

## Risk Assessment

Activity General Church Use – to be used in conjunction with event specific risk assessments			
Date of Assessment 19-05-2025		By The Revd Max Drinkwater in consultation with Churchwardens	
What are the risks?	Who might be affected?	What are you doing to reduce the risk?	What further action needs to be taken?
<p><b>Main Church Areas</b></p> <p>The flooring in the nave is all on one level and should not generally present a trip hazard. It can be uneven in places and some of the stone tiles can become loose.</p> <p>The pews in the central aisle are on a raised wooden platform which can protrude into the aisle. Some have a large step on entry.</p> <p>There is a rug over the memorial in the floor at the chancel steps.</p> <p>There are steps up to the chancel and again to the altar. There are wooden prayer desks at the chancel steps which can be used as handrails.</p>	<p>Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, choir, clergy.</p> <p>Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy.</p> <p>Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy.</p> <p>Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy.</p>	<p>Ensure main thoroughfares are kept clear of clutter.</p> <p>Ensure aisles are kept clear of clutter, especially around the edges, so that the platform is clearly visible. Stewards should warn visitors or those with mobility limitation about the potential hazard.</p> <p>Ensure rug has a non-slip backing and remains in good condition.</p> <p>Ensure handrails are positioned securely at the chancel steps. Encourage those with mobility limitations to make alternative arrangements so that they do not need to use the steps e.g. receive communion at their seat.</p>	<p>Regularly check flooring for loose tiles or other damage.</p> <p>Review arrangements in line with the PCC's EDI policy.</p>

There is a large wooden screen across the entrance to the chancel, which is of historic importance. It is not secured at the top but is otherwise robust. It includes two doors which rest open against the choir pews.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy.	Do not use doors as a handrail when using the chancel steps. Do not apply additional force to or tie anything to the screen.	It is not possible to secure top of screen given the historic fabric.
The pulpit is accessed by a short flight of free-standing steps. It is not in good condition	Clergy.	Do not use pulpit regularly. Discourage access by keeping door closed and latched.	
The lectern is heavy and the top half can become loose. There is a wooden box provided from which to speak.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy.	Do not move lectern unless absolutely necessary, in which case ensure that there is an appropriate number of competent people. Observe good moving and handling practice.	Regular check box for signs of deterioration.
There is a step inside the main door. A portable wooden ramp is positioned permanently across half of the width of the doorway, with a mat across the other half.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy.	Ensure ramp and mat are positioned correctly so as not to present a trip hazard.	
The north door is heavy and is closed with a heavy wooden bar resting in channels in the stonework.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy.	Only use the north door when there is a vergers present. Only trained stewards should operate the door.	
Rainwater has been known to ingress through the roof during adverse weather conditions.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, choir, clergy.	Ensure floor is clear of hazards when opening church, especially in adverse weather conditions. Mop up any water and cordon wet areas if needed.	Regularly ensure drains and gutters are clear and in good working order. Review windows and roof as part of ongoing maintenance and inspection of the fabric of the church.
Heating is provided by electric heaters underneath the pews.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, choir, clergy.	Ensure space in front of heaters is clear, especially during services when people may stow bags etc. under pews.	Regularly inspect and maintain heaters. Regularly inspect fire extinguishers and safety equipment as part of routine maintenance. Keep an up-to-date log of inspections.

Votive candles are available for people to light in the south chapel. Gas lighters are provided which do not remain alight after use.	Congregation, visitors, clergy.	Ensure area around votive candle stand is kept clear of flammable material, especially flower displays.	As above.
Fire exits are provided through the main entrance. At services with a greater attendance, it is possible to provide a second exit through the north door.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, choir, clergy.	Ensure all escape routes, are kept clear at all times. Open additional exit through the north door when occupancy exceeds 100 people. Ensure seating during busy services maintains clear escape routes.	Provide appropriate fire safety equipment in visible locations in the nave, near to exits.
The font has a raised stone step to the rear.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, choir, clergy.	Discourage access to storage area under tower or rear of font by keeping curtains drawn across tower. During services when the font is used, the minister should be aware of the potential hazard.	
There is a storage area under the tower. This is also where switches for lights and heaters are, as well as ropes to chime the bells. Hazardous material, including cleaning products, are stored here.	Stewards, volunteers, clergy.	Ensure storage area is kept clean and tidy, free of unnecessary clutter, with items in cupboards, boxes or on the work surface where possible. Ensure access is maintained to switches and the chiming apparatus in particular. Ensure hazardous material is clearly labelled and stored securely. Discourage access by keeping curtains drawn across tower.	
The organ is a complicated and delicate instrument.	Organist.	Keep the organ console locked when not in use. Access given to competent, authorised people only.	
The chiming apparatus for the bells is a delicate instrument.	Bellringer.	Access given to competent, authorised people only.	

<p>The church suffers from damp, especially around the external walls at the west end which are below surface level.</p> <p>The church is kept open to the public during the day and night.</p> <p>Day-to-day use of the church could still result in accidents, even where risk is mitigated.</p>	<p>Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy.</p> <p>Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy.</p> <p>Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy.</p>	<p>Maintain airflow to external walls, especially where there is storage.</p> <p>The historic nature of the church encourages people to be aware of their surroundings and take additional caution. Discourage access to areas of high risk as noted above. Complete regular maintenance checks and note any additional risks.</p> <p>First aid boxes and accident report books are located in the pulpit. Health and safety posters are displayed in the church. The PCC have a health and safety policy.</p>	<p>Regularly inspect fabric for signs of deterioration. Ensure only trained, authorised people treat potential mould or insect damage.</p> <p>Display notice of caution and disclaimer in porch.</p> <p>Regularly review the health and safety policy, general risk assessment and event-specific risk assessments.</p>
<p><b>Vestry</b></p> <p>The vestry is small and can become cluttered.</p> <p>There is an electric heater in the vestment cupboard.</p> <p>Hazardous material, including candle oil, is stored in the vestry.</p>	<p>Stewards, volunteers, clergy.</p> <p>Stewards, volunteers, clergy.</p> <p>Stewards, volunteers, clergy.</p>	<p>Ensure vestry is kept clean and tidy free of unnecessary clutter, with items in cupboards or boxes where possible.</p> <p>Ensure floor area around heater is kept free of clutter.</p> <p>Hazardous material to be clearly labelled and stored securely and away from the public, especially children.</p>	<p>Regularly inspect and maintain heater.</p>
<p><b>Tower</b></p> <p>Access to the tower is via a steep, narrow spiral staircase.</p>	<p>Volunteers, visitors.</p>	<p>Restrict access to the tower to competent persons over the age of seven. Supervise the public when opening the tower and complete an</p>	

The tower stairs are covered only by a wire mesh at the exit, meaning debris can enter.	Volunteers, visitors.	additional risk assessment. Keep tower locked when not in use. No one should enter tower without another person present in the building.	
The clock chamber includes a historic windlass and clock mechanism. It is difficult to access.	Volunteers, visitors.	Ensure tower is clean before use. Use appropriate personal protective equipment when cleaning. Do not access tower in inclement weather.	
The bell chamber contains five bells hung in a wooden frame in poor condition. The floor is not sound..	Volunteers, visitors.	Only competent people to access chamber.	
The tower roof is surrounded by a castellated parapet at chest height. There is a disused flagpole on the floor of the roof. The lead roof can become slippery when wet.	Volunteers, visitors.	No access to bell chamber under any circumstances without additional safety precautions and risk assessment.	
A fire exits is provided through the tower door.	Volunteers, visitors.	Access only to competent people. In adverse weather conditions, take extreme caution and access only when strictly necessary.	
		Ensure escape routes are kept clear at all times. Brief those accessing tower to ascend to roof if exit below is blocked and await further instruction.	
<b>External</b>			
Maintenance of the churchyard remains the responsibility of the PCC, including upkeep of the paths, grass cutting, plant and tree maintenance and upkeep of churchyard walls.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy, general public.	Damage or unsafe conditions to be reported to church stewards, who assess, clear or cordon as necessary.	Review churchyard, including trees, as part of regular maintenance.
There is a steep incline along the path	Congregation, stewards, visitors,	Exercise caution, especially in adverse weather conditions. Keep path clear of	Maintain path as part of regular

from the road.	volunteers, clergy, general public.	hazards including ice/snow, grass, moss.	churchyard maintenance.
The church is an historic building and there is some damage to external masonry.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy, general public.	Report damage to church stewards who assess. Where there is danger of falling masonry, clear and cordon as necessary.	Review fabric of church as part of regular maintenance.
There is a steep bank into a brook on the south side of the churchyard.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy, general public.	Keep bank clear of debris. Access only to competent people.	
Maintenance of the cemetery to the rear of the church is the responsibility of Withersfield Parish Council.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy, general public.	Report concerns to clergy or churchwardens, who can alert parish council.	
There is vehicle access from a lane to the west of the churchyard.	Congregation, stewards, visitors, volunteers, clergy, general public.	Restrict vehicle access to those authorised by PCC or Parish Council, for disabled access or loading/unloading in churchyard. Restrict access if churchyard in use.	

## Capacity

The maximum number of people that the church is reasonably capable of holding is **200**. Events which are expected to exceed this capacity must undertake an additional risk assessment, which would explain how the event undertakes to maintain personal safety in the event of a fire or other critical incident, including complying with the [Terrorism \(Protection of Premises\) Bill 2024](#). It must also give due consideration to the risk to the fabric of the building.

### Key people:

The Revd Max Drinkwater, rector and health and safety officer

Karen Williams, churchwarden

Angela Kinloch, buildings officer