pack of wipes on entrance. The pack of wipes are kept by each family unit for subsequent services.</li> <li>Each entrance and entry procedures are supervised by a steward. Stewards will ensure that congregants</li> </ul>	Medium	<p>Responsible: deacons and stewards</p> <p>All congregants to follow the briefing they have been given and to sanitise hands as they pass through the door on entry and exit.</p>	Low

		<p>have face coverings or will provide a disposal covering if not.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregants wipe down their seating area in their designated area.</li> </ul>			
3.	<p>Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to lack of social distancing measures <u>upon departure</u></p>	<p><b>Exit from church:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregants are asked to wipe down their seating area.</li> <li>• Congregants who are picked up can do this in the usual way.</li> <li>• Congregants must leave via the designated, signed (specifically for this time) exit from the building.</li> <li>• Exit doors are held open, reducing the number of congregants touching the doors.</li> <li>• Congregants are reminded to wash hands as they leave the church building.</li> <li>• Hand-wash stations are located at the exits from the church.</li> <li>• Good hand washing signage to instruct congregants how to do this effectively.</li> </ul>	Medium	Responsible for procedures: deacons and stewards	Low
4.	<p>Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to lack of social distancing measures <u>during the service</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is noted that the capacity of the building is seating for nearly a 1,000 people. However, we would not expect more than 90 at a morning service or 75 at an evening service.</li> <li>• It is also noted that much of our congregation consists of larger than average family sizes e.g. approximately a third of the congregation is made up of three households. Each family will sit together as a unit without the need for social distancing amongst themselves. This ensures a significant amount of surplus capacity in the building. APSC is in a much better place than most churches to ensure social distancing and indeed to go beyond the government's social distancing guidelines.</li> <li>• All windows are opened which are capable of doing so and all doors to the sanctuary and external doors are left open. This provides enhanced ventilation.</li> </ul>	Medium	Responsible: elders, deacons and stewards	Low

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church benefits from considerable natural light and area capacity for air to flow. The sanctuary benefits from unusually high ceiling space.</li> <li>• Congregants aged 11 or above are asked to wear face coverings <i>at all times</i> (apart from when they eat or drink at the Lord's Supper).</li> <li>• There are four doors into the sanctuary, three of which will be used on a Sunday to reduce any pressure on each of the others.</li> <li>• The church is separated into three separate zones for seating and door purposes - the marble zone, the downstairs pew zone, and the upstairs gallery. Each zone covers an area larger than many church buildings.</li> <li>• Congregants will be seated in their family units. A space of <u>at least</u> 2m will be left between family units. Two rows of pews will be left empty between each occupied pew, empty pews denoted by markers. Similar gaps will be left between free standing seating in the marble zone.</li> <li>• 2m markers will be on the floor in each zone to assist with transiting.</li> <li>• Appropriate socially distanced 'cry room' and baby changing rooms are available. The space capacity of each has been enhanced. Parents will supervise their own children at all times.</li> </ul>			
5.	Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to <u>congregational singing.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The government's guidance is noted. In particular, that whilst singing "should be avoided", it is not prohibited. A responsible assessment must be made of any risk and mitigating factors.</li> <li>• A full range of measures have been fully considered and adopted by the elders.</li> <li>• Use of zones and registration measures to limit spread and support track and trace.</li> <li>• All congregants (apart from young children) are required to wear face coverings at all times.</li> </ul>	High	Responsible: elders	Medium

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singing is limited in duration. Whilst the church's constitution mandates singing in public worship, singing in fact constitutes a relatively short period of time in ASPC services, unlike churches which are more Catholic or 'Charismatic' in tradition.</li> <li>• Accompaniment is by a single pianist. There is no music group and no woodwind instruments used.</li> <li>• Note all measures and observations in previous section 4 relating to the duration of the service.</li> </ul>			
6.	<u>Spread/contraction of COVID-19 during the administration of the Lord's Supper.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No 'pressure' is placed on any elder to serve at the Lord's Supper or on communicants to receive it, given any health concerns they may have.</li> <li>• General advice on cleaning churches and on the conduct of public worship is observed.</li> <li>• Those preparing the elements first wash and sanitise their hands. Two deacons do this together, to ensure that hygiene procedures are properly and fully followed.</li> <li>• The bread is pre-cut into small pieces. There is a separate basket for each of the three zones.</li> <li>• The wine and grape juice are poured into glasses on three trays with larger gaps than unusual between glasses to avoid the risk that communicants touch any glass other than the one they take.</li> <li>• The elements will be covered by plastic up to the moment before serving. The plastic will be covered by the usual white cloth for aesthetic purposes.</li> <li>• The minister and elders sanitise their hands before touching the elements/offering them.</li> <li>• Each communicant is encouraged to sanitise their hands before receiving the bread.</li> <li>• Three elders distribute the elements – one elder to each of the three zones of the church.</li> <li>• The elder serves from the empty row in front of the communicant.</li> </ul>	Medium	Responsible: elders and deacons	Low

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The elder uses tongs to hand the bread to the communicant by <i>dropping</i> it into their flat hands whilst their arms are outstretched. A communicant is not permitted to serve him or herself from the basket.</li> <li>• The elder is careful not to touch the communicant's hands. If any physical contact takes place between the hands of the elder and communicant, both must sanitise their hands.</li> <li>• We recognise that it will not be possible to maintain the normal two-metre distancing for the brief time that the elders administer the elements. However, the risk associated with this is relatively low. Both congregant and serving elder wear face coverings and the actual distance is likely to be at least 1m.</li> </ul>			
7.	<p><u>Spread/contraction of COVID-19 during social interaction before or after the service</u></p>	<p><b>Moving around the church:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement to different areas within the church is reduced as much as possible e.g. those in the gallery zone are required to access facilities by leaving the building through the side door and reentering to avoid transit through the building. This creates an external corridor in the open air.</li> <li>• Where possible, all spaces are well ventilated using natural ventilation (opening doors and windows).</li> <li>• Access to the gallery is on a one way system - one staircase to go up and another one to come down.</li> <li>• A one way system for downstairs has been considered but it raised other health and safety concerns. On balance, it is considered that the aisles in the church are unusually wide and congregants are asked to keep to their left in the event of passing another person. Congregants wear face coverings.</li> <li>• Congregants have been told not to use aisles for social interaction or stopping.</li> <li>• Congregants are asked not to move between zones at any time. Any interaction following the service</li> </ul>	Medium	<p>Staff/congregants briefed on new procedures.</p> <p>Responsible: deacons and stewards</p>	Low

		<p>must continue to maintain the 2m rule and is encouraged to take place outside.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregants have been asked to supervise their children at all time; children are to remain at all times within their family unit. If children need more space to move around, families are asked to leave the building.</li> <li>• Deacons and stewards ensure that protocols are followed.</li> </ul>			
8.	<p>Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to <u>congregants not washing hands or poor hygiene.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregants and staff have been briefed on hand cleaning protocol.</li> <li>• Parents will assist children and young people who have trouble cleaning their hands independently.</li> <li>• Hand washing is recommended frequently and required at the following times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Entry and exit from the church;</li> <li>➢ After using the toilet;</li> <li>➢ Before and after taking the Lord's Supper.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Unnecessary touching of the face is discouraged.</li> <li>• Toilets and wash stations have air dryers for drying hands. Congregational has been told not to use kitchen facilities for washing hands.</li> </ul>	Medium	Responsible: deacons	Low
9.	<p>Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to <u>lack of adequate cleaning measures.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church has implemented additional cleaning regimes. This includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ The regular church cleaner will be cleaning before and after Sunday services.</li> <li>➢ Frequent cleaning of all touched surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, table tops and manipulatives. This will be routinely carried out in between the two Sunday services.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If an area is suspected to have been contaminated by coronavirus (a positive case is detected for an occupant of a classroom), the room will be closed for 72 hours and then deep cleaned as per the guidance set on <u>COVID-19: cleaning un non-healthcare settings.</u></li> </ul>	Medium	Responsible: deacons and church administrator in conjunction with cleaners.	Low

10	<p>Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to <u>insufficient First aid measures</u>. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dealing with first aid;</li> <li>• Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19;</li> <li>• Inappropriate handling / removal of clinical waste</li> <li>• Intimate care procedures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any person exhibiting symptoms of the virus is asked to leave the building immediately, together with their family unit.</li> <li>• Our congregation comprises a large number of healthcare professionals alongside a number of lay people with first-aid training. Appropriate precautions will be taken.</li> </ul> <p><b>Waste disposal measures</b> Waste control measure from possible cases of COVID-19 and cleaning of areas where possible cases have been identified (including disposable cloths and tissues) are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full;</li> <li>• The plastic bag is placed in a second bin bag and tied;</li> <li>• It is put in a suitable and secure place and marked for storage until the individual's test results are known;</li> <li>• Waste is stored safely and kept away from children;</li> <li>• Waste is not put in communal waste areas until negative test results are known or the waste has been stored for at least 72 hours;</li> <li>• If the individual tests negative, this can be put in with the normal waste;</li> <li>• If the individual tests positive, then waste is stored for at least 72 hours and then put in with the normal waste;</li> </ul>	Medium	<p>Enhance cleaning regime in place across the church.</p> <p>Responsible: deacons and church administrator</p>	Low
11.	<p>Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to lack of social distancing measures through <u>unsuitable use of toilets</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable persons are asked to use accessible facilities only. No one else may use them.</li> <li>• One in one out management of toilets is in place. The exception to the rule is that a family unit may occupy the toilets concurrently.</li> <li>• Markings on the floor in the Baptistry area to ensure appropriate and social distanced queuing.</li> <li>• Congregants are asked to wipe down key touch points after use e.g. taps.</li> <li>• Toilets are cleaned throughout the day.</li> </ul>	Medium	<p>Responsible: deacons and stewards to ensure the system operates effectively.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of congregants to ensure they follow the briefing that has been issued to them.</p>	Low



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toilet external doors are left propped open all day.</li> <li>• Toilet use protocols are managed by deacons and stewards.</li> </ul>			
12.	Lack of suitable premises management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church adheres to the government guidance on managing buildings that are partially open.</li> <li>• The church has applied government guidance regarding continued premises management.</li> <li>• The deacons will be overseeing the management of the premises and will be selecting appropriate steward support for Sunday services.</li> <li>• Appropriate cleaning levels are in place.</li> <li>• Waste removal and enhanced cleaning programs are in place for the potential coronavirus contaminated waste.</li> </ul>	Medium	<p>Enhanced cleaning program implemented for all populated locations.</p> <p>Suspect Covid 19 waste is to be double bagged and kept for 72 hrs before disposing of normally.</p> <p>Responsible: deacons and church administrator.</p>	Low
13.	Fire and evacuation procedures being inadequate at this time due to lack of trained fire wardens or occupants being spread around the building without suitable procedures in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evacuation plans including the following have been reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Safe assembly of occupants following social distancing requirements.</li> <li>➢ Safe exit via the nearest final exit.</li> <li>➢ The deacons and stewards will sweep all used areas of the church.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• All other fire system testing and maintenance has continued as normal.</li> </ul>	Low	Responsible: elders and deacons	Low

**Please note:**

All controls are subject to change should government guidance change. Government guidance MUST be regularly reviewed. Risk assessment must be reviewed if there is a significant change.

*Following assessment if no further actions are assessed to be required please mark an **X** in the "Further Actions" box. If however additional controls or actions are assessed to be required please place a ✓ in the box and note the action in the action plan.*

*Any further actions identified should be completed before the assessed task is carried out.*