



**Introduction:**

A key decision in regard to opening the church building is how many people can be allowed in the building at any one time, whilst keeping each separate household group (single person, couple, family, bubble) at least two metres apart (the white object in the photo is a two metre length pole – that is the distance that needs to be between each group).

**Recommended decision:**

This document sets out detailed considerations of theoretical maximum numbers on the assumption that everyone understands the rules & regulations and follows both the rules/regulations and directions given by steward / host. However at least in the initial stages it is very likely that the rules & regulations will not be well understood and so to keep people safe, keeping the initial numbers small is highly recommended.

**The initial recommendation is for a maximum general public congregation of 16 spaces (including one space for a single household of three people and three spaces for two person households).**

Higher capacities, as set out in the remainder of the document, may be permitted (subject to complying with any relevant legislation) for well organised groups, special circumstances such as a small number of large household groups or once initial gatherings for worship have demonstrated that people are being compliant with rules.

**Update April 2021. Worship area - 16 "spaces" (on a 4 x 4 grid) gives some flexibility to accommodate household groups (i.e. multiple chairs together) whilst retaining 2 metre distancing. There is space to add (at the discretion of the steward) an extra "space" at the rear left hand corner and some limited "overflow" into the vestibule. Hall (for Sunday children's work with tables) – the 4 x 5 grid giving a capacity of 20 "spaces" does not allow for tables, so some reduction is likely to be necessary for table use – 9 "household" spaces on a 3 x 3 grid should work well (see photo with settees) and more might be ok with smaller tables (e.g. 12 on a 3 x 4 grid).**

**The rest of this document sets out the detail behind the recommendation and illustrative factors considered.**

Toilets are particularly problematic, with a need for regular cleaning, and managing a one at a time access through a narrow corridor.

**By way of illustration, necessary legislative and guidance rules are expected to include:**

Encouraging higher risk people not to attend general public gatherings. Not socialising outside the building before entry. Entering the building in separate household groups (with at least 2 metres distance between groups). Using hand sanitiser on entry. Providing contact details for use by the Government Track and Trace team. Sitting down straight away in the chair allocated by the steward/host and remaining from the chair. Not moving any chair from its allocated position. Not socialising (talking or physical contact) with those outside the household group. No singing or raising of voices. **Encouraging** use of face coverings (unless exempt). At the end of the gathering, leaving straightaway when directed by the steward/host through the designated door and not socialising with others in the car park.

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**Prepared by the church opening working group for consideration by Church Council**

**Toilets**



We need to clear the notice boards (sorry) as they are an invitation to loiter.

Possible signage: “Toilets only, do not go past this sign if there is someone waiting ahead of you” with a “keep left” arrow. During gatherings, steward/host to manage a one at a time use of the toilet facilities to avoid queuing in the corridors.

If necessary there could then be a queue point for one person in the corner by the hatch. Whilst returning people could pass close to a queueing person so to reduce risk it should be made clear they must not stop to talk to each other (i.e. there is no interaction and the passing by time is seconds at the most). We should also **encourage** wearing of face coverings and queueing facing the wall, so away from each other.

We will need to prop the door at the end of the corridor open (not a fire door, and if we are not using upstairs then there is no risk of anyone being trapped upstairs anyway).

A mirror on the wall behind the (opened) door might help people see round the corner.

There is then scope for further queueing if necessary in the corner/outside the ladies and outside the gents.

For larger gatherings, particularly if more than one toilet is open, an alternative exit through the youth room to the outside, with the external door manned/supervised, should be considered.

The guidance does encourage toilets to be kept open, and they also provide a handwashing point, so for larger gatherings if the extra cleaning can be managed, we should try to facilitate all facilities being open (albeit one cubicle in each of the ladies and gents).

If we did this, I think we would need to prop open the doors off the corridor, and maybe also see if we can fit further “blind spot mirrors” inside so that it can be seen if anyone is already in, without needing to enter.

If we do open them all, we need to ensure appropriate ventilation. If we don't open the ladies and gents, there is a window type screw lock on the doors which could close them off.

In the longer term, we could assess the feasibility of installing outdoor sinks in the car park in front of the youth room to facilitate handwashing on arrival.

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**Foyer**



Foyer to be kept clear.

Recommend no noticeboards, other than COVID-19 specific instructions (as they provide a loitering point).

The white object is a 2m long measuring stick.

A policy of “keep left” and “no loitering” should help to keep the space for transitory use only.

Not opening the Harrowby Lane doors for entry should enable the better management of the flow of people.

For additional ventilation, windows in the hall could be opened and a temporary barrier (such as a rope/bungee between the hinges with a “please do not enter sign”) placed at the Hall doorway to keep people out of the Hall whilst not in use.

**Youth room**



With 2m distancing, the Youth room could only just accommodate 6 “positions” (illustrated by the 6 chairs that are not tucked under the table). Again the white object is the 2m measuring stick. As “households” can sit together, there is scope to add chairs between two positions in “infill” for a single household (but not to add an extra chair to a single position only, only taking both adjacent positions).

So the capacity is:

6 single person households (or 6 persons in total); or, subject to an overriding maximum of 12 people:

One household/bubble (up to 6 people) and 4 single persons; or

Two households/bubbles (each up to 6 people) and 2 single persons; or

Three households/bubbles (each up to 6 people) only.

All subject to any legislation/guidance for indoor gatherings which do not comprise worship in the case of non-worship use.

**Currently** however the youth room **might be better** **is** utilised as a designated place to direct any person showing symptoms (or other illness) whilst the remainder of the building is evacuated, as they can then leave the building by the external door from that room without needing to re-enter the communal area.

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**Hall**



The maximum capacity of the hall (based on 2m distancing) is based on a “grid” of 4 x 5 (see positions of chairs in the photo).

This gives a maximum single person household capacity of 20.

There is scope to add around 2 or 3 extra chairs to each row at the window side for household/bubble use (depending on use of stored chairs) so five lots of up to 4 person households, plus 15 single households (35 in total).



*Above: Eight single chairs could be replaced by the three sofas with up to a two person household per sofa.*

Or again, with infill chairs, two single positions could be converted to a single household/bubble (of up to 6 people). It wouldn't be possible to do this by the doorway, but at the extreme, nine such households/bubbles could be accommodated (with 2 remaining single positions). This gives a theoretical maximum of 56 but it would be very unusual for the household sizes to exactly match this theoretical maximum. This also assumes that good discipline could be maintained (fill up from the back, don't move until told) **so initially a lower working guide of 15 is therefore recommended for normal worship occasions, increasing to the figures above once good discipline has been established.**

For non worship events, relevant guidance/legislation would need to be considered.

**Upstairs rooms**

The upstairs rooms have not been considered for public worship use as they are all expected to be too small, and of more use for storage or surplus contents. At 2m distancing, indicative capacities are 4 persons for the two smaller rooms and 6 persons for the two large rooms.

**Kitchen**

The kitchen has not been considered for public worship use.

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**Main worship area**



To get the maximum usable capacity (at 2m distancing) any leader of worship must be restricted to the higher level of the dais area and not stray onto the lower level. It would also be good practice to stand at an angle behind the lectern (so 45 degrees sideways) rather than face directly forward. And the microphone should be used for amplification.

In the picture the green arrows mark the lectern position and the red crosses the out of bounds area.



Illustrative 2m distance (white marker) NB the communion table is now pushed further back in the photo above.



Careful measurement has identified that it is possible to fit in 22 spaces (at 2m distancing) for congregational use. One of these spaces can accommodate 3 chairs and three others can accommodate 2 chairs, with the rest having to be single chairs only. (so 27 congregational chairs).

Although no other chair spaces can have additional chairs added alongside and retain the 2m distancing, it is possible to “trade” 2 chair positions for a single household/bubble of up to 6 people, by infilling with 4 additional chairs (see green markings on the photo alongside). A maximum of two such “trades” could be made on each of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> row from the front, and a single such trade could be made on the front row (due to the need to keep fire exits accessible). At the maximum this could add 28 additional congregational chairs, bringing the congregational capacity up to a theoretical maximum of 55. In practice it will be less than this as not every household/bubble will comprise 6 people. This also assumes that good discipline could be maintained (fill up from the back, don’t move until told) so **initially a lower working guide of 16 (allowing for a central walkway) is therefore recommended for normal worship occasions, increasing to the figures above once good discipline has been established.**



In addition to this, there is capacity for up to two worship leaders (one either side of the dais), up to two on the tech desk (at 1 m distancing, so additional precautions would be required, such as sitting slightly facing away from each other and/or wearing face coverings unless they were in a household/bubble) and two or three stewards who would need to stay in the vestibule area if all spaces were taken in the worship area.

### **Total building capacity**

The above calculations suggest that an absolute maximum (if several household/bubbles of six persons each were present) of 100 people might be accommodated for a short worship event (using both the main worship area and the hall as an overflow area and with good exercise of discipline and careful marshalling of people into and out of the event). However in practice, as household/bubbles will not all consist of six people, the working maximum is likely to be much lower, as defined by the available “spaces” for separate households, and at least initially, good discipline (fill up as directed, don’t move until told) may not be evident.

**Hence the initial recommendation is for a maximum general public congregation of 16 spaces (including one space for a single household of three people and three spaces for two person households).** Higher capacities, as set out in the remainder of the document, may be permitted (subject to complying with any relevant legislation) for well organised groups, special circumstances such as a small number of large household groups or once initial gatherings for worship have demonstrated that people are being compliant with rules.

### **Additional comments**

The “chair position spaces” in the main worship area are now marked by tape. This took some extensive careful measuring to obtain the maximum capacity, so the chairs should not be moved from these markings, as that will lower the overall capacity.

There has been a deliberate use of different chairs (rather than the church chairs) so that it is obvious if anyone has “helped themselves” to an additional chair. Extra “infill” chairs should only be brought in from the hall by stewards. Using the enclosed arm chairs should also help with social distancing (i.e. not turning round) and also enable “self help” of any who find it difficult to stand up without assistance. The positioning of the chairs may also help retain something of a worship atmosphere (the chairs are not on a regimented grid facing forward, but are slightly staggered and angled inwards – which should also help with social distancing).

Currently the church chairs are stacked carefully in the main worship area. This does not reduce the maximum capacity but does not look very “tidy”. There is probably scope to fill one or more of the upstairs rooms with them, albeit they will all need taking up there, or alternatively they could perhaps be covered with some sort of covering.

The 3 sofas from the vestibule have been moved into the main hall – if left out in this way this reduces the maximum capacity calculation for the hall.

