

Acre Mill Baptist Church

Covid 19 Risk Assessment

July 2020



This Risk Assessment and Mitigation is based on the Government document:

COVID-19 : Guidance for the safe use of places of worship from 4 July (Published 29 June 2020)

We have also consulted guidance from the Covid-19 Risk assessments and guidance published by the Baptist Union, the Methodist Church and the Church of England which are available at:

www.baptist.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=257881

www.methodist.org.uk/media/17334/covid-19-risk-assessment-template.pdf

www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/COVID%2019%20advice%20on%20conducting%20public%20worship%20v1.1.pdf

1. Introduction

A risk assessment would normally grade each risk in terms of likelihood and severity but this seems inappropriate to the Covid transmission situation since all risks are highly likely if an infected person enters the building and the severity of the consequences of transmission are all medium/high. This would make the minimisation of all risks a high priority and require all of the following mitigation measures to be in place before the building is opened and during use

2. General Considerations

Anyone who has any of the key symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, persistent dry cough and loss of taste or smell), have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Track and Trace or to self-isolate for any other reason should not attend Church services.

Those who are clinically vulnerable should be encouraged to consider if it is appropriate for them to attend, as they are advised to stay at home as much as possible. Anyone concerned should consult their GP for advice. Similarly, those who are shielding should be recommended to continue to follow government advice.

However, the government guidance does make clear that these decisions are for the individual, because the risk is to them and they do not present any higher risk for other attendees.

The name and contact details of anyone who enters the building should be recorded, with details of the time of their visit. This will allow NHS Track and Trace to follow up with attendees should a COVID-19 case be identified as having attended the church.

Recording of attendees needs to be done in compliance with data protection legislation which means that a specific privacy policy is made available when taking details. Records should be kept securely and disposed of after 21 days. A paper attendance register will be used, largely based on the contact details already provided by members of the congregation. A sample privacy statement is provided in the BU Guidance in Appendix 4

Instructions to the congregation should include the requirement to notify the church if they show symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 so that appropriate action can be taken.

3. Pre-Event Actions

A re-occupation checklist is provided as Appendix 1 of the BU Guidance. This will be completed prior to re-opening, and kept in the Church Covid file along with any action taken.

A pre-event checklist is provided as Appendix 2 to the BU Guidance which will be completed and signed each week on the day prior to the Sunday service.

A cleaning checklist is provided as Appendix 3 of the BU Guidance. This will be completed and signed each week on the day prior to the Sunday service. The church cleaner has a copy of this guidance and will incorporate it into the regular cleaning programme.

The building has been opened several times a week during lockdown for cleaning, maintenance and ventilation. All checks and any issues arising from long-term closure are recorded in the re-occupation checklist.

4. Surface Transmission

There is a high risk of transferring the virus by contact with infected surfaces. Therefore the following mitigation measures involve removing access to surfaces likely to be touched and ensuring that, where touching a surface is unavoidable, appropriate cleaning and disinfecting procedures are in place

- a) Instructions to the congregation will include the need not to touch any surface unnecessarily and a reminder to remove all personal belongings after each service.
- b) Hand Sanitisers will be provided in the foyer, toilet and worship area. Instructions to the congregation and posters will provide a reminder to use these.
- c) All entrance doors to be fixed in the open position while the building is in use. This will remove the need to touch handles and doorplates except for the downstairs toilet (see Section 5 below)
- d) Access to the kitchen area, fellowship room, stairs and upstairs rooms will be prevented

e) Only authorised people will be allowed to touch microphones, PA system, Computer system, OHP projector and musical instruments. Those so authorised will be required to take appropriate steps to protect themselves and clean the equipment after the service

e) Portable objects and books will be removed from the worship area. This will include bibles and hymn books. All hymns and songs will be on OHP.

f) All seating will be cleaned and sanitised directly after the service

f) Giving by direct bank transfer or online has been encouraged. An offering will be taken by stewards during the service and will be quarantined for 72 Hours before counting and checking.

g) No food or drink will be served in the Church building during or after the services.

5. Downstairs Toilet

a) The use of the toilet will be kept to a minimum but it is recognised that it will be necessary to have toilet facilities available. Toilets have an elevated transmission risk and need some careful management. The toilet ventilator fan will be left on during the service time and for one hour after the service.

b) Toilets will be thoroughly cleaned before and after every service.

c) Hand sanitiser will be made available before entering the toilets and inside the toilet.

d) Single use paper towels will be provided

e) A foot-operated lidded bin for disposal of paper towels will be provided

f) Cleaning wipes will be provided to allow the toilet seat and other touched surfaces to be cleaned by users.

g) Appropriate signage will be provided to explain the rules for toilet use and promote good hygiene practices.

h) Suitable temperature hot water will be provided to allow for hands to be washed.

i) Children under 11 should be accompanied to the toilet by an adult from their household to ensure compliance with good hygiene practice and social distancing.

j) If the toilet is in use, those waiting should stand in the foyer at a safe distance to allow those exiting to maintain social distancing

k) Waste paper will be disposed of according to safe handling procedure detailed in the BU Guidance Appendix 3

6. Social Distancing

From 4 July, the government social distancing requirement changed from 2 metres to "1 metre plus", which means one metre plus "mitigations" (which are additional measures put in place to reduce the risk of transmission, such as face coverings). 2m social distancing remains the ideal situation and should be observed wherever possible. This is particularly important in seating arrangements because this is where attendees at the church will spend the majority of their time. Managing seating capacity is a complex practical issue that will need to take account of families who can sit together and individuals who may be unfamiliar with the building.

Please note that in an emergency such as a fire or accident, people do not have to stay socially distanced if it would be unsafe. People involved in the provision of assistance to other should pay attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards...

7. Managing Arrivals/departures

- a) Floor markings and signage will be put in place to indicate a safe flow of people and maintain safe distances.
- b) A steward will be present in the foyer to manage arrivals, point out flow markings and remind about hand sanitation. A supply of information leaflets will be available for those who have not been contacted through usual church communication routes.
- c) A steward will be available to direct members of the congregation to seating that is safely distanced. Children should remain seated with their parents at all times.
- d) Stewards must be aware of possible pinch points where people are brought together into close proximity. The area near the double doors between the foyer and the fellowship room is a critical area since this is also a route to the toilet. If the toilet is in use, anyone waiting should stand in the foyer so that exit from the toilet is possible without coming nearer than 2m.
- e) Face coverings may be worn but are not compulsory
- f) Congregational singing is not permitted as it is considered that this enhances risk of virus spread.
- g) At the end of the service, stewards will direct members to leave the worship area in a safe manner. The exit route will be clearly marked.