SILVERDALE METHODIST CHURCH

Keeping people safe

Fire risk assessment

Part 1 – Information about Our Church

A Our Church Details

Name of church:

SILVERDALE METHODIST CHURCH

Address:

EARL STREET, SILVERDALE, NEWCASTLE STAFFS, ST5 6NF.

Responsible person:

LEE LEIGHTON

The Church Council of:

SILVERDALE METHODIST CHURCH, in the CIRCUIT of NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

In the District of:

CHESTER & STOKE-ON-TRENT

Date:

19/2/24

Suggested review date:

19/2/25

(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.

Although the legislation only requires the responsible person to record the arrangements if five or more persons are employed, we have decided to do so anyway in order to demonstrate our commitment to ensuring the safety of everyone who uses our church and to ensure that everyone is aware of our fire safety arrangements.

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 (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):

pp. REV. CHRISTINE LEGGE (Chair of Church Council)

Role(s):

MINISTER

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

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005: **www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/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/publications/fire-safety-risk-assessment-small-and-medium-places-of-assembly**

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/freedownloadspublications.html**

C General Information about our Church

THE BUILDING:

Number of floors:

1

Floor area (approximate overall size in square metres):

20

(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:

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, and then the Side Room, which can both be partitioned-off to form two separate area's. However, it must be noted that for the majority of the time, the two sections remain open as one large combined area. At the back, there is then the Kitchen, Toilets, and the Chill-Out Area/Store Room/Vestry Store - noting that there is a Fire Exit in the Kitchen, and a Fire Exit Window in the Vestry. Other than that, there is the Office at the very front of the building. There are plenty of Fire Exits, clearly marked, throughout.

(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:

The church is built of stone/brick with a roof constructed of mineralised felt on timber. The floor is of solid construction covered, primarily, with carpet tiles, although other forms of covering are prevalent.

(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:

It is vast & varied - yes, with a regular pattern, but used through the many Outreach Activities that we do on a regular basis, and then other "specials" that we hold too! For reference, visit www.silverdalemethodistchurch.org.uk to see an exhaustive list of ACTIVITIES, and also check the CALENDAR Page to view what is happening & when!

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:

impossible to say, because of the vastness of what we do - but we will use the no. of 35

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

impossible to say, especially when incorporating Funerals too - but we will use the no. of 75

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

impossible to say, because of the vastness of what we do - but we will use the no. of 10

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:

A whole array of people attend, at varying times - and the nature of what we do, and how we do it, and who we are, means that there will always be someone who ensures that those requiring help to evacuate would indeed receive it.

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:

Children do attend, yes - and it all depends on the Activity as to where they will be "housed" - most of the time, for their "own" activities, they are all together, in the main body of the building that is always kept opened-up. Due to the nature of what we do and how we do it, our Fire Procedure can still be followed, and the Fire Regulations upheld, at all times.

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

N/A - there are times, of course, such as when people are in the Kitchen - but the majority of the time, there are always a no. of people in the building - and because the building is of the nature that it is, it means that there is no massive risk, because we are all within reach of each other, and close enough to hear "the shout".

(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:

N/A

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

(see Mick Shuff. - he can provide the answer)

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

(see Mick Shuff. - he can provide the answer)

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

(see John Glover - he can provide the answer)

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

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

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

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

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

The building is of sufficient size, and set-up, for "a shout" to be feasible - the notification of a fire would be issued, to every room wherever people were present - the make-up of our building allows for this to be satisfactory.

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

Chubb - see Mick Shuff. for details of the last inspection, or Certificate on Notice Board

(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 ✓ No

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 ✓ No

(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 ✓ No

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 ✓ No

This is addressed under the arrangements for Fire Safety Management.

Training and Evacuation Drills

Are regular periodic evacuation drills carried out? Yes ✓ No

(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 ✓ No

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 No N/A ✓

Are records kept for tests of the fire alarm system in a log book or similar document? Yes No N/A ✓

Are records kept of evacuation drills in a log book or similar document? Yes ✓ No

Are records kept of fire safety training in a log book or similar document? Yes ✓ No

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.

very varied, and regularly - all as detailed previously, and as described and scheduled on our Website, www.silverdalemethodistchurch.org.uk

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

We do not have an automatic Fire Detection System, but, in view of the nature of the building, we are confident that, when the building is occupied (and we are only concerned with safety of people and not the protection of the building), a fire would be detected almost immediately by persons either smelling or seeing smoke, and raising the alarm by shouting "Fire", in accordance with our Fire Action Notice.

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

with direction from the Leadership Team, and other relevant attendee's, they will be directed to the nearest possible Fire Exit

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

quite easily, due to the nature and construction of the building - and because the building holds lots of equipment - etc.,

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.

not very likely

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:

- [x] **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:

- [x] **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 / Likelihood of fire	Slight harm	Moderate harm	Extreme harm
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:

..a TRIVIAL RISK - so we need to monitor it accordingly, and regularly, to ensure all that we do is still OK, and relevant.

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

We do not consider there is a need for a permanent emergency lighting system. Rechargeable torches are always available for use by stewards to assist in the evacuation of the church.

Manual Fire Alarm

In view of the nature of the building, and its use as detailed above, we consider that there is no need to provide any form of manual fire alarm system. In the event of a fire, a warning will be given by shouting "Fire", and stewards will guide persons to a place of safety.

Automatic Fire Detection System

We consider that our arrangements are sufficient to provide for the safety of persons in the church when it is occupied, and that there is not a need to provide any form of fire detection overnight when the building is unoccupied. We have therefore decided that there is no need to install any form of automatic fire detection system.

This policy was agreed at the Church Council held on 19th February 2024.

Signed,

Rev. Christine Legge (Chair of the Church Council Meeting)