



The Church of Scotland

Covid-19 (coronavirus)

Reopening of Church Buildings

June 2020

Version 2.0

Scottish Charity Number: SC011353

www.churchofscotland.org.uk

Date	Version Number	Amendment
12/06/2020	1	As published
19/06/2020	2	<p>3.definition of congregation for the purpose of this guidance document</p> <p>5.1 new section on the role of Presbytery</p> <p>6.5 further advice on Legionella and water safety</p> <p>6.6 further advice on the cleaning and disinfection of soft furnishing and advising the removal of pew cushions</p> <p>6.7 further advice on the use of gloves and update from the HSE on the use of KN95 facemasks</p> <p>6.8 further information on the use of alcohol-based hand gels</p> <p>6.9 further guidance on the cleaning of toilet facilities</p> <p>6.13 further information on church building insurance</p> <p>6.14 further information on the maintenance of church buildings</p> <p>7.1.2 further information and clarification on church building capacity</p> <p>7.1.5 further information on Marriages</p> <p>7.1.6 new section on Funerals</p> <p>7.1.7 new section on using your church buildings to support schools</p> <p>7.2.2 further information on taking the offering</p> <p>7.2.4 amended section on Funerals and Memorial Services in phase 3</p> <p>Appendix 1 – amended Gas/Oil Supply Section</p> <p>Appendix 3 – examples of physical distancing in the church sanctuary</p>

Further Information

If you would like further information or if you have any questions relating to any of the contents of this guidance document, please email:

covid19guidance@churchofscotland.org.uk

Contents

1. Introduction	4	7. Preparing your church buildings for reopening	16
2. Being Church – a time for reflection	5	7.1 Phase 2	16
3. How to use this guidance	6	7.1.1 Who can attend church?	16
4. The challenges that lie ahead	7	7.1.2 Church building capacity	16
5. Who will decide when we can reopen our buildings?	8	7.1.3 Supporting those who attend Church	17
5.1 Role of Presbytery	8	7.1.4 Reopening your church buildings for individual prayer	17
6. Planning to reopen your church buildings	9	7.1.5 Marriage	18
6.1 Property checklist	9	7.1.6 Funerals	18
6.2 Risk assessment	9	7.1.7 Using your church buildings to support schools	19
6.3 Emergency procedures	9	7.2 Phase 3	19
6.4 Fire safety	10	7.2.1 Worship in Phase 3	19
6.5 Legionella and water safety	11	7.2.2 Taking the offering	20
6.6 Cleaning and disinfection	11	7.2.3 Communion	20
6.7 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	12	7.2.4 Funerals and Memorial services in Phase 3	20
6.8 Hand hygiene and general safety precautions	13	7.2.5 Baptism	21
6.9 Toilet facilities	14	7.2.6 Church groups	21
6.10 Food safety	14	7.2.7 Children’s and Youth Ministry	21
6.11 Waste management	14	7.2.8 External groups	21
6.12 Outdoor church activities	14	7.3 Phase 4	22
6.13 Church building insurance	15	Appendix 1 – Property checklist	23
6.14 Maintenance of your church buildings	15	Appendix 2 – Covid-19 risk assessment	28
		Appendix 3 – Examples of physical distancing in the church sanctuary	36

1. Introduction

The vast majority of our church buildings closed on 28 March 2020 because of the global Covid-19 pandemic. This has been a very difficult time for us all as we learn to adapt to a new way of life. Some congregations have opened their buildings to support vulnerable members of their community by providing essential services such as foodbanks or childcare facilities for key workers. Many congregations have successfully embraced new technology as a means of supporting local mission and worship and are thriving. Some congregations are worried what the future may hold for their church and whether things will ever be the same again. The truth is, we just do not know when, or even if, we will ever be able to go back to the way things were previously.

The Scottish Government has produced a four-phased approach on how they plan to ease Covid-19 restrictions in Scotland. A copy of this guidance is available from the Scottish Government website (www.gov.scot/news/route-map-for-moving-out-of-lockdown/). Places of worship, referred to as church buildings within this guidance, can reopen for limited purposes when phase 2 has now begun. As we move in to phases 3 and 4, congregations will be able to use their church buildings more to support local mission and worship alongside the wider needs of the community. However, as there is legislation in place restricting the use of church buildings, it is the responsibility of the Scottish Government to provide a regulatory framework for when congregations can reopen their church buildings and for what purpose.

This guidance document has been produced to help congregations think about how they may be able to reopen their church buildings safely. Some congregations will be able to reopen their church buildings very quickly, whilst for others it might be later in the year, or even 2021 before they can reopen their church buildings.

2. Being Church – a time for reflection

The General Trustees Consultation Paper on *'Well equipped spaces in the right places'* presented to General Assembly of 2019 stated as the first principle of any future plan that *"Buildings and glebe land are simply a means by which the mission of the Church can be achieved. The traditional model which the church currently operates - that of providing space for Church presence through a dedicated building - is not appropriate in every case. A range of models is more appropriate. There are alternative ways of the Church having a 'space' or presence in the community which do not involve ownership of buildings."*

There are very practical, theological and missional differences between a congregation having a dedicated building and utilising a shared community space. However, since March 2020 there can be no doubt that all congregations whether in rural villages or city centres have faced a uniting shared experience of how to 'be church' with no access to any buildings.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been a number of juxtapositions recognised in relation to church and our buildings.

In the days that followed the lockdown announcement, the Church of Scotland saw creativity across its congregations on a level that had not been recognised in living memory. Along with creativity came a real sense of loss for many. For the first time in generations, church doors were ordered to be closed on government authority.

Theologically, congregations have often stated that the church comprises the people and not the buildings, however when faced with the reality it becomes apparent that our church buildings provide a sense of place for many to express their faith, experience worship and grow in relationship.

Many congregations have wrestled with new technology to allow online worship, coffee time, banner groups and Sunday schools. Individuals have felt both included and excluded from activities. Ministers and those working in parishes have identified the challenge of engaging some regular church attendee whilst reaching many individuals in the community for whom a traditional model of church would not be enticing.

For many the effects will last well beyond the lockdown. There will be tension in how congregations move forward whilst recognising that which has gone before.

Kirk Sessions and the wider congregation may wish to consider discussing:

- What place does a physical, dedicated church building have in the ongoing missional strategy of your congregation?
- Looking back over the period of lockdown, what innovation has been seen? What might be kept? How might that alter the focus of congregational life moving into a post pandemic phase?
- In relation to 'church', what feelings of loss have been articulated in the congregation and community?
- How might the Kirk Session prayerfully consider and evaluate what aspects of pre-lockdown church might be restarted to enable relationships to grow and mission to prosper?

3. How to use this guidance

We have structured this guidance document around the Scottish Government's four-phased approach, starting with phase 2. Congregations can only reopen their church buildings if they can safely meet the principles outlined in this document. As we move into phases 3 and 4, this will build upon the principles and requirements that we have described in phase 2. The congregation should still consider the principles outlined in phase 2, even if you do not intend to reopen your buildings until phase 3 or 4.

We have included a number of resources in the appendix to this guidance that will help congregations prepare for the safe reopening of their buildings.

This guidance document refers throughout to "congregations" rather than to "Kirk Sessions" or "Congregational Boards". The intention is to frame the guidance widely, recognising that some of the matters covered lie with the Congregational Board, and some with the Kirk Session (where a congregation has both) but that ultimately it is the congregation as a body which must ensure that suitable steps are taken. Compliance is not solely the responsibility of the charity trustees of a congregation: safety for all will only be achieved if each individual member adheres to the good practice set out in the following guidance.

This guidance reflects what we currently know about Covid-19 and the likely requirements that the Scottish Government will ask all congregations to comply with. We will review and update this guidance as more information becomes available and you are encouraged to regularly check the Church of Scotland website for any updates or amendments (www.churchofscotland.org.uk).

4. The Challenges that lie ahead

We have all had to adapt to the threat of Covid-19 over the past few months. Some people have adjusted and coped well under the imposed restrictions whilst others have struggled. Much of Church life as we have known it has stopped. In some cases, we have embraced these challenges by using technology to continue providing worship and support to our congregations. A virtual presence has ensured that we can still meet many of the spiritual and emotional needs of our members and parishioners. However, for many this has been difficult, and especially so when we think about the loss of our loved ones and supporting those who have experienced bereavement and loss.

Many of the restrictions that have been in place since March 2020 will now be with us throughout the rest of this year and probably into 2021. Physical distancing, hand hygiene, enhanced cleaning and disinfection will have to be embraced into a new way of church life. We also have to consider those vulnerable members of our congregations, and how we can support their needs. The reality is that those over the age of 70 will have to consider carefully whether they should be attending church. Those members of the congregations who are shielding or have underlying health conditions would be best advised not to come to church for the time being.

As a congregation, we know that you will also be thinking about the financial impact of Covid-19. You may also be focussing on how you will be able to carry out the administrative functions of your congregation and look after your buildings and assets safely. Many congregations work with local community groups that use their church buildings, and you will be asking when they will be able to return. We may not have all the answers to your questions now, but the following sections will hopefully be able to provide you with some clarification, encouragement and support as you look to the immediate future.

5. Who will decide when we can reopen our buildings?

The Scottish Government will determine as part of their phased approach to easing Covid-19 restrictions when it is permissible for church buildings to reopen and for what purposes. Congregations, alongside Presbytery will then be able to decide whether they wish to reopen their buildings or not. At this stage, no congregation will be required to reopen their church buildings. However, it is important that congregations do not reopen their church buildings or undertake any activity unless doing so is permitted in terms of the Scottish Government guidance or relevant regulatory provisions.

When deciding whether to reopen a church building, it may be useful to ask yourself the following initial questions:

- Can we safely practice physical distancing within our church buildings?
- Can we provide access to suitable hand hygiene facilities?
- Do we have enough willing volunteers who will be able to assist church members and visitors to our buildings and to help them understand and follow our safety precautions?
- Do we have enough willing volunteers who will be able to assist with the regular cleaning and disinfection of our buildings?

All of these questions are important, as congregations must have the resources and ability to put in place reasonable precautions to control the risks of Covid-19 before they can reopen. Each of these questions will be explored in further detail throughout this guidance document.

5.1 Role of Presbytery

Every Presbytery has general powers of superintendence over congregations within its bounds. Presbytery also has a duty to ensure that church buildings are safe. This is normally carried out during a five yearly inspection of church buildings and annually attesting records that consist of a property inspection, updated Property Register and relevant Health and Safety documentation.

It is expected that all Presbyteries will play a role in supporting congregations and ministers in the reopening of their church buildings. This may vary across Presbyteries, but as a minimum standard Presbyteries will ensure that every congregation has completed a reopening of church buildings checklist (Appendix 1), a Covid-19 risk assessment (Appendix 2) which indicates that the congregation can meet the legal requirements expected of a church building open to members of the public. Where a disagreement between a minister and the congregation exists over the reopening of their church buildings, the Presbytery should seek to discuss the matter with the congregation and the minister to understand the issues and work in partnership to overcome the challenges and reach agreement.

Presbyteries may also wish to consider bulk buying schemes for cleaning and hygiene products and, where appropriate, may offer advice or instruction to congregations on reopening in accordance with the general powers of Presbytery.

6. Planning to reopen your church buildings

It is essential that congregations take some time to plan the reopening of their church buildings. Even though the Scottish Government may announce that church buildings can reopen from a specific day, there is no requirement to do so. Only reopen your church buildings if it is safe to do so and when you have considered all the requirements within this guidance document.

The following information outlined in the remainder of this section will help you to plan for the reopening of your church buildings.

6.1 Property checklist

Many of you will already be following the guidance issued by the Church of Scotland Insurance Service (COSIS) and the General Trustees about regularly visiting and inspecting your church property. Therefore, it is likely that you will know the current condition of your church property. A property checklist has been provided in Appendix 1 of this guidance document, and congregations should use this checklist as part of their planning to reopen their church buildings.

Before visiting and inspecting your church buildings, consider who may have accessed them in the previous week. Anyone visiting or inspecting church buildings should have been following the guidance issued by the General Trustees, which includes the need for cleaning and disinfecting of all hand contact surfaces that they may have touched during their visit. If you are unsure who last accessed your church buildings or when the last person visited your church buildings, you should wait 72 hours before you visit your buildings to complete the property checklist. In addition, when more than one person is completing the property checklist, physical distancing should be observed unless they are from the same household. Good hygiene practices must be followed at all times during your visit, and all hand contact surfaces that you have touched must be cleaned and disinfected before leaving the church building.

6.2 Risk assessment

It is the responsibility of every congregation to ensure that there are suitable and sufficient arrangements in place to comply with health and safety legislation. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is clear that Covid-19 is a recognised hazard and therefore the congregation should undertake a Covid-19 risk assessment. An example of a Covid-19 risk assessment is provided in Appendix 2 of this guidance document. The congregation should review and update their Covid-19 risk assessment as we move through the different phases of the Scottish Government's four-phased approach to easing restrictions. The Covid-19 risk assessment should also be reviewed and amended if any circumstances or arrangements for the reopening and use of your church buildings change.

The Covid-19 risk assessment supplements the risk assessments that you should already have in place for your church buildings. Congregations will be required to review and update all other risk assessments that are already in place to ensure that they accurately reflect the hazards and risks within their church buildings. Further advice and guidance on risk assessments can be found in the Church of Scotland General Trustees Health and Safety Toolkit (www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/building-and-property-resources/general-trustees-health-and-safety-toolkit).

6.3 Emergency procedures

The congregation should ensure that they have a procedure in place to deal with emergencies, including what to do if someone falls ill when visiting your church buildings. Health Protection Scotland (HPS) has produced accessible guidance on how to respond to a Covid-19 incident in a non-healthcare setting and a copy is available from www.hps.scot.nhs.uk.

Please note, HPS updates this guidance regularly so it is important that you refer back to this document from time-to-time to ensure that you are using the most up to date version of the guidance.

The HSE has published guidance for first-aiders with specific reference to Covid-19. A copy of the guidance is available from www.hse.gov.uk/news/first-aid-certificate-coronavirus.htm.

6.4 Fire Safety

The congregation is responsible for ensuring that there is a suitable Fire Safety Risk Assessment (FSRA) in place for their church buildings. Congregations should review and update their FSRA regularly, and in particular, when there is a change in the use or occupation of their church building. Congregations should also review their FSRA before reopening their church buildings and consider the following questions:

- How many people can you have in your church buildings at any one time once physical distancing precautions are in place?
- Is there the capacity to help anyone with a disability and anyone who may require assistance in an emergency?
- Will anyone in your church buildings be by themselves and if so, will this create any additional fire safety risk?
- Will there be an increase or decrease in the volume of materials being used or stored in your church buildings? For example, will you be using more chairs or fewer chairs or are you storing additional food items as part of a community food bank?
- Will items that are normally in your church buildings be stored elsewhere in the building? For example, will you be stacking chairs or storing items in places where they would not normally be stored?
- Will storing and using hand sanitisers or alcohol based hand gels create additional fire safety risks within your church buildings?

- Will physical distancing create any additional fire safety risk? For example, will people have to wait outside your building before they can safely enter, or will you need to position chairs close to an emergency exit?
- How will physical distancing impact on your emergency evacuation procedures?
- Will the precautions that you put in place impact on how the fire service will be able to access your church buildings in case of an emergency?
- What additional training or support will you require for anyone who will be assisting members of your congregation or visitors in case of an emergency?

This is not an exhaustive list and there may be other factors that you might need to consider depending on your own circumstances and arrangements.

The congregation should maintain their current systems and controls already in place for fire safety such as their fire detection system, emergency lighting and fire extinguishers. The congregation should also review and update their FSRA as we move through the different phases of the Scottish Government's four-phased approach to releasing Covid-19 restrictions. Further advice and guidance on FSRA can be found in the Church of Scotland General Trustees Health and Safety Toolkit (www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/building-and-property-resources/general-trustees-health-and-safety-toolkit).

6.5 Legionella and water safety

The General Trustees published guidance on the control of Legionella bacterium whilst your church buildings remain closed and this is available from the Church of Scotland website (www.churchofscotland.org.uk). If you already have a water safety management plan in place, then it is important that you continue to follow the control measures that it describes.

If your water supply has not been isolated during the closure of your church buildings, then it is important that you take reasonable steps to ensure that your water supply is safe. Therefore, congregations should arrange to:

- Run all water outlets for a minimum of 20 minutes. This includes all hot and cold taps and any showers that may be in your church buildings.
- Hot water systems should be set to a minimum of 60°C.
- Hot water temperature from all taps should reach at least 50°C within one minute.
- Cold-water temperature from all cold-water taps should be below 20°C within two minutes.
- If possible, windows and doors should be opened when running taps to ensure that the area is well ventilated.

If the temperature of the water is out with any of these temperatures, then there is a risk that Legionella bacterium may be present in your water system. Further advice on Legionella is available from the HSE website (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires>).

If your church buildings' water is supplied by a private water supply, then as well as the risk from Legionella bacterium, you should also ensure that any water treatment facilities installed in your church buildings are working properly.

6.6 Cleaning and disinfection

The cleaning and disinfection of all church buildings are important infection prevention and control measures against Covid-19. Congregations should consider what arrangements and resources would be required to clean and disinfect their church buildings before, during and after their church buildings have been used. The following principles should help you prepare for the cleaning and disinfection of your church buildings:

- Church buildings should be cleaned as normal with a detergent and disinfectant that is active against bacteria and viruses. It is important that the correct dilution rates are used, and contact time is followed as different cleaning chemicals may have different instructions. You should also follow any instructions on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves and/or apron (see section 6.7).
- All areas of the church building that are to be open to members of your congregation and visitors should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before reopening your church buildings each day.
- Congregations may decide to close certain areas of their buildings to reduce the level of cleaning required. As we move through the different phases of the Scottish Government's plan, additional space could be made available for use by members of the congregation or visitors to the church buildings.
- Particular attention should be given to the all hand touch sites such as door handles, grab-rails, light switches, chairs and tables. These should be cleaned and disinfected regularly whilst any church building is open and not just when opening and closing the building.
- Before closing the church building, the areas that have been open should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. However, you may consider closing your church building for 72 hours before cleaning and disinfection as an additional control measure. This would allow any active Covid-19 viruses present on any surfaces to be reduced to a safer level. This would only be suitable if you can be certain that no one will be accessing your church buildings for at least 72 hours. Upon reopening the church building, all areas and surfaces should be cleaned with detergent and disinfectant as normal.

- Historical articles, fixtures and fittings in your building may require the use of specialist cleaning materials. Please contact the General Trustees for further information.
- Ideally, disposable cleaning equipment such as cloths should be used. However, if this is not possible, then all cleaning equipment must be cleaned and disinfected after use. Re-usable cloths should be laundered in a washing machine using the warmest setting possible and dried completely before reusing. Ideally, laundered cloths should be steam-ironed and kept in a clean bag before reusing.
- You may find it beneficial to implement a cleaning schedule for each area of your church building to assist those involved with cleaning.

Congregations should consider the risk of Covid-19 transmission from fabrics and soft furnishings within your church buildings. If members of your congregation and visitors to your church building follow good hand hygiene practices and demonstrate good cough and sneezing etiquette, then the risk of virus particles transmitting on to fabrics is greatly reduced. Congregations should consider temporarily removing pew cushions as an additional control measure to reduce the risk of Covid-19 infection. If your church buildings have fabric chairs, then current evidence suggest that unless these have been visually soiled, you should continue to clean these as you normally would with, for example, a vacuum cleaner with a soft brush attachment. Congregations may also wish to consider steam cleaning fabric chairs every so often as an additional infection prevention and control measure.

Before any church building reopens, the areas of the building that you will reopen to members of your congregation and visitors should be thoroughly cleaned, disinfected and well ventilated. If you do not have access to a water supply within your church building, then you should consider how you can effectively clean and disinfect the building.

Congregations should consider how the additional cleaning required for

reopening their church buildings could be undertaken. For example, will you need to employ additional cleaning staff or will you ask volunteers to help with the cleaning of your church buildings? Further advice on employing additional cleaning staff, amending the cleaning contract that you already have in place or working with cleaners and volunteers in the high-risk group can be obtained from the Law Department.

6.7 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The correct use of suitable PPE is an effective infection prevention and control measure against Covid-19. However, congregations should have a sensitive discussion with members of their congregation about the type of PPE that may be required, and how this can be used appropriately and safely in the church environment. PPE should only be considered once all other administrative control measures such as physical distancing and hand hygiene have been considered. The congregation should record in their risk assessment if PPE is being provided and for what purpose (section 6.2). The following principles should help you decide what PPE may be required and used in your church buildings:

- There are some situations when the use of gloves would be important such as when cleaning or when handling money. However, gloves should not be routinely used in church buildings as they may offer a false sense of security to those who wear them. Instead, congregations should focus on promoting hand washing and good hygiene practices. Individuals may decide to wear gloves for other reasons such as if they have sensitive or broken skin, or if they are suffering from a dermatological condition. Only latex or nitrile gloves should be worn for infection prevention and control purposes.
- The Scottish Government, as part of its four-phased approach to easing Covid-19 restrictions, has stated that individuals will be advised to wear a face covering when in enclosed public spaces. Congregations should make arrangements to ensure that anyone who accesses their church buildings complies with best practice in this area as it may change from time to time.

This should only apply when your buildings are open to more than one person and who are not from the same household.

- Facemasks protect the wearer from potential exposure to Covid-19 whereas face coverings offer some protection to other people who may be around someone who coughs or sneezes. Medical facemasks should not be worn unless there is a specific reason for their use. The congregation may decide to keep a small supply of non-medical facemasks in their buildings in case of emergencies (see section 6.3).
- The HSE has advised that KN95 facemasks must not be used for PPE purposes, as they do not comply with the relevant European standard. KN95 masks are readily available online, including through several discount websites. If you already have a supply of these masks in the church building, you are advised to dispose of these sensibly.
- Disposable aprons should not normally be routinely worn, however they may be useful when cleaning or when responding to an emergency (see sections 6.3 and 6.6).
- If the congregation decides to use PPE, then it is important that they ensure that people follow the manufacturer's instructions on their correct storage, use and disposal. Congregations are responsible for ensuring that anyone who uses PPE knows how to use it safely and for what purpose.

6.8 Hand hygiene and general safety precautions

Once congregations have decided that they wish to reopen their church buildings, it is essential that they plan how they will communicate, promote and ensure that everyone who attends or visits their buildings can demonstrate good hand hygiene practices and follow the general safety precautions highlighted in this guidance document. Congregations should ensure that:

- Hand washing facilities including hot running water, soap and drying facilities are available to use. If you do not have a running water supply in your church buildings they may still reopen, however alcohol-based hand gels must be readily available.

- Alcohol-based hand gels must be readily available throughout the areas of the church buildings that are open to members of the congregation and visitors. Alcohol-based hand gels should not be placed in toilets (see section 6.9).
- Appropriate signage is in place reminding those who are attending or visiting your church buildings to wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand gels upon entry and when leaving the building.
- Appropriate signage is in place reminding those who access your church buildings that a face covering should be used whilst inside the building.
- Appropriate measures are in place to ensure that physical distancing (2 metres) can be observed at all times and in all areas of your church buildings that are open to members of your congregation and visitors. This includes all areas where people enter, occupy and leave your buildings. You should also consider accessibility and if people can safely use any wheelchair or passenger lifts inside your church buildings whilst safely maintaining physical distance.

Alcohol-based hand gels with a minimum alcohol (ethanol) content of 60% are recommended for use in the effective control of Covid-19. We are aware that some congregations may find it difficult to source an adequate supply of alcohol-based hand gel and the availability of this should be a determining factor in whether your church buildings should reopen. Although alternative hand gels are available, it is important that congregations are confident that whatever type they intend to use, it is safe, and will provide a similar level of decontamination and protection to alcohol-based hand gels. Medical grade alcohol based hand gels, and those alcohol-based hand gels with a very high ethanol concentration (greater than 80%) should not be used if possible, as this may pose a fire safety risk.

The easiest way to promote physical distancing would be to use appropriate tape and signs in and around your building. However, please be mindful of the historical nature of your church building, and that placing tape on the floor and on some pews/surfaces may cause significant damage.

6.9 Toilet facilities

Congregations should ensure that any toilet facilities that are available for use by members of their congregation or visitors to their church buildings can support physical distancing and good hygiene practices (see section 6.8). Congregations may decide to only allow one person to use their toilet facilities at any one time regardless of the number or size of the facilities available within their church buildings. Alternatively, congregations may decide to temporarily close their welfare facilities; however, this may have a negative impact on the ability of individuals to demonstrate good hand hygiene. Alcohol based hand gels should not be placed in toilets, as this does not promote good hand washing.

Toilet facilities may create additional infection control risks. Therefore, congregations should ensure that suitable arrangements are in place for the regular cleaning and disinfection of their toilet facilities before, during and after their church buildings are open.

6.10 Food Safety

It is unlikely that you will be able to offer any food and drink as part of your congregational activities any time soon. However, in some circumstances you may be able to offer water if this is requested by an individual. Hot drinks such as tea and coffee should not be provided under any circumstances. Water should be dispensed in to a disposable cup and left at a safe distance for the person to collect. Those providing and receiving the water should then wash their hands. Alternatively, bottled water may be offered. Disposable cups or bottled water must not be handed to the person, as this would not demonstrate physical distancing. Disposable cups and used bottles should not be taken away from the church building and should be disposed of as either general waste or recycled waste depending on local circumstances.

6.11 Waste management

Congregations must ensure that any waste management contract is reinstated before you reopen your church buildings. General waste, including cleaning

waste can be disposed of as you would under normal circumstances. If your local authority collects your waste, then you should advise them that your church buildings are reopening.

If a member of your congregation or a visitor to your church building becomes ill whilst inside your building, then any waste created from cleaning and disinfection must be double-bagged, labelled and left in a secure place inside your church building for at least 72 hours before being placed outside for collection (see sections 6.3, 6.6 and 6.7).

6.12 Outdoor church activities

Some congregations may decide to offer a particular service or activity outside of their church buildings, but still within the grounds of their property. The general principles of risk assessment and management outlined in this guidance document would still apply, including the need for physical distancing. There will be added risks that the congregation would have to consider, including the weather, the suitability of the grounds and safe access and egress.

In each of the phases of the Scottish Government's four-phased approach to easing the Covid-19 restrictions congregations may decide to offer different activities. From Phase 2, individuals can meet people outside from two different households up to a maximum of 8 people, as long as physical distancing can be maintained.. Congregations may decide that it is appropriate in their context to offer worship outdoors in the grounds of the church or another open space with relevant permissions. Congregations should also consider access to toilet and hygiene facilities (see section 6.9) and the implications of meeting outdoors in your church grounds would have on cleaning, management and any risk assessment.

It is important that congregations do not offer any activities either inside or outside of their church buildings that are prohibited by the Scottish Government.

6.13 Church buildings Insurance

Congregations should review their insurance cover for their buildings and activities as soon as possible. We have now been advised that the initial agreement, that church buildings closed due to Covid-19 restrictions will continue to be classed as occupied and benefit from full cover, will be extended until 5 August 2020. Further information is available from the Church of Scotland and the Church of Scotland Insurance Service (COSIS) website (www.cosis.co.uk) and you are encouraged to regularly check for updates.

If congregations decide not to reopen their church buildings until after the 5 August 2020, then they should contact COSIS for further advice.

6.14 Maintenance of your church buildings

The Scottish Government has now removed the general prohibition of construction and maintenance work in ecclesiastical buildings as part of moving to Phase 2 of the Construction Restart Plan developed by Construction Scotland. However, construction and maintenance work can only restart in a measured and controlled way as outlined in the Construction Scotland Restart Plan (www.cs-ic.org/library/construction-re-start-plan) and in line with the industry's site operating guidelines (www.cs-ic.org/library/working-on-site-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-construction-guidance).

Congregations must ensure that any contractor that they ask to undertake work in their church buildings completes a Covid-19 risk assessment before the work begins. Congregations must also undertake a Covid-19 risk assessment for the construction/maintenance work and ensure that physical distancing, cleaning and disinfection, and suitable infection prevention and control precautions are followed. If all of these measures cannot be followed due to the type of construction or maintenance work being carried out, then this work should be delayed until further notice.

Further information is available from the Scottish Government Covid-19 website (www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-construction-sector-guidance/pages/overview).

General maintenance work such as cleaning, painting and redecorating by church volunteers or members of the congregation can now be undertaken in church buildings. However, congregations should consider the advice published by Construction Scotland and ensure that physical distancing, cleaning and disinfection and infection prevention and control precautions are followed at all times. Congregations should consider staggering or planning their maintenance work over a period of time so that as small a number of volunteers as possible are involved at any one time with maintenance work. Volunteers or members of your congregation who are in the extremely vulnerable category, who are isolating due to Covid-19, or who have been in contact with someone who has either tested positive or has symptoms of Covid-19 should not participate in any maintenance work and must remain at home (see section 7.1.1 for further information).

7. Preparing your church buildings for reopening

This section of the guidance document will help congregations to prepare their church buildings for reopening. We have presented this guidance in a way that reflects the Scottish Government's approach to easing restrictions due to Covid-19. It is important to remember that at this time, we do not have an exact timescale for when we will enter each phase or an exhaustive list of what activities will be allowed to be provided by congregations at a particular point in time. However, we will update this guidance as further information becomes available.

7.1 Phase 2

Phase 2 of the Scottish Government's four-phased approach to easing Covid-19 restrictions allows church buildings to reopen for private prayer, marriages and other ceremonies. (Funerals have been permitted by Government Regulations since the start of the lockdown – see Section 7.1.6 below). However, these will only be allowed if physical distancing and strict hygiene practices can be followed. In addition, it is expected that further guidance from the Scottish Government will restrict the number of people who will be able to participate in marriages and will only permit these to take place outdoors at this stage. Congregations should only consider reopening their church buildings once they are satisfied that they have considered all of the principles outlined in section 6 of this guidance.

7.1.1 Who can attend church?

This is a particularly sensitive question and it is important that congregations consider the impact that reopening their church buildings may have on members of their congregation.

The Scottish Government has provided clear guidance that anyone who is shielding (extremely vulnerable), or has been in contact with someone who has either tested positive or has symptoms of Covid-19 should not attend church and must remain at home. Congregations should take steps to

observe the requirements of this guidance. Further information on high-risk groups and shielding can be obtained from (www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/pages/highest-risk-classification).

Congregations should ensure that those in the extremely vulnerable category will still be able to participate in church life during the Covid-19 pandemic without the need to attend church. Congregations should also ensure that those in the vulnerable category would be appropriately supported in their choice to participate in church life in a way that meets their own individual needs and preferences whilst safeguarding their own health, safety and welfare and those of the wider congregation

7.1.2 Church building capacity

The requirements for physical distancing means that it is unlikely that any church building will be able to reopen to the same capacity enjoyed before the closing of church buildings. Congregations must ensure that the 2-metre physical distancing rule can be safely followed in all the areas of the church building that will be open. This rule applies to anyone standing, sitting or moving in or around your church buildings.

Congregations should consider looking at any plans that may be available for your buildings. This may provide an indication of what the likely capacity of your church buildings will be. Congregations should identify the maximum number of people who can be safely permitted within the church buildings at any one time, whilst being able to practice physical distancing and ensure that this number is not exceeded.

Factors that congregations should also consider:

- How will people arrive at your church buildings?
- If several people turn up at your building at the same time, how will you ensure that they can wait safely to enter your building?
- What will you do if more people arrive at your building than you can

safely accommodate?

- How will people know where to go and where to sit when they enter your building?
- Will people leave your building by a designated exit or will they be entering and leaving your building by the same route?

There are likely to be other factors that congregations will need to consider depending on their own specific circumstances. For example, if your sanctuary has chairs then it will be easier to plan your space for physical distancing. If you have pews, then you will have to consider how you will allocate “safe pews” and how you will deter people from occupying pews too close to another person.

At the present time, congregations should not allow their balconies to be used by members of their congregation or visitors to their building. We are currently considering the risk factors associated with Covid-19 from people sitting in balconies and further advice will be provided in a future update of this guidance document.

We have provided photographs in Appendix 3, which demonstrate what physical distancing may look like in your church building.

7.1.3 Supporting those who attend church

Congregations must ensure that there is suitable support available to those people who do decide to attend church or visit your church buildings. This may involve asking elders and church volunteers to assist on a rota basis. However, any elders or church volunteers who fall within the extremely vulnerable category, or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 or displaying symptoms should not volunteer (see section 7.1.1). All elders and church volunteers must demonstrate good hygiene practices at all time and ensure that they wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand gel before entering the church building and at regular intervals thereafter.

The specific role that elders and church volunteers could be asked to undertake will depend largely on the congregation. For example, they could be asked to participate in the following:

- Welcome members of your congregation and visitors to your church building. It is important to remember that shaking hands or other form of physical welcome would not be appropriate.
- Explain what precautions are in place and indicate where alcohol-based hand gel can be found and request that they use this before progressing in to the building.
- Confirm that those attending your church buildings are well and not within the extremely vulnerable group (see section 7.1.1). This should be done discreetly and may be achieved by pointing to a notice or poster advising individuals that if any of the factors listed applied to them, then they should not attend church.
- Direct members of your congregation and visitors to a safe place to sit.
- Assist with any enquiries, questions or concerns that those attending church or visiting your church buildings may have.
- Assist with the cleaning and disinfection of the building before the building opens and during and after the session has ended.

7.1.4 Reopening your church buildings for individual prayer

We recognise that some congregations who would not normally offer individual prayer may decide to start offering this as a means of welcoming members of their congregation and visitors back in to their church buildings. It is important to remember that Phase 2 of the Scottish Government’s four-phase plan refers only to individual prayer and not to minister or worship leader led prayer. In preparing for reopening their buildings for individual prayer, congregations should consider:

- Which areas of the church will be open for individual prayer and how many people can you safely accommodate (see section 7.1.2).
- How many sessions of individual prayer will you be open for, and how long will each session last? You should consider opening you church for

several short periods rather than one long period to accommodate the number of people who may wish to participate in individual prayer.

- Will individuals be able to enter and leave throughout the prayer session or will they be expected to stay for the entire session? If you allow people to enter and leave throughout the session, then how will you ensure that there is appropriate physical distancing, cleaning, and disinfection of the seats/pews between users?
- Bibles and other shared resources should not be provided for use and ideally be removed from the area where the prayer sessions are being held. However, if you wish to provide some guidance or inspiration to help with private prayer, then a notice board, computer screen or poster may be useful.

7.1.5 Marriages

We understand the sensitivities around the current restrictions on marriages in places of worship. The Scottish Government has intimated that marriage and other ceremonies may restart under Phase 2 from the 29 June, but only in outdoor settings and with limited numbers. The need for a 28 day notice period for a Marriage Schedule remains in place, but those who had already made application for such a Schedule for a wedding planned for a date affected by the closure of churches will be able to obtain a Schedule sooner if the new date is in 2020.

7.1.6 Funerals

Although we have been allowed to provide funerals within our church buildings during the Covid-19 pandemic, up until now we have advised Presbyteries and congregations not to do so. We are now changing that advice so that funerals with limited attendance may now take place in church buildings.

It is recognised that one of the most challenging aspects of the Covid-19 lockdown has been the inability of families to hold a funeral service

in their church or community. Should a congregation agree to reopen their church buildings and have met all the criteria in the Covid-19 risk assessment, buildings checklist and secured the approval of Presbytery to reopen; a minister (or Interim Moderator) may agree to allow a funeral to be conducted in their church building from Phase 2 of the Scottish Government's four-phased approach to easing the Covid-19 restrictions if it is deemed safe to do so.

Funerals taking place in church buildings at this time should not be open to the community but only attended by those within the categories named in the Scottish Government guidance on who can attend funerals and this should be followed at all times (www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-funeral-services/pages/overview/). This means that for now, those attending should be limited to household members, close family members or (if no one in either of these categories is attending) a friend of the person who has died. Congregations may wish to provide webcasting facilities for families, should that be possible from the church building.

Congregations should bear in mind that funeral directors and staff who attend the service must be counted in the maximum numbers allowed in the church building at any one time. As no singing is permitted in church buildings at this time, there may be no requirement for an organist to attend, however the minister may wish to offer recorded music to be played at the appropriate time.

Whilst it is permissible for coffins to be inside the church building, assuming that the funeral director has followed all professional guidance on managing the deceased, no coffin should be left in the church overnight and should only enter the church building a maximum of 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the service. The minister has the final say over whether or not a coffin can be placed in the church building.

Care must be taken by the congregation to ensure that appropriate cleaning and disinfection of the church buildings can take place before the church building is reused. Where this is less than 72 hours after the funeral service, extra care must be taken as outlined in section 6.6 of this guidance document

7.1.7 Using your church buildings to support schools

We are aware that a number of congregations have either offered, or have been approached by their local schools, to see if their church buildings can be used to support children returning to schools. We are currently liaising with the Scottish Government about this and we will provide further information in a future update to this guidance document. However, congregations who are considering using their church buildings in this way are encouraged to have early discussions with their local schools and to contact the Law Department for advice and assistance on establishing a letting agreement.

7.2 Phase 3

It is anticipated that phase 3 of the Scottish Government's four-phased approach to easing of the Covid-19 restrictions will allow churches to reopen for worship and some other group-based activities. However, the measures described in section 6 and under phase 2 of this guidance document will still have to be followed. In particular, physical distancing and good hygiene practices will still be in place.

The Scottish Government is expected to publish additional guidance on which activities will be permitted in church buildings during phase 3. We will update this guidance document as more information becomes available. However, congregations may find it beneficial to consider the following points as you plan to reopen your church buildings for additional use.

7.2.1 Worship in Phase 3

The customary pattern of worship is unlikely to be permitted in church buildings for quite some time, and therefore ministers and worship leaders should explore other ways of providing worship. Physical distancing will mean that fewer people may be allowed to attend worship and therefore you should consider if more than one service should be provided. If you intend to offer more than one service, then you will have to ensure that the areas where worship takes place can be cleaned and disinfected in between use.

Ministers and worship leaders should not shake hands or offer any other form of a physical welcome or farewell to members of the congregation.

Items such as bibles should be removed from the sanctuary and other areas where worship takes place. The use of computer/television screens or boards as an alternative to bibles and other worship materials should be encouraged. Alternatively, church websites can be used to share information and members of the congregation or visitors could be asked to print out limited materials for their own use and bring them along with them to support worship. People should not share any materials that they have printed off at home under any circumstance.

Studies have indicated that Covid-19 may be transmitted by singing as the water droplets produced from singing can travel further than the 2 metres required for physical distancing. There is still a lot of research ongoing on the risk of Covid-19 transmission from singing. Therefore, we would recommend that alternative ways of providing music rather than communal hymn singing should be explored. For example, the church organist may be able to provide music, however, this in itself may encourage those who attend worship to sing.

Some ministers and worship leaders who have presented worship through live video feed or by video recordings may prefer to continue with this method of worship to support those members of the congregation who cannot attend church.

It is unlikely that refreshments such as the provision of tea, coffee and biscuits either before or after worship will be allowed under phase 3. We will provide further information relating to the provision of hospitality in a future update to this guidance document.

7.2.2 Taking the offering

The traditional method of taking the offering by passing the plate should not take place. The Stewardship and Finance Department issued guidance on how members and adherents could continue to give while buildings remained closed and can provide advice to congregations who wish to receive offerings and other income by standing order, by text message, by use of a contactless terminal, through the donate button on either the congregation or Church of Scotland website or from a Facebook page. Contactless terminals should not be passed from person to person and it may be appropriate to set the terminal to a predetermined amount to eliminate the need for the screen to be touched by donors. An appropriate cleaning solution should be used for cleaning contactless terminals. Where it is necessary to collect cash, consideration should be given to providing envelopes and discreet, secure deposit boxes. Gloves should be worn when handling money (see section 6.7) and the areas where any money has been handled should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected afterwards.

7.2.3 Communion

It is likely that communion will be allowed under phase 3 of the Scottish Government's four-phased approach to easing the Covid-19 restrictions. However, the traditional arrangements of passing a plate/tray of elements or by intinction will not be allowed.

At this moment, we believe that it will very challenging to offer communion under phase 3 of Scottish Government's four-phased approach to easing the Covid-19 restrictions. We are engaging with the Scottish Government and other key stakeholders as a matter of urgency and we will update this guidance document with further advice in due course.

7.2.4 Funerals and memorial services in Phase 3

Ministers and worship leaders should expect an increase in the number of requests for memorial and thanksgiving services, as the initial restrictions placed on funerals meant that many were unable to grieve well or fully. Ministers and worship leaders will require additional time and support to prepare for these services and it is important that they do not over commit themselves within the first few weeks of reopening their church buildings. Congregations should ensure that families are aware of the maximum numbers who can safely attend the service. The minister will determine the number of people who can attend the service; however, this will not be greater than the number of people who can safely occupy the sanctuary once physical distancing arrangements are in place. Infection prevention and control procedures must be followed at all times (please see section 6.6 and 6.8 for further information).

Once wider attendance at funeral services becomes possible, and bearing in mind that physical distancing will limit the numbers who can be accommodated, one option which some congregations may wish to consider, if they believe it to be necessary in their community, is to issue those who are invited to the funeral some form of card or item that allows those welcoming at the church door to allow admittance. This might be achieved in a similar manner to families giving cards to those who take a cord at the graveside. A congregation may wish to print and provide these cards to the family to control numbers.

Ministers and worship leaders should expect an increase in the number of

requests for memorial and thanksgiving services, as the initial restrictions placed on funerals meant that many were unable to grieve well or fully. Ministers and worship leaders will require additional time and support to prepare for these services and it is important that they do not over commit themselves within the first few weeks of reopening their church buildings.

7.2.5 Baptism

It is likely that Baptismal services will be possible under phase 3 of the Scottish Government's four-phased approach to easing the Covid-19 restrictions. However, physical distancing, good hygiene practices and a reduction in the number of those who will be able to attend will remain in place.

Ministers should consider whether the requirement for physical distance and the space available within the building would be able to support baptism. Ministers should not hold the infant, but ask a parent or guardian to do so for the duration of the service. Ministers should also demonstrate good hand hygiene practices by washing their hands before and after the baptism. The water used for baptism should not be used more than once.

7.2.6 Church Groups

It is likely that some small church groups will be able to restart under phase 3 of the Scottish Government's four-phased approach to easing the Covid-19 restrictions. However, this will largely depend on the physical capabilities of your church buildings and the ability to adhere to physical distancing and good hygiene practices. Further information will be provided in future updates of this guidance document.

7.2.7 Children's and Youth Ministry

It is likely that some children's and youth ministry activities will be able to restart under phase 3 of the Scottish Government's four-phased approach to easing the Covid-19 restrictions. However, the measures described in

section 6 and 7 of this guidance document will still have to be followed. In particular, physical distancing and good hygiene practices will still be in place.

Sunday schools may be able to restart as part of the resuming of worship (see section 7.2.1) should there be adequate space; suitable volunteers and all physical distancing guidelines should be followed. Congregations will need to carefully consider whether their church buildings and volunteers can cope with the demands of young children for whom physical distancing is a challenge. If it is decided that the congregation cannot meet these demands you may wish to consider in what other ways children's ministry can resume, for example using technology with appropriate safeguards in place. Intergenerational activities such as Messy Church or Café Church present their own risks, however where congregations wish to consider restarting such activities consideration could be given to having different household groups at different smaller tables to allow for a community experience within a physically distanced environment.

Many congregations undertake an annual Holiday Club for children and this will not be possible during this phase in a physical sense. The congregation may wish to consider a virtual Holiday Club, for which resources are beginning to be made available online.

When children are a part of the worshipping community during Phase 3 congregations should ensure that children sit in family groups and that young children remain close to the parent or guardian to ensure that physical distancing is maintained and risk to others is reduced.

7.2.8 External groups

It is likely that some external groups will wish to restart using your church buildings under phase 3 of the Scottish Government's four-phased approach to easing the Covid-19 restrictions. You should not agree to

this without first considering a number of factors such as the physical capabilities of your church buildings, the ability to adhere to physical distancing and good hygiene practices and the number of separate letting arrangements which are in place. What is possible and appropriate for a single user of your premises may not be possible if your church buildings are used throughout the week by a variety of different groups. Existing contracts for the hire of church buildings will require to be updated to ensure that users are responsible for adhering to guidelines, responsibility for cleaning has been agreed and that both parties continue to be covered by their insurance policies. It may be necessary to consider employing someone to clean and disinfect surfaces before and after use by each group, to ensure cleaning is sufficiently thorough.

Congregations should not confirm return dates with external groups at the present time. When external groups may be able to return to church buildings will be informed by further guidance from the Scottish Government. More information will be provided in future updates of this guidance document and the Law Department's Hall Lettings circular will at the same time be updated to reflect the current situation.

7.3 Phase 4

Phase 4 will allow church buildings to reopen for all regular activities; however, physical distancing and good hygiene practices will remain in place. Covid-19 may still be present in the community, but the risk of transmission will be significantly reduced and it will no longer be classed as a significant threat to public health. We will only be able to move on to phase 4 of the Scottish Government's four-phase plan to ease Covid-19 restrictions under the direction of the Scottish Government.

If congregations decide not to reopen their buildings until phase 4, then they must be satisfied that they have considered all of the principles outlined in section 6 and 7 of this guidance. In addition, the control measures highlighted under phase 2 and phase 3 of this guidance should also be considered.

We will update this section of the guidance document once further information and guidance is received from the Scottish Government.

Church of Scotland, Covid-19 (coronavirus) Reopening of Church Buildings Checklist

Congregations should use this property checklist when preparing to reopen their buildings that have closed due to Covid-19. The property checklist should be used alongside the Covid-19 risk assessment and the Church of Scotland guidance on the reopening of church buildings. Your presbytery may request a copy of this checklist and risk assessment as they work with the Kirk Session to reopen church buildings.

Description	Yes	No	NA	Comments
General				
1. Has the Kirk Session agreed that their building(s) should reopen?				
2. Has the minister been consulted in respect of the desire of the Kirk Session to reopen the church building(s) and are they in agreement?				
3. If only part of the building is to reopen, has the Kirk Session confirmed which areas? If the answer is yes, please indicate which areas are to reopen in the comments box.				
4. Is the Kirk Session aware of the current restrictions in place for places of worship and understand that their buildings can only reopen for those activities contained with the Scottish Government's four-phased plan?				
What is the current condition of the building? It is important that the church building(s) be inspected before reopening to see if any problems have occurred whilst the building has been closed.				
5. Is there any evidence of a roof leak or other forms of water ingress/damage?				
6. If you have any asbestos containing materials (ACM) in your church building(s), have these been disturbed or damaged?				
7. Is there any evidence of dampness?				
8. Has there been any escape of water or other fluids from pipes?				
9. Are there any problems with flooding or with the drains?				

10. Is there any evidence of subsidence or building movement?				
11. Are there any signs of malicious damage?				
12. Are there any signs of damage to the building(s) by trees or ingress of foliage?				
13. Is there any evidence of fly tipping?				
14. Has there been any theft of materials or equipment from either inside or outside of the building?				
15. Has there been any damage to the lightning system?				
Building security				
16. Have you inspected the condition of the perimeter fencing/gates?				
17. Have you checked the condition of all external doors, windows ensuring that all locks operate correctly?				
18. Have you confirmed that any external security lights are working properly?				
19. Have you inspected the intruder alarm and CCTV systems to ensure that they are working properly?				
20. Do you think that any additional security measures are required for your church building(s)?				
Risk assessment including Covid-19 risk assessment				
21. Have all of the risk assessments that you have in place relating to, and the use of the church building(s) been reviewed?				
22. Do any of the risk assessments require amending or updating? If you answer yes, please explain why and confirm that they have been updated				
23. Has the Covid-19 risk assessment been completed for your building(s)?				

24. Have suitable control measures for Covid-19 been identified and implemented?				
Fire Safety				
25. Have you reviewed and updated the fire safety risk assessment for your building(s)?				
26. Have you checked that emergency lights are working?				
27. Have you inspected the condition and operation of all fire doors and fire exit routes, including emergency exits?				
28. Have you checked that any evacuation equipment such as an Evac chair is in good order?				
29. Have you checked all fire extinguishers are in the correct place and within their service dates?				
30. Have you checked that the fire detection and alarm system is working and within its service date?				
31. Have people been advised of any new emergency fire safety procedure?				
Electrical Installation				
32. Has the fixed wire electrical installation for your church building(s) been inspected and tested as required under the Electricity at Work Regulations 1998 and IET Wiring Regulation and have all C1 and C2 faults been repaired?				
For the purpose of this checklist, your electrical installation should have been tested at least once in the previous 5 years.				

Gas/Oil supply				
33. Have the gas isolation valves been exercised and checked by a GasSafe engineer including any interlocks on any equipment?				
34. Has the gas/oil boiler been inspected in the last 12 months and do you have an appropriate safety inspection certificate?				If you have less than six months to go before your next inspection/ service, congregations should consider having their boiler inspected before reopening.
Legionella and water safety plan				
35. Do you have a water management risk assessment in place and if so, have you followed the water management plan specific to your building?				
36. Have you implemented suitable Legionella control measures? Please refer to the Church of Scotland guidance on the reopening of church buildings for further information.				
Cleaning and disinfection				
37. Have you made provisions for the cleaning of your building(s) including the regular cleaning and disinfection of all hand touch surfaces?				
38. Do you have an adequate supply of cleaning materials including disinfectant, detergent, cloths and mops?				
39. Are people aware of their responsibilities for cleaning and disinfection and what areas require cleaning and when?				
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)				
40. Have the PPE requirements identified from the COVID-19 risk assessment been implemented to ensure that suitable and appropriate PPE is provided and available?				
41. Are volunteers trained in the correct storage, use and disposal of PPE?				

Hand hygiene and general safety precautions				
42. Is there an adequate supply of hot running water, soap and paper towels? Please refer to the Church of Scotland guidance on the reopening of church buildings for further information.				
43. Is alcohol based hand sanitiser/hand gel available for use upon entry/exit and throughout the church building?				
44. Is appropriate signage in place to remind people to wash and/or decontaminate their hands and to comply with other infection prevention and control measures?				
45. Are there provisions in place to ensure that anyone who enters your church building(s) can comply with physical distancing requirements? For example, signage on doors, corridors and toilets and/or suitable markings on the floor,				
Covid-19 emergency procedures				
46. Have you written an emergency procedure based on the HPS guidance for non-healthcare settings for responding to someone who falls ill with Covid-19 symptoms when visiting your church building?				
47. Has this procedure been communicated to all volunteers and anyone else who may be responsible for your church building?				
Control of Waste				
48. Is PPE available to anyone who undertakes cleaning?				
49. Is PPE available to use when dealing with waste that could be contaminated with COVID-19 and can this waste be disposed of correctly?				
50. Has the local authority and/or your waste service provider been informed that you intend to reopen your building?				

The Church of Scotland , Church Buildings COVID-19 Risk Assessment (V1

This risk assessment must be completed before any church building reopens. This risk assessment will help congregations identify appropriate control measures that must be in place to protect members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors from the risk of Covid-19 infection. The control measures highlighted in this risk assessment reflect current best practice and should be regarded as the minimum standard for your church buildings and congregation. Additional control measures may be implemented to reflect local circumstances. Please note: this risk assessment reflects current policy in Scotland and may not be suitable for congregations in England or those within the International Presbytery. Further advice should be sought from the Church of Scotland General Trustees OR by emailing covid19guidance@churchofscotland.org.uk. Your presbytery may request a copy of this risk assessment as they work with the congregations to reopen church buildings.

Congregation		
Presbytery		
Which building(s) does this risk assessment relate to?		
Name of assessor(s)		
Date		
Date of review		
Signature		

Infection prevention, cleaning and members, volunteers and visitors Safety

Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

As church buildings reopen after the restrictions on places of worship are eased, congregations must ensure that their buildings are safe and do not increase the risk of virus transmission.

Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

There is a direct threat to anyone who enters a church building due to its public nature that they may be exposed to Covid-19.

People can catch the virus from others who are infected in the following ways:

- virus moves from person-to-person in droplets from the nose or mouth spread when a person with the virus coughs or exhales
- the virus can survive for 72 hours or longer on surfaces which people have touched or coughed on, etc.
- people can pick up the virus by breathing in the droplets or by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching their eyes or mouth

Not all people infected with Covid-19 show symptoms. Therefore, it is vitally important that reasonable precautions are in place and followed at all times.

Control measures

The congregation will comply with its statutory duty to provide a safe environment, with particular reference to the Covid-19 pandemic by:

- ensure that all members, volunteers and visitors are aware of the infection prevention and control precautions that are in place within your buildings and the behavior expected of them during the pandemic to keep themselves and others safe
- require all members, volunteers and visitors to practice physical distancing when in or around your building, including outside areas

The congregation will communicate and reinforce key Government public health messages to all members, volunteers and visitors who visit their buildings:

- anyone who is unwell or who shows symptoms of Covid-19 (High temperature/fever, cough or loss of smell), who is in the extremely vulnerable group, who is shielding, who is isolating, or who is living with someone who is isolating or is unwell must not attend church
- recommend the use of an appropriate face covering when inside the building.
- if a face covering is not used for medical or other reasons, cover the mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not hands) when coughing or sneezing (Catch it – Bin it – Kill it)
- put used tissues in the bin straight away
- wash hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (use alcohol base hand sanitiser/ gel if soap and water are not available)
- avoid close contact with people who become unwell when within your buildings
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces
- do not touch face, eyes, nose or mouth if hands are not clean

Further actions required

Infection prevention, cleaning and members, volunteers and visitors Safety (continued)

Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

Control measures

The congregation will fully implement in all areas of their church buildings Health Protection Scotland (Public Health Scotland), Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and Scottish Government advice and guideline relevant to the Covid-19 Pandemic, including the following safety precautions:

- make any adjustments to the space within your buildings to facilitate effective infection prevention and physical distancing
- follow Government health and travel advice
- provide alcohol based hand sanitiser/gel as required
- provide infection control and personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, and masks if required
- increase environmental cleaning in the church building including hand-touch areas; and ensure cleaning staff and volunteers have access to suitable detergents, disinfectants and PPE
- provide additional waste removal facilities and more frequent rubbish collection if required
- display appropriate public health posters and notices around the building and on websites informing members, volunteers and visitors of the control measure that are in place and their own role and responsibility to follow them.

Further actions required

Physical distancing

Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

Effective physical distancing is a key element in reducing the transmission of Covid-19

Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

Physical distancing refers to people being required to maintain a distance from each other of 2 meters, wherever possible
Physical distancing effectively puts people at a safe range from anyone coughing
The main route of virus transmission is through droplets exhaled or coughed by an infected person

Control measures

All members, volunteers and visitors are required to practice effective physical distancing while in and around the building by:

- avoiding non-essential contact with others
- keeping a safe distance of at least 2 metres (about 3 steps) from others whenever possible
- avoiding physical contact (e.g. hugs, handshakes, etc)

Adaptations to the building to support physical distancing will include:

- a review of the church building to identify suitable adaptations which will support physical distancing, for example layout changes, appropriate signage, stickers and floor markings to denote safe distances, etc
- establishing maximum occupancy limits for all areas of the buildings
- all meetings will take place using telephone or video conferencing facilities

The congregation will display notices in throughout the church building reminding members, volunteers and visitors of the key infection prevention requirements, including the need to maintain safe physical distancing

Further actions required

Higher risk areas of the building

Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

Some areas of the church building may present a higher risk than others; for example toilets and restrooms.

Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

Heavily used areas of the building are more likely to present an infection transmission risk

Toilets are essential for members, volunteers and visitors to wash their hands regularly but also the toilets must be kept clean and free of coronavirus contamination

A number of people going to the toilet together may compromise their ability to comply with physical distancing

Increased risk of people coughing and touching door handles, taps and toilet flush handles

Control measures

Ensure higher-risk/ high-traffic areas of the building are effectively controlled by applying appropriate safety precautions, including:

- stressing the need for everyone to follow good hygiene practice at all times (i.e. regular handwashing, using tissues and disposing of them appropriately, etc)
- the congregation will ensure that adequate hand-cleaning resources are provided; all toilets to be supplied with adequate supplies of hot water, liquid soap and paper towels
- printing handwashing instructions/posters and displaying throughout the building, especially in toilets
- limiting numbers of people who can use high traffic areas such as corridors, stairs, toilets and restrooms at any one time to ensure physical distancing
- limiting lift occupancy
- monitor high-traffic area use and regulate access as necessary
- prioritise disabled use where necessary, e.g. disabled toilet use, use of lifts, etc
- establishing safe queuing systems by use of room occupancy limits and floor markings/signage, etc
- placing alcohol hand sanitisers/ gels at convenient places around the building with instructions for use
- increasing environmental cleaning, especially in and around toilets and; special attention to be paid to frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, toilet flush handles, light switches, etc
- increasing toilets/washrooms inspections to check for cleanliness/adequate stock of soap/toilet paper, etc
- where possible, providing paper towels as an alternative to hand dryers in handwashing facilities

Further actions required

Vulnerable and Extremely Vulnerable members, volunteers and visitors

Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

Some members, volunteers or visitors may have pre-existing medical conditions which render them more vulnerable to the dangers of coronavirus infection

Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

Those who are classified by the Scottish Government as being at greater risk from Covid-19 include people in the vulnerable (higher-risk) and extremely vulnerable (extremely high risk) categories

Vulnerable (higher risk) people include those who:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 and instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds
- pregnant

And those with:

- chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- problems with their spleen, for example sickle cell disease
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- a BMI of 40 or above who are seriously overweight

Extremely vulnerable (extremely high risk) people include those with:

- cancer who are receiving active chemotherapy
- lung cancer who are either receiving or previously received radical radiotherapy
- cancers of the blood or bone marrow, such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, severe COPD, severe bronchiectasis and pulmonary hypertension
- rare diseases, including all forms of interstitial lung disease/ sarcoidosis, and inborn errors of metabolism (such as SCID and

Control measures

The congregation will ensure that those in the extremely vulnerable category will still be able to participate in church life during the Covid-19 pandemic without the need to attend church.

The congregation will ensure that those in the vulnerable category will be appropriately supported in their choice to participate in church life in a way that meets their own individual needs and preferences whilst safeguarding their own health, safety and welfare and those of the wider congregation and community.

Further actions required

Vulnerable and Extremely Vulnerable members, volunteers and visitors (continued)

Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

- homozygous sickle cell) that significantly increase the risk of infections
- an absent spleen or have had their spleen removed
 - significant heart disease (congenital or acquired) and are pregnant

And those that have had:

- solid organ transplants
- bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs

Or receiving:

- immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- immunosuppression therapies that significantly increase the risk of infection
- renal dialysis treatment

The following advice applies:

- Those in the extremely vulnerable category are subject to special "shielding" arrangements by the Scottish Government.
- those in the vulnerable category are advised to stay at home as much as possible
- people in both categories are advised by the Scottish Government to be particularly stringent in complying with physical distancing requirements

There is some evidence that people from ethnic minority backgrounds are hit harder by Covid-19

Control measures

Further actions required

Premises access and travel

Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

Members, volunteers and visitors who come to your church building must be able to access your building safely

Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

Travel to and from your building may lead to a greater risk of virus transmission

Public transport may be restricted in order to achieve physical distancing on trains, buses, etc

Access to church buildings may create a virus transmission risk if people all seek entrance at once or are channeled through single points of entry

Risks may be increased for disabled people who may have reduced options for access

Control measures

The congregation will apply the following arrangements to ensure safe access to their building:

- ensure that sufficient access points to the church building are provided so that people do not congregate at entrances and exits; ensure that all access points have supplies of hand sanitiser/gel available for use
- review disabled access arrangements to ensure safe entrance or exit for disabled people
- use floor markings and signage at entrances and exits and introduce one-way flow systems at entry and exit points where appropriate. Consideration to the historical nature of the building will inform the extent of this provision.
- provide alcohol based hand sanitiser/gel at entrances and exits

Further actions required

Cases of possible infection in the church building

Hazards associated with the coronavirus pandemic

A members, volunteer or visitor may become unwell whilst attending the church building, or a symptomatic person may attend the building

Potential risks to members of the congregation, volunteers and visitors to the church caused by hazards

High risk of transmission

Control measures

If a member, volunteer or visitor of becomes unwell in the church building with coronavirus symptoms (a new, continuous cough or a high temperature) they should be sent home and advised to follow Government advice to self-isolate

- Health Protection Scotland (HPS) "Covid-19 guidance for non-healthcare settings" guidance will be followed.

The following actions should be taken within the building:

- all surfaces that a symptomatic person has come into contact with must be cleaned and disinfected, especially objects visibly contaminated with body fluids and all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as toilets
- public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time, such as corridors, but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids, can be cleaned thoroughly as normal
- cleaning staff should use disposable cloths or paper roll and a combined detergent disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1000 parts per million available chlorine
- cleaning staff must wear appropriate PPE
- waste from cleaning of areas where possible cases have been (including disposable cloths and tissues) should be "double-bagged" and tied off; it should be placed in a secure holding area for 72 hours before being disposed of in general waste

Further actions required

Appendix 3 – Examples of physical distancing in the church sanctuary

Congregations must ensure that everyone attending or visiting their church buildings can practice physical distancing at all times. Some congregations will be able to adapt their space very easily, whilst for others this may take some time. Congregations should focus on how people can arrive, enter, move around and leave their church buildings whilst maintaining a 2 metre distance at all times. It is also important when you consider physical distancing in your church buildings that you think about how people will access hand hygiene facilities such as water and alcohol-based hand gels whilst maintaining a 2 metre distance.

The following photographs provide an example of how congregations have been preparing to reopen their church buildings with physical distancing in place. Photograph A shows how physical distancing can be achieved in a sanctuary with chairs set out for private prayer where individuals will be moving freely in and out of the sanctuary. Photograph B shows how physical distancing can be achieved when providing worship and other ceremonies in a sanctuary with pews. Photograph C shows how physical distancing can be achieved in the same sanctuary as in 'A' above when providing worship and other ceremonies. It is important to remember that every church building and congregation is different, and congregations should take as much time as needed to adapt their space to allow for physical distancing.

Photograph A – physical distancing in a sanctuary with chairs set out for private prayer



Photograph B - physical distancing in a sanctuary with pews set out for worship and other ceremonies



Photograph C – physical distancing in a sanctuary with chairs set out for worship and other ceremonies





The Church of Scotland

www.churchofscotland.org.uk

Scottish Charity Number: SC011353