

Church Maintenance: Your Guide to Care

June, July, August and September Maintenance Tips

With the Summer months upon us, drier conditions offer an ideal opportunity to ventilate your church by opening any windows and doors that can be safely opened on a dry day. While doing so, take the time to ensure that all doors and windows are operating properly and that any ironmongery is well lubricated. This is also a good opportunity to inspect for any defects. Check for any damage to glazing, putty, lead comes and wire ties in each window, and look for signs of decay in surrounding timber and stonework. You should also take the time to clear away any dirt or debris that may have accumulated in condensation drainage channels and at the base drainage holes of windows.

During the Summer months, you should also aim to examine any exposed timber (if safe to do so) for cracks, rotten wood, defective paintwork, or insect infestations. Areas to examine may include timber windows, doors, floorboards, furnishings, fascias and bargeboards, alongside less accessible areas such as floor and roof voids and under stairs. You may wish to do these checks in the month of June as this is a particularly good month to identify woodworm and death watch beetle because larvae hatch at this time of year resulting in flying beetles.

The drier climate of Summer also makes it a good time of year to carry out any maintenance tasks around your churchyard. Whilst outside, you should make sure drainage and ventilation channels remain clear and unobstructed. For instance, plants, soil, and debris can block airbricks and reduce the effectiveness of drainage channels. To ensure these elements function properly, you should remove any obstructions from around the base of your church.

While the weather is warm and the heating system is turned off, it is also a good opportunity to have your church's boiler and heating system tested to make sure that it is working properly (if you have not already done so this year). These checks are best done in September, before the colder months strike, so that you can plan for repairs. If your heating system uses oil or Gas, September is also a good time to make sure that you have enough fuel for winter. If your heating system is nearing the end of its life, you should start considering what options are available for when a replacement is needed. Under the Faculty Jurisdiction Amendment Rules 2022, churches are required to show due regard to the Church Building Council's advice on Net Zero Carbon. As a result, a replacement system which relies on fossil fuels may not be possible.

September is also a good time to check all exposed water tanks, water and heating pipes, and oil feed pipes are protected from frost by making sure pipes are well-lagged (insulated). Any leaks should also be repaired before the colder months arrive. At the same time, it would be worthwhile checking your frost thermostat is working.

Other tasks to consider during the Summer months include having your lightning conductor inspected (this should be done every five years) and having your organ tuned (this should take place once or twice a year). It is also worthwhile replacing any broken bulbs and security lights before the darker mornings and evenings arrive. The Summer months are also a good time to check that your bird control measures, such as bird screens and spikes, are in place and working effectively.

Top Tips for Inspecting Timberwork & Windows

The Church of England has produced a wealth of guidance relating to the conservation of church buildings. This includes useful advice on the care of timberwork and stained glass. You may find it helpful to read this guidance to understand what to look out for when inspecting these areas of your church, as well as tips for best maintaining them.

ChurchCare Conservation of Timberwork Guidance:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/timberwork>

ChurchCare Conservation of Stained Glass Guidance:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/advice-and-guidance-church-buildings/stained-glass>

Permissions

Although many maintenance tasks can be completed without List B permission or a Faculty, general repairs and minor changes normally require permission.

If you identify a repair need, please contact us via churches@cofe-worcester.org.uk for advice on whether permission is needed.

Need support?

If you would like any advice on church maintenance or have any repairs you need help with planning, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the team for assistance. You can contact us via the Church Buildings Team email, churches@cofe-worcester.org.uk.