



## **ST MARY'S CHURCH NEWICK PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL**

### **St Mary's Church Sexton**

#### **Brief Overview**

The job title 'sexton' is still current but not widely known or understood. It is a traditional role within churches and local council cemeteries. In the past a sexton might well have dug graves, rung a steeple bell, lit candles, set the sexton's wheel (displaying fasting days) etc. Nowadays the nature of the job has changed with the times. Typically various tasks are usually devolved on to volunteers or paid individuals both within and outside the church. In many circumstances it will be the churchwardens and vergers who carry out many tasks in a volunteer capacity. However, where a need is proven, then it may serve to appoint a sexton either in a volunteer or paid capacity. How a church makes use of a sexton will vary and that individual will need to work as part of the ecclesiastical team but not necessarily have any direct involvement in church services, being concerned instead with the safe and smooth running of the church estate.

Part of the job is a very practical role dealing with maintenance and health and safety issues, reviewing Policies with Linda Farmer Health and Safety co-ordinator, among other matters. The other part of the job would involve computer skills, record keeping and up to date knowledge of relevant legislation. It would be a largely autonomous role, whilst also working with other church officials and answerable to the parochial church council.

Here are suggested responsibilities for sexton work at St Mary's Church, Newick. Each sexton will bring their own skillset or trade skills which will affect how they go about their tasks but the basic responsibilities of the job remain the same.

#### **Organisational Tasks**

- Keep a register of all relevant tradespeople, suppliers and volunteers with specific skills, keep the register updated.
- Have overall responsibility for maintenance and day-to-day running of the church estate, resupply and health and safety. Each area may already have officials or volunteers dealing with specific matters but the sexton will need to coordinate these tasks and be able to take over dealing with such matters if it proves necessary.
- Develop a knowledge of the unique nature of our Church and churchyard, having reference to CofE regulations governing the care and maintenance and legal responsibilities.
- To be conversant with current and proposed health and safety legislation particularly in relation to historic places of worship.
- Records of periodic tasks and health and safety matters to be kept and done by due dates where possible.
- A regularly updated list of maintenance and urgent repair and H&S tasks to be kept and marked off when done.
- Overall responsibility for risk assessments - working with the risk assessor and others and records of risk assessments kept.
- Cost items below a certain value to be actioned without reference to the PCC but the church staff to be informed as necessary.

- Higher value work will require quotes as usual, to be put forward to the PCC for discussion and approval.
- All records to be kept in readable format e.g. Word documents, stored on the sexton's PC and also uploaded to Google Drive, accessible to Church staff members rather than whole PCC.
- Hard copy documents to be stored in box files in the Church office.
- The sexton to be a PCC member and to submit a report before each PCC meeting.
- An updated list of services and life events (BMD's) to be provided to the sexton so any works avoid clashing or to allow completion before services take place.
- Have access to churchyard records and notice of plots for intended burials.
- Responsibility for regular testing of fire alarms, emergency lighting and other safety critical items and a checklist kept.
- In the event of an emergency or critical issue occurring the sexton is an on-call member of staff. Therefore holidays or long distance trips to be notified to staff.

### **Practical Tasks**

The newly appointed sexton's key practical skill is woodworking. Therefore most of these particular maintenance tasks can be undertaken by the sexton.

- The sexton can also undertake other practical work within their competence such as minor electrical or plumbing work, painting and decorating, felt roof repairs, clearing lower level gutters, fitting and fixings, etc. provided they are acceptable within church regulations.
- High level work to be done by a contractor or tradesperson with relevant skills, training, equipment and insurance.
- The sexton must use an 'eye for detail' to spot problems with the buildings, fittings, pipework, electrics and churchyard, walls and headstones, before they develop to avoid additional cost and hazard to people due to catastrophic failure.
- To act on reports from anyone who notices a perceived problem so it can be dealt with in a timely manner and in the correct way.
- Check on gutters, downpipes, gullies and drains regularly to ensure they are free running and where possible clear them or call in a contractor where necessary.
- Access the tower to carry out a regular visual inspection of the roofs, battlements etc.
- Responsibility for tasks also applies to the Barn Centre and car park as well as the Church working with other members of staff and congregation as required.

NOTE - The sexton does not take tasks or work away from other people – such as risk assessments or care of the churchyard, instead the sexton works with those key individuals to ensure they have the support they need and tasks are completed in a timely manner.