

WOODBIDGE METHODIST CHURCH FIRE SAFETY POLICY 2023 AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Name of Church	Assessment undertaken by
WOODBIDGE METHODIST CHURCH ST JOHN'S STREET WOODBIDGE SUFFOLK IP12 1ED	M.J. PORTER - SAFETY OFFICER WMC Contact at:- WMCroombooking@gmail.com
Initial Assessment Jan 2022 Annual Review October Quinquennial Reassessment 2028	Area of the building assessed – ALL:- SANCTUARY; OCTAGON; WESLEY ROOM; TOILETS; VESTRY; STEWARDS' OFFICE; ENTRANCE FOYER; UPPER ROOM(S); OFFICE/COMPUTER ROOM; STAIRS, LIFT, CELLAR, STORAGE SPACES AND CORRIDORS.
Next Assessment Review Dates 31 OCTOBER 2024	

Signed
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Next Review Date	31/10/ 2024	NEXT FULL REASSESSMENT DATE - 2028

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	<u>(Separate Excel File!)</u>

PART I - ORGANISATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Responsibility of the Church Council

The Church Council has overall responsibility for Fire Safety on Woodbridge Methodist Church Premises. They will ensure that arrangements are in place to satisfy all legal requirements of the fire safety regulations and appropriate Codes of Practice and that the Fire Safety Policy is implemented.

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.

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 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, people hiring rooms or facilities for their own or specified purposes and working 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. We understand that in the case of a church, 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 that the legislation is not prescriptive and that we are only required to undertake preventive measures 'where necessary'.

In carrying out our Fire Risk Assessment we have followed the Government guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government 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.

B. Responsible Person: The Church Council

The Church Council carry the responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of the arrangements outlined in this policy and in particular to:-

- Be familiar with Health & Safety and Fire Legislation as far as it applies to church premises
- Be familiar with the Health and Safety Policy and other Risk Assessments
- Ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe systems of work are in place, that all plant and equipment used is properly maintained and kept in good condition and that all operators have received appropriate training
- Ensure that adequate access and egress is maintained and that the premises are kept clean and tidy.
- Ensure the church buildings and grounds are properly maintained
- Ensure that firefighting equipment, is available and maintained and that it is properly and correctly marked and the use to which it may be put is displayed.

All Employees, Voluntary Workers, Contractors, Hirers and any other visitors to the premises, have a responsibility to co-operate in the implementation of this Fire Safety Policy and to take reasonable care of themselves and others whilst on church business or premises and must therefore:-

- Comply with safety rules, operating instructions and working procedures;
- Use protective clothing and equipment when it is required
- Report any fault or defect in equipment immediately to the appropriate person.
- Report all accidents - however minor - injuries, "near misses", or other potential safety hazards or incidents to the appropriate person, as soon as possible, using the appropriate form where necessary.

C. General Description of Church Premises

Woodbridge Methodist Church was originally built in the 1870's.

The Sanctuary, Cellar and a small area of storage space set over 3 floors at the front of the building, whilst much modernised in the 1990's, is the only remaining part of that original building.

The Sanctuary is a large room, mostly at ground floor level but with a first-floor balcony across the whole of the rear wall, accessed either by a spiral staircase from The Sanctuary or through a double door from The Upper Room behind. On this balcony is housed the electric organ, the audio-visual and lighting control centre and some tiered seating.

The storage area is at the very front of the building and is located over 3 floors with access by a straight staircase to each level. There is a small, locked room at 1st floor level housing the projector and screen facility and locked access to the two spaces in the roof above the Sanctuary's false ceiling.

The other major components of the Church Premises are:-

At ground floor level: a small room or "Side Chapel" known as The Wesley Room; a suite of toilet facilities – male, female and disabled; an Office used as the Vestry; a small Office referred to as The Stewards' Room; a kitchen; and a large hall referred to as The Octagon.

At first floor level: a small Office used to house the computer equipment; a Bathroom /toilet and a large room able to be divided into two by a moveable partition, known as The Upper Room. This room contains a small "domestic sized" kitchen.

All parts of the premises are interconnected by doors and passageways. Access to first floor level is by a wide staircase, an hydraulic lift or a standard width, double door to The Sanctuary Balcony.

The overall building area is approximately 30 x 25m; 750m².

The main rooms have the following approximate sizes and floor areas:-

i.	The Sanctuary	–	16.1 x 11.3m	182m ²
ii.	The Octagon	-	SIDE LENGTH: 5m	120m ²
iii.	Upper Room	-	8.9 x 6,9m	61.5m ²
iv.	The Wesley Room	-	4.3 x 3.1m	13m ²

Basic Construction Details:-

The main part of the Church is of brick construction with slate roof on wooden rafters and joists. Most walls and ceilings are plastered; exceptions to this are The Octagon, which has a wooden frame structure, infilled with brick walls and a wood lined ceiling and the Upper Room which has pine cladding to parts of the 2nd floor storage / loft area.

Use of the Church:-

The Church Sanctuary is used mostly for weekly, Sunday worship, usually during the morning period, but with occasional evening or other special or celebration services and occasional concerts or similar events.

Other Church rooms and facilities are available for Church organised events and activities, regular and sporadic and also for Public Hire on an hourly basis for each room or facility. Sometimes, more than one room is occupied and sometimes more than one organisation is on the premises at the same time.

There is activity at the premises at some time during every day of the week. Users meet at various times of the day or night, totalling approximately 35 hours of regular use each week.

People at Risk:-

The Congregation. Currently (Covid has restricted Conditions of use) there are approximately a maximum of 35 attendees for Sunday Worship, 1 hour + Refreshments afterwards for another 1 hour maximum. More usual attendance was in the region of 50 – 80 people with Special Occasion Services (for eg. Christmas, Weddings and Funerals) up to 150 people may be present. Most of the regular congregation are elderly (80 years of age or over) and many have health and mobility difficulties. There are rarely any children present at services and usually there are none.

Other groups that hire the premises have between 3 and 50 attendees, but some special events may have more. Each room has a maximum number of occupants dependant on the use of the room and these are set out in the general Safety Policy and Hiring Terms and Conditions.

During Services there are usually at least 3 Church Stewards present and there may be more for special services. Funerals and Weddings are usually attended by a least 2 Stewards and The Minister.

The Church employs a part time Cleaner who is often accompanied by a family member. Several Church Members and some others play the Organ on a regular basis. Church Organists often practice alone at the premises. The only people who work in remote places within the building are the Cleaner(s) (who may work in any part of the premises); Volunteers assisting with preparation of the premises, repairs and maintenance work (and who may also work, sometimes alone, in any part of the premises); and the Lift Engineer who needs to work in the cellar area to check the lift mechanisms. The most distant / remote part of the premises is the front of Sanctuary Storage area, 2nd floor which would involve a travel distance down 2 full staircases, and approximately a total distance of 80m to travel to the furthest denoted fire escape door, although there is an alternative exit door at the foot of the ground floor staircase – a maximum of about half that distance.

The Fire Alarm has been tested and is audible to a suitable level in all parts of the building.

PART II

GENERAL FIRE SAFETY

1. General Fire Safety Statement of The Church Council:

So far as is reasonably practicable, we will:-

- Undertake an assessment of the fire risks in the church and associated buildings and the risks to, or from, our neighbours.
- Check that fire at our premises can be detected in a reasonable time and that people can be warned.
- Check that people in the building can be got out safely including where necessary, the provision of fire exit signage and emergency lighting.
- Provide reasonable fire-fighting equipment with clear instructions for application and any limitations in use.
- Ensure that all users of the building know what to do if there is a fire.
- Ensure that there are regular checks that firefighting equipment is in place and that there is an annual maintenance contract in place with a reputable company.
- Provide information, training and supervision as appropriate for these purposes.
- Have a standing item on the agenda of the Church Council and Property and Finance Committee for Health and Safety, including Fire Safety.
- To provide High Visibility Fire Warden tabards/jackets for 3 Fire Wardens (see Appendix 5)
- Consult from time to time, with contractors, employees, voluntary workers and persons hiring or using the Church Premises in order to seek their views on Fire Safety matters.
- We recognise that Churches like ours, with a wide range of activities such as lettings and public use of the buildings, should consider appointing an independent consultant to help us carry out the Fire Risk Assessment. At the present time, we do not feel this is relevant to our Church situation due to the low-risk activities that various hirers carry out whilst on the premises, but we will keep the matter under constant review.
- To reassess the Fire Risk Assessment at least ANNUALLY and to undertake a detailed review of all factors involved at least every 5 years.

2. General Fire Safety Management

The first priority in case of a fire being discovered is to raise the alarm and ensure that all occupiers of the building can be safely evacuated. Only very minor fires should be “fought” and the person(s) doing so must first ensure that they can themselves escape quickly and safely.

- The Church have decided NOT to hold regular Fire Practices because of the serious hazards they involve with our usual mostly elderly, infirm, independent, attendees. Instead, Church Stewards are instructed in what procedures to follow, are familiar with the building and all escape routes, assembly points and are capable of fighting the most basic of fires and knowledgeable as to what fire-fighting equipment to use in which situation.
- The Lettings Officer advises every hiring person/body/organisation of the fire escape routes and assembly points.
- All Fire Alarm points and emergency lighting systems are checked to be working at least monthly.
- Fire Systems and equipment are maintained by a contractor on a 5-year plan.

3. Recognised Fire Safety Hazards

The potential Fire hazards are recognised as follows

- Main Kitchen: large gas cooker, heating and other electrical appliances: fridge, freezer, microwave, kettles, water heater and gas-fired central heating/hot water supply unit.
- Upper Room Kitchen Area: Electric Domestic cooker
- Other parts of premises: Occasional use of candles, gas-fired heater units in Sanctuary and The Octagon, other electrical appliances.
- Small amounts of cleaning materials are stored.
- The Octagon has a mostly wood-based floor and ceiling construction.
- The Sanctuary has a wooden floor with a small, externally accessible cellar area below.
- Rooms are let out to outside organisations or individuals who, whilst known and considered responsible, are outside the direct control of the Church.
- Adjoining Builders' Merchant premises contain much flammable material.
- Vehicles are often parked on the car-park area at the front of the Church and the apron leading to the main entrance doors. St John's Street, at the front of the Church is busy and hazardous.
- The Church attendees are mostly elderly and some are of restricted ability. Many need assistance to move.

There are no known historical incidents involving a fire at the premises or any arson or other fires nearby.

The matter of a malicious attack or arson is reviewed annually and whilst thought extremely unlikely, it has to be re-assessed in the light of current information and conditions. In general, we maintain more than one alternative route of escape from all parts of the building.

4. Methods of controlling fire risk:

General:

- An automatic fire detection system is in place. This is maintained by a contractor and consists of 7 heat and smoke detectors which, if triggered, set off the audible / visible fire alarm systems and also release two magnetically held- open fire doors in the rear corridor forming part of the main fire escape routes.
- There are fire-fighting extinguishers/fire blankets at various points throughout the premises that are maintained by a contractor. These are appropriate for use in the different areas in which they are situated.
- There are 4 fire alarm points and 13 emergency light units which are tested regularly, usually twice a month.
- Church Stewards are kept aware of how to evacuate the building in case of fire.
- There is a no-smoking policy at the Church and smoking is statutorily prohibited inside the buildings.
- Details are shown on the plans referred to in Appendices 1 – 3
- Electrical / Heating
- Fixed Electrical Systems are inspected by a competent person at least every 5 years. (See Appendix 5)
- Only electrical items listed by the Safety Officer and examined/certified as appropriate, are permitted to be used on the premises. No equipment belonging to outside bodies are allowed to be brought onto the Church without express permission and depend on them being appropriately documented and tested.
- All portable appliances are checked visually and by other methods as appropriate, including some being “Pat Tested” at least every 5 years.
- Where appropriate, any appliances that fail tests or are otherwise noted as being defective will be immediately taken out of use and either be kept securely locked away or be removed from the building until they are adequately repaired or disposed of.
- Trailing Leads and multi-point adaptors are only used in specific places and at appropriate times.
- All gas heating appliances – central heating/hot water “boiler”, 4 gas heaters in The Sanctuary, 2 similar heaters in The Octagon and 1 similar heater in the Main entrance Foyer – are examined by a competent person/contractor at least annually. Certification is displayed in the Stewards Office and copies may be shown elsewhere.
- No LPG or similar gas or oil fuelled appliances are to be used on the premises with the exception of builders, contractors or maintenance repairers, who may use their own purpose-appropriate tools and equipment.
- There are no oil, coal, wood or other solid fuel type heaters or systems at the premises and no such fuels, including petrol or diesel, are to be stored or kept at or on the premises.
- There are cooking facilities at the premises used occasionally for producing beverages or warming pre-prepared foods (mince pies etc). A new Hirer will however, be using the Main Kitchen for sandwich making including the preparation of fillings on a regular basis.
- Kitchen Extract ventilation facilities are only cleaned as appropriate, as and when needed, because they are rarely used. They are regularly checked.

The premises are covered by up to 8 cctv cameras inside and out. These record images for up to 3 weeks and can be interrogated by the camera crew. Whilst this is not a prevention matter, it may be of use after an incident has occurred.

MEANS OF ESCAPE

These are shown in schematic form on the plan at Appendix 3 (A & B) contained in the attached Excel Spreadsheet.

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.

No part of the Church Premises, with the exception of extremities of locked areas in the roof space not accessible to general personnel, is more than the Travel Distance for a Low Risk Area.

- There are sufficient emergency exits at the premises. There are 3 primary escape routes, 2 of which use double width doors at the final exit point to the outside. Other doors/windows are available as exits, but are not designated Emergency Fire Exit Routes.
- All designated route, final Fire Exit doors open outwards. Most doors on escape routes also open with the flow of people evacuating, however, some cope with multi-directional travel being part of alternative escape routes and are kept under observation – some open in both directions. Where they are found to need attention, they will be changed.
- All routes are kept free from obstruction and are checked regularly.

5. FIRE SAFETY POLICY, RECORDS AND FILES

A copy of The Fire Safety Policy will be kept available for any person using or visiting the premises to inspect.

The contents of any files (not containing personal information) will be available for examination by any member of the Church Council.

Certificates and records of testing equipment or systems will be displayed at the premises where any person visiting can inspect them.

FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT:-

LIKELIHOOD OF FIRE	LOW
POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF FIRE	MODERATE HARM
ASSESSMENT	TOLERABLE RISK

Appendix 1

A. List of Serviceable Equipment

Period of Inspection Required

Gas system and equipment
Fire Precautions:

Annually
12 months – system, equipment
1 month – 11 x Emergency Lights & 4 x Fire Alarm Points

B. LIST OF FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT AND POSITIONS WITH TEST/DISCHARGE DATES:-

Next test date:

Reference Number	Situation	Type	Discharge Date	Restrictions For use on:-
On Fire Plan				
Fire Extinguishers:-				
Ground Floor				
1	Front of Church: Storage Area (electric cupboard)	CO ₂	2026	Electrical
3	Corridor outside Wesley Room	water	Oct 2023	Wood, paper, textiles
4	Corridor outside vestry	CO ₂	2028	Electrical
6	Kitchen	CO ₂	2026	Electrical
17	Kitchen	Wet Chemical	2028	Oil / fat
8	Main entrance foyer	water	2024	Wood, paper, textiles
11	Octagon	water	2024	Wood, paper, textiles
First Floor				
13	Corridor top of stairs	water	Oct 2023	Wood, paper, textiles
14	Room A	CO ₂	2026	Electrical
16	Sound Desk, Balcony	CO ₂	2027	Electrical

(See Appendix 5)

Fire Blankets:

5	Kitchen	Flammable liquids
14	Room A small Kitchen	Flammable liquids

SMOKE/HEAT DETECTORS

There are 7 smoke/heat detectors situated in/at:-

Ground Floor Level –

Kitchen,
Passageway outside Kitchen,
Passageway outside toilets,
Passageway outside Wesley Room, at foot of main staircase to 1st Floor Level.

1st Floor Level –

Passageway outside lift

Upper Room x2

FIRE ALARM BELLS/LIGHTS Marked 'B' or 'B/L' on Plan

Ground Floor Level -

Octagon - Bell & Flashing Red Light

Passageway outside kitchen (Fire control Panel) - Bell

Passageway outside Toilets - Bell

Sanctuary – Bell

1st Floor Level –

Passageway outside lift - Bell

EMERGENCY LIGHTS Numbered 20 – 31 on Plan.

Ground Floor Level -

Entrance Foyer above external "Escape" door

Octagon x2 – above external double "Escape" doors & internal double "Escape" doors

Passageway outside kitchen ceiling light

Passageway outside Toilets ceiling light

Passageway outside Wesley Room above "escape door" ceiling light

Passageway outside Sanctuary x2 ceiling lights

Sanctuary – above double "Escape route" Doors

Passageway below projector screen (Front of Church storage) ceiling light

Staircase to 1st Floor Rooms x 2 –

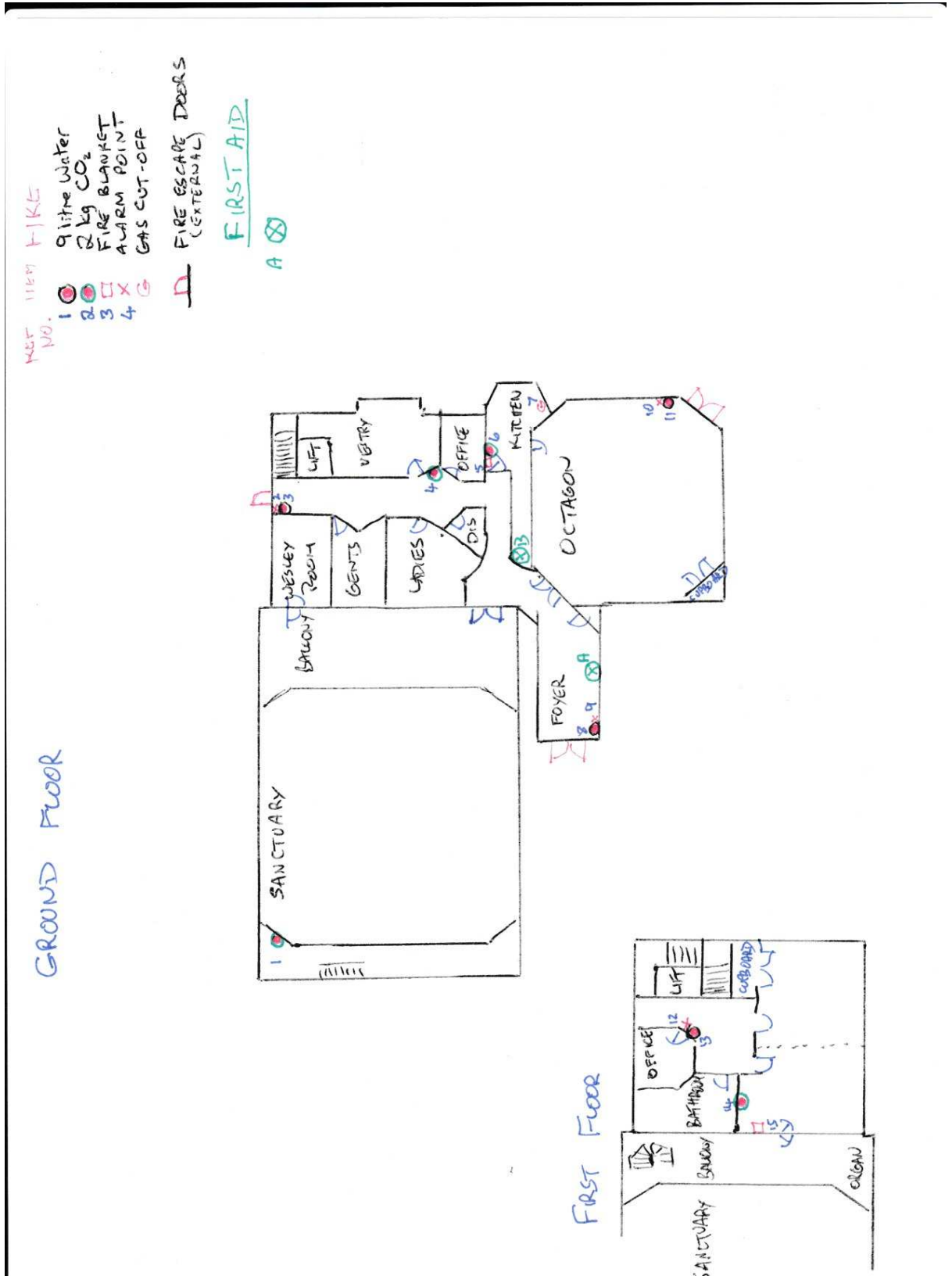
Lower Stairs and upper stairs – ceiling lights

External –

Immediately outside front, main entrance doors - Canopy Light

Appendix 2 – SEE ALSO EXCEL SHEET FOR UP TO DATE NUMBERING APPENDIX 5

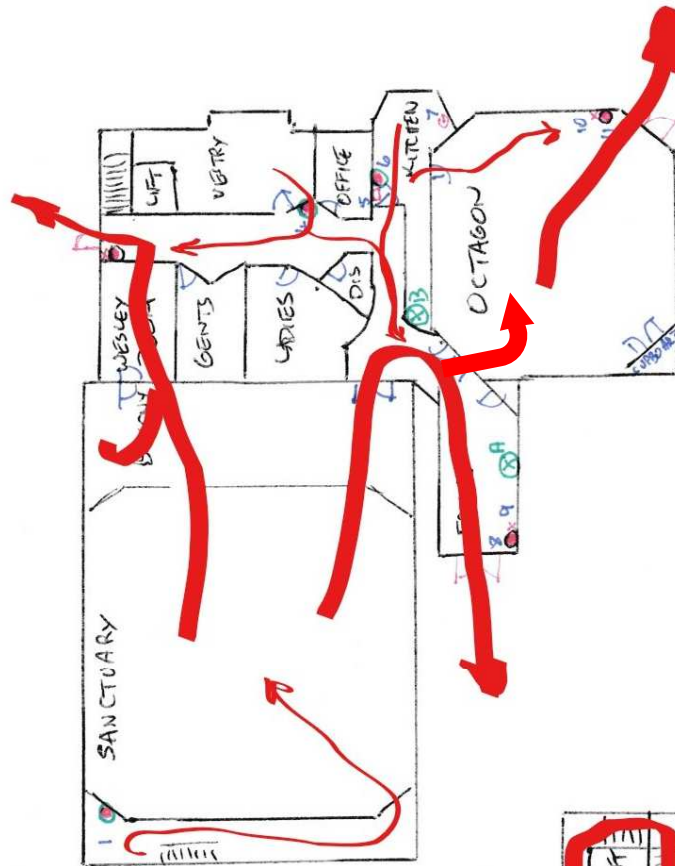
Plan showing Fire equipment and first aid points



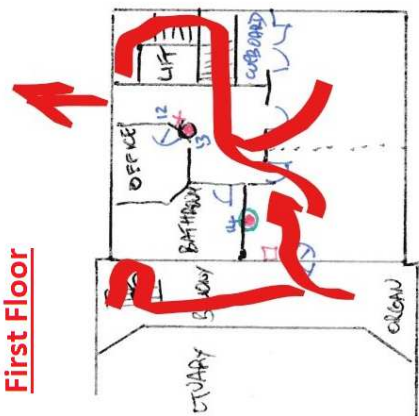
Appendix 3

Fire Escape Routes

Ground Floor



First Floor



Appendix 4

link to Excel Schematic Plan of Buildings – FILE NAME - “Church Fire Plan” (forwarded separately)

APPENDIX 5 ACTION PLAN

1. Acquire 3 FIRE WARDEN High Viz Tabards (page 4)
2. Check Fixed Electric Systems are inspected by competent person at least every 5 years (Page 9)
3. Check Foam extinguisher for Kitchen (Page 11)

APPENDIX 6 FIRE ALARM AND EMERGENCY LIGHTING TESTING RECORD

SEE SEPARATE RECORD FILE – EXCEL SHEETS