# Parish of St Paul’s Risk assessment – prayer and small groups

## Name: St Paul’s Church Assessment carried out by: Charles George

## Date of next review: TBA Date assessment was carried out: 11 January 2022

**This Risk Assessment was reviewed (27 July 2021) when we reached step 4 of the roadmap out of lockdown. This removed the legal requirement to undertake certain mitigations. However, a further review was necessary because of the government’s decision to move to Plan B from 10 December 2021 in recognition of the highly infectious Omicron variant. Aside from making it compulsory to wear face coverings in the church setting the subject of this risk assessment, legally nothing has changed but there is a heightened awareness that it is in everyone’s interests to minimise the risk of the transmission of Covid-19 and the practices set out below although advisory are best followed to ensure everyone’s safety, and indeed makes those attending feel comfortable in doing so. This also assumes the group leader is content with meeting in person in church. Groups, prayer or otherwise, may have capacity, if they so wish, to meet remotely on Zoom if there is a concern about the risk of infection during this period of time. This risk assessment relates to both prayer and other church groups. The rest of the preamble to this document remain for reference purposes only.**

**Reference only: Prayer groups are not limited by numbers, subject to meeting social distancing requirements and mitigations generally and in any event the nature of such groups is that they are most effective with relatively low numbers. Any other groups are a social gathering and limited to a maximum of six by the Rule of 6. However, as of 14 October 2020 the Government introduced the 3 Tier System of alert levels, which then had the Stay-at-Home Tier 4 added as from 20 December 2020. We were in Tier 4 as from 31 December 2020 and as with Level 2 (High) and Level 3 (Very High), there could not be a mixing of households indoors and, therefore, there could not be social gatherings under the Rule of 6 for small groups. Levels 2 to 4 of the Covid local alert levels did not prohibit or limit prayer groups meeting in church and this remains the case, as an act of public worship, under Lockdown 3 from 6 January 2021 and now under Step 2 (from 12 April 2021) as part of the Government’s Roadmap out of lockdown. However, at this time small groups cannot meet in church, but that will be possible if Step 3 takes place as from 17 May 2021. The meeting of prayer groups, or not as the case maybe, reflect the assessment of risk by the group leaders having regard to infection rates, the vulnerability of group members and the very fact there remains a form of lockdown. Groups, prayer or otherwise, do, if they so wish, have capacity to meet remotely on Zoom and this is actively encouraged.**

**Regard should also be had to the Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public (revised as at 8 January 2022), the contents of which are not repeated in this document. If there are any issues arising from the meeting of such groups, the designated leader should have regard to the said Risk Assessment or seek guidance from the church wardens or the office administrator.**

**Seating: For small groups (circa 5-6) the best position is to set up socially distanced chairs around the red carpet in the children’s corner to the right of the raised dais. However, this is not a requirement, and the group leader can ask those attending to sit elsewhere. If numbers are greater a prayer group can use the chairs which are set out in rows (50 inches apart by rows) ensuring that 2 empty chairs separate each individual or couple. This is done to make those attending feel safe. It is not a legal requirement. If it is decided by the group leader to move any chairs from the front rows to facilitate a slightly larger group, the chairs should be cleaned with sanitiser spray both before and after and returned to the rows ensuring the 50 inches gap provision is met.**

| What are the hazards? | Who might be harmed and how? | Controls required | What further action do you need to take to control the risks? | Who needs to carry out the action? | Action by when? | Done |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Spread of COVID 19** | All attendees those subsequently coming to church. | **Entry**  By the priest’s store which will be left open to improve ventilation.  **Exit**  By the same door. Probably not an issue but try to avoid queuing and give others present time to leave. | In certain circumstances avoiding the foyer reduces the risk of mingling with any other users of the site. | Group leader | On day |  |
| **As above** | As above | **Hand sanitation**  Sanitisers to be used on entry and exit. Positioned by door. | No | Group leader | On day |  |
| **As above** | As above | **Social Distancing**  No legal requirement but those present to typically stay 2 meters apart. | See preamble about chair layout. They key is to respect the space of others. | Group leader | On day |  |
| **As above** | As above | **Ventilation**  Where possible leave doors open. Windows with louvres can be opened. | Attendees reminded to wear warm clothing. | Group leader | On day |  |
| **As above** | As above | **Face coverings**  It is mandatory to wear face coverings subject to exemptions. | Stock of face coverings in office if required. | Group leader | On day |  |
| **As above** | As above | **Personal testing**  Advisability of regular lateral flow tests given the highly infectious Omicron variant. | Encouraged to test depending on circumstances and contact with others. | Group leader | On day |  |
| **As above** | As above | **Worship materials**  Attendees should bring own bibles to avoid infecting materials. | Materials are best single use and then taken home or left in bin by exit. In practice church bibles are sometimes used. Not an issue as they can be put to one side/quarantined. | Group leader | On day |  |
| **As above** | As above | **Lighting of candles**  A large bowl and single use candles are available. | Allow 3-4 minutes after applying hand sanitiser. Warning notice with prayer bowl. | Group leader | On day |  |
| **As above** | As above | **Refreshments**  Bring own. | No | Group leader | On day |  |
| **As above** | As above | **Toileting**  Facilities available. | Toilet in foyer is most accessible but main toilets can be used. | Group leader | On day |  |
| **As above** | As above | **Attendance Record**  A record is asked to be kept and retained for 21 days on a rolling basis. | Attendees invited to sign NHS Test and Trace consent form and give to CJG/WP to retain. Group leader keeps the register but can pass it to CJG/WP if want to. Needs to available on request. | Group leader | On day |  |
| **As above** | As above | **Cleaning**  After meeting, clean hight risk surfaces and touch points using sanitiser spray and disposable cloths. | Group leader should wipe down wooden parts of chairs and other surfaces used. Clean touch points in toilets, if used. Materials on table by exit next to sacristy. Disposable gloves in office. Ise bin by exit. | Group leader | On day |  |
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