

## COVID-19 Church Heating

Issue Date	Version	Issued by
8 <sup>th</sup> December 2020	1.1	The House of Bishops Recovery Group
Updates from version 1.0: The document has been reviewed but no major changes made.		

*The Recovery Group has been set up to support the Church of England as government guidance changes through the COVID-19 pandemic. This document has been prepared with information available by the issue date. It will be kept under review and updated as the situation develops, with each update issued as a new version. The current version will always be available to download from the Church of England website via the [Coronavirus FAQs page](#).*

This guidance has been prepared to support churches during the heating season. Please read it alongside the general guidance on [opening churches and cathedrals to the public](#) and the Government guidance on [places of worship](#) and [multi-use facilities](#) for putting these FAQs in context.

### **1. We've been advised to improve ventilation to reduce Covid-19 spread. Is it safe to turn on the heating?**

**Yes.** It is safe to operate nearly all forms of church heating.

Types of heating that present a Covid-19 risk are those that take air from one occupied space in a building and move it into another occupied space, i.e. from one room to another. If your heating or ventilation system has this feature it must be turned off so that air is not moved from one space to another. The system can be used with the feature turned off. It is extremely unlikely that a traditional church building will have such a system, but if in doubt ask the company that services your heating. They will know what, if any, adaptation is needed to operate in a Covid-secure way.

No Covid-related concerns have been identified with the use of traditional hot water radiator systems, electric heating (including under pew), underfloor heating, gas heaters, including gas convector heaters and, in a ventilated space, fan convector heaters. In a ventilated space fan convectors can assist with reducing pockets of stagnant air.

If your heating type is not listed and if you have any doubts about it being appropriate to use, please consult the company that maintains it, or other heating engineer. The industry will be aware of requirements for Covid-secure heating operation in public buildings.

### **2. Can we really reduce the number of windows and doors open to be warm?**

**Yes.** You can be warm in a ventilated space.

Cooler weather will promote some forms of natural ventilation, meaning that adequate ventilation will be achieved with a reduction in the number of windows open, and the amount they need to be

open. If there is high-level ventilation, such as a clerestory, ventilators built into the ceiling or roof or ventilation through the method of construction of the roof it will not usually be necessary to leave lower-level windows open. It is suggested that any windows that are opened are open at least 15 minutes before the building is occupied.

In cooler weather cold air from outside is drawn into a warmer, heated, building. Heated air will move up inside the building, drawing moving air around and promoting ventilation. Where air can enter the building at a high level this will cool the air that has risen before falling and introducing further ventilation. Even if these are not experienced as strong draughts heated air moves in the building and will cause natural ventilation with fewer, if any, windows open to admit fresh air.

Most church buildings are large spaces, compared with small shops, offices, pubs and restaurants, and well naturally ventilated. It is not necessary to keep external doors open for added ventilation where this causes discomfort over the colder months where existing Covid-safe practice ensures physical distancing of 2m and the use of face coverings for example.

### **3. Can people touch the outer door to open and close it as they enter?**

**Yes.** Hand sanitiser will be available inside the church to use after entering. This will remove any risk of transmission of infection from shared use of the door handle.

### **4. Is it OK to leave fire doors propped open to increase ventilation?**

**No.** It is not appropriate to compromise fire safety. Doors that display a 'Fire door, keep shut' in a blue lozenge should **never** be propped open. The only exception is where the door is integrated with a fire alarm and self-closes when the alarm is triggered.