# **A Bluffer’s Guide to Being a Churchwarden**

## **Don’t be intimidated!**

There are some very impressive churchwardens about, who may have done it for years, recommend a lot of books and seem to have endless time to devote to the role – but they are not the norm.

You have stepped in because there was a need, you may have a full-time job, you may not even have been on the PCC very long. That is fine – God can use you as you are, and there are lots of people to ask.

## **What is the job?**

The Canons of the Church of England set it out in just two paragraphs:

*3. The churchwardens when admitted are officers of the bishop. They shall discharge such duties as are by law and custom assigned to them; they shall be foremost in representing the laity and in co-operating with the incumbent; they shall use their best endeavours by example and precept to encourage the parishioners in the practice of true religion and to promote unity and peace among them. They shall also maintain order and decency in the church and churchyard, especially during the time of divine service.*

*4. In the churchwardens is vested the property in the plate, ornaments, and other moveable goods of the church, and they shall keep an inventory thereof which they shall revise from time to time as occasion may require. On going out of office they shall duly deliver to their successors any goods of the church remaining in their hands together with the said inventory, which shall be checked by their successors.*

(Canon E1 Of Churchwardens, paragraphs 4 and 5)

## **Tips for working with your vicar**

* **Relationship:** Be a loyal and honest friend – ‘there are some things only your best friend can tell you’ - and try to relax together occasionally.
* **Communication**: Insist on time to meet regularly and to pray together– and if there is more than one church in the benefice, include the wardens from the other church(es)
* **Email**: great for making arrangements and sharing ideas, but a terrible medium for disagreement. If there is the slightest hint of friction, pick up the phone or pop round instead.

## **Where can I go for information?**

**Diocesan website** – look for the drop-down menus under Resources

**Online Faculty System** – tells you what you can do to your building without permission (List A) and how to apply for Archdeacon’s permission for List B minor works, and for full faculty permission from the Chancellor for major works

**Parish Resources website** – great for downloading templates, [Home Page - Parish ResourcesParish Resources](https://www.parishresources.org.uk/)

Church Representation Rules 2022 – a number of simplifications introduced in 2020 [Church Representation Rules | The Church of England](https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/church-representation-rules)

* Model rules for APCMs and PCC meetings
* New simplified procedure for forming a joint council to replace having separate PCCs

Handbook for Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councillors – the standard guidebook for the role [Handbook for Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councillors New Revised Edition by Timothy Briden, Kenneth M. MacMorran - Paperback - 9781441154743 (hymnsam.co.uk)](https://chbookshop.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781441154743/handbook-for-churchwardens-and-parochial-church-councillors)

## **Who can I call on for help?**

Your Area Dean

* First port of call in a vacancy
* Good person to talk to if there is a problem with your vicar

Senior Church Buildings Officer/DAC Secretary Jen Read – Jen.read@blackburn.anglican.org

* Can advise on process for applying for List B permission or full Faculty, and can arrange for DAC members to visit your church if you would like advice on a particular project

Archdeacon’s PA – Kelly Quinn – Kelly.quinn@blackburn.anglican.org 07384 819825

* Can signpost you to who to contact in Clayton House for advice
* Can advise on grants and loans from the Parish Vision Fund

## **How do I avoid burnout?**

* Attend to your spiritual life – this is a spiritual calling, and giving time to your own spiritual growth is not a luxury, it’s an essential.
* Delegate – the churchwarden’s role is not to do everything him/herself, but to share things out so that the essential bases are covered.
* Train up a deputy or a successor, and then you won’t feel trapped in the role.

Mark Ireland, Archdeacon of Blackburn, 27.6.22