

**Immanuel United Reformed Church:**

**Fire Prevention Policy and Arrangements**

**Updated December 2025**

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#### **Fire Procedure**

##### **IF YOU DISCOVER A FIRE**

- Dial 999 to call the Fire Brigade.
- Raise the alarm by the rotating handle on the Fire Alarm Bell in
  - The corridor leading to the Minister's vestry
  - The Atrium
- Only use the appliances provided to tackle the fire if you are competent to do so. Do not endanger yourself or others in doing so.

##### **IF YOU HEAR THE ALARM**

- Leave the building by the nearest available exit.
- Close all the doors and windows behind you.
- Go to the Assembly Point (Car Park grass area at the front of the building)
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings.
- Do not re-enter the building.

**BUILDING EXITS IN THE EVENT OF FIRE**

1. Main Body of the church
  - a. Exit at church entrance door
  - b. Exit at church 'dead porch' door
  - c. Exit at door to Atrium
  - d. Exit at Door to minister's vestry corridor
2. Atrium: entry door
3. Parlour: fire exit door
4. Garden room: door exit to garden
5. Choir room: door exit to west side
6. Corridor: door exit to west side or via atrium

(N.B. Hall – door exit to garden not a Fire door but an additional means of escape.)

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**1. Introduction**

- a. The purpose of this policy is to outline the way in which Immanuel United Reformed Church (IURC) aims to safeguard life, and safely manage the church premises in line with good fire safety practice to protect all those using the building

## **2. Objective**

It is the overall aim of IURC to minimize the risks to clergy, congregation, volunteers and users of the premises that may arise from fire. This will be achieved by ensuring precautions are taken to avoid fires occurring and by ensuring that procedures for minimising the effects of an outbreak of fire and evacuating the premises are in place.

### **3. Compliance Requirements**

- a. General fire safety in England and Wales is delivered through compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 ('the Order'). This legislation implements a risk-based approach to fire safety in community, industrial and business premises. It requires the 'responsible person' (usually the employer, owner or occupier of the premises) to:
  - i. carry out a fire safety risk assessment
  - ii. implement appropriate fire precautionary and protection measures;
  - iii. maintain a fire management plan.
- b. The Fire and Rescue Authorities are the principal enforcers and have a statutory duty to enforce the requirements of the legislation

#### **4. Policy**

- a. Immanuel United Reformed Church (IURC) acknowledges its responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- b. IURC recognises and accepts its obligation to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk from fire and make sure people can safely escape if there is a fire.
- c. IURC recognises that good management of fire safety is essential to ensure that fires are unlikely to occur; that if they do occur they are likely to be controlled or contained quickly, safely and effectively; or that, if a fire does occur and grow, everyone on the premises is able to escape to a place of safety quickly and easily.
- d. IURC will ensure that fire safety risk assessments are carried out on all church premises to determine the 'general fire precautions' and 'preventive and protective measures' needed to comply with the requirements imposed under the Order.
- e. IURC will appoint a 'competent person' to assist with implementing the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, including fire safety risk assessments
- f. IURC will make and give effect to such appropriate organisational arrangements as are necessary for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of its preventive and protective measures
- g. IURC will implement such general fire precautions as will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of its members, voluntary helpers, visitors and contractors on church premises. These general fire precautions will be implemented on the basis of the following principles from Part 3, Schedule 1 of the Order:
  - i. avoid risks
  - ii. evaluate the risks which cannot be avoided;
  - iii. combat the risks at source;
  - iv. adapt to technical progress;
  - v. replace the dangerous by non-dangerous or less dangerous;

- vi. develop a coherent overall prevention policy which covers technology, organisation of work and the influence of factors relating to the working environment;
- vii. give collective protective measures priority over individual protective measures; and
- viii. give appropriate instructions to all premises users.

h. And, as specified in Article 4 of the Order, these general fire precautions will include:

- i. measures to reduce the risk of fire on church premises and the risk of the spread of fire on the premises;
- ii. measures in relation to the means of escape from church premises;
- iii. measures for ensuring that, at all material times, the means of escape can be safely and effectively used;
- iv. measures in relation to the means for fighting fires on the premises;
- v. measures in relation to the means for detecting fire on the premises and giving warning in case of fire on the premises;
- vi. measures in relation to the arrangements for action to be taken in the event of fire on the premises, including
- vii. measures relating to
  1. the instruction of voluntary helpers and
  2. measures to mitigate the effects of the fire.

**5. The action to be taken on discovery of a fire or hearing the alarm;**

- a. On discovery of a fire or on hearing a Fire Alarm
  - i. Contact Emergency Fire Service – Dial 999
  - ii. Sound the Fire Alarm Bell –
    1. Corridor outside Minister's vestry
    2. Atrium
  - iii. Identify the nearest exit point and evacuate the building
  - iv. **Disabled – Permanent or Temporary**
    1. wheelchair users, people on crutches, frail and/or elderly or heavily pregnant women and all other persons with a disability (permanent or temporary) will be given special assistance to ensure safe exit.
  - v. Do not stop to collect personal possessions
  - vi. Assemble on the grass area at the front of the building.
  - vii. Stand clear of any exit point ensuring free movement for other evacuees or emergency service access.
  - viii. Do not re-enter the building until it has been declared clear to do so.
- b. **Lift Controls**
  - i. The disabled lift may be used after a prior risk assessment by a trained and competent person of the prevailing situation at the time i.e. how serious, close etc. is the threat.

## **6. Emergency Plan for Hirers of Church Premises**

As the responsible person for the event / function you have legal duties with regard to the safety of those persons assisting with or attending the event.

Before the event or function, you should be aware of:

- The contents of the Fire Procedures Notice displayed in the room.
- What fire protection systems are present and their location.
- How a fire will be detected.
- How people will be warned if there is a fire.
- What staff should do if they discover a fire.
- How the evacuation should be carried out and arrangements for those particularly at risk such as disabled persons and children.
- Identification of escape routes and exits.
- Arrangements for fighting fire.
- How the fire and rescue service will be called.
- Checking that all escape routes are clear of obstructions and combustibles.

At the start and during the event or function you should ensure that:

- Those present are notified of the location of exits and escape routes and the contents of the Fire Procedure Notice.
- Escape routes and exits do not become blocked.
- No naked flames are started, including candles.
- Rooms do not become overcrowded and when setting out chairs and tables adequate room is left for safe and easy means of escape.

a. On discovery of a fire or on hearing a Fire Alarm

- i. Contact Emergency Fire Service – dial 999
- ii. Sound the Fire Alarm Bell –
  1. Corridor outside Minister's vestry
  2. Atrium
- iii. Identify the nearest exit point and evacuate the building
- iv. Do not stop to collect personal possessions
- v. Assemble on the grass area at the front of the building.
- vi. Stand clear of any exit point ensuring free movement for other evacuees or emergency service access.
- vii. Do not re-enter the building until it has been declared clear to do so.

- viii. It is essential that all Activity Leaders take their members promptly and safely well away from the buildings and do not allow them to re-enter until the all clear has been given.
- ix. Any Activity Assistants who are not in charge of members are expected to assist with crowd control as detailed above.

## **7. Duties of Fire Marshal**

### **a. Sunday Service**

- i. In an emergency evacuation, the Minister's Chaplain will become Fire Evacuation Marshal.
- ii. All attending Elders will assist the Fire Evacuation Marshal with basic fire marshalling. Duty Welcoming Stewards may be asked to assist.
- iii. On hearing the fire alarm, all Assist Fire Marshals should leave their areas promptly encouraging others to also do so.
- iv. Once outside, Assist Fire Marshals should take up position by an exit and assist with control by keeping the congregation evacuees moving well away from the exit doors in order to allow others to leave quickly and safely and the Fire Brigade clear access.
- v. If another Assist Fire Marshal is already at the exit, staff should still help to keep evacuees moving until well clear of the building.
- vi. If evacuees are allowed to congregate close to the building, escape routes will quickly become impassable.
- vii. Fire Marshals should not allow evacuees to re-enter any building until the leading Fire Brigade officer or the Fire Evacuation Marshal has declared it safe.

## **8. Responsibility**

- a. The responsibility for fire safety arrangements within the Church rests with IURC. IURC delegates the day-to-day management of the policy to the Buildings and Grounds (B&G) committee.
- b. The Fire and Rescue Authorities are the principal enforcers and have a statutory duty to enforce the requirements of the legislation.

## **9. General Fire Safety Guidance and planning**

- a. We want everyone who uses IURC to be safe and confident in responding in the unlikely event of a fire on the premises. The premises have in-built smoke detectors that should activate automatically in the event of a fire.
- b. However, this is no substitute for common sense and vigilance on behalf of all users of the premises.
- c. Please take a moment to read and understand the guidance given below which outlines your responsibility with regard to fire safety and tells you what to do in the event of a fire.
- d. On discovery of a fire raise the fire alarm
- e. Leave calmly and quickly through the nearest fire exit.
- f. Do not stop to collect your possessions
- g. Smoking
  1. Please note: smoking is not permitted within the building perimeter.
- h. Exit Routes
  1. Please make yourself aware of the nearest fire exit and that your route to it is clear and unobstructed.
  2. Please ensure everyone you are responsible for is aware of these arrangements at the start of each meeting/event.
- i. Please be aware of anyone who is with you who will need special arrangements to exit the building such as a physically disabled.
- j. The B&G committee in liaison with all User Groups will ensure that a number of basic 'good housekeeping' procedures are followed:
  - i. Waste bins will be emptied regularly
  - ii. External bins will be housed in a suitable container and emptied weekly.
  - iii. All escape routes and fire exits will be kept clear and rooms kept tidy.
  - iv. Any flammable cleaning materials will be stored in a locked store.

- k. The B&G committee will also conduct specific processes and encourage a number of practices to minimise the risks of a fire starting and minimise the risk to individuals in the unlikely event of a fire.
- l. Persons/Groups hiring/making use of the premises will also be provided with information on the action to take on discovering a fire and to support the safe evacuation of the building.

**10. Assembly Point**

- a. Evacuees are instructed to move well clear of the exits once outside the building.
- b. The assembly point will be the car park grass area at the front of the building.
- c. Care should be taken to ensure free access by Emergency Service vehicles.

## **11. Fire Extinguishers**

- a. The general rules for the use of fire extinguishers are that they should only be used after the alarm has been given and that no risks should be taken.
- b. Accordingly, no one should contemplate using fire extinguishers if they have not been trained in their use and they should also be confident that the fire is not out of control.
- c. Whenever possible two persons should tackle the fire - one to use the extinguisher and the other to keep an eye on the escape route.
- d. If any doubt at all as to competence or safety exists then the use of fire extinguishers should be left to the professionals - the Fire Brigade.
- e. Fire extinguishers are located
  - i. Kitchen – 1 fire blanket, 1 CO2 extinguisher
  - ii. Parlour – 1 Foam extinguisher
  - iii. Hall - 1 Foam extinguisher
  - iv. Stage - 1 Foam extinguisher 1 CO2 extinguisher
  - v. Choir Room - 1 Foam extinguisher
  - vi. Corridor - 1 Foam extinguisher by exit door
  - vii. Main Church Choir Bay - 1 CO2 extinguisher
  - viii. 'Dead Porch' - 1 Foam extinguisher
  - ix. Entry Porch - 1 Foam extinguisher
  - x. Boiler Room – 2 Powder extinguishers

## **12. Fire Risk Assessment**

- a. The B&G committee will undertake the annual risk assessment using the process and format recommended by the Department of Communities & Local Government for Churches.
- b. This review will look at all aspects of fire safety and will enable them to identify any actions the B&G committee need to take to improve safety.
- c. The key aspects of the assessment are:
  - i. Identify Hazards
  - ii. Identify Location of People at Risk in Case of Fire
  - iii. Identify the Risks and Decide Whether Existing Precautions are Adequate
  - iv. Record Findings and Actions
  - v. Review & Revise Policy if Required
  - vi. The Minister, Minister's Chaplain. Elders, Stewards, Welcome Team Members, User Group leaders and any other volunteers will be given training and guidance to support the B&G committee in the implementation of the Fire Safety Policy:
  - vii. Identification of the fire detection & alarm systems operating in the building;

## **13. Fire Drills**

- a. Fire Drills will be conducted twice a year on both Sundays and on weekdays.

#### **14. Location of Shut-off Valves**

- a. Key holders and those who regularly use the building will be made aware of the location of the main shut-off valves for when the emergency services require this information.
- b. **GAS** shut-off valve is located in
  - i. In the kitchen behind the cooker at floor level
  - ii. At the top of the stairs leading down to the boiler room
  - iii. On the outer wall outside the Vestry in the Green cabinet
- c. **ELECTRICITY** switch boxes are located
  - i. the main fuse box area (flower cupboard)
  - ii. the table storage cupboard in the atrium
  - iii. the kitchen above the entrance door.