

UUMH Safety Plan

Goal: To ensure that UUMH is a safe and welcoming place for members and friends to gather.

Background:

Recent national tragedies remind us that the risk of an active shooter or other emergency situation is real. Being prepared and thinking about these issues in advance can help us react quickly when every second counts.

In an emergency situation, before any outside help can arrive, there are things we can do to help ourselves and each other by being prepared.

Prevention:

1. Being aware of our surroundings, including people, activities and hazards is key. If someone or something is out of the ordinary, and you are concerned, let someone on the Safety Team know. Avoid rushing to conclusions; sometimes slowing down can help defuse a situation.
2. The function of greeting visitors is vitally important for welcoming and for safety. According to experts, in the case of someone with questionable intent, the act of greeting them, calling them by name and engaging them can disrupt their plan. Encourage visitors to sign the guest book, to make a name tag and to engage in conversation. In addition to offering a welcome to all and providing information about UUMH, this simple act may prevent a problem.
3. There are four doors at UUMH. The downstairs door and the main entrance double doors in the foyer are handicapped accessible. In the sanctuary, the side door off Main Street and the emergency exit on the right front of the sanctuary are not handicapped accessible. In an emergency, those who can use the sanctuary doors are encouraged to do so, to avoid crowding in the foyer.
4. During the Sunday service the ushers will ensure the building doors are locked, except for the double entrance doors in the foyer which will be closed but unlocked, per the approved policy. Greeters will be seated in the foyer adjacent to the double doors, monitoring any arrivals and activity. Ushers will ensure all doors are locked when the service and follow on activities are over.
5. There are four fire alarm stations and five fire extinguishers in the building. The alarm pull stations are located near each of our four outside doors. Extinguishers are located in the foyer at the base of the stairs to the balcony, in the copier area on the outside wall, in the music storage area, near the tool closet outside the Fleck room and in the third floor storage room. In addition, an AED, automatic defibrillator is available in the foyer to assist with immediate

response to medical emergencies while awaiting 911 response. The alarm system is monitored remotely by Alarm New England monthly.

6. If necessary, don't hesitate to pull the fire alarms or to call 911. Don't be too intimidated to disrupt the service by calling out to Chris if you are concerned. Everyone, including police and fire department, would rather get what turned out to be an unnecessary call than to miss the real one

7. If a situation is developing in the foyer that needs Chris's awareness while he is in the pulpit, greeters should call Chris by name or signal to her.

Active shooter scenario:

According to FEMA and local first responders, there is an established protocol in the event someone enters the building with a weapon.

RUN. In case of an active shooter, getting away is the first priority. Run, leaving your things and the building and moving safely away. If it is safe, warn others nearby. Call 911. Describe each shooter, their locations and weapons.

HIDE If you cannot run, find a place to hide. Get out of the shooter's view and stay very quiet. For those in the sanctuary with mobility issues, this may mean dropping down on the floor under the pews. If you are hiding, stay silent and silence cell phones. If possible, secure the door and turn off the lights. Stay in place until law enforcement gives you notice that all immediate danger is clear.

FIGHT. The last resort when you are in immediate danger is to defend yourself. Commit to your actions and act aggressively to stop the shooter, using makeshift weapons including hymnals, chairs or anything that could distract and disarm a perpetrator.

Afterwards, keep hands visible and empty and follow law enforcement instructions.

Other scenarios:

1. If a suspicious package is left in the sanctuary by an unknown visitor. Do not touch the package, evacuate and call the police.

2. In the case of a stranger who is loitering or entering. There is something about the behavior, attitude, dress or verbal interactions that raises questions. A recent case involved an aggressive panhandler who asked for food and money. They were shown to the Thrift Shop where they were given some clothing and departed. Our usher handled the situation thoughtfully. A good example of avoiding rushing to conclusions; sometimes slowing down can help defuse a situation.

3. In the case of someone who interrupts the service with abusive outbursts. Chris will engage from the pulpit; the safety committee will monitor as needed.
4. In the case of a medical emergency, contact 911 and provide assistance as appropriate until they arrive. The AED may prove useful in this situation.
5. Following approval by the Board, the plan will be briefed to the membership after a Sunday service and then periodically. New members should be briefed on this plan when they join.

Roles and responsibilities:

1. The Safety Committee will:
 - Develop and update the plan as needed
 - Ensure greeters and ushers are aware of their roles
 - Communicate the plan to members
2. The Board will:
 - Act on the recommended plan

Submitted by:

UUMH Safety Committee (Rev Tracy Johnson, Beth Avery, Bonnie Brydges, Robin Hubbard, Kathy Nye, Liz Van Wye, Debbie Zahka, Joe Zahka)

9/16/22

Updated by Admin. (Danielle Jeanloz) 11/4/24