

Guidance for BPEC Reopening – Coronavirus Pandemic

Review Date: 13 April 2021)

A. Introduction

We are grateful to God for the way he has helped and kept us throughout the Coronavirus-related lockdown, and are looking forward to being able to meet together again “in the flesh.”

The Welsh Government website (gov.wales) has published guidelines on the reopening of public worship, where social distancing is in place. In the light of this, we have taken the decision that in order for the church to reopen safely, we will take the following steps:

1. Undertake a risk assessment – **this is available from the elders upon request**
2. Develop initial guidelines and protocols for reopening key activities – **this document**
3. Continue to use the risk assessment and gained experience to develop specific guidelines for higher risk activities, such as the luncheon club, as we ease back into action.
4. Circulate appropriate documents to all members

These documents have been developed using the advice from several sources (see Appendix 1)

We began to hold our Sunday morning meetings at Borrass Park on Sunday 20th September 2020 at 11 am. These meetings are livestreamed over YouTube. The Sunday evening services are to recommence on Sunday 25th April 2021, and are also to be livestreamed. We observed the Lord’s Supper together for the first time on 6 December 2020.

The Wednesday night Bible Study and Prayer Meeting was recommenced at 7:30 pm in the main hall at Borrass Park Church on the 16th September 2020. We discontinued these meetings and reverted to the use of Zoom on 7 October 2020 due to local lockdowns restricting attendance, and the difficulty in having those present and those on Zoom interacting effectively.

B. Managing reopening risks and risk assessment

1. Overview

The communal nature of church meetings make them places particularly suitable to the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and other infections. In view of this, caution and understanding are required to manage this risk with the objective that everyone who attends our church remains safe.

2. Steps to manage risk

To minimise the risks from reopening the church we have undertaken the following steps:

1. Taken the decision that we will slowly ease our way back to full reopening by:
 - a. Initially opening for the mid-week Bible Study and Prayer Meeting on Wednesday the 16th September in the main hall of the church to ensure social distancing. **Please note, when we refer to social distancing in this document, this currently refers to a separation of at least 2 metres.** At this meeting we ran over some of the proposals for the following Sunday.
 - b. Subsequent to the successful opening at this meeting and reviewing the risk assessment and procedures, the church re-opened on the following Sunday morning (20th September).
 - c. Limiting the length of meetings to around 50 minutes
 - d. Limiting attendance to ensure the necessary social distancing – depending on the size of extended households, this may be around 50 people.
2. Carefully considered the church premises to ensure:
 - a. They can be easily entered and exited with minimal pinch points
 - b. The seating can be positioned to enable social distancing during meetings
 - c. All furniture, fittings and equipment can be easily cleaned and sanitised or alternatively where this is not possible, the surfaces left for greater than 72 hours (the survival time of the virus on surfaces).
 - d. There is easy access to all essential communal areas such as, the toilet facilities. The kitchen and other non-essential rooms will be shut. The school room will only be open for essential activities, a route through the building and queuing for toilets
 - e. The toilet facilities will be kept clean
 - f. Any waste will be bagged, removed and disposed of immediately after any meeting using adequate PPE
3. Ensured that first-aid arrangements and facilities are adequate and correct for emergency response, including if someone is taken ill with COVID-19
4. Provided adequate signage around the church so that all visitors understand what safety precautions are needed whilst onsite
5. Prepared a complete and full COVID-19 risk assessment (see Appendix 2 for further information).
6. Agreed that the Elders will check weekly for Government, Welsh Government, NHS and HSE updates to assure that the church's procedures and protocols are updated

3. Will you be able to attend when the church building reopens?

1. The Welsh Government website (gov.wales) has published guidelines on who can attend religious services.

Those experiencing the main symptoms of coronavirus **should not attend** a place of worship:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means considerably more than one coughing episode per hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Most people with coronavirus have at least 1 of these symptoms.

2. Any individuals who are self-isolating due to a possible, or confirmed case, of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the household or extended household; or if they are a contact of a case and have been advised to self-isolate should not attend. This will also include those required to quarantine from travelling abroad.
3. The advice for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable is that they should take extra precautions to keep themselves safe.
4. No one should feel obligated to return to a place of worship, even if they have a role of responsibility that they would normally fulfil.
5. Those wishing to attend a place of worship should consider how far they need to travel and how they will travel to and from the building safely. Members of the same household (including its support bubble) may travel together.
6. For all who are unable to attend the church in person:
 - a. All sermons will continue to be streamed live on the church's YouTube channel,
 - b. For those not using the internet, the current arrangements for sermons to be able to be heard by telephone, etc. will remain in place.
7. If anyone, including the church officers and workers, becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 in the church, they should isolate as quickly as possible, be sent home and are advised to follow the self-isolation guidance and to apply for a coronavirus test.

If you have, for example, a common cold with symptoms of coughing and sneezing, you may wish to consider not attending to alleviate the fears of other attendees.
8. Other people who may have been in contact with the person who has become unwell should wash their hands thoroughly after the interaction. They may need to take other specific action depending on their involvement with the patient and whether they develop symptoms themselves. If they develop symptoms, they should follow the self-isolation guidance and apply for a coronavirus test.
 - The areas used by these individuals should be isolated and thoroughly cleaned according to the procedures.
9. Parents or guardians should supervise their children to ensure they maintain social distancing at all times. They should be accompanied at all times.

C. When attending worship at the church

1. On Arrival

1. It is the responsibility of those who wish to attend church meetings not to come if:
 - a. They have any of the symptoms of the coronavirus. (Appendix 3)
 - b. They are uncertain if a chest infection is COVID-19 or not
2. We all have the responsibility to maintain social distancing from the moment we leave our homes.
3. If you come by car, please use the car park. Please ensure you observe social distancing and avoid unnecessary interaction with others outside your household group .
4. Pay attention to the signage giving information about church opening hours and safety procedures when in and around the church.
5. The necessary procedures mean it will take you longer to enter the building, so please arrive early. We believe that our own congregation are considerate enough for us not to have to put permanent separation markers outside, however, we will place traffic cones around the building to indicate social distancing when queuing.
6. On entry, your name and contact details will be recorded for 'test and trace'. Each day's details will only be kept for as long as necessary (21 days) and will only be accessible by a church elder.
7. Please use the hand sanitisers provided or wash your hands. The preferred option is the use the sanitisers to limit the use of the toilets.
8. Please wear face masks while in the building. This is not necessary for those with a medical exemption, or aged under 12. Although there will be masks available in the church for emergencies, we would prefer people to provide their own. The speaker will use a visor or will stand behind a transparent screen.
9. You may wear gloves if you wish.

2. During the meeting

1. The programme for each meeting will be simple and similar to the format used on-line. We also plan to have a short message for the children. There will not be any singing. If music is played on the piano at the beginning and the end of the meeting, please do not sing along.
2. Space in the main body of the church is limited so seating has been rearranged so as to maintain social distancing (equivalent to 4 chair widths). You will be guided to your seats.
 - a. Once seated please remain in your seats to maintain social distancing.
 - b. Please beware of turning around or leaning back to speak to others as this may break that distance. Wherever possible, the seating will face in the same direction to minimise virus transmission.
 - c. Households should sit together wherever possible to ensure efficient use of the space available while social distancing. On arrival, you will be shown to your individual, couple or household group, seats.
 - d. There will be seats reserved for visitors, probably the back rows.

Please note: The virus is killed in less than 72 hours on surfaces (this is a worst-case scenario and without any disinfection being applied)

1. *By midweek (Wednesday night), 72 hours will have passed so those attending will simply be asked to social distance.*
 2. *When you return the following Sunday morning, 72 hours will also have passed, and you can confidently regain your seats.*
 3. *On Sunday evening, you will be asked to sit in the same seats you occupied during the morning service. Those who were not present in the morning service will be seated in seats that have been unused for at least 72 hours.*
3. Church Bibles and hymn books will be removed from the main hall and stored under cover in the schoolroom. Please bring their own Bibles, hymn books or mobile phone software. In addition, a copy of the hymns and readings will be shown on the projector screen..
4. Weather permitting, the external doors will be kept open throughout the meeting to aid air flow in the buildings and to minimise the need to touch door handles. We may also open other doors and windows to aid air circulation so please bear this in mind in deciding what to wear (i.e. you might need an extra layer or two).

3. Exiting after the meeting

1. After the meeting, please remain in your places until asked to leave the main hall by the the steward co-ordinating your exit from the building. Exit from the church will be via the main entrance or the back entrance. Please be aware that these are potential pinch points and therefore swift movement through these areas is important.
2. Once the building has been exited, please ensure that you maintain social distancing while others exit the church.
3. If you wish to have a short time of catch-up and fellowship in the car park, please maintain social distancing. It is vital that we maintain a good witness and assure safety in the car park while cars are moving.

4. Should you wish to speak with a Pastor, please make contact privately with him, or ask a steward to arrange this if that is easier for you.

D. Protocols for other matters

1. Communion

We observed the Lord's Supper together on the first Sunday of December. To minimise risk, we implemented the following:

1. The bread fragments are to be freshly prepared following good hygiene practices (including face masks and gloves) before being placed on the serving plates or bowls.
2. The communion table is to be placed against the back wall of the church, and plates (bowls) and wine trays are to be placed at each end of the table and covered with cloths in the usual manner. They are to remain covered until immediately prior to serving.
3. The person leading communion shall speak from a separate table in front of the communion table, shall ensure appropriate social distance from the congregation and shall wear a visor or stand behind a screen.
4. Those serving the elements shall wear face masks and disposable gloves. A fragment of bread will be offered to each recipient and dropped into their cupped hands using a spoon or tongs. Cups of wine will be spread out on the trays and offered to the congregation as normal.
5. Used cups are not to be collected but rather placed in a bowl / plastic bag by each exit at the back of the main hall by each user as they depart, after which they are to be washed in hot, soapy water.

2. Offerings

Once the church building is reopened, collection boxes will be placed at both exits for gifts. Please avoid using coins where possible. As always, the use of direct electronic giving is preferred to minimise contamination transfer – please contact the Treasurer for further information.

3. Personal responsibility

All users of the building are urged to behave responsibly towards each other as an outworking of Christian love, and a witness to a watching world. In addition to social distancing, please avoid touching items belonging to others e.g. clothing, books, phones etc. It is hoped that a hug and handshake will return in time!

When someone forgets themselves and accidentally breaches these procedures, please forgive and, if necessary, remind them as appropriate.

If you access the hall 'out of hours', please sign the 'Test and Trace' sheets in the foyer on entry. In addition, please use the alcohol wipes provided to wipe down areas you – it is important that we can all have confidence when entering the building.

4. Sunday School and Youth Work (up to 18 years old)

In alert level 4, supervised children's activities such as Sunday Schools are prohibited. We will review the appropriateness of recommencing such activities when the alert level changes.

5. Luncheon Club, Ladies Meeting and the Home Fellowships

The advice from the Welsh Government with respect to the higher risks of COVID-19 linked with over 70s, combined with our inability to social distance adequately around tables in and in our homes means

that these may not be possible at present. This decision will be reviewed as further guidance is issued, particularly with respect to the availability of a vaccine.

6. General cleanliness

- a. Bins provide improved hygiene and minimise the accidental touching of unclean surfaces.
- b. Having washed your hands appropriately for at least 20 seconds with antibacterial soap, the warm air hand dryers should be used to dry hands.
- c. Church members are requested to ensure that all surfaces are kept as clear as possible. This means that items must be stored away in cupboards immediately after use.

7. Kitchen and refreshments

At this stage, the kitchen will be shut, and refreshments will not be served after meetings. Access to the kitchen will be restricted – access only for the preparation of the communion elements and in emergencies. Use of the kitchen and provision of refreshments will be reviewed as further guidance is published.

If you need to have water available during the meeting, we would ask you to please bring your own. Bottled water will, however, be available for visitors and in emergencies

8. Evangelistic outreach

While the COVID-19 lockdown has significantly impacted our potential outreach plans for this year, please continue to pray that the Lord would guide us to other opportunities such as online witness. Above all, please pray that the Lord would bless his Word, however it is communicated.

General access to the bookcases at the back of the main hall will not be possible. If you require evangelistic literature, or books from the library, please ask a steward, rather than browsing yourself.

9. Toilets

As it is difficult to maintain social distancing in the toilets, only one person (or household) will be allowed in each toilet at a time. Children up to and including Year 6 should be accompanied by a parent / guardian. To avoid potential queueing, please use hand sanitisers wherever possible rather than hand washing. If queuing, please use the school room to make social distancing easier in the foyer with people entering or leaving the building.

Handles, taps, and other regularly touched surfaces (including toilet seats) will be disinfected as part of the standard cleaning process which takes place between each meeting. Disinfectant wipes will be available in each toilet for pre- and post- toilet wiping of toilet seats as well as the flush buttons – please discard in the waste bins- do not flush down the toilets.

10. Lifts to church

Current Welsh Government guidance discourages people travelling with those outside their household and, as such, car sharing is not recommended. This guidance clearly encourages the use of public transport, including taxis wherever – see Appendix 5.

If you decide to make private arrangements with friends to provide lifts, we recommend that you follow the advice for taxis given in Appendix 5.

Appendix 1. Sources of Information

- UK Government - UK Government guidance for cleaning because of a suspected case of COVID-19: "COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings outside the home"; dated 16th October 2020

Welsh Government – “Guidance on reopening places of worship: coronavirus” dated 5 March 2021

- Public Health England – “COVID-19: Guidance for maintaining services within health and care settings Infection prevention and control recommendations”, version 1.1 dated 21 January 2021
- National Health Service (NHS)
- Health and Safety Executive (HSE) – “Cleaning your workplace to reduce risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)” dated 31 December 2020
- The Evangelical Movement of Wales
- The Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches (EFCC)
- The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC)
- The Church of England
- Other Churches

Appendix 2. Risk Assessment

1. Key objectives
 - a. To minimise the risks posed by the transmission of COVID-19 either by touch or exhalation
 - b. To minimise the risks posed by legionella or other micro-organisms through contaminated water supplies
 - c. To minimise any risks arising from using the church in a new way
2. Strategies to mitigate identified risks
 - a. Consider who might be at risk and how
 - b. Consider how people will arrive at the church and whether they need to wait or queue outside
 - c. Consider how people can adhere to social distancing when outside the church premises
 - d. Consider how people will enter and leave the building
 - e. Consider how people will access sanitisers, gloves and masks on arrival and adhere to hygiene requirements
 - f. Consider how people will circulate within the church building on entering and during the meeting where necessary
 - g. Ensure the church is correctly cleaned and sanitised 72 hours before meetings and other gatherings
 - h. Arrange seating so that social distancing is maintained between attendees when in the building
 - i. Ensure attendees avoid touching communal Bibles, hymn books and the property of others
 - j. Ensure worshippers are aware of the need to minimise the touching of ‘shared’ surfaces
 - k. Ensure that all water is free from bacterial contamination
 - l. Consider whether any new equipment will be needed and what temporary changes need to be made to the church to enable new social distancing

Appendix 3. Symptoms associated with COVID-19

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Most people with coronavirus have at least 1 of these symptoms.

Appendix 4. Cleaning Procedures

1. General cleaning

- a. Door handles and other regularly touched surfaces will be cleaned immediately before each meeting
- b. If the church building has been closed for 72 hours between periods of being open, then there is no need for extra cleaning to remove the virus from surfaces.
- c. If a 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.
- d. A cleaning rota will be set up to cover every opening up of the church as necessary
- e. All cleaners should wear masks and disposable cleaning gloves
- f. Suitable cleaning materials will be provided – this may vary with the type of surface to be cleaned
- g. Confirm who is responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the building
- h. The potentially contaminated waste should be removed on the same day as collected

2. Cleaning after known exposure to someone with coronavirus symptoms

- a. If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted
- b. If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings
- c. If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning (see general cleaning above).

Appendix 5. Lifts to church

Below are excerpts from the Welsh Government document, "Taxi and private hire vehicle guidance" dated 5 January 2021

Ensure that passengers wear a face covering.

Ask passengers if they have any coronavirus symptoms before picking them up. If potential passengers have symptoms such as a persistent cough, or high temperature or loss of sense of smell and/or taste, you should direct them to NHS Direct and refuse service.

Ask passengers if they have had a positive coronavirus test in the last 10 days, if they have you should refuse service.

Ask passengers to sit in the rear of the vehicle. It is preferable that single passengers sit in the rear left-hand seat to maximise the distance between driver and passenger.

Keep a bottle of hand sanitiser gel in your vehicle. This should be at least 60% alcohol based. Alternatively keep a large bottle of water and a bar/bottle of soap. You should wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.

Carry tissues in your vehicles and use tissues to catch coughs and sneezes. Dispose of used tissues in a bin straight away.

Keep the vehicle well ventilated, and open windows when possible. You should not use the recirculated air option for the car's ventilation system when carrying passengers.

After each passenger journey drivers should clean hard surfaces such as:

- *door handles*
- *window winders*
- *seat belts*
- *card payment devices*
- *the rear of the front seats and other surface the passenger(s) may have touched or coughed/sneezed on*

You should then wash/sanitise your hands.

- *The Church Officers*
 - *13 April 2021*