



## CHRIST CHURCH EXMOUTH COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT

The purpose of this document is to assess the present risk and in line with Government guidelines put an action plan into place. The risk is ongoing and fluid so the plans will be flexible and open to modification as the situation develops, both nationally and locally.

Consideration will be given to the following-

Identifying the risk to individuals and considering the extra risk associated with the vulnerable of our congregation.

Identifying risk arising from the use of the building including the hall, offices, kitchen, catering and toilet facilities.

Identifying risk arising from activities such as Church services and meetings. Consideration will be given to families, children and youth ministries. Hire and use by outside groups or organisations will also be considered.

Advising and communicating with all the Church family and outlining how individuals and families should take their responsibility to abide with the guidance. **Individual compliance is the key** to maximise safety.

How to identify and track any possible incident. Who to inform and what action to take.

Following on from this assessment recommendations will be made, and action plans will be established.

Assessment carried out for Christ Church Exmouth by Richard Glazebrook (Church warden)

16, Gipsy Lane, Exmouth, EX8 3HW on 20.07.2020.

To be reviewed as necessary.

Approved by the Church Council on 31st July 2020.

## COVID-19

Covid-19 is a highly contagious new viral infection that has spread throughout the world and has been the cause of illness, death, and economic hardship. Because it is a new infection there are still many aspects of its transmission and effects that are still not fully understood.

The Covid-19 virus is transmitted by the exhalation of droplets from the mouth and nose. People can become infected by only a small amount which is to all intents and purposes invisible. The virus enters the body primarily into the lungs but also via the mouth or eyes. The spread can be directly from person to person through the air. The virus can survive outside the body on skin so a handshake or a touch can pass it on, especially if the recipient then touches their face. The virus can also live on hard surfaces for up to 3 days.

Initial symptoms include a temperature and a persistent dry cough. Some also suffer a loss of taste and smell amongst other lesser symptoms.

The virus can affect people in different ways. It is primarily a disease of the lungs causing varying degrees of breathing difficulty, sometimes leading to loss of life. It also can affect the heart and can lead to general organ failure. Some are left with a lingering “post viral syndrome” which causes weakness and lethargy. Some are left with reduced lung or heart function.

Some exhibit no symptoms at all but can be found to have been exposed and now have antibodies.

The majority of infected people recover well after a period of illness.

In the United Kingdom the prevalence is now much reduced but the virus is still present in the population and although the chance of infection is not high the consequences can still be severe, so the risk is present and genuine.

**It is not easy to quantify the risk of contracting the disease, but because of the potential seriousness the risk is present and real.**

## WHO IS AT RISK?

**All** are at risk of contracting and carrying the virus which is considered **highly contagious**. However, some are more at risk than others and will need particular consideration. We need to both follow the Government guidelines and provide our own measures to ensure as best we can the safety of all. All include our Church family, local residents and any visitors.

Lowest risk at present appears to be in young children. There are very few cases reported but even so there have been a very few serious cases. Most children do not seem to suffer the effects, but it is not yet fully understood how much they can carry the virus asymptotically.

Teenagers also have a low risk, slightly higher than younger children but statistically still a relatively low risk. Again, it is not yet fully understood how much they could be asymptomatic spreaders of the disease.

As age advances the risk increases. The government guidelines identify those of 70 or over as being in a higher risk category.

People who have what is known as underlying conditions such as compromised immunity, obesity, diabetes, heart, or lung conditions etc. are considered at high risk and have been advised by the government to “shield.”

The Church has a responsibility to minimise the risk to all. Some may need special consideration and extra precautions. However, people at higher risk also may need to assess the potential risk to themselves and their own families.

**The Church will put into place measures of best practice for the buildings and the behaviour of people to minimise risk but besides this all of us as individuals will have to take a degree of ownership and decide how to behave. It may be right for some to prefer not to meet together particularly in larger gatherings at the present time.**

In Exmouth and the South West, the risk of transmission and infection is at present low. This may improve or worsen, and we need to be aware if the transmission risk rises. However, as the consequence can be very severe, we need to be serious and vigilant to keep all as safe as possible.

## **CHRIST CHURCH EXMOUTH**

### **COVID- 19**

#### **THE POLICY AND PLAN**

This policy is to produce a plan to maximise the protection of all who belong to the Church family and all who use the buildings and facilities.

The plan to protect our congregation is in three parts.

1. The first and most important part is communicating and educating our congregation. Sensible and safe practice and behaviour by individuals is the primary defence we have against the virus. All must take personal responsibility for their own safety and those in their family, their care or household. Visitors also need to be informed on arrival.
2. The second part is ensuring that the building and facilities are configured and equipped to be as safe as possible for anyone using them.
3. The third part is managing any services of worship and events to both maximise safety and to reassure people that all reasonable precautions have been taken to minimise any risk.

We are to comply with all present and future Government guidelines and legislation regarding the Covid-19 virus. Our plan needs to be flexible to be able to respond to any changes of circumstance.

Our risk assessment is that although the likelihood of transmission may or may not be high (it is still reducing but there may be a second spike or a local flare up) the consequence is still severe. Therefore, this document is concerned with how best to manage the risk for our church.

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The most important strand of the strategy to keep people as safe as possible is communicating the fact that it is down to us all as individuals to behave responsibly. Any measures put in place will fail if people do not behave appropriately. The best signage, hand sanitation etc. will be of no use if social distancing fails for example.

Communication will be by the following means prior to the opening of the church for worship.

1. We will send information to all our members by both e-mail and also preferably by letter as well to kindly explain how we expect people to behave. Social distancing especially must be the key.
2. We will place posters at the entrance to the building and at any appropriate location.

I know this seems simple, but it is by far the most effective thing we can do. If everyone behaves as if those, we meet have the virus and socially distance most risk is already mitigated.

The steps outlined in part 2 and 3 are dependent on personal compliance.

## THE BUILDINGS

Outlined below are the measures to be taken to ensure that the church and associated buildings are made as safe as possible.

1. Signage. Signs to be placed outside the entrance to request social distancing, sanitising of hands, wearing of face masks where appropriate and following any directions on movement, entry, and exit.
2. Floor markings where needed to organise safe flow of people with distance markings where needed to ensure distancing both inside and outside...for queuing for example. Separate entry and exit.
3. Seating to be arranged at a social distance, 2 metres or 1 metre plus with face masks to keep individuals and households separate.
4. Screens to be erected for the protection of the sound and media teams and for any singing by a worship leader.
5. Hand sanitiser stations for entry, and exit.
6. Spare masks to be available, maybe for a donation!!
7. Large group meetings to be ideally 72 hours apart. This will ensure no live virus remains. If this is not possible appropriate cleaning of especially hard surfaces should be undertaken.
8. Communal touching points to be sterilised regularly before and during use of the buildings, for example door handles and door jambs.
9. Regular cleaning and sterilising of hard surfaces. Usual thorough weekly cleaning.
10. Closing Barry's bar and the kitchen...for the time being. If they are to be opened in the future a further risk assessment will be carried out. Possibly cordoning off the organ when not in use.
11. Closing of 2 toilets. One to remain open with social distancing markers to prevent queue bunching. "One in and one out". Signage for this and correct hand cleansing. Sanitising to be provided. Paper towels and bin to be provided and plenty of liquid soap. Regular cleaning and sanitising, especially handles seats etc.
12. Worship and PA equipment, mics, stands and keyboards to be wiped for sanitising before and after use but considered safe after 72 hours. Use of mixing desk and computer to be with sanitised hands only, Gloves at the operator's discretion.
13. Where possible keep windows and doors open so the rooms are well ventilated. Keep doors open while people are moving through, not constantly open, and close.

## SERVICES AND EVENTS

These are the measures required to run Church services and other events as laid down in the Government guidelines. Performance e.g. concerts at present are not allowed. Please note this may all be **subject to change** as the guidelines are reviewed! A **Covid coordinator** should be appointed to ensure that the measures in this document are in place and adhered to. The coordinator will also be the go to person if anyone has questions... or complaints.

Worship services to be conducted as below. Online streaming is still preferred.

1. No one showing symptoms (cough/fever etc.) to be permitted to enter.
2. The services to be as short as possible and people to move in and out promptly.
3. People should be advised not to engage in conversation with those outside their household.
4. Voices are not to be raised. Use of PA is encouraged to aid clarity.
5. No communal singing allowed. 1 singer/leader permitted and band with no wind instruments. Band to be socially distanced themselves. Preferred that the singer has a Perspex screen. Organ allowed.
6. Social distancing to be observed. 2 metres or 1 metre plus with face covering. Household groups/families are not required to distance among themselves.
7. No food or drink.
8. Communion to be with safe practice using Individual portions safely blessed undercover and safely distributed.
9. Children. Parents/guardians to be responsible at all times. No play areas or toys allowed. Parents and children to wash and sanitise. The guidelines probably mean that no children's clubs can run at present.
10. It is recommended that a register of attendees is kept. We can use a simple register for regular members. Visitors should provide name and telephone with signature and date.
11. Attendance to be limited to 30 people, or more if social distancing can be safely achieved.
12. Stewarding in place to direct people as they enter, to explain the restrictions and to control movement if required. Stewards to have the authority to ask people to leave if not compliant.
13. Advance booking may be necessary to control and limit numbers.
14. It may be appropriate to organise a special service with extra restrictions for those at increased risk.

## APPENDIX

1. Band or music practice is permitted providing precautions are followed concerning social distancing and correct sanitising. Musical or drama performances with an audience are at present not allowed.
2. Use of the Hall should we choose to use it to be subject to the same protocol as the church. Sanitising stations, social distancing signage, one-way systems etc. all as set out in the document "the buildings". At present no food or drink to be prepared and the kitchen not opened. If required, the catering team will need to carry out a risk assessment.
3. Hire of the hall. My recommendation is at present not to hire. The responsibility for correct behaviour and sanitising and cleaning is at present blurred. There are compliance and sanitary issues. This to be reviewed and guidelines may change. At present this presents an extra risk both to hirers and to any who use the facilities subsequently.
4. Arise and Shine and after school clubs. At present an increased risk. Interaction will break the school bubble system.
5. Use of the office and other rooms. The number of people at any one time to be in proportion to the size of the room. I would suggest 2 for the office. The prayer room and youth room can have up to 4 people being aware of the staircase. At present the crèche room is too small to enable social distancing for more than 6-8 people.
6. Test and Trace. Records of attendees at services to be kept for 21 days, data secured then destroyed. Information only to be sent directly to NHS Test and Trace in the event of any outbreak. Remember it works both ways, ie. For us to report and also for us to receive information. Ensure any communication is from NHS England before releasing any information.
7. If any suspected outbreak occurs immediately notify [gov.uk/health-protection-team](https://www.gov.uk/health-protection-team). Follow the advice in full!
8. People of 70 or over and others at higher risk are advised by the Government to still stay secure. However, the responsibility lies with them if they prefer to accept the risk of attending while understanding the measures in place. In this instance the advice from the government is advisory not compulsory.
9. If further detail is required on any matter the Government guidance is attached to this hard copy document in full.