



# The Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland

Guidance for Opening Churches for Worship

July 2020

The Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland

Presbytery Office

% Mastrick Parish Church

Greenfern Road

Aberdeen AB16 6TR

Telephone 01224 698119

Email [aberdeenshetland@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:aberdeenshetland@churchofscotland.org.uk)

#### Revision History

RV01 First Draft

RV02 Minor amendments & corrections

RV03 Reorganisation of the document

RV03.1 Amended to include changes suggested by June 30<sup>th</sup> meeting

Issued as approved July 1 2020

**Contents**

Contents..... 3

Foreword ..... 4

Scope of this Document..... 5

Feedback..... 5

Contributors..... 5

Weblinks ..... 5

General Trustees’ Guidance ..... 6

Kirk Session Responsibilities ..... 6

The Checklist..... 7

    General ..... 7

    What is the current condition of the building? [...] ..... 8

    Building security..... 9

    Risk assessment including Covid-19 risk assessment ..... 9

    Fire Safety, Electrical Installation and Gas/Oil Supply ..... 9

    Legionella and water safety plan ..... 10

    Cleaning and disinfection..... 11

    Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)..... 12

    Hand hygiene and general safety precautions (including signage) ..... 13

    Covid-19 emergency procedures..... 14

    Control of Waste..... 15

The Covid-19 Risk Assessment..... 16

Examples of physical distancing in the church sanctuary..... 16

Some general advice..... 18

External companies..... 18

Environmental ..... 19

Volunteers..... 19

Conclusion ..... 19

## Foreword

Our churches across the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland have been closed for a considerable time due to the restrictions imposed upon all of us by the Scottish Government, and the direction of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland.

At the end of June 2020, the restrictions are being relaxed and the Scottish Government's Route Map for starting activity again has been published online at: [www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-scotlands-route-map](http://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-scotlands-route-map)

Part of the guidance refers to "Places of Worship" and the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland have published further guidance for our churches, helping to ensure that we open up again in a way that gives focus to the safety of everyone who may enter the church.

This document has been prepared by a Presbytery task-and-finish committee, named C19C, to try and give localised help to the churches of Aberdeen and Shetland. It is important to note that, as the situation with COVID-19 measures, this document may be revised and updated. The most current version of the document is always found at the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland website at [www.aberdeenshetlandpresbytery.org.uk](http://www.aberdeenshetlandpresbytery.org.uk)

Care must be taken by churches to have the current version to hand when deciding their own measures for opening up.

There is no pressure being applied by the General Trustees or by the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland for churches to open. The decision to open rests with the Kirk Session and the agreement of the Minister. Should a Kirk Session not feel ready or able to open, the Presbytery is available to help understand the barriers and, where a Kirk Session wants, to try and offer help in removing those barriers.

Isaiah 43 : 18 – 19 says:

*"Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."* (NRSVA)

The Prophet's message is one of hope for the future. We must recognise that things will never again be as they were, but the great and successful efforts to adapt to lockdown have set us on the right path for what happens next in our own churches, and in the Church of Scotland as a whole.

## Scope of this Document

This document looks specifically at opening the churches for congregational and community worship. This is in Phase 3 of the Route Map and at the time of writing this document, the Scottish Government says, “is unlikely to be before the 23<sup>rd</sup> July [2020]”.

[www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-scotlands-route-map-indicative-dates-remainder-phase-2-early-phase-3/pages/2/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-scotlands-route-map-indicative-dates-remainder-phase-2-early-phase-3/pages/2/)

The Route Map also indicates that restrictions on wedding and funeral services may be relaxed at the same time. The measures set out in this document for regular worship will allow churches, should they wish, to prepare to carry out these ceremonies in a way that is safe for all.

## Feedback

The C19C committee will be pleased to receive feedback on any element of this document. The contributors have done all in their power and experience to ensure that the advice given herein is timely, accurate and helpful.

Any feedback you have for the committee should be sent by email to the Depute Clerk of the Presbytery at the email address:

[aberdeenshetland@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:aberdeenshetland@churchofscotland.org.uk)

## Contributors

The contributors to the C19C committee are M Leys (Queen’s Cross, Aberdeen)(Convener), R Johnstone (South Holburn, Aberdeen), Rev J Ferguson (Peterculter, Aberdeen), L Brady (Shetland), D Buddle (Shetland) and B Mitchell (High Hilton, Aberdeen).

All can be contacted via the Depute Clerk.

## Weblinks

Throughout this document links are given to online resources. Some of these links are quite long and perhaps difficult to type into a web browser, so they have been added to a “jumping off” page at [www.aberdeenshetlandpresbytery.org.uk/c19c](http://www.aberdeenshetlandpresbytery.org.uk/c19c). Visit that page and you will find clickable links to those given in this document.

## **General Trustees' Guidance**

This document must be read in connection with the General Trustees' guidance document, the most up to date version always being available on the Church of Scotland website at:

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/covid-19-coronavirus-advice](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/covid-19-coronavirus-advice)

This document was written with reference to the Church of Scotland's document "Covid-19 (coronavirus) Reopening of Church Buildings, June 2020, Version 2.0" which was circulated to Ministers, Session Clerks and MDS staff by email. It can be accessed at any time through the link given above.

The advice given by the General Trustees is the definitive standard.

The additional advice given in this document is to give emphasis to, and offer some practical help for, achieving the various items set out in the *checklist* at Appendix 1 of the guidance, the *risk assessment* at Appendix 2 of the guidance, and the *examples of physical distancing in church sanctuaries* at Appendix 3 of the guidance.

## **Kirk Session Responsibilities**

Individual members of the Kirk Session are Trustees of their church's charity, and have specific duties towards the charity, the church, and everyone who comes through the doors of the church, be that as worshippers, members of groups, workmen or contractors, employees, and other members of the Kirk Session.

Ensuring that every element of the guidance for opening has been addressed, and understanding individual roles in the church, is a responsibility of every member of the Kirk Session. In many churches the work associated with reopening will be assigned to a subcommittee that will report its findings and recommendations to the Kirk Session. The Kirk Session then accepts or rejects that report.

The Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) publishes a guide to the duties of trustees on its website at

[www.oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms/guidance-and-good-practice-for-charity-trustees/charity-trustee-duties/](http://www.oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms/guidance-and-good-practice-for-charity-trustees/charity-trustee-duties/)

and there is further advice from an Edinburgh law firm, 'Duties of Trustees [in Scotland], 6th Edition, Turcan Connell Law, Edinburgh'

[www.turcanconnell.com/media/3230/turcan-connell-duties-of-trustees.pdf](http://www.turcanconnell.com/media/3230/turcan-connell-duties-of-trustees.pdf)

## The Checklist

### Appendix 1 – Buildings check list

#### 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
<b>General</b>				
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?				
<b>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.</b>				
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?				

23

The checklist is given as appendix 1 to the guidance. Before completing it, check on the Church of Scotland website that you are working to the most recent version of the guidance document.

After completing the checklist, it is important that you keep it in a file alongside all other records of work done for opening up again.

We will look at each section of the checklist in turn.

### *General*

If your answer to question 1 is “No”, then much of the remainder of the checklist may not be immediately relevant. However, there are still duties upon the Kirk Session to ensure the integrity of all the church’s buildings and the safety of anyone who may come into the buildings for whatever reason.

### *What is the current condition of the building? [...]*

The questions here are about items that the Kirk Session should be looking at continuously. Should the answer to any of these questions be “Yes” then arrangements must be made to address the items causing concern.

Addressing items of concern may need people to come onto church grounds or enter the church. The Kirk Session must make sure that it has measures in place to protect these people. It must also ensure that the people coming onsite will be working in a way that protects those around them.

A standard health and safety approach is to request a “method statement” from anyone coming onto or into church property to provide a service. Method statements outline the safety measures that the provider has adopted and must be up to date to cover safety measures for managing the coronavirus environment.

Kirk Sessions should check their insurance coverage and in particular the requirements of their insurers for regular building checks. It is likely that the insurers require a weekly inspection of grounds and buildings and it is important that a record be kept of these inspections, including date & time of any concerns found, of what was done to address the concerns, and when the issue was resolved.

When opening up the church, a further inspection of these items is necessary to ensure the safety of everyone in the church. It is recommended that in the days before opening that systems that will be in use when open, are tested and inspected.

*For example. Over the period of lockdown, due to the empty building and the unusually warm weather, many churches have had no need to run heating systems. It is prudent to run the heating system as a test a few days in advance of opening the building. Should any problem be found, there remains time for it to be addressed.*

If churches find issues with their buildings that need external help to be addressed, the Presbytery Property Committee may be able to assist in finding suitable contractors where the church has none.



### ***Building security***

The items on this part of the checklist are fairly straightforward.

These items must be regularly checked and maintained at any time. It is prudent to ensure the Kirk Session is aware of any requirements of the church's insurers regarding building security and protection of any items of value in the church.

### ***Risk assessment including Covid-19 risk assessment***

Kirk Sessions must have risk assessments completed for the various activities and services that the church provides. The *General Trustees Health and Safety Toolkit* issued to churches some years ago gives detailed advice on why risk assessments are needed, what parts of building uses and church life should be looked at, as well as examples and templates to support the people carrying out the risk assessments.

An additional risk assessment, specifically for the measures that churches are taking for management of COVID-19 risk, has been added. That risk assessment is given at Appendix B of the guidance document and will be discussed later in this document.

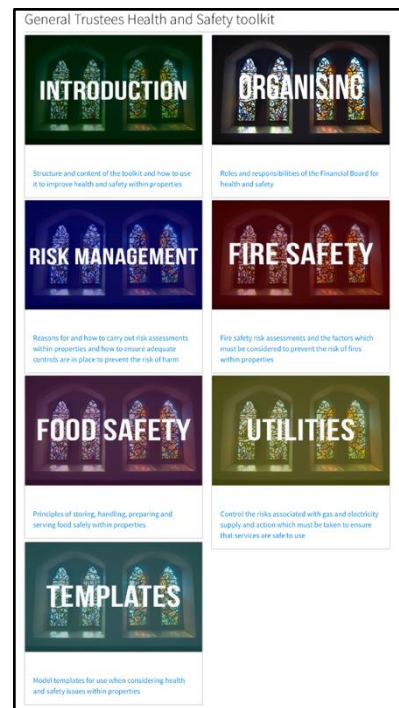
The checklist specifically references fire safety precautions in its next section. Fire safety considerations are also part of the General Trustees' Health and Safety Toolkit. The Toolkit can be found at:

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/building-and-property-resources/general-trustees-health-and-safety-toolkit](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/building-and-property-resources/general-trustees-health-and-safety-toolkit)

### ***Fire Safety, Electrical Installation and Gas/Oil Supply***

The items on this part of the checklist again, as for risk assessments above, should be being carried out as part of regular inspection and maintenance visits to the church.

Should a Kirk Session need advice or assistance with this part of the checklist, please contact the Presbytery Property Committee via the Depute Clerk email [aberdeenshetland@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:aberdeenshetland@churchofscotland.org.uk)



## *Legionella and water safety plan*

This is a particularly important safety consideration and it is essential that the Kirk Session addresses this item carefully and in detail.

Legionella, the bacteria that causes legionnaires disease, grows readily where water systems have been unused for some time. The General Trustees Health and Safety Toolkit describes the measures that a Kirk Session should be taking regularly to ensure water safety in church buildings.

Legionnaires disease is a particularly nasty variant of pneumonia and comes with a list of other effects on sufferers.

The risks of transmission are perhaps not immediately obvious. Legionella is transferred through tiny water droplets that carry the bacteria, and these droplets come from simple sources like turning on a tap, flushing a toilet, emptying a flower vase, using a hosepipe, using water from a garden water butt, and so on.

Dehumidifiers, humidifiers, ice-cooled room coolers, fridge/freezers with icemakers or water dispensers, water coolers, etc. will need cleaned and flushed.

Almost every water source has a chance of carrying the legionella bacteria. Infection comes when these tiny water droplets are breathed in.

Whether or not churches are choosing to reopen, there is an essential need to ensure that a legionella and water safety plan is in place.

*Strong recommendation. Kirk Sessions immediately mark water sources inside and outside buildings not to be used until tested and, where needed, treated.*

Where individuals have been going into buildings as part of inspection and maintenance visits, they may be making use of church facilities – toilets, taps, hosepipes, etc – without an awareness of the risks involved. Anyone carrying out these visits for the Kirk Session must be made aware of the risk and that their use of these facilities must stop.

Kirk Sessions will want to consider not only the review of their legionella/water safety plan but the timing of testing and, where needed, treating water supplies, when taken in conjunction with the work needed to open up the church. It would be appropriate to carry out the testing, and the actions in section 6.5 of the guidance document, well in advance of people being in the building for cleaning and other preparations for opening up.

**It is essential that individuals who will carry out the testing of water supplies be provided with appropriate PPE. This is described in the Toolkit.**

Drinking water, including water for kettles & urns, etc, should come from a tap that is connected directly to the mains water supply. Drinking water should not come from a storage or header tank. Taps fed from a tank should be labelled “Not Drinking Water”. Whilst this is only a recommendation and not a legal requirement, the risk to people increases where water has been stored or standing.

Testing of water supplies is done initially with a simple probe thermometer. There are requirements for time taken for water to reach a particular temperature, and if these requirements are not met, for further action to be taken.

Appropriate probe thermometers cost from about £50 upwards. Churches in the Presbytery’s various cluster groups may wish to consider sharing the equipment and perhaps even identifying people to carry out the testing on behalf of all the cluster group’s churches to ensure that there is consistency in testing.

Testing, and the results of the testing, must be recorded and filed for possible future reference. This is described in the Toolkit.

### ***Cleaning and disinfection***

Cleaning and disinfection is covered later in this document, in greater detail, in the discussion around section 6.6 of the guidance document.

It should be noted that the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland is examining a group purchasing contract for cleaning and sanitising products and materials. Working with the supplier, a list of items that can be bought from the group contact will be agreed, and a common, discounted, pricing scheme put in place.

Some churches may already be in a contract with suppliers and commercial cleaning companies and be unable to use the group purchasing scheme.

Churches can choose to use the scheme or not. The supplier that we are currently talking to already ships to Shetland, with various options for delivery, including to the ferry terminal in Lerwick for collection, delivery directly to churches, or to an individual’s home. Some further work needs done to understand Shetland’s needs should churches there choose to use the group contract, but there are two C19C committee members from Shetland’s churches.

The group agreement works by Presbytery adding a purchasing contact to the agreement with the supplier, that contact completing a simple form with address,

delivery and invoicing details, then ordering from the Presbytery list. Items not on the Presbytery list can be ordered from the supplier catalogue at retail pricing.

Each church will receive and pay its own invoices. Presbytery will receive overview reports (ie not detailed) from the supplier, to monitor the effectiveness of the group agreement.

The benefits, where a church chooses to use the agreement, are:

- Consistency of product. A church need only order, say, 3 x 5l hand sanitiser, and the supplier will provide a product that meets Presbytery's requirement (e.g. 70% alcohol, uncoloured, non-fragranced, gel) without that needing to be specified by the person ordering.
- Consistency of pricing. A church orders 3 x 5l of hand sanitiser, they receive a product that matches Presbytery's requirement at the agreed price, no matter if the product supplied in this order is differently branded from the last order. All churches using the agreement pay the same for price for the products.
- Consistency of protection. Protection of people and of churches. For example, Presbytery agrees with the supplier that disinfectant spray products will meet British Standards for effectiveness, and the churches can be sure of receiving a compliant product without having to do the work to establish the standards or the particular products.

Details of the group purchasing agreement will be made available through the Presbytery office.

### ***Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)***

PPE is the last thing that should be considered when completing the checklist and the risk assessments. PPE is only used where there is no other option for keeping people safe. Further information about why this must be the default position is in the General Trustees Health and Safety Toolkit and is published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on its website at:

[www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/ppe.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/ppe.htm)

However, even after considering practices that keep people safe, there are still some risks remaining that PPE can address. The guidance document goes into details of what churches should consider as part of their risk assessments and preparations.

The group purchasing agreement highlighted in *Cleaning and Disinfection* above may include simple PPE, including disposable aprons, gloves, facemasks, face coverings, etc.

Provision of PPE is only one part of a bigger picture.

Disposal of used PPE is another aspect to its effective use.

Training and familiarisation in its use is another important part. There is little point in providing, for example, a face covering, if the wearer keeps lifting it up to speak or wears it without covering their nose.

Training must cover preparing to don PPE, how it is used, how it is removed and how it is disposed of.

Presbytery will be looking at simple online training for PPE use for people to complete as part of preparations for reopening.

PPE training, issue, use, and possibly disposal, should be recorded and filed as part of the risk assessment.

#### ***Hand hygiene and general safety precautions (including signage)***

Hand washing with soap and water is the most effective hand hygiene measure anyone can take. The guidance document refers to hot water being available, but this is not a requirement.

It may not be practical to ask everyone who enters a building to wash their hands, so hand sanitising gel is an appropriate alternative. People should use gel on entering a church – they may have used a handrail outside, pulled on a door handle, or touched something else along the way.

Hand sanitisers must not be placed in toilets or washrooms. Liquid soap from a dispenser is required, bar soap must not be used. Signs instructing good handwashing techniques should be installed above sinks.

Paper towels are recommended over hot air dryers.

Hot air dryers may continue to be used if there is no alternative, but the recommendation of the C19C committee is that they be disabled now, and their future use kept under review.

The group purchasing agreement mentioned above will offer churches access to paper towel dispensers, liquid soap dispensers, hand gel dispensers and associated products.

Face coverings are required for anyone entering the church. As for cleaning products and PPE, there are standards set out for what is appropriate, and sensible recommendations to protect front-line medical staff by not ordering or using medical-grade coverings.

People coming to church should be made aware that a face covering is required and is a condition of their entry to the building. Churches have no requirement to provide face coverings (outwith agreed PPE for people carrying out tasks in the buildings) but may choose to have some disposable items available to cover some situations where visitors to the church have none.

Signage outside and inside the building is important. Signs should reinforce hand washing, gelling, physical distancing, not shaking hands, use of face coverings, marking routes in, through, and out of the building, toilets, etc.

It is anticipated that as we move through the Scottish Government's phased relaxation of restrictions, changes will be made in physical distancing rules and other areas. If churches choose to go their own way with signage, they should consider the signs message carefully before buying. For example, posters and floor stickers that refer to two-meter distancing would be confusing at best should distancing be reduced to one meter. The church may have to replace the signage at additional cost.

Presbytery is putting together a set of consistent signage that churches may choose to order and use. As highlighted in *Cleaning and Disinfection* above, consistency of message across all our churches has some importance. The signage should promote the same standards across all churches.

The signs will be designed to reinforce safety measures in a generic way that does not need frequent replacement. For example, a poster can be produced to highlight and promote physical distancing without having "2 meters" explicitly mentioned.

### ***Covid-19 emergency procedures***

The other risk assessments that a church has in place for keeping people safe will be supported by people with specific supporting roles, including first aiders and other trained, perhaps, in the use of a defibrillator. The guidance issued by the British Red Cross and by St John's Ambulance for immediate first aid and defibrillation has changed. Churches must ensure that their people who carry out these roles are fully aware of the changes.

The *guidance* asks that churches consider and put in place a procedure for managing the situation where someone suddenly becomes ill in church.

The natural impulse for many people is to go to a casualty and offer help. This breaks social distancing rules and may put other people, and particularly those in the vulnerable groups, in danger.

Procedures need to be developed where those involved in a church service know to try and keep people distanced and are aware of a plan to move the congregation away from a first aid incident safely. This may include directing people to leave the church.

Changed first aid procedures will require additional PPE for first aiders. Gloves, mask and plastic visor are considered essential by the British Red Cross for a first aider. For situations where a casualty has collapsed and appears to need resuscitation, a towel must be placed loosely over the casualty's nose and mouth during defibrillation and chest compressions. No rescue breaths are permitted.

The need for a fast and accurate emergency response by ambulance or first responders is heightened, and emergency procedures must include consideration of calling 999 and having the church address details ready. During the period of opening churches it is possible that the doors used for entry to and exit from the church is not the one people are used to.

For example, the postal address of one Aberdeen church is on Hilton Drive, and this is the address that will come up on Scottish Ambulance's computer system. However, access to the church for services, on level ground avoiding steps, is from Rosehill Drive, and it is important that emergency procedures include passing this information to the ambulance service during the 999 call.

Emergency procedures should also consider other events that may disrupt church services. Power cuts, drops spills and breakages, water leaks – anything that might cause people to move outside the social distance rules.

### ***Control of Waste***

Procedures for controlling waste need to be reviewed. Disposal of PPE needs particular attention and there is guidance on the NHS website and on local authority websites.

Local authorities have stopped regular waste collection from many non-domestic premises. It is important that the authority is informed of the reopening of your buildings and the church getting confirmation that waste collections will be made.

## The Covid-19 Risk Assessment

The covid-19 risk assessment given in Appendix 2 of the guidance needs to be completed before your church opens.

A risk assessment form must be completed for every building that is reopening and perhaps for different areas of the same building. For example, the sanctuary will need a risk assessment for holding worship, and if you intend to open a church hall for, say, overspill worship, a risk assessment will need to be done there too.

The guidance offered in the several pages following the form should be treated both as best practice and the basis of your own risk assessment. The information and instruction in each section is fairly straightforward and it is up to Kirk Sessions to decide how to apply these in the setting of their own church and buildings.

This is not a small task. Time and effort will be required to carry out and record risk assessments properly, and over time, as restrictions due to Covid-19 change, the risk assessments will need to be revisited.

It is important that risk assessments are filed and retained. Put a version number on printed copies for file and store these safely. When they are updated, move the “old” risk assessment to another file (or the back of the folder, or an archive box) and have the new risk assessment available.

## Examples of physical distancing in the church sanctuary

Appendix 3 of the *guidance* offers some examples of how seating in sanctuaries might be arranged to ensure social distancing during worship and includes some pictures of these examples.

It is worth noting that, at the time of writing, the *guidance* does not allow for galleries or balconies to be used and singing is not permitted.

We all know that there are church members who always sit in the same place in the church every Sunday. It may be difficult for some to break that habit, and thought must be given as to how to explain why things have changed and why the changes have been necessary.

The risk assessment for worship will cover how you fill the available seats in a church to observe social distancing and keep people safe. For example, it is likely that seats will be filled in rows starting from the front of the church. It may be difficult to see this done effectively if someone comes into the church and goes to sit up the back – people will need to pass by that person going to their seat.



The communications that a church makes with its congregation and on signage outside the building before opening must inform people about this change. The safety of everybody is paramount.

Similarly, how the church is emptied at the end of a service is important. Asking people to leave by their rows, starting at the back and working to the front while maintaining their distance may work for your church. Some churches are planning that entry and exit doors be different.

Routes through the sanctuary to toilets and exits must be identified. Where, during a service, someone needs to leave their seat, it must be clear how they get to toilets or exits without encroaching on others' space. Similarly, their return to their seat must be considered.

It will take time to come up with a seating plan that achieves the necessary distancing, and there needs to be some early consideration of how changes in distancing rules will affect seating arrangements.

## Some general advice

Throughout the *guidance* there is continuous reference to “touch surfaces” and the need to keep these sanitised. Cleaning is not necessarily sanitising, and cleaning should always be done before sanitising.

Sanitising products are produced to various standards and only those that are produced to one or more British Standards are guaranteed to be effective in use when the instructions are followed.

As an example, you may see someone touch the tops of every pew as they make their way to their seat. These surfaces need to be regularly sanitised and people encouraged to wash their hands or use hand gel.

A simple, cheap and effective sanitiser is 30ml household bleach in 1l of water. Follow the instructions on the container for safe use. Surfaces wiped with this bleach solution are properly sanitised. However, bleach is not recommended to be used on porous surfaces such as wood and aluminium. Do not store diluted bleach for later use – bleach has a shelf life and diluted bleach degrades faster.

Sanitising and disinfectant products will be available through the group purchasing agreement. In the meantime, Astonish Germ Clear Disinfectant (750ml) is certified to a relevant British Standard and is available in pound shops and discount stores for less than a pound a bottle. Again, follow the instructions on the packaging for safe and effective use. Be careful to note that this is a sanitising product and surfaces should be cleaned with a cleaning product before the sanitiser is used.



One of the best ways of avoiding touch surfaces is to remove them. For example, a church may have a table for information and literature in a fellowship area in the sanctuary. Others may have a computer available for public access. If it is possible to remove things like these and store them safely away, they become one less thing to worry about.

## External companies

Cleaning, maintenance and service companies essential to keeping the building in operation should be contacted and asked to provide a method statement for their activities before allowing them to restart. For example, nappy bin/sanitary bin collection services.

## Environmental

Several churches have attained Eco Congregation status and may be wary of using some of the cleaning and sanitising products available. For example, bleach is one of the most effective readily available bactericides/virucides but Eco Congregations Scotland, while not “banning” its use, recommends strongly against it. There may be other environmental programmes and other concerns with the cleaning / sanitising requirements for some churches.

## Volunteers

(used here as a general term for involved people, to include Ministers, elders, paid staff, deacons, readers, supply, etc)

People involved in the church service – stewarding congregants on entry and exit, monitoring toilets, ensuring social distancing is observed, managing A/V systems, counting people in, declining access for any reason (e.g. already a maximum number of people in a church) need to be involved in the opening up process. Thought needs to be put into “what if” situations – perhaps capacity has been reached in the sanctuary and further people will need to be turned away – and how to explain without confrontation or escalation.

Volunteers must be scrupulous in following the guidance that they, themselves, have been involved in producing.

Do the volunteers need to be visibly identifiable to impart authority and safety? Badge, lanyard, vest? In most churches the “regulars” are known and will know the volunteers. Should we make that adjustment for people who are not regular but may have been following the church online during lockdown, or who are looking for something once lockdown is relaxed?

## Conclusion

The process of opening up our churches will be a continuing one as we begin to welcome back the various groups, clubs and other users of church and halls.

Getting this initial stage for opening up for worship right will pay huge dividends when it comes to the next stages.

The C19C committee offers its thanks for your time in reading this document and hopes that it helps give you some confidence that you will be able to carry out the various tasks needed to open up knowing that there is help and assistance available through the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland.

Space for your notes:



The Presbytery of  
Aberdeen and Shetland