



CHURCH WARDENS

HANDBOOK

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Churchwardens represent and speak for the whole community in which their church is set. As the Bishop's lay officers they are responsible directly to him/her for the life and work of their church. Being a Churchwarden is a privilege and a responsibility.

In general, the task of the Churchwarden as the Bishop's lay officer is to co-operate with the Incumbent and the PCC in the worshipping, pastoral, evangelistic, social, ecumenical and administrative life of the church. The word co-operation includes having ideas of your own – and also sometimes making friendly criticisms of anything you think seriously mistaken. Most Incumbents will appreciate this – but try not to overdo the criticism. All church leaders, including Churchwardens, get a good deal of it anyway.

The role includes:

01 Cooperation with the Incumbent

02 Church and Churchyard

03 Safeguarding Responsibilities

04 Finances

05 Services

06 The Vicarage

07 Visitation

08 Vacancies

1 COOPERATION WITH THE INCUMBENT

A good Churchwarden tries to be a friend and adviser to the Incumbent, to the PCC and all who belong to or look to the Church. In particular, the Churchwardens have a special care for the morale of the Incumbent and, where appropriate, their family. The morale of the congregation, and its healthy relationship with the whole community, is also of key concern.

A good Churchwarden will try to share in the Vicar's leadership and vision and give a good lead in spiritual matters, and strong support in practical matters. This will include being present at all principal services, and, where possible, social events. It will involve being understanding, and being ready to interpret and support, parish policy – even if the Churchwarden personally disagrees.

Normal duties could include drawing up Sidespeople's rotas and training Sidespeople where necessary. A high priority will be welcoming newcomers to the Church and also informing the Incumbent of anyone in trouble, sickness or need of any kind.

The Churchwardens should make sure that the Incumbent fixes and keeps a day off each week; and also takes the holidays which are customary. During the holiday periods, and of course during a vacancy, the up-keep of services is the responsibility of the Churchwardens.

2 CHURCH AND CHURCHYARD

A good Churchwarden will take the initiative in practical matters, like the tidiness of the church and surroundings, heating apparatus etc., clean and up to date notices and an attractive appearance of the entrance and interior of the Church.

Each Church is required to have a Terrier and Inventory. A terrier is a document that lists the property of the benefice and would ordinarily include a plan of the church, churchyard and any other property. An inventory lists the movable items in the church building, all that are owned by the churchwardens and which are to be handed over their successors. These should be kept up to date and checked every year by the Churchwardens. The Archdeacon may ask to see the Terrier and Inventory at any time. The Churchwardens are also responsible for keeping a Church Log Book to record all repairs and alterations when they are carried out. This is a vital record of exactly what had been done and how.

You should have received these documents from your predecessor and must hand them on, at the end of your term of office, to your successor.

Repairs or alterations to church fabric and furnishings require, by law, a Faculty (legal permission). It will be the Churchwardens' responsibility to apply for these on behalf of the PCC and to take a leading role on all matters concerning the church building.

Most churches have items of value which should be kept securely. They should be properly listed, valued, insured and photographed. This information should be in a different safe place from the valuables themselves. Records and Registers should, whenever possible, be lodged with The Northumberland Collections Service at Woodhorn, Queen Elizabeth II Country Park, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 9YF, telephone 01670 624358 or e-mail archives@northumberland.gov.uk.

3 SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES

‘Safeguarding’ means the action the Church takes to promote a safer culture in all our churches. Churchwardens, along with the PCC, the incumbent and the Parish Safeguarding Officer, have a duty of care to ensure the protection of the vulnerable in their church community. They should ensure that the parish takes appropriate steps to maintain a safe environment for all, following the principles set out in The Church of England’s Safeguarding Policy Statement, and that the requirements outlined in the Safeguarding Parish Dashboard/Safeguarding Parish Handbook are implemented and regularly reviewed.

The Diocese provides training for those in leadership positions in parishes and churchwardens should undertake this training, and subsequent refresher courses.

4 FINANCES

‘Churchwardens should have a good relationship with the Church Treasurer, giving support in helping the PCC to discharge its responsibilities for insurance, repairs and replacements. A particularly important role is to ensure the Incumbent has the parochial working expenses refunded. These should be recorded as parish expenses and budgeted. It is the responsibility of the Churchwardens to make sure the PCC pays the Parish Share regularly. A good Churchwarden also tries to encourage regular giving by parishioners. If no Treasurer can be found, the duty falls on the Churchwardens.

5 SERVICES

You should be aware of the PCC’s rights as well as the Incumbents in the matter of introducing new orders of service. Care should be taken over the decency and order of the services, the taking of collections, the greeting and care of visiting clergy and Readers, and the payment of their travelling expenses.

6 THE VICARAGE

This is not strictly the responsibility of the Churchwardens, except during a vacancy. Most clergy and their families will, however, much appreciate friendly concern about their living conditions and the care of the vicarage and the grounds.

7 VISITATION

‘Churchwardens hold office legally for one year only – but are eligible for re-election to a maximum of 6 years. All Churchwardens must be admitted legally each year otherwise a vacancy is declared. Instructions, together with Articles of Inquiry, are sent out in good time early each year. Some of the information that is submitted enables us to keep Church House records up to date

8 VACANCIES

A vacancy involves a number of extra duties for Churchwardens. Your Area Dean is in overall charge of a parish during a vacancy and has detailed notes to help you which he will let you have as soon as the vacancy occurs. If a new incumbent is to be appointed, your PCC has the right to elect two representatives to take part in the appointment of a new Incumbent. These will not necessarily be the Churchwardens.

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Churchwarden's role is an old one in the church, but not as old as that of Archdeacon. It goes back to the 13th Century. However, the Churchwarden is no longer responsible for highways in the parish or other parochial functions; he/she is much more concerned with the church. Since the 1919 Enabling Act, PCCs have taken on some of the Churchwarden's tasks. Nevertheless, Churchwardens remain important within the parish and are senior members of the PCC. A key document is the Churchwardens' Measure 2001 and the technical legal description is:

The Churchwardens when admitted are officers of the Bishop. They shall discharge such duties as are by law and custom assigned to them; they shall be foremost in representing the laity and in co-operating with the incumbent (which in this context includes rector, vicar or priest-in-charge); they shall use their best endeavours by example and precept to encourage the parishioners in the practice of true religion and to promote unity and peace among them. They shall also maintain order and decency in the church and churchyard especially during the time of Divine Service.

In the Churchwardens is vested the property in the plate, ornaments and other movable goods of the church, and they shall keep an inventory thereof which they shall revise from time to time as occasion may require. On going out of office they shall duly deliver to their successors any goods of the church remaining in their hands together with the said inventory which shall be checked by their successors.

Canon E1.4, 5

LEGAL ROLES

(i) In law the Churchwarden is 'chosen' by consent of the vicar and the parish; not, strictly speaking, elected. The choice should be by consensus of the people of the parish.

(ii) The Churchwarden is admitted to office by the Archdeacon or Bishop. He/she remains in office until a successor is admitted.

(iii) The Churchwarden is responsible in the parish and the parish church as the Bishop's Officer.

(iv) Legal responsibilities include:

(a) Law and order in the church and churchyard (which is why they carry wands).

(b) Allocation of seating in the church.

(c) With the incumbent, the Churchwardens provide bread and wine for Communion.

(d) The churchwardens are empowered to lead Morning and Evening Prayer in the absence of the incumbent. (They might also say Ante Communion in a crisis though this not legally specified.)

(e) Acting as Treasurer if no Treasurer is appointed.

(f) Acting as legal owners of movables in the parish church.

(g) Presenting answers to the Articles of Inquiry to the Bishop or Archdeacon

(h) Reporting to the Bishop any irregularities in the parish or in the 'mode of life' of the minister. (Clergy are often bad at dealing with their own problems.)

(i) Contacting the Area Dean when the vicar is ill, and ensuring services and pastoral care are maintained.

(j) Acting in an incumbent vacancy. The Area Dean and Churchwardens are Sequestrators, though they are no longer financially responsible for the stipend. They are responsible for maintaining services, pastoral care and covering emergencies. They need to see to the security of the vicarage (burglaries and frost).

(k) With the PCC, caring for and maintaining the buildings.

(l) With the PCC, maintaining registers and records.

(m) Guiding the PCC in making sure that when repairs, alterations, additions or removals are done, proper advice is taken, professional advice is obtained for repairs, the DAC is consulted on removals or additions and faculty forms are properly completed.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Your essential working books are at least those mentioned below. They should be bought by the PCC for you and other church officers. New editions are issued from time to time and it is important not to go on using an out of date edition.

-  **Terrier, Inventory and Log Book**
Church House Publishing, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ
-  **A Handbook for Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councillors**
by Kenneth M Macmorran, Kenneth JT Elphinstone and E Garth Moor.
Mowbray, ISBN 0 264 6700 32
-  **How to look after Your Church**
Church House Publishing, ISBN 0715175610
-  **The Churchyards Handbook 4th Edition**
Church House Publishing, ISBN: 9780715143018
-  **A Guide to Church Inspection and Repair**
Church House Publishing, ISBN 0715175688
-  **The Parochial Expenses of Clergy**
Digital copy available [here](#)
-  **The PCC Member's Essential Guide**
by Mark Tanner
Church House Publishing, ISBN 9780715110935

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The following books are also helpful:



The Churchwardens Yearbook

Digital copy to download [here](#)



The Churchwardens Year : A light-hearted calendar of Church maintenance

Church House Publishing, ISBN 9780715143575

and books on: Church Security, Church Plate, Heating your Church, Church Roofing etc. which are all available from [Church House Publishing](#), Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ.

CHURCH REPRESENTATION RULES

[Church Representation Rules](#) is a vital tool for all those involved in parochial, diocesan and national Church governance.

This 2020 edition presents an entirely new text of the Church Representation Rules, replacing the previous Rules established in 1969 and amended numerous times over the following fifty years.

CHURCH REPRESENTATION RULES

There are pages on the [diocesan website](#) and the national [Church of England website](#).

PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP



The Archdeacon of Lindisfarne (the Venerable Dr Catherine Sourbut Groves)

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The Archdeacon of Northumberland (the Venerable Rachel Wood)

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The Archdeacons' PA (Mrs Katherine Govier)

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The Diocesan Registrar (Mrs Laura Peace)

Sintons, The Cube, Barrack Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6DB

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The Diocesan Secretary (Mr Chris Elder)

Church House, St John's Terrace, North Shields, NE29 6HS

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The Property Manager (Mr Ian Beswick)

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Your Area Dean is also available for support.

PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP

Matters concerning the Diocesan Advisory Committee: Please consult the Secretary, your Archdeacon or the Diocesan Registrar. .



Mrs Lucy Burfield (Secretary)

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The Diocesan Website also has a churchwardens' [page](#).

The Royal Institute of British Architects also has a '[Client Advisory Service](#)'.