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Diocesan Advisory Committee
for the Care of Churches

Health & Safety

PCCs should have a Health & Safety Policy and the following policy is a good example.

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Wigston Magna PCC

Health and Safety Policy

Statement of Intent

The Parochial Church Council of Wigston Magna (The PCC) is committed to ensuring the safety of clergy staff, lay staff, worshippers, visitors and employees both in church and in the church room.

Objectives

The PCC will endeavour to: -

- Provide safe buildings
- Ensure compliance with legislative requirements and standards
- Provide safe work equipment and safe methods of working

Arrangements

The elected Churchwarden will undertake an annual health and safety inspection and risk assessment inside and outside all buildings.

The PCC will review annually, at its first business meeting, the Health & Safety Policy together with a risk assessment.

Hazards identified

Solo workers (e.g. Churchwardens, organist, vergers, cleaners or flower arrangers) should not undertake hazardous tasks on their own. Also if anyone is in the church on their own, they must ensure that someone knows they are there and for how long they will be there. Solo workers should be aware of the risks involved in the task that they are undertaking.

Emergency exit from the building – when the buildings are in use all fire exit doors should be easily opened from the inside without the use of a key. On special occasions when large numbers may be present, exit signs should be in place. There should be escape / emergency lighting in place, particularly in bell ringing chambers and on staircases. A Fire Policy is in place.

Footpaths should be regularly maintained to ensure these remain free from obstruction. Ramps and steps need particular attention. Bear in mind the difficulty the frail, elderly, disabled, those with pushchairs or using crutches or walking sticks may have in accessing the church and church room. As the churchyard is closed and the responsibility of Oadby & Wigston Borough Council, we must advise them immediately of any problems.

Steps, stairs and ladders, including bell towers and access ladders should be examined at least annually. Uneven or worn treads are a positive danger.

Boundary walls and fences should be checked at least three times a year to check for potential hazards.

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Trees should be inspected at least every six months and looked at every five years by a tree surgeon. As the churchyard is closed and the responsibility of Oadby & Wigston Borough Council, we must advise them immediately of any problems.

Drainage – special arrangements should be in place for clearance of snow and ice from valley tower roof during wintry conditions. Ensure that water shed from buildings drains away but not onto paths.

Roof covering and structure – visual inspection of the external wall coverings should be carried out at frequent intervals to discover any defects requiring attention. Look out for loose or defective pinnacles, parapets, roof crosses and slipped or damaged tiles.

Floor coverings – defective floor coverings, carpets, and trailing flexes from heaters etc. should be made safe or removed immediately upon discovery.

Flammable liquids and polishes – if it is necessary to use any of these, they should be kept in well ventilated areas or within a lockable metal cabinet. Paraffin or petrol must not be stored in church.

Fire – portable electric heaters with trailing flexes should not be used. Ideally all socket outlets RCD protected, particularly those which supply other portable instruments e.g. guitars. Movable heaters using gas cylinders should not be used. Fire extinguishers should be of the correct kind, serviced annually and easily accessible.

Bells – must be left in the ‘down position’ when not in use during the week between 7 a.m. Monday and 6 p.m. Friday – Public Holidays excepted. They should not be left in the ‘up position’ unless access is restricted and warning notices posted. Please refer to Ecclesiastical Insurance ‘Health & Safety’ booklet Section 3 for detailed guidance on management of bells and bell tower.

Preparation & sale of food on church premises – The Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995 require that premises which are used occasionally for food preparation such as church halls and movable or temporary premises such as marquees, follow the guidance for temporary premises. Please see Ecclesiastical notes for summary of some of main requirements. Oadby & Wigston Borough Council will give advice on food safety and legal requirements.

Child protection – please see Child Protection policy.

Ecclesiastical Insurance Note for Churches: Section 3 Health and Safety are available for guidance. These notes should be read every 12 months by incumbent, Churchwardens, Tower Captain and Verger and any problems reported immediately to Churchwardens for action.

All stipendary ministers and Churchwardens are responsible for ensuring that a risk assessment review is carried out every 12 months of the hazards identified.

A copy of the Health & Safety Policy is given to all hirers of the church hall who are responsible for ensuring adherence to the policy. All hirers of the church room are to sign a copy of the Health & Safety policy as evidence of agreement and must be notified of any amendments.

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Fire Plan

PCCs should have a Fire Plan and this plan is a good example.

Wigston Magna PCC

The Parochial Church Council (The PCC) is the Responsible Person to ensure fire safety in all church buildings.

The Competent Persons appointed by the PCC to carry out a fire risk assessment are the elected Churchwardens.

The Competent Persons are to carry out a fire risk assessment every 12 months and any problems are to be reported to the PCC.

A fire risk assessment is to be made of all open air meetings e.g. church fete.

In the event of a fire, Churchwardens and Sidespersons are to direct the congregation to an appropriate fire exit. Fire exits are located at the north door, west door and in the chancel.

In the church room, the two fire exits are clearly marked and must be used.

On occasions when there is a large congregation in church or at a concert, someone is to be appointed to sit at the front of church to ensure the exit in the chancel is opened and used. Temporary fire exit signs are to be placed at all exits when there is a large congregation in church or a concert is being held.

Churchwardens and selected Sidespersons are to be instructed in the use of fire extinguishers and to be aware of their location.

The PCC is to ensure that any third parties occupying any part of the church buildings appoint their own 'Responsible Officer' and liaise with the PCC on fire safety measures. This applies to any regular church facility hirer e.g. a playgroup. Consideration must be given to changing hire contract for users as part of the management of fire risk.

The PCC is to ensure that occasional hirers (e.g. those who hire the church room for a birthday or other party) are made aware that they are legally responsible for conducting their activities in a safe way from fire. The PCC will need to ensure such persons are aware of the fire precautions to be heeded and what to do if a fire occurs. Consideration must be given to changing hire contract for users.

The PCC is to ensure that for church members meeting in a non-church building (e.g. Christmas Bazaar at Age Concern) it co-operates with the owner, landlord or other occupants on fire safety matters and keeps church members informed of what is expected of them.

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Incumbent

Churchwarden

Churchwarden