

LOOKING AFTER CHURCH BUILDINGS

1. A small fabric committee (or an individual) should be appointed to take responsibility for all items required covering all property for which the Church is responsible. The following list indicates the time of year when certain jobs should be done. If a regular report is made to the church meeting or elders at fixed intervals, the jobs are more likely to be carried out. Much expensive remedial work can be avoided by simple regular maintenance and repairs following regular inspections.

Monthly	Check operation of emergency systems (fire alarm, emergency lighting)
Spring and Autumn	Carry out " Regular Inspection " (see Checklist on pages 3 and 4) and put in hand any necessary work.
Spring/ early summer	Sweep out tower (if any), boiler room, storerooms etc. Cut any ivy starting to grow up walls. Spray around church to discourage weed growth. Arrange servicing of heating apparatus. Clean flues. Spring clean the church.
Summer	Cut grass at regular intervals and attend to any garden areas. Arrange for external repainting when due.
Annually	Arrange for servicing of fire extinguishers, emergency lighting and alarm systems to programmes as recommended by suppliers. Arrange servicing of all gas appliances by CORGI registered engineer. Arrange for the servicing and testing of electrical equipment including portable electrical appliances (anything with a 13 amp type plug) in accordance with the IEE Code of Practice

2. Insurance

Adequate public liability cover is of primary importance. Adequate comprehensive cover for damage to the building is very desirable, but there is often conflict between what is desirable and what can be afforded. The insurance companies will be happy to advise in these circumstances. Risks normally covered would include: fire, lightning, explosion, aircraft, storm, tempest and flood, overflowing of water apparatus, impact by road vehicles, theft and malicious damage.

Most current policies allow for regular and automatic increases to allow for inflation and increases in building costs, but the cover should be re-assessed from time to time in relation to any changes to the building, its equipment or contents, or changes in re-building costs. Particular care in assessing the level of cover is needed in the case of Listed buildings, on which the use of particular kinds of material may be required when repairs or renovations are carried out.

The insurance companies also provide information for churches giving advice that will help minimise the risk of deterioration of the property or of injury or damage to property. Failure to take reasonable precautions may result in problems if a claim is made.

3 **Finance**

It is recommended that each Church has a Fabric Fund into which sums are paid regularly each year, towards the cost of future repairs. Experience has shown that to have money immediately available in the event of an emergency will often prevent the situation getting out of control and will enable repairs to be carried out more economically.

The primary care for a building rests with those who use it, but financial assistance may sometimes be available from a number of sources.

Listed Buildings:	English Heritage The Local Authority The County Authority
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All buildings	The Yorkshire Synod
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Initial information should be sought from the Synod Office.

4. **Surveys**

It may not be practicable to visit every part of a church regularly. The church is unlikely to possess specialised equipment necessary to check moisture levels in woodwork etc. A trained eye will see existing and imminent defects and advises accordingly. That is the great value of a survey by a qualified surveyor (as well as a specialised timber survey) at regular intervals. The Synod scheme for surveys assists with the costs involved.

5. **Reports**

Just as the Treasurer makes an annual report to the Church Meeting on the state of finances, so it seems advisable that the convener of the Fabric Committee should give an annual report on the state of the building. The life of the congregation does not depend solely on money and buildings, but its energies will be badly used if too much time has to be spent either raising money or worrying about a neglected building.

6. **Documents**

The Buildings Record Book is intended to be a summary of the work carried out. The reports, survey documents, specifications and drawings should be filed and kept for reference in a separately numbered file.

7. **Energy Conservation**

In carrying out any adaptation work and in many repair work items, particularly in heating repairs and renewals, energy conservation measures can be taken which will reduce future revenue costs.

Short pay back times can be achieved by expenditure on low energy lighting (which can also save on labour time or costs), draught proofing, insulation of accessible roof areas and lagging of pipes and tanks, heating controls and sensors and appropriate heating units.

Advice can be obtained from the Energy Advice Centre of your fuel suppliers. The Energy Saving Trust (www.energysavingtrust.org.uk) is a useful source of advice and can also be contacted on 0800 512012) .

REGULAR INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Premises

Church / Hall / Manse / Other premises

A EXTERNAL (inspect in both wet and fine weather)

<u>Area</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Date</u>
Ventilators to floor voids etc	Clear away any vegetation and soil banked against walls above damp-proof course level. Clear any blocked ventilator apertures.	
Drains	Check out gullies and inspection chambers to ensure that drains are not blocked. Clear out gullies and gratings.	
Guttering and fall pipes	Clean out, remove vegetation. Check for damage, leaking joints, blocked pipes.	
Internal gutterings, valleys and flashings	Check and have cleaned out or rectified by competent builders.	
Flat roofs	Remove any accumulated debris, leaves and other vegetation. Clean gutters, clear fall pipes.	
Walls	Check for cracking and bowing of walls. Check for water stains indicating rainwater leaks.	
Pointing and coping stones	Check for any evidence of loose stones on boundary walls as well as on buildings. Keep well pointed to avoid water ingress.	
Roofs	Check roof with binoculars for broken or slipped slates and tiles.	
Paintwork	Check blistering and cracking paintwork.	
Woodwork	Check for softness, water penetration, signs of dry or wet rot.	
Towers, Spires	Inspect visually, where there is safe access, and through binoculars for any signs of disturbed leadwork or masonry. Check for any ingress of birds or roosting on ledges. (NB Do not disturb any bats!).	
Pavings, ramps, steps	Check for any break up, settlement etc causing danger of tripping, or pooling of water which might lead to icy patches in winter. Check condition and security of any handrails. Ensure that the nosings of steps are visually well defined by repainting markings as necessary.	
Trees	Check for loose or damaged branches or trees, signs of movement against buildings or walls. Seek professional advice if in doubt.	
Graveyards	Check and make safe any headstones or memorials that appear hazardous. (Although these are the responsibility of the families concerned the church must take action if necessary.) Check pathways, paving, boundary walls, trees, etc.	

B **INTERNAL**

<u>Area</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Date</u>
Walls	Check for signs of damp and rot especially fungoid growths. Check and monitor cracks.	
Woodwork	Check for signs of rot and beetle activity.	
Ventilation	Make sure that there is adequate through ventilation, both in rooms and below floors. Pay particular attention to steamy kitchens.	
Electrical Installations	Watch out for frayed cables, overheating plugs, loose switches and plugs. Call an electrician if in any doubt.	
Rubbish	Keep premises clear of rubbish. It is a fire risk and prevents proper inspection.	
Plumbing and Heating Installations	Check for leaking radiators or pipework. Ensure the location of the water stop-cock is known by all people who might need to access it in an emergency.	

C **GENERALLY**

<u>Area</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Date</u>
Taps and overflow pipes	Keep watch for dripping overflow pipes and taps and deal with the cause.	
Asbestos	Ensure the Church's Asbestos Management Plan is in place. The written record must be available for inspection and should note the date and findings at each location, assessing the risk of asbestos fibres being released into the air and, when necessary, action taken to safely remove the potential of fibre release by engaging specialist contractors. Check locations and condition of known areas of asbestos and record the results.	
Fire Safety	Ensure a review is made of the Fire Risk Assessment for all buildings. The written record should be available for inspection.	
General Health and Safety	Review premises critically looking for any potential areas where health and safety of building users might be compromised, e.g. trip hazards, sharp corners, radiator covers, socket protection, etc.	

D **BUILDING RECORD BOOK**

Each church should keep a Building Record Book – a loose-leaf file is probably the easiest format. In addition to the report from the five-yearly professional inspection under the Synod Scheme, it would be wise to keep copies of any reports of other inspections carried out by specialists, for example electrical inspections, alarm or fire extinguisher maintenance, timber or damp inspection, tree specialist, etc. A record of each regular inspection as described above should also be placed in the Building Record Book and this form is designed to be copied and used for this purpose.