

Hope Reformed Baptist Church, Gravesend – July 2020

COVID-19 Policy and Risk Assessment

COVID-19 is a new and highly infectious disease. The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

Recent studies, however, have indicated that up to 80 percent of people testing positive for the virus have been asymptomatic, so that it is not possible to know who has been infected without testing. For most people that do develop symptoms, COVID-19 will be a mild illness. For some people in our community, however, more severe symptoms may develop which may result in the need to seek urgent medical care, and as we have witnessed in recent months the disease may result in death. Those who are frail or elderly and those with underlying health issues and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable, and since the virus is so highly contagious, we all have a responsibility to take steps to limit the spread of the disease within our families and our community.

Policy Statement

In Acts 2 we read how the early church continued to meet together daily and had all things in common, and the writer to the Hebrews warns us “not to give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing.” It is a settled principle in our church that none of us should deliberately neglect the spiritual activities of the church, (the means of grace). But we also have two additional responsibilities, namely (i) to care for the vulnerable and (ii) to obey the governing authorities.

From the start of the pandemic, Hope Church has sought to follow all the official government guidance as it has been issued, including lockdown measures of ‘stay at home’, and more recently ‘stay alert’ and practice ‘social distancing’. In the face of the public health emergency this was the right thing to do. Instead we have sought to gather together ‘virtually’ using electronic technology.

On 29 June 2020 as part of the easing of lockdown, the government in England published “COVID-19-guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic”

We are now therefore in a position to seek to interpret this guidance and consider what steps we should now take. It is our desire as a church to recommence our meeting together at the earliest possible opportunity, but to do so as safely as we can, by seeking to follow the official guidance as carefully as we can. In preparing this document we also acknowledge input from the Association of Grace Baptist Churches (South East), the Fellowship of independent Evangelical Churches, and also the Grace Baptist Trust Corporation, (the trustees of Zoar Chapel where we meet).

Hope Church will ensure “so far as is reasonably practicable” that we implement all the measures recommended in the official COVID-19 guidance, so that our activities are carried out as safely as possible and do not pose an unacceptable risk to the health of our employees, volunteers, congregation, visitors and others who may use the church premises that we are responsible for.

To this end we will complete a full COVID-19 Risk Assessment and implement all the measures indicated. If the Risk Assessment indicates that it is still not safe to reopen we will act in accordance with this.

COVID-19 Risk Assessment

Basic Considerations

- The transmission of COVID-19 is thought to occur mainly through respiratory droplets generated by coughing and sneezing, and through contact with contaminated surfaces. There is growing evidence that spread may also be via airborne transmission. The predominant modes of transmission are assumed to be **droplet** and **contact**. Other bodily secretions, should also be treated as potentially infectious. (www.gov.uk).
- The steps taken to reduce, minimise or eliminate the risk of infection by the virus, will therefore focus on reducing the chance of encountering contaminated droplets or touching contaminated surfaces.
- The incubation period for the virus is from 1 to 14 days (median 5 days). Most individuals will not be infectious until the onset of symptoms. Individuals should be considered infectious while they have symptoms. No-one with symptoms and no-one who has been in contact with other people with symptoms should visit church, (or anywhere else), but should follow current government guidance.
- Research seems to indicate survival of the virus in the environment, (outside of a human host) varies, depending on the type of surface, from 8-72 hours.
- Once in the air, the virus-containing aerosols may be cleared from atmosphere by ventilation, but the speed of clearance will depend on the size of droplets generated and the extent of ventilation. The science on this is developing, and there is still much that is unknown.
- General Government measures recommended for the population include the following:
 - We can all help control the virus if we all stay alert. This means you must:
 - stay at home as much as possible
 - work from home if you can
 - limit contact with other people
 - keep your distance from people not in your household (i.e. social distancing of 2 metres apart where possible, or if this is not viable, 1 metre with actions taken to reduce the risk of transmission between households, (e.g. use of face coverings).
 - wash your hands regularly
 - Do not leave home if you or anyone in your household has symptoms.
- Government advice has identified certain vulnerable groups, including those shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable). We recommend that anyone in these groups follow the current official advice.
- Government advice has been revised at various dates based on the prevalence of the virus in the community. Further updates will occur. We will always seek to apply the current guidance
- Specific guidance contained within the [COVID-19: guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic](#) includes:
 - Limiting the size of the gathering, (or use of online streaming to avoid large gatherings)
 - Reconfiguring spaces to ensure social distancing and avoiding face to face communication
 - Limiting the time spent together
 - Not touching the same surfaces, (bring own books etc)
 - Special arrangements for food, (e.g. Lord's Supper)
 - Avoid singing or playing musical instruments that are blown into
 - Use of water (Baptisms)
 - Special arrangements for donations and offerings
 - Parental supervision of children
 - Procedures to trace visitors if required

- Arrangements for use of toilets, cleaning and other hygiene issues
- Face coverings
- Protecting vulnerable people
- Communicating information about these arrangements
- Maintaining security and stewarding

Risk Assessment:

Template

- The template for this Risk Assessment is taken from the Health and Safety Executive website, but is also an adaptation of the Grace Baptist Trust Corporation COVID-19 Risk Assessment issued to churches on 30/06/2020.

Definitions

- **Hazard:** something with the potential to cause harm
- **Risk:** the chance of potential harm from that hazard - it is measured in terms of consequences and likelihood.
- **Consequences and likelihood:** the magnitude of consequences of an event, should it occur, and the likelihood of the event and its associated consequences, are assessed in the context of the existing controls.

Risk Matrix

Likelihood		Low		Medium	Significant	High	
		Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Certain or Imminent	
Value (A)		1	2	3	4	5	
Consequences	Value (B)	Not expected to happen		Could well happen	Happening now or expected to happen within the next year		
	Insignificant No Injury	1	L	L	L	L	L
	Low First aid	2	L	L	L	M	M
	Medium Medical Treatment	3	L	L	M	S	S
	High Extensive Injuries	4	L	M	S	S	H
	Very High Death	5	L	M	S	H	H

Risk in relation to the Hazard of potential COVID-19 infection and gathering for worship at Zoar Chapel with no existing controls in place:

- **Likelihood:** With no controls, this should be ranked 3 (possible/could well happen) at least, and could be ranked 4 (likely/expected to happen) within the next year.

- **Consequences:** individual In the event of a person contracting COVID-19 these will vary from individual, (for some minor consequences, but this risk assessment will focus on those for whom the consequences will rank as 3, 4 or 5 (medical treatment (medical treatment, extensive injuries, even death).
- **Risk High** Based on the above risk matrix, the risk is **Medium, Significant** or

Risk in relation to the Hazard of potential COVID-19 infection and gathering for worship at Zoar Chapel with government recommended controls in place from 4 July 2020 onwards:

- **Likelihood:** This must still be ranked 3 (possible/could well happen). The reduced prevalence of the virus in the community, plus the adoption of all government recommended control measures and mitigation reduces the risk.
- **Consequences:** previously, The consequences of a person contracting COVID-19 remain as i.e. variable between individuals but for some medium to very high, (medical treatment, extensive injuries, death).
- **Risk Significant** If the above statements are accepted, the risk is still **Medium** to

The results of this Risk Assessment should be communicated in simple terms to any prospective members of the congregation that are considering coming back to church. Each individual should be given the opportunity to make an informed choice about whether they are willing to accept that there are ongoing risks associated with returning to the regular worship at Hope Church.

For those who decide not to return at this time, full understanding must be shown and their choice respected. We should make it clear that we are still aiming to broadcast parts of the service retrospectively via You Tube.

Notes about the Risk Assessment Template (below)

- The column on the HSE template (below) entitled “*What are you already doing to control the risks?*” has been deleted on the **initial (red)** Risk Assessment section of the document. The reason for this is that the Chapel building was closed at the start of the pandemic, and no specific controls were implemented apart from not shaking hands, not serving refreshments and carrying out a deep clean during the intervening weeks. None of these were recorded on a Health and Safety Risk Assessment at the time, and the current COVID-19 Risk Assessment is a new initiative prior to reopening.
- For all **subsequent (blue)** reviews of this Risk Assessment the additional column has been reinstated. This column has been populated with the existing controls from the initial assessment, and any additional measures identified at the time of the review will then be included in the column entitled “*What further action do you need to take to control the risks?*”
- A separate review will also need to be undertaken when new activities other than Sunday services or the weeknight prayer meeting are recommenced.

HOPE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH: COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT – INITIAL ASSESSMENT		Control Sheet/Risk Assessment Number	1
Premises	Zoar Chapel, Peacock Street, Gravesend DA12 1EG		
Person(s) covered by this assessment	Staff, Volunteers, Visitors (all persons using the Chapel building)		
Purpose of Risk Assessment:	To evaluate and reduce the risk of Covid-19 infection for those attending a worship service or prayer meeting		
Scope of Risk Assessment	All activities and processes required to allow safe return of staff, volunteers and visitors to the premises		
Assessment carried out by	S.Hindson	Date 1st Assessment was carried out	15/07/2020
Risk assessment approved by	S.Lloyd, A.Foden, M.Fryer, M.Scrase, S.Hindson	Date of approval	17/07/2020
Frequency of Review	Weekly (initially – frequency to be reviewed)	Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	24/07/2020

RECORD OF SUBSEQUENT REVIEWS							
Review Number	2	Date of Review		Reviewed by		Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	
Review Number	3	Date of Review		Reviewed by		Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	
Review Number	4	Date of Review		Reviewed by		Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	
Review Number	5	Date of Review		Reviewed by		Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	
Review Number	6	Date of Review		Reviewed by		Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	
Review Number	7	Date of Review		Reviewed by		Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	
Review Number	8	Date of Review		Reviewed by		Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	
Review Number	9	Date of Review		Reviewed by		Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	
Review Number	10	Date of Review		Reviewed by		Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	
Review Number	11	Date of Review		Reviewed by		Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	
Review Number	12	Date of Review		Reviewed by		Date risk assessment to be reviewed by	

HOPE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH: COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT – INITIAL ASSESSMENT			ASSESSMENT NUMBER	1	
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
Infection via airborne virus	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential attendees to be given a summary of the arrangements for Sunday by email or by phone in advance. • Potential attendees told in advance by phone or email not to attend if they have symptoms or suspected symptoms. Advise to follow official government guidance • Entrance and exit to be managed by stewards to maintain spacing and avoid choke points. • Stewards to wear masks • Stewards to offer any additional explanation as required • Maintain distance of 2 metres between people at all times. • Seating to be spaced, congregation to be seated by plan. • Clear thoroughfares to be indicated to allocated seating or towards back corridor/toilets to be demarcated in some way, to avoid breach of 2 metre social distancing • If talking to one another maintain the 2 metre social distancing. • At the close of the service leave the building in short time to reduce exposure to potential virus hazards • Doors and windows to be open where practicable for increased ventilation. • Singing and raised voices to be avoided at all times. • Explanation of the danger of transmission via coughs and all attendees asked to cough into tissue or crook of elbow • Tissues to be provided • A record to be kept of all attendees and their phone numbers to assist with track and trace if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin and/or Leaders (email/ phone) • Leaders • Welcome stewards • Stewards • Stewards • All • Stewards • Stewards • All • All • Stewards • All Leader/ All • Stewards • Designated person 	<p>Before 1st service</p> <p>Before 1st service</p> <p>Each Sunday</p> <p>On the day Before service</p> <p>On the day</p> <p>On the day</p> <p>On the day</p>	

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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
Infection via airborne virus	Vulnerable individuals, those aged over 70 and those 'shielding'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that current Government guidance in relation to any specific groups identified in the guidance be followed. Where specific guidance exists, a conversation should take place in advance by email or phone so that it is clear that the correct current advice has been communicated and is understood All persons attend services at their own risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pastor or leaders 	Before 1 st service and whenever the guidance is updated	
Infection via airborne virus. Danger of queuing to enter the chapel on public pavement	All attendees - forgetting social distancing or by meeting passers-by on pavement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steward to control any queues Congregation advised to arrive early, (by 10:15am) to allow for hand sanitising/registration/seating Signage outside to remind about social distancing. Steward to apologise to any passers-by for inconvenience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steward All Stewards Stewards 	On the day	
Infection via airborne virus from children, who may be asymptomatic carriers and also less aware of the need to be socially distanced	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents to be asked to supervise their children at all times. Children to be seated with parents and not allowed to run around. Children without parents or adult carers not allowed to attend. Communicated as necessary in advance and on the day 	Parents or adult carer Leaders/ Stewards	Before 1 st service or on the day	

HOPE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH: COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT – INITIAL ASSESSMENT			ASSESSMENT NUMBER	1	
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
Infection from hand contact	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss and agree initial plan for one Sunday meeting per week to reduce the risk of infection. No hand shaking or elbow bumping Mandatory hand sanitiser use on entry and on exiting the building ((including children supervised by parents). Hand sanitiser to be sited at the main entrance to the Chapel Doors to be left open when possible to reduce need for touching handles or hard surfaces Discuss and agree celebration of the Lord's Supper to be suspended pending later review Discuss and agree no refreshments or food to be served on the premises. Attendees advised to bring their own water bottles if required as the kitchen will not be in use All children's toys to be taken out of use and parents to bring a toy for use only by their own child Discuss and agree no hymnbooks, Bibles, notice sheets or other items to be distributed. All printed text to be displayed on AV system Encourage congregation to bring their own Bible or Phone/Tablet Bible app etc, keep hold of it and take it home. Cash giving discouraged but if necessary to be done via open offering box, which should be counted after 72 hour quarantine period, (cash not retained on site). Provision of soap hand wash for each toilet area Provision of paper towels to replace fabric towels Used paper towels to be disposed of into bins provided and removed from site hygienically Signage to remind about hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders and all All All Stewards Stewards Leaders and all Leaders and all All Steward s/ Parents and all Leaders /IT All All/ Steward s Cleaning team Cleaning team Cleaning team Steward s Steward s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before 1st service On the day On the day On the day On the day Before 1st service Before 1st service On the day Before 1st service On the day Before each service On the day After 72 hours Before service Before 1st service Before 1st service Before 1st service 	

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What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
Infection from hard surfaces	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough cleaning of the premises before reopening. • ...and weekly going forward, paying particular attention to the toilet areas. • Use of antiviral spray as needed during the meeting, particularly on handrails, door handles and toilet apparatus • Access to toilets monitored by steward to prevent people meeting in the narrow corridor • Removal of unnecessary items of furniture etc to reduce likelihood of contamination by contact and ease cleaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning team • Stewards • Stewards • Stewards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before first service and ongoing. • On the day • On the day • Before 1st service 	
Suspected/confirmed case of COVID-19 on site. Staff, volunteers, and visitors may display symptoms of COVID-19 whilst on site	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a member of anyone becomes unwell with a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss of sense of smell/taste whilst on site they must be sent home and advised to follow the stay at home guidance, including contacting NHS 111. • Double check the person's name and contact details were recorded correctly • If subsequently a positive COVID-19 test is reported follow guidance below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stewards • Designated person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the day • On the day • When test result known 	

HOPE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH: COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT – INITIAL ASSESSMENT			ASSESSMENT NUMBER		1
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
Infection during the administering of First Aid	Injured person or First Aider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All first aid must be recorded in the Accident book in line with church policy Actions taken during an incident or emergency will reflect the social distancing principles as far as possible In an emergency, for example, an accident, provision of first aid, fire or break-in, people do not have to stay 2 metres apart if it would be unsafe People involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards including washing hands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First aider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the day 	
Security of the premises -unnecessary use of the building presents risk of contamination after cleaning has been carried out	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keyholders should avoid unnecessary use of the building but where access is required they should have due regard for the need to prevent contamination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keyholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 	
Risk of infection during Evacuation of the building	All attendees -due to lack of social distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Normal evacuation procedures should be followed using social distancing where possible It is recognised that social distancing measures may not be possible in all circumstances, in which case evacuation measures take precedence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All/ Fire wardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the day 	

HOPE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH: COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT – INITIAL ASSESSMENT			ASSESSMENT NUMBER		1
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
COVID-19 positive test after attendance at service	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it is reported that a person or persons who attended the service have tested positive, the NHS test and trace procedures should be followed and people will be contacted • The list of names attending the service will be made available for all legitimate NHS test and trace procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders • NHS advisers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When positive test results arise 	

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HOPE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH: COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT – REVIEW PROFORMA				RISK ASSESSMENT NUMBER		2
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further actions do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
Infection via airborne virus	All attendees					
Infection via airborne virus	Vulnerable individuals, those aged over 70 and those 'shielding'					
Infection via airborne virus. Danger of queuing to enter the chapel on public pavement	All attendees - forgetting social distancing or by meeting passers-by on pavement.					
Infection via airborne virus from children, who may be asymptomatic carriers and also less aware of the need to be distanced	All attendees					
Infection from hand contact	All attendees					

HOPE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH: COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT – REVIEW PROFORMA				RISK ASSESSMENT NUMBER		2
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further actions do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
Infection from hard surfaces	All attendees					
Suspected/confirmed case of COVID-19 on site. Staff, volunteers, and visitors may display symptoms of COVID-19 whilst on site	All attendees					
Infection during the administering of First Aid	Injured person or First Aider					
Security of the premises - unnecessary use of the building presents risk of contamination after cleaning has been carried out	All attendees					
Risk of infection during Evacuation of the building	All due to lack of social distancing					

HOPE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH: COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT – REVIEW PROFORMA				RISK ASSESSMENT NUMBER		2
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further actions do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
COVID-19 positive test after attendance at service	All attendees					

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