



In Case of Emergency...

In the deepest spiritual sense, the church is our true sanctuary: a place of refuge and safety from the world.

But *physically*, a church can be as vulnerable as any other building to the threat of fire and natural disaster. A parish in our Diocese has been taking steps to prepare for such emergency situations—and its experience provides a model for other communities to follow.

The St. John Church in Southfield, MI, has launched a project to develop plans for fire evacuation, tornado shelter, and lock-down situations. On two Sundays last fall, practice fire drills were held for the congregation and church school students. The drills were held at the conclusion of the *badarak*; but prior to that, ushers, choir members, parish council members, teachers, and other personnel underwent special training in how to react in a real emergency. Parishioners and students were also informed of the proper steps to a safe evacuation.

Through the drills, the entire church complex was safely cleared within a few minutes. Most importantly, St. John now has trained leaders who can assist and direct others in case of emergency.

The effort is being led by the St. John parish council, which plans to hold practice fire drills every year, and is also developing plans for tornado and lock-down emergencies. Other parishes in the Diocese have held training sessions for CPR and medical emergencies. Local first aid squads can helpfully advise parishes on such precautionary measures.