

Setting Up a Maintenance Working Party

Church and churchyard maintenance can sometimes feel like an overwhelming task. While it may be tempting to ignore routine maintenance tasks and inspections, serious fabric issues can arise if these tasks are overlooked. An excellent way to help stay on top of maintenance is to organise a Maintenance Working Party.

What is a Maintenance Working Party?



A Maintenance Working Party is a volunteer group designed to help keep on top of maintenance and cleaning tasks at your church. It can be formed of members of the PCC or your congregation, or people from your church Friends Group or the local community who may wish to help care for the church without necessarily joining your worshipping community. You can even form one in partnership with neighbouring churches to make sure all the churches in the group are well maintained.

The type of tasks you will normally complete during a Working Party session can vary, but will normally include things such as cleaning, sweeping, removing plants at the bases of walls and clearing gullies. Volunteers should not attempt to complete repairs or do tasks that require specialist knowledge or training as this should be left to a suitably qualified professional.

The Benefits of Setting Up a Maintenance Working Party

Undertaking cleaning or maintenance tasks as a group can have several benefits. This includes:

- Completing tasks as a group can make maintaining your church **more manageable**.
- It allows people from the church and the local community to **come together**.

- You can **attract new people** from the local community to engage with your church and take on some of the responsibility for caring for your building.

How to Set Up a Maintenance Working Party

To set up a Maintenance Working Party you should:

- **Identify a Coordinator:** Choose someone who can organise your Working Party, liaise with volunteers, outline what tasks need doing and complete necessary risk assessments. This may be someone on the PCC or a person from a Fabric Committee or Friends Group.
- **Define the Scope of the Group:** Decide what type of tasks your Working Party would like to do. If you find you have different groups of volunteers who wish to do specific types of tasks, you may wish to have multiple Working Party groups. For instance, you could have one Working Party for cleaning, another for maintaining the churchyard and one more for carrying out preventative maintenance tasks around the church.
- **Recruit Volunteers:** Decide who is going to be involved in the Working Party and start recruiting volunteers.

Depending on who you want to join the group, you may find it helpful to advertise the opportunity in various ways. This can include announcing it at PCC or Friends Group meetings, before or after services, on your church noticeboard or website, in your church or local community newsletter, or on social media. If you want people from the wider community to join, the more places you can advertise the opportunity the better!

When you are advertising your Working Party, you may find it beneficial to simply send out a general call for action in the initial stages. This way, you can see if enough people are interested in the opportunity and see what their availability is like.

What to Do on the Day of the Working Party Session

- **Assign Tasks:** On the day of a Working Party session, the Coordinator should ideally have a checklist of all the tasks you wish to carry out and assign jobs to attendees. To make it easier to distribute jobs, you should aim to see if anyone has any specific skills or preferences.
- **Observe Health & Safety Guidance:** During a Working Party session, volunteers should make sure they are wearing appropriate PPE and following any relevant advice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The Coordinator should make sure these are being followed and advise volunteers of any risks.

- **Observe Conservation and Cleaning Guidance:** Volunteers should be informed of the correct ways to clean items before undertaking cleaning. This is because using improper techniques or materials could inadvertently harm the fabric of the church or its contents. It could also put the health and safety of volunteers at risk. If necessary, volunteers should be shown relevant guidance (e.g. [ChurchCare's advice and guidance](#)).
- **Provide Refreshments and Socialise:** Don't forget to make the working party session social! Tea, coffee, biscuits can go a long way and can help encourage people to come to any future sessions. If your session runs over lunch, you may also wish to provide a light meal such as sandwiches.

Organising Regular Maintenance Sessions

You may only wish to organise a Working Party session on an ad-hoc basis, however, it can be useful to keep momentum going. If you plan to host regular Working Party sessions, it would be a good idea to:

- **Schedule Sessions Early:** If you have a regular group of people wanting to help maintain your church, it would be a good idea to arrange sessions with plenty of notice so volunteers can plan ahead. Determining how often people want to meet up and what people's availability is like will help you do this.
- **Prepare a Task List:** Ahead of each Working Party session, you should aim to establish what tasks need doing based on your Maintenance Plan. You may wish to focus on several tasks or simply tackle one larger maintenance item. To help people prepare for the session, share the task list with all the volunteers beforehand.
- **Provide Equipment:** For each session, you should make sure everything needed is available on the day. This should include things like PPE, gloves, bin bags, gardening tools, cleaning supplies. If you need volunteers to bring their own equipment, make sure to notify them in advance!
- **Celebrate the Work of the Group:** To help encourage more volunteers, and share the success of the Working Party, you may wish to share photos or updates in a newsletter, on social media, or on your noticeboard. If you plan to include photos from sessions, don't forget to get permission from the people in the photos beforehand.

Permissions

Although it is unlikely you will need permission for many of the maintenance and cleaning tasks you complete during a Working Party session, general repairs and minor changes will require List B permission or a Faculty.

If you identify a repair need during the Working Party session, please contact a member of the Church Buildings Team for advice on whether permission is needed. You can contact us via the Church Buildings Team email: churches@cofe-worcester.org.uk