

St Nicholas Church, Marston

Health and Safety Policy

Issue 5

25 May 2016

St Nicholas Parochial Church Council

Preface

St Nicholas is a historic parish church which serves the parish of Marston in Oxford. It provides the traditional physical and spiritual hub to a very diverse community. The original building dates back to the late 12th century but has been enlarged and modified over succeeding centuries to meet the changing needs of the community.

Average attendance at Sunday worship is about 120. At Christmas and other special occasions there are many more and much additional seating has to be packed in. A large proportion of the regular congregation are retired people, but there are also a number of families with young children. There are three Sunday services which cater for different styles of worship, and daily offices throughout the week. In addition to the services of worship, St Nicholas is host to various community groups; Coffee Pot, Over 50s, Women's Institute, baby and toddler group, and an annual week-long children's holiday club which takes place in the church and neighbouring church hall. During the week, the church is used for practice by bell ringers and choir.

The church is always open during the daytime and attracts many parishioners and visitors for a moment of tranquil meditation and prayer.

General Statement of Policy

So far as is reasonably practicable we will provide and maintain safe and healthy conditions for all employees, casual labour and voluntary helpers and provide such information, training and supervision as they need for this purpose.

We will endeavour to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all members of the congregation, contractors, and others who may visit the church, churchyard and any associated buildings or participate in events organised by the church.

This policy will be implemented by means of the arrangements set out below and will be reviewed by the Parochial Church Council at least once every five years.

Signed by Tony Price (vicar)

Date 25 May 2016

1 Organisation and Responsibilities

1.1 Responsibility of the Vicar

The vicar has overall responsibility for health and safety.

1.2 Responsibility of the Parochial Church Council

The Churchwardens and Parochial Church Council have general responsibility to ensure that the health and safety policy is implemented and will appoint a Health and Safety Officer (normally one of the churchwardens) with the following duties.

- To be familiar with Health and Safety Regulations as far as they concern the church.
- To be familiar with this Health and Safety Policy and ensure that it is observed.
- To ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe systems of work are in place.
- To ensure that the church is maintained clean and tidy.
- To ensure that the churchyard is properly maintained, including the safety of monuments, tombstones and trees, and that grass is kept cut.
- To ensure that safety equipment and clothing is provided and used where required.
- To ensure that plant, equipment and tools are properly maintained and in good conditions and that operators have received appropriate instructions.
- To ensure that adequate access and egress is maintained.
- To ensure that adequate fire fighting equipment is available and maintained.

1.3 Responsibilities of employees and voluntary workers

Employees and voluntary workers have a responsibility to co-operate in the implementation of this policy and to take reasonable care of themselves and others whilst on church business or premises. They must therefore:

- Comply with safety rules.
- Use protective equipment or clothing when required.
- Report any fault or defect to the appropriate person.
- Report accidents, injuries and dangerous incidents as soon as possible.

2 Arrangements

2.1 Accidents and First Aid

First Aid boxes and accident books are located in:

- The choir vestry of the church
- The kitchen of the church hall

All accidents and dangerous incidents must be recorded in one of the accident books.

2.2 Fire Safety

Fire Alarms

The church vestry and church all are equipped with smoke sensor alarms. It is not expected that people will be sleeping on the premises. Because of the relatively small size of the buildings and the nature of their use, it is possible to raise a fire alarm verbally.

Fire extinguishers

The church is equipped with a number of appropriate fire extinguishers which are kept in strategic positions, generally near to exits. These are checked by a contractor once a year who reports to a churchwarden or Safety Officer.

Fire Exits

The church is provided with three exits - the main South door, a door in the chancel and a door in the vestry. All three doors are operated by the same key. For normal services only the main door is unlocked. For special services when there may be a higher risk, eg due to the use of candles and/or extra seating, then the other two doors will be unlocked for the duration of the service.

Torches are kept at the emergency exits to allow sidespersons to assist in an evacuation.

Evacuation

In the event of a fire, the person leading the service or meeting will assume responsibility to order evacuation.

The churchwardens and duty sidespersons (if present) will assist by carrying out the following. Otherwise they should be done by any sidesperson or other competent person.

- Assist in the evacuation of the church, particularly disabled people
- Telephone the emergency services
- Ensure that children are supervised and kept together, clear of the building
- Attack the fire if possible within your capability using the appliances provided, but without taking personal risk
- Ensure clear access for emergency services
- Prevent people from re-entering the building until cleared by the fire service

2.3 Electrical Safety

Routine precautions

All church members must observe the following precautions when using electrical equipment.

- Visually check equipment before use.
- Don't use faulty equipment, but report the fault to a churchwarden or Safety Officer.
- Switch off and unplug equipment which is not in use.
- Take care with flexible cables to avoid a hazard of tripping.

Heaters

The church is heated by electrical storage heaters and concealed pew heaters. Pews are labelled to warn that screw, nails etc must not be inserted near the heaters. Any faults must be reported to a churchwarden.

Quinquennial checks

Every five years the fixed electrical system and portable electrical appliances will be inspected and tested by appropriately qualified electrical contractors and a report will be delivered to a churchwarden or Safety Officer.

Lightning conductor

Every year the lightning conductor will be checked by an appropriately qualified contractor and a report will be delivered to a churchwarden.

2.4 Gas Equipment Safety

The church does not have any gas equipment.

2.5 Hazardous substances

The following types of hazardous substances may be used.

- Domestic cleaning materials
- Garden chemicals
- Fuel and oil for lawnmowers

These will be stored in clearly marked containers in suitable areas out of the reach of children.

2.6 Plant and machinery

The following types of equipment may be used by adult employees or voluntary workers who are suitably experienced.

- Garden equipment, including lawnmowers and strimmer
- Ladders
- Hand tools, including power driven hand tools
- Audio-visual equipment
- Snow-clearing shovels

The following precautions will apply, so far as relevant.

- Visually check that the equipment is in safe working condition before use. Do not use faulty equipment, but report the fault to a churchwarden or Safety Officer.
- Switch off powered equipment before making any adjustments to it.
- Ladders may only be used where they can be safely and correctly positioned, or secured if necessary
- Wear suitable clothing, including safe non-slip shoes and protective clothing (eg gloves, eye protection) where appropriate.

Every year the condition of equipment owned by the church will be inspected by the Safety Officer and it will be repaired or replaced as found necessary.

2.7 Floors, paths and steps

The Safety Officer will inspect the condition of floors, paths and steps within the church, and churchyard at least once a year and more often

when conditions require and will, so far as is reasonably practicable, take any necessary action to repair damage, to remove moss, algae, leaves, snow or ice and/or to post warning notices in order to reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls.

All church workers and PCC members will take care to prevent situations which could cause trips or falls by keeping the church tidy and reporting any potentially dangerous conditions.

A supply of salt is maintained and is readily accessible in the churchyard for application to paths during winter as needed. Snow and ice will be cleared from paths as soon as practicable.

2.8 Lighting

To ensure that the church is adequately lit, the Safety Officer will inspect the lights at least once a month and arrange for the replacement of bulbs as required. Because of the difficulty of changing bulbs at high level in the nave, this may be deferred until up to 4 bulbs require replacement.

2.9 Working at heights

Competent volunteers may use the church step-ladder or the church extending ladder (two sections only) subject to the following precautions.

- An assistant must always be present to hold the ladder and provide help in the event of difficulty.
- The ladder must be correctly and securely positioned on level and solid ground.
- The step-ladder should be fully extended and locked in position.
- The two-section ladder should be extended to the required amount and erected at a safe angle.

Suitably qualified contractors should be used for working at any heights above the extent of these ladders, including replacement of light bulbs in the church nave.

2.10 Preparation of food

Bread, wine and wafers used for communion will be prepared and stored in suitably decent and hygienic conditions in the church vestry.

Hot or cold drinks, biscuits and food freshly prepared by volunteers at home may be served in the adjacent church hall. The following precautions apply.

- Relevant government or local authority regulations are followed.

- Food handlers have adequate experience or are appropriately supervised.
- Food is prepared and stored at appropriate temperatures.
- Promptly after any meals are finished, crockery and cutlery will be washed, waste will be disposed of and the kitchen will be tidied and left in a clean state
- No perishable food items will be left or stored in the kitchen and any items which are stored there (eg coffee, tea, sugar, squash) will be in clearly labelled containers in a high level cupboard.
- Any sign of infestation by insects or vermin will be reported promptly to the Safety Officer who will ensure that appropriate action is taken.

2.11 Manual handling

- As far as is reasonably practicable we will avoid the need for manual handling of heavy objects.
- When necessary, loads will be moved by sufficiently fit and competent adults, using suitable lifting aids as far as possible.
- The Clavinova keyboard is provided with wheels for movement on flat surfaces. If necessary to lift, this should be done with care by two suitably fit adults.

2.12 Hazardous buildings and glazing

Our policy is to ensure that buildings are safe and without risks to the health safety and welfare of all who work in or use them. Defects are reported to a churchwarden or other responsible person and repairs are arranged. If necessary, temporary measures may be taken to ensure there is no risk of accident or injury until permanent repairs can be carried out.

A detailed inspection of the buildings is carried out by the church architect once every five years (the quinquennial inspection). The churchwardens are responsible to ensure that actions recommended at this inspection are carried out.

There is no glazing below waist height in the church buildings.

The balcony rail is slightly lower than is currently recommended. Considering the type of use of the balcony, this is not believed to be a significant risk.

2.13 Asbestos

An asbestos survey has been carried out. It is believed that there is no asbestos on the premises.

2.14 Contractors

Anyone carrying out work in the church other than employees or volunteers must abide by the following.

- Have their own health and safety policy (if required by law) and be able to provide a copy.
- Have appropriate public and employer's liability insurance and be able to provide a copy.
- Comply with this policy and cooperate with church officials to provide safe systems of work.
- Be able to show that portable equipment has been appropriately inspected and tested.
- Use subcontractors only with the express permission of church officials. However, responsibility will remain with the contractors.

2.15 Bells

The Tower Captain has overall responsibility for ringing of bells and safety within the bell tower and will issue appropriate instructions to bell ringers and visitors to the tower.

Bells are always left in the down position when not in use and the ropes are attached to a spider in the ringing room.

The access door to the bell chamber is kept locked, except when required for maintenance or repairs or by the Tower Captain or deputy for access to the bells. Access is by a vertical ladder attached to the wall, and due care must be taken in climbing the ladder and within the tower, taking into account the age of the building.

The Tower Captain or deputy should be satisfied with the competence of visiting ringers and warn them of the circumstances relevant to St Nicholas.

The Tower Captain may issue other safety instructions from time to time, in accordance with usual practices.