



PARSONAGES - A GUIDE FOR CLERGY

Duties of Clergy

Clergy are provided with a house as part of their stipendiary package. The responsibilities of the Clergy are set out in Chapter VII of the Constitution of the Church in Wales. Clergy are responsible for:

- Anything that belongs to those living in the house
- Provision of home contents insurance
- Fuses, light bulbs, lampshades, batteries for doorbells etc
- The provision and maintenance of telephone equipment, TV aerials/satellite dishes and ensuring they conform to local planning regulations
- The maintenance of internal decoration
- The maintenance of gardens (except mature trees) and high hedges
- The cost of repairing items damaged due to misuse or neglect
- Any damage caused by their domestic animals
- Keeping chimneys and flues cleaned and swept
- Pest control issues should be addressed to your Local Authority; if they do not provide a service, contact the Diocesan Inspector

It is not expected that Clergy will necessarily carry out all of these items personally but may need to employ and pay local contractors. Reference should always be made to the Asbestos Register at the Inspector's office before commencing internal, decorative work or any intrusive repairs. If material suspected to be asbestos is identified, the Diocesan Inspector must be contacted immediately for further advice. Clergy may not make any structural alteration to a parsonage without the written consent of the Diocesan Parsonage Board. You are asked to inform the Diocesan Inspector of any problems that might lead to structural damage or expense, if left unattended.

What to do in an Emergency

When urgent repairs are necessary, please contact the Diocesan Inspector on 07980 582403. If necessary you should instruct a local tradesman or public utility to carry out the repairs immediately.

Maintenance of Internal Decoration

The Parsonage Board expects to provide clergy on their arrival in a new parish/benefice with a good house in good decorative order, although not newly decorated throughout. The condition of the decorations will be recorded to provide a benchmark for future inspections. Clergy are required to keep the house in good decorative order, to the satisfaction of the Parsonage Board and are expected to return the house to the Parsonage Board in similar condition.



The decoration can be to the occupier's individual taste but consideration should be given to the next occupier. Most houses will be provided with pastel or neutral shades to walls and it is expected that any stronger colours or specific designs will be removed and the walls returned to pastel or neutral shades before vacating; this will be advised on departure. A record of colours and materials used in decorations would be helpful in the ongoing maintenance of the interior.

Regular inspections will be made to ensure that decorations are maintained to a satisfactory standard. Where decorations are not so maintained, you will be given a reasonable time to undertake the works.

Dealing with Damp

Monitor all rainwater and waste pipes, gullies and gutters to avoid blockages. Where safe to do so, ensure they are clear; where unsafe to do so, contact the Diocesan Inspector, who will arrange the necessary work. The Inspector should be advised of any leaking pipes or gutters to enable prompt repair. Ensure any ventilation equipment provided is in working order and make use of it at all times. Ventilate the house by opening windows as often as possible. Ensure air bricks and ventilators are kept open and clear; keep furniture etc away from internal vents and keep ground levels below external air bricks. The provision of air via ventilators and air bricks in rooms with heating appliances is essential for safety.

Maintenance of Gardens

Clergy are required to undertake general maintenance and upkeep of grounds and gardens, including the trimming of hedges – a maximum height of 2.4 metres is suggested to help ease of maintenance and to maintain privacy – and pruning of shrubs to prevent overgrowth. Lawns should be mowed regularly. Training plants, particularly ivy, up the walls of houses is discouraged and any such growth must be cut back to prevent clogging of gutters and growth into roof spaces etc. The Parsonage Board will not be responsible for the cutting back of excessive growth.

Do not plant new shrubs or trees within 3 metres of the house or 1.5 times the mature height of the tree/shrub, whichever is the smaller.

Hard or gravel surfaces such as paths and drives should be regularly cleared of weeds and treated with a proprietary weed killer, as required. Fallen dead leaves should be swept up.

Trees are the responsibility of the Parsonage Board and any concerns are to be reported to the Diocesan Inspector as soon as they become apparent; no work on trees should be undertaken by the Clergy.



Fixtures and Fittings

All fixtures, including shelving, fitted wardrobes or cupboards, fitted kitchen units, working surfaces, sink units, integral appliances and extractor hoods, bathroom and lavatory fittings, showers and tiling are deemed to belong to the Parsonage Board. None of these items may be removed or altered without the express permission of the Parsonage Board.

Clergy should always request permission from the Parsonage Board to install any fixtures and fittings within a Parsonage Board property. The Diocesan Inspector will be happy to provide guidance concerning these matters.

Electrical Installations

All electrical installations are the responsibility of the Parsonage Board and you must not commission or carry out any adaptations or alterations. All electrical installations will be inspected regularly to ensure compliance with the latest regulations and to help to ensure the health and safety of the occupiers. Any concerns about the electrical installation eg. dimming of lights, sparking sockets or switches, faulty sockets or frequent failure of light bulbs, should be reported to the Diocesan Inspector as soon as possible. Make yourself familiar with the location of the main trip switches for your house to enable a rapid response in an emergency.

Heating Systems

All systems are serviced annually and inspected for condition and to ensure safety. The service covers all elements of the heating and hot water systems and gas fires and the inspection, for safety, of gas cookers. Make yourself familiar with the location of the gas emergency shut off valve – usually adjacent to the meter – to enable a rapid response to any emergency.

Water

Do not make alterations or additions to the water systems. Report leaking pipes to the Diocesan Inspector as soon as they become apparent. Make yourself familiar with the location of the main stop tap to enable rapid response in an emergency. Consider the installation of a water meter to reduce costs and to encourage water saving; this also helps reduce cost for the parish/benefice.

Security and Fire

Security of the house and of its occupants is of paramount importance. Mains operated smoke detectors, including heat detectors in some cases, are installed in all properties. If you have any particular concerns about the security of the house and grounds or about vandalism, please contact the Diocesan Inspector for advice.



Sub-Letting

Under no circumstances should clergy let or lease (however informal an agreement may be) any land or buildings forming part of the curtilage of a parsonage. Reference should always be made to the Parsonage Board for guidance.

Business Use

No business use whatsoever outside usual ministry activities is to be carried out in the property (including outbuildings), except with the written consent of the Parsonage Board.

Legal Notices

If any legal notice is served on you concerning the Parsonage such as planning applications on adjacent property, a compulsory purchase order or a proposal form from Cadw to list the parsonage, you should pass these on without acknowledgement or reply to the Diocesan Inspector as soon as possible. Any delay could result in the opportunity being lost to make any objection to the proposals which could, if accepted, seriously affect the amenities and value of the property. Under no circumstances should clergy, on their own account, respond to the notice.

Insurance

The fabric of the building and any fixtures and fittings for which they are responsible are insured by the Representative Body (RB). Public Liability cover is also included for third party damage caused by any part of the structure (eg falling roof tiles or slates etc), where the RB is legally liable.

The Church in Wales' insurers, the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group plc provides cover for the RB against any third party claims for which they are legally liable arising from damage or injury sustained whilst a third party is on Parsonage Board premises and whilst the clergy is carrying out "business duties" on behalf of the Church.

If any parish possessions are stored or held on Parsonage Board premises, insurance cover must be independently arranged. Clergy are strongly discouraged from storing any flammable materials belonging to the parish, such as fuel for lawnmowers or lawnmowers filled with petrol.

Access

Access to Parsonage Board property should be offered to the Parsonage Board's representatives and, in particular, the Diocesan Inspector and contractors at appropriate times in order to inspect and carry out works. Whenever possible this will be at a time mutually agreed with the parties concerned. However, if appointments are not observed and costs are incurred in abortive visits, the Parsonage Board reserves the right to pass these charges on to the persons concerned.



In case of vacant property where works are in progress prior to occupation, it is imperative that visits are strictly made at times agreed with the Diocesan Inspector and contractors.

Contractors

The Parsonage Board employs a variety of contractors to carry out works of repair and improvement. The contractors carry Public Liability Insurance and Employer's Liability Insurance, where appropriate. The Diocesan Inspector will welcome information from clergy who consider that the works are not being undertaken in a satisfactory manner as well as advice if the contractor leaves the work, once started, for an undue period. Any comments on work are to be directed to the Diocesan Inspector as soon as issues arise, to help early resolution. All complaints must be channelled through the Diocesan Inspector who will issue the necessary instructions to the contractor concerned. Clergy must not, under any circumstances, give direct instructions to contractors employed by the Parsonage Board. Any such action resulting in additional cost, not agreed with the Diocesan Inspector, will be charged to the clergy.

The Diocesan Inspector is always willing to invite contractors recommended by parishes, particularly those with church connections, to carry out work provided that it can be shown the contractor is suitably qualified and experienced and can conform to statutory legislation. Details of experience, capacity and appropriate insurance cover should be submitted to the Diocesan Inspector.

The final choice of contractor remains with the Parsonage Board which must have regard to the cost and reputation of the contractor as well as to any local connections.

Vacating the House

Clergy should notify the Diocesan Secretary and Inspector as soon as possible after giving notice to the Bishop that the house will be vacated. Early notifications will enable an inspection to be carried out by the Diocesan Inspector, providing sufficient time for you to carry out any remedial works that are the responsibility of the clergy and for a follow-up inspection, where necessary. Any damage or deterioration to the property, for which the occupants are responsible, which has not been made good within a given time, other than normal wear and tear will result in a charge being made to make good.

It is the clerics responsibility to arrange all utilities to be transferred when leaving or moving house into a new house. Read all meters and arrange for payment of final bills; do not request the disconnection of services. Leave the house, including the roof void and outbuildings, clean and empty of rubbish and personal possessions and in a condition suitable to be re-occupied. Ensure all equipment belonging with the house is clean and in a safe working order. Set up re-direction of all mail to your new address and cancel any unwanted subscriptions. Hand keys to the Area Dean and/or Churchwarden (all clearly labelled and identified) and provide the alarm code. Identify the date and location for



collection of refuse. On retirement, clergy should vacate the property no later than the agreed date for retirement from ministry. If a member of the clergy dies in post, their family or dependants may remain in the house for two months following the date of death. In special circumstances, the Bishop may, at his discretion, give permission for a further extension to occupation.

Custody of Vacant Parsonage House

When a parsonage is unoccupied during a vacancy, responsibility for the custody of the house passes to the Area Dean and Churchwardens. These notes are for their guidance and should be read in conjunction with the Constitution of the Church in Wales, Chapter VII.

These notes are not intended to be all-embracing since the action required will vary with the house and season. Custodians are required to use their judgement in the effective and economical discharge of their duty. The term “Parsonage House” includes assistant curates’ houses and also “House for Duty” houses in the Parsonage Board Scheme. Utility bills and grounds maintenance costs are the responsibility of the parish/benefice during the vacancy period. However, costs can be reimbursed by the Diocesan Secretary at a rate to be advised periodically.

Allowances

The Diocese pays the cost of removal expenses and also a disturbance allowance and you should contact the Diocesan Office for details.

Complaints

Maintaining an estate having a value of many millions of pounds and spread across the Diocese is a complex matter and occasionally mistakes will be made. If you have a problem with the way work has been carried out or any other difficulty, please let the staff at the Diocesan Office know. It would be helpful if you could identify the name of the contractor responsible and, in the first instance, you should contact the Diocesan Inspector. If the situation is not resolved, please contact the Diocesan Secretary. Final recourse can be made to the Chairman of the Diocesan Parsonage Board, whose name and address can be found in the Diocesan Year Book.



Contact Details

Diocesan Office (St Asaph)

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