**9.6.2020 Summary of Guidance DRAFT**

* 7th June 2020: Government announcement on easing of restrictions and **allowing churches to open for private prayer** from 15th June 2020;
* 9th June 2020: House of Bishops of the Church of England advise **small funerals may take place in church buildings** from 15th June 2020. Note there will still, sadly, have to be significant limitations on how we mark funerals for some time to come.

Updated guidance has been released on [opening church buildings for works to the building and interior](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Access%20to%20church%20buildings%20for%20construction%20%20professional%20contractors%20v.2_0.pdf).

Planning documents have also been released on the national website for the time when marriage services, Holy Communion and ordinations will be possible.

The latest updated documents can always be found [here](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches).

*The following summary guidance is to give you a quick overview on what is possible from 15th June, do please read the detailed guidance before embarking on anything.*

**General matters to consider**

* **anyone with Covid-19 symptoms must stay at home**
* note that you are permitted rather than mandated to open your church buildings; please consider carefully the implications before making the decision whether to open or not: it is for incumbent and PCC to decide
* please use the UPDATED risk assessment which is part of this mailing to assist you in your planning and decision-making
* the 2m physical distance rule is paramount
* please respect the nature of the guidance and government permission: please do not open the church and then just happen to be presiding at the Eucharist
* the latest updated documents can always be found [here](https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches)

BUILDING & HYGIENE

* seating and access capacity of building in proportion to size of expected congregation – work out your maximum number bearing in mind 2m physical distance between all households
* handwashing and/or handsanitizing facilities must be readily available, use disposable towels
* before opening, consider your capacity for [cleaning](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Keeping%20church%20buildings%20clean%20v1.pdf)
  + how easy is the church to clean
  + capability of cleaning teams
* Parish Buying provides various COVID-19 supplies. A range of hygiene and cleaning supplies, together with personal protective equipment (PPE) is being made available through a PPE buying group, ensuring churches have access to fairly priced supplies that are sourced from audited supply chains to ensure quality and ethical supply. You can [find out more and Register here](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.parishbuying.org.uk%2Fcategories%2Fcovid-19-supplies&data=02%7C01%7CBishop.huntingdon%40elydiocese.org%7C2c0658e1c34c4c3e9bdb08d80c922234%7C8cefe2afc6f544c4bbc3849ef05aafca%7C0%7C1%7C637273169065906736&sdata=Dj19AA0X0KF8kYGdfIQVO%2FBxPQTOxpbr%2FSiybTfvpck%3D&reserved=0).
* good ventilation of the church building is important, so do plan for it (eg door remaining open, windows open)
* put notices on the door reminding people of physical distancing and hand sanitizing
* a poster is in preparation for you to put up outside
* plan seating, consider marking places
* plan routes in and out of the church that safeguard physical distance
* plan timetable that allows for cleaning time between the times the church is in use
* note that we are awaiting clarification from government on the extent and nature of what ‘supervised individual prayer’ means and what exactly will be required eg by way of a constant presence of someone.
* the decision to open the church is for the incumbent and PCC – you do not HAVE to do this but plan carefully how to communicate clearly either decision to the local community, and if you do open, during which hours
* if your church does not open, a poster outside explaining this and pointing people to the nearest one elsewhere would be helpful
* consider forming alliances between groups of churches in order to share the burden of risk mitigation and cleaning – be collaborative: who could you help, who could you ask for help?
* reflect with your leadership team or PCC on whom the chief burden of opening up the building will mainly fall and in which way, and how this could be more widely shared

PEOPLE

* avoid all touch
* consider vulnerability of members of your team and of those most likely to turn up
* there is a particular issue for those churches which have significant numbers of visitors/tourists: anyone who wishes to come into a church should be welcome, but they will be expected to maintain social distancing, respect the limited purposes of opening (so tours or taking lots of photos is not likely to be possible in most places, and there may be restrictions on numbers entering), and respect other users; further guidance for those churches is underway.

SERVICE PARAPHERNALIA

* remove Bibles and hymnbooks, pens and papers, also toys and books etc from a children’s corner
* where applicable, consider whether votive candles can be offered safely by minimizing handling, eg do not use cigarette lighters
* you may use service sheets, which people either take away with them or which must be disposed of after the service
* wash robes after a service in warmest possible setting, vestments that cannot be washed need to be hung up and left for 72 hours before using them again
* strictly no singing

**FUNERALS**

* if you, as a cleric or as an LLM, are over 70 and/or have health concerns, you should be quite clear that you are by no means required to take funeral services anywhere;
  + when a request comes in for a funeral which you cannot take, please liaise promptly, as appropriate, with your incumbent or Rural Dean or other colleague, so that the bereaved family and the funeral director find easy access to a minister
* as far as possible, work with local funeral directors and all their staff (best before funerals have even started to be booked in church) to get them on board and understand your plans for risk mitigation, including small numbers, so that grieving families with their hopes and expectations can be cared for as well as possible
* communicate with funeral director and bereaved family by phone or internet
* current advice allows attendance of members of the deceased’s household, close family members or, if family not attending, close friends, plus clergy and funeral director and staff
* make provision for esp vulnerable or shielding people attending (sufficient space, and make others in the congregation aware)
* in line with Government advice, involvement of additional staff such as organist, verger and sound system operator are not encouraged
* for those for whom it would be difficult or is impossible to attend: if possible, record or live stream, or make orders of service available by email or post
* offer a memorial service at a later time
* there should not be a wake and clergy should definitely not attend one
* if there are issues with people gathering outside the church or in the churchyard afterwards, not observing physical distancing, it is not clergy responsibility to move them on but a police matter