

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

Church	All Saints Presbyterian Church, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, NE1 2ES	Assessment No.	2
---------------	--	-----------------------	---

Subject of Assessment	Use of church for the purposes of services of public worship.		
Assessed by		Date	6 March 2021
		Review date	Ongoing
Details of activity	Service of public worship including administration of the sacraments.	Persons Affected <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 √IX <i>(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"> • 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). • 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. • Congregants have been individually consulted about health issues to ensure they can attend safely. 	Medium	Continued congregational engagement. Responsible: elders Safety briefings: elders and deacons	Low

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The congregation has been briefed and consulted on church Covid-19 safety procedures. 			
2.	Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to lack of social distancing measures <u>on arrival</u>	<p>Entry to the church:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three separate external doors are in use and congregants have been told ahead of time which door they may enter and leave by. 2m markers will be on the path/steps leading to each entrance to ensure appropriate social distancing if congregants have cause to queue. Entrance doors are held open, reducing the number of occupants touching the doors. 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 has been given a bottle of sanitiser to keep. Good hand washing signage to instruct congregants how to do this effectively is displayed. Congregants are given a pack of wipes on entrance. The pack of wipes are kept by each family unit for subsequent services. Each entrance and entry procedures are supervised by a steward. Stewards will ensure that congregants have face-coverings or will one if not. Congregants wipe down their own seating. 	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
3.	Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to lack of social distancing measures <u>upon departure</u>	<p>Exit from church:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congregants are asked to wipe down their seating. Congregants must leave via the door they have been advised to use. Exit doors are held open, reducing the number of congregants touching the doors. Congregants are reminded to wash hands as they leave the church building. Hand-wash stations are located at the exits from the church. 	Medium	Responsible for procedures: deacons and stewards	Low

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good hand washing signage to instruct congregants how to do this effectively. 			
4.	Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to lack of social distancing measures <u>during the service</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The seating capacity of the building is over 1,000 people. However, we would not expect more than 90 at a morning service or 75 at an evening service. For this reason, we do not operate a booking system. • The congregation consists of several larger than average family sizes. Each family will sit together as a unit without the need for social distancing amongst themselves. This ensures a significant surplus capacity in the building. APSC is in a much better place than most churches to ensure social distancing and to go beyond social distancing guidelines. • Some windows and the accessible entrance at the front of the sanctuary are left open. This provides enhanced ventilation. • The church benefits from considerable natural light and area capacity for air to flow. The sanctuary benefits from unusually high ceiling space. • Congregants aged 11 or above must wear face-coverings <i>at all times</i> (apart from when they eat or drink at the Lord's Supper). • There are four doors into the sanctuary, three of which are used on a Sunday to reduce any pressure on each of the others. • Congregants are seated in their family units. A space of <u>at least</u> 2m is left between family units. Two rows of pews are left empty between each occupied pew, empty pews denoted by markers. Similar gaps are left between seating in the marble zone. • A separate zone is available to those who consider themselves more vulnerable. • 2m markers are on the floor to assist with transiting. • Appropriate socially distanced 'cry room' and baby changing rooms are available. The space capacity of 	Medium	Responsible: elders, deacons and stewards	Low

		each has been enhanced. Parents are required to supervise their own children at all times.			
5.	Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to <u>congregational singing</u> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government’s guidance that singing “should be avoided” is noted. But a responsible assessment has been made of the risk and mitigating factors. • A full range of measures have been fully considered and adopted by the elders. • Use of registration measures to limit spread and support test and trace. • All congregants (apart from young children) are required to wear face-coverings at all times. • Singing is limited in duration. Whilst the church’s doctrine mandates singing in public worship, it constitutes a short period of time in ASPC services. • Accompaniment is by a single pianist. • Note all measures and observations in previous section 4 relating to the duration of the service. 	High to Medium	Responsible: elders	Medium to Low
6.	Spread/contraction of COVID-19 <u>during the administration of the Lord’s Supper</u> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General advice on cleaning churches and on the conduct of public worship is observed. • Those preparing the elements wash and sanitise their hands at each and every stage of preparation. • The bread is pre-cut into small pieces. • 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. • The elements are covered by plastic up to the moment before serving. The plastic is covered by the usual white cloth for aesthetic purposes. • The minister and elders sanitise their hands before touching the elements/offering them. • Each communicant is encouraged to sanitise their hands before receiving the bread. • Three elders distribute the elements 	Medium	Responsible: elders and deacons	Low

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The elder serves from the empty row in front of the communicant. • 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 himself from the basket. • 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. • We recognise that it is not 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 about 1m. 			
7.	Spread/contraction of COVID-19 <u>during before or after the service</u>	<p>Moving around the church:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement to different areas within the church is reduced as much as possible e.g. those in the gallery are required to access facilities by leaving the building through the side door and re-entering to avoid transit through the building. This creates an external corridor in the open air. • Where possible, all spaces are well ventilated using natural ventilation (opening doors and windows). • Access to the gallery is on a one-way system - one staircase to go up and another one to come down. • A one-way system for downstairs was 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. • Congregants have been told not to linger in aisles. • Congregants have been asked to maintain 2m rule. 	Medium	Staff/congregants briefed on new procedures. Responsible: elders, deacons and stewards	Low

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 to move around, families are asked to leave the building. • Mixing outside household units is prohibited in line with current legislation. Where applicable, congregants are asked in the notices to remain in their seats at the conclusion of the service and wait for the steward to dismiss their row. • Deacons and stewards ensure protocols are followed. 			
8.	Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to <u>congregants not washing hands or poor hygiene.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congregants and staff have been briefed on hand cleaning protocol. • Parents are asked to assist children and young people who have trouble cleaning their hands independently. • Hand washing is recommended frequently and required at the following times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Entry and exit from the church; ➢ After using the toilet; ➢ Before and after taking the Lord's Supper. • Unnecessary touching of the face is discouraged. • Toilets and wash stations have air dryers for drying hands. Congregants have been told not to use kitchen facilities for washing hands. 	Medium	Responsible: deacons	Low
9.	Spread/contraction of COVID-19 due to <u>lack of adequate cleaning measures.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The church has implemented additional cleaning regimes. This includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ The regular church cleaner will be cleaning before and after Sunday services. ➢ 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. • If an area is suspected to have been contaminated by coronavirus, the area 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> 	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"> • Dealing with first aid; • Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19; • Inappropriate handling / removal of clinical waste • Intimate care procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any person exhibiting symptoms of the virus is asked to leave the building immediately, together with the household. • Our congregation comprises a large number of healthcare professionals alongside a number of lay people with first-aid training. Appropriate precautions will be taken. <p>Waste disposal measures 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"> • Put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full; • The plastic bag is placed in a second bin bag and tied; • It is put in a suitable and secure place and marked for storage until the individual's test results are known; • Waste is stored safely and kept away from children; • 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; • If the individual tests negative, this is put in normal waste; • If the individual tests positive, the waste is stored for at least 72 hours. 	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"> • Vulnerable persons are asked to use accessible facilities only. No one else may use them. • 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. • Markings on the floor in the entrance hall to ensure appropriate and socially distanced queuing. • Congregants are asked to wipe down key touch points after use e.g. taps. • Toilets are cleaned throughout the day. 	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"> ● Toilet external doors are left propped open all day. ● Toilet use protocols are managed by stewards. 			
12.	Lack of suitable premises management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The church adheres to the government guidance on managing buildings that are partially open. ● The church has applied government guidance regarding continued premises management. ● The deacons will be overseeing the management of the premises and will be selecting appropriate steward support for Sunday services. ● Appropriate cleaning levels are in place. 	Medium	<p>Enhanced cleaning</p> <p>Suspect Covid 19 waste is to be double bagged and kept for 72 hrs before disposing of normally.</p> <p>Responsible: deacons.</p>	Low
13.	Fire and evacuation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evacuation plans have been reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Safe assembly of occupants following social distancing requirements. ➢ Safe exit via the nearest final exit. ➢ The deacons and stewards will sweep all used areas of the church. ● All other fire system testing and maintenance has continued as normal. 	Low	Responsible: elders and deacons	Low