

**Whenever you require help or guidance in executing your duties, never hesitate to get in touch with your Archdeacon, Rural Dean, or the Diocesan Office.**

### **THE OFFICE**

Churchwardens, when admitted, are officers of the Archbishop (not the minister or PCC) 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 Archbishop or the Bishop, or by the Archdeacon and Rural 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)

### **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 Divine Worship within the parish.
2. 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.
3. As Lay Officers of the Archbishop, the Churchwardens must answer to the Archbishop or Bishop, or to the Archdeacon and Rural Dean as to the state of the parish.
4. The Churchwardens are required to make the Declaration of office and to be admitted to the office by the Archdeacon each year and also to attend visitations by the Archbishop or Archdeacon, which are explained at the time.
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 that the burial grounds and church curtilages are in good repair and decent order and that their boundaries are marked with fences, walls or hedges and properly maintained. Churchwardens should record in a Log Book provided by the PCC, all alterations, additions, removals or repairs to the Churches in their care and this record shall indicate where specifications and plans may be inspected if not deposited with the Log Book (Canon F13.4).
6. The Churchwardens hold the title to the plate, ornaments, furniture and furnishings of the church. They must keep the inventory up to date. They are required to check the items at least once a year to ensure that none has been lost. A certificate to this effect in the inventory must be signed before every annual parochial church meeting, and a report should be made at the meeting on the furnishings and fabric of the church. Churchwardens must hand over all movable goods to their successors. New Churchwardens should check and identify the location of all items on the inventory. The Churchwardens should ensure that the Church Plate and other valuable furnishings, the alms boxes, etc., are secure against theft (Canon E1).
7. If any alterations, additions, removals or repairs are proposed to be made in 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 (Canon F13.3).
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 Sidesmen. All persons whose names are on the electoral roll are eligible to be appointed, and appointments are made by the annual parochial meeting or between meetings by the PCC. The Churchwardens should arrange the roster of Sidesmen’s duties and ensure that Sidesmen know what their duties are (Canon E2).
9. The Churchwardens should maintain close and good relationships with the Church Treasurer and should encourage the PCC to discharge its responsibilities for insurance, repairs and replacements, and for seeing that the share of the Diocesan budget allocated to the Parish is paid to the Diocese regularly and on time. They should ensure that the Minister’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. Churchwardens may also be trustees of other parochial charities by virtue of their office.
10. The Churchwardens are responsible for the collection of alms and dues taken in the church (helped by the Sidesmen), for the recording of the sums received in the church service register, and for the safe keeping, depositing in a bank account and proper disposal of the money.
11. The Churchwardens must provide the bread and wine for the services of Holy Communion, with the advice and the direction of the minister and at the expense of the PCC (Canon B17).
12. The Churchwardens should ensure that the minister is relieved of administrative work to do with the parish magazine, the heating, lighting and cleaning of the church and hall, the maintenance of the hall and curate’s house, the repair or replacement of damaged hymn and prayer books, etc.

13. The Churchwardens should encourage their clergy to adhere to the Diocesan Guidelines for annual holidays, four Sundays off during the year, one of these probably not as part of the summer holiday of three to four weeks. In addition to the long summer holiday there should be a few days holiday after Christmas and Easter. The Churchwardens should also ensure that each week their clergy have a full day off duty.
14. The Churchwardens must inform the Bishop of any misconduct or neglect on the part of the Incumbent.
15. When other clergy and readers take Services during the temporary absence of the minister in sickness or on holiday, the Churchwardens should welcome them, and make sure that they are duly licensed and are paid their fees, if appropriate, and travelling expenses.
16. During a vacancy the Churchwardens have extra duties to perform and are sent detailed notes about these from the Diocesan Office.
  - ◆ The Rural Dean is in overall charge of the parish and consults with the Churchwardens about the necessary continuing pastoral care of the parish by visiting clergy and readers.
  - ◆ The Churchwardens are responsible for arranging for services to be taken, in consultation with the Rural Dean. If there is no one available to take the services they should be prepared to say Morning and Evening Prayer on Sundays themselves (Canon B11.1).
  - ◆ When a new appointment is being made the PCC has certain rights under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986. These will be explained at the time of a vacancy.
  - ◆ The Churchwardens are sequestrators together with the Rural Dean and Diocesan Board of Finance.

The legal rules on the number of Churchwardens in each parish, who may be a Churchwarden, the appointment and terms of office, and how to resign are prescribed by the Churchwardens Measure 2001. Although not dealt with here, there is an unofficial summary of the provisions of the 2001 Measure available from the Diocesan Office.

“Minister” in this leaflet means either an incumbent or priest in charge.

LIONEL LENNOX, DIOCESAN REGISTRAR

May 2006

NOTE: Unlike Churchwardens, deputy wardens of daughter or district churches are not ‘Churchwardens’ in the strict legal sense and their functions are confined to the particular church. Deputy wardens are not the bishop’s officers and do not come within the terms of the 2001 Measure.

## DIOCESE OF YORK

### THE OFFICE AND DUTIES OF A CHURCHWARDEN

#### A message from the Archbishop

What would we do without you? Churchwardens are elected by the whole community and not just the congregational roll, so they relate to the parish as well as the congregation. Canon law says churchwardens are to be:

*“foremost in representing the laity and 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 ...”*

So a churchwarden is a missionary, alongside the parish priest. As well as mission, you have management and maintenance duties, like keeping order in church and churchyard, especially during divine worship. You would be well advised to share those duties with the local police (keep their number stored on your mobile ‘phone just in case)! Increasingly, a churchwarden ensures that rules and regulations are kept, as well as turning up at church before everyone else and organising various rotas. The role of a churchwarden may be ancient, but it’s bang up to date, too.

Sometimes you may feel that your duties interrupt your personal worship. Please don’t be hard on yourself – your work *is* worship, for it is part of your offering to God. My dear mother’s motto above the kitchen sink read: *“Divine service offered here three times a day.”* Your personal prayers will lay hold of God’s grace to help you fulfil your responsibilities with sensitivity, determination and good humour.

Churchwardens are officers of the Bishop. I’m proud of you and I thank God – and you – for all you are doing for the Lord.

+ **Sentamu Ebor:**

#### DECLARATION OF OFFICE

I solemnly and sincerely declare before God and his people that I will faithfully and diligently discharge the duties of the office of churchwarden for the parish for which I have been chosen during the period of my appointment and that I will present to the Bishop such matters, or persons, as to my knowledge should be presented.