



## St Nicholas Church, Lincoln

### *Covid Risk Management Policy post 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021*

#### General

This document outlines the policy of St Nicholas Church for managing the risks associated with worship and other activities within the church building following the removal of specific legal restrictions on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021 but while the Coronavirus pandemic continues to represent a risk to public health. In line with the Church of England's national guidance<sup>1</sup>, the Incumbent (Revd Canon Dr Hugh Jones) has consulted within the Parish before reaching the final decisions recorded here. An updated Risk Assessment is included in this pack and attached as Appendix 1. All documentation will remain under review as conditions develop.

HM Government's guidance on re-opening places of worship for public worship<sup>2</sup> continues to identify the risk of Coronavirus transmission as being of two main kinds: *airborne transmission*; and *contacts with contaminated surfaces*. The Church of England's template risk assessment further identifies a subsidiary risk: *lack of clear communication of risk management protocols*. In this connection, we remain committed to seven main principles of risk management:

- keeping people at a safe distance;
- keeping the building well-ventilated, while minimising access to areas that are difficult to ventilate
- minimising the number of objects and surfaces that more than one person touches;
- clear signage explaining our risk management protocols;
- keeping records of those attending for Test and Trace purposes;
- asking those who enter the church to observe personal hygiene particularly with regard to their hands; and
- making sure that all objects and surfaces that anyone touches while in church are kept clean.

We note that the fact that these principles are no longer backed by legal sanction in some respects *increases* the risks. However, we also note that the level of vigilance required in each area now moves to become a matter of advice and encouragement rather than requirement.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/COVID%2019%20Guidance%20from%20the%2019th%20July%202021%20v1.0.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-summary-of-changes-from-19-july>

These principles are reflected in the consideration of specific hazards below.

### Hazard - Airborne Transmission of Virus

#### *What is the hazard?*

Transmission of the virus via airborne droplets.

#### *Who might be harmed and how?*

Those attending church services or using the building for private, individual prayer could catch the virus by breathing in contaminated air.

#### *How we are managing the risk*

##### SOCIAL DISTANCING

Areas for seating will now form an X-shape, with those where seating is encouraged marked with green laminated 'ticks' and those where it is discouraged marked by red laminated 'crosses'. All pews will now be open. Seating for those who wish to be further distanced is available in the side aisles – for singletons on the north side and for households of two or three on the south side. All other areas of the main church building are now open.

Lists of those attending will no longer be created and numbers will no longer be limited to those that can safely be accommodated using a 2m distance between households. NHS QR Test and Trace code will remain in use and on display. A voluntary Test and Trace slip will be provided and those attending asked to complete it.

##### FACE COVERINGS

Face coverings are no longer required by law, but are encouraged in enclosed spaces and expected in those spaces when especially crowded. We will continue to encourage those who attend public worship to wear face coverings. The wearing of face coverings at sparsely attended events (such as the daily office and 'church opening') will be a matter of personal choice from now on, but everyone will be encouraged to respect the difference in confidence levels and be sensitive to others' anxieties.

##### LITURGICAL ADJUSTMENT

Risk management procedures will continue to be announced verbally by the President at each act of worship.

Holy Communion will be distributed in one kind only, or by 'simultaneous administration' according to the communicant's personal wish. The mechanics of the former will be as at present and the latter will follow national church guidelines<sup>3</sup>. Online worship will continue, in a somewhat abbreviated form.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/COVID 19 Receiving HC by simultaneous administration v1.2.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/COVID%2019%20Receiving%20HC%20by%20simultaneous%20administration%20v1.2.pdf)

## BUILDING MAINTENANCE PROTOCOLS

The whole building will continue to be 'aired', dusted and hoovered weekly.

*What further action do you need to take to control the risks?*

Although no longer required, we will continue to use the 'one-way system' through the south aisle for people to return to their places, as this makes the most sense logistically. It is a bonus that it will help maintain a measure of social distancing.

*Who needs to carry out the action?*

Vicar, stewards, churchwardens.

*When is the action needed by?*

For each act of public worship.

## Hazard – Contact with Contaminated Surfaces

*What is the hazard?*

Transmission of the virus from hand to surface to hand.

*Who might be harmed and how?*

Those attending church services could catch the virus by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching their faces.

*What are you already doing to control the risks?*

### HAND WASHING AND SANITISATION

Staff and volunteers are requested to wash their hands with soap and water before and after services. The vestry sink will be used by the officiating clergy only. The servery sink can be used by other staff and volunteers.

For worshippers, hand sanitisation points have been established throughout the church. 'Catch It; Bin It; Kill It' signage is widely displayed.

### LITURGICAL ADJUSTMENT

Worshippers will continue to be encouraged to download the liturgy prior to service and bring with them on a tablet, phone or personal printout. A limited number of fresh printed liturgies available, to be taken away and either destroyed or re-used. Hymn books will be re-introduced on a once weekly basis, as this greatly exceeds the 72 hour requirement.

Congregational and choral singing are now permitted.

We will not, at this time, re-introduce refreshments, but will review this matter in the early autumn.

The two disabled toilets (tower and centre) will now both be available.

## BUILDING MAINTENANCE PROTOCOLS

Areas where people have been will be cleaned down after every service that is to be followed within 72 hours by another service or event. opening and/or service. In practice, this will most often be after the 9 o'clock service on a Sunday. When in doubt, stewards / wardens should check the Weekly Sheet for details of other services.

*What further action do you need to take to control the risks?*

As above.

*Who needs to carry out the action?*

As above.

*When is the action needed by?*

For each act of public worship.

## Hazard – Poor Understanding / Poor Communication

*What is the hazard?*

People fail to follow best practice due to lack of understanding or poor communication.

*Who might be harmed and how?*

Those present when someone fails to follow best practice.

*What are you already doing to control the risks?*

### SIGNAGE

We are adjusting our signage to explain the new position and will explain verbally it at every event and act of worship. This document will be circulated to our e-Church mailing list. A brief explanation will be provided in our Weekly Sheet every week throughout the summer.

*What further action do you need to take to control the risks?*

None at present.

*Who needs to carry out the action?*

Vicar.

*When is the action needed by?*

Immediately.

### Those Who are Especially Vulnerable

Government and national church guidance advises those who are in clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) groups to take extra care when attending public worship. We are:

- providing designated seating areas for those who want or need to maintain a larger social distance;
- continuing to provide online worship resources to support them spiritually;
- continuing to provide phone-based pastoral support;
- continuing to provide a small number with printed resources where internet access is not possible, taking due precautions with regard to the handling of these materials, which are one use only.

### Additional Points

The church building has been sub-divided into zones, with specific permissions for entry to each zone and arrangements for airing and cleaning each zone. Appendix 2 lists these zones, with details of the arrangements for each that are now in place.

Additional documents for staff and volunteers are being prepared providing detailed guidance on how to carry out their duties within the current risk management protocols.

Other documents prepared by the national church's Recovery Group are available via the Church of England website.

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Appendix 1

**Note:** This risk assessment relates **exclusively** to hazards due to the Coronavirus pandemic. It supplements the general risk assessment in place with regard to the church building that deals with other hazards.

<b>Church:</b> St Nicholas, Newport, Lincoln	<b>Assessor's name:</b> Revd Canon Dr Hugh Jones	<b>Date completed:</b> 20 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	<b>Review date:</b> End August 2021
<b>Event or service this assessment relates to:</b>		Services and Events in Church after 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Aerosol or droplet transmission of Covid-19</b>	Increase ventilation in your building: natural ventilation by opening doors, windows and vents or mechanical ventilation if appropriate/necessary.	Consult HSE <a href="#">guidance on identifying poorly ventilated areas</a> Do not prop open fire doors.	Weekly airing	Protocol in place
	Use outdoor spaces if appropriate and available.		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Request or consider requiring people to wear a face covering, unless exempt, when inside your building. This may particularly apply to activities that increase risk of aerosol spread such as singing.		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Put in place measures to reduce contact between people e.g. retaining social distancing		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	If practical in your building, choose one point of entry into the church to manage flow of people and indicate this with notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different door for exit.		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	For events where the building is likely to be especially busy, or the activity is particularly energetic, pay		n/a in view of the above	

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	particular regard to the need for additional mitigations such as social distancing and face coverings.			
<b>Surface transmission of Covid-19</b>	Provide adequate hand cleansing stations. Provide hand sanitiser for the occasions when people can't wash their hands.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Identify where you can reduce the contact of people with surfaces, e.g. by leaving open doors that are not fire doors, using electronic documents rather than paperwork.		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Good hygiene and cleaning of the building.	See advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings</a> .	Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Consider hygiene around shared items such as Bibles, prayer and hymn books that are used by multiple people.	You could consider a long-term loan system for Bibles and other books to ensure people have access to these.	Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	If providing single-use service sheets or prayer cards, either place these on sheets or ask people to sanitise hands before picking one up, and request that people take these home with them.		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on).		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Put in place a cleaning rota/system for children's materials and toys, and consider providing cleaning materials for these if safe to do so (keeping all such materials out of the reach of children).		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available.	Register with <a href="#">Parish Buying</a> for procurement options.	Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place

Risk	Controls to consider (delete or detail as appropriate to your location and event)	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
<b>Visitors are unclear on requirements for attending church or visiting the building for other purposes, or anxious about attending.</b>	Display an NHS Track and Trace QR code, with an alternative option for those who cannot use that system. Encourage visitors to use one or other of these options.	Consult <a href="#">advice on Track and Trace</a> .	Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media with information for visitors. Communicate details on requirements or requests such as bringing a face covering and options for those who may be anxious.		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Consider specific advice for those who may struggle with continuing restrictions, such as those who are deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired.		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services.		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	Communicate with nearby churches to ensure offered provisions are complementary.	Vicar is Rural Dean and discusses regularly with colleagues.	Vicar	Protocol in place
	Provide welcoming notices that outline safety measures.		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
<b>Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms</b>	If possible close the church building for 48 hours with no access permitted.		Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	If 48-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.	<a href="#">Public Health England guidance available here</a> .	Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place
	If the building has been quarantined for 48 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning.	Advice on <a href="#">cleaning church buildings can be found here</a> .	Vicar, staff, H&S officer & wardens	Protocol in place



## Appendix 2 – Zone Protocols after July 19<sup>th</sup>

### *Zone 1 – Porch*

#### **Open**

Sole point of entry for public

Doors open to allow entry without touching handles if possible, and left open for ventilation where possible

Hand sanitiser, tissue, bin and disposable masks continue to be available

Signage recommending that people sanitise hands, and to respect seating arrangements

All surfaces and handles cleaned after each opening

### *Zone 2 – Tower*

#### **Open**

Toilet flushed and taps run at least weekly

Light switched on regularly, to activate fan for ventilation purposes

### *Zone 3 – West End*

#### **Open**

Base for Stewards

### *Zone 4 – South Aisle*

#### **Open**

Area of more distanced seating for especially anxious groups of 2-3

Toy area now open – cleaned down after each Sunday service using dilute washing-up liquid spray other points.

### *Zone 5 – Nave*

#### **Open**

All pews open

Spaces for seating marked with green ticks and red crosses

Surfaces wiped down when next service is less than 72 hours later

*Zone 6 – North Aisle, Servery Area*

**Closed to the public**

Staff and volunteers may enter for handwashing and cleaning purposes

Cleared of all unnecessary items, including food, coffee pots etc

Tables stacked and unavailable

*Zone 7 – North Aisle, Seating Area*

**Open**

Area of more distanced seating for especially anxious individuals

*Zone 8 – Prayer Chapel Area*

**Open to the public for private individual prayer only**

*Zone 9 – Chancel*

**Open**

*Zone 10 – Sanctuary*

**Open**

*Zone 11 – Corridor in Centre*

**Open for walk through purposes and access to toilet and cleaning**

*Zone 12 – Other Areas in the Centre*

Available by special arrangement with the Vicar & Wardens

Toilets flushes, taps run, aired out once weekly

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