

Melbourn United Reformed Church

Fire Risk Assessment

FRA 2 - Usage of Sanctuary / Upper Room
(e.g. Normal Sunday Worship)

Prepared by:.....

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Approved by:.....

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(On behalf of the Elders)

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Fire Risk Assessment FRA 2

Use of Church Sanctuary and Upper Room (e.g. normal Sunday Worship) with Balcony Unoccupied.

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1. Introduction

The format of the original Fire Risk Assessments (completed in 2007) identified any risks, recommended actions to mitigate them, recorded actions placed by the Elders in respect of the recommendations and recorded the date when such actions were completed. These are retained in our archives for record purposes.

The format of **this** Fire Risk Assessment, which has been conducted to update the document in light of current usage and changes to equipment in the intervening period, records fire risks and the measures currently in place to mitigate them. Any recommendations for further risk reduction measures are recorded at the end of the "Risk Reduction Measures" section.

Fire Risk Assessments are primarily about people and their safety - not about protecting the building. Where there are issues regarding the latter that arise as a result of this assessment they will, however, be noted.

2. Preamble

This Risk Assessment deals with usage of the Church Sanctuary as on a normal Sunday and includes use of the "Upper Room" (the room at the pulpit end of the balcony) frequently used by Junior Church during Sunday morning worship. The balcony is not normally occupied on these occasions and, for the purpose of this Risk Assessment (FRA 2), will be considered to be unoccupied.

(Note: A separate Risk Assessment FRA 3 deals with the case when the balcony is occupied.)

3. Current Assessment

3.1 Potential Sources of Ignition

- i) The church sanctuary is heated by electric heaters on the ground floor only which are generally situated underneath alternate pews. There is also one wall mounted heater at the back of the sanctuary. These are individually fused. There is also a main fuse in the fuse box situated within the cupboard through which main electrical power enters the building. This main fuse cupboard is located at the back of the church in what is colloquially referred to by some as the "Sin Bin". These heaters are controlled by a thermostat located on a pillar at the back of the church close to the Notice Board and a time switch located within the main fuse cupboard.
- ii) The organ, situated at the front on one side, is powered by an electric blower.
- iii) The (removable) Hymn Technologies Digital Hymnal is situated, when in use, on the organ blower housing and there are adjacent 13 amp socket outlets for power to this unit as well as the three powered speakers which are located adjacent to the organ pipes in the balcony.

- iv) The main control equipment of the Sound System supplied by Keith Monks Sound Systems (now Cunnings Recording Associates) is housed in a purpose designed cabinet housed in the “Sin Bin”. There is a fixed microphone on the Lectern, a number of radio mics and a socket adjacent to the lectern for lap-top (or similar) connection to the projector which is located in the pulpit and powered from a 13 amp socket installed specifically for the purpose. Two speakers are located at Balcony floor level towards the front of the Sanctuary.
- v) Controlled by a timer located outside the kitchen on the ground floor, the Upper Room is heated by three fixed wall mounted convection heaters each supplied from a floor level fused supply. A television is available and is powered from an adjacent 13 amp socket. Currently there are a keyboard, radio and free standing convector heater available for use. Adequate 13 amp socket outlets are available. In the toilet adjacent to the Upper Room there is a small “frostat” heater individually fused.
- vi) The Back Room has three wall mounted convection heaters each supplied from a floor level fused supply - these are not timer controlled. Also within the Back Room is a speaker powered from the sound system and a further input socket for the sound system for microphone and a mini jack socket for other digital inputs.
- vii) The kitchen (refurbished at the time of the construction of the new church hall in 1996) contains two ovens, one fridge/freezer, a water heater located under the sink area, a dishwasher, a “frostat” heater and a high level single bar electric heater – all appropriately fused as required by regulations at that time. Two high level extractor fans are provided. A free-standing “boiler”, electric kettles, microwave and filter coffee machine together with “Hostess” trolleys are available for use.
- viii) The Vestry contains a high level single bar electric fire with supply cable stapled to the wall and a photocopier.

3.2 Sources of Fuel

- i) There are no obvious sources of fuel in the Church Sanctuary, Back Room or Upper Room. All have various books and furnishings but these are kept tidy and the foregoing stored well away from the above potential sources of ignition.
- ii) Within both the kitchen and Vestry there are no obvious sources of fuel and both are kept in a tidy and clean condition.

3.3 Alarms & Escape Routes

- i) There is only one battery operated smoke detector within the building complex and this is situated at the top of the stairs leading to the Upper Room from the corridor in which the church kitchen is situated. This was installed specifically to alert occupants of the Upper Room of the possible presence of smoke emanating from the kitchen or other area below that would limit their escape routes.
- ii) Regarding the ground floor sanctuary there are no automatic smoke alarms. There are two pairs of inward opening double doors which are the main entrances to the sanctuary. In each case the innermost of the double doors leads in to the ground floor sanctuary whilst the outermost door leads to stairs which, when this door is open, only provide access to and from the balcony as the door itself virtually prevents access to the ground floor. It is general practice for only the innermost of the double doors of the left hand pair (viewed from church gates) to be open for normal worship. Behind each pair of outer doors there is a further pair of inward opening interior doors allowing access to the ground floor of the sanctuary. At the opposite end of the sanctuary are two doors one of which leads to the Back Room from where there is a door leading to the kitchen corridor whilst the second door leads directly to this corridor. Escape from this point is through the door which separates the church from the hall (A) and then either through the hall entrance (B) or fire exit at the far end of the hall. Both doors (A) and (B) are specified to be opened by the Duty Elder on the Elders’ Sunday Check List.

- iii) Regarding use of the Upper Room during normal Sunday worship access (generally for Junior Church) is from the main ground floor of the sanctuary through the door which leads directly to the kitchen corridor and up the stairs past the smoke detector. From the Upper Room there are two exits:- firstly retracing the entry route or secondly through the door which leads onto the sanctuary's balcony, along the length of the balcony and down the stairs at the "normal entrance" end of the building to exit through an emergency exit door with specially modified lock so that it can be opened from the inside with a simple handle (no key required) but not from the outside. Both exit doors are marked as is the escape route along the balcony adjacent to the outer wall, the exit down the stairs and the emergency exit door (actually the outermost of the lefthand pair of double doors which are the main entrance to the sanctuary).
- iv) Regarding use of the kitchen, there are two entrance/exit doors. The door from the kitchen corridor has no lock whilst the other exit is into the Hall's servery. This self-closing door is normally locked (to prevent users of the hall gaining access to the church sanctuary) but a key is left on the church kitchen side window sill by this door.

3.4 People

- i) Our normal congregation ranges in age from young children to the elderly and whilst most are physically able there may be some who are significantly less so. However, on every occasion when there is any kind of service there are sidesmen whose duties include that of being a "Fire Marshall" as well as providing a welcome to all and being ready to assist any of the congregation should they require help - e.g. if they are feeling unwell.

3.5 Other Issues

- i) One foam fire extinguisher (primarily for use on liquid fires and not suitable for electrical fires) is situated within the ground floor of the main sanctuary close to the main entrance. A carbon dioxide extinguisher, which is suitable for electrical and flammable liquid fires, is situated adjacent to the organ. These are checked regularly by Chubb Fire Protection.
- ii) Within the kitchen a Fire Blanket is provided for use in an emergency together with a carbon dioxide extinguisher – suitable for both electrical and flammable liquid fires. Again these are checked regularly by Chubb Fire Protection.
- iii) Within the Upper Room there is a water fire extinguisher (primarily for use on fires involving solids and not suitable for flammable liquid or electrical fires). This, too, is checked regularly by Chubb Fire Protection.
- iv) Following recommendation from Chubb Fire Protection there is also a water fire extinguisher (primarily for use on fires involving solids and not suitable for flammable liquid or electrical fires) located at the top of the stairs in the Balcony adjacent to the fire exit route. This, too, is checked regularly by Chubb Fire Protection.

4. Risk Reduction Measures

4.1 Potential Sources of Ignition

- i) The Duty Elder's Checklist requires checks to ensure all heaters etc the Sound System and all other electrical appliances are switched off before leaving and, providing this is done, there would appear to be no significant risk.
- ii) Apart from keeping an eye on the condition of the electrical equipment as one would in ones own home (and in my view we should be able to trust the common sense of users here) no issues identified.

4.2 Sources of Fuel

- i) Maintain a "tidy" regime.

4.3 Alarms & Escape Routes

- i) The smoke alarm is battery operated. On the basis that the building is unoccupied for periods of up to a week the normal “low battery” warning may well occur *and expire* within this time. A check on the proper operation of the smoke alarm is part of the normal weekly Opening Procedure by the Duty Elder.
- ii) The absence of automatic fire alarms is not, in my view, an issue and I recommend that we should not attempt to replace an average of 30 to 40 alert human beings with such! The building originally dates from 1717 and is Grade II listed. Were it to be constructed today the doors would be outward opening to make for easy egress in an emergency. However, our Grade II listed status not only excuses us from this requirement but actively prevents us (even during the refurbishment) from altering this aspect even should we wish. The escape route from the sanctuary at the pulpit end are opened and checked as part of the Elders’ Check List activities. At the main entrance currently only the innermost of the double doors of the left hand pair (viewed from church gates) is open for normal worship. Sidesmen on duty are required to check that the (right hand) door leading from the main sanctuary is capable of being opened quickly.
- iii) Regarding escape from the Upper Room clear routes are marked and need to be kept clear. The fire exit door (actually the outermost of the left hand pair of double doors which are the main entrance to the sanctuary) is checked on a fortnightly basis as part of the normal weekly Opening Procedure by the Duty Elder and recorded on the Check Sheet located in the Vestry.
- iv) There is a notice on the door separating our kitchen from the servery to advise that it should be unlocked whenever our kitchen is in use to provide a second exit.

4.4 People

- i) We have to accept that some of the normal congregation are less physically able than others. However, with the construction of the building and the sources of ignition and fuel, it is highly unlikely that any situation would spread so quickly as to cause occupants of the sanctuary to be trapped providing clear instruction is given and followed. To this end:
 - Sidesmen have been instructed (see Sidesmen’s Duties”) to adopt the role of Fire Marshall” and guide the occupants of the sanctuary to safety using the same “Point of Assembly” as for the Hall Evacuation plan ensuring that none are left.
 - Should an emergency situation arise in the main sanctuary that requires evacuation, it is the Duty Elder’s responsibility to ensure those in the Upper Room (and Main Hall if affected) are alerted as noted on the Elder’s Check List.

4.5 Other Issues

- i) Continue to have our fire extinguishers checked by professional body on annual basis.

(BGM 4th July 2017)