Churchwarden

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
SUFFOLK

Churchwardens play a vital part in parish life, caring not just for the church building and the churchyard, but also for the well-being of the church's ministers and members and the wider community.

If you wish to be a Churchwarden you will be fully immersed in the life of your parish church.

This is a hugely rewarding role as you have specific areas of responsibility enabling you to act as guardian of the parish church and its services, in co-operation with the parish priest.

The role offers great variety, including administration, pastoral care of your PCC team, dealing with problems and welcoming new people into your parish.

The role can be hugely influential and although it can be time demanding, it is also extremely rewarding.

First and foremost Churchwardens are officers of the Bishop. In that capacity, each year they present answers to such questions as have been put to them in the Archdeacon's Articles of Enquiry.

They may include in their response any further matters affecting the parish, always remembering that the aim is to inform the Archdeacon and the Bishop whether all is well with the parish or, if not, what is wrong.

The formal occasion of the annual visitation and completion of the Articles of Enquiry do not mark the limit of the Churchwarden's responsibilities in this respect.

At any time the Bishop or Archdeacon may make enquiry of them as to parochial matters, and at any time they can inform the Bishop or Archdeacon of any concerns or irregularities in the life of the parish They are also only too glad to hear good news!

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What does a Churchwarden do?

- They are legally responsible for the plate, ornaments and other movable goods of the church.
- They compile and maintain an inventory of church goods and a terrier of church lands, and make an annual fabric report to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.
- They keep a logbook of all work done to the church.
- They are responsible for the maintenance of order and decency in the church and churchyard.
- They have legal responsibility for allocation of seats to the congregation and the collection of alms, although in practice they will be assisted by others in these tasks.
- During a vacancy in the benefice the Churchwardens, together with the Rural Dean, will automatically become sequestrators and as such have responsibility for provision of services and care of the parsonage house, although much of this will be undertaken by Diocesan Office staff.
- They know where to go for help (often the Archdeacon is the first port of call), and have faith that can move mountains - although building church extensions can seem more of a challenge!

Who can be a Churchwarden?

- To be eligible for election, a person must be baptised, aged 21 or over, on the church electoral roll, and a regular communicant. These conditions apply unless the Bishop directs otherwise.
- Good Churchwardens also have tact, discretion, a sense of humour, readiness to take the lead on occasion and commitment to the local church and community.