

# **Buxton Methodist Church**

## **Information for Users of the Premises**

### **Generic Risk Assessment**

#### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to outline the principle areas of risk in using the premises and indicate where mitigation measures are in place.

All Users of the premises (whether an “in-house” organisation or a hirer) are required to familiarise themselves with the relevant contents of this document and to create a separate detailed risk assessment regarding the use of the premises by their group. Different groups of people have different needs and sets of risks which cannot be addressed by the trustees of Buxton Methodist Church.

#### **2. Church area including Gallery and Sanctuary**

2.1 Weekday entrance is via the side main door, except where a public event is being staged, in which case the Market Place entrance doors are also used. However, if more than 50 people are expected to be in the space at any one time, the Market Place doors should be unlocked (though not necessarily open) to form a third fire escape route. The remaining two escape routes: via the main side entrance and via the push-bar locked door adjacent to the organ at main floor level in the north transept are always available and have sufficient diversity for the lower number of people.

2.2 Step-free access is available at both the main side entrance and at the Market Place entrance. Two toilets are provided underneath the gallery. One toilet has been converted for universal access.

2.3 Access to the gallery is by staircase with a discontinuous hand rail and is not considered suitable for the less able. The balustrade to the gallery is comparatively low and, although with supplementary rails at each corner, is considered to pose a risk to children who are unsupervised. Notices on each gallery staircase require that any children are accompanied by a responsible adult who will ensure that a child does not endanger themselves.

2.4 Access to the sanctuary area is via three steps that run the width of the sanctuary area. Vertical rails are provided at each end of the stairs, to assist those that might find it difficult to climb unaided. If the communion rails are in position along the stairs, they should not be used as an aid to climbing as they are not firmly fixed in position. The tight staircase to the hall, to the left of the organ, should not be used. The door to the entrance lobby is locked, and not available for use, unless specifically required for an event, in which case it can be opened by arrangement. It should never be opened by the user of the building.

#### **3. Coffee Lounge Area, next to Kitchen**

3.1 This informal area also acts as a passageway with access to emergency exits. Users of this area must ensure that their activity does not impede access to the emergency exits.

Level access is provided from the street (when the street door is open) to the hall, kitchen, ladies toilet and accessible toilet.

3.2 For security, the street door is only unlocked routinely when there are expected to be more than 50 people in this part of the building (hall, kitchen, lower room and coffee lounge). If the door is unlocked, but shut, it will automatically latch in the fully open position when first fully opened. This should be the action of the first person to leave the building in an emergency, to ensure that the escape path remains clear for others to follow. A “tear strip” beneath the handle gives access to a mechanism for emergency unlocking of this door, if necessary. When this door is locked, and is not opened via the “tear strip”, escape from this area is either through the hall, or down the corridor passed the lower room. The linking door between the hall level and the church level may also be open and act as a fire escape. When locked, it is clearly labelled as not an escape route.

#### **4. Main Hall**

4.1 Normal access to the hall is via the Coffee Lounge. Emergency exit is either via the Coffee Lounge (see 3.2) or via both doors at the opposite end of the hall. The left hand door opens directly into a storage area but with a clearly marked demarcation between permitted storage and the path to the final (push bar) exit door onto Fountain Street. The right hand door opens into a small lobby at the foot of the stairs from the upper room. The staircase is clearly marked as not being available for emergency use from the lower level as, for security reasons, there is no means of opening the door at the higher level. A door leads directly into the storage area, where the clear path is marked to the final exit door.

4.2 Two further doors from the hall lead respectively to a stair up to the rear of the Church Sanctuary area and a stair down to the Boiler Room. Neither staircase is adequate for public use, and these doors should normally remain locked while members of the public are in the building.

#### **5. Lower Room**

5.1 Although capable of being divided into two rooms by a movable screen partition, this is rarely used and must not be moved by anyone who has not had specific authorisation from the church Property Committee.

5.2 Normal access to the Lower Room is via the short flight of stairs in the corridor. Level access is available via the push bar fire exit to Fountain Street. A short portable ramp is provided to assist wheelchair users. Whoever opens this door for access purposes must ensure that at all times when not actually open it is kept locked. Gents toilets and an accessible toilet are at this level.

5.3 A sink and water boiling facilities are provided for people using this room. As with any water boiling capability, appropriate care must be undertaken to ensure that the water does not splash or spill onto other people. Those intending to use this facility must bring all supplies (tea, coffee, milk, sugar, etc.) with them and remove them at the close of the session. Food and drink making items are never to be stored in this room.

#### **6. Upper Room**

6.1 Access is up the staircase built within the tower at the main side entrance. A second staircase provides a separate escape route and is accessed by the push bar door from the room. This leads down to the emergency lobby at the lower level (see 4.1). No provision is made for access by people who are not happy with the stairs, as other accessible facilities are available in the building at the lower levels.

6.2 A small kitchen area is effectively closed within a cupboard, for use by those using the room. As with any water boiling capability, appropriate care must be undertaken to ensure that the water does not splash or spill onto other people. Those intending to use this facility must bring all supplies (tea, coffee, milk, sugar, etc.) with them and remove them at the close of the session. Food and drink making items are never to be stored in this room.

6.3 Also at the upper room level are a toilet, the main church office, the minister's vestry and a stair giving access to storage at the highest level. Apart from the toilet, access to the remaining spaces is by specific invitation only.

## **7. Kitchen**

7.1 General access to the kitchen is provided for users of the main hall, to enable the preparation of drinks, etc. The fixed water boiler should be used. As with any water boiling capability, appropriate care must be undertaken to ensure that the water does not splash or spill onto other people. Those intending to use this facility must bring all supplies (tea, coffee, milk, sugar, etc.) with them and remove them at the close of the session. Food and drink making items are never to be stored in the kitchen. The refrigerator and freezer are solely for use by the church café and related activities.

7.2 The other facilities in the kitchen are available for hire but must only be operated by people who have received appropriate training.

7.3 The church is very proud of the food hygiene rating awarded to the kitchen, which enables it to run the café with confidence that customers will not suffer infections or food poisoning. In order to maintain this rating, it is essential that nothing, such as coats or bags, which could contaminate the surfaces is brought into the kitchen.

7.4 In order to maintain hygiene, and to minimise fire risk, virtually all fittings and furniture in the kitchen are stainless steel.

## **8. General**

### **8.1 Water**

8.1.1 Water is a precious commodity and the church has taken steps to minimise the waste of water, for example by fitting dual level flush capability to all toilets. We ask that all users of the building exercise due diligence to ensure that taps are fully turned off, as appropriate.

8.1.2 From time to time, the temperature of water in the pipes is checked to ensure that it is either above, or below, the critical temperatures for the breeding of Legionella. Generally, where water is not heated locally, hand washing facilities are provided with a temperature limiting mixer arrangement, but users should still take care that the temperature is appropriate for their use and the use of any children that may be under their supervision.

### **8.2 Electricity**

8.2.1 Energy is a precious commodity and the church has taken steps, primarily by the installation of solar panels, to minimise the use of electricity. We ask that all users of the building exercise due diligence to ensure that lights are turned off, as appropriate.

8.2.2 The fixed electrical installation is tested at appropriate intervals. Portable electrical appliances and extension leads that are the property of the church are tested at appropriate intervals. Users of the premises are asked to check that any equipment (computers, projectors, etc.) brought onto the premises is fit for purpose and will not pose a danger. Such equipment that is the property of a commercial or governmental organisation would be expected to be included in the PAT schedule for the organisation. High power appliances should not be connected to the church supply without obtaining specific permission.

### **8.3 Fire Alarm System**

8.3.1 The fire alarm system uses call points located at each final exit from the building:

**Fountain Street:**

Lower Corridor

Rear of Hall

North Transept

**Chapel Street:**

Upper (Main) Entrance

Coffee Lounge Entrance

**Market Place:**

Entrance to Church

This is the minimum legal requirement for this type of fire alarm, but other call points are available throughout the building.

The alarm will also sound if triggered by smoke detectors installed in some rooms and spaces.

Users of the building should familiarise themselves with both the fire alarm and also the emergency exit routes from their space in the building. It is the responsibility of the hirer to ensure that those attending an event supervised by the hirer are made aware of the emergency exits from their location.

Note that the emergency light fittings in the spaces to the rear of the main hall are “maintained” so that light is always available to anyone using those spaces as an escape route.

### **8.4 Use of furniture**

8.4.1 Unless agreed specifically prior to use, the user of the facility shall return all furniture to the place and state it was in. Diagrams are available to show the most common layout used in the church.

8.4.2 Note particularly the maximum heights for stacking chairs: generally two high for the “church” chairs used in the church and both the upper and lower rooms; two high for the fabric covered chairs with arms; and four high for the plastic chairs in the hall.

8.4.3 Trolleys are provided for storage and transport of the folding-leg tables. Care should be exercised when opening or closing the legs and when returning tables to the trolleys. Because of stability, rather than weight, the larger tables would normally be better handled by two people.

### **8.5 AV Equipment**

8.5.1 Users are permitted to bring their own AV equipment for use on the premises (see also 8.2.2) and deploy screens where fitted. Note that the fitted screen in the church area is of the “back-projection” type and only for use with the church AV equipment.

8.5.2 The AV desk in the church will not be made accessible unless by prior specific arrangement. Normally, the sound system will be left so that a casual user can employ two stand microphones without having to gain access to the desk, but this facility should always be specifically requested.

## **9. Hirers’ responsibility**

9.1 Hirers are responsible for the safety of their people when within church premises. In order to do this, hirers are expected to be familiar with this document and to have prepared a risk assessment for their own specific activities, taking into account any relevant information provided here.

9.2 Hirers are responsible for always having someone on the premises (the hirer’s responsible person) who is familiar with the fire escape routes and is capable of taking charge of an evacuation. This includes allocating an assembly area, should there be an evacuation. The church has designated the market Place, opposite the church Market Place doors, as an area fit for most purposes.

9.3 Except for small groups of regular attendees, it is recommended that groups are given a reminder of the fire escape routes appropriate to the room they are occupying, on each occasion that they meet. The hirer’s responsible person should check that all routes are clear and fully accessible for the people in the group.

9.4 If the fire alarm sounds, the building should be evacuated immediately, unless the cause of the alarm is obvious and can be seen to represent no danger to those in the building. The fire brigade should be contacted immediately by dialling 999. In the unexpected event that none of the members of the group has a mobile ‘phone, use the ‘phone in the wooden box in the coffee lounge area, just outside the double doors to the main hall.

9.5 Fire extinguishers are provided throughout the building and may be used to tackle very small fires, but under no circumstances should tackling a fire take precedence over evacuating the building of the majority of occupants.

9.6 If a hiring group sees any risk related to the building that they do not think has been addressed by the church, they should inform a church officer or caretaker. If the hire is “without caretaker” and no church officer is in the building, please write a note and place it in the church letter box (beside the Chapel Street main entrance). If the church is unaware, the problem cannot be sorted.

Assessment reviewed and revised 16<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Ron Sinclair