

Church Risk Assessment

Reducing the spread of respiratory infections, including Covid-19 – April 2022



Impact	Severe	5	5	10	15	20	25
	Major	4	4	8	12	16	20
	Moderate	3	3	6	9	12	15
	Minor	2	2	4	6	8	10
	Insignificant	1	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	3	4	5
			Remote	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Highly Likely
			Likelihood				

Key to Risk Level

Catastrophic	
Unacceptable	
Undesirable	
Acceptable	

United Reformed Church Risk Assessment – Gov’t guidance - How to stay safe and prevent the spread of Coronavirus and Working Safely

Person/Group completing this risk assessment: Joan Grindrod-Helmn, Julie Wightman, Liz Spence and Joyce Spencer

Date of initial assessment: 11.7.20

Church: St James’s United Reformed Church and Church Centre, Pottergate, Alnwick NE66 1JW

Latest updates: 13.4.22

Risk No	Risk	Type*	Inherent risk			Mitigation	Residual risk			Notes	
			Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score		Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score		
The building											
1	A	Build-up of dust and possibly mould	Prop	2	1	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Open doors and some windows to allow airflow. ➤ Regular checks on a weekly basis 	1	1	1	<i>“Staying Covid-19 Secure” Disclaimer signed and remains placed on front glass door</i>
2	A	General cleanliness of building	Prop	2	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regular cleaning of building by Molly Maids weekly. ➤ All fitting and fixtures (including door handles, hand rails and light switches) MUST be wiped down with anti-bacterial wipes and sanitisers after use 	1	2	2	Steward roles each Sunday – include cleaning at end of service Checks made by LS
3	A	Potential contamination of water system (legionella)	Prop	1	1	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Water system flushed through normal and regular use during the week. All toilets flushed as in regular use. 	1	1	2	Building being used regularly during the week
4	A	Safety measures against fire are not securely in place	Prop	1	1	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fire Risk Assessment in place and up to date ➤ All fire extinguishers to be checked and 	1	1	2	*Ref: Fire Risk Assessment held in Vestry and with JW

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							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure functioning and in date ➤ All fire signage and exit are clear ➤ Fire evacuation procedures in place 				
5	A	A clear evacuation route is not obvious or needs to be changed	People	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review evacuation and emergency response procedures to ensure they remain suitable. ➤ Where occupants require assistance evacuating the premises, ensure a plan is in place to provide appropriate support. Ensure a steward is designated to this task. ➤ Display clear signage and ensure the identified route is free of obstruction and accessible to all 	2	3	6	
6	A	Seating in areas to be used for public worship is too close together.	Prop	5	5	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Remove some seats/rows to allow for some social distancing. Remove excess chairs and stack safely. 	2	2	4	Embleton Room to be used to stack spare banqueting chairs
7	A	Electrical and heating systems	Prop				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure all statutory compliance checks are up to date (gas and 				All Systems comply with statutory

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		(including emergency lighting) fully functional		2	1	2	electrical safety) ➤ All systems to be checked and signed off ➤ All cables taped to floor	1	1	1	regulations and are up to date.
8	A	Items stored and displayed on surfaces makes cleaning regime difficult	Prop	3	3	9	➤ Clear surfaces as much as possible and move items to safe storage	2	2	4	Ensure unnecessary items are removed as appropriate
9	A	High value items at risk of theft	Prop	3	3	9	➤ Secure items that are not needed (such as audio-visual equipment).	2	2	4	All items securely stored.
10	A	Items may be handled by more than one person, increasing the risk of cross contamination	People	4	4	16	➤ Hymn books and other worship material left on shelves for attendees to collect and return themselves. Use of screens. ➤ Hand sanitisers in place at entrance and exit for recommended use when entering and leaving the building	2	2	4	
11	A	Issues with outside of building	Prop	2	3	6	➤ Check guttering/downpipes/gullies ➤ Check overgrown shrubs or trees across walkways	1	2	2	Regular checks made by DW/LS and actioned at F&P 26.11.21

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							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Check for any loose fence panels as appropriate ➤ Check for uneven paving stones on pathway 				Reported storm damage to roof. Flat occupants warned of risks.
12	A	Flow of people within the church causes congestion or makes social distancing impossible	People	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement process to ensure flow of people when people enter and exit the church. 	2	2	4	Stewards continue to ensure flow of people in their roles
13	A	Excess rubbish builds up at the premises	People	1	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All rubbish to be taken away by church attendees where appropriate ➤ Bins regularly emptied by cleaning company and stewards where necessary. 	1	1	1	Cleaning checked by Centre Manager on a weekly basis
14	A	Safeguarding information missing or out of date	Legal	1	1	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure safeguarding notice including contact details for local safeguarding co-ordinator are displayed prominently ➤ Ensure stewards are briefed on the safeguarding policy and know who to contact if a concern is raised 	1	1	1	<p>Safeguarding information on noticeboard in corridor</p> <p>Training regularly updated in line with URC guidance (Version 5) Policy Statement online</p>

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Social Distancing											
15	A	Too many people in the building.	People	5	5	25	➤ Max number of attendees determined by how many people a venue can safely accommodate	2	2	4	
16	A	Those using the building don't respect social distancing.	People	4	4	16	➤ Attendees encouraged to keep to some social distancing.	2	4	8	
17	A	People attend who have symptoms of coronavirus	Legal	5	5	25	➤ Clear signage reminding people of the symptoms of Covid-19 and of the importance of self-isolation. ➤ All attending requested to wear face masks. Reminders given weekly.	2	4	8	<i>Omicron variant update - URC guidance 2.22</i>
18	A	Congestion at choke points prevent distancing being respected	People	3	5	15	➤ Layout of church set up to reduce pinch points ➤ Signage ➤ All stewards briefed in flow of building	2	3	6	Stewards are fully briefed to enable smooth flow-updated roles August '21

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19	A	A person known to be on the sex offenders’ register attends	People			9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Brief stewards that known offenders are not to be admitted ➤ Review the covenant of care/offenders' contract and amend it to provide socially distanced supervision. 	2	2	4	<p>Good Practice Guidance <i>Version 5</i></p> <p>All Elders Trained</p>
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Cleaning											
20	A	Nominated company or rota of volunteers not in place to ensure regular cleaning	Service delivery	1	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Follow current Government guidance on cleaning in a non-healthcare setting ➤ Confirm responsibilities for cleaning and ordering supplies etc. 	1	2	2	Cleaning regime must be in place and maintained. Overseen by Centre Manager Team
21	A	Cleaning staff/volunteers unable to comply with safe working practice for cleaning	People	1	2	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Update risk assessments and method statements, including COSHH assessments to reflect changes in systems. ➤ Ensure that cleaning company are following safe method of cleaning. ➤ Provide gloves and aprons for volunteers using cleaning materials. ➤ Use anti-bacterial/viral spray and kitchen paper or wipes for wiping surfaces. 	1	2	2	Cleaning regime in place <i>Public Health guidance on the use of PPE (personal protective equipment) to protect against COVID-19</i> <i>Use of Hand Sanitizer placed for information at cleaning stations.</i> <i>*Alcohol based sanitizers not to be near heat or naked flame</i>

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							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hands must be washed thoroughly after removing and disposing of PPE ➤ PPE MUST be disposed of in designated receptacle. ➤ Waste must be double-bagged and securely stored for 72 hours before being placed in bins. 				
22	A	Materials not available to properly clean surfaces	Service delivery	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cleaning stock regularly checked and re-ordered 	1	2	2	Assistant Centre Manager checks regularly.
23	A	Contamination from high-touch areas such as door handles and switches	Property	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement a practice of cleaning high-touch areas ➤ Cleaning routine after use of building. ➤ Where consistent with fire safety and security, use wedges/hooks to hold doors open and ensure doors are closed when the building closes to maintain fire safety. 	2	2	4	Steward’s roles information identifies cleaning regime after people have left the building.
24	A	Contamination from surfaces in toilet	Property				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cleaned regularly. ➤ Provide anti-bacterial wipes to allow surfaces to be 				

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				3	5	15	sanitised after use and a bin for disposal along with signage instructing wipes not to be flushed away. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hand washing facilities with soap and water in place. ➤ Drying of hands with disposable paper towels from automatic no touch dispenser 	2	3	6	NHS Guidance https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/
25	A	Someone with Coronavirus is found to have visited the building	People	3	5	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inform cleaning company ➤ After a period of closure, ensure as a minimum that all surfaces are cleaned. ➤ Any objects handled by the person where cleaning is not possible should be quarantined for at least 3 days. ➤ Double bag waste and store it securely for 72 hours before placing it in bins. ➤ Wash hands thoroughly after PPE kit has been removed and disposed of in designated bin 	2	4	8	This process MUST be followed and all relevant individuals briefed Ref: Public Health England specific guidance.

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26	A	People may carry Coronavirus into the building on their hands	People	4	5	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encourage everyone to sanitise their hands upon entry ➤ Provide hand sanitizers and health warnings at various points in building-entrance to church, worship area and exits. ➤ Hand washing facilities with soap and water in place. ➤ Drying of hands with disposable paper towels ➤ Bins provided for disposal 	2	4	8	<p>Clear signage and instructions.</p> <p>Health and safety policy updated</p> <p>NHS Guidance https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/</p>
27	A	Toilet facilities cannot be cleaned adequately between users	Property	3	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cleaning regime to be in place to ensure toilet facilities are safe to use. ➤ Volunteer rota to be set up for Sunday Worship and users encouraged to wipe down surfaces after use. 	2	3	6	<p>Volunteers, stewards and all centre users briefed on cleaning procedures</p> <p>Conditions of Hire – specific to Covid-19</p>
28	A	Increased risk of airborne transmission of disease	People	4	5	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Limit the duration of services ➤ Ventilate the building before, during and after opening times where possible. 	2	3	6	<p>Ref: URC guidance Feb 2022</p> <p>Although regulations have changed, and the current wave of infections is showing signs of easing, infection rates remain high across the United Kingdom. We would therefore</p>

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							➤ All attenders requested to wear masks when in the building and singing.				urge the continued use of face coverings in churches, including during singing, as well as maintaining good hand hygiene and appropriate physical distancing.
29	A	Someone starts to feel unwell or develops coronavirus symptoms whilst on the premises	People	3	5	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Isolate the person in a sanctuary extension whilst arrangements are made for them to be taken home or into medical care. ➤ Anyone sitting with the person must wear a face mask, disposable gloves and apron throughout the period of supervision/support ➤ Cleaning cloths and PPE to be double-bagged and stored securely for 7 hours before placing in outside bins. ➤ Hands must be washed thoroughly immediately after removing & disposing of PPE ➤ Anyone supervising/caring for the person who is unwell should return home. 	2	4	8	

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Additional risks associated with opening for public worship											
30	A	Premises are not Covid-Secure	Property	3	5	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure the space is properly prepared, the cleaning regime is in place and preparations for hand-washing, hygiene and signage are all in place. 	2	3	6	Ref:6 URC Guidance from Northern Synod Moderators
31	A	Increased risk of coronavirus spread through communal singing	People	5	5	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Worship with communal singing allowed indoors. Encourage wearing of face masks. 	1	3	3	There are no limits on the number of people who can sing or perform indoors or outdoors.
32	A	Risk of virus transmission from shared resources (Bibles, hymn books, offertory plate etc.)	People	5	5	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hymn book can be collected from book shelf by a person and returned at end of service ➤ Offertory plate at back of church ➤ Encourage online or bank standing orders ➤ Cash handling -wear gloves and mask when handling it and wash hands thoroughly afterwards 	2	3	6	Sanctuary steward to not hand out hymn books

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33	A	Children’s group leaders in worship to resume activities	People		3	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure the space for children is properly prepared for some social distancing ➤ Sanitize any toys to be used before and after use 	2	3	6	
33	B	Children’s group leaders in worship to resume activities	Legal/Reg		3	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure that any new group leaders have been securely recruited under Good Practice 5 and are available in sufficient number for safeguarding 	2	3	6	If adult/child ratios cannot be upheld, activities must not take place
34	A	Covid-safe place available for children’s groups to meet during worship	People		2	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide space and activities within the sanctuary where the children can be safely supervised without leaving the main act of worship or ➤ move to another Covid-safe room with 2 adults present, following safeguarding procedures. ➤ Sanitize any hard resources/equipment or toys to be used before and after use 	2	2	4	

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							➤ Co-ordinate with worship leaders to provide all-age/intergenerational worship/activities.			
35	A	Risk of virus transmission through serving/receiving Holy Communion	People				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Written guidance on Communion during Covid followed by Elders ➤ The President may use the elements at the table but not serve to others. ➤ Hands must be sanitized before and after serving. ➤ The Common Cup must not be used. 			<p>4 5 20</p> <p>2 2 4</p> <p><i>*See Guidance sheet for Communion, outlining safe procedures</i></p> <p>“The use of shared communal objects, including consumables, is now a personal choice.” Jan 2022</p>
36	A	Visiting worship leaders are not aware of Covid-19 secure arrangements	People				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Send out information about precautions with the usual information about leading worship ➤ Ensure the format for worship is updated 			<p>3 5 15</p> <p>2 2 4</p> <p><i>“Covid-19 Guidance for Worship Leaders” document v1 updated August ‘21</i></p>
37	A	Equipment may be touched by more than one person before and during worship (e.g. audio-visual equipment, light switches, sound box etc.)	Property People				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Emphasise the importance of good hand hygiene for everyone throughout their time in the building ➤ Provide cleaning materials to wipe equipment surfaces between use and 			<p>4 4 16</p> <p>2 2 4</p>

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							instruct those involved on how to use it safely				
38	A	Risk of transmission in a Funeral Ceremonies	People				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure relevant Gov’t Guidance on funerals and conducting public worship is followed ➤ Mitigations above applied ➤ Max number of attendees held in a venue determined by how many people a venue can safely accommodate ➤ Congregational singing allowed with masks ➤ Recommend use of face coverings when in the building and singing. <i>See notes</i> ➤ Single use resources can be used but removed by the attendees. 				<p>Ref:3/5 Gov’t guidance on Funerals COVID-19:</p> <p>There are no legal limits on the number of people who can attend funerals or commemorative events. Those attending, arranging or managing such events should consider that it may be harder to manage the risk of spreading COVID-19 if spaces are crowded, and venue operators may set their own limits.</p> <p>Although not required to do so by law, the government recommends that face coverings are worn in crowded areas. You should respect other attendees and those working at events who may wish to adopt a more cautious approach.</p>
				5	5	25		2	2	4	
39	A	Risk of transmission in a Marriage Ceremony	People				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure relevant Gov’t Guidance on conducting weddings is followed ➤ Mitigations above applied 				<p>Ref:2/5 Gov’t Guidance COVID-19:</p> <p>Wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations 19.7.21</p> <p>There is no longer a legal requirement to wear a face</p>

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					5	5	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Max number of attendees determined by how many people a venue can safely accommodate ➤ Recommend use of face coverings when moving around the building and singing. ➤ Congregational singing allowed with masks (See notes) ➤ Single use resources can be used but removed at end of service. 	2	2	4	<p>covering. The government suggests that people continue to wear one in crowded and enclosed spaces where they may come into contact with people they do not normally meet.</p> <p>There are no legal restrictions on the number of people that can attend a place of worship, including at significant life events</p> <p>It is important to consider that others may wish to take a more cautious approach. We should all be considerate of this, and provide the opportunity and space for others to reduce close contacts if they wish.</p>
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			Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score		likelihood	Impact	Risk Score		
Additional Risks associated with opening for other church activities or lettings											
40	A	Resume external lettings	Property	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure current Covid-19 measures are in place – full risk assessment in place. ➤ Mitigations above apply ➤ Agree areas of building to be used 	2	2	4	<p>Ref:5 Guidance on “Living with respiratory infections, including Covid-19”</p>

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							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Kitchen facilities made available but with agreed rules for use. ➤ Limited food preparation 				
40	B	Resume external lettings	People Legal	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure the proposed use is compatible with current Covid-19 guidance. ➤ Letting agreement and Conditions of Hire/Special Conditions related to Covid-19 in place. ➤ Liaise with group leaders/hirers on how they will ensure all safety measures are in place, and that they will be responsible for operating those measures. ➤ Agree on the day and length of session to ensure a reasonable amount of time between public worship and the group sessions. ➤ Agree who is responsible for cleaning the 	2	2	4	<p><i>*Each group accommodated must be able to meet in accordance with regulations and procedures in force, otherwise their actions will jeopardise the safety for everyone else using the premises</i></p> <p><i>Monitored by Centre Team</i></p> <p><i>Ref: 7</i> <i>Standard Conditions of Hire and additional "Special Conditions" during Covid-19.10.20, updated 12.4.21</i></p>

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							room/area before and after their session.					
							➤ Use of kitchen facilities and rules agreed prior to hiring					

Assessment accepted by Elders' Meeting – *Virtually signed* (Meeting chair or secretary)

Date accepted: 22nd July 2020 – updated regularly in line with Gov't Regulations as required.

References - The following documents are referenced in this Risk Assessment, dated as latest version.

1. Action Plan linked to Risk Assessment – April. 2022
2. COVID-19: Wedding and civil partnership ceremonies, receptions and celebrations – withdrawn on 1.4.22
3. COVID-19: arranging or attending a funeral or commemorative event - Withdrawn on 5.4.22
4. COVID.19: Guidance for the safe use of places of worship – Withdrawn on 29.3.22
5. All of the above Replaced with “Living Safely with respiratory infections, including Covid-19”
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-safely-with-respiratory-infections-including-covid-19>
6. URC Guidance Feb. 2022 <https://urc.org.uk/our-news-stories/coronavirus-advice/coronavirus-synod-moderators-updated-guidance/>
7. Appendix 1: Special Conditions of Hire during Covid-19 as part of “Conditions of Hire” (19.10.20 then updated 12.4.21)