

**Rupert Allen**  
**DAC Secretary & Database Manager**  
Direct Line: 0116 261 5332 (with voicemail)  
Applications: <https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org/>  
Architect submissions: [dac@lecportal.org](mailto:dac@lecportal.org)  
Email: [rupert.allen@leccofe.org](mailto:rupert.allen@leccofe.org)  
Website: [www.leicester.anglican.org/dac](http://www.leicester.anglican.org/dac)



Diocesan Advisory Committee  
for the Care of Churches

## CANDLELIT SERVICES

### Choice of Candle

Good quality slow-burning candles are best. Cheaper, catering-quality candles will burn down quickly, and the flame may soon get dangerously close to foliage decoration.

### Hand-held candles

Great care needs to be taken where the congregation are given candles to hold, especially where large numbers are involved. Apart from the risk of igniting service sheets etc., molten wax can cause damage to clothing - and is hot. Purpose-made candles are available, and should be used with proper slide-on card drip trays.

### Decoration material

Flammable decoration and foliage must be kept well clear of candles. Extinguishers

Every church should have at least two extinguishers of appropriate type, and these should be examined and serviced at recommended intervals.

Water extinguishers are the most suitable for dealing with burning foliage, paper or wood. Advice on extinguishers is available from Ecclesiastical Insurance.

Stewards must know where the extinguishers are, and how to use them.

### Fire Blanket

A fire blanket may be a better means of dealing with any fire, and you should consider having one or more available for the service. They are particularly suitable for dealing with burning clothing.

### Means of Escape

If a fire starts, how quickly can you get people out of your church? All doors should be unlocked and capable of being opened quickly. Many churches have doors which are not normally used, for example, in the chancel or the tower. These could be very helpful in the event of a fire, and you should ensure that each door can be readily opened if needed.

As a rough guide, you can expect to get 80 people per minute through an escape route one metre wide.

St Martins House  
7 Peacock Lane  
Leicester  
LE1 5PZ

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Registered Office St Martins House, 7 Peacock Lane, Leicester, LE1 5PZ

T: 0116 261 5200  
[www.leicester.anglican.org](http://www.leicester.anglican.org)

## **Keeping Doors Open**

Nearly all traditional church doors open inwards. Substantial wedges should be on hand, so that if an emergency arises, the doors can be fixed open to allow people to get out quickly. Stewards should be allocated to deal with specific doors - see below.

## **Lighting**

Stewards should have torches, so that any minor problems can be dealt with, without bringing on the main lights. In the event of a fire or other serious emergency, the main lights should be brought on at once.

## **Who does What?**

It is strongly recommended that a small team of able-bodied stewards is appointed, and that each person has specific duties in the event of a problem. These could include: -

- Putting the church lights on
- Getting the doors open and wedged open
- If necessary, calling the emergency services (a mobile phone should be available)

A specific steward should be allocated to each door, and must ensure that it will open easily, before the service starts.

Similarly, fire extinguishers should be allocated to specific stewards, who should know how to use them. For large services, a trained first-aider - with first-aid equipment - should if possible be present.

## **The Minister**

The person leading the service should be aware of the risk of fire, and in the event of an emergency should be ready to ask everyone to leave in an orderly fashion, clearly pointing out the doors which are available.