



## Diocese of Ripon & Leeds Diocesan Advisory Committee Guidelines

### CHURCHWARDENS' CHECKLIST

On taking office a churchwarden should make sure that he or she has a water-tight pair of wellies, a strong umbrella, a pair of binoculars, a thick overcoat, an oil can (not just for calming troubled waters!), a set of church keys, a stout heart, a notebook and pen. With these he or she can tackle anything, especially spotting potential trouble almost before it starts.

#### THE ENEMY

No, it's not the Vicar or the congregation but rising damp, blocked drains and gutters, poor ventilation, faulty wiring, insecure windows and doors, the unserviced boiler, the slipped slate and crumbling stonework. It may even be the burden of office and need to take time off and say your own prayers!

Water is probably the greatest single cause of damage to buildings, then poor ventilation, followed by faulty electrical wiring (which is the cause of most fires) and poor security which lets the thieves and vandals in.

A regular walk round the buildings in your care (at least once a month), occasionally in the rain to spot blocked drains and gutters, armed with binoculars to spot the slipped slate or the elder tree growing half-way up the tower can do wonders. Notice it, note it and get help to put it right!

#### A CHECK LIST

The following check-list may help:

- **Drains and gutters** - should be cleared, at least once a year, after leaf fall. Paying someone to do this may cost £100 or so if you cannot reach them yourself. If you do chose to clear them yourself, remember the working heights legislation. Failure to keep gutters clear will certainly cause damage which may cost up to several thousand pounds to repair.
- **Weeds and green growth** - round the base of walls - remove or poison as necessary.
- **Ventilation** - Maintenance of ventilated windows is important especially in summer when a through draught is essential to reduce internal condensation.

- **Slipped slates** and damaged tiles - look out for them especially after storms and for internal tell-tale damp patches.
- **Insecure doors and windows** - an invitation to the thief!
- Old, trailing or loose **wiring** - the cause of many fires.
- **Churchyard care** - not just the grass, but noting dangerous or loose tombstones (a real hazard to children), broken glass and dead limbs on trees which may need surgery.
- The **boiler** - should be serviced annually and started up occasionally during summer months to make sure it works when it is needed.
- Churchyard **walls and fences** - a stitch in time can save large bills.
- **Valley gutters** - out of sight, out of mind, but need clearing, especially of leaves and snow.
- **Fire Risk assessments** - need to be carried out to establish the need for precautions.
- **Fire extinguishers** - need annual maintenance.
- The **Log Book and Inventory** - be ready for the New Year and the annual church meeting.
- Oil the **locks** - dry locks bend keys.
- **Spring-clean** - an annual event in both buildings and churchyard can prevent the accumulation of clutter and debris.
- Clear **tower roof and belfry** - jackdaws and pigeons love bell towers - check screens for holes.
- **Beetles and dry rot** - watch for tell-tale dust (wood-worm), droppings (mice), droppings that look like mice droppings (death-watch beetle) and growths on walls and woodwork (which may be dry rot).

**Good churchwardens look for trouble but seek the help of others to put things right.**

**If in doubt, shout! Ring your Archdeacon or inspecting architect.**