



Emergency Preparedness Grace Episcopal Church

Nobody likes to think a disaster or act of violence could happen to them. Maybe you've never even considered that it might happen to our church. Disasters or acts of violence are difficult to foresee and prevent. Having a preparedness plan in place, along with regular review and training may help mitigate some of the potential property damage, injury, or even death that could occur.

Although there are any numbers of incidents that can happen at a church, there are four major types of emergencies churches should try to prepare themselves for:

- Medical Assists
- Fires
- Earthquake
- Violence

Priorities:

- The safety of our children is priority #1
- The safety of our parishioners, staff and guest
- The safety of our facility

Definitions:

Many emergencies may not require the Command Center be established and/or a need for an Incident Commander and can be handled as part of our routine business. However:

Command Center – Is a place, away from the point of the Emergency where the problem can be worked on by those responsible. In most cases, this location will be the Church Office, if that structure is safe. If not it can be moved outside. Personnel responding to our emergency will be directed to our Command Center.

Incident Commander – (Who is in charge?) In most instances, the Incident Commander shall be the Senior Warden or their designee. In the absence of the Senior Warden, the Junior Warden shall be in charge. If the Junior Warden is not available, a member of the Vestry shall assume Command and Control. This structure is to allow us to select the most knowledgeable person for the roll. Additionally, we need to avoid assigning the rector as the Incident Commander as their roll will be to tend to the needs of the congregation. It is the Vestry's responsibility to care for the needs of the organization. In the end, it is the responsibility of the entire Vestry staff to work together to bring the problem to an appropriate conclusion.

Opening the Command Center – This shall be done at the request of the Rector or any vestry member or parishioner if it is determined that the scope of the emergency is of such a

magnitude that requires long term planning or Church official management. The Command Center shall be closed when the Incident Commander determines the emergency has been sufficiently resolved.

P.I.O. (Public Information Officer) – A P.I.O. shall be appointed by the Incident Commander to manage all outside communications about the incident. The P.I.O shall interact with any members of the Press and be responsible for making and managing any press release information. It is very necessary to document what we are releasing, to whom and exactly what we say. The Vestry needs to understand that all information released by the Church goes through the P.I.O at all times. One voice, one message is very important. One resource to consider is Church Mutual, our Insurance Company. They provide this service to us at no additional charge and can be onsite generally within 1 hour. This is highly recommended

City Liaison Officer – A person, preferably a member of the sitting Vestry, can be appointed to be our representative at the City Emergency Operations Center, if needed or necessary. It shall be that person's responsibility to pass important information between the Church, the Emergency and the appropriate City Staff.

Safe Zone – It is designated area where we are out of harm's way and out of the way of any first responders that are assisting with the emergency. A place where we can take roll to ensure all are accounted for. It is also a place where we can group together to assess our circumstances and our response action, if any.

Shelter in Place – This means selecting a small, interior room, with no or few windows, and taking refuge there until found and released by first responders. It is recommended that you lock doors, or block doors and windows with whatever is available. It does not mean sealing off your entire home or office building.

Insurance – Church Mutual is our insurance company. They should be notified and engaged anytime we are presented with an emergency, possible liability exposure or any question.

Medical Assists

The term *Medical Assist* has pretty broad connotations, but for the purposes of emergency preparedness, we are talking about life-threatening medical situations. **For Grace Episcopal Church, any medical condition that requires outside assistance, created by electrical shock or other trauma, or causes a person to collapse to the floor, we will automatically and without hesitation:**

- Call for Emergency Paramedic Assistance by Dialing 9-1-1.
- Follow the Dispatchers instructions.
- Retrieve the AED and/or First Aid Kit.
- Evacuate the immediate area.
- If this occurs during a church service, the service shall stop and the church evacuated so first responders can provide for the injured without obstructions.
- If this occurs in a classroom the classroom shall be evacuated so first responders can provide for the injured without obstructions.
- After exit, assemble in the designated "Safe Zone" on the west side of Church or as directed.

Fires

Fire is a danger in any type of building, and churches are no exception. In fact, because our church has a kitchen with ovens, microwaves, and toasters, we are more susceptible to fire than the average building. Here are several areas of importance regarding fire protection:

- Smoke detection systems
- Fire extinguishers
- Escape routes
- Fire department access
- Power cutoff

We have strategically located fire extinguishers throughout the campus. They are also noted on the attached master plan.

It is the policy of Grace Episcopal Church to call for Emergency Assistance, the Fire Department; at 9-1-1 **ANY TIME and EVERY TIME** we have an accidental, unintentional fire in or around the facility. As with any Emergency Assistance Response we shall always:

- Evacuate the area or building
- Follow the Evacuation Plan
- If reasonable, fight the fire with fire extinguishers from a safe distance
- Wait until the Fire Department arrives and secures the Church property
- Notify Church Officials, Vestry or Rector

Fire in the Classrooms:

- Teachers will check that the available exits are clear and free of danger. (i.e. door or window)
- Lead students through the exit and to the "Safe Zone" on the West side of the Church. Teacher will take emergency bag.
- Close exit if able.
- Once in the "Safe Zone", teacher will take roll of students. Report numbers to command center using paperwork found in emergency bag. (# of teachers evacuated, # of students evacuated, # of teachers/students missing)
- Dismiss students directly to parents or guardians. Parents/guardians must come check out their child at the "Safe Zone". Students will stay with the teacher or at the Command Center until a parent/guardian is available to pick them up.

Evacuation

There are several evacuation plans that cover different areas of the Grace Church Campus. These include, but are not limited to:

- The main Church Sanctuary
- The Chapel
- The Church Office
- Church Sunday School Classes
- Baxter Hall

As important it is to evacuate an area, it also important **to reassemble in a "safe zone"** to ensure everyone is out of harm's way. The safe zone shall be (in this order)

- The far west end of the public parking area, near Cullen Avenue (Primary)
- The Church Front Lawn in front of the playground (Secondary)
- Finkbinder Park – Band shell area

Evacuation of Church Sanctuary:

There are 8 exits to the Main Church.

- Two North of the Alter
- Three in the Narthex
- One in front of (on the east side) of the pulpit
- Two in the main Chapel.
- After exit, assemble in the designated "Safe Zone" on the West side of the Church.

Evacuation of the Chapel:

There are 5 immediate exits to the Chapel area.

- The rear main door to the Chapel.
- The door on the west side of the Alter.
- Two doors north of the Sanctuary Alter.
- One door on the east side of the Sanctuary Alter.
- After exit, assemble in the designated "Safe Zone" on the west side of Church.

Evacuation of the Church Office:

There are 6 exits to the Church Office area

- Exit out the east main door to the parking lot
- Exit out the West door of the Rectors office
- Exit into the Choir Room, where there are three exit doors
- After exit, assemble in the designated "Safe Zone" on the west side of Church

Evacuation of the Church Sunday Schools:

Each Sunday School room has two exits.

- After exit, assemble in the designated "Safe Zone" on the west side of the Church.

Evacuation of Baxter Hall:

Baxter Hall can be evacuated via any one of four exits.

- Northwest main door
- Southwest main door
- East Door out of the Kitchen
- South door out of the Fireside Room
- South Main Doors to Baxter Hall
- After exit, assemble in the designated "Safe Zone" on the west side of Church

Earthquake

We live in an earthquake prone area and our main sanctuary, chapel and main office are of the steel reinforced brick building, subject to cracking and flaking during an earthquake. Although you instinct during an earthquake would be to run outside, we suggest sheltering in place during the event. The Church is equipped with solid wooden pews that offer good protection.

As such, we suggest:

- Move away from windows and breaking glass
- Get down on the floor, between the pews, the pew will offer protection
- Get up next to the marble alter for protection, get down.
- Try to protect your head and neck with your hands and arms
- Avoid hanging objects
- Hold this position until the shaking STOPS
- Evacuate the building after the shaking stops
- After exit, assemble in the designated "Safe Zone" on the west side of Church.
- Check for trapped and injured people. Evacuate injured and treat with first aid accordingly
- Turn off utilities to the building at their shutoff point, as appropriate for safety.

Earthquake in the Classroom:

Teacher and students will duck and cover under the tables in the classroom. Once the shaking has stopped, the teacher will lead the students to the Safe Zone using the evacuation plan.

1. Teachers will check that the available exits are clear and free of danger. (i.e. door or window)
2. Lead students through the exit and to the "Safe Zone" on the West side of the Church. Teacher will take emergency bag.
3. In an earthquake situation, doors should remain open to allow emergency personal to examine the building.
4. Once in the "Safe Zone", teacher will take roll of students. Report numbers to command center using paperwork found in emergency bag. (# of teachers evacuated, # of students evacuated, # of teachers/students missing)
5. Teachers will dismiss students directly to parents or guardians. Parents/guardians must come check out their child at the "Safe Zone". Students will stay with the teacher or at the Command Center until a parent/guardian is available to pick them up.

WATER

As part of being prepared, we will be storing 25 or more cases of water at the Church. To ensure its freshness, we will encourage its use at Church gatherings and encourage our parishioners to replenish the water supply as we use it.

Violence

Any act of violence should immediately result in calling 9-1-1 for emergency assistance. We need to protect our staff and visitors and no act of violence is acceptable. **CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY!**

During Church Services, our first line of defense is our Ushers. Our ushers are watching the congregation, watching the grounds and watching our visitors as they enter the Church. ANY signs that cause concern they need to take pro-active action, including and up to calling 9-1-1 for assistance.

Usually acts of violence fall into two basic categories.

Unarmed/Physical

This is generally person who is usually acting in the "heat of the moment" and hasn't thought out their act of violence. Something has caused this person to explode and act-out physically in a hostile way. Although this person can be a danger to others, there is usually a possibility to escape and move away from the threat. If an assault occurs, it is usually not life threatening. Usually a group of motivated people, such as our Ushers can overcome and subdue this threat.

Our response and goal will be:

- CALL 9-1-1 for assistance
- Protect the lives and safety of others
- Remove the threat by either stopping the fight or deescalating the situation
- If we cannot stop the fight, attempt to chase off the assailant.
- Protect "in place" any victims
- Be the best witnesses we can be

Armed with a Weapon

This is a more serious and life-threatening situation. Although there is any number of objects that could be used as a weapon, who's use could result in serious bodily harm or death.

The sharp-edged weapon presents a life-threatening situation. However, the overall risk to the church congregation is limited.

Our response and goal will be:

- CALL 9-1-1 immediately
- Protect the lives and safety of others
- RUN! – If you can, run off the property to safety.
- Shelter in place – Hide – Get on the floor
- Try stopping the assailant by with multiple resistors to overcome the attacker. Every moment could save a life.
- Protect "in place" any victims.
- Be the best witnesses we can be.

A hostile person armed with a firearm presents our greatest threat. These armed threats usually fall into two separate categories. The first category is related to an emotional response to something that's happened to the suspect. He/she can be distraught or threatening and therefore is a danger to themselves as well as others around them. Think of all the possible situations that could lead to a person having a dramatic emotional response—divorce, child custody, loss of employment, an embarrassing public incident, etc. These triggering possibilities are very real and happen every day.

Our response and goal will be:

- CALL 9-1-1 immediately
- Protect the lives and safety of others
- If you can, **RUN**, get away from the problem.
- If you cannot run; Shelter in place – Hide – Get on the floor
- Try stopping the assailant by with multiple resistors to overcome the attacker. Every moment could save a life.
- Protect "in place" any victims.
- Be the best witnesses we can be.

If possible it is important to obtain a physical description of the subject and relay that information to responding law enforcement. What does the subject look like (height, weight, hair color, approximate age, clothing), what type of weapon does the subject have, what is the subject saying, where was the subject last seen? Remember; get all evacuees as far away from the armed subject as possible.

In this case, where nobody has been harmed yet by the armed subject, law enforcement will attempt to contain the armed person and negotiate with him in an attempt to have him put down the weapon and surrender himself.

Active Shooter Incidents

These armed subjects are motivated, calculating and usually carefully plan their acts of violence. An active shooter is usually a person who plans on committing suicide during their mission. They are seeking to make a “statement” through their actions and want to spread their suffering by inflicting massive damage. They also usually seek non-resisting targets and want to go out with a bang.

In this case, the goal of Law Enforcement will be to eliminate the threat and stop further harm, as quickly as possible. Expect their response to be directed at the assailant first, not as medical aid that will be our initial responsibility.

What we should expect with an armed assailant from Law Enforcement:

- An immediate response focused on the assailant
- The use of deadly force, matching the deadly force being used against us.
- A building response by law enforcement as the event continues.
- Expect some confusion as law enforcement understands what is happening.
- Expect to be detained – Follow carefully the instructions of Law Enforcement
- If you are sheltered in place (locked in a room) DO NOT OPEN the door under any circumstances. Law Enforcement or Church Officials will open the door.

Disarming

- Involves getting close enough to the shooter to remove the gun from his hands.
- High likelihood of injury or death
- Requires significant training
- Has a low likelihood of practicality

Swarming

- Requires several people to act as a team; each going for one of the subject’s limbs, body and head.
- High likelihood of injury or death
- Low likelihood of success
- Requires some level of training.

Our Own Law Enforcement Members

They say a police officer is always on duty. Grace Episcopal Church recognizes the advanced training some of our members from the Law Enforcement community have and their legal right to bear arms under California and Federal Law. Additionally, we recognize that instinctively police officers go at the problem, not run from the problem. We would encourage and appreciate our Law Enforcement Members taking a leadership roll in the event of an extreme emergency. Although we do not condone violence, we recognize that quick action by these very special members, including deadly force, could save many innocent lives.

Conclusion:

The best way to manage emergencies at our Church is with some type of plan. The emergency response plan needs to be visited often. It is a living document and action plan that has to grow with the Church needs and changing environment.

- Individual parishioners also need to be prepared. Ask yourself:
- Do you have a personal emergency plan?
- Do you have an emergency "Go" kit or bag?
- Do you carry emergency supplies in your car?
- Do you have access to an emergency supply of water?
- Do you have a first aid kit at your home or in your car?
- Do your family members have emergency supplies, especially if you are not available?
- Can you sustain yourself for three days or more without assistance?
- Do you have an emergency supply of your medications?
- Do you have a plan to find family members?

These are just a few questions you need to ask yourself to ensure that you are prepared. We can work together to better prepare our Church Family, but don't forget yourself.