

THE OFFICE AND DUTIES OF A CHURCHWARDEN

A. THE OFFICE

Churchwardens, when admitted, are the Bishop's lay officers responsible directly to him for the life and work of the church in the parish, and their office is accordingly both a privilege and a responsibility. Those who accept the privilege must be prepared to carry out the responsibilities laid upon them from time to time by the Bishop, or by the Archdeacon and the Area Dean.

"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; 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."

(Canon E1.4)

"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 E1.5)

B. DUTIES

The following list of duties is not exhaustive but includes the chief duties assigned to Churchwardens by law and those usually assigned by custom:

1. The Churchwardens should be regular and constant in attendance at worship within the parish..
2. The Churchwardens are responsible alongside the Area Dean for arranging services during a vacancy. If there is no one available to take the services they should be prepared to lead morning or evening prayer themselves. *(See Canon B11.4)*
3. As Lay Officers of the Bishop, the Churchwardens must answer to the Bishop, or to the Archdeacon or Area Dean as to the state of the parish. They must inform the Bishop of any misconduct or neglect on the part of the Incumbent.
4. As ex officio members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC), the Churchwardens must lead the Council 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.
5. The Churchwardens should see that the PCC carries out its responsibilities for the care, maintenance and insurance of the fabric of the church, the goods and ornaments of the church and the fencing of the churchyard. Churchwardens should record, in a Log Book provided by the PCC, all alterations, additions, removals or repairs to the Churches in their care. *(See Canon F13.4)*
6. If any alterations, additions, removals or repairs are proposed to be made to the fabric, ornaments or furniture of the church, it is the duty of the Minister and Churchwardens to obtain a Faculty before starting the work. This will also involve consulting the DAC. Where, however, repairs to a church or

re-decoration are minor, de minimis approval may be issued by the Archdeacon after relevant consultation with the DAC. See the Bishop's Regulations (The Red Book) for more details and also the new "De Minimis" – matters not requiring faculty regulations. For more details consult the Registry or your Archdeacon. (*See Canon F13.3*)

7. The Churchwardens are the 'owners' of the plate, ornaments, furniture and furnishings of the church. They must keep the inventory up to date. They should check the items at least once a year to ensure that none has been lost. A certificate to this effect in the inventory should be signed at every Annual Parochial Church Meeting, when a report should be made on the furnishings and fabric of the church. The Churchwardens should ensure that the Church Plate and other valuable furnishings, the alms boxes, etc., are secure against theft. (*See Canon E.1*)
8. The Churchwardens are responsible for the seating of the congregation in church, and for maintenance of good order especially during services. They are assisted in these duties by the Sidespersons. The Churchwardens should arrange the roster of Sidesperson's duties and ensure that Sidespersons know what their duties are. (*See Canon E2*)
9. The Churchwardens are responsible for the collections taken in the church (helped by the Sidespersons), for recording the sums received in the church service register, and for the safe keeping and proper disposal of the money.
10. The Churchwardens must see to the provision of the bread and wine for the services of Holy Communion, with the advice and the direction of the Incumbent and at the expense of the PCC. (*See Canon B17*)
11. When other clergy and readers take services during the temporary absence of the Incumbent in sickness or on holiday, the Churchwardens should welcome and entertain them, and make sure that they are paid their fees, if appropriate, and travelling expenses.

12. The Churchwardens should ensure that the Incumbent is relieved of administrative work to do with the parish magazine, the heating, lighting and cleaning of the church and hall, the maintenance of any hall or parish property, the repair or replacement of damaged hymn and prayer books, etc. What can be shared, should be shared.
13. The Churchwardens should maintain close and good relationships with the PCC Treasurer and should encourage the PCC to discharge its responsibilities for insurance, repairs and replacements, and for seeing that the Parish Share is paid to the Diocese regularly and on time. They should ensure that the Incumbent's Parish Working Expenses are reviewed annually by the PCC and refunded in full. If no Treasurer can be found the duty falls on the Churchwardens.
14. The Churchwardens should encourage their clergy to adhere to the Diocesan Guidelines for annual holidays, i.e. four weeks and a few days break after Christmas and Easter. The Churchwardens should also ensure that each week their clergy have a full day off duty.
15. During a vacancy the Churchwardens have extra duties to perform. The Area Dean is in overall charge of the parish and consults with the Churchwardens about the necessary continuing pastoral care of the parish provided by visiting clergy and readers. When a new appointment is being made the Churchwardens and the PCC have certain rights under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986. These will be explained at the time of a vacancy.
16. The Churchwardens also have duties in connection with visitations by the Bishop or Archdeacon, which are explained at the time.

Whenever you require help or guidance in executing your duties, never hesitate to get in touch with your Archdeacon or Area Dean.