

COVID ————— 19

SAFER CHURCHES

Helping public places to reopen safely

Churches are places that help to support and sustain the public life of many communities across the country. This Covid-19 Safer Spaces guide is to assist staff in adapting their church to enable safe reopening and worship.

Developed by architects IF_DO, in partnership with the Church of England, this free-to-use guide sets out clear stages of how to safely reopen churches across the UK. Visual diagrams illustrate the spatial adaptations required for worship and other essential services to recommence as safely as possible.

As an architecture practice, IF_DO is focussed on the design of social infrastructure - places that help to improve lives for people and foster stronger and more resilient communities. These places will be critical to the social recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Covid-19 Safer Spaces project has been developed to provide expert guidance on how they can be safely adapted.

We are grateful for the support of numerous individuals who have contributed their time and expertise to the development of this guide. With thanks in particular to Becky Clark, Director of Churchs and Cathedrals at the Church of England, Claire Strachan in the Diocese of Coventry, Joseph Denby at Christ Church Cathedral Oxford, Reverend Liz Jackson at St Francis of Assisi Church in Radford, Reverend Gareth Irvine at St Laurence's Church in Foleshill and Reverend Stephen Cousins at St Mary the Virgin Church in Ewelme.

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Overview 04

Key Considerations 05



07
Entrance /
Exit



08
Circulation



09
Seating



10
Collective
Worship



12
Meeting Spaces

General Facilities



13
Amenities



14
Toilets

Community



15
Unfold the
Church

COVID ———— 19
**SAFER
COMMUNITY
CENTRES**

COVID ———— 19
**SAFER
FOOD BANKS**

*Future guides will assist
with pastoral services*

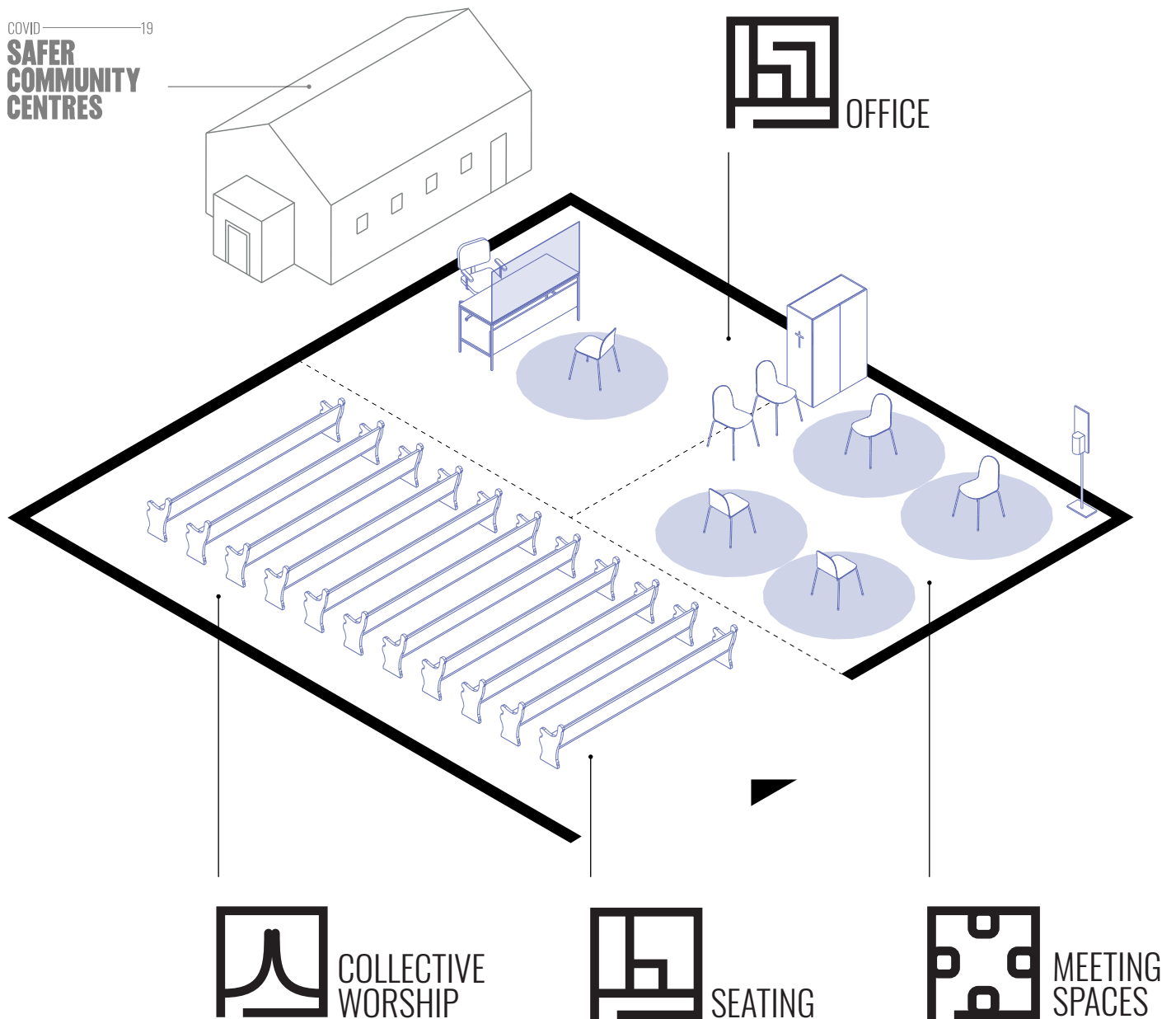
Case Studies

Urban 17

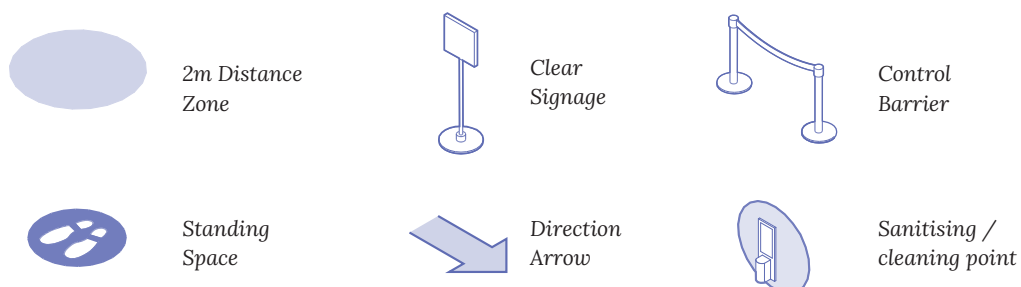
Rural 18

OVERVIEW

The overview diagram below illustrates the core elements for the initial reopening of Churches across the UK. The key details the graphical components used throughout the guide.



KEY



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

01

Sanitising the space but not the experience. Small interventions such as the introduction of hand sanitiser stations, clear signage and circulation routes will help to create a safer environment in the church, while allowing people and services to return.

02

Optimising the use of space so no one is left out. The requirements of social distancing will limit the number of parishioners able to attend larger ceremonies, such as Sunday services. This guide suggests seating arrangements to optimise the number of people able to attend safely.

03

Worshipping in safety. While singing will not be possible at initial reopening, the use of bibles and prayer books can be made safer by limiting how much they are shared. The use of projectors or lending of books to individuals or households will allow for safer collective worship.

04

Sustaining a welcoming environment. Churches are the focal points of many communities across the country, extending their services far beyond worship. Further guides for community centres and foodbanks will help to assist churches in reopening their pastoral services.

05

Unfolding the church. Many churches have external open space that might be used to allow for social gatherings, such as collective worship and discussion groups, in compliance with social distancing guidance.

ELEMENTS

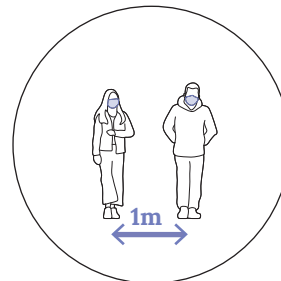


INITIAL OPENING

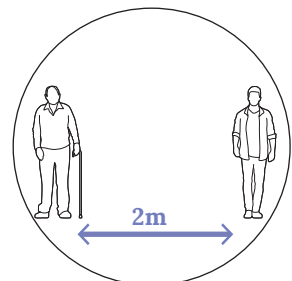
ENTRANCE / EXIT

Entering the Church

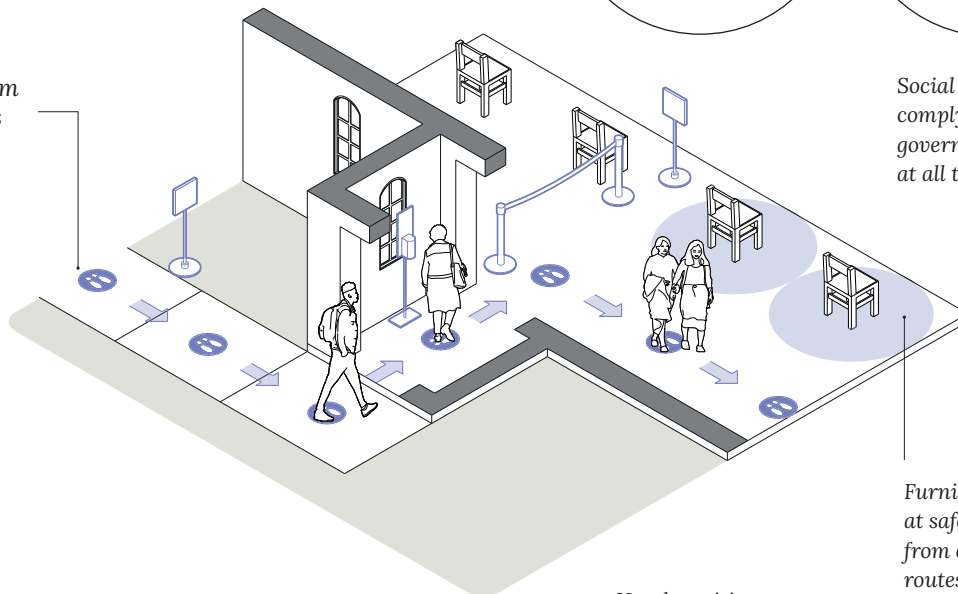
With face-covering



Without face-covering



Introduction of 2m distance markers



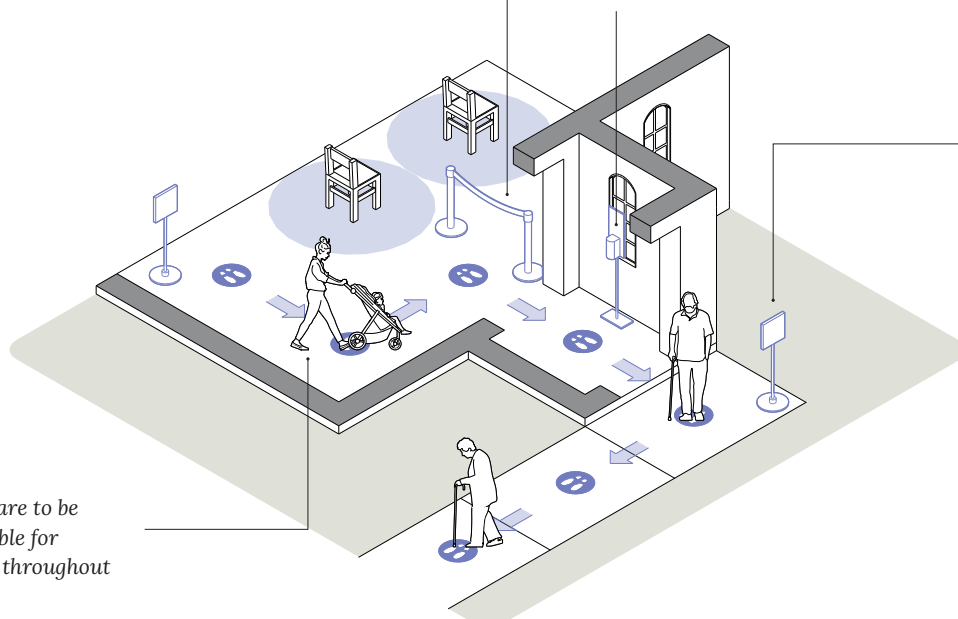
Social distancing must comply with current government guidance at all times.

Furniture arranged at safe distance from circulation routes

Exiting the Church

Barriers introduced to guide one-way system

Hand-sanitiser station available upon entering and leaving the church



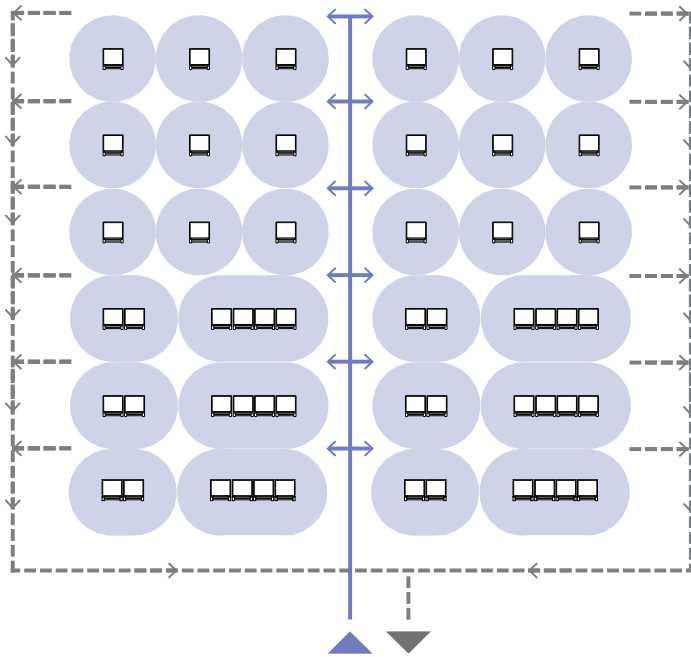
Clear signage to direct one-way system, protected from the weather if possible

Parents are to be responsible for children throughout service



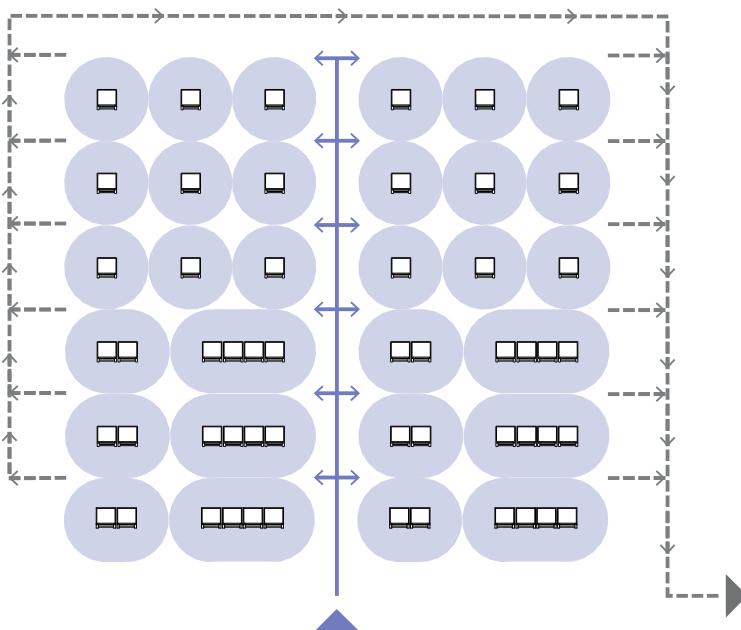
INITIAL OPENING

CIRCULATION



Single Entrance / Exit

Nave to be used for filing into seats, beginning with front row first. Aisles are used for exiting in single file using one-way system, beginning with back row. Level access should be reserved for the elderly and those with limited mobility for a period of time either before or after the service.



Multiple Entrances / Exits

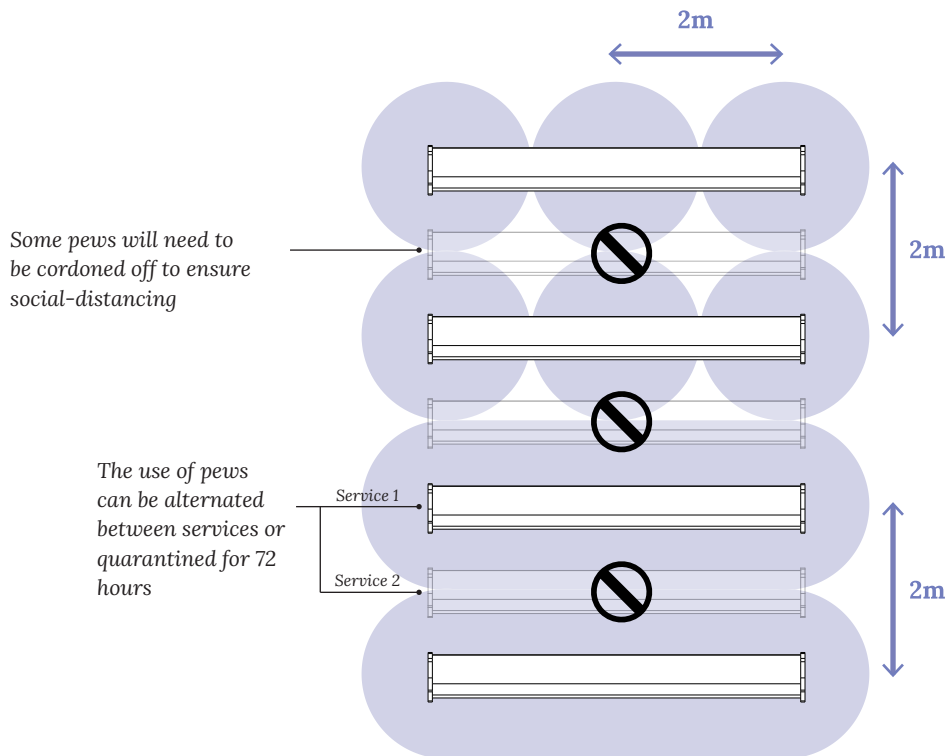
In the case of multiple entrance/exit, dedicate one for entrance and another for exit. Circulation to be single-file, one-way system from entrance to seating. Seating to be filled from the front (beginning with North/South transepts). Maintain safe distance from clergy. Aisles are kept free for circulation during services. Entrances with level access should be reserved for wheelchair users or those with limited mobility.



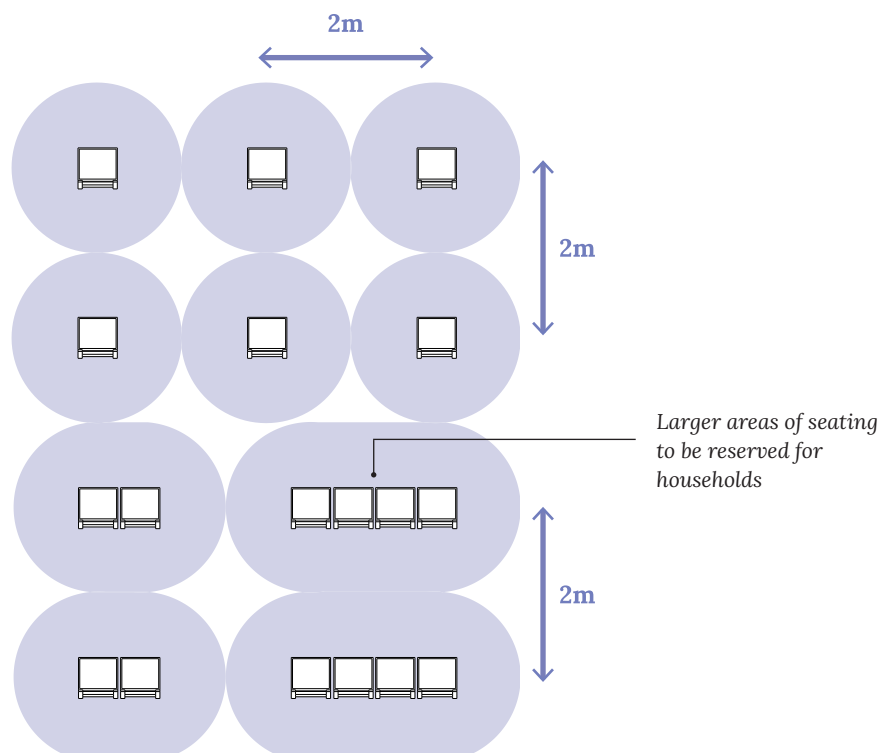
INITIAL OPENING SEATING

Furniture arranged to comply with social distancing guidance, with some sections dedicated for use by households. Furniture to be a safe distance from circulation routes. Services should be limited so high-contact surfaces like furniture can be quarantined for 72-hours. Seating with arm-rests or close to a pillar should be reserved for those who require physical support.

Pews



Chairs



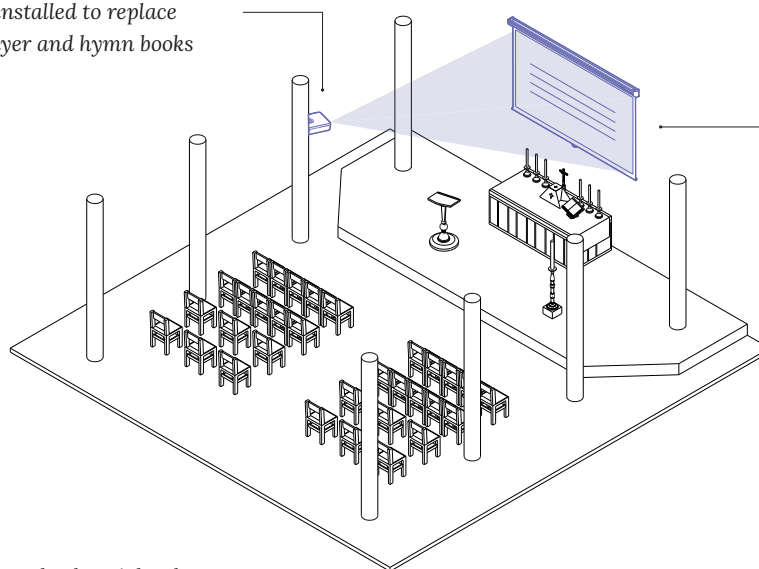


INITIAL OPENING

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Projection

If possible, projectors can be installed to replace prayer and hymn books

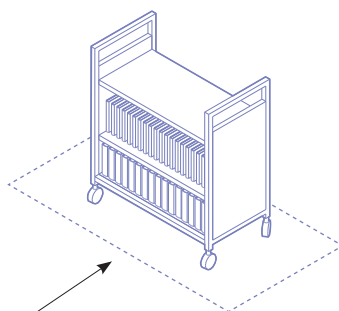


Projection screens can display readings to replace the need for individual books

Individual prayer books can be loaned to parishioners or households rather than distributed at the start of each service

Hymn books might also be loaned once singing is permitted again

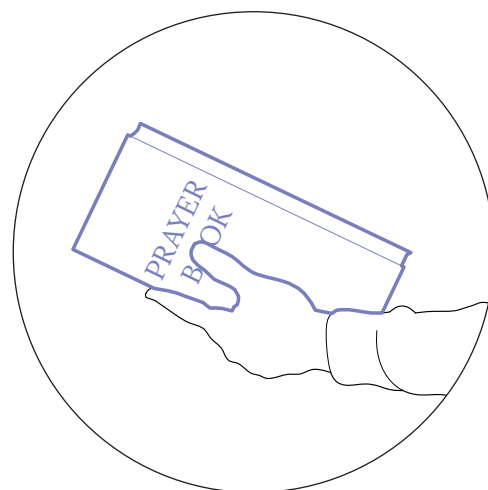
If used during service, prayer and hymn books to be quarantined for 72 hours



Individual prayer and hymn books could be loaned to individuals

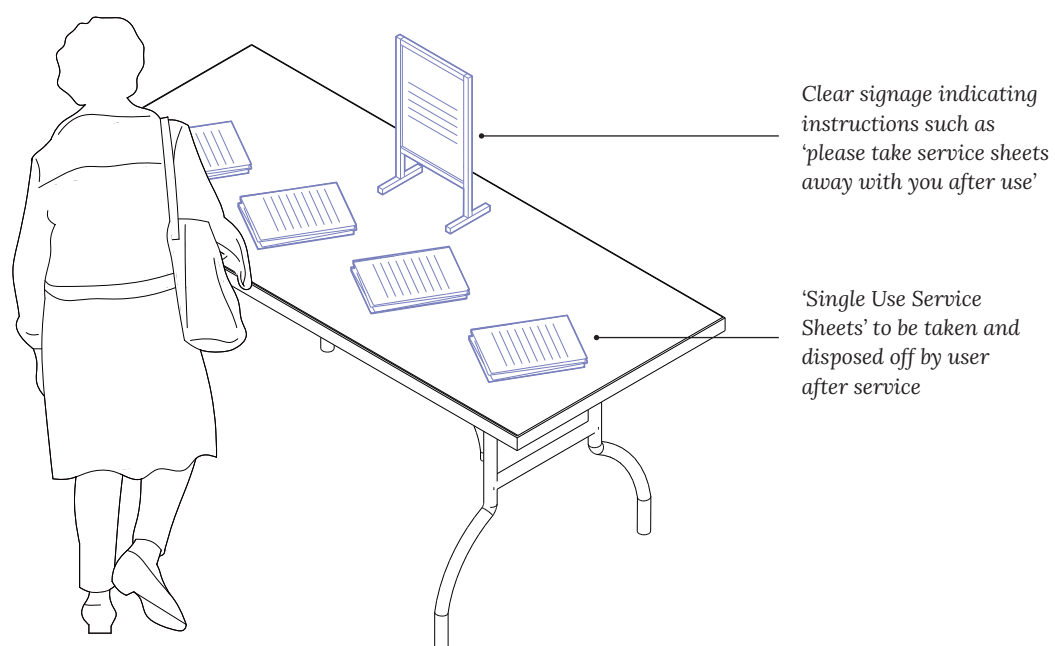
Personal Prayer Books

Parishioners could bring personal prayer books, or have prayer books loaned by Church where possible.



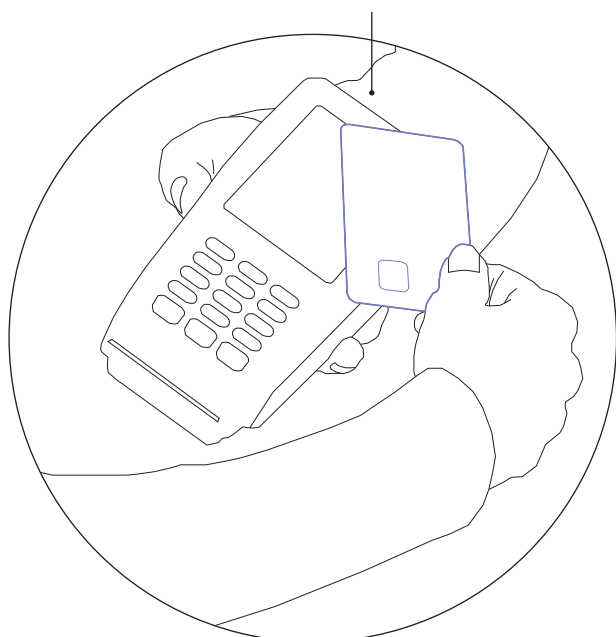


Single Use Service Sheet

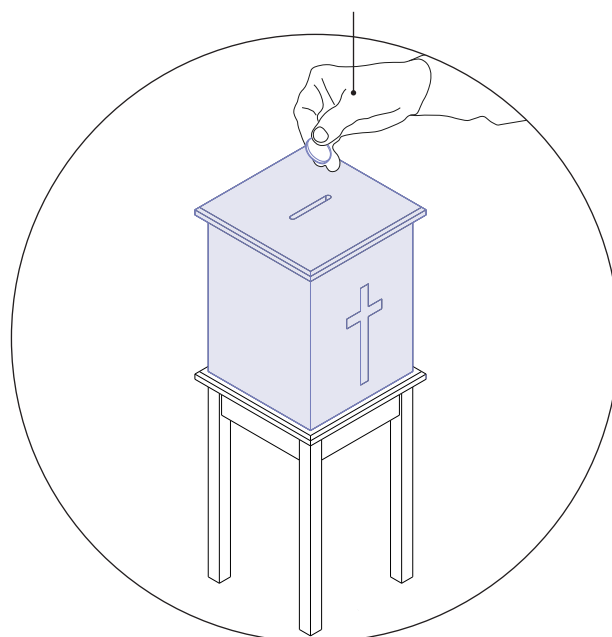


Offerings

Offerings to be made via card payment if possible



If offerings are made with cash, the donations box is to be quarantined for 72 hours





INITIAL OPENING

MEETING SPACES

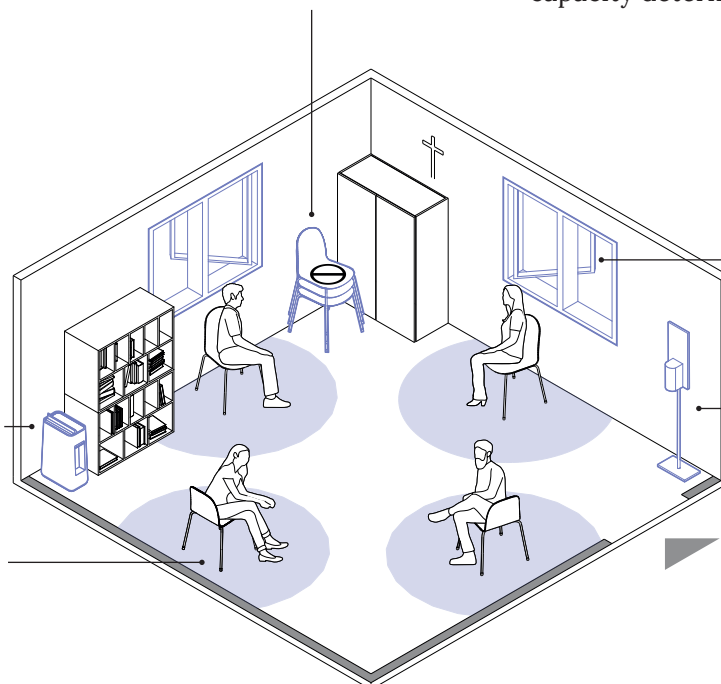
High-contact surfaces such as chairs to be taken out of use to limit capacity of room

Vestry

Limited to essential use with limited capacity determined by size of room

Free-standing air filtration units can help improve air quality.

Furniture to be arranged to ensure social-distance guidance is upheld and circulation is still enabled



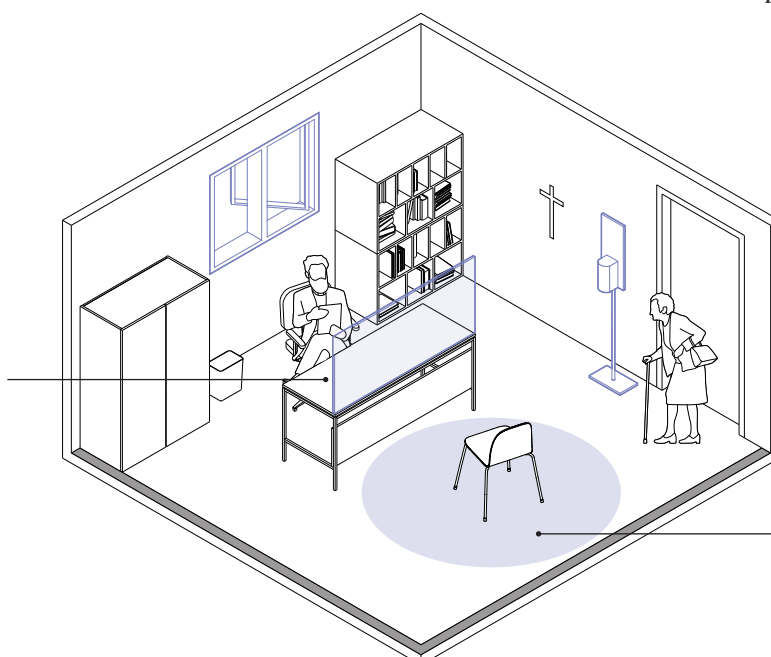
Windows opened to ensure ventilation

Sanitiser stations to be available in spaces with larger gatherings

Office

Removal of any non-essential furniture with limited capacity when in use.

Screens to be installed on office desk to protect staff



Furniture to be arranged to adhere to social-distance guidance

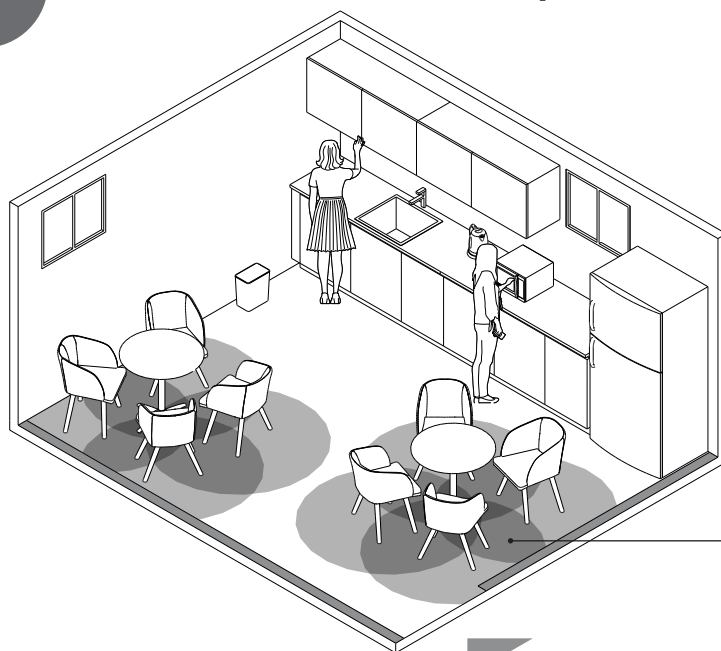


AMENITIES

Staff Kitchen

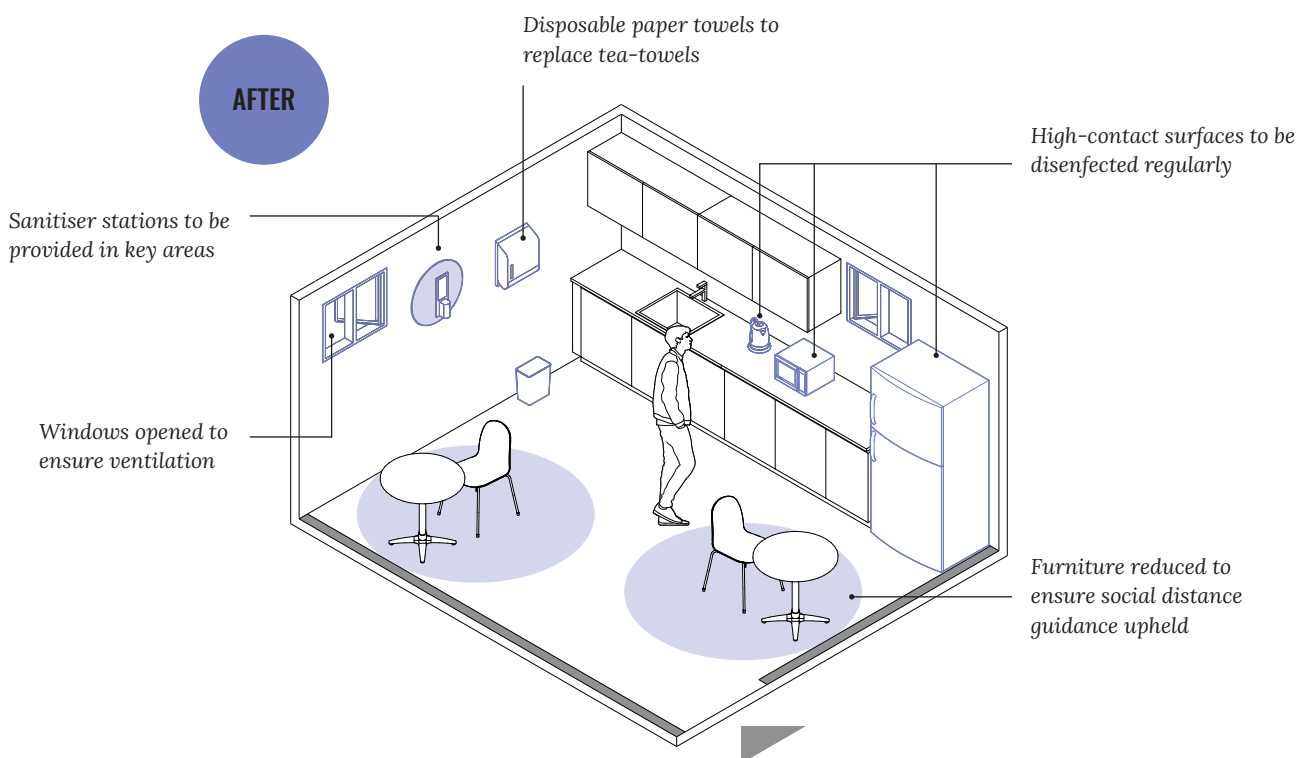
Dedicated to essential use with limited capacity determined by size of room. This space should be reserved for staff only.

BEFORE



Existing arrangement of furniture does not comply with social distance guidance

AFTER

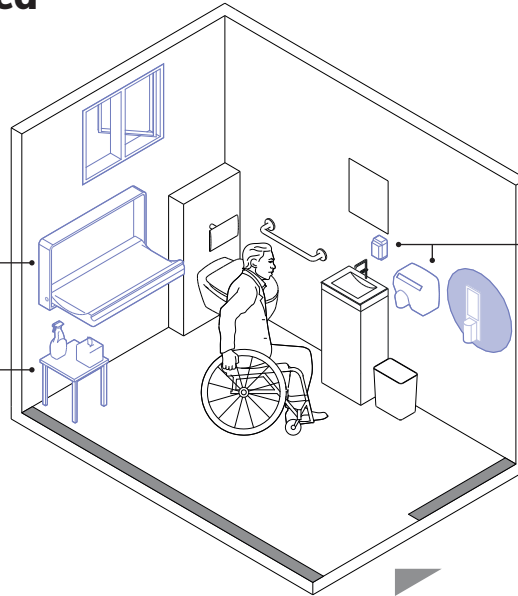


GENERAL FACILITIES **TOILETS**

Single Person / Disabled

High-contact surfaces to be disinfected regularly

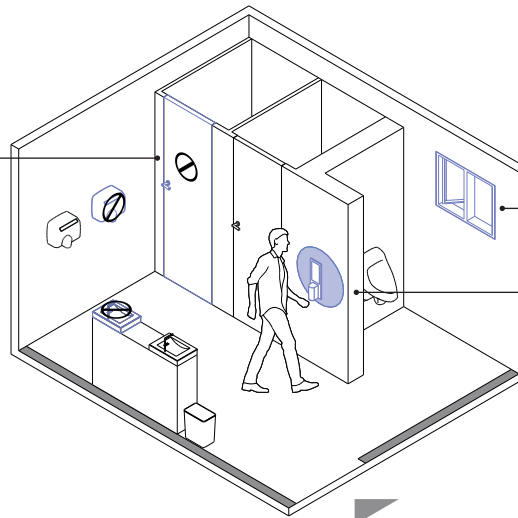
Disinfectant to be provided in order for users to sanitize surfaces after use



If possible, high-contact surfaces such as soap dispensers, taps and hand-dryers to be fitted with hands-free sensors

Multiple Cubicles

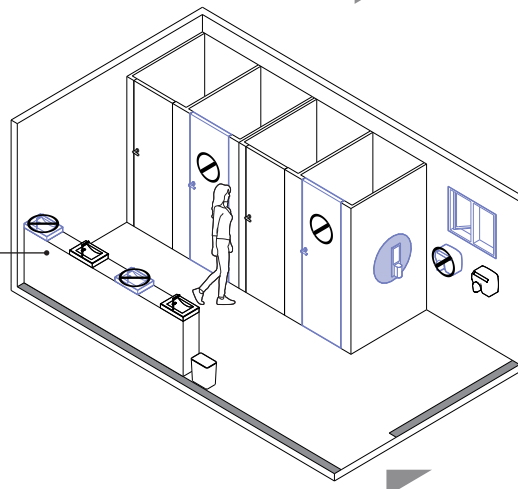
Alternating cubicles taken out of use to limit the number of users at one time

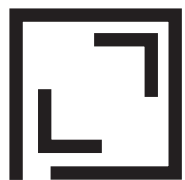


Windows opened to ensure ventilation

Sanitiser stations to be provided

Where less than 2m apart, alternating sinks, hand dryers and urinals should be taken out of use to allow for required social distancing

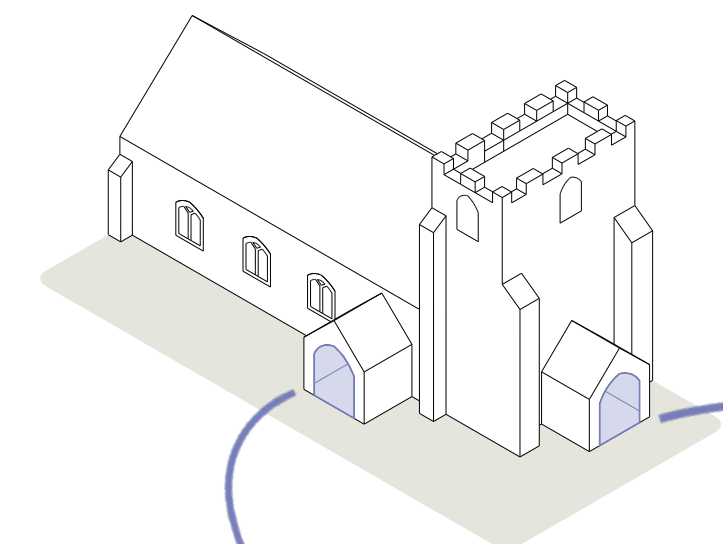




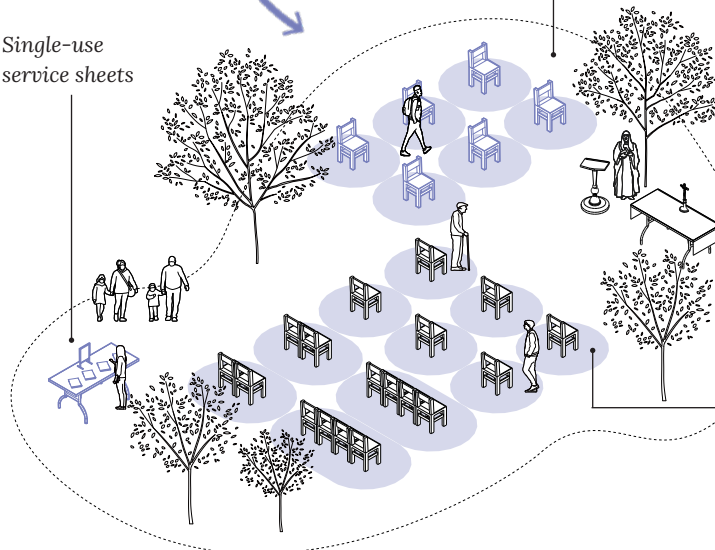
COMMUNITY

UNFOLD THE CHURCH

Collective Worship Outdoors



Single-use service sheets



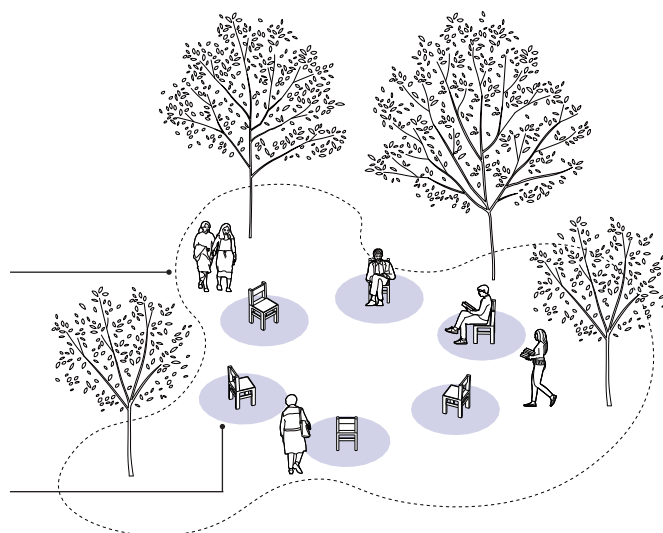
Hymns can be sung by small groups of professional singers

Temporary seating to be arranged in compliance with social-distancing guidance

Meetings & Discussion Groups

In compliance with current social distancing guidelines, utilising outdoor spaces could enable some collective activities to continue

Furniture arrangement to adhere with social distance guidance and cleaned after use or quarantined for 72 hours



Outside Space & Activities

While some activities, such as small discussion groups, will not be possible within church buildings between services it may be possible for these to take place outside, such as in church yards or local parks. Staff should be encouraged to reach out to the local area and extend their services off site.

CASE STUDIES

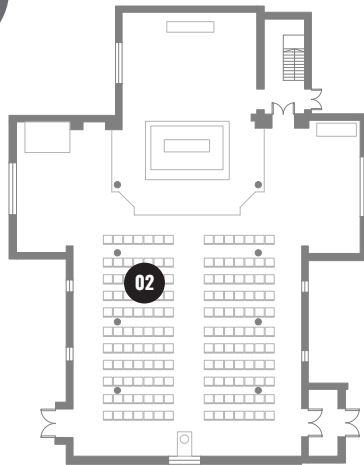
CASE STUDY

URBAN

St. Francis of Assisi, Radford, Coventry

Limits for communal worship should be decided on the basis of the capacity of the place of worship following an assessment of risk.

BEFORE



01



01

The congregation's entrance to the church is a small porch adjoining the south-aisles.



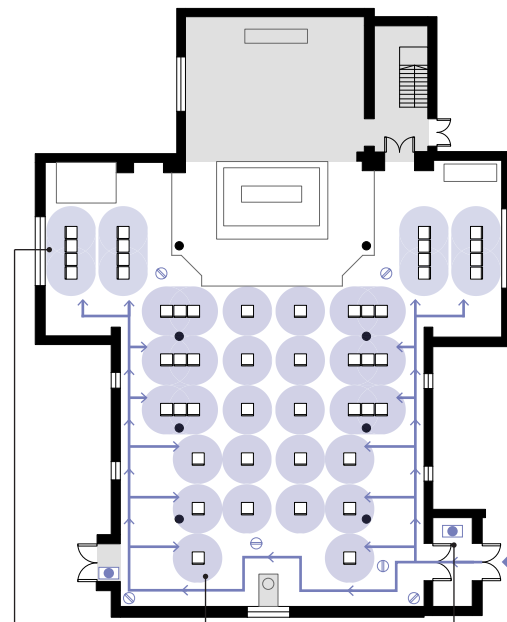
02

The congregation sits on chairs facing the altar, with a projector suspended above the pulpit.

AFTER

A sanitising station located directly inside the entrance, followed by a table offering single-use service sheets will follow. Signage directs parishioners to their seats via a one-way-system, leading them down both aisles into the transepts. Areas of seating are dedicated to households in compliance with social distancing guidance. After the service, parishioners will then circulate along the nave and aisles to exit through a door located on the north side.

Entrance Route

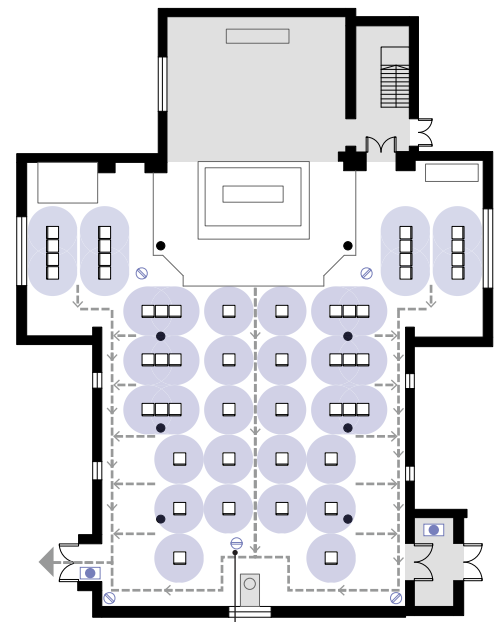


Family seating

Single-person seating

Hand sanitiser station

Exit Route



Clear signage guiding one-way system

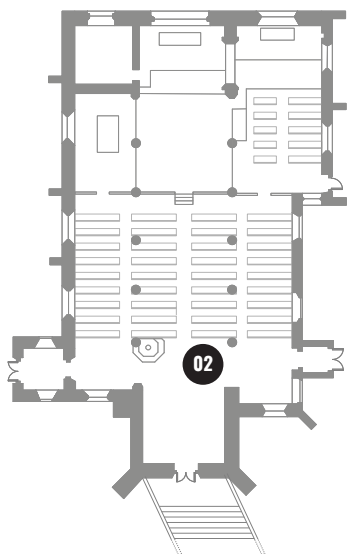
CASE STUDY

RURAL

St Mary the Virgin, Ewelme, South Oxfordshire

Limits for communal worship should be decided on the basis of the capacity of the place of worship following an assessment of risk.

BEFORE



01



01

The congregation's entrance to the church is a small porch adjoining the south-aisles.



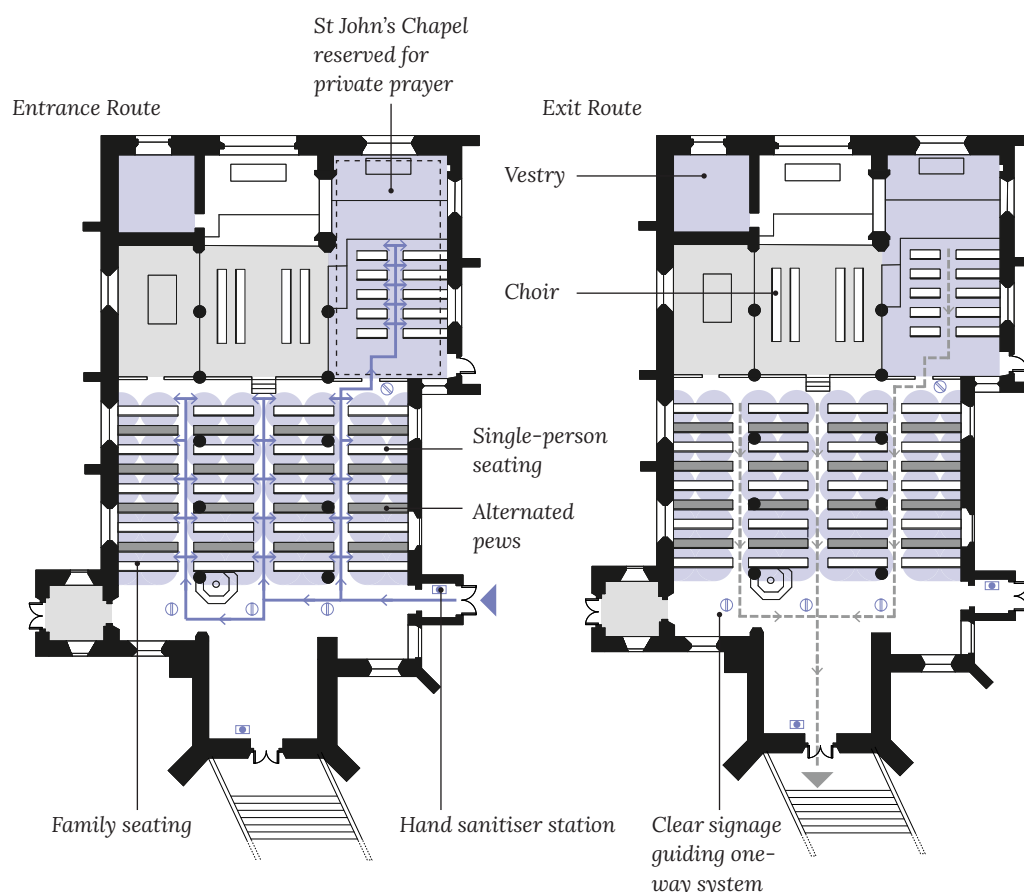
02

In-built wooden pews are arranged along the nave and aisles.

Photography: John Ward, Oxfordshire Churches

AFTER

A sanitising station is located directly inside the entrance, followed by a table offering single-use service sheets will follow. Signage directs parishioners to their seats via a one-way-system, leading them down both aisles and the nave, filing in from the front first. The route out will lead parishioners back the way they came, exiting through an alternative door, with a sanitizing station located close by. Private prayer in St John's Chapel will follow the circulation routes described above.



This guide has been developed with and should be read alongside the Church of England Coronavirus (Covid-19) guidance for churches, and all relevant Government guidance. Please note that knowledge of Covid-19 and best practice guidelines in response to it are evolving, and that this document may be updated to reflect ongoing learning.

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