

St John the Baptist, Flitton

Fire Risk Assessment

Address : High St, Flitton, Bedford

Assessor: Clare Butler Ellis, 6, Flitton Hill, Flitton, Bedford MK45 5EA 01525 861496

Date of assessment: June 2017

Date of review: June 2019

Fire Safety Policy

It is the policy of the PCC of St John the Baptist, Flitton to protect all persons including employees, volunteers, contractors and members of the public from potential injury and damage to their health which might arise when in or near the church.

The PCC will provide and maintain safe and healthy conditions, equipment and systems of work for all employees and volunteers and provide such information, training and supervision as they need for this purpose.

The PCC will give a high level of commitment to health and safety and will comply with all statutory requirements.

It is also the policy of the PCC to protect the building, which is of historic significance and very valuable to the local community, from damage by fire.

Property Description

St John the Baptist, Flitton, is a small village church. It is a Grade 1 listed building. The construction is stone, with a wooden roof and some internal wooden partition walls. The furnishings are also wooden. There are four separate areas: nave and chancel; vestry which is partitioned off from the rest of the church by wooden walls; bell tower, which has two upper floors; the mausoleum (owned and managed by English Heritage).

There are two entrances/exits, both on the North face of the church, one in the nave and one in the chancel.

Occupancy

The church is used regularly on Sunday mornings for worship, Tuesday evenings for choir practice, Wednesday evenings for bell ringing practice. There are many other ad-hoc usages, including special services, weddings, baptisms, funerals, cleaning parties, flower arranging. It is also open to provide access to the mausoleum on the first Sunday of each month across the spring and summer.

The numbers present on any occasion vary from one or two, up to around 100 for some services. A typical attendance would be 20 – 30.

Fire warning system

There is no automatic fire warning system. A hand bell is located near the door in the nave for this purpose.

There is no emergency lighting in the event of a power failure. A torch will be located next to the fire bell

How a fire could start

1. Electrical fault. Electricity powers the lights, organ and sound system, two radiant heaters mounted on the wall in the chancel, a number of heaters in the bell tower used only for bellringing, a heater in the vestry that is rarely used, kettle and urn for refreshments. All portable appliances will be PA tested regularly. The electricity circuit is checked every 5 years. It was last checked by Moir and Son, Ampthill on 4/7/2014, and is due to be checked again by 4/7/2019. Electrical items are not to be left switched on while the church is unoccupied.
2. Gas heaters. The main heating is provided by five wall-mounted radiant gas heaters. These were newly installed in September 2016 and will be serviced on a 4-yearly basis. The heaters are not to be left on while the church is unoccupied.
3. Candles. Candles are lit at most services and large numbers of candles are occasionally used for special services. No combustible material will be placed near candles, and all candles will be placed in secure holders. Burning candles will not be left unattended.

A specific risk assessment for the Christingle Service, where the congregation hold lighted candles, will be conducted and made available, based on the guidelines provided by the Children's Society.

4. Lights above the storage cupboards in the bell tower. A small fire was started in April 2015 when some boxes were placed on the storage cupboards touching the lights which are above the cupboards, and the heat set the boxes on fire. No storage of anything is now permitted on top of these cupboards and there is a notice to this effect in the bell tower.

Who could be affected by fire

All members of the congregation could be affected by fire, particularly those who are less mobile and those with poor eyesight or hearing who may be unaware of a fire alarm; also any contractors, volunteers, visitors or employees of the Church of England.

Training

While it is not possible to conduct a fire drill with the congregation, the procedure for dealing with a fire and evacuating the church will be 'walked through' with new members of the PCC and a reminder for existing PCC members will be given on a regular basis (every two years)

Escape routes

The two escape routes are the two doors on the North side of the church, in the nave and chancel.

Fire extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are located:

1. Powder fire extinguisher near the font
2. Foam fire extinguisher in the back pew next to the vestry door
3. CO₂ fire extinguisher by the chancel door
4. CO₂ fire extinguisher in the bell tower

They are checked on a two-yearly basis by CFS, and were last inspected in March 2017.

Two fire blankets are being purchased: one to be kept in the bell tower and one in the chancel to deal with very small fires, such as from candles.

Fire action plan

On discovery of a fire, any members of the PCC present will be responsible for evacuating the church and alerting the fire service.

If no PCC members are present, the leader of the activity (e.g. Choir leader, Bell-ringing leader, worship leader) or the keyholder (i.e. the person responsible for unlocking the church) will take responsibility.

Assistance should be given to the elderly and the less able to ensure that they leave the building promptly and safely.

No one will attempt to extinguish a fire unless they have the necessary knowledge, it is safe to do so, and the church has been evacuated.

The notice of Fire Orders is given below.

ON HEARING THE FIRE BELL BEING RUNG, OR BEING INFORMED OF A FIRE IN THE BUILDING

- Leave the building immediately by the nearest available exit, either the chancel door or the main door in the nave.

STAY CALM

CLOSE ALL DOORS (to stop fire spreading)

- Give the necessary assistance to people to ensure that they can leave safely
- Take care on the church path which may be slippery.
- Proceed to the assembly point and report to the person in charge of the evacuation. Do not return to the building for any reason until authorised to do so.

ON DISCOVERING A FIRE (no matter how small):

- Raise the alarm by
 - Ringing the fire bell, which is a hand bell located to the left of the main door to the nave
 - Informing all those present in the church and mausoleum of the fire and instruct them to leave
- Only try to extinguish the fire using the nearest appropriate fire extinguisher if it is safe and you have been trained to do so.
- Call the fire brigade by dialling 999 giving the following details of your location:

**FLITTON CHURCH
HIGH STREET
FLITTON
BEDFORD
M45 5EJ**

ASSEMBLY POINT:

Outside the Church Hall