

WAKEFIELD DIOCESAN REGISTRY



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To all Incumbents and Priests-in-Charge

Churchwardens' Visitation 2009

This year the Archdeacons are to undertake Visitations to groups of Deaneries rather than individually as last year. The dates and venues of the four Deanery Visitations are set out in the Archdeacons' note on the 2009 Articles of Enquiry or can be found in the "Events" section of the Diocesan website. Outgoing Churchwardens, clergy, PCC members and other supporters are welcome to attend with the elected Churchwardens.

I enclose herewith the Notice of Visitation which will you please publish at a main Sunday service following the election of your Churchwardens, and then return the tear-off slip to this office to confirm that you have done so.

Whilst the Visitations will commence at 7.30pm it would be appreciated if Churchwardens would attend in good time, as they usually do, to deal with the administrative detail of completing the written form of their Declaration. To simplify the process I am enclosing with this letter that Declaration. It would be very helpful if this could be copied for each warden and completed by them in advance of the event; this can then returned to myself or my fellow Registrar, Julia Wilding, on the night.

As in previous years I must emphasise that it would be inappropriate for the Declaration to be completed by a warden who will be absent from the Visitation to be handed in on their behalf by a colleague. In the event that a warden is unable to attend their own Deanery Visitation they should make arrangements to be present at an alternative venue. If this is not possible then the warden will need to arrange to attend either their Archdeacon or at the Registry to make their Declaration.

It would also be very helpful if you could ensure that your wardens return the completed Declarations to myself or Julia Wilding direct on the evening of the Visitation and not to the Archdeacons (unless they are made before their Archdeacon) or to Church House nor, indeed, in an envelope containing responses to the Articles of Enquiry. The completed Declarations are collated at the Registry and it can cause confusion if the appearance is that a warden has not attended a Visitation because we have not received the form, whereas they were present but sent the form elsewhere.

I would take this opportunity of reminding you that the provisions of the Churchwardens Measure 2001 limiting a warden's length of service to no more than six consecutive years come into effect last year. The consequence of this is that no Churchwarden who was elected by their parishioners in 2003, or earlier, and who has been re-elected each year since then, will be eligible to stand for re-election at the forthcoming meeting of parishioners. Wardens who cease to be eligible for election for this reason are then unable to present themselves for re-election for a period of not less than two years. The purpose underlying the rule is, of course, to encourage as many of the laity of the parish as possible to serve in a leadership role.

This general rule is, however, subject to the right of the parishioners to resolve that it should not apply in their parish. There may be good reason why this might be considered appropriate, such as a shortage of

alternative candidates able and willing to serve as Churchwardens, or perhaps it might be felt sensible to keep an experienced “team” of wardens together in anticipation of a forthcoming interregnum. The parishioners have a complete discretion as to their reasons for so resolving, but in the same way a subsequent meeting of parishioners is entitled at any time to revoke the resolution and revert to the “six-year rule”.

There are two ways to pass a resolution to revoke the length of service rule

- At a meeting of parishioners, either on the same occasion as the APCM, or at a specially convened meeting, when it is resolved that the rule shall not apply with effect from a date in the future, such as a subsequent meeting of parishioners
- At the meeting of parishioners on the date from which it is proposed the limitation shall not apply, a resolution to revoke the rule coming into force immediately. In other words candidates for the post of Churchwarden will be proposed in advance of the meeting in the usual way, even if they have already served for six consecutive years and would thus not normally be eligible for election. A resolution to revoke the rule with immediate effect would then be put to the parishioners as the first item on their agenda. If it is adopted then the nomination of the otherwise ineligible candidate can proceed; if the resolution fails then the candidate’s nomination must lapse and he or she cannot be elected.

I hope all this is helpful but if in any doubt please do not hesitate to contact me

Yours sincerely



JULIAN S GILL
Joint Registrar

JULIAN S. GILL
Solicitor and Ecclesiastical Notary
MRS JULIA H. WILDING
Solicitor and Notary Public
Joint Registrars of the Diocese of Wakefield