

# HOPE CHAPEL REDHILL – COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT

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## REVISION HISTORY

Revision	Revision Notes	Revision Date
1.0	Prepared to formalise discussions and email conversations that occurred in the weeks preceding 4 <sup>th</sup> July 2020 and to capture the baptism specific risk assessment undertaken prior to the baptisms on 10 <sup>th</sup> July 2020.	09/07/2020

## GENERAL CHAPEL INTRODUCTION

- Hope Chapel is an Independent Chapel for Public Worship which is used only for the following: Routine Communal Worship including a Sunday School; the Ordinances of Baptism by Immersion and the Lord’s Supper, Church Meetings (members only); and Weddings and Funerals.
- The church is led by the Pastor and Deacons. The congregation numbers around 50 from 12 households.
- The Chapel is a single building with the main chapel used for worship, and there is a Community Room with a kitchen area, a Pastor’s Room, cloakroom, and toilets.
- There are no other activities or groups meeting at Hope Chapel and there are only surrounding paths. There is no carpark or graveyard.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE RISK ASSESSMENT

- This Risk Assessment has been carried out in order to re-open the chapel following the COVID-19 lockdown from March-July 2020 to ensure safety in line with HM Government’s Guidance “COVID-19: Guidance for safe use of places of worship from 4 July” Published 29 June 2020.
- The Risk Assessment has been developed following:
  - Exhaustive discussions and consultations with the Pastor, deacons and the chapel Health and Safety co-ordinator.
  - Site visits by the deacons and Health and Safety co-ordinator for the purpose of identifying hazards.
- This document formalised discussions and email conversations that occurred in the weeks preceding 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020.
- The results of the risk assessment and the actions taken have been communicated to regular worshippers at the chapel by means of a series of emails and online meetings.
- Visitors will be able to view this risk assessment on the Chapel website.
- The risk assessment is presented below in two parts:
  - Part A – A summary table outlining the key points.
  - Part B – Additional notes on various topics.
- This risk assessment has been approved by the Pastor and Deacons at Hope Chapel, Redhill.

## RISK ASSESSMENT – PART A – SUMMARY TABLE

Hazards	Who might be harmed	Summary of COVID controls Implemented – see also Part B additional notes	Further actions needed
Transmission of virus on entering and exiting the Chapel	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hand Sanitizer Dispensers installed with usage signs at all entry and exit points.</li> <li>● Paper Towel Dispensers and Bins installed with usage signs (to replace normal towels).</li> <li>● Seating Plan circulated for Social Distancing with usage signs</li> <li>● One-Way system with signs implemented in the community room</li> <li>● Additional Ventilation extractor fans installed</li> <li>● Additional exit provision with signage</li> </ul>	None

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Hazards	Who might be harmed	Summary of COVID controls Implemented – see also Part B additional notes	Further actions needed
<b>Transmission of virus during services and other meetings</b>	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suitable socially distanced seating plan. All members of the normal congregation have an assigned seat (in family units). A plan is in place to cater for visitors. The seating plan is presented in Appendix A.</li> <li>• Singing will not be done. The only instrument used is an electric organ or electric keyboard.</li> <li>• Members of the congregation will use their own Bibles, Hymnbooks and Tune books.</li> <li>• Spare books have been packed away. A small number of books have been kept available for visitors and these will be sanitised after use.</li> <li>• No food or drink will be served at the chapel and congregation to bring their own bottled water.</li> <li>• Sunday School risk prevention measures – Sunday school will remain online until summer break and a full risk assessment will be carried out prior to recommencing in September.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Attendance</b>	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track and Trace – A register of attendance will be kept.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Cash Donations</b>	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online giving will be encouraged for the foreseeable.</li> <li>• Any cash in collection boxes will be collected by the treasurer using suitable precautions.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Hygiene</b>	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapel will be cleaned by the same cleaner on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Congregation have been requested to take special care not to drop litter, used tissues etc.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Vulnerable and unwell</b>	Specified Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra care will be taken for those who are vulnerable and they are advised not to attend the chapel.</li> <li>• Services will continue to be streamed live over the internet.</li> <li>• Anyone displaying symptoms should not attend the chapel.</li> </ul>	None
<b>Lord’s Supper</b>	Church Members only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual communion cups will be used instead of the communal cup.</li> </ul>	None

Hazards	Who might be harmed	Summary of COVID controls Implemented – see also Part B additional notes	Further actions needed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bread will be broken with suitable hygiene precautions.</li> <li>• Bread and wine to be distributed by a deacon not in a high-risk category.</li> </ul>	
<b>Weddings &amp; Funerals</b>	All attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As specified in the COVID-19 Government Guidance.</li> <li>• Each special event will be considered on a case by case basis to determine if additional measures are required.</li> </ul>	Review risk assessment as required by special events.
<b>Baptisms</b>	All attendees / esp. minister and candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ See separate notes in Part B below along with Appendix B.</li> </ul>	Review risk assessment for the specifics of each baptism.

## RISK ASSESSMENT – PART B – ADDITIONAL NOTES

This section presents more detail on the various COVID controls implemented and the decisions taken on various key topics.

### Sanitizers & Paper Towels

In addition to the soap dispensers available for the washing of hands in the toilets, hand sanitizer gel in dispensers have been placed at all entrances and exits with signage for use when entering and leaving the Chapel. Communal towels have been removed from the toilets and kitchen area and replaced with disposable paper towel dispensers with enclosed bins nearby. The bins have been marked with 'Paper Towels only' signs.

### Seating Plan

A seating plan has been advised to all regular worshippers, and provision made for the seating of visitors.

Alternate pews are being used which provides for the 2 metre social distancing guidelines where possible and not less than 1 metre plus in all situations. Members of the same household will sit together in the same pew or adjoining pews.

The seating plan is presented in Appendix A

### Social Distancing

Numerous signs have been displayed in the Chapel to ensure adherence to the COVID-19 guidance, and especially in the more restricted toilet cloakroom areas. Provision of a one-way system with partition and markers have also been placed in the Chapel community room.

### **Ventilation**

One large window on each side will be opened slightly and others together with doors as necessary during service times and a double extractor fan has been installed. The existing air-conditioning units will not be used.

### **Building Exits & Premises**

Provision has been made for additional means of exit by signage from the main chapel to facilitate social distancing, and the congregants will be reminded not to congregate outside near gates and entrance doors. It is possible to walk all the way round the chapel keeping at least a 2m range of view ahead for others. Although gatherings up to 6 persons outside is permitted (observing the 'social distance' advice now of 1-2 metres) the congregation have been requested not to linger outside the Chapel as others living in the community or passing by may question it.

### **Singing and Instruments**

There will no singing at our services - although this is an essential part of our worship, and no instruments other than the organ will be played. Hymns will be given out and read from the desk or pulpit or the organ will be played through the number of verses.

### **Use own Books and shared items**

Regular worshippers have been asked to only use their own books at services. All Chapel Bibles and hymn books are to be removed from the main Chapel. Clean Bibles and hymnbooks will be available to visitors who do not bring their own. These will be cleaned and quarantined for 48 hours again after use.

### **Food and Drink**

Food and Drink are not generally served or provided at the Chapel other than tea, coffee and biscuits, but all these have been removed from the Chapel. No Chapel drinking glasses, or other utensils are to be used. The congregation to bring their own bottled water, and bottles taken away home afterwards. This will minimise the touching of water taps, etc.

### **Sunday School**

The risk assessment will be revisited over the summer of 2020 in order to consider how the Sunday School can safely meet together again at the chapel. In the meantime, the Sunday School will continue to meet online until the summer break in mid-July 2020.

### **Attendance**

An accurate register of all worshippers from our normal congregation will be taken. This register will be kept in a folder appropriately dated and available for the purposes of Track and Trace. Very few visitors over and above the normal congregation are expected and visitors will be asked to complete a separate attendance slip to record their details. Records of all who come to the services and meetings at the Chapel will be kept for 21 days then destroyed.

### **Cash Donations**

No formal cash collections are taken at the door. Online giving is promoted as the means of giving of first choice. Where this is not an option, cash should be collected in the collection boxes which will then only be handled by only one person, the Treasurer. Regular cleaning and hygiene should be maintained, and gloves worn to handle cash.

### **Hygiene & Cleaning**

Services only occur on 2 or 3 days per week. Cleaning/sanitizing, especially of those things most frequently touched such as door handles and rails, will be regularly done after services, using standard cleaning products. The Chapel itself is cleaned once a week.

### **Vulnerable & Unwell**

Anyone who has symptoms or who is unwell should not attend services. Those who are shielded or self-isolating or any who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 should not attend the services. Services will continue to be broadcast for those who through age or with underlying medical conditions cannot attend the chapel.

### **Lord's Supper**

The bread and wine used for the Lord's Supper will be pre-prepared adhering to the hygiene standards set out in the guidance, and the pastor will wash his hands thoroughly before administering the Lord's Supper. Once broken, the bread will be passed on the plate to the members so that they only have to touch the piece of bread they will eat. The wine will be administered in individual disposable glasses which will be passed on a tray for each member to take an individual glass. The bread and wine will be distributed by a single deacon or other church member not in a high risk category. The bread and wine will remain covered on the table until they are used. Members will be aware of these points, and partake of this ordinance voluntarily, and will not be disciplined for not doing so.

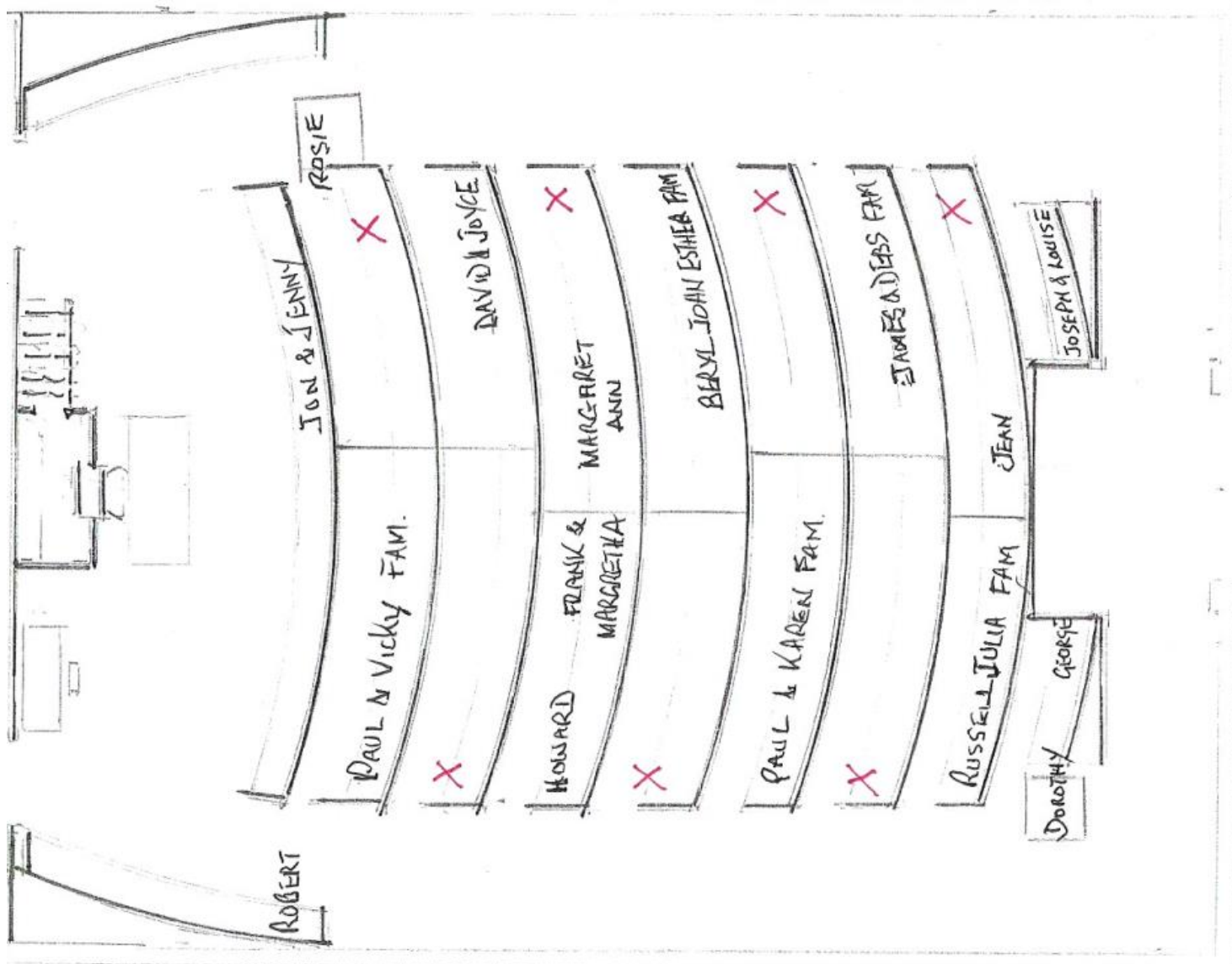
### **Weddings & Funerals**

The deacons have the responsibility of ensuring that gatherings are limited as set in the government's guidance. Where the advised limit set is 30 people, the deacons will be given responsibility to ensure that this limit in the COVID-19 guidance is adhered to as far as is practicable and possible. Each special event will be considered on a case by case basis.

### **Baptisms**

It has been concluded that it is reasonable to proceed with baptisms despite the guidance advising that baptism by immersion should be avoided. A full consideration of baptism is given in Appendix B.

APPENDIX A – PROPOSED SEATING PLAN FOR NORMAL SERVICES



## APPENDIX B – DETAILED CONSIDERATION OF BAPTISMS

This section considers the special case of baptism by immersion where the Pastor and Deacons have considered it reasonable not to follow the advice in the “COVID-19: Guidance for safe use of places of worship from 4 July” document.

In this revision of the Hope Chapel COVID-19 Risk Assessment the proposed baptisms on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> July are considered. Future baptisms will be subject to their own specific assessment.

Pastor and deacons at Hope Chapel have carefully considered the government's advice and guidance regarding COVID-19 and the reopening of places of worship. We are seeking to follow the guidance as much as is possible and a number of mitigations have been implemented to ensure social distancing and hygiene as presented in this risk assessment document.

We would also note that the guidance advises against baptism by full immersion. In the light of this and with the desire to move forward with the baptism and welcoming into church membership of prospective members, we have prayerfully considered what we should do.

The guidance states that baptism by immersion 'should be avoided'. If it stated, 'must be avoided' and was therefore forbidden under law we would not proceed. However, as it is written as advice, we have concluded that, when considering the full range of factors involved, it is reasonable to proceed with baptisms. Our reasoning and the conclusions of a specific risk assessment that has been undertaken are presented below.

- Baptism by full immersion is an essential part of our church life and practice; it cannot be replaced by anything else without undermining Scripture and our articles of faith.
- There are no defined timescales giving any clarity on when this advice might change.
- Baptism is a prerequisite of church membership and according to our rules should be carried out at the earliest convenient opportunity. It is undesirable for the spiritual welfare of prospective candidates (and for the wider church at Hope Chapel) for them to be kept in a state of limbo where they are unable to join our local church with the associated privileges and responsibilities.
- This is generally a 'one off' event, not something we will be doing week by week.
- A COVID-19 risk assessment has concluded that the risks are low and can be mitigated.

Conclusions of the specific risk assessment for the baptisms on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020. This is the voluntary baptism of two adults from the same household.

- All normal COVID mitigations will apply at the baptism service and will be supplemented by other baptism specific actions.
- A specific seating plan for the baptism has been planned and is included below.
- The baptism will be part of one of our normal services rather than an extra service as would usually be the case at Hope Chapel.
- Those taking part in the ceremony in the pool will shield as much as possible in the week preceding the service.
- If any taking part in the ceremony show any symptoms it will not go ahead.



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- Our Pastor will not undertake the actual baptisms in the pool as he is in several COVID high risk categories. The baptisms will be carried out by someone from a low risk category.
- The officiating minister in the pool will take suitable mitigation and hygiene measures (such as handwashing).
- The candidates and officiating minister should thoroughly wash their hands prior to the baptisms.
- The candidates and officiating minister are able bodied, and no third-party assistance is expected to be required in the pool.
- The children and young people will not gather round the edge of the pool as is usual, but all members of the congregation will remain at a suitable distance to avoid splashing.
- Following each baptism, the doxology will be spoken by the officiating minister rather than sung by the whole congregation as would be our usual practice.
- Candidates and the officiating minister will supply their own towels.
- COVID infection rates in this area are currently very low.

Seating Plan for the Baptism Service on 10th July 2020

