

Churchwardens

At our next annual Vestry Meeting, on Sunday 30th May, two churchwardens will need to be appointed. Christianah and Helen have both served well our church community through unprecedented times, and it is time to find two new church lay leaders.

The responsibility to find a new wardens lies with all of us. This leaflet contains some information about the role. Please think and pray about who God might be calling to serve in this way. It might even be you!

Whilst being churchwarden can be a demanding role, it is not uncommon these days for the role to be shared between a team of

people, even if two people are the official 'named' churchwardens. This helps with time pressures as well as combining different skills and interests. Please note that having oversight of various things does not mean having to do them all yourself!

If you have any questions or would like to have an informal chat about it with no commitment, please speak to Christianah, Helen or Revd Maria.

What is a Churchwarden?

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.

What are the Churchwardens' key responsibilities?

The Churchwardens' responsibilities fall into three main areas: worship, maintenance and care.

1) Worship: churchwardens are responsible for seating the congregation and maintaining good order during worship. They are responsible for taking the offerings and collections and ensuring proper systems are in place for handling monies. They also have a responsibility to encourage people in their faith

2) Maintenance: the Churchwardens should see that the PCC carries out its responsibilities for the care, maintenance

and insurance of the church building and its contents. Together with the Incumbent, they should make sure that the required records concerning church property are kept. These are the terrier (a list of land belonging to the church), an inventory of all the items belonging to the church, and a log book of all alterations, additions and repairs to the church, its land and articles. Each year the churchwardens prepare a written report on the fabric, fixtures, fittings and furniture of the church to present to the PCC and the APCM. They will be involved in any faculty applications.

3) Care: the Churchwardens should care for the parish priest and their family, paying particular attention to their wellbeing. They should also care for the congregation, to encourage them in their Christian faith, and to help heal any quarrels or disagreements that arise

between them or between the congregation and the parish priest.

Churchwardens are members of the PCC and, as such, play an important part in discerning and directing the strategic vision and direction of the church.

What qualities is it desirable for a churchwarden to have?

A Churchwarden should be someone who the congregation respects as a leader, and who can take charge when needed. They should be wise and, if needed, firm. They should not be frightened of dealing with senior clergy. It is important that they maintain their own Christian faith and a regular pattern of prayer and worship.

Who may be a churchwarden?

Churchwardens must be baptised, on the church electoral roll, over 21, have taken

communion at least three times in the previous year, and consent to being appointed. As members of the PCC (and therefore charitable trustees) they cannot be people who are disqualified from being a charity trustee, or those who have been convicted of criminal offences against children or vulnerable people.

How are churchwardens appointed?

Two churchwardens are chosen annually, by election. Anyone on the church electoral roll and anyone who lives in the parish are eligible to vote. Candidates must be proposed and seconded before the meeting. If there are two nominations it will normally be agreed that they are appointed; if there are more than two, a vote takes place. Clergy do not vote but the Incumbent may, if they have concerns about working with one of the churchwardens, choose to appoint on warden themselves, with the meeting appointing the other (by vote).

How long are you appointed for?

Churchwardens are only every appointed for one year. Under ordinary circumstances, they may stand for up to six successive years and then must not stand for at least two years.

What training and support is available?

No one is expected to know everything and be able to do everything! Support will be available from Revd Maria as well as from the experienced churchwardens. In addition, the diocese runs training for churchwardens. You shouldn't feel alone and unsupported in this role.