**Draft Template for Emergency Planning**

This is intended to be a simple, draft template for parishes to implement emergency response planning for a variety of different possibilities. Your Emergency Plan should be the work of an Emergency Planning team in your organization, either the Vestry/governing board, or a special subcommittee and task force set up.

At the outset, be mindful and aware of how these conversations can be difficult ones. It can be anxiety producing and uncomfortable to talk about and imagine violence in our churches. There are ways in which these discussions can be triggering for persons with PTSD or who have experienced trauma. Yet like talking about death, or systemic racism, as a church we are called to be faithful, trust in God, and ask the Holy Spirit to be with us as we engage difficult conversations.

1. **Make sure important constituencies are on your Emergency Planning team**: Vestry/governing board members, ushers, staff persons, Sunday School volunteers, choir/music ministry, etc.

2. **Take advantage of local resources:** Ask the local Community Services Officer from the Police Department (or equivalent in your local area) to come to the property and do a walk-through. Contact the Fire Department and schedule a fire drill.

3. **Define the different kinds of scenarios you want to have a plan in place for**. This may change depending on your context; for instance, if your parish is located near a nuclear power plant; if your building is connected to natural gas, what to do in case of a gas leak; and so on.

4. **For each scenario, determine actions to be taken and who will take those actions.**

5. **Be sure to train people involved on a regular basis:** often there is turnover among ushers, Vestry members, Sunday School volunteers, etc. A plan is only as good if people are properly trained.

6. **Make sure you know where things are located**.

--**Keep important documents in a waterproof, fireproof safe and keep a copy stored offsite** (see the Episcopal Relief and Development suggested checklist). Either scan documents digitally and store them online, or make physical copies to be stored offsite. In the Episcopal Diocese of New York, the diocesan offices will store important documents as an offsite backup.

--**Make a map** of where fire extinguishers, fire alarms, first aid kits, wheelchairs, defibrillators, and any other important safety resources are located. Post these in high-trafficked areas. Check regularly that these resources are updated and in working order.

**Additional Resources:** This is just one version of a possible emergency plan. There are a number of different templates, we encourage you to look at others and see if one is more relevant to your context. Here are some important links:

**Episcopal Relief & Development Checklist on important documents to keep securely stored,** and checklist for important local and diocesan contact persons in case of emergency: <https://www.episcopalrelief.org/resource/bronze-level-preparedness-planning-guide-basic-level/>

**A more detailed overview on Emergency Planning from the Diocese of Southern Ohio:**

<https://episcopaliansinconnection.org/emergency-preparedness/>

**A template from the Diocese of Texas**: <https://www.epicenter-prepare.org/_files/ugd/3c904f_e1c49616d5154b8f89a5042b7f01ac02.pdf>

# *Example of an Emergency Plan*

***The following is a short, straightforward Emergency Plan drawn from FEMA and Episcopal Relief and Development resources. If you wish to use this as a template, you can change the necessary details.***

# St. John’s Episcopal Church Emergency Procedures Manual

1. **Introduction and Overview**

This manual is to provide guidelines and outline best practices for different emergency situations which may arise during worship or other events at St. John’s Episcopal Church.

While we realize some of the possibilities are quite rare, we feel it best to be prepared. We take seriously our commitment to care for and be a safe place for those who gather within our walls.

# Medical Emergency

**In case of a medical emergency:**

1. If a medical emergency occurs during worship, the Rector or the worship leader will make the determination whether to pause worship or whether the situation warrants canceling and clearing the sanctuary. Either the Rector/Worship Leader or an Usher will make sure that 9-1-1 has been called. The Rector/Worship Leader will make an announcement to request anyone with medical training to make themselves available.

If the Rector/Worship Leader determines the sanctuary should be cleared, there are two gathering points:

* 1. the swingset on the playground
  2. the corner of Jarves & Main, allowing exit through the handicapped ramp for persons with mobility concerns.

If the sanctuary needs to be cleared, the Rector/Worship Leader will ask a Worship Assistant to make sure the other portions of the church building are notified, including the kitchen and basement/Sunday School areas. Before exiting the church, the Rector/Worship Leader will walk through the building to ensure all persons have evacuated if it is safe to do so.

# Fire Alarm

**In the church sanctuary:**

If any volunteer or church member has reason to believe there may be a fire, there are manual fire alarm stations in the church building. The fire alarm in the church is connected to the Sandwich Fire Department.

Should the fire alarm in the church building go off, either triggered manually or otherwise:

The Rector/Worship Leader will inform the congregation that the church building will be evacuated. Ushers will show people to the exits.

There are two gathering points:

* 1. the swingset on the playground
  2. the corner of Jarves & Main, allowing exit through the handicapped ramp for persons with mobility concerns.

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Before exiting the church, if it is safe to do so, the Rector/Worship Leader will walk through the building to ensure all persons have evacuated.

If the Fire Department determines the building is safe to re-enter, the Rector/Worship Leader will determine whether to continue any church programs or gatherings.

# Fire Alarm in 161 Main Street or 163 Main Street:

There is no fire system connected to the Sandwich Fire Department in these buildings. If a smoke detector goes off, and if there is a determination that this is because of potential fire:

1. A staff person on duty will call Sandwich Fire Department either from a landline, or, if this is not safe, by cell phone.
2. Staff will inform all persons in the building to evacuate. Gathering points will be: the swingset on the playground

the corner of Jarves & Main

If it is safe to do so, a staff person will ensure that all persons have evacuated the building. If the Fire Department determines the building is safe to re-enter, a staff person will determine whether any church programs or gatherings will continue.

# Weather Emergency

St. John’s Church communicates information about the need to cancel church programs through email, the church Facebook page, the church website, and through a telephone push notification system.

There may be times when unexpected weather opportunities emerge that do not allow for advance notification; for example, severe thunderstorms, flash floods, or tornadoes.

If there is a forecast for possible extreme weather, the Rector/Worship Leader and at least one usher will monitor the situation through their mobile phones, either from a weather application or by enabling severe weather warning notifications.

If an extreme event warning (not watch) is issued -- for instance a Tornado Warning -- the usher will inform the Rector/Worship Leader, or the Rector/Worship Leader will inform those present.

**Remember: A Watch indicates conditions exist for such an event; a Warning means that an extreme weather event has been confirmed nearby.**

**A Watch signals the needs for awareness, a Warning that precautions and actions to be taken.**

In the event of a Severe Thunderstorm Watch or Tornado Watch: persons will take shelter in the nearest basement or lower level area. Persons with mobility issues and unable to go to the basement will be directed to an area in the Parish Hall as far away as possible from any windows. When the Watch has officially been ended by the National Weather Service, the Rector/Worship Leader or staff person will determine whether to resume any church programs or meetings.

In the event of a Flash Flood Watch, persons will stay within the building until the Watch has been ended. When the Watch has officially been ended by the National Weather Service, the Rector/Worship Leader or senior staff person will determine whether to resume any church programs or meetings.

# Disruptive or Dangerous Person on Premises.

If there is a disruptive or potentially dangerous person on the premises, please call law enforcement and inform the nearest staff person or volunteer. Only staff who are trained in de-escalation and handling disruptive persons will address the situation until law enforcement arrives. Staff or a volunteer will inform you if there is a need to vacate the area with the disruptive person -- but if you feel the need to do so, use your own discretion and leave immediately if you feel the need.

# How to respond to an active shooter

While extremely rare, as part of ensuring the safety of our community and those who use our building, St. John’s clergy, staff, and volunteers have been trained in the following procedures for dealing with an active shooter.

Gunshots may initially sound like fireworks or a car backfiring. If you see someone with a weapon, or if you hear sounds like fireworks that do not stop, and/or occur at a time when they could not be fireworks, follow these guidelines.

The general best practices recommend the following responses, in this order:

# Run

# Hide

# Fight

1. **Run: Attempt to evacuate the premises.**

Be sure to:

* Have an escape route and plan in mind (KNOW where you are going)
* Evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow
* Leave your belongings behind
* Help others escape, if possible
* Prevent individuals from entering an area where the active shooter may be
* Keep your hands visible and empty (a cell phone may look like a weapon to law enforcement)
* Follow the instructions of any police officers
* Do not attempt to move wounded people
* Call 911 when you are safe

# Hide: if evacuating is not possible.

Your hiding place should:

* Be out of the active shooter’s view
* Provide protection if shots are fired (i.e., an office with a closed and locked door)
* Not trap you or restrict your options for movement (a dead end with no other possible exit) To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place:
* Lock the door
* Blockade the door with heavy furniture
* Silence your cell phone and/or pager
* Turn off any source of noise (i.e., radios, televisions)
* Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks)
* Remain quiet If evacuation and hiding out are not possible:
* Remain calm
* Dial 911, if possible, to alert police to the active shooter’s location
* If you cannot speak because shooter is nearby, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen
* Wait patiently until a uniformed police officer, or someone known to you, provides an "all clear."
* Unfamiliar voices may be an active shooter trying to lure you from safety
* Do not respond to voice commands until you can verify that they are being issued by a police officer or someone known to you.

1. **Fight: ONLY As a last resort, and ONLY when your life is in imminent danger**: Attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter by

* Acting as aggressively as possible
* Throwing items and improvising weapons
* Yelling
* Make a plan with others in the room about what you will do if a shooter enters.
* Make a total commitment to action and act as a team with others.
* Do whatever is necessary to survive the situation.

# When Law Enforcement Arrives:

Law enforcement’s purpose is to stop the active shooter as soon as possible. Officers will proceed directly to the area in which the last shots were heard. The first to arrive will not respond to injured persons.

* Officers may wear regular patrol uniforms or external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets, and other tactical equipment
* Officers may be armed with rifles, shotguns, handguns
* Officers may use pepper spray or tear gas to control the situation
* Officers may shout commands, and may push individuals to the ground for their safety How You should act:
* Remain calm, and follow officers’ instructions
* Put down any items in your hands (i.e., bags, jackets)
* Immediately raise hands and spread fingers
* Keep hands visible at all times
* Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as holding on to them for safety
* Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling
* Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction; proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises

Information to provide if you have it and if asked to law enforcement or 911:

* Location of the active shooter
* Number of shooters, if more than one
* Physical description of shooter/s
* Number and type of weapons held by the shooter/s
* Number of potential victims at the location

The first officers to arrive will not stop to help injured persons. Rescue teams comprised of additional officers and emergency medical personnel will follow the initial officers. These rescue teams will treat and remove any injured persons. They may also call upon able-bodied individuals to assist in removing the wounded from the premises.

Once you have reached a safe location or an assembly point, you will likely be held in that area by law enforcement until the situation is under control, and all witnesses have been identified and questioned.

# Do not leave until law enforcement authorities have instructed you to do so.

# E. Safeguarding Important Documents

The parish keeps important documents as outlined by the Episcopal Relief & Development checklist in a fireproof, waterproof safe.  We have also scanned these documents digitally and keep them stored online in a secure, cloud-based storage system.

# Appendix:

**Map of church with Exits, Fire Extinguishers, First Aid Kits, and defibrillators marked.**