



## CHURCHWARDEN SAMPLE ROLE DESCRIPTION

### BACKGROUND TO THE ROLE

A churchwarden is an elected lay official in a parish church of the Anglican Communion. They are the Bishop's officers, and are usually admitted to office each year by the Archdeacon on behalf of the Bishop at a special service. Their first responsibility is to the Bishop, usually via the Archdeacon. They, with the incumbent, are generally responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the parish. Churchwardens are vital to the health and wellbeing of church communities. It is an important and, at times, a demanding role.

They can serve for up to six years. It is a voluntary (unpaid) position. The responsibilities of Churchwardens are laid down in the Churchwarden's Measure 2001 and the Canons of the Church of England E1.4 and E1.5, which state:

- Churchwardens shall be foremost in representing the laity and in cooperating 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.
- The property, in the plate, ornaments and other moveable goods of the church, is vested in them, and they should keep an up-to-date inventory of these items, and deliver them to their successors.

Thus the role has three chief components:

- To make a key contribution to the strategic leadership of the church they serve as it discerns, articulates and implements God's vision for his church in the parish.
- To oversee the maintenance and development of the churchyard, church building and its contents, and the smooth running of the church as a Christian community. This includes legal and financial aspects of church life.
- To care for and encourage the vicar and the whole church membership in their joint ministry and mission within and beyond the parish.

Much of the essential content of the above legislation is helpfully reproduced in chapters 7 and 8 of the latest edition of *A Handbook for Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councillors* (Mowbray).

### MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

As a church community seeks to grow – numerically, in more people becoming disciples of Jesus Christ; spiritually, in deepening the spiritual life of those who are disciples; and in impacting the community and beyond through loving service – churchwardens will ideally look to delegate various tasks to enable them to concentrate on key priorities and involve others in the smooth running of church life. However, it is important to remember that while tasks essential to the running of the church may be delegated to others, they remain the responsibility of the churchwardens, and there needs to be a certain flexibility to ensure that these are done, whether by churchwardens or by others.

Their main responsibilities will include:

- To work with the PCC to 'co-operate with the incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical' (PCC Powers Measure 1956).
- To share leadership with the incumbent, to support the incumbent by being someone to whom the incumbent can turn to for advice and encouragement, and to provide feedback, as a 'critical friend'.



- To care for the congregation and encourage people in their Christian faith.
- To help to resolve disputes or disagreements amongst the congregation or with the incumbent, or with the local community.
- To work collaboratively with the incumbent in the selection, appointment and on-going well-being of PCC employees.
- To oversee practical arrangements before, during and after Sunday worship, including the service register and other registers being properly filled in.
- To oversee practical arrangements before, during and after special worship services and events.
- To oversee a vacancy in the parish. The churchwardens, along with the Area Dean, are responsible for ensuring that worship, pastoral care and mission continues in the parish, and for supporting any assistant clergy, lay ministers, staff and volunteers in the parish in their responsibilities.
- To arrange the insurance, security, maintenance and repair of the church building and associated appliances including, where appropriate, dealing with contractors. This includes the implementation of repairs suggested in the quinquennial report.
- To ensure the terrier (list of land belonging to the church), inventory (list of items belonging to the church) and log book (detailing alterations, additions and repairs to the church, its lands and articles) are kept up-to-date.
- To oversee the completion of Annual Returns to the Diocese and the Charity Commissioners.
- To ensure there are adequate preparations for the Archdeacon's triennial parochial visitation.

### PERSON SPECIFICATION

- A follower of Christ, and a faithful member of the church.
- Over 21 and on the electoral roll, a confirmed and communicant member of the Church of England.
- A servant heart, with a preparedness to get 'stuck in' when needed.
- Flexible, with a sense of humour.
- In full agreement with the vision and values of the church.

### EXPECTATIONS

We expect the churchwardens to:

- Appreciate and accept the overall vision into which this role fits and encourage others to appreciate, accept, and work towards it.
- Serve as an ex-officio member of the PCC.
- Serve as an ex-officio member of the Standing Committee.
- Work diligently to fulfil their responsibilities.
- Subject to re-appointment or re-election at the Annual Meeting of Parishioners or a change in personal circumstances, ideally serve for a minimum of three years.
- Meet regularly with the incumbent (about every 6-8 weeks) for prayer, mutual support, review and planning.

### SUPPORT FOR CHURCHWARDENS

We intend to support and encourage you in this ministry by:

- Ensuring there is a good handover with the outgoing churchwarden and a supportive induction process.
- Praying for the ministry of the churchwardens.
- Providing, via the incumbent, an annual review of the role and workload.
- Informing you of diocesan training events for churchwardens.
- Providing access to practical help and appropriate resources from the Diocese and the Church of England.
- Encouraging the identification and use of gifts among church members so that some of the tasks currently done by the churchwardens are delegated.

### STEPPING DOWN

A churchwarden wishing to step down from office should inform the incumbent but must tender his or her resignation to the Bishop by giving two months' notice in writing.



## Appendix 1 – Overview of Responsibilities from the Diocese of London

The way in which churchwardens exercise their office will vary from parish to parish.

### 1. MEETINGS / TRUSTEESHIPS

They are *ex officio* members of the PCC (the trustees of the parish), and the PCC Standing Committee. Churchwardens become members of the PCC from the moment they are elected, although they might not be admitted to office by the Archdeacon until several weeks later.

They may also be *ex officio* trustees of parish ecclesiastical and parochial charities. They should meet regularly with the incumbent.

### 2. ADMINISTRATION

With the incumbent and PCC, they should use their best endeavours to ensure that:

- There is adequate provision for and oversight of the administration of the parish, including financial administration
- There are proper procedures in place for recruiting, and managing lay staff and volunteers
- The PCC adopts a Safeguarding policy, and has an action plan for ensuring that the policy is implemented
- The PCC has a health and safety policy and ensures that it is implemented
- There are adequate preparations for the Archdeacon's triennial parochial visitation.

### 3. FINANCE

They should use their best endeavours to ensure that:

- There are proper systems in place for counting collections, recording amounts and their secure holding until they can be banked
- Adequate processes are in place for managing the finances of the PCC
- Expenses of office are paid to the clergy
- The church is adequately insured
- All bills are paid
- The PCC contributes to the Diocese's Common Fund
- The parish's end of year accounts, and other returns are submitted promptly.

In the absence of a PCC Treasurer, the churchwardens must fulfil the role of Treasurer together.

### 4. MISSION

Churchwardens should use their best endeavours to ensure that:

- The PCC has a Mission Action Plan, and pays attention to implementing it
- There is an appropriately encouraging welcome to people attending church
- The church is open to the public as much as possible.

### 5. PASTORAL CARE

Churchwardens should use their best endeavours to ensure that the pastoral work of the Church is being undertaken in the parish and amongst the congregation.

### 6. BUILDINGS AND CONTENTS AND PROPERTY

Churchwardens are responsible for ensuring that the PCC cares for and maintains the church and its contents and other buildings in the parish, and the churchyard or grounds.

They are responsible for ensuring that:

- There is a terrier, (the list and description of any land or buildings belonging to the church).
- Proper records of any property transactions, including licences under Faculty and tenancy agreements and leases are kept.
- A list of all ecclesiastical trusts and charities associated with the parish is maintained.
- An annually updated inventory and photographic record of all the items belonging to the church is retained
- Quinquennial repairs are carried out.



- A log book of all alterations and repairs to the church and its lands and contents exists.
- Appropriate building and contents insurances are in place.
- An annual report is made on the fabric of the church and any other buildings to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.
- All valuable items are securely kept.
- The Archdeacon and the DAC are consulted about any repairs or alteration to the church, or any acquisitions or disposals of contents, and that a Faculty is obtained before any work is begun.

## 7. LITURGY AND WORSHIP

- In the absence of the parish priest they are responsible, with the Area Dean, for ensuring that there is someone to conduct services, and that liturgy and the life of the parish continues as far as possible as with the previous incumbent. If there is no one available they should conduct any service, as far as possible themselves. They must check that all visiting clergy hold the Bishop's licence or Permission to Officiate.
- They should ensure that the service register and other registers are properly filled in.
- During a vacancy in the parish, they, with the Area Dean, are responsible for the good ordering of the parish.
- They are responsible for ensuring that people are properly welcomed to the church and to services, and that sidespeople are appointed.
- They are responsible for good order in the church and churchyard or the equivalent. In the event of a service being disrupted or a disturbance in church they should call the police, and, if necessary, may arrest a person, or escort them off the premises.

At the end of their period of office churchwardens should handover their keys to their successors, and the inventory, which should then be checked and signed.

Churchwardens are not expected to do everything above themselves, but to make sure that there are other people available to carry out the various tasks.

## Appendix 2 – Overview of Responsibilities from the Diocese of Blackburn

Thank you to those of you who have chosen to serve God and your community through the office of Churchwarden. Please find below a list of the primary duties of a Churchwarden.

### 1. TO BE A CHRISTIAN

- Committed to and believing in the Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour and Lord.
- Now living out your life as a Servant of Christ and 'given' to building the Kingdom of God.

### 2. TO BE A CHRISTIAN LEADER

- Setting an example of Christian life and holiness.
- Growing in Christian maturity and wisdom.
- Convinced of the Gospel and God's calling.
- To make being a Churchwarden a priority.

### 3. TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY IN PARTNERSHIP

- With humility and graciousness.
- As a peacemaker, bridge builder and reconciler.
- With loyalty and co-operation especially towards the incumbent and others in leadership.

### 4. TO CO-OPERATE WITH THE PRIEST IN LEADING THE WHOLE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

- Pastoral.
- Evangelistic.
- Social.
- Ecumenical.

### 5. TO BE THE BISHOP'S OFFICER

- Attend any meeting of the Bishop, Chancellor or Archdeacon when summoned.
- Report any matter of serious neglect within the Parish.
- Make accurate replies to any 'articles of enquiry'.

### 6. TO BE STEWARDS OF THE CHURCH BUILDING AND FURNISHINGS

- Keep the church/parish Inventory and Log Book up to date.
- Oversee security.
- Inspect and report on the church fabric each year.

### 7. OTHER DUTIES

- Responsible for seating.
- Oversee the taking and recording of collections.
- Provide bread/wine under direction of priest.
- Welcome visiting clergy/arrange for necessary clergy cover in co-operation with priest.
- Ensure that the parish's financial obligations are met.
- Work with the Area Dean and Archdeacon especially during times of vacancy.
- Make sure of a good hand-over to your successor.

