



Archdeacons' Visitations 2024 Explanatory Note

The dates of the 2024 Archdeacons' Visitations will take place as set out in the Citation. Details of the Visitations can also be found on the Diocesan website.

I would ask you to publish the Citation at the main Sunday service following the election of your Churchwardens and also place the Notice on your noticeboard. Outgoing Churchwardens, Clergy, PCC members and other supporters are all welcome to attend with the elected Churchwardens.

It would be appreciated if Churchwardens would attend in good time, as they usually do, to deal with the administrative details of the Visitations.

I attach with this letter a form of declaration which should be copied for each Churchwarden. The form can be completed by them in advance of the Visitation, but they should not sign the declaration until they have made this declaration in the service. The forms should then be handed to the Archdeacon.

I must emphasise that a Churchwarden who will be absent from the Visitation cannot complete the declaration and give it to a colleague to hand in. Churchwardens should make arrangements to be present at an alternative venue if they are unable to attend a Visitation in their Episcopal Area.

Should this not be possible, Churchwardens will need to arrange to attend either their Archdeacon or at the Registry to make their declarations. Neither parish priests nor Area Deans have authority to take declarations from Churchwardens. Churchwardens' appointments will lapse if they have not made their declarations by 31 July and the parish will then have to call a further meeting with the parishioners to fill the vacancy.

It would also be very helpful if you could ensure that the Churchwardens return their completed declarations on the evening of the Visitations or, if not, to the Archdeacons subsequently. The completed declarations are collated at the Registry, and it can cause confusion if it appears that a Churchwarden has not attended a Visitation because we have not received the form, whereas the Churchwarden was present but sent the form elsewhere or simply omitted to hand the form in.

I would also like to take this opportunity of reminding you of the provisions of the Churchwardens Measure 2001 limiting a Churchwarden's length of service to no more than six years. The consequence of this is that no Churchwarden who was elected by their parishioners in 2018 or earlier, and who has been re-elected every year since then, is eligible to stand for re-election at the forthcoming meeting of parishioners. Churchwardens 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 to encourage as many of the laity of the parish as possible to serve in a leadership role. Please note that the outgoing Churchwardens will remain in post until the new Churchwardens are sworn in.

This general rule is, however, subject to the right of parishioners to resolve formally that it should not apply to 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 sensible to keep an experienced team of Churchwardens together. The parishioners have 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:

1. At the annual meeting of parishioners to elect Churchwardens (or at a specially convened meeting for the specific purpose) at which it is resolved that the rule shall not apply with effect from a date in the future, such as a subsequent meeting of parishioners; or
2. 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 annual meeting in the usual way, even if they have already served 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 the agenda. If the resolution 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.

David Whitaker
Diocesan Registrar and Legal Secretary to the Bishop of Leeds
December 2023