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YEARS 1872-2022



**METHODIST
INSURANCE**
MAKING IT COUNT

2022
2024.

Keeping people safe

Health and safety toolkit

Fire risk assessment



Our fire risk assessment

Churches are required to undertake a Fire Risk Assessment in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. In Scotland fire safety duties are contained in part 3 of The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, as amended and The Fire Safety (Scotland) Regulations 2006.

Methodist Insurance have developed this fire risk assessment based on our own expertise. This assessment can only be used by churches whose normal activities are limited to what might be expected in a church building such as services and occasional public events such as concerts.

Churches with a wider range of activities such as night shelters, lettings and nurseries should consider appointing an independent consultant to help them carry out the Fire Risk Assessment.

How to use this Fire Risk Assessment

The assessment has the following sections which you will need to read and then complete:

Part 1 – Information about Our Church

Part 1 of the assessment is about collecting together all the information you need about your church so that you can perform the Fire Risk Assessment. It is broken down into various sections which are summarised below.

- A Our Church Details
Basic information about our church location and the person responsible for the Fire Risk Assessment.
- B Church Council Declaration
A declaration about the awareness and understanding of the Church Council or other church management committee of the requirements of the Order to be signed by the appropriate person.
- C General Information about our Church
Description of the church building and how it is used.
- D Potential Fire Hazards at our Church
Details of fire hazards, sources of ignition and their elimination or control.
- E Our Fire Protection Arrangements
Details of the current arrangements we have in place for fire protection.
- F Our Fire Detection, Warning and Extinguisher Equipment
Details of the equipment we have in place and its testing and maintenance.
- G Our Fire Safety Management
Information about our plans should a fire occur.

Part 2 – Our Fire Risk Assessment

Part 2 of the assessment is about the fire risks at our church and how we will go about fulfilling our obligations under the order.

Part 3 – Our Arrangements for Fire Safety at Our Church

Part 3 of the assessment details the measures we have taken to offset the risk of fire at our church.

Part 4 – Our Action Plan to Reduce Fire Risk at Our Church

Part 4 details any gaps in our fire protection arrangements and outlines what we are going to do to address them.

Appendix 1

Examples to help you complete Part 2 – Our Fire Risk Assessment.

Appendix 2

Examples to help you complete Part 3 – Our Arrangements for Fire Safety at Our Church

Appendix 3 Fire Action Notice

A specimen notice that needs to be placed near all exit doors and in separate areas such as meeting rooms which you will need to complete for your church.

Need to contact us?

For further information on health and safety in churches:

Call our Risk Management Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (excluding Bank Holidays).

We may monitor or record calls to improve our service.

Email us at: riskadvice@micmail.co.uk

Part 1 – Information about Our Church

A Our Church Details

Name of church:

Trinity Methodist Church

Address:

Raistford Rd.,
Chelmsford, CM1 2XB

Responsible person:

Janet Winte

The Church Council of:

Trinity Methodist Church

In the District of:

Bedfordshire

Date:

29-6-24.

Suggested review date:

30.6. ~~2024~~ 25.

(This assessment should be reviewed at least annually unless there is a change that materially affects the fire risk such as a change in the method of heating or use of the building, when it should be reviewed immediately.)

B Church Council Declaration

As a church, we understand that we are required to undertake a Fire Risk Assessment in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (in Scotland fire safety duties are contained in part 3 of The Fire Scotland Act 2005, as amended and The Fire Safety Scotland Regulations 2006) even if we have no employees.

We note that we are required to take such general fire precautions as will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of employees, if we have any, and to take such general fire precautions as may reasonably be required in the circumstances to ensure that the premises are safe for all other visitors to the church including volunteers, members of the congregation, and contractors. Our Fire Risk Assessment and arrangements are therefore directed, to the safety of people rather than the protection of the building itself.

We understand that we must appoint a responsible person and other competent persons to give effect to such arrangements as are appropriate, having regard to the size of our undertaking and the nature of our activities, for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventive and protective measures. In the case of a church, we understand that the responsible person is the person who has control of the premises and we deem this to be the 'Body Corporate' namely the Church Council. We have also appointed the Church Council as the Competent Persons under the legislation.

We understand it is the responsibility of the **Responsible Person(s)** to fully record the following information in the fire risk assessment:-

- All findings from their fire risk assessment regardless of the size or purpose of the premises in full.
- Fire Safety Arrangements that show how you manage fire safety in the building. These can be anything from procedures you need to have written down to policies you have in place.
- Details of the appointed Fire Risk Assessor who undertakes or reviews any or all of the fire risk assessment.

In carrying out our Fire Risk Assessment we have followed the Government guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (for Scotland - Scottish Government's Police and Community Safety Directorate, HM Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland, the Scottish Building Standards Agency and the Health and Safety Executive) and have noted from this document that the action we take should be common sense and in the main, not expensive. We have also noted Appendix C of the guidance for Fire safety risk assessment: small and medium places of assembly which refers to listed and historic buildings and note that we will need to endeavour to strike a balance between ensuring sufficient fire safety measures are in place for the safety of people, yet avoid extensive alterations and helping to maintain the character of the building.

Church Council member(s) responsible should sign here:



Print name(s):

Janet Wintle

Role(s):

Property Steward.

You can see the full documentation referred to above at the links below:

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2005/1541/contents/made

Government Guidance including a fire risk assessment form is available from:
www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/aboutguides/

A document that may also be of assistance is the Fire Safety Risk Assessment Small and Medium Places of Assembly: www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-safety-legislation-guidance-for-those-with-legal-duties

For Scotland a document that may be of assistance is Practical Fire Safety Guidance - Existing Non-Residential Premises (August 2017): <http://www.firesafetyfirst.co.uk/freedownloadpublications.html>

C General Information about our Church**THE BUILDING:**

Number of floors:

3

Floor area (approximate overall size in square metres):

(You will need to measure the building to calculate things like the number of fire extinguishers required and travel distances. See also 'Plan' below.)

Building description:

Worship area
Hall on 3rd floor
Meeting rooms
Annex to ground floor

(Describe what the building comprises noting if there is one main undivided area and then separate parts which can be closed off from the main area which could prevent the spread of a fire, e.g. The main undivided area of the church comprises worship area and meeting rooms, kitchen, toilets and hall).

Basic construction details:

Brick

(For example, The church is built of stone/brick with a slate/tile roof on a timber frame. The floor is of solid construction covered with tiles.)

Use of the church:

Appx 60 hours per week.

Note the use of the building and how often it is occupied, e.g. The church is used for services twice on a Sunday but otherwise the use is very limited. There is the occasional concert.

You should draw a plan of the church which can be used during the risk assessment process and then as a part of your fire safety arrangements documentation. This should be roughly to scale and should identify by name the main parts of the church and note all doors both internal, which separate different parts of the church, and external, which provide means of escape.

The plan can be used to note the location of fire extinguishers and other relevant information.

You can use a tape measure or rule to measure the building but an easy way is to pace along the outside walls and note down the distances. A good pace is about 1 metre.

There is a blank page at the back of this document for you to draw a plan of your church.

PEOPLE AT RISK:

Occupants:

Approximate average number attending a normal service:

50

Approximate maximum number attending special services and events such as weddings and at Christmas:

120

Approximate number of employees and/or volunteers in the church at any one time:

8

OCCUPANTS AT SPECIAL RISK FROM FIRE:

Give details of any persons with disabilities who attend the church who would need help in evacuating the building:

1-2 elderly with walking aids

Give details of any children who attend the church and whether they occupy a different part of the building during services such as a Sunday School in the meeting room:

Sunday club appx 6 max
4-10 yrs
Meet in ground floor annex.

Give details of the number of persons who occupy remote parts of the building and when:

None

(For example, does the organist practice alone or does someone undertake maintenance in an enclosed boiler room?)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Previous fire losses:

Detail any fires or related incidents that anyone can remember even if it did not result in an insurance claim:

None

Other relevant information:

Note any other information which could have a bearing on the risk of fire such as the nature of any nearby or adjoining premises or evidence of arson:

N/A.

D Potential Fire Hazards at our Church

Where the answer is NO then some action may be required in order to ensure that your fire safety arrangements are satisfactory. This needs to be noted in the Action Plan at the end of the assessment. If the situation does not apply, enter N/A.

Electrical

Is the fixed electrical system inspected and tested by a competent person at least every five years?

Yes ☒ No

If YES, state the name of the competent person and the date of the last inspection

Meed Electrical 4-12-23

Are all portable electrical appliances including those belonging to outside bodies annually tested? (PAT testing)

Yes No

If YES, state the name of the tester and the date of the last test

Meed Electrical 4.12.23

Are any electrical items that fail the testing removed immediately from the church?

Yes ☒ No

Is the use of trailing leads and multi-point adaptors restricted as far as possible and subject to control?

Yes ☒ No

Heating

If portable electric heaters including electric fan heaters, and radiant 'bar' type fires are used are they included in the PAT testing programme and are they kept away from combustible materials?

Yes No N/A ☒

(Remember to check areas that you would not normally visit such as small meeting rooms or storage areas).

If portable LPG (liquid petroleum gas) heaters are used are they fixed away from combustible materials and are the arrangements for the storage and replacement of spare cylinders satisfactory?

Yes No N/A ☒

If heating appliances burning coal or other solid fuel, e.g. wood pellets, are used, are arrangements in place to ensure fire cannot spread accidentally?

Yes No N/A ☒

Are gas boilers subject to an annual maintenance contract with an approved Gas Safe registered contractor?

Yes ☒ No N/A

If YES, state the name of the contractor and the date of the last inspection

Chelmsford Heating + Plumbing Dec 23

Are oil-fired boilers subject to an annual maintenance contract with an approved OFTEC contractor?

Yes No N/A ☒

If YES, state the name of the contractor and the date of the last inspection

Are oil tanks suitably bunded or double skinned and fitted with a safety cut-off valve?

Yes No N/A ☒

Do you ensure that all heating appliances are kept clear of combustible materials?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Arson

Have you considered the risk of arson and malicious attacks?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Is the storage of combustible materials and flammables such as petrol for mowers kept to a minimum and in a secure place where the risk to people is minimised?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Have you removed or kept secure anything which could be used by an arsonist such as matches and candles?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Cooking

If you have a kitchen or servery in the church are measures in place to prevent fire as a result of cooking?

Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A ☐

If kitchen equipment includes filters or ductwork are they cleaned regularly?

Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A ☐

If YES, state how often

Are suitable fire extinguishers and a fire blanket located in the cooking area?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Lightning

If the church has a lightning conductor is it inspected by a competent, specialist Lightning Engineer at recommended intervals?

Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A ☐

If YES, state the name of the contractor and the date of the last inspection

not inspected.

Combustible Materials

Has combustible material been removed from the church as far as possible?

Yes ☒ No ☐

(Examples of combustible material which can accumulate are hay and straw used in Christmas cribs, articles collected for jumble sales but never sold, waste paper collected for recycling and old Christmas trees.)

Are all exits and escape routes kept clear of combustible materials?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Contractors and Building Works

Are outside contractors subject to control when working in the church and are they required to use a 'hot work' permit system when necessary?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If volunteers undertake maintenance work in the church are suitable precautions taken such as the use of a 'hot work' permit system and the provision of suitable fire extinguishers close to the location of the work?

Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☒

Are both contractors and volunteers aware of safety arrangements including provision of fire extinguishers and escape routes during building works?

Yes ☒ No ☐

E Our Fire Protection Arrangements

Means of Escape

Are there a suitable number of exits from the building?

Yes ☒ No ☐

This is addressed under the arrangements for Fire Safety Management.

(As a guide, it should be possible to evacuate the building in less than 2.5 minutes although this time may be extended for low-risk buildings such as churches. Guidance also indicates that one exit is sufficient for up to 60 persons but if the building can accommodate more than 60 persons there should be more than one exit. It will not normally be possible to increase the number or width of doors in a church, but remember that doors not normally in use such as external doors to meeting rooms may be used.)

Do the exit doors open in the direction of escape?

Yes ☐ No ☒

This is addressed under the arrangements for Fire Safety Management.

(It is likely that all of the doors in the church are inward opening and may be difficult to change as they are an integral part of the historic fabric.)

Can exit doors be opened easily?

Yes ☒ No ☐

This is addressed under the arrangements for Fire Safety Management.

Is the travel distance acceptable where there is only a single escape route?

Yes ☒ No ☐

Is the travel distance acceptable where there are alternative means of escape?

Yes ☒ No ☐

(The travel distance is the furthest a person would have to travel from a point within the church in order to reach an exit door. For areas with seating in rows, such as is found in the majority of churches, guidance suggests the following travel distances:

Where there is only a single escape route, the maximum distance is 15 metres for a normal fire risk area and 18 metres for a lower fire risk area;

Where there is more than one escape route, the maximum distance is 32 metres for a normal fire risk area and 45 metres for a lower fire risk area.

In the case of vestries that have their own external door, travel distances will normally fall within these guidelines.

The main body of the church may be regarded as a lower fire risk area and in most cases the travel distances should be within the guidelines.

However, you do need to measure travel distances in order to answer this question. Where they exceed the guidelines it will need to be addressed under the arrangements for Fire Safety Management.)

Are escape routes suitably protected from fire and kept clear of obstructions at all times?

Yes ☒ No ☐

(In practice, unlike many other buildings, churches have very few corridors so the 'escape route' is effectively the whole of the building. The reception area is the most likely area to pose a risk of obstruction during an evacuation and must be kept clear of obstructions and combustibles such as free-standing noticeboards and displays.)

Are the means of escape suitable for persons with disabilities?

Yes ☒ No ☐

(Compliance with Equality legislation probably means that access to the church and therefore also egress is suitable for wheelchair users. If not, it will need to be addressed under the arrangements for Fire Safety Management.)

Is an Emergency Escape Lighting System installed?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If NO, detail your means of providing light in the event of a main lighting failure, e.g. hand lamps, torches etc

If YES, is it subject to regular testing?

Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A ☐

If YES, state the intervals of testing and the date of the last full annual maintenance inspection

6 monthly.

Are Fire Exit signs displayed?

Yes ☒ No ☐

If NO, describe here the arrangements in place to direct people to exits

This is addressed under the arrangements for Fire Safety Management.

Are Fire Safety Signs and Notices displayed?

Yes ☒ No ☐

(Signs need to be displayed indicating the location of fire extinguishers and the types of fire for which they are suitable. Fire Action Notices need to be displayed indicating what to do in the event of a fire.)

F Our Fire Detection, Warning and Extinguisher Equipment

Is there a manually operated fire alarm such as a rotary gong, bell or whistle, which is operated in the event of a fire?

Yes

No ☒

If YES, is it tested on a regular basis?

Yes

No

N/A

How often is it tested?

Is there an electric, manually operated fire alarm with 'break glass' panels to operate the alarm?

Yes

No ☒

If YES, is it tested on a regular basis?

Yes ☒

No

N/A

If YES, state the name of the contractor and the date of the last maintenance visit

Firemain UK May. 24.

Is there an automatic fire detection system and alarm which incorporates smoke detectors to activate the alarm in the event of a fire?

Yes ☒

No

If YES, is it subject to a maintenance contract?

Yes ☒

No

N/A

If YES, state the name of the contractor and the date of the last maintenance visit

as above

If none of the above are provided, then describe here the arrangements for giving warning of a fire

Are suitable and sufficient portable fire extinguishers in place?

Yes ☒

No

If YES, are they subject to an annual maintenance contract?

Yes ☒

No

If YES, state the name of the contractor and the date of the last inspection visit

Thameside Fire
protection May 24.

(Guidance indicates that there should be one 9-litre water extinguisher for around each 200 square metres of floor space with a minimum of two per floor. Note - a 6-litre hydro-spray or AFFF (Aqueous Film-Forming-Foam) extinguisher will have the same fire extinguishing capacity as 9 litres of water and is only two-thirds the weight making it them much easier to lift and use.

In addition, 2 Kg Carbon Dioxide extinguishers should be provided to deal with fires involving electrical equipment. One certainly needs to be provided near the organ and one near the main electrical intake.

If there is a kitchen or servery, a 6-litre Wet Chemical or AFFF extinguisher should be provided together with a fire blanket to smother any clothing which may catch fire.

Note that Dry Powder extinguishers are not normally suitable in church buildings as they can cause irreparable damage to the buildings and contents.)

G Our Fire Safety Management

General Arrangements

Is there a suitable Emergency Plan for the building?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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This is addressed under the arrangements for Fire Safety Management.

(You are required to have an Emergency Plan and, for most churches, Fire Action Notices together with written procedures to be followed by Stewards for larger services and events will satisfy this requirement.)

Can the Fire Service be summoned easily?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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(You should have either a landline or ensure that there is someone with a mobile telephone in the church when it is occupied. In rural areas it may be necessary to check whether a signal is available, as often a signal cannot be obtained inside the building.)

Are persons nominated to assist in case of fire?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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This is addressed under the arrangements for Fire Safety Management.

Is there a procedure to give persons with disabilities appropriate assistance in evacuating the building?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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This is addressed under the arrangements for Fire Safety Management.

Training and Evacuation Drills

Are regular periodic evacuation drills carried out?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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(Even if your normal congregation is small you should carry out a practice to ensure that everyone can leave the building safely in the required time of less than 2.5 minutes.

This can easily be done at the end of a normal service and should be undertaken say annually.

An evacuation drill also needs to be carried out for those times when the church is full, say at weddings or at Christmas. On these occasions there may be people there who are not familiar with the building. You can simulate these situations by asking for the cooperation of the local school for example and use pupils to represent the maximum number who may be in the church. Having undertaken this exercise it does not necessarily need to be repeated every year.)

Is there fire safety training for persons nominated to assist in case of fire?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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This is addressed under the arrangements for Fire Safety Management.

Record Keeping

Are records kept for tests of the emergency lighting system in a log book or similar document?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
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Are records kept for tests of the fire alarm system in a log book or similar document?

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
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Are records kept of evacuation drills in a log book or similar document?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Are records kept of fire safety training in a log book or similar document?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Part 2 – Our Fire Risk Assessment

Once you have gathered all the information in Part 1 you can then complete the actual Fire Risk Assessment below.

Our Fire Risk Assessment

Having completed our fact finding we now feel confident that we are fully aware of the fire hazards present in our church and the risks to people using the building. We have noted the precautions that we already have in place and where we have noted any deficiencies these will be rectified as soon as practicable. These matters are set out in Part 4 Our Action Plan. Part 3 Our Arrangements for Fire Safety on our Church sets out how we will deal with fulfilling our obligations.

Our assessment of the fire risk has been based on the following factors (see Appendix 1 for some example descriptions):

Occupation – How your building is used by people.

Worship.
Sunday Club
Group meetings
Hirees various
Concerts / Music productions

.....
Fire Detection – Information about any fire detection systems you have in place.

Smoke Alarms

.....
Escape – In the event of an emergency, how people will exit your church.

Emergency fire escape lighting
Fire evacuation notices in every
room

Fire Load – How easily the structure of your building could ignite and flames could spread in a fire.

unlikely Brick built,

Likelihood – In your experience what is the possibility of a fire at your church taking into account the history of the building and existing precautions.

unlikely,

Overall Fire Risk Assessment

Based on the factors set out in the Fire Risk Assessment above, the overall Fire Risk Assessment is as follows:

1. Potential consequences of fire:

Please tick one:

☒ **Slight harm:** Outbreak of fire is unlikely to result in serious injury or death of any occupant.

☐ **Moderate harm:** Outbreak of fire could foreseeably result in injury (including serious injury) of one or more occupants, but is unlikely to involve multiple fatalities.

☐ **Extreme harm:** Significant potential for serious injury or death of one or more occupants.

2. Likelihood of fire:

Please tick one:

☐ **Low:** Unusually low likelihood of fire as a result of negligible potential sources of ignition.

☒ **Medium:** Normal fire hazards (e.g. potential ignition sources) for this type of occupancy, with fire hazards generally subject to appropriate controls (other than minor shortcomings).

☐ **High:** Lack of adequate controls applied to one or more significant fire hazards, such as to result in significant increase in the likelihood of fire.

Table

Based on the answers above you can now map the amount of risk in the table below.

Potential consequences of fire	Slight harm	Moderate harm	Extreme harm
Likelihood of fire			
Low	Trivial risk	Tolerable risk	Moderate risk
Medium	Tolerable risk	Moderate risk	Substantial risk
High	Moderate risk	Substantial risk	Intolerable risk

The overall assessment of the fire risk at our church and the risk to persons, based on the table above and the answers in 1 and 2, is:

Slight risk of fire but risks
controlled.

Building houses normal amount
of combustible material.

Part 3 – Our Arrangements for Fire Safety in our Church

This section details the arrangements for fire safety in our church. For some examples of content for this section please see Appendix 2.

Our Arrangements for Fire Safety Management

Emergency Lighting

System installed
Tested when electrical testing carried
out in Dec 23. Further items added.

Manual Fire Alarm

Break Glass

Automatic Fire Detection System

Smoke detectors +
audible fire alarm

Exit Doors

Good order.

Major Services and Events

Fire exist signs displayed + Lit
Fire extinguishers in place + yearly tested.
Fire evacuation procedures in
every room.

Stewards and Training

New stewards need to
undergo training.

Record Keeping

Servicing records kept for
Fire extinguishers
Fire alarm system
Fire alarm test
Boiler Servicing.