

COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT

FOR USE OF WISEWOOD METHODIST CHURCH BY CHURCH AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Revision 03 – 14th March, 2022

	28 th July 2021	Previous document withdrawn and replaced by separate Risk Assessments for Corporate Worship and Use of Community Rooms.
Revision 01	7 th September 2021	Document retitled and Worship Area added to list of rooms. General Notes corrected for singing, updated to include use of the Worship Area and renumbered as required. General updates and restrictions on use of toilets eased.
Revision 02	27 th February, 2022	Updated in accordance with latest Government and Methodist Church guidance.
Revision 03	14 th March, 2022	Reference to NHS Test and Trace removed. Risk assessment simplified.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this risk assessment is to ascertain the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the use of Wisewood Methodist Church premises by church and community groups, and to determine what protocols and regimes should be established and continued to reduce and minimise any dangers to the health and wellbeing of those attending for activities.

This document reflects the latest [Government guidance for Places of Worship](#) and [Methodist Church Covid 19 guidance](#), both updated on 24th February 2022

The Government guidance advises the wearing of face coverings ‘*in crowded and enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with other people you do not normally meet*’. Additionally, ‘*social distancing in a place of worship is now a personal choice. People are encouraged to respect other attendees and those working who may wish to adopt a more cautious approach*’. The guidance also states that: ‘*simple and effective personal hygiene behaviours can also reduce the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19*’.

With regards to ventilation, Government guidance states that ‘*When worship takes place inside or in other enclosed spaces, consider how the space can be continually well ventilated, before, during and after*’.

Latest Methodist Church guidance suggests the following:

The Government is still encouraging safer behaviours to reduce the risk of infection. Churches may still wish to consider these to help those using their buildings feel safe and welcome:

1. Consider letting fresh air in if possible:

Try to maintain adequate ventilation to rooms, where possible and practical. See - [Ventilation of indoor spaces to stop the spread of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

2. Consider wearing face coverings in areas of high risk:

It may be suitable in crowded or enclosed spaces, particularly if ventilation is poor, to wear face coverings, particularly where you share spaces with people you do not normally meet.

3. Considerations if feeling unwell:

Anyone experiencing Covid-19 symptoms should still consider taking a test and staying at home and avoiding contact with others if the test is positive. Particularly if working in higher risk environments or with those who might be vulnerable.

4. Consider how to encourage ongoing good hygiene practice:

It may be helpful to continue to provide hand sanitiser in convenient areas for everyone to use; keep established practices of cleaning surfaces touched regularly and rooms with high use by different groups such as toilets and kitchens. Similarly, continue to encourage good hygiene when considering handling shared objects, communal resources and food & drink.

In summary, although no longer legal requirements, both the wearing of face coverings and social distancing are still advised on our premises, as is the substantial ventilation of all occupied spaces. Hand sanitizers will still be located at various points around the building, and rooms may be antiseptically cleaned using the 'fogger' when timescales permit. After 'fogging' the room should not be accessed for a minimum of one hour.

USE OF COMMUNITY ROOMS AND WORSHIP AREA

- **ACCESSING THE BUILDING AND TOILETS**
See General Notes.
- **ACCESSING THE WORSHIP AREA**
See General Notes below. Numbers in the Worship Area to be limited to ensure that appropriate social distancing for the particular activity can be maintained. Where possible, face coverings should be worn when standing or seated. For singing (performance or rehearsal) see General Note 9. See also General Notes regarding cleaning of the premises.
- **ACCESSING THE HALL, KITCHEN, OWLERTON ROOM AND WADSLEY/WESLEY ROOM**
See General Notes below. Numbers in each area to be limited to ensure that the appropriate social distancing for the particular activity can be maintained. Where possible, face coverings should be worn when standing or seated. Face coverings may be removed for exercise activities, e.g. dancing, Pilates, Zumba and keep fit, and when seated to partake of refreshments. For singing (performance or rehearsal) see General Note 9. Access to the Owlerton Room and Wadsley/Wesley Room and rear corridor to be carefully managed. See also General Notes regarding cleaning of the premises.
- **EXITING THE PREMISES**
See General Notes regarding the regime for a controlled exiting ensuring social distancing.
- **ACCESSING THE TOILETS**
Numbers of people allowed into the toilet areas at the same time should be limited to prevent crowding, and therefore users may experience having to wait on occasion. See General Notes 13 and 14.

USE OF VESTRY AS OFFICE AND FOR MEETINGS (while the NHS Vaccine Hub is operating at Wisewood, the vestry is not available)

- Limit the number of people in the vestry at any given time, all wearing face coverings and ensuring social distancing. Time spent in the vestry to be kept to a minimum; vestry window to be opened whilst it is occupied. Cleaning of equipment and touched surfaces to take place after use.

GENERAL NOTES

In our drive to minimize Covid-19 transmission via social and tactile contamination we will be adopting the following protocols and regimes until further notice:

1. Access into the building should be via the main entrance and managed to ensure where possible the observance of social distancing and the wearing of face coverings.
2. Hand sanitizers are available at key points throughout the building with a request that they be used by everyone.
3. Where any activity will last longer than fifteen minutes, ventilation in the room in which it is taking place should be implemented immediately upon entering the area and allowed to continue for as long as possible after the end of the activity prior to leaving the premises.
4. Where possible, during use of the worship area, windows in the worship area should be opened to improve cross ventilation. Vertical blinds in front of the open windows should be left open to avoid limiting air flow.
5. When the Community Rooms (Hall, Owlerton and Wadsley/Wesley Rooms) are being used, all opening windows should be opened to maximise natural ventilation. Blinds and curtains should be left open to avoid limiting air flow through open windows.
6. In order to improve ventilation in the hall, the windows in the snooker area should be opened for the duration of the activity and the fire exit door between the foyer and the main corridor should be held open on the magnetic hold-open device where this does not compromise privacy.
7. Where possible, no-one should remain in any of the Community Rooms or kitchen for more than 30 minutes without a break.
8. In the event of a particular group of people wanting to use the Community Rooms (Hall, Owlerton and Wadsley/Wesley Rooms) or Worship Area, the number of people in a room at any one time should be limited to ensure social distancing can be achieved if required. All activities, particularly singing or exercise activities, e.g., Pilates, Zumba, dancing, keep-fit, etc. should be strictly in accordance with Covid-19 guidance from their regulating bodies and with Government and Methodist Church guidance, particularly regarding any requirement for social distancing and wearing of face coverings.
9. Where singing takes place (rehearsals or performances), where possible it should follow the Government's latest [Covid 19 – guidance for the safe use of places of worship](#). Appropriate social distancing between singers, and singers and audience should be maintained.
10. Users of the Community Rooms and Worship Area (other than for worship) should undertake their own risk assessment, based on the proposed activity, guidance from their governing bodies, and this document. A copy should be made available to the church's Covid-19 Co-ordinators on request.
11. More than one person may be in the kitchen at a time, provided that social distancing is maintained, and face coverings worn. The kitchen extract fan should be switched on. If possible, the kitchen fire exit door should be opened when the kitchen is occupied and closed when not.
12. The difficulties in maintaining any social distancing in the narrow corridor outside the Owlerton and Wadsley/Wesley Rooms mean that access, both entry and egress, should be carefully managed.

13. Toilets in the foyer and the disabled toilet are available for all building users, although access down the corridor may entail giving way to someone already in the corridor in order to maintain social distancing. Face coverings should be worn in all areas unless particular individuals or groups are exempt. Members of the congregation are advised to be mindful of other people using the toilet areas at the same time to prevent crowding.
14. Toilets have soap dispensers and paper towels, along with hand sanitizers for use on entering and leaving the toilet area. Open waste bins are provided. Antiseptic spray and wipes are available in the toilet cubicles for use on the sanitary ware both before and after use. The toilet lid should be down before flushing the toilet. Where toilets have mechanical extract, the fan should be left on continually and any window left shut to avoid short circuiting of the air movement. Where toilets only have opening windows, these should be left open.
15. All surfaces that can reasonably be expected to have been touched during occupation of the building should be cleaned before and after each use of the building by the users. Where necessary, the 'fogger' should be used to disinfect specific areas and items of furniture, etc. After use of the fogger, the room should not be accessed for a minimum of one hour.
16. When use of any of the rooms has finished, all open windows and external doors must be securely closed and locked by the users.
17. Informative and directional signage will be employed to help users to safely negotiate the premises. The building should be checked weekly by church stewards or property stewards to ensure that informative and directional signage is still in place.
18. The church stewards will act as Covid-19 Co-ordinators.
19. No-one who currently has Covid-19 symptoms should attend the building. Latest NHS guidance should be followed – see '<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/if-youre-told-to-self-isolate-by-nhs-test-and-trace-or-the-covid-19-app/>'.
20. In the event of someone developing Covid-19 symptoms within 48 hours of having visited the building, one of the church stewards should be informed as soon as possible. Information on cleaning is available on the government website '<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>'.
21. Further information is available on the government website '<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-living-with-covid-19/covid-19-response-living-with-covid-19#living-with-covid-19>'.

Advice on these matters is frequently changing and will, of necessity, require constant monitoring and the making of changes to our protocols. Similarly, changes will have to be made in the light of our own experiences in using the building, and this can only be successful with the complete co-operation of all concerned. This risk assessment is a 'live document' and will be presented to each Church Council as the Managing Trustees to show of any amendments or updates undertaken.