

Fire Evacuation Plan

Catonsville United Methodist Church

6 Melvin Avenue

Catonsville, MD 21228

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SECTION 1: FIRE EVACUATION PLAN

Catonsville United Methodist Church

6 Melvin Avenue, Catonsville, MD 21228

PURPOSE

To protect the safety of all persons in the event of fire, smoke, or other conditions requiring evacuation of church facilities during worship services, meetings, and church activities.

We often have people in the building who require special handling during evacuation. This includes children and people with sight, hearing, or mobility limitations. This plan identifies actions to assure that all people can be evacuated quickly and safely.

The acronym “**S.A.V.E.**” is a memory tool to help recall fire evacuation steps.

S –

- **Save** anyone who is in immediate danger. We value lives over property.
- This is essentially **separating** the people from the problem and is accomplished by moving into the next smoke-free compartment or to the outside.

A –

- **Alert** someone (call 911) or activate the alarm.
- It should be understood that dispatch is already alerting stations while they are still talking to you and getting info.
- Someone should be designated to greet the fire department upon arrival especially if there is no visible smoke from the exterior.

V –

- **Ventilation** control. All doors and windows should be closed as quickly as possible (without compromising safety).
- Attempting to let the smoke out can actually feed the fire. Fire needs oxygen/air to exist.

E –

- **Exit** or **extinguish**.
 - **Extinguishment** should only be attempted after the first three steps are completed, if the fire is still contained to its point of origin, if you have been trained, and if you feel comfortable attempting to extinguish the fire.
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FIRE EVACUATION PLAN:

1. EMERGENCY ACTION

- **Activate the fire alarm** immediately if fire or smoke is detected.
 - **Call 911** from a safe location.
 - Do **not** attempt to fight the fire unless trained and it is safe to do so.
 - Evacuate immediately when the alarm sounds.
 - Stay calm, help others, evacuate quickly, and follow instructions.
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2. EVACUATION LEADERSHIP

- **Evacuation Coordinator:** Lead Pastor, designated staff member, or event leader
 - **Ushers / Greeters:**
 - Calmly direct people to the nearest exit
 - Keep aisles clear
 - Assist guests and visitors
 - **Children & Youth Leaders:**
 - Bring attendance lists
 - Escort children to the designated assembly area
 - Do not release children except to authorized caregivers
 - **Accessibility Assistants:**
 - Assist individuals with mobility, vision, or hearing needs
 - **Facilities Representative:**
 - Property Manager with knowledge of alarm panel & utility shutoffs locations, and building layout
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3. EVACUATION ROUTES

- Evacuate first, fight fires only if trained and safe.
 - Use the **nearest safe exit** as posted on evacuation maps.
 - Primary exits include:
 - Tower exit
 - Melvin Avenue exits – fewer stairs for those needing assistance
 - Social Hall exit
 - Asbury Hall exits
 - **Do not use elevators.**
 - Close doors behind you if time permits.
 - Ensure the Tower Stairwell doors and the Melvin Avenue exit doors are unlocked in order to allow entrance by fire department personnel.
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4. ASSEMBLY AREAS

- **Tower Exit, Melvin Avenue Exits, Nursery:** Melvin Avenue parking lot across street
 - **Asbury Hall exits, Social Hall exit:** Grassy area near Winters Lane
 - Remain at the assembly area until further instructions are given.
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5. ACCOUNTABILITY

- Children & Youth Leaders are responsible for confirming counts and stewardship until minors are released to parent/guardian.
 - Missing persons must be reported immediately to the Evacuation Coordinator or emergency responders.
 - Do not re-enter the building until cleared by the fire department.
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6. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Kitchen staff must shut off equipment **only if safe to do so**, then evacuate.
 - Fire extinguishers are for trained individuals only.
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7. TRAINING & REVIEW

- This plan will be reviewed annually by Trustees and Administrative Council.
 - Ushers, staff, and ministry leaders will receive training semi-annually.
 - Presentation of the plan, signage, and pew cards will occur annually to the congregation.
 - New member classes will include a review of fire safety, and floor plans with evacuation routes will be distributed.
 - Orientation will be provided for new volunteers.
 - All staff members, teachers, and leaders should be trained in the proper use of fire extinguishers and fire protection equipment.
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SECTION 2: ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Catonsville United Methodist Church

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PURPOSE

To provide detailed expectations and requirements for each role involved in an evacuation. These roles include Lead Pastor, Ushers/Greeters, Children & Youth Leaders, Accessibility Assistants, and Facilities Representative.

Lead Pastor


The Lead Pastor serves as the **calm spiritual and operational leader** during a fire emergency. While safety procedures are followed, the pastor's presence greatly influences how calmly and orderly the congregation responds.

When a fire alarm occurs during worship or a church event, the Lead Pastor or Event Coordinator will read the following to the congregation/attendees:

- We do not know if this a drill or in error, but we will all exit the building quickly and quietly.
- Do **not** use the elevators.
- Parents – your children are already being evacuated by teachers, so do not go to the classrooms. Nursery children will be taken to Melvin Avenue parking lot. All other children will be taken to the Winters Lane grassy area.
- People needing assistance, please head to the Melvin Avenue exit (*Lead Pastor points the direction*).
- If you are willing and able to provide assistance with exiting the building, please head to the Melvin Avenue exit (*Lead Pastor points the direction*).
- If you do **not** need assistance, you can use the Tower Staircase (*Lead Pastor points the direction*) or the back staircase (*Lead Pastor points the direction*).

Laminated copies will be kept at each church pulpit.

The lead pastor will assist with the following:

- Orderly Evacuation
 - Help direct people from the front of the sanctuary.
 - Encourage calm movement and discourage rushing.
 - Accountability at Assembly Area
 - Go to the designated outdoor assembly point.
 - Assist ministry leaders in determining if everyone is accounted for.
 - Identify visitors, children's ministry groups, or vulnerable individuals.
 - Provide Pastoral Care
 - Offer reassurance and calm presence.
 - Pray briefly if appropriate once everyone is safe.
 - Support anyone who is frightened or experiencing medical distress.
 - Coordinate Communication
 - Communicate with emergency responders upon arrival.
 - Provide building information if needed.
 - Later, communicate with congregation via email/text regarding next steps.
 -  Important Guidelines
 - Personal safety and congregational safety take priority over property.
 - Never re-enter the building once evacuated.
 - Allow trained emergency personnel to manage the situation.
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Leaders of Children & Youth (Teachers, Director of Christian Formation/Education, Youth Group Leader, Event Coordinators). The teacher/leader goal is to guide children/youth out of the building and release them to parent or guardian.

- Teachers & Youth Leaders
 - Gather the children and advise them we are exiting the building quickly and quietly.
 - Take the attendance chart and pen (or Youth group signup sheets).
 - Before leaving the classroom, count children.
 - Exit the classroom (verify everyone exited, close classroom door).
 - Exit building following designated exits as posted in the classroom/hallways.
 - When exiting the building, be cautious as you may need to cross a parking lot or street; PreK/elementary age children should hold hands.
 - **Nursery:** Upon exiting, assemble in Melvin Avenue parking lot across street
 - **Asbury Hall classrooms:** Upon exiting, assemble in grassy area near Winters Lane
 - Once in designated area, re-count children & compare to attendance chart.
 - Release to parent/guardian and write on the attendance chart who picked up.
 - Provide church leadership with the attendance chart which indicates who picked up the child.
- Sunday School Superintendent & Director/Leader
 - A master list of children is to be kept in the Sunday School Office and Director Office.
 - The Sunday School Superintendent and/or Director and Nursery Room Attendant should take the Emergency Binder when exiting the building and assist the teachers. If possible, Director should exit with Nursery children to the Melvin Avenue parking lot, and the Sunday School Superintendent should exit with all other children to the Winters Lane grassy area.
- Note: for family events, parents/guardians will be responsible for safety and evacuation of their children.

Ushers/Greeters


Ushers and greeters serve as calm, visible leaders during a fire evacuation. Their primary responsibility is to guide congregants safely out of the building, assist those needing help, and support emergency responders by ensuring orderly evacuation and accountability.

Role of Ushers & Greeters during a Fire Evacuation, if physically able and if safety permits:

- Remain Calm and Take Visible Leadership
 - Stay calm and speak clearly.
 - Help reduce panic by modeling steady behavior.
 - Follow instructions from the evacuation coordinator, pastor, or emergency personnel.
- Guide people to closest safe exits.
 - From the sanctuary, those needing assistance will be directed to the Melvin Avenue staircase.
 - From the sanctuary, those not needing assistance will be directed to the Tower staircase.
 - Those are willing and able to provide assistance will be directed to the Melvin Avenue staircase.
 - Open and hold doors as needed.
 - Redirect people away from smoke or blocked areas.
- Assist Individuals Who Need Extra Help
 - Help elderly individuals, children, and guests unfamiliar with the building.
 - Coordinate with designated Accessibility Assistants to support people with mobility, hearing, or vision challenges.
 - Never use elevators during a fire unless directed by emergency personnel.






- Check Assigned Areas
 - Quickly check restrooms, classrooms, or Social Hall.
 - Ensure no one is left behind.
 - Close (but do not lock) doors behind you to help slow fire spread.
 - Prevent Re-Entry
 - Once outside, guide people to the designated assembly areas.
 - Politely but firmly prevent anyone from re-entering the building.
 - Keep driveways and fire lanes clear for emergency vehicles.
 - Report to Leadership

Inform the evacuation coordinator or pastor of:

 - Any missing persons
 - Anyone needing medical attention
 - Hazards observed (smoke, blocked exits, etc.)
 -  Important Safety Guidelines
 - Do not attempt to fight large fires.
 - Do not delay evacuation to collect belongings.
 - Personal safety comes first.
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Accessibility Assistants


- Accessibility Assistants help people who may have difficulty evacuating independently, including those who:
 - Use wheelchairs or mobility devices.
 - Have limited vision or hearing.
 - Have cognitive, developmental, or memory challenges.
 - Are elderly, injured, or temporarily disabled.
- During an evacuation, Accessibility Assistants communicate clearly and calmly:
 - Explain what is happening in simple, calm language.
 - Use multiple communication methods (verbal instructions, gestures, written notes if needed).
 - Reassure individuals to reduce panic and confusion.
- For individuals with hearing or vision impairments, assistants may:
 - Guide by touch (with permission).
 - Use visual cues or hand signals.
 - Stay within close proximity for reassurance.
- Accessibility Assistants assist with safe evacuation:
 - Know accessible exit routes and assembly areas.
 - Never use elevators unless designated as fire-safe by fire evacuation personnel.
 - They **do not carry or physically lift** individuals unless trained and it is safe to do so.
- Once outside:
 - Confirm that assisted individuals have reached safety.
 - Report anyone unaccounted for to the Incident Commander or Fire Department.
 - Report anyone who was physically unable to be evacuated to the Incident Commander or Fire Department.
 - Stay with the individual until further help or reunification occurs

-  What Accessibility Assistants Should NOT Do:
 -  Put themselves in danger.
 -  Use elevators unless officially designated for evacuation by fire emergency responders.
 -  Force evacuation methods against an individual's will.
 -  Attempt rescue techniques they are not trained to perform.
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Facilities Representative

A **Facilities Representative** is responsible for the **building systems, infrastructure, and physical safety operations** during a fire or emergency evacuation. Their role supports both occupant safety and coordination with emergency responders.

- Activate & Verify Emergency Systems
 - Confirm the fire alarm has activated.
 - Call 911 if not automatically dispatched.
 - Verify that fire doors release/close properly.
- Support Safe Evacuation
 - Sweep assigned areas (if safe) to ensure occupants are exiting.
 - Direct people toward primary and secondary exits.
 - Prevent re-entry into the building.


 The Facilities Representative should **never delay evacuation to troubleshoot equipment.**

- Provide Building Intelligence to Fire Department

When first responders arrive, the Facilities Representative should report:

- Location of fire alarm panel
 - Location of fire (if known)
 - Areas not yet cleared
 - Individuals needing assistance
 - Locations of:
 - Fire department connections
 - Gas and electrical shut-offs
- Accountability & Perimeter Control
 - Assist with headcounts if assigned.
 - Keep access roads clear for emergency vehicles.
 - Maintain a safe perimeter.
 - Prevent unauthorized re-entry until cleared by fire officials.

- After “All Clear”
 - Do not allow re-entry until authorized by the Fire Department.
 - Document incident details.
 - Coordinate repairs and system resets.
 - Participate in after-action review.

 -  What a Facilities Representative Should NOT Do
 - **X** Attempt to fight a fire beyond a small, initial-stage fire (only if trained).
 - **X** Enter smoke-filled or unsafe areas.
 - **X** Override fire safety systems without authorization.
 - **X** Put themselves at risk.
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SECTION 3: REQUIRED SIGNAGE

Catonsville United Methodist Church

6 Melvin Avenue, Catonsville, MD 21228

PURPOSE

To identify required fire evacuation signage for the church property.

Building Fire Exit Diagram & Fire Equipment Location Diagram

- Both the Building Fire Exit diagram and the Fire Equipment Location diagram will be framed 8 ½ x11, with “You Are Here” location stickers.
 - The appropriate floor diagrams will be mounted side by side in each room & location:
 - Social Hall and kitchen.
 - Scout Room and Meals on Wheels Room.
 - Office level: Library, Office, Pastor’s Office, Youth Director Office, Christian Formation Office, Kitchenette, Rooms 206 through 211.
 - Sanctuary level: Sanctuary, Parlor, Treasurer’s Office, Ushers’ Office, Board Room, Little Chapel, Altar Guild Room, Women’s Circle Meeting Room, Music Storage Room, Acolyte’s Room.
 - Balcony level: Prayer room area, Meeting area.
 - Asbury Hall level 1: Rooms 101 through 105
 - Asbury Hall level 2: Rooms 201 through 205
 - Asbury Hall level 3: Rooms 301 through 304 (Soul Café), Rooms 305 & 306
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Fire Exit Non-Directional Signage

- Non-directional fire exit signs will be posted above doors leading to building exits.
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Fire Exit Directional Signage

- Directional fire exit signs will be mounted in hallways to direct occupants to the nearest fire exit.
 - The following space will have fire exit directional signage:
 - Social Hall and kitchen areas: pointing to Tower staircase, Melvin Avenue exits, Social Hall exit.
 - Office level: both ends of office hallway, both ends of class room hallway.
 - Sanctuary level: pointing towards Tower staircase, Melvin Avenue exit, back staircase which exits at Social Hall.
 - Balcony level: pointing towards Tower staircase and Melvin Avenue exit.
 - Asbury Hall: in hallways on all levels, pointing to Asbury Hall exit and back Parking Lot exit.
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Sanctuary Pew Evacuation Card

- Evacuation cards will be placed in each card holder in the Sanctuary church pews and Parlor chairs.
 - Evacuation cards will be approximately 2.5 by 7.5 inches, allowing the evacuation cards to be taller than any other current pew cards.
 - Evacuation cards will contain a diagram of Sanctuary fire exits along with a description of the Sanctuary fire exits.
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SECTION 4: ROLLOUT, TRAINING, & REVIEW

Catonsville United Methodist Church

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PURPOSE

To ensure that the church's fire evacuation plan is clearly communicated, consistently practiced, and regularly evaluated so that all staff, volunteers, and congregants understand their roles and can respond calmly and effectively in an emergency. This section outlines how the plan will be introduced, how training will be conducted, and how ongoing review and updates will be carried out to maintain readiness, incorporate lessons learned, and comply with applicable safety guidance.

Rollout of Fire Evacuation Plan

- Leadership approval and ownership
 - Present the finalized evacuation plan to church leadership (Pastor, Trustees, Administrative Council).
 - Formally approve the plan and designate a **Fire Evacuation Coordinator** responsible for implementation and oversight (Phil Bowman, Administrative Council Chair).

- Review & approval by industry experts
 - Present the finalized evacuation plan to church members with professional expertise in related roles, and incorporate feedback. Roles such as:
 - Maryland Fire Inspector.
 - Building Evacuation Planner.
 - Present the finalized evacuation plan to the local fire department and incorporate feedback.

- Communicate the Plan
 - Introduce the plan to staff and key volunteers first (Lead Pastor, Ushers/Greeters, Accessibility Assistants, Children & Youth Leaders, facilities staff).
 - Share a simplified overview with the congregation through:
 - Announcements or bulletin to give notice of scheduled presentations
 - Church bulk email
 - Posted evacuation maps and instructions in common areas
 - Emphasize why the plan matters: protecting lives, especially children, older adults, and those with disabilities.
 - The plan will be communicated to leaders of outside groups using the church building, such as Scouts, AA, Mom Co, Dancing groups, etc.
 - Although the CUMC Fire Evacuation Plan will be supplied to the Catonsville Cooperative Pre-school (a.k.a. Co-Op), the Co-Op will follow the Maryland State Department of Education's Emergency Preparedness Plan for Child Care Providers.

- Documentation and Posting
 - Keep the full plan on file in the:
 - Social Hall level - Kitchen
 - Office level - Church Office
 - Sanctuary level – Ushers' Office
 - Asbury Hall – Sunday School office on Asbury Hall 2nd floor
 - Digitally – Church Office computer plus cloud storage location
 - Post Fire Evacuation Diagrams and Fire Equipment Diagrams:
 - Near entrances and exits
 - In classrooms and fellowship areas
 - Ensure new staff and volunteers receive the plan during onboarding.

Training

- Rollout of training will be the responsibility of the **Fire Evacuation Coordinator**.
- Ushers, staff, and ministry leaders will receive training semi-annually.
- Orientation will be provided for new volunteers.
- All staff members, teachers, and leaders should be trained in the proper use of fire extinguishers and fire protection equipment.
- Role-Based Training
 - Provide focused training for each role, such as:
 - Ushers/Greeters: directing exits, calming congregants
 - Accessibility Assistants: helping those needing extra support
 - Facilities Representative: alarm awareness, utility knowledge, identify individuals as backup
 - Ministry Leaders: accounting for participants after evacuation
 - Keep training short, clear, and practical—walk-throughs are more effective than lectures.
- Know the responsibilities of the assigned role.
- Know the building – exit locations, fire equipment locations, assembly areas, utility locations
- Key Leadership Principles
 - Evacuate persons in the building.
 - Stay calm and visible.
 - Give short, clear instructions.
 - Delegate—do not do everything yourself.
 - Prioritize people over property.
 - Trust emergency responders.

Review

- This plan will be reviewed annually by Trustees and Administrative Council.
- Presentation of the plan, signage, and pew cards will occur annually to the congregation.
- New member classes will include a review of fire safety, and floor plans with evacuation routes will be distributed.
- Physical Walkthroughs
 - Conduct building walkthroughs with staff and volunteers to:
 - Identify primary and secondary exits
 - Review evacuation routes for each ministry area
 - Locate fire extinguishers, alarms, and assembly areas
 - Verify signage visibility and accessibility routes.
- Review and Continuous Improvement
 - Review the plan annually or after:
 - A drill
 - A real emergency
 - Building renovations or layout changes
 - Update roles, diagrams, and procedures as needed.
 - Communicate updates promptly to staff, volunteers, and the congregation.

SECTION 5: ELECTRICAL PANELS & SHUTOFF VALVE LOCATIONS

Catonsville United Methodist Church

6 Melvin Avenue, Catonsville, MD 21228

PURPOSE

To identify the locations of electrical panels and gas and water shutoff panels, both inside and outside the church building. During a church fire evacuation, the **electrical panel and gas/water shutoff valves** are critical safety components—but they should only be handled by trained and authorized individuals.

Safety Considerations

- Electrical Panels
 - Untrained volunteers should **not** operate electrical panel.
 - **Do NOT delay evacuation** to access the panel.
 - Only shut off power **if safe to do so**.
 - If fire involves the electrical room or panel → **do not approach**.
 - Notify arriving firefighters of:
 - Panel location
 - Any breakers already shut off.
 - Gas Shutoff Valves
 - Untrained volunteers should **not** operate gas shutoff valve.
 - If you smell gas or suspect a leak:
 - DO NOT turn lights on/off
 - DO NOT use electrical switches
 - Shut off only if:
 - Valve is safely accessible
 - No active flames blocking access
 - Inform fire department immediately.
 - Water Shutoff Valve
 - Do **NOT** shut off water if Fire department has not authorized it.
 - Untrained volunteers should **not** operate water shutoff valve.
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Locations

- Electrical Panels
 - Social Hall Basement Level - Main Boiler Room (1) in Basement level
 - Social Hall Level - Kitchen (1)
 - Social Hall Level - Chair room (1)
 - Social Hall Level - Next to stage (2)
 - Social Hall Level - in stairwell behind stage (1)
 - Entrance Level - Scout room (1)
 - Office Level - Across from handicap bathroom (1)
 - Sanctuary Level - Acolyte room (1)
 - Asbury Hall Basement - Boiler Room (2) – accessed from playground area
 - Asbury Hall 1st Floor - Hallway (2)
 - Asbury Hall 2nd Floor - Hallway (1)
 - Asbury Hall 3rd Floor - Hallway (1)

- Gas Shutoff Valves
 - Social Hall stairwell - Main shut off valve in double-door closet.
 - Social Hall Kitchen - Individual shutoff valve to the right of the stove.

- Water Shutoff Valve
 - Social Hall Basement Level - Main Boiler Room (multiple valves) level.
 - Social Hall Level - Chair room (1) – close to ceiling.
 - Asbury Hall Basement - Boiler Room (Asbury Hall main valve) – inside the crawl space accessed through the left side of AH Boiler room.
 - Individual shutoffs to and from boilers/water heaters in AH Boiler room.
 - Individual shut offs under all sinks in the building, inside the vanity.