

# **COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT**

## **FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP AT**

### **WISEWOOD METHODIST CHURCH**

**July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020**

**Revision 01 – minor typographical changes**

**Revision 02 (11<sup>th</sup> August 2020) – changes to include face coverings in worship area, use of PPE visors in-lieu of perspex screens, accommodation of mobility scooter users, etc.**

**Revision 03 (20<sup>th</sup> August 2020) – notes added regarding use of vestry as office during the week.  
Other minor changes to text.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this risk assessment is to ascertain the impact of Covid-19 on opening up Wisewood Methodist Church premises for corporate worship and to determine what protocols and regimes could be established to reduce and minimise any dangers to the health and wellbeing of those attending such worship.

It is, therefore, necessary to consider the various individuals and their functions in the service and the format of this assessment lists the individuals, the Covid-19 risk that they are exposed to in carrying out their function and purpose during worship and then sets down what practical measures can be taken to protect them from the virus.

The protocols and regimes set down in this assessment inform the contents of the letter sent out by the Church Stewards to the congregation outlining the impact of anti- Covid-19 procedures on corporate worship at Wisewood Methodist Church.

July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020

## **MINISTERS AND PREACHERS**

- **ACCESSING THE BUILDING**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - See General Notes.
- **ACCESSING THE VESTRY**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - See General Notes. Escorted by steward down corridor ensuring 2 metre social distancing
- **STORING CLOTHES AND PERSONAL EFFECTS IN VESTRY**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Designated space for storage. Natural ventilation and antiseptic cleaning of vestry and designated storage space.
- **TIME SPENT IN VESTRY**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Max. 2 people, including the preacher, in the vestry at any given time. Time spent in the vestry to be kept to a minimum. Vestry window to be opened immediately after the premises are opened and closed last thing before exiting the building.
- **FITTING MICROPHONES AND HEAD-SETS**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Antiseptically cleaned equipment will be delivered to the vestry by the sound box operative ensuring social distancing and left for the preacher to fit themselves.
- **ACCESSING THE TOILET**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - See General Notes. Preacher to use the toilet by the rear fire escape door after ensuring social distancing along the corridor.
- **ACCESSING THE WORSHIP AREA**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Preacher escorted by steward along offshoot corridor ensuring social distancing of 2 metres. See General Notes regarding antiseptic cleaning of the premises.
- **LEADING WORSHIP**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Preacher to access the dais and either immediately occupy the pulpit or sit behind the lectern. Only one person is allowed to use the pulpit and/ or lectern throughout the service, and a maximum of two

people are allowed to access the raised dais area during the service. If the lectern is not being used by a reader, then it can be used by the preacher to lead the service from. However, if a reader is involved in the service, either the preacher should use only the pulpit and the lectern will be moved at least 2 metres away from the pulpit or a second temporary lectern positioned adjacent to the choir stalls. The service is to include no singing. The preacher is to bring their own Bible etc. for use in the service. A bottle of still water will be provided for the use of the preacher. Preacher to remain on the dais during the service. See General Notes regarding antiseptic cleaning of the premises.

- IMMEDIATE POST SERVICE
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Maintain 2 metre social distancing with no handshakes, hugs, or kisses. Collect personal effects from the pulpit area and vestry. See General Notes regarding antiseptic cleaning of the premises.
- EXITING THE PREMISES
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Employ social distancing of 1.5 metres plus face covering down the corridor and across the foyer and forecourt. See General Note regarding antiseptic cleaning of the premises.

## **READERS**

- ACCESSING THE BUILDING
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - See General Notes.
- ACCESSING THE WORSHIP AREA
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - A reserved space will be left on the front right-hand pew for the reader which will be accessed from the offshoot corridor. Only one reader will be appointed. See General Notes regarding antiseptic cleaning of the premises. The reader to be responsible for bringing their own personal Bible.
- USE OF LECTERN
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - A minimum of 2 metres social distancing to be maintained between the lectern and any other person in attendance. Only the one

person allowed to use the lectern throughout the service. See General Notes regarding antiseptic cleaning of the premises and equipment.

- ACCESSING THE TOILET
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - See General Notes. Reader to use the toilet adjacent to the rear fire exit door after ensuring social distancing along the corridor.
- EXITING THE BUILDING
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - See General Notes regarding the regime for a controlled exiting ensuring social distancing. The front right-hand pew will likely be the last asked to exit.

## **MUSICIANS AND MUSIC**

Government regulations and Methodist recommendations state that singing should not take place in worship as this generates water droplets and aerosols that can transfer and deposit the Covid-19 virus. There will, therefore, be no singing in worship at Wisewood.

Similarly, the playing of brass and wind instruments generates water droplets and, therefore, will not take place in our worship.

The organ can be played, but if played before or after the service it is thought that it may be difficult for the congregation to hear instructions from the supervising stewards regarding entering and leaving the worship area. Additionally, this may bring about an increase in the volume of general conversation which, in turn, would generate more water droplets. It is, therefore, felt that unfortunately this activity should not take place until the congregation is familiar with the new procedures. However, an organ solo could take place during the service. If the preacher/ worship leader is the only other person on the dais (i.e. there is no reader), a musical solo could also be played on the keyboard which would be located on the raised dais at the front of the worship area by the choir stalls. However, initially the organ and keyboard are not to be played until the full ramifications of this scenario can be appreciated in the light of our new worshipping experience.

In order to maintain social distancing around the organist, the playing of the organ could result in reducing the available seating in the pews by at least 2. Therefore, the pew seating immediately behind the organ should be reserved for use by the organist and individuals from the organist's household.

Music can be embedded in the PowerPoint presentation but with no accompanying congregational singing.

## **POWERPOINT OPERATORS**

- **ACCESSING THE WORSHIP AREA**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - See General Notes on access. Prior to the service and whilst setting up the PowerPoint and sound system, the operator should wear a face covering. Socially distanced route to the sound desk and a clear 2 metre zone around the operator when behind the sound desk. Once seated at the sound desk, the operator should wear a PPE visor. See General Notes on post-use antiseptic cleaning.
- **SETTING UP THE EQUIPMENT**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Face covering and surgical type gloves to be worn when moving about the worship area ensuring a minimum of 1 metre distancing at all times. Wearing face covering and gloves, take antiseptically cleaned headset and microphones through to vestry and place in a designated location. Leave the vestry immediately and do not assist the preacher in securing the equipment to their person. All equipment to be antiseptically cleaned after use.
- **USING THE SOUND DESK**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Equipment to be antiseptically cleaned before and after use. Only one person is to be seated at the sound desk unless both parties are from the same household, in which case, both are to take the above precautions. As they will be required to wear a PPE visor, face coverings can be dispensed with when the operator(s) is sat behind the desk. Wearing of gloves to be maintained.

## **OFFERING STEWARDS**

This function will be dispensed with as there is a high risk of tactile contamination. The congregation is to be encouraged to make use of Standing Orders or Bank Transfers. Any monies or envelopes that are brought are to be placed in a designated box in the foyer. The offering can be acknowledged in the service in a prayer of blessing but the box would remain in the foyer and then transferred and kept in the safe for 72 hours prior to being counted by 2no. stewards and then deposited at the bank. A rota and regime for this is to be set up allowing for PPE precautions.

## **PORCH (RECEPTION) STEWARDS**

**The existing Porch Steward rota will be temporally suspended and a new rota of “RECEPTION STEWARDS” created whose function and protocol is described below.**

- **ACCESSING THE BUILDING AND TOILETS**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination and having their authority challenged.
  - Precautions - See General Notes.
- **WELCOMING AND MONITORING THE CONGREGATION**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Only one steward wearing face covering or PPE visor to be located behind the desk and to be responsible for filling in an attendance register to facilitate future track and trace. There will be no handing out of any written material including notices. The steward is to encourage the congregation to move swiftly into the worship area maintaining a 1.5 metre social distancing. A second steward with face covering or PPE visor to be in the foyer to maintain swift socially distanced movement into the worship area and toilets. Both stewards to wear high viz vests to help establish their authority to instruct and direct members of the congregation. For security and monitoring purposes, the steward located behind the desk to remain there during the service. The other steward to occupy a reserved seat at the back of the worship area during the service.

## **SUPERVISING STEWARDS IN THE WORSHIP AREA**

- Their function would be to deal with queries and direct the congregation to their seats according to a structured seating procedure, see General Notes.
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination and having their authority challenged.
  - Precautions - Face coverings and high viz vests to be worn. See General Notes for the regime of filling and emptying the pews. Supervising stewards to be sat at the back of the worship area during the service so as to be aware of any activity and to respond accordingly.

## **CONGREGATION**

- **ACCESSING THE BUILDING AND TOILETS**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - See General Notes.

- **ACCESSING THE WORSHIP AREA**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Instructions to be given by the Supervising Stewards as to where a member of the congregation must walk and sit to maintain social distancing of 2 metres. Face coverings must be worn at all times when seated. See General Notes regarding antiseptic cleaning of the premises.
- **THE ACT OF WORSHIP**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Seating locations will be clearly marked to ensure social distancing of 2 metres between individuals or households. Face coverings must be worn during the service. The congregation will remain seated throughout the service with no singing. There will be no papers, hymn books, Bibles etc. to be handled. Personal Bibles may be brought in but must be removed from the premises at the end of the service. Spoken congregational responses will be kept to a minimum and comprise only the saying of The Lord's Prayer and "Amen" at the end of the preacher's prayers. Holy Communion will not be offered. Antiseptic cleaning of the worship area furniture and pews will take place before and after each service. To reduce possible contamination both inside and outside the premises there will be no fresh flowers on display. As no refreshments will be served and the kitchen is out of bounds then the congregation are asked to bring their own water drinks if required for consumption during the service. Children will be asked to stay with parents or an adult member of their household.
- **EXITING THE WORSHIP AREA AND PREMISES**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - Supervised exiting of the worship area under the direction of the stewards will start at the back of the worship area and work row by row towards the front. The congregation must remain seated until asked to move by the stewards. Face coverings to be worn. Refreshments will not be served, and the congregation will be encouraged to exit the foyer as quickly as possible and not to involve themselves in conversation either in the foyer or on the forecourt or steps.
- **ACCESSING THE TOILETS**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.



- Precautions - Only one person at a time will be allowed into the toilet areas and users may experience having to wait on occasion. See General Notes on antiseptic cleaning of the premises.

## **WHEELCHAIR USERS and MOBILITY SCOOTER USERS**

Mobility scooters can either be parked under the front canopy or alternatively in the proposed holding area in the foyer if there is space and the mobility scooter user is from the same household as anyone else using the holding area, or if the holding area is not required by another person. Alternatively, the mobility scooter can be driven directly into the worship area and parked along the rear wall in the designated spaces for wheelchair and mobility scooter users, providing that social distancing can be maintained.

- **ACCESSING THE BUILDING**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - See General Notes.
- **ACCESSING THE WORSHIP AREA**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - To maintain social distancing wheelchair users and their household will be seated at the rear of the worship area under instruction from the supervising steward. A holding area for wheelchair users and their household will be established in the foyer while they wait their turn to enter the worship area. Wheelchair users will be amongst the first to leave the worship area and premises.
- **ACCESSING THE TOILET**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - See General Notes on usage and antiseptic cleaning of the premises.
- **EXITING THE BUILDING**
  - Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
  - Precautions - See General Notes.

## **JUNIOR CHURCH**

A separate Covid-19 strategy for implementing Junior Church has still to be formulated. In the meantime, no Junior Church will take place.

## **PHOTOCOPYING**

- Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
- Precautions - Controlled access to the building either before, during or after the service or on a Wednesday. Since Church Notices and other literature will not be handed out then photocopying will be minimal. Antiseptic cleaning of equipment and touched surfaces to take place after use.

### **USE OF VESTRY AS OFFICE**

- Risk – Social and tactile contamination.
- Precautions - Controlled access to the building either before, during or after the service or on a Wednesday. Antiseptic cleaning of equipment and touched surfaces to take place after use. Not to be used for 72 hours both before and after services.

### **CLEANING AND GARDENING TEAMS**

- Risk - Social and tactile contamination.
- Precautions - Teams to make use of hand sanitizers, wear face coverings, gloves and disposable plastic aprons (not required for the Gardening Team) and to observe social distancing of minimum 1metre if both parties are wearing face coverings and minimum 2 metres if not. Teams to bring their own personal drinks and refreshments from home. Teams to carry out their duties on Sunday and/ or Wednesday.

### **HANDLING MAIL**

- Risk - Tactile contamination.
- Precautions - Regular antiseptic cleaning of the letter box flap and surround internally and externally. Retrieval of mail using gloves and placing the unopened mail in a designated marked up space for a minimum of 72 hours prior to opening.

### **GENERAL NOTES**

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

1. The lock on the main entrance will be changed and the keys will be in the possession of a maximum of four people whose details will be announced. This approach is to eliminate unknown access into the premises which may compromise the sterility of the building. Any authorised access will require antiseptic cleaning of any touched surfaces unless such access takes place

between Sunday and Wednesday, which ensures a minimum of 72 hours before the next service. The side door entry into the premises is not to be used except as a means of fire escape.

2. As numbers attending the service will be strictly limited due to the requirements for social distancing, everyone wishing to come to service will be required to book prior to their attendance.
3. People arriving by car are asked to observe 2 metre social distancing when leaving their car and walking from the road or church car park. The side door is not to be used for the loading or unloading of materials.
4. Controlled access into the building via the main entrance will mean the observance of 1.5 metre social distancing complete with face covering and the forecourt will be marked out at 1.5 metre intervals to facilitate controlled queuing. Queuing and admission will be supervised by high viz vested Supervising Stewards. Ministers, preachers, Church Stewards, readers, porch stewards and PowerPoint operators will be given priority access and will follow their own Covid-19 protocols and regimes as set down elsewhere in this document.
5. Hand sanitizers will be available at critical points throughout the building with a request that they be used by everyone.
6. On entering the foyer, the congregation will be entered on a register, subject to their consent, and this register along with information on the pastoral roll would enable Track and Trace to be implemented. Visitors would be asked to provide their name and contact details. The register would be destroyed after 21 days.
7. Face coverings must be worn by everyone in the foyer, corridors, and toilets. No written notices will be handed out and the congregation will be encouraged by the Supervising Stewards to move swiftly into the worship area without loitering in conversational groups.
8. Face coverings must also be worn in the worship area. Occupation of the 2 metre socially distanced pews will be under the control of the Supervising Steward and will be as described in 9. below
9. All access down the central aisle, left-hand front pew filled, then left-hand second available pew filled followed by right-hand second available pew, then left-hand third available pew followed by right-hand third available pew and finally left-hand fourth available pew followed by right-hand fourth available pew. On both sides of the central aisle, alternate pews have been closed off to assist with social distancing. One of the two available spaces on the front right-

hand pew to be left for use by the reader, but if no reader is being used then this would be filled immediately after the left-hand front pew. Wheelchair and mobility scooter users would be accommodated last at the rear of the worship area along with the Supervising Stewards who would occupy chairs along the rear wall or the fourth pews.

10. There will be no standing in services, no singing, and no Holy Communion. Congregational responses will be limited to “Amen” and the saying of The Lord’s Prayer. The worship area will be devoid of all pew Bibles and Hymn Books etc. Personal Bibles can be used but must be taken away after the service. The PowerPoint screen will be used for information and service content.
11. Exiting of the worship area will follow a strict regime under the control of the Supervising Steward. The congregation are to remain seated until asked to move by the Supervising Steward. Exiting will commence from the rear of the worship area and work forward pew by pew in rows. Swift exiting to the outside will be encouraged with no conversational groupings in the foyer.
12. The pairs of doors at the main entrance and between the foyer and the worship area will be left open at all times during the service to improve ventilation and the removal of virus laden water droplets in the atmosphere. Similarly, all windows in the worship area will be open during the service to improve cross ventilation. If it is anticipated that any activity will last longer than five minutes then any ventilation in the room in which it is taking place must be implemented immediately upon entering the area and allowed to continue for as long as possible after the end of the activity prior to terminating upon leaving the premises.
13. No access will be allowed into the hall, kitchen, Owlerton Room, Wadsley Wesley Room and the corridor between the accessible toilet and the Owlerton Room.
14. Toilets in the foyer and the disabled toilet will be made available for congregational use, although access down the corridor may entail giving way to someone already in the corridor in order to maintain social distancing. The foyer and offshoot corridor can be used as waiting areas in this eventuality. Face coverings are to be worn in all areas including the worship area. The toilet immediately by the rear fire exit door is to be used only by those involved in the service.
15. Toilets will have hand sanitizers for use on entering and leaving the toilet area along with soap dispensers, paper towels and antiseptic wipes. Open waste

bins will be provided. Spray and wipes will be 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. It is imperative that this protocol be observed by everyone. Where toilets have mechanical extract, the fan will be left on continually and any window left shut to avoid short circuiting of the air movement. Where toilets only have opening windows, these will be left open.

16. To minimize physical contact with surfaces, all doors, where possible, will be wedged open. This will require extra vigilance where fire procedures and security are compromised. All surfaces that can reasonably be expected to have been touched during occupation of the building will be antiseptically wiped down before and after each service.

17. All banners and non-laminated notices etc will be removed from walls and stored. Informative and directional signage will be employed to help users to safely negotiate the premises.

18. The Church Stewards will act as Covid-19 Co-ordinators.

It should be appreciated that whilst this proposed regime is prescriptive and somewhat alien to our usual experience of corporate worship, it has been arrived at as a result of trying to comply with Government requirements, the Methodist Church recommendations and a desire to make our corporate worship as safe from Covid-19 infection as is possible.

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.