

Publications

A Handbook for Churchwardens and parochial Church Councillors : Kenneth Macmorran and Timothy Briden

Churchwardens: A Survival Guide-The Office and Role of Churchwardens in the 21st Century : Martin Dudley and Virginia Rounding

Practical Church Management: A Guide for Every Parish : James Behrens

The Churchwarden's Handbook: A Practical Guide : Ian Russell and Helen Elliot

Management Essentials For Christian Ministries : Michael J. Anthony and James Estep (eds.)

How to Look After Your Church: Council for the Care of Churches

The Churchyards Handbook (Conservation & Mission) : Council for the Care of Churches

Websites

Diocese of Carlisle : www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk

Churches Trust for Cumbria : www.ctfc.org.uk

Ecclesiastical Insurance Group : www.ecclesiastical.com

Churchcare : www.churchcare.co.uk

Keeping God's House as your Own : www.churchwardens.com

The Role of Churchwardens



The role of Churchwardens is set out in Canon E1 and is regulated by the Churchwardens Measure 2001. These legal documents give the role some clear and unchanging parameters, with which those who are churchwardens will be familiar. The role has, though, evolved in practice over the years and varies in detail from parish to parish. We can also anticipate it evolving further in Carlisle Diocese as we begin to work together as collectives of parishes in Mission Communities. The purpose of this paper, building on discussions held on the Churchwardens Training Day 2014, is to set out in simple form the core essentials of the churchwarden's role and to offer some thoughts on how the role might further evolve in a Mission Communities setting. This is a draft document, so do please send any ideas on how it might be improved before wider circulation by e mailing your archdeacon.

1. Relationship with God

Being a churchwarden is first and foremost a calling and vocation in Christ's church, to serve the wellbeing of God's people. This will mean:

- taking care of your own spiritual and devotional life
- finding time and opportunity for your own worship
- undergirding your work as churchwarden with prayer
- praying for the clergy and people of the parish and for the church's mission

2. Relationship with the community

Churchwardens are elected by the parishioners and have a representational role for the church in the local community. As resident clergy have decreased in number the churchwardens are often the most easily recognised and accessible officers of the church and often will be a first point of contact for enquiries on a range of church related matters. This will mean:

- being informed and up to date on church activities, policies and procedures
- looking for ways to be involved in the wider life of the parish community
- helping the church to keep an outward-looking community focus
- informing church leaders of community issues and prayer needs
- helping to develop the church's ministry of welcome
- making sure that the church's mission takes account of local ways

Churchwardens will share this role with others and (in Mission Communities) with their Local Church Leader and leadership team.

3. Relationship with diocesan leaders

Churchwardens are officers of the bishop, which gives them a commitment to the life and mission of the church beyond their own parish. They will work closely with the archdeacon and rural dean on a range of matters, and are their 'eyes and ears' in the parishes. This will mean:

- being aware of deanery and diocesan priorities
- informing the bishop or archdeacon of any parish problems or achievements
- responding to enquiries that senior clergy make about the parish
- completing and returning the annual Articles of Enquiry
- meeting the archdeacon on triennial visitations

Churchwardens are a key link between the life of the church at local and diocesan level and this will continue in a Mission Communities setting.

4. Relationship with clergy and Local Church Leaders

Churchwardens have a particular responsibility to "cooperate with the incumbent" and represent the lay members of the church. Churchwardens will, therefore, have a close working relationship with their clergy and, as they are appointed, with their Local Church Leader and Mission Community Leader and Leadership Team. This will mean:

- attending regular meetings with the incumbent or Priest in Charge
- working with the Local Leadership Team and often being a member of it
- playing an active role on the Parochial Church Council
- representing the views of lay members and of the local community
- being a sounding board and critical friend to for the clergy and local leaders
- providing the clergy and Local Church Leader with pastoral support
- being authorised to lead morning and evening prayer in clergy absence
- being a sequestrator, with the Rural Dean, during vacancies
- contributing to clergy appraisals

5. Relationship with other churchwardens

The law allows for the appointment of two churchwardens in each parish, and more if this is custom and practice. It will be important that wherever possible all churchwarden posts are filled and that churchwardens then work closely together and with other wardens in the Mission Community. This will mean:

- establishing a good personal and working relationship
- planning work together and recognising each other's gifts and interests
- building a team of sidespeople and co-workers with whom tasks are shared
- meeting with other churchwardens in the benefice and Mission Community

6. Relationship with the congregation

Churchwardens are servant leaders within their congregations. They are to encourage parishioners in their faith by their example and influence and are to have a particular concern for the unity and growth of the church, and the furtherance of its mission in the world. This will mean:

- being visible and involved in church life
- building relationships with church members, especially newcomers
- preparing the church building for the church's worship
- overseeing, with sidespeople, the church's welcome ministry at services
- handling practical matters to ensure the smooth running of services
- being aware of safeguarding and health & safety issues

Churchwardens will need increasingly to share the practical tasks with others and be good delegators, within a teamwork approach to the work.

7. Relationship with the church building

Churchwardens have particular legal and practical responsibilities for the parish church and its furnishings. They have a key role in helping to maintain the fabric of the building and also to ensure that it is adapted to current needs. This is a complex and sometimes onerous responsibility that churchwardens will need to share with others in the congregation. This will mean:

- keeping the Church Property Register (Terrier & Inventory) up to date
- arranging routine cleaning and maintenance
- arranging the church's quinquennial inspection and consequential works
- being familiar with the faculty jurisdiction requirements
- taking advice from the archdeacon and Diocesan Advisory Committee

Many churchwardens have responsibility for listed buildings, and few are building experts. Mindful of this the diocese provides professional and advisory help on legal and technical matters and offers a Toolbox of resources to help churchwardens to care for buildings that serve well the contemporary life and mission of the church.

This paper doesn't unpack every fine detail of the churchwardens' responsibilities. The fact that it *doesn't* do so highlights the scale and range of responsibilities that fall to the churchwardens in our diocese. We are deeply grateful to those who are willing to follow God's call into this work and as a diocese we look to support our churchwardens as best we can, particularly as we transition into a Mission Communities setting. As with all our work for Christ, this is a work that can only be done "with the help of God".