

# Lower Earley Baptist Church

To be a community where Jesus is encountered and lives are transformed

## Fire Risk Assessment

Initial assessment undertaken by Ruth Wilson Church Secretary on behalf of the Church Trustees

Date 11 October 2016

Updated 31 March 2024

Ruth Wilson Health & Safety Officer & Dorothea Lowman Church Secretary

Review date 31 March 2025 (ordinarily reviewed annually)

Lower Earley Baptist Church

Maiden Place

Lower Earley

Reading

RG6 3HE

## Trustee's 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 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 the church, we understand that the responsible person is the person(s) who have control of the premises and we deem this to be the current Trustees (deacons) of Lower Earley Baptist Church. We have also appointed the Trustees 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 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.

### **Trustees of Lower Earley Baptist Church**

Russell Howes, Minister ..... date .....

Julian Rowlandson, Secretary..... date.....

Stephen Newton, Treasurer..... date.....

Jacques Zeeman, Trustee..... date.....

Rebecca Hogg, Trustee..... date.....

Jon Lloyd, Trustee ..... date .....



## Basic construction details

The building is constructed of rendered block with a tiled roof. The main meeting room is a steel frame and the remaining parts of the building are pitched timber frame. The flooring in the main meeting room is block and beam covered with carpet tiles. The rest of the building is a suspended timber floor covered with carpet tiles or hard flooring.

## Use of the church

All the rooms in the building are used on a Sunday morning and occasionally on Sunday evenings for services and for children's groups. Various rooms in the building are used for church groups during the week including Parent and toddler group, primary and secondary school aged children's groups, bible study and prayer groups, a women's group and a men's group and an occasional café on Saturday mornings.

The building is also used for special events and services at various times throughout the year.

Rooms in the building are also let out commercially to outside groups with fire safety during the let being the hirers responsibility as outlined in the hirer's agreement - including groups that may use the church free of charge such as REInspired, other Christian charities or evangelical churches.

## People at risk

There are around 120 people of varying ages who attend a normal Sunday morning service. Around 200 attend special services such as at Christmas. There are 4 paid employees at the Church- our minister, Russell Howes, the cleaner - currently Mrs Susan Olembo, Church Administrator - currently Mr Jesujuwa Ojumu and Mulberry Bush Coordinator - currently Mrs Chrissy van der Merwe. Many of the church members volunteer in various capacities throughout the week, such as helpers at parent and toddler groups, café volunteers, young people's group leaders/helpers.

## Occupants at special risk from fire

There is currently 1 wheelchair user and 2 or 3 other people with limited mobility, at least 1 person with significant sight impairment or who are registered blind, and 2 people with learning difficulties who attend the Sunday services and other groups during the week. Some of these also attend a bible study group held in the building once a week.

There are approximately 35 pre-schoolers and primary aged children who attend on a Sunday morning with their parents plus 15-20 secondary school aged children. They would all need assistance in evacuating the building. There are also some members of the congregation who are hard of hearing who may need assistance.

No area of the church is regarded as remote.

During the week approximately 40 parents/carers and their children attend the Parent and toddler group (for 1.5hrs on one morning) and approximately 25 children attend the primary school aged children's group (1 hour in early evening once a week). About 15 secondary school aged young people attend a youth group for 1.5 hours every two weeks on average.

There may be times during the week when the minister, cleaner, Church Administrator or another key holder are on their own in the building.

## Background Information

There have been no fires or related incidents at the Church building since it opened. The building is surrounded mostly by residential housing and car parking. Next door is the local Community Centre and Social club which is occupied most of the time during the day and in the evenings. There have been no incidents of arson in buildings locally as far as we are aware.

## Potential Fire Hazards

### Electrical

Is the fixed electrical system inspected and tested by a competent person at least every 5 years? **Yes**

Name of competent person David Tatham

**Date of last inspection 20/04/2018**

Are all portable electrical appliances including those belonging to outside bodies annually PAT tested?

**Yes**

Name of tester PATPALS John Gray PAT Tester 7 Beech Rd, Purley on Thames, RG7 8DR

**Date of last test June 2023**

Are any electrical items that fail the testing removed immediately from the church?

**Yes**

Is the use of trailing leads and multipoint adaptors restricted as far as possible and subject to control?

**Yes**

### Heating

Are all portable heaters included in the PAT testing programme and kept away from any combustible materials? (*Oil filled radiators only in use.*)

**Yes**

Are gas boilers subject to an annual maintenance contract with an approved GAS Safe registered contractor?

**Yes**

Name of contractor: Crowthorne Heating 4a Dukes Ride Crowthorne. RG45 6LT Tel: 01344 772397

**Date of last inspection 30/01/2024**

Do you ensure that all heating appliances are kept clear of combustible materials?

Yes

## Arson

Have you considered the risk of arson and malicious attacks?

Yes

Is the storage of combustible materials and flammables such as petrol for lawn mowers kept to a minimum and in a secure place where risk to people is minimised?

*Yes - Kept in locked storage outside the building.*

Have you removed anything which could be used by an arsonist such as matches/lighters and candles?

*No - Matches & Lighters are stored away in kitchen and office drawers.*

## Cooking

If you have a kitchen or servery in the church are measures in place to prevent fire as a result of cooking

Yes

*Limited number of people allowed in the kitchen. Children are not allowed in the kitchen. No microwave in the kitchen.*

*Those permitted to cook food is always supervised by those with Food Hygiene Level 2 certificates who are also trained in fire safety awareness.*

If kitchen equipment includes filters or ductwork are they cleaned regularly?

*Yes - Cooker hood removable filters are washed monthly (if the kitchen is being used for food preparation). A log is in place for this. No commercial kitchen equipment in the kitchen.*

## Lightning

If the church has a lightning conductor is it inspected by a competent, specialist Lightning Engineer at recommended intervals – at least every 4 years – ideally annually

Yes

Name of contractor Mike Dicker

Date of last inspection 07/05/2021

## Combustible materials

Has combustible material been removed from the church as far as possible?

*Yes - All rubbish is removed promptly.*

Are all exits and escape routes kept clear of combustible materials?

Yes

## 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

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

Are both contractors and volunteers aware of safety arrangements including provision of fire extinguishers and escape routes during building works?

Yes

## Our Fire Protection Arrangements

Are there a suitable number of exits from the building?

**Yes** - *There are lots of exit doors from all rooms ensuring people can leave the building very quickly*

Do the exit doors open in the direction of escape

**Yes**

Can exit doors be opened easily?

**Yes** - *All have turn knobs to open.*

Is the travel distance acceptable where there is only a single escape route?

**Yes**

Is the travel distance acceptable where there are alternative means of escape?

**Yes** - *There are less than 15 metres to exit the building from any room*

Are the means of escape suitable for persons with disabilities?

**Yes** - *All areas are level access including the fire escape route from the rear garden.*

Is an emergency escape lighting system installed?

**Yes**

Is it subject to regular testing?

Yes

Name of contractor Churches Fire Security Ltd Fire House Mayflower Close Chandler's Ford SO53  
4AR Tel: 0370 608 4350

Intervals of testing and date of last full annual maintenance inspection

Twice yearly testing – **last test 11/12/2023**

Are Fire Exit signs displayed?

**Yes**

Are Fire Safety Signs and Notices displayed?

**Yes**

## Our Fire detection, warning and extinguisher equipment

Is there a manually operated fire alarm?

**No**

Is there an electric, manually operated fire alarm with 'push call point' panels to operate the alarm?

Yes

Is it tested on a regular basis?

**Yes**

Name of contractor Churches Fire Security Ltd Fire House Mayflower Close Chandler's Ford SO53  
4AR Tel: 0370 608 4350

**Date of last maintenance visit 11/12/2023**

Is there an automatic fire detection system and alarm which incorporates smoke detectors to activate the alarm in the event of a fire

**Yes**

Is it subject to maintenance contract

**Yes**

Name of contractor Churches Fire

**Date of last inspection 11/12/2023**

Are suitable and sufficient portable fire extinguishers in place?

**Yes**

Are they subject to an annual maintenance contract

**Yes**

Name of contractor RES Fire Protection engineers

**Date of last inspection 19/03/2024**

# Fire Safety Management

## General arrangements

Is there a suitable Emergency Plan for the building **Yes**  
Can the Fire Service be summoned easily **Yes**

Are persons nominated to assist in case of fire?  
**Yes - Fire Marshalls, Responsible Key Holder, Trustees and Nominated individuals**

Is there a procedure to give persons with disabilities appropriate assistance in evacuating the building?  
**No - Fire Marshalls/relatives will aid as necessary**

## Training and Evacuation Drills

Are regular periodic evacuations carried out?  
**Yes - Last drill carried out: Sunday, 13 November 2022**

Is there fire safety training for persons nominated to assist in case of fire?  
**Yes - Fire Warden Training completed by Church Secretary, Co-ordinator of Toddler Group and planned for church administrator, some Trustees and nominated persons**

## Record Keeping

Are records kept for tests of the emergency lighting system in a log **Yes**

Are records kept for tests of the fire alarm system in a log? **Yes**

Are records kept of evacuation drills in a log? **Yes**

Are records kept of fire safety training in a log?  
**Yes - All logs to be stored on the leader's area on the Church website**

## Our Fire Risk Assessment

### Occupation

- Our primary aim is to ensure the safety of people, but we have also put in place measures to protect the building through the fire detection and alarm system.
- Our normal congregation is relatively small and the building has excellent visibility throughout and many exit doors meaning the building can be evacuated quickly and easily in the event of fire.
- There are occasions when the church is full, sufficient trained stewards are in place to provide assistance.
- Smoking is not permitted on site and there are no hazardous activities.
- The rear garden is overlooked/surrounded by residential housing so a fire in the building whilst unoccupied is likely to be detected by neighbours quite quickly.

## Fire Detection

- We have an automatic fire detection system in place which is checked and maintained annually which should mean fire is detected very quickly.

## Escape

- The main body of the church has one large open area with no corridors or risk of congestion and 4 doors providing immediate means of escape.
- All other rooms except toilets, have good visibility around the building as there is a large number of windows and glass in all the doors. No rooms are off other rooms or down dark corridors. All rooms have an exit route clearly marked and visible.
- The high ceiling in the main sanctuary provides a large open space where smoke can be contained thus increasing the potential time for evacuation
- Escape routes around the outside of the building are kept clear at all times.

## Fire Load

- The fire load of the main sanctuary is low, mainly comprising chairs with fire retardant seats and metal frames and limited hardwood furniture (communion table and sound desk). Instruments and PA equipment is a PAT tested annually to reduce risk.
- Candles are only used occasionally – during Advent, Christmas usually. When in use they are clearly visible, kept away from any combustible materials and are monitored closely whilst alight and there is little risk of a fire starting or developing undetected.
- There are virtually no combustible linings that would aid the risk of fire spread.

## Likelihood

- There has not been any fire related incident in the building since it opened.
- The rear access to the property is kept secured to reduce possibility of arson.

## Overall Fire Risk Assessment

Based on the factors set out in the Fire Risk Assessment above the overall Fire Risk Assessment for Lower Earley Baptist Church is as follows:

Potential consequences of fire	Slight harm	Outbreak of fire is unlikely to result in serious injury or death
	Moderate harm	Outbreak of fire could foreseeably result in 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
Likelihood of fire	Low	Unusually low likelihood of fire as a result of negligible

		potential sources of ignition
	Medium	Normal fire hazards 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

<b>Potential consequences of fire</b>	Slight harm	Moderate harm	Extreme harm
<b>Likelihood of fire</b>			
Low	Trivial risk	Tolerable risk	Moderate risk
Medium	Tolerable risk	Moderate risk	Substantial risk
High	Moderate risk	Substantial risk	Intolerable risk

## Our Arrangements for Fire Safety

- We have considered the possibility of a fire actually happening based on our experience at LEBC
- Emergency lighting is in place and is checked annually
- An automatic fire alarm system with break glass points is in situ and checked annually
- Exit doors all open outwards for ease of exit and are clearly marked. Stewards will assist persons with limited mobility and are trained accordingly

## For major services and events there is a policy in place

- Persons with disabilities who require assistance to evacuate will be located close to an exit door. Stewards will assist them as required.
- Stewards will be responsible for directing people to nearest exits and assembly point
- At the start of the service/event, an announcement will be made setting out the arrangements for evacuation
- The minister or person leading the service/event will make the announcement to evacuate if required and to follow the direction of the stewards
- The assembly point is marked clearly on the Fire evacuation notices and stewards will be responsible for directing people to it.

## Stewards and training

The PA/AV desk operators and church trustees will all undertake fire warden duties. For major services additional stewards will be nominated from those trained. In addition, all key holders will undertake fire safety training.

All those with fire warden responsibilities will be trained. Training will include:

- How to raise the alarm and contact the fire service

- Location and use of fire extinguishers
- How to evacuate the church
- How to help the evacuation of persons with disabilities
- The location of the Assembly Point
- Special requirements for major services or events and location of 'Reserved' signage
- Knowledge of the Fire Action Notice

## Record Keeping

Logs will be maintained for the following:

- Fire extinguisher and maintenance visits
- Boiler maintenance visits
- Fixed electrical system inspections and tests
- Portable appliance testing (PAT)
- Lightning conductor system inspections and tests
- Evacuation drills

## Action Plan

Action to be taken	Target completion date	Person responsible
Arrange annual fire extinguisher test	March 2024	Jesujuwa Ojumu
Set dates for Fire warden training for new trustees, stewards and key holders	30 May 2024	Church Secretary & Trustees
Evacuation Drill to be arranged	May 2024	Church Secretary & Trustees
PAT annual test to be arranged	June 2024	Jesujuwa Ojumu

## **Appendices**

1. Fire Evacuation Plan
2. Fire Training
3. Fire Notice Photo
4. Fire Extinguishing Equipment

## **LEBC Fire Emergency Plan**

When there is a fire, people in the building will be made aware of it by the person who has detected the fire shouting "Fire!" and/or by the sound of the fire alarm.

Anybody who detects a fire should shout "Fire!" and activate the fire alarm by pushing the black button at the nearest "fire call point".

The responsible lead fire warden will contact the fire and rescue services by dialling 999.

## **LEBC FIRE EVACUATION PLAN**

If the fire alarm sounds everyone must leave the building in a calm manner as quickly as possible by the nearest exit and proceed to the Assembly Point (located outside the LEBC premises, at the top of the car park, right hand corner).

The Lead Fire Marshal (a key holder or to whom the key holder has delegated the responsibility for this occasion) will instruct the fire marshals to take on their responsibilities.

The overriding imperative is the safety of lives, and everyone exiting the building in the event of a fire activation must be the main priority.

Fire Marshals are deacons, some trained members of the Welcome Team/TechTeam and other specifically nominated and trained persons.

### **Fire Marshall Responsibilities:**

1. Manage the safe evacuation of the building, pointing people to the nearest exit and lead them to the assembly point.
2. Check all areas are clear of people, including the toilets.
3. As you leave rooms close windows and doors, if safe to do so, to contain fire.
4. Assist those with reduced mobility or other needs as appropriate

5. One team member to assist creche team to evacuate all the children safely.
6. Ensure children's names are checked against the registers for their groups at the assembly point as appropriate.
7. Assist Sunday Club leaders to ensure children are handed back safely to their parents at the assembly point once their names have been checked on the register.
8. Ensure the yellow Fire Marshall vests go back on the stewards' chairs of the church or returned to the cupboard in the foyer after everybody has been sent off.

**In the case of major services or events:**

At the start of the service /event, an announcement will be made setting out the arrangements for evacuation.

Persons with disabilities who may require assistance to evacuate will be located close to an exit door.

The minister or person leading the service/event will make the announcement to evacuate if required and to follow the directions of the stewards (trained to be fire marshalls).

Stewards will be responsible for:

- Directing people to the nearest exits and the Assembly Point. The assembly point is marked clearly on the Fire Action Notice at various exit doors. **The Assembly Point** is in the car park, left out of the church gates and at the top of the road away from the church building - leaving the car park clear outside the church for emergency vehicles.

- Checking all areas are clear of people, including the toilets.
- Closing windows and doors, if safe to do so, to contain fire.
- Assisting those with reduced mobility or other needs as appropriate.
- Instructing people to remain at the assembly point until the all clear has been given.

## **Key Escape Routes**

The three doors leading to the courtyard are the main escape routes. Another escape route is a door leading to the garden and once in the garden turning to the **right** and exit the premises through the two gates along the right side of the building.

## **Fire Fighting**

There are fire extinguishers at various locations in the building and a fire blanket in the kitchen. These should only be used by those having had training in using them.

## **FIRE TRAINING**

The minister, Church Administrator, church secretary and Mulberry Bush Group Coordinator will be trained as fire wardens by doing an online fire warden course and necessary refresher courses. Trustees and other appointed persons will be given basic fire training arranged by the church secretary and/or a deacon/trustee. The annual review of the LEBC Fire Safety Policy in February will also be the time to ask staff and appointed people to refresh their training.

## **LEBC FIRE TRAINING**

### **1. How to raise the alarm:**

Shout "Fire" and go to the nearest "Fire Call Point". Push the black point in the middle until the alarm starts to sound.

Read the attached document "Location of Fire Call Points at LEBC"

( possible activity : each participant has a plan of LEBC. Have a look at the plan and mark with a little cross all the locations of a Fire Call Points)

## **2. How to contact the Fire services:**

Remember the fire alarm at LEBC does NOT alert the Fire services to a fire at LEBC. Dial 999 and ask for the Fire services. They may want some more information like the location of LEBC: Maiden Place, Lower Earley, RG6 3HE, next to the Community Centre. They may want a contact number. Have your mobile number at hand.

## **3. Location and use of fire extinguishers:**

Please read the document “Fire Extinguishing Equipment at LEBC”. Next time you are in the build go through the premises and locate the equipment mentioned. Practical fire extinguisher training will be offered separately.

Only **if it is safe** to do so tackle a **small** fire and only when it is in its very early stages **Never** tackle a fire:

- If it is spreading beyond the spot where it started.
- If it is bigger than a small waste paper bin
- If you can't fight the fire with your back to an escape exit.
- If the fire can block your only escape.
- If you don't have adequate fire-fighting equipment.

Make sure you choose the correct firefighting equipment and know how to use the equipment correctly.

## **4. How to evacuate the church:**

Please read the attached document “Evacuation Plan”.

There is the possibility that it is a false alarm. While the evacuation starts one fire marshal (and possibly with support from Michael Tapp and Jacques Zeeman if they are present) is to the best of his/her ability and if safe to do so:

- check the fire panel for details
- check visually all rooms for smoke or flames
- if safe, put hand on the electrical cupboard door to check for heat
- call Fire Brigade if in any doubt as to whether there is a fire or not and continue with evacuation.
- if it can be established that a False Alarm has occurred then silence alarm and attempt to reset system. If it can be reset the evacuation can then stop. If, however, the reset fails then the event must be abandoned and a call made to Churches Fire on 0370 608 4350 by a key holder.

#### **5. Special requirements for mayor services/events:**

Please find the details in the “Evacuation Plan “document.

#### **6. Knowledge of the Fire Action Notice:**

Please familiarize yourself with the content of the “Fire Action Notice” and when in the building try to find all the doors with “Fire Action Notices” next to them or on them.

