



Archdeacons Visitations 2021 Explanatory Note

The dates of the 2021 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. Whilst the form can be completed by them in advance of the Visitation they should not sign the declaration until they have made this declaration in the service. The forms will then be handed in to me as Registrar.

I must emphasize that it is not permitted for the declaration to be completed by a Warden who will be absent from the Visitation, to be handed in by their colleague. In the event that a Warden is unable to attend a Visitation in their Episcopal Area they should make arrangements to be present at an alternative venue.

Should this not be possible, the Warden will need to arrange to attend either their Archdeacon or at the Registry to make their declaration. Neither Parish Priests nor Area Deans have authority to take the declarations from Churchwardens. In the event that the Wardens have not made their declarations by 31 July their appointment will lapse and the Parish will have to call for a further meeting with the parishioners to fill the vacancy.

It would also be very helpful if you could ensure that the Wardens return the completed declarations on the evening of the Visitations and if not to the Archdeacons. 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 or simply omitted to hand the form in.

I would take this opportunity of also reminding you of the provisions of the Churchwardens Measure 2001 limiting a Warden'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 2014 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. 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 to encourage as many of the laity of the Parish to serve in a leadership role.

This general rule is, however, subject to the right of parishioners to formally resolve that it should not apply their Parish. There may be good reason why this might be considered appropriate such as a shortage of alternative candidates able and willing to service Churchwardens, or perhaps it might be sensible to keep an experienced team of Wardens 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, 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
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 at the first item on the 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.

Peter W Foskett
Diocesan Registrar and Legal Secretary to the Bishop of Leeds
March 2021