



ADVICE ON ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

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 (smoke detectors, fire alarm, emergency lighting) (>[241](#))

Spring and Autumn:

- Carry out “regular inspection” (see checklist) 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
- Arrange servicing of all gas appliances
- 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 *Gas Safe*-registered engineer (>[241](#))
- Arrange for 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 (>[241](#))

ADVICE ON ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

Finance

Each Church will find it useful to have 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. Initial information should be sought from your Synod Office.

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 advise accordingly. That is the great value of a survey by a qualified surveyor (as well as a specialist timber survey) at regular intervals. Most Synods administer a scheme of quinquennial inspections and your Synod Office will have details.

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.

Documents

A Buildings Record Book provides a useful summary of work carried out. Copies of your Asbestos Management Plan and Fire Risk Assessment together with the reports, survey documents, specifications and drawings should be filed and kept for reference in a separately mounted and readily accessible file. (➤[251](#), ➤[291](#))

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 payback 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/0800-512012) is a useful source of advice.

ADVICE ON ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

Regular Inspection Checklist: External

- *Ventilators to floor voids etc* – Clear away any vegetation and soil banked against walls. 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 (between parallel roof slopes), 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 and 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 and 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 families concerned the church must take action if necessary.) Check pathways, paving, boundary walls, trees, etc

Regular Inspection Checklist: Internal

- *Walls* – Check for any signs of damp and rot especially fungoid growths. Check and monitor cracks. Check paintwork
- *Woodwork* – Check for signs of rot and beetle activity. Check paintwork
- *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

ADVICE ON ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

- *Rubbish* – Keep premises clear of rubbish. It is a fire risk and prevents proper inspection
- *Heating Installations* – Check for leaking radiators or pipework

Generally

- *Taps and Overflow Pipes* – Keep watch for dripping overflow pipes and taps, and deal with the cause

Asbestos

Check locations and condition of known areas of asbestos and record the results in the church's asbestos management plan. (>[291](#))

Fire Safety

Ensure a review is made of the Fire Risk Assessment for all buildings. The written record should be available for inspection. (>[251](#))

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. (>[271](#))

Further Information

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings has produced excellent guidance for the maintenance of places of worship of all ages. This includes an online film and pages of information and advice www.spabfim.org.uk. A book entitled "The Good Maintenance Guide" can be obtained for £5 + £1 postage and packing from:

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