

DUTIES of CHURCHWARDENS

Canon E1 of the Canons of the Church of England, sets out in summary form the duties of churchwardens.

1. The churchwardens of parishes and districts shall be chosen in accordance with the Churchwardens Measure and any other Measure, Act or scheme affecting churchwardens.
 - (a) At a time and place to be appointed by the bishop annually, being on a date not later than 31 July in each year, each person chosen for the office of churchwarden shall appear before the bishop, or his substitute duly appointed, and be admitted to the office of churchwarden after-
 - i) Making a declaration in the presence of the bishop or his substitute, that he will faithfully and diligently perform the duties of his office; and
 - ii) Subscribing a declaration to that effect and also that he is not disqualified under section 2(1), (2) or (3) of the Churchwardens Measure 2001.
 - (b) In relation to a filling of a casual vacancy the reference in paragraph (a) above to the 31 July shall be construed as a reference to a date three months after the person who is to fill the vacancy is chosen or the date of the next annual meeting of the parishioners to elect churchwardens, whichever is earlier.
2. Subject to any provision of any Measure, Act or scheme relating to the resignation or vacation of their office, the churchwardens so chosen and admitted shall continue in their office until they, or others, as their successors, be admitted in like manner by the bishop or his substitute duly appointed or, if no person is admitted by 31 July in the year in question, until that date.
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.
5. In this Canon "bishop" means the bishop of the diocese concerned.

For a fuller explanation, you may like to consult the following publications:

The Churchwarden's Handbook : a practical guide by Ian Russell (Kevin Mayhew, 2001)
Practical Church Management James Behrens (Gracewing, 2nd Edition, 2005)
Handbook for Churchwardens and Parochial Church Councillors (Macmorran and Briden, Mowbrays, 2001)
So the Vicar's Leaving, Alexander and Martineau (Arthur Rank, Revised Edition, 2002)