



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

A QUICK GUIDE TO LOOKING AFTER CHURCH BUILDINGS

This guide is aimed at all PCC members, as well as Churchwardens and other volunteers involved in the management and care of church buildings.

Tilney St Lawrence

“We shape our buildings, and afterwards they shape us”

Winston Churchill

Looking after a church building is a team effort. Every member of a PCC should be aware of what is involved, so it can prioritise items and identify what support is needed.

This document has been produced to highlight the key areas - it is not a list of things that need to be dealt with immediately, nor is it a list of things for just one person to be responsible for. There are clickable links to take you to more detailed guidance when needed. While the focus is on listed buildings, much of what is included will be relevant to all church buildings.

Printed copies are available on request from the [Church Buildings Team](#).

GET TO KNOW YOUR BUILDING

It is important to have a good understanding of your building, from the materials used and the way it has been constructed, to why it is valued by a range of people.

Key documents:

- Quinquennial Inspection (QI) Report
- Inventory and Logbook
- Statement of Significance
- Guidebooks, local research etc...

Links to more information:

- A guide to [Quinquennial Inspections](#)
- [Church Property Register and Logbook](#)
- How to write a [Statement of Significance](#)
- Help with [Interpreting your historic church building](#) – a video produced by the Diocese of Lincoln
- Notes on how to [Research your Church](#)

REMEMBER YOUR CHURCHYARD/OUTDOOR SPACE

It might not be part of the church building, but it is an important part of the heritage of the church and the first threshold people cross.

- Consider how the space is/could be used.
- Is the churchyard closed for burials? If so, check who's responsible for maintaining grass, trees, monuments etc.
- Explore opportunities to encourage wildlife - take part in the Churchyard Conservation Scheme.
- Look after churchyard monuments.
- Maintain trees.

Links to more information:

- Guidance on [Churchyards and Memorials](#)
- Churchyard Conservation Scheme in [Cambridgeshire](#) and [Norfolk](#)
- [Advice on trees](#)

“Burial grounds encapsulate the history of communities whilst offering refuge for our native wildlife.”

Caring for God's Acre



KEEP ON TOP OF MAINTENANCE & REPAIRS

Regular maintenance and timely repairs can help to prevent problems from becoming bigger and more expensive.

It is important to understand:

- how to use a QI Report;
- the principles of good maintenance and areas that require particular attention, such as gutters and drains;
- how to appoint architects and contractors and manage work.

Remember to:

- keep the Maintenance Plan and Logbook updated;
- conduct an annual survey of the building.

Links to more information:

- A guide to [Quinquennial Inspections](#)
- A range of [Church Building Maintenance](#) resources
- [Church Logbook](#)

CLEAN HISTORIC OBJECTS & SURFACES CAREFULLY

Many of us wouldn't question using our home cleaning products to clean the interior of churches, but not only could we be doing more harm than good, we might actually be cleaning far more than we need to.

What you need:

- A basic knowledge of cleaning techniques for different materials & objects.
- Appropriate equipment and materials.
- To know when and how to get professional support.

More information can be found in the [Church Cleaning](#) section of the website.



UNDERSTAND WHEN & HOW TO APPLY FOR CONSENT

Most repairs, maintenance and changes to a church building or its contents require consent. Depending on the type of work this could be List B Archdeacon's consent or a full faculty.

- Familiarise yourself with List A, B, Faculty consent the **Online Faculty System**.
- Be aware of when other forms of consent might be required.
- Know how to write a Statement of Needs.
- Be aware of rules and advice relating to all protected species, such as bats.

Links to more information:

- [The Diocesan Advisory Committee](#) (DAC)
- [Faculty Consent and The Registry](#)
- How to write a [Statement of Needs](#)
- [Bats in Churches](#)
- For more specific notes on things such as floor covering, footpaths, car parks etc... please search the [Care of Church Buildings and Churchyards](#) section.

REVIEW BUDGETS, RAISE FUNDS & APPLY FOR GRANTS

A good understanding of income and expenditure is essential for running your building, including budgeting for future repairs and how to raise funds for future projects.

It is a good idea to:

- have budgets and business plans for maintenance, minor repairs and major projects;
- create a fundraising strategy;
- know how to write grant applications;
- look into setting up a Friends Group or something similar.

Links to more information:

- How to write a [Project Business Plan](#)
- A range of resources for [Fundraising](#)
- A guide to [Grants](#) and writing applications
- A range of resources on [Volunteering and Friends Groups](#)



Kingston



Walsoken



LOOK AFTER YOUR VOLUNTEERS

We value our volunteers, from Churchwardens and PCC members to casual support at events; they are the lifeblood of the church. It is important to make sure that everyone who volunteers is supported and managed to the highest possible standards.

- Carry out a skills audit of your existing team.
- Understand the legal responsibilities and liabilities of certain key roles.
- Understand how to recruit and manage volunteers.

More information can be found in the [Volunteering and Friends Groups](#) section of the website.

MAINTAIN A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Reaching out to the wider community helps you to understand local needs, in order to widen the faith, cultural and social mission of your church.

- Understand the difference between engagement and consultation.
- Conduct a community audit.
- Ensure the church is included in parish or local area plans and projects.
- Build partnerships with other groups, organisations and churches.
- Develop effective communication for a range of audiences.

Links to more information:

- [Community Engagement and Consultation](#)
- [Questionnaires and Surveys](#)



Woodditton

“Buildings are vehicles to engage with God’s work within the world.”

Archdeacon of Lindisfarne

CREATE AN OPEN & WELCOMING CHURCH

People visit churches for a variety of reasons; they should be open, welcoming and accessible wherever possible.

Focus on:

- Good first impressions externally and internally
- A welcome table and clear signage
- Accessibility and the Equalities Act
- Risk assessments and security

More information can be found in the [Open and Welcome Churches](#) section of the website.

SHARE THE STORIES OF YOUR CHURCH

Interpreting the heritage of your church is an important part of being a custodian of part of the nation's heritage. It is not about listing dry dates and facts, it is about engaging different audiences in the history and stories connected to your church.

Consider:

- Guidebooks, trails, text panels etc...
- School visits and group tours
- Events and exhibitions
- Research projects
- Online presence

Links to more information:

- A range of resources on [Open and Welcome Churches](#)
- [Event Planning](#)

“People just come in, they see a lovely building and want to have a look. They may bump into God while they are here.”

Churchwarden



Wisbech St Mary

“If nobody loves them and nobody understands them, there is no future for them.”

Churches Conservation Trust

BALANCE SECURITY & RISK WITH ACCESSIBILITY

Keeping buildings secure and people safe is a balance between accessibility and security. We need to identify, evaluate and take steps to minimise any potential risks.

- Boilers, fire extinguishers, lightning conductors, electrics, equipment etc... need regular testing.
- Check the level of insurance and security measures.
- Metal roofs – is there an approved roof alarm? Has Smartwater been applied?
- Review risk assessments and your Health and Safety policy.
- Be aware of regulations e.g COSHH, working at height, asbestos etc...

Links to more information:

- [Risk management resources](#) from Ecclesiastical Insurance
- Guidance on [Security and Crime Prevention](#) including metal theft, cleaning graffiti and protecting church treasures

RESPOND TO CHANGING NEEDS

Buildings change as the needs of those using them change, but it is important to ensure that the heritage and value of a building isn't drastically altered or lost as a result.

- Review your vision, mission statement, action plan etc...
- Consult the congregation and wider community.
- Familiarise yourself with different options for church buildings.
- Understand how to manage a project, particularly one involving major works.

More Information can be found in the [Project Management](#) section of the website.

BECOME MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT

It makes environmental and financial sense to become more energy efficient.

- Carry out an Energy Audit.
- Join the Eco-Church award scheme.
- Start with the 'small stuff' and make bigger changes when funds allow.

Links to more information:

- [The Practical Path to Net Zero Carbon](#)
- [Eco Church](#)

TOP TIPS FROM CHURCH VOLUNTEERS

- Don't take on too much.
- It is a team effort; make sure the whole PCC is involved and not just one Churchwarden.
- Learn to smile when people are unhappy about how things are/are not being done.
- Have the patience of a saint.
- Looking after a church takes time, lots of time.
- Help is available from all sorts of places.
- Take time to stop and remember how fantastic these buildings are.
- Enjoy it!



Do you know about *Church Heritage*, our quarterly newsletter? [Click here](#) to download the latest issue or contact us to be added to the mailing list.



Contact details for the [Church Buildings Team](#)

Have we missed something?

We have tried to condense all the key components of looking after a church building into this small leaflet, but if we have overlooked something please let us (the Church Buildings Team) know.



Caxton



Longstanton