

The role of the churchwarden

The roles and responsibilities of a churchwarden are wide and varied, as befitting an office that dates back to the 13th century, and churchwardens duties vary considerably according to local custom, tradition and the needs of particular parishes. These local variations evolve over time and it is important that each churchwarden is clear about what is expected and what is realistic. That being said, there is a framework expressed in statute and canon law which churchwardens should understand.

Churchwardens are officers of the bishop and their loyalty is to him, whilst at the same time remembering that they are chosen by the people of the parish, so their responsibility is to the parish as a whole, not just to the church congregation. These duties are covered in greater detail in the books recommended on the attached reading list, but some of these duties are summarised here.

A churchwarden offers lay leadership in the parish:

- As Bishop's Officer, by keeping the Bishop and Archdeacon informed about the life of the parish.
- By welcoming visiting clergy.
- Working collaboratively with clergy and laity.
- Exercising pastoral care of the clergy, especially the incumbent.
- Leading and enabling others and helping others develop their gifts and offer their ministries.
- Churchwardens are automatically members of the PCC and serve on the Standing Committee.

Legal responsibilities:

- To maintain the fabric and content of the church.
- To keep the inventory and terrier up to date and in a safe place.
- To attend visitations.
- To keep up to date with relevant legislation and inform others as appropriate.
- To ensure the smooth running of services.
- To ensure that the PCC meets its financial obligations.

Legal responsibilities with the PCC:

- To exercise leadership in relation to the mission of the church.
- To work together with all other members in leading the church forward in prayer, worship and pastoral care.
- To ensure buildings are taken care of and legalities are met (faculties, etc).
- To support the incumbent in the administration of the parish.
- To ensure expenses of ministry are adequately met.