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DIOCESE OF  
BATH & WELLS

Changing Lives, Changing Churches for Changing Communities

# A Handbook for Rural Deans Assistant Rural Deans and Lay Chairs

September 2012

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## Introduction

Rural deans, assistant rural deans and lay chairs play key roles in the work of the diocese and in the mission of God. That work combines legal responsibilities, pastoral responsibility for those in their particular deanery and a strategic role in ministry and mission.

A deanery offers different opportunities for clergy and laity to support one another and to learn together. Working together effectively in the key roles entrusted to you is an example of the key strand of Changing Lives, that no one is alone, and is in itself a statement about the collaborative nature of ministry that the church often talks about, yet sometimes struggles to live out.

This document sets out the responsibilities of rural deans, assistant rural deans and lay chairs and deals with practicalities. We hope that this will support you in this ministry. You might also want to refer to the document *Constitution and Standing Orders of Deanery Synods*, which is available on the Diocesan Website, (along with a copy of this document) at School of Formation/Resources/Deaneries.

The work done in the deaneries, formally through chapters, synods and committees, as well as informally in developing loving relationships, is where much of the hard work is done in providing the structures and support for confident Christian communities to grow and flourish.

May God bless and sustain you in this important part of your ministry.

+ Peter Bathurst

+ Peter Tanton

## **Appointment and Terms of Office**

### **Rural Deans**

The power to appoint a rural dean rests with the diocesan bishop. Before making an appointment the bishop consults with the archdeacon, the deanery clergy, the deanery Readers and lay chair to find a person who is both capable of undertaking the task and who will receive the support of the deanery in exercising this ministry. The appointment is initially for six years, which may be extended for a further period.

### **Assistant Rural Deans**

A rural dean may request the archdeacon that a colleague becomes an assistant. The choice of assistant rural dean is subject to approval by the bishop and licensed by the bishop. It is not assumed that an assistant rural dean will automatically become rural dean.

### **Lay Chairs**

Lay chairs are elected by the deanery synod House of Laity for the three-year life of the synod.

## Commissioning and Training

### Institution

- ◆ Where possible there should be a handover with the outgoing rural dean and the lay chair.
- ◆ A nearby rural dean who is willing to act as a mentor for the first few months may be appointed by the archdeacon.
- ◆ There will be a public act of worship to license and welcome the new office-holder.
- ◆ There will be a meeting within six months of appointment with the archdeacon, rural dean, lay chair and director of clergy development. The purpose of this meeting is to come together to review the work of the deanery and to reflect on its future direction.
- ◆ There is an annual three-day consultation for newly appointed rural deans and assistant rural deans provided by the Southern Regional Institute to which people from the diocese will be invited (subject to spaces being available).
- ◆ The new rural dean may wish to contact the diocesan secretary and arrange a visit to The Old Deanery to meet members of staff with whom they will have contact in their new role.

### Training

Where possible, training should be thought of as development in strategic thinking and practice, and should be incorporated in regular meetings of rural deans.

Rural deans and assistant rural deans are encouraged to think of training needs they have for this role when assessing their training needs, planning their CMD and framing their responses to Ministerial Development Review.

The following is also agreed to be part of regular support and development:

- ◆ There will usually be three meetings of rural deans, assistant rural deans and bishop's staff each year, one of which will also be for lay chairs.
- ◆ There will be an annual retreat of rural deans (or assistant rural deans in their absence) and bishop's staff.
- ◆ Archdeaconry meetings of rural deans with their archdeacons usually take place every two months.
- ◆ One to one meetings with archdeacon will be held by arrangement.

## Rural Dean's Responsibilities

1. As an officer of the diocesan bishop
  - a) The rural dean is an officer of the bishop through whom the bishop exercises such pastoral care and oversight as he is not able to exercise in person.
  - b) The rural dean will seek to know all the clergy and their families (stipendiary and ONSM) and support their ministries. The quality of his/her relationship with clergy and laity in the deanery is fundamental to the job.
  - c) The rural dean will work in the deanery with the archdeacon in shared and devolved episcopal oversight.
  - d) The rural dean will exercise a pastoral ministry, in consultation with the archdeacon, including help with cases of serious illness or other forms of distress among the clergy, or where there are signs of deterioration or depression which might lead to neglect of pastoral care, breakdown in pastoral relationships, or failure to exercise adequate supervision or team leadership. It is important that the bishops are kept informed of these situations within a context of confidentiality.
  - e) The rural dean is encouraged to play his/her part in developing good communications between the bishops and the diocese, and the wider community.
2. As chair of the clergy chapter
  - a) Chapter meetings offer the opportunity for collaboration, development, and mutual support of ministry. There needs to be a balance between worship, prayer, study, discussion and social events so as to promote fellowship and understanding between colleagues. It is important to include the needs of ONSMs and Readers, as well as the retired clergy, in arranging the chapter programme.
  - b) From time to time opportunity should be given to bishops, archdeacons, sector ministers and others to attend chapter meetings.
  - c) The rural dean will be invited to attend regular meetings with the bishops and other members of bishop's staff in order to share matters of policy and to review the shared privilege of ministry.
  - d) The rural dean will arrange for deanery confirmations.
3. As a colleague of the archdeacon
  - a) In order to strengthen the devolved pastoral responsibility and shared oversight, the archdeacon will arrange regular meetings with the rural deans.
  - b) Under Canon Law (C.22.5) the archdeacon shall hold annual Visitations.
  - c) The archdeacon's inspections of churches will usually be delegated to rural deans.
  - d) If at any time the rural dean has any reason to believe that there is any serious defect in the fabric, ornaments, and furniture of any church or chapel, or that the buildings are in a state of disrepair, he/she will let the archdeacon know.
4. As co-chair of the deanery synod
  - a) The rural dean is co-chair, with a member of the House of Laity (lay chair) of the deanery synod.
  - b) It is essential that there should be a deanery pastoral committee to work in relationship with the archdeaconry pastoral committee. It is important that those elected to this body have the mission of the whole deanery at heart.
  - c) The rural dean and lay chair, together with the standing committee, plan the meetings of the synod. The development and growth of synod members will in large measure derive from the shared listening, discussion and study of synod members.

- d) The deanery should play a significant role in mobilising parishes and local ministry groups (Imgs) for mission, encouraging the deepening of discipleship, and the development of evangelism and shared ministry.
- e) Under synodical government the rural dean is responsible for seeing that each parish maintains an up-to-date church electoral roll, that it has a properly elected church council and holds an annual parochial church meeting.
- f) The rural dean, with other deanery officers, shares the responsibility for agreeing parochial assessments and encouraging the payment of parish shares to the Common Fund.

#### 5. Vacancy (or absence through illness or study leave)

- a) Under the Patronage Measure the rural dean will work closely with the archdeacon, the churchwardens and the PCC to ensure that legal processes are carefully followed.
- b) In normal circumstances the rural dean will meet with the churchwardens to agree the arrangements for continuing the worship, work and mission of the congregation during the vacancy and other similar circumstances.
- c) The rural dean should know who holds the keys to the parsonage house and should ensure that someone takes responsibility for looking after it properly. The property department in the diocese will offer the necessary support and advice.
- d) If there is an assistant curate or other ordained staff in the parish, the rural dean will arrange to meet with them from time to time to ensure that they are well supported.
- e) When an appointment has been made, the rural dean will work with the churchwardens in arranging the service of institution or licensing, including taking the rehearsal.

#### 6. Representing the local Anglican Church

- a) The rural dean will often be seen by those outside the church as a spokes-person for the church. He/she may have to take a lead in developing good relationships with churches of other denominations, people of other faiths and the civic authorities.

#### 7. Appointment and Conditions of Service

- a) An invitation to serve as rural dean will come from the diocesan bishop after consultation with his staff, the stipendiary clergy, the ONSMs, Readers and other deanery officers. The invitation needs careful thought, as acceptance will add to your existing workload.
- b) Canon C.23 "Of Rural Deans" sets out some of the official duties but, as in most dioceses, other duties have been added and expectations established.
- c) The appointment is initially for six years, which may be extended for a further period.
- d) Expenses for the work required in fulfilling the role of rural dean are met in full, and these include secretarial support and equipment. For details see page 13 and contact the diocesan secretary.
- e) The rural dean and assistant rural dean will be commissioned by the bishop or the archdeacon in the context of a deanery event.
- f) Training and development is available through the director of clergy development and appropriate courses will be paid for by the diocese.
- g) A new rural dean will meet with one of the bishops at an early stage and also with the archdeacon to discuss the role in more detail and within the local context.

## Lay Chair's Responsibilities

1. As required by synodical legislation
  - a) To act as co-chair of the deanery synod (and therefore a member of the deanery synod standing committee).
  - b) To act as returning officer for the election of deanery clergy representatives to diocesan synod.
  - c) To be consulted where pastoral reorganisation is in prospect.
  - d) To be asked for advice where there are 'material disagreements' concerning worship in a parish.
  - e) To be invited to any Section 12 meetings under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure.
  
2. In the light of *Changing Lives*, and working with the rural dean
  - a) To be active in bringing together the views of the parishes of the deanery, getting to know the parishes and the people and understanding their concerns.
  - b) To help foster a common sense of community and interdependence among the parishes of the deanery.
  - c) To promote in the deanery the whole mission of the church: pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.
  - d) To play a full part in the life of the deanery, representing the deanery at the licensing of new priests, archdeacon's visitations, and other events.
  - e) To share (if appropriate) in the programme of parish visitations undertaken by rural deans.
  
3. In the life of the diocese
  - a) Through the regular meeting of lay chairs, rural deans and bishops, to act as an important conduit between the diocese, the deanery and the parishes in supporting and promoting *Changing Lives*.
  - b) To work with the rural dean in ensuring that the deaneries are key agents of mission in their communities.

There may be other reasonable roles and responsibilities that are agreed in consultation with the rural dean.

It is strongly recommended that the lay chair be formally commissioned at a deanery event, perhaps when the rural dean/assistant rural dean is commissioned.

## Assistant Rural Dean's Responsibilities

In the spirit of 'no one alone', and in response to the dangers of work overload, it is becoming increasingly common to designate one (or more) assistant rural dean(s). An 'assistant' is not the same as a 'deputy', however, in the event of the rural dean being unable to be at the deanery pastoral committee, the assistant will take his/her place.

There is no template for the role of assistant rural dean. Each deanery is different, and the skills and gifts of the rural dean and assistant rural dean will vary from deanery to deanery. In some places, having an assistant rural dean from a different part of the deanery or of a different theological emphasis will be very important.

Below is a set of questions, covering some of the issues that should be agreed between the rural dean and assistant rural dean prior to licensing. A copy of your own protocol should be discussed and agreed with your archdeacon when you have decided what is right for you.

### **'Public' tasks:**

- How will we share chairing of the deanery synod (together with the lay chair)?
- How will we share chairing of chapter?

### **Diocesan role:**

The rural dean attends a number of diocesan meetings, such as an overnight meeting with the bishop's staff.

- How will the rural dean share information from these meetings with the assistant?
- Will the assistant rural dean attend if the rural dean cannot go?

### **Clergy vacancies:**

- How will we share the oversight of parishes in vacancy? (One possibility may be a geographical split, taking half the deanery each.)
- Will we use the same criteria for involvement in appointments – parish profile, shortlisting, interviews, etc?

### **Legal and pastoral opportunities with parishes:**

As noted on page four, 3(c), rural deans are required, on behalf of the archdeacon, to 'inspect' parishes. This is generally done by a visit to the church with the wardens to inspect registers, etc, followed by an informal discussion elsewhere about the parish's life. It is recommended that each parish be visited at least every three years.

- How will this work be shared out?

### **Expenses and secretarial support:**

As noted on page five, 7(d), the rural dean can claim from the diocesan office for these matters.

- Will the assistant rural dean claim mileage, etc through the rural dean or directly?
- Will s/he need extra secretarial support, and how will that be reimbursed?

### **Communication:**

Other than on business occasions, in what ways will you meet together and support each other in prayer?

## Vacant Benefices

On a parish or benefice becoming vacant, the rural dean will have a key role to play and various legal tasks to carry out. When a vacancy arises the archdeacon will seek to meet with the rural dean, lay chair and churchwardens as soon as possible. Churchwardens need to be made aware of their responsibilities - see Appendix C: Information for Churchwardens after Notice of Vacancy.

The following matters should be covered:

- 1 Ensure that churchwardens have obtained all keys to the vacated parsonage house.
- 2 Make early contact with the churchwardens to help them arrange for the conduct of Sunday and occasional services.
- 3 Ensure that the churchwardens, along with the outgoing incumbent, check and sign the terrier and inventory of the parish church(es), parsonage house and other church property.
- 4 Work closely with the archdeacon at the time of appointments, including associated matters such as disposal and acquisition of parsonages and the chosen place of residence.
- 5 Take responsibility for the planning of institutions, collations and licensings in collaboration with the churchwardens and the incumbent-designate (or equivalent).
- 6 Welcome the incoming minister to the chapter and the synod.

## Institutions, Collations and Licensings

1. Rural deans have the responsibility for making the preparation for these services in the parishes of their deaneries. Together with churchwardens and the lay chairs they should always be informed about the date of such services.
2. Rural deans should then arrange to meet the incumbent designate, to welcome him/her on behalf of the chapter and deanery, to advise him/her on the dates of future meetings of both these bodies and to have a preliminary discussion about the service itself.
3. Rural deans should consult with all the churchwardens involved and the incumbent designate in the planning of the service.
4. The booklet *Preparation Notes for Institutions and Licensings* has been prepared by the diocesan liturgical advisory group and is available on the Diocesan website at School of Formation/Resources/Deaneries. It covers: invitations, service sheets, parking, robing, refreshments, seating, the service, order of procession, rehearsal, service register, including children and young people, using music within the liturgy, sample invitation card and words of welcome in benefice churches for the first Sunday. It should be used for the planning of services.
5. Time, care and prayer spent by the rural dean in making these arrangements will ensure that what takes place glorifies God and enables the mission of the Church in that benefice.

## **Confirmations**

1. The norm is for there to be one confirmation service in each deanery every year. The bishops' office will contact each rural dean with a suggested date for their deanery confirmation in the summer of the preceding year and rural deans will arrange within their deanery where the service will take place. The detailed arrangements for the confirmation are made by the parish whilst regular contact is maintained with the rural dean who can advise and assist as appropriate.
2. The rural dean should remind chapter members that collections at confirmation services are for the diocesan Zambia link and should be sent to the diocesan office. Collections should be recorded in the service register and properly recorded as both income and expenditure in the PCC accounts. Those presenting candidates should bring with them their confirmation register and completed confirmation returns.

## **Deanery Chapters**

The rural dean is the chair of the clergy chapter. Although the chapter has no formal place as a statutory body in the synodical government of the Church, it has a vital pastoral and educational role to play in the care and guidance of and collaboration between ministers in both practical and spiritual matters. It is helpful to have a chapter clerk.

### **Frequency of meetings**

Chapter meeting should be held regularly and at dates and times, that enable as many clergy as possible to attend. Opportunity should from time to time be given for those whose work or other duties preclude meetings during the day to attend at a time more convenient to them, for example in the evening or at lunchtimes.

### **Membership of chapters**

Deanery chapter membership comprises those in parochial posts in the deanery and licensed ordained chaplains in the deanery.

In order to affirm the collaborative nature of ministry, chapters should consider inviting Readers to attend certain meetings. Retired clergy might also be invited to some meetings. .

The lay chair may be invited to attend meetings of the chapter where there are particular matters to discuss.

### **Diocesan communication**

The rural dean must report to chapter members issues raised at staff meetings called by the bishops and archdeacons, and also identify questions and issues that can be raised at future meetings on behalf of the deanery and its clergy. The rural dean should also find out if the lay chair wishes any specific concerns of the laity to be raised at meetings.

### **Relationship with deanery synod**

It is important that the rural dean and the other members of chapter fully recognise the limits of the chapter's authority and do not make or pre-empt any decision which more properly belongs to the deanery synod.

## Deanery Synods

Deanery synods are governed by the Synodical Government Measure 1969 to which specific reference should be made. This provides amongst other matters that the rural dean and a member of the House of Laity elected by that House should jointly chair deanery synod.

Leadership of the deanery synod is therefore a shared responsibility. The key joint task of the chairs is to enable all within the deanery to make a contribution to the life and mission of the Church according to their own particular gifts. Therefore, together they should encourage all synod members to see the deanery as a body able to create and support creative mission hand in hand with the parishes.

The rural dean and lay chair are ultimately responsible for the correct and efficient operation of the synod and its committees including the deanery synod standing committee and the deanery pastoral committee.

## Deanery Committees

### Standing Committee

It is composed of joint chairs of deanery synod, officers of synod (where they are members of synod) and other people elected by members of each house in equal numbers from amongst their members as the synod shall determine. It has no power to co-opt additional members.

Its role is to initiate and advise on proposals; to ensure members are adequately informed on questions raised and other matters of importance to the deanery; to prepare the agenda; to transact the business of synod between meetings; to make such appointments and do such other things as the synod may delegate to it.

### Pastoral Committee

This committee is for pastoral matters and has a watching brief over how resources are best used for the mission and ministry of the deanery.

It might be that a decision is made to combine the standing committee and the pastoral committee.

### Other committees

The synod may constitute additional committees with such chairs, membership, terms of office, function, mode of appointment and other procedure as it thinks fit.

For further details on deanery synods and committees see *Diocese of Bath and Wells Constitution and Standing Orders of Deanery Synods*, which is available on the diocesan website, along with a copy of this document, at School of Formation/Resources/Deaneries.

## **Chaplains**

Chaplaincies probably exist in a number of places in each deanery and they have a significant presence and perspective through their ministry and mission. They bring perspectives that could potentially add substantially to the lives of deaneries yet often feel isolated. Close relationships with the chaplains in deaneries should enrich the ministry of chaplains and the life of the deanery.

The following suggestions are made for rural deans to try and make this relationship work most effectively:

- Assign someone in the deanery to keep an up to date and readily available list of all the chaplains in the deanery
- Encourage membership of chaplains to the deanery chapter
- Promote awareness of the work of chaplains
- Encourage partnerships and cooperation between chaplains and churches.

## **Retired Clergy**

The rural dean meets with all newly-arrived clergy living in their deanery receiving the bishop's Permission to Officiate (PTO) before exercising their new ministry. The reasons for this are:

- It provides an opportunity for clergy to express their thoughts on when, where, and how often they might want to serve
- It allows the rural dean to give any relevant background information.

Contact with people renewing their PTO in person is strongly encouraged in order to assess (on both sides) how much people feel able to take on.

Deaneries should take opportunities for the public welcome/affirmation of retired clergy ministry, possibly at a service or synod.

Retired clergy are not members of deanery chapters, but every encouragement is given to support them in a deanery in an appropriate way, which enables them to exercise their ministry in the light of the culture, ethos and priorities of the diocese.

No-one should be ministering without a current PTO from the bishops (which involves CRB checks being done). Some clergy do let their PTO lapse because they do not renew it, and may need to be told they must stop ministering – check with bishops' office if you are aware of a situation.

## **Clergy on long term sick leave**

As set out in the *Clergy Manual*, following an absence of more than seven days a clergy person should make contact with the rural dean and archdeacon and inform them of the nature of the absence and its likely duration. The rural dean should provide ongoing pastoral support and keep the archdeacon updated on the situation. After the fifth week of continued absence the diocese will appoint a local contact (either the rural dean or nominee) to arrange provision of services or to liaise with churchwardens who are prepared to do this to ensure that the incumbent concerned is completely relieved of his/her duties at this time. The rural dean (or local contact) should arrange to visit the member of clergy at this time.

## Finance

### Expenses of Office

Expenses are reimbursed on submission of a claim form obtainable from the diocesan accounts office. Expenses should be claimed for:

- Travel on deanery business within the deanery
- Travel to diocesan meetings on deanery business
- Stationery
- Telephone calls on deanery business
- Postage
- Official entertaining
- Contribution to secretarial costs

Full details and further advice on what you can claim can be obtained from the diocesan accountant.

### Deanery Training

The deanery chapter and the deanery as a whole can be an ideal location for training and development. Contact the director of clergy development for funding for training events that you may like to initiate as a deanery or with neighbouring deaneries.

### Deanery Quiet Days

Contact the diocesan secretary for funding for deanery quiet days.

## Notes for Inspection of Churches, Registers etc. by Rural Deans and Lay Chairs

**Canon F 18** requires each archdeacon to inspect every church in their area at least once every three years, either in person or through the rural dean. The following guidance is for when this duty falls to the rural dean.

### **Preparation**

A few weeks before the visit a letter should be sent to the incumbent and the churchwardens inviting them to meet you at the church at an agreed time.

With the letter you should send a list of what you expect to see and to do and you should ask them to have the documents all laid out for your inspection.

### **The visit**

Arrange your timetable so as to leave plenty of time for travel between the churches (especially if you don't yet know your way around). Arrive on time, having looked up the names of the churchwardens beforehand.

Your visit should have two parts. There is the inspection of all the documents and contents of the church, comparing the one with the other, and there is the inspection of the church itself and the churchyard. You might, too, like to take the opportunity of paying a visit to other church property such as a church hall.

It is also important to ensure that there is an opportunity to talk about the spiritual wellbeing and life of the parish.

### **The follow-up**

A few days afterwards a letter should be sent to the churchwardens, encouraging them for the efforts they have put into the visit and are giving to the running of the parish, and listing the matters you have discovered which require attention. It is important to send your letter to the churchwardens who are responsible for the fabric and the contents, but you should also send copies to the incumbent and, if appropriate, to the inspecting architect.

You should expect the churchwardens to reply to your letter within, say, three months, telling you what they have done. If you have not heard by then, drop a gentle reminder and, if necessary, another one after six months.

### **The inspection**

What you need to see can be laid out under four headings:

#### **1. Church Records**

##### *Registers*

You should inspect all the current registers to make sure they are being filled in correctly. You can also quickly pick up information here about the health of the parish. The registers should also be kept in the safe.

You should also inspect registers that are no longer in use to ensure that they are kept securely and cleanly. If the baptism or burial registers are over 100 years old the law requires that they shall be deposited in the local Record Office. If they are still in use they may be kept open for 150 years but then have to be closed and deposited and a new register bought. Marriage registers, being the joint responsibility of the civil registrar, fall under different regulations.

#### *Other ancient documents*

The above rules about depositing also apply to all other ancient documents. It is therefore well worth 'nosing around' the drawers and safes of the vestries to see what has been tucked away in corners and forgotten about. You may also discover mouldy hymn and prayer books and suggest that they are burnt.

#### *Parish terrier and inventory*

This is a legally required document which you should check carefully against the contents of the church. **It needs to be signed at the back by you, the incumbent and the churchwardens.**

#### *Church Electoral Roll*

You should ensure that there is an up to date and accurate electoral roll for each relevant parish.

#### *Minute Books of PCC and Annual Meetings*

There are sometimes questions about how the minutes should be kept and it is useful to advise those who keep loose-leaf minutes to number the pages and to put the name of the church and the date of the meeting on each page.

## **2. Finance**

#### *Annual PCC accounts*

You could ask to have a look at these and talk with the churchwardens and, as appropriate, the treasurer or even the examiner/auditor about any issues you or they might have. It is also worth checking that the accounts have been prepared in accordance with the 2006 Charities Act and the Statement of Recommended Practice 2005, if necessary. The church treasurer should perhaps have availed himself of a Treasurers' Update Workshop to keep abreast of best practice in accounting and accounts presentation; these workshops have been held at the autumn financial consultations for the last a few years.

#### *Special church accounts*

The 2006 Charities Act requires that trusts and accounts that provide income annually for the PCC or make payments on behalf of the PCC should at a minimum be mentioned in the accounts, but might have to be consolidated within the accounts if appropriate and material.

#### *Insurance policies*

It is advisable to ask to see the actual policy by which you can check the adequacy of the church's cover. The employer's liability certificate of insurance should be displayed somewhere in the church.

### **3. Church Contents**

#### *Church plate*

It is particularly important to examine this carefully and compare it with the Inventory. It is amazing how easily Elizabethan chalices go missing. It is important to ensure that all silver is kept in the safe.

#### *Other church valuables*

It is not only church plate that constitutes 'articles of value'. Stained glass, monuments and furnishing of all kinds can also fall into this category. But do not talk too frequently in terms of monetary value or some of the churchwardens will want to sell them off to repair the church roof!

#### *Photographs*

All churches should have a photographic record of their valuable silver and furniture with details on the back of each photograph. There are frequent instances of stolen goods being recovered because of this simple practice. Two copies of the photographs, kept separately, is safest.

#### *Altar linen*

Ask to see this. You will find the occasional church that uses a Kleenex for purificator. It has been known for the linen to be filthy, so ask about laundry procedures.

### **Church building and churchyard**

#### *Quinquennial inspection report*

It is helpful if you make time to glance over your copy, if you have one, before you go.

#### *Church log book*

This is a legal requirement, but many parishes are very bad at keeping it up to date.

#### *Faculties*

Ask them to show you the faculties they have been granted over the last five years. You can check them against work actually carried out. Look out for signs of work which you suspect has not been authorised by faculty.

#### *The churchyard*

One of the most important things here is to check that they have an adequate grave-space plan which includes a list of the names and locations of those interred (*not* a plan of memorial stones, which is different). This will tell you whether the church or the undertaker has actual control of their churchyard. You may need to check whether the churchyard is closed by Order in Council and therefore legally in the charge of the local civil council for maintenance purposes.

The diocesan advisory committee (DAC) encourages the maintenance of churchyards as places of wildlife conservation. It is difficult to get the issue taken seriously either by parishioners, who become irritated when they find long grass barring their way to the grave they are tending, or by the church members who, if they are interested at all, will just see the churchyard as another public garden to be kept spick and span. A good balance will need to be found

### *Gutters and down pipes*

The traditional *bête noire* of the archdeacon, but experience suggests about half our churches at any one time will have some inadequacy in their rain-water disposal. It can cause grave damage to stone and brickwork faster than practically anything else.

### *Security*

Do they lock the church? Is the safe bolted or concreted in? Where do they keep loose cash on the premises? Where do they keep the keys? How do they maintain a balance between the church being open for prayer and secure? These aspects require constant vigilance.

### *Order in the church*

It can be helpful to use an outsider's fresh eye to make comments about the interior of the church – the dusty children's corner unused for decades, the possibilities for the space under the tower, the dirty cupboard full of unused rubbish, a vision for re-ordering. Approached in a positive spirit, you can find yourself used over time in further informal, imaginative discussions.

### *Trusts*

It is important to see that these are properly managed.

## Inspection of Churches Record Form

## DIOCESE OF BATH AND WELLS

Archdeaconry .....

Deanery .....

## ARCHDEACON'S INSPECTION

Date of Inspection:

Parish:

Full Name of Incumbent

Full Names of Churchwardens

## Registers

Was the receipt produced for those deposited in the County Records Office [if any] YES / NO

Is the list supplied by the Office still correct? YES / NO

Registers retained in the parish:

		Commencing	Date Closed or in Current Use
Baptism	1		
	2		
Marriage	1		
	2		
Burial	1		
	2		

Marriage Register				
Date	January 2010	January 2011	January 2012	Present
Last Number in Register				

Burial Register				
Date	January 2010	January 2011	January 2012	Present
Last Number in Register				

Other Records	Number and Start Date	Condition
Service Register		
Banns Book		
Confirmation Register		
Inventory		
Is the Inventory up to date?		
Where is it kept?		
Log Book		

### Church Plate and Furnishings

Has a visual check been made and does this agree with the Inventory? YES / NO

What is the general condition of the plate and furnishings?

Where is the plate [chalices, etc.] kept?

Are there photographs of all items of plate? YES / NO

Where are the photographs kept?

Are there any items of special value? [details]

In the case of any plate deposited at the bank, was a receipt produced? YES / NO

### **Linen, Vestments and Hangings**

Are linens spotlessly clean and in good condition? YES / NO

Where are the vestments [if any] kept? What condition are they in?

Are there choir robes? YES / NO What condition are they in?

Where are the altar hangings kept? What condition are they in?

### **Fire Precautions and Electrical Installations**

How many fire extinguishers are there?

Are they serviced annually? YES / NO

Is there a CO2 extinguisher within six feet of the organ? YES / NO

Do the clergy, wardens, sidespeople and organists know how to operate extinguishers? YES / NO

When was the electrical system last tested?

Name of the firm who carried out the inspection

### **Security**

Are there adequate locks, bolts and other precautions to all doors?

North Door	YES / NO	South Door	YES / NO	East Door	YES / NO
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West Door	YES / NO	Priest's Door	YES / NO	Bell Tower	YES / NO
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Boiler House	YES / NO	Vestry Door	YES / NO
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Is the vestry door kept locked outside service times? YES / NO

What church plate and ornaments are left out during weekdays when the church is open?

Is the church closed at all during the day time? YES / NO

Is there a wall safe for donations, etc.? YES / NO

Where is the church safe(s)?

Is it in good condition? YES / NO

How is the safe[s] secured/anchored?

### **Churchyard**

What is the general condition of:

a) Fences

b) Gates

c) Paths

d) Walls

e) Grounds

f) Tombstones

### **Insurance**

Name of insurance company

Is the cover within the diocesan group scheme? YES / NO

What is the percentage cover for a first loss?

What is the amount of public liability cover?

When did the PCC last review the cover?

## General Observations and Comments by Rural Dean

Signed

## Diocese of Bath and Wells

### Notes for Churchwardens after Notice of Vacancy

#### Services

- 1 A rota to cover all necessary services (regular Sunday services and occasional offices e.g. baptisms, weddings and funerals) will have to be arranged by the churchwardens. A copy of the rota needs to be sent to the rural dean.  
NB Groups of parishes may have to forgo some services if cover cannot be found.
- 2 Retired clergy are paid at the diocesan rate for normal services (See notes from diocesan office for rates) and receive part of the fee for weddings and funerals (church treasurers should have a copy of the bishop's guidelines indicating how much the priest receives - if not, consult the rural dean or diocesan office). Retired clergy sign a form after conducting a normal service which is sent to the Diocesan Office to claim reimbursement.  
  
Retired clergy are also entitled to travelling expenses at the diocesan rate for any service they take.
- 3 Stipendiary and non-stipendiary clergy do not receive a fee, but are entitled to travelling expenses at the diocesan rate.
- 4 Readers, if any, should of course be asked to do whatever they can - especially taking Family Services, Matins and Evensong. They can also take funerals with the consent of the family - they do not receive fees, but are entitled to expenses.
- 5 Churchwardens have authority to take Matins and Evensong. The rural dean can give instructions regarding this, if required.
- 6 Churchwardens are responsible for finding lesson readers, intercessors, lay help etc. A rota needs to be prepared.

#### Banns of Marriage

Churchwardens should deal with applications for banns of marriage and get a priest to sign the banns certificate after the banns have been called, if required. Churchwardens also need to collect the fee from the couple (see table of fees).

#### Memorials in Churchyards

All applications have to be approved by the rural dean, including additional inscriptions to existing memorials.

cont...

## **Care of Buildings**

- 1 The fabric of the church, the rectory/vicarage and hall (if there is one) need to be regularly inspected for damage, etc. Gutters and downpipes need to be kept clear, water pipes that may freeze need to be protected, etc. See diocesan leaflet - *Care of the Parsonage House during a Vacancy*. The diocese may let the rectory/vicarage during a vacancy.
- 2 Churchwardens must seek a faculty or an archdeacon's authority for any work which needs to be done.
- 3 Beware of using cheap labour, and watch specifications for details like pointing etc.

## **General**

- 1 Consult the rural dean with any problems, especially on legal matters.
- 2 Churchwardens, as leaders of the local Church, need to encourage the faithful throughout the vacancy. A vacancy can be a good chance to be the body of Christ, and a time to encourage full lay participation in the life of the parish.

## Some useful contact numbers

Accounts	Nick May	01749 685112
Archdeacons:		
Bath	Andy Piggott Usual Day off Friday PA Denise Blake (Mon, Tue, Thur 9am-5pm, Fri 9am-2pm)	01225 873609
Taunton	John Reed Usual Day off Thursday PA Belinda Morgan (Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri 9am-3.30pm)	01823 413315
Wells	Nicola Sullivan Usual Day off Thursday PA Caroline Maycock (Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri 9am -3.30pm)	01749 685147
Archdeaconry Wardens of Readers:		
Bath	Richard Hall	01225 872275
Taunton	Peter Martin	01278 652953
Wells	Graham Witts	01278 782991
Bishops' Office:		
Diary	Caroline Turner	01749 672341
Correspondence	Christine Treanor	
Admin Assistant	Penny Gibbs	
Bishops' Chaplain	Stephen Lynas	01749 672341
Communications	Gillian Buzzard	01749 685111
DAC	Sarah Davis	01749 674747
Diocesan Secretary	Nick Denison	01749 685109
Faculty Office, London		0207 222 5381
Legal Advice	Tim Berry (Registrar)	01749 674747

For Diocesan Contacts see [www.bathandwells.org.uk/contact/](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/contact/)