

Duties of Churchwardens

Churchwardens are Bishops' officers, chosen by the parish and admitted to their office by the Bishop or Archdeacon. Once admitted they have formal and legal responsibilities to fulfil.

Canon Law

The Church of England's official rules (the Canons, section E1) state that Churchwardens:

- must discharge such duties as are by law and custom assigned to them;
- should be foremost in representing the laity and in co-operating with their incumbent (their rector, vicar or priest-in-charge);
- should encourage the parishioners in the practice of true religion, and to promote unity and peace among them;
- must maintain order and decency in the church and churchyard, especially during services;
- are responsible for the plate, ornaments and other movable goods of the church, and should keep an up-to-date inventory of all such items.
- on going out of office, should hand over to their successors any goods of the church remaining in their hands, together with the inventory which should be checked by their successors.



Some of the Churchwardens' chief duties

The Parochial Church Council

- Once elected, churchwardens normally become members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) immediately, although they become the bishop's officers only after being admitted to office.
- The outgoing wardens retain office and continue to serve as ex-officio members of the PCC until their successors are admitted.
- The churchwardens should lead the PCC in carrying out all its duties, including co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Church services

- Churchwardens are responsible for the seating of the congregation in the church, and for maintenance of good behaviour especially during services.
- They are assisted in these duties by the sidespeople, who will also welcome people arriving for worship. Churchwardens should arrange the sidespeople's rota, and ensure that they know what their duties are.





Parish finances

- The churchwardens should try to ensure that the PCC meets its financial obligations, including contributions to diocesan funds and the payment in full of the working expenses of the clergy in the parish.
- The churchwardens are responsible for the taking of any offerings or collections in church (helped by the sidespeople), noting the amounts in the service register and for the proper use of the money. Normally two people should count and record the collections.
- A churchwarden may hold the office of treasurer and, if no other member of the PCC is willing to act in that capacity, the churchwardens, or one of them must do so.

Property and buildings

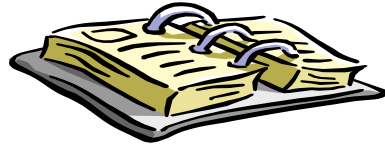
- The churchwardens should see that the PCC carries out its responsibilities for the care, maintenance and insurance of the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church and for the fencing of the churchyard.
- They should ensure that the necessary faculty (church permission) is obtained before any works are carried out.
- The churchwardens, as the 'owners' and trustees of the plate, ornaments, furniture and furnishings of the church, are responsible for ensuring that nothing is disposed of without a faculty.
- Churchwardens should ensure that the valuable furnishings, alms boxes, etc. are secure against theft.
- The churchwardens should try to ensure that the incumbent is relieved of administrative work particularly in connection with such matters as the insurance, heating, lighting, cleaning and maintenance of the church and other parish buildings, and the repair or replacement of such things as hassocks, hymn and prayer books, notice boards etc.



Records and reports

- Churchwardens, in consultation with the minister, should compile and maintain a full terrier listing the church's lands, a full inventory of the articles belonging to the church and a log book of repairs and works done to the church. *(This is required by the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991.)*
- Churchwardens are to inspect the fabric of the building and the goods of the church annually. A report on these matters is to be made at the PCC meeting next before the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, and then a report should be given to the Annual Meeting itself.

As soon as practicable after the beginning of the year, churchwardens should produce to the PCC the up-to-date terrier, inventory and log book, along with a signed statement that they are accurate



When there is no incumbent

- When visiting clergy and readers take services during the temporary absence of the incumbent in sickness or holiday or during a vacancy, churchwardens will wish to welcome them and, if necessary, see that they are entertained.
- Churchwardens should be satisfied that visiting ministers are authorised to officiate and should make sure that they are paid the appropriate fee and their travelling expenses.
- When there is an interregnum in the parish, churchwardens have certain responsibilities which will be notified to them at the time by the archdeacon, but particularly over the maintenance of services, in consultation with the Area Dean.
- Churchwardens may be chosen as Parish Representatives when a new incumbent is being appointed to the parish. Again, the archdeacon will give full details when this arises.



Access to the Archdeacon or Bishop

- As lay officers of the Bishop, the churchwardens ought, when necessary, report to him or to the archdeacon as to the state of the parish, and regarding any neglect or default by the incumbent in carrying out parish duties. Churchwardens will in any case be asked to complete the archdeacon's Articles of Enquiry each year
- The churchwardens also have duties in connection with visitations by the bishop or chancellor or by the archdeacon which are explained at the time.
- Having been admitted as Bishop's officers, any churchwarden who stands down before the term of office is completed must send a letter of resignation to the Bishop.



Churchwardens fulfil a valuable role in the life of the church, and we want to encourage and support all those who take on these responsibilities.

The Archdeacon and other personnel in the Diocesan Office are available to give support and advice, and are happy to be of service.

