

FIRE EMERGENCY PLAN

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Contents

A. People

1. Roles and Responsibilities

- 1.1 The *Responsible Person in Charge*
- 1.2 Fire Stewards
- 1.3 Sunday School leaders
and others responsible for groups meeting in an upstairs room

B. Procedures

- 2. **What to do if you discover a fire.**
- 3. **What to do on hearing the alarm.**
- 4. **Contacting the Emergency Services**
- 5. **Arrangements for a Safe Evacuation**
 - 5.1 Advance preparation
 - 5.2 Escape Routes and Assembly Point. (if it is safe to do so)
 - 5.3 Persons at Risk and those with disabilities.
 - 5.4 Children.
- 6. **Fire Fighting**
- 7. **Accounting for Personnel**
- 8. **Liaising with the Emergency Services**
- 9. **Re-Entering the Building**
- 10. **Recording the incident**

C. General Policy Information

- 11. **Use of this policy**
- 12. **Fire prevention**
- 13. **Training and Training Provision**
- 14. **Information Distribution**
- 15. **Review**
- 16. **Other relevant documentation**

D. FIRE SAFETY DISPLAY NOTICES

- 1. **Building plan**
- 2. **Site plan**
- 3. **Fire Safety Procedure notice**

A. People

1. Roles and Responsibilities

In the event of a fire the following people have particular responsibilities:

- The designated **person in charge** of any group meeting, or event taking place, on church property (see **1.1**).
- **Licensed & Associated Clergy**
 - when officiating or presiding (see **1.1** below)
 - otherwise – *whether or not on duty at the time* (see **1.2** below)
- **Licensed Readers**
 - when officiating or presiding (see **1.1** below)
 - otherwise – *whether or not on duty at the time* (see **1.2** below)
- **Churchwardens** (see **1.1** & **1.2** below)
- **Sidespeople** *whether or not on duty at the time* (see **1.2** below)
- **Sunday School leaders** and others responsible for groups meeting in the upstairs rooms (see **1.3** below)
- **Servers** *when on duty* (see **1.2** below)

NB: Independent organisations or groups using the church or church centre are themselves responsible for putting fire-safety procedures in place, and must:

1. be clear as to the identity of their Responsible Person in Charge (see **1.1** below) and ensure that that person is aware of their responsibilities. (Please note, it is generally assumed that the keyholder is the Responsible Person);
2. decide whether or not to appoint Fire Stewards to assist in the event of an evacuation (see **1.2**);
3. ensuring that members are aware of what to do in the event of an emergency, providing appropriate training, etc.

The designated Responsible Person in Charge must familiarise themselves with this policy.

1.1 The Responsible Person in Charge

For the purposes of this document, the *Responsible Person in Charge* in the event of an emergency is deemed to be:

- Generally: the Rector or a Churchwarden, if present
- *If a service is taking place (or is about to begin or has recently ended):* The person leading the service
- *Otherwise:* the leader or organiser of whatever activity may be taking place on Church premises at the time.

In the event of an emergency the *Responsible Person in Charge* has overall control of the evacuation procedure. He or she must:

- Ensure the alarm has been activated. (see section **2** below)
- Ensure the fire service has been called (see section **4** below)
- Ensure all persons remain at the assembly point (if it is safe to do so) until otherwise instructed by the fire brigade.

- Ensure that an assessment is made, as far as possible, as to whether anyone is known to be missing or still within the building. (see section **7** below)
- Pass any relevant information to the fire services. (see section **8** below)

The *Responsible Person in Charge* may choose to delegate all or any of the above tasks to others.

Sunday morning church services: special procedures:

- The **officiant/president** acts as *Responsible Person in Charge* (see above)
- S/he should also ensure that someone has opened the Baptistry door and is assisting people to depart (see **1.2**).

1.2 Fire Stewards

For events involving more than 25 people, or where there may be several people with mobility problems, selected people should be designated to act as Fire Stewards in the event of an emergency.

In the event of an emergency, the Fire Stewards' duties are as follows:

- To assist all present to leave the building by the nearest safe Emergency Exit (taking particular care to ensure that people with mobility problems are given due assistance).
- To ensure that no one tries to re-enter the building. (In particular, if Sunday School is in session it may be necessary to assure parents that Sunday School leaders are responsible for the evacuation of children, and that they shouldn't try to assist, as in doing so they are likely to impede the departure of others).
- To make a sweep of the building on their way out *if it is safe to do so*.
- To report directly to the *Responsible Person in Charge* and inform him/her of all action taken.
- To continue to be available to assist the *Responsible Person in Charge* if required.

For more details of these procedures see part **B** of this policy, below.

Sunday morning church services: special procedures:

- The **Duty sidespeople**, on hearing an alarm, should immediately open the double doors at the back of the church, unlatch & unbolt both double-doors at the main entrance, and then (if safe to do so) remain in the foyer to assist the evacuation, before departing themselves (as detailed above).
- The **Clergy/Readers/Servers** on duty, on hearing the alarm, should go directly to the door in the *Baptistry*, unbolt & open it and ensure the path to it is clear. They should then assist people to depart before departing themselves (as detailed above). *If it is safe to do so* then one of them should go and check that the organ console, vestry & vestry corridor are clear of people.

The following are trained in safe evacuation procedures: **Sidespersons, Churchwardens, Licensed & Associated Clergy** and **Readers**. *All trained persons*, in the event of an emergency – even if not 'on duty' at the time – are asked to assist in the safe evacuation of the building.

1.3 **Sunday School leaders** and others responsible for groups meeting in an upstairs room

- When Sunday School (or its equivalent) is 'in session' it is the responsibility of the Sunday School leaders to co-ordinate evacuation of children and helpers in the event of an emergency; n.b. parents and others will be strongly discouraged from coming upstairs to retrieve their children, as this will impede the departure of others.
- In the event of an emergency, Sunday School leaders should:
 - Gather all the children for whom they are responsible, reassure them and lead them calmly out of the building by the safest available route, ensuring that their group stays together until they have reached the Assembly Point on the front lawn (*if it is safe to do so*).
 - If it is safe to do so, detail a helper to sweep the upstairs rooms on your way out (ie check no one has been left behind).
 - Keep the group together until you have ascertained that all are accounted for at the Assembly Point. Report anyone not accounted for at the Assembly Point to the Responsible Person in Charge.
 - Ensure that no one leaves the Assembly Point until they have been instructed to do so by the Responsible Person in Charge.
- NB: The most direct escape route from upstairs is via the 'back door' fire exit at the bottom of the stairs.
- In the unlikely event that it is not safe to use the stairs, you should ensure all fire doors are closed and remain in an upstairs room until taken to safety by a fire officer.

B. Procedures

2. What to do if you discover a fire.

- Raise the alarm by operating the nearest fire alarm call point
- Leave the building by the nearest safe exit.
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings.
- Close any doors en-route without delaying your escape.
- Evacuate to a safe place and proceed immediately to the assembly point.
- Ensure visitors are escorted from the building to the assembly point.
- Remain at the assembly place (*if it is safe to do so*) until instructed otherwise.
- Do not use any fire fighting equipment unless you have been trained.

3. What to do on hearing the alarm.

- Leave the building by the nearest safe exit (following the instructions of the *Responsible Person in Charge* and/or Fire Stewards).
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings.
- Go to the Assembly Point on the front lawn (inside the wall, at a safe distance from the building and well clear of the vehicle entrance & parking areas, *if it is safe to do so*).
- Remain at the Assembly Point until instructed otherwise.

4. Contacting the Emergency Services

- Dial 999 or 112
- A telephone in the Vestry for out-going calls.
- A public telephone is situated at the church gate (by the bus stop).
- Any mobile phone may be used.

5. Arrangements for a Safe Evacuation

5.1 Advance preparation

For Church services, concerts, etc where the congregation/audience exceeds 25 our advance procedures are as follows:

- All designated fire doors must be unlocked before the service/event commences and be clearly marked as fire exits using the "Running Man" symbol.
- A check must be made that all doors can be opened.
- A trained steward must be allotted to each door and have responsibility for persons in a specific part of the church. (For regular services the sidespeople are allotted to the west end / main front door, and the officiant to the Baptistry door).

5.2 Escape Routes and Assembly Point.

- See map attached (copies of which are posted in the Vestry corridor and Church Centre foyer). Shows emergency exits, escape routes, break glass points and fire fighting equipment; also assembly point.

5.3 Persons at Risk and those with disabilities.

- The ideal Emergency Exit for people with disabilities and those reliant on wheelchairs is via the main entrance where a ramp is provided. The side door in the main church (Baptistry) may also be used if the main entrance is not available.
- Regular wheelchair users, and their carer if applicable, should be instructed how to act in the event of the fire alarm sounding.
- If they have a regular carer or someone who accompanies them, it is that carer's responsibility to help them to the appropriate emergency exit, assisted by a Fire Steward. If unaccompanied, a Fire Steward will escort them to the assembly point.
- If it is impractical to evacuate any person from the first floor, the responsible individual should ensure all fire doors are closed and remain in a closed room until they can be safely evacuated by the fire services.

5.4 Children.

- Parents / carers are responsible for their own children before, after and during church services, except that Sunday School leaders are responsible for children attending Sunday School (but only during the designated Sunday School time).
- During Sunday School, the leaders are responsible for the safe evacuation of the children. In the unlikely event it is not safe to leave the room, they will ensure the fire doors are closed and will remain in the room until taken to safety by a fire officer.

6. Fire Fighting

- Some of the clergy, churchwardens and sidespeople are familiar with the fire fighting equipment. If the fire is small and there is no risk to themselves, they may attack the fire. They are under no obligation to do this.

7. Accounting for Personnel

- All evacuated persons will remain at the assembly point until instructed otherwise.
- The *Responsible Person in Charge* will check for any person not accounted for (or may delegate this task to one of the Fire Stewards) and will relate this information directly to the chief fire officer when the fire brigade arrives.

8. Liaising with the Emergency Services

- The *Responsible Person in Charge* will liaise with the emergency services.
- They will immediately make themselves known to the chief fire officer.
- They will give details of:
 - The site and nature of the fire.
 - missing persons
 - Anyone known to be still in the building and their position
 - Position of the diagram of the building (with exits etc marked).

9. Re-Entering the Building

- The Fire Stewards should try to ensure that no person re-enters the building.
- If the fire services are present, only the fire officer may give people permission to re-enter the building.
- If the fire services are not involved, the *Responsible Person in Charge* will give permission for people to re-enter the building.

10. Recording the incident

- ***The Churchwardens*** if present must record the emergency, and any action taken, in the Fire Log Book.
- In the absence of the Churchwardens the *Responsible Person in Charge* must ensure that the Churchwardens are informed at the earliest possible opportunity of all relevant details.

C. General Policy Information

11. Use of this policy

- This Emergency Plan can be also used in other circumstances where there is a need to evacuate the building or premises in an emergency.

12. Fire prevention

- No flammable substances will be kept in the building.
- Fixed Electrical wiring / equipment will be tested on a 3 year basis. Lightning Conductor at intervals not more than 4 years. All portable appliances are to be PAT tested annually. Visitors are not to bring electrical equipment for use on the premises unless the equipment has a current PAT certificate. (The exception to this is personally owned equipment brought to church for a specific event by that person and taken away after the event; in such cases we would expect the owner to make sure the equipment was in sound condition and fit for use.)
- A competent person will conduct maintenance and checks on fire fighting equipment annually; fire detection equipment and fire protection equipment. These will be conducted within the time frame required and recorded. Certificates will be obtained and kept in an accessible file, for example in the Fire Log Book.
- Checks and maintenance will be carried out on the fire alarms weekly; emergency lighting and smoke/heat detectors etc., as identified by statutory requirements. Records will be kept in an accessible file, for example in the Fire Log Book.
- Consideration will be made for those using the building who are at an increased risk from fire, particularly those with disabilities.
- Appropriate instruction and training in all aspects of fire prevention, in emergency procedures and in evacuation will be given to specified personnel (see below). This provision will be reviewed annually.
- Fire drills will be carried out once a year. A review of procedures will be held after each exercise and will be recorded.
- The Fire Service will be informed of every fire outbreak even if it has been extinguished. The event will be logged even if it is a false alarm.
- Precautions will be taken to prevent arson e.g. locking doors, windows, preventing access to the building etc.

13. Training and Training Provision

The following will undertake annual training and updates in fire safety, the use of fire fighting equipment and evacuation procedures:

- Licensed clergy & Readers.
- Associated Clergy
- Churchwardens.
- All Sidespeople.
- Sunday School Leaders, and others with responsibility for children's and young people's activities.

All such training will be recorded.

14. Information Distribution

- Fire action instructions will be sited at each break glass point, in the foyer, the vestry, and the two first floor rooms.
- Plan of building including emergency exits will be sited by main door, vestry and upstairs landing.
- Copies of this policy document, together with copies of the Fire Risk Assessment forms and other relevant documentation, will be kept on the blue noticeboard in the foyer, in the vestry desk drawer and in the parish office (Antioch House). These copies are available to all for reference and inspection.
- Information about the policy will be given to all users of church premises, and they will be strongly advised to familiarise themselves with its details.

15. Review

- The fire risk assessments and this emergency plan will be reviewed annually (prior to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting), and whenever significant change may be made to the building or room use.

16. Other relevant documentation

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The documents displayed at the break glass points (ie the Fire Action Instructions and associated plans of the building & grounds).

It has been drawn up with reference to the Fire Risk Assessment forms.

Elements of this policy are also covered by the church's Health & Safety Policy.

St John's Church, Neville's Cross

FIRE EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

- **If you discover a fire** leave the building immediately via the nearest Emergency Exit and activate the Fire Alarm. (Fire Alarm Call Points are situated at each Emergency Exit.)
- **If you hear the Fire Alarm** leave the building immediately via the nearest Emergency Exit. Leave in a calm orderly manner and do not stop to collect personal belongings.
- **All persons must assemble on the front lawn** inside the wall, *if it safe to do so*. Keep as far from the building as possible and well clear of the vehicle entrance and parking areas.
- **No one is to leave** without notifying the Responsible Person in Charge.
- The Responsible Person in Charge will call (or instruct to be called) the Fire Service (**999**) from a phone in a safe location. If a mobile phone is not available there is a public phone on the footpath adjacent to the main vehicle entrance / bus stop.
The location to be given to the Fire Service is:
St. John's Church – Neville's Cross – Durham
Postcode: DH1 4DU
(Crossgate Peth on the A690 near the Traffic Lights)
- When persons are assembled a check should be made to assess as far as possible that everyone is out of the building.

Do Not re-enter the building until authorised to do so by the Responsible Person in Charge or the Fire Brigade (if present).