

Access to church buildings during lockdown: advice for incumbents

Issue Date	Version	Issued by
6 th May 2020	1	The Archbishops' Council, Cathedral and Church Buildings Division
7 th May 2020	2	The Archbishops' Council, Cathedral and Church Buildings Division
22 nd May 2020	3	House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group

This document will be kept under review and updated as events develop, with each update issued as a new version. The current version will always be available to download from the Church of England website via the [Coronavirus FAQs page](#).

This advice is written to help clergy return to their churches safely. It is intended to be helpful and not to put an additional burden on clergy whilst at the same time enabling clergy to pray and livestream in a way that protects both their and others health.

This advice seeks to help clergy and church councils prepare to reopen churches when circumstances allow. It is recognised that for all kinds of specific reasons to do with both people and buildings a particular local church may not be able to open at the same time as others and collaborative working between local churches is encouraged.

Churches differ considerably in their layout, content, age and context. What follows below is intended as a helpful guide of things you may want to consider as you re-enter your churches.

This guidance reflects the situation following the new guidance from the House of Bishops on 5th May 2020. At the present time church buildings remain closed to the general public in line with government requirements.

In addition to this document the following advice has been issued to help support parishes and cathedrals with managing church buildings in specific situations as lockdown restrictions change:

- General advice on accessing church buildings during lockdown (this document contains much of the detailed advice which previously formed part of this advice note)
- A template risk assessment for accessing church buildings for various groups, including clergy
- Advice on cleaning church buildings
- Advice on access for professional contractors
- Advice on re-starting construction projects

Before using your church building for individual prayer or streaming:

1. If your building has been completely closed for the lockdown period, open the doors and any openable windows to air it out.
2. Check the building for cleanliness. If there are bat droppings or other animal waste be sure not to touch or go near it until proper cleaning can be arranged.
3. If you are going to use the water system or toilets, flush all toilets and run the water from all taps and other hot and cold water-outlets for at least five minutes to ensure the water system has been thoroughly flushed through to reduce the risk of legionella and Weil's disease. If you have any concerns seek appropriate professional help/advice.
4. If heating or electrical systems have been switched off then consider if you need to turn them back on, and ensure you know how to do so.
5. Take the chance to do a basic visual check of general maintenance items such as electrical systems, emergency lighting and other lighting, fire alarm systems, heating systems, fridges, security monitoring and access systems, water systems and toilets.
6. Holy water stoups and the font should be empty.

To use the building safely:

1. If services are being streamed; filming should be done either with a fixed camera or by a member of the priest's or lay minister's household.
2. You can ring a single bell and/or raise a flag if access is on ground level. Further advice on safely ringing bells can be found here.
3. If you are using candles then take care not to light them immediately after using hand sanitiser gel, especially if this has alcohol in it.
4. If you are not the only person accessing the building (for example contractors or cleaners are coming in) then make sure there is a rota in place, with a written record of who has been in. Ensure hand sanitiser and/or hand washing facilities are easily available near every entrance.
5. Do not share Bibles, prayer books etc. This includes lending libraries, Parish Magazines etc.
6. If toilets or washing facilities are available, make sure that there are disposable paper towels and that there is plenty of liquid soap.
7. If others will be using the building then any surfaces you have touched should be cleaned using disinfectant. Advice on cleaning can be found here.
8. Ensure you close any windows and lock the church when you leave.

If you would like more detail on any of these areas then please refer to the general access guidance document available via the [Coronavirus pages](#) of the Church of England website.

END