



St Hugh of Lincoln Church Health and Safety In Liturgy Planning

Extract from the Diocesan Parish Administration Manual

Section 13 – Health & Safety Policy : www.nwconsultancy.co.uk/dabnet.htm

“Effective health and safety management reduces the risks associated with our activities and helps to prevent accidents, injury and ill health. We shouldn’t look on it as preventing us from doing things so much as asking ourselves if what we are doing is safe and whether we could improve safety by doing things differently.

What we are aiming for in the Diocese, is to provide and maintain an environment which allows people to be involved in God’s work and celebrate their beliefs without being harmed.”

In the context of the current Health and Safety legislation, the Parish Priest is the ‘Responsible Person’ for the Parish who is charged with ensuring that the correct processes and procedures are in place to comply with current H&S requirements. The Parish Finance Committee is responsible for assisting the PP with the overall development and delivery of the H&S policy in the parish.

Where special ‘Events’ are being planned, it is the responsibility of the event co-ordinator to ensure that the Health and Safety of the participants is actively considered and incorporated into the planning and delivery of the event. In this context, the Liturgy Group are being asked to ensure that H&S is considered as a specific responsibility when planning special liturgies. This is particularly important when planning events which include:-

- The use of candles
- People with special needs
- Large congregations
- Large numbers of visitors who may not be familiar with the church

Because of the adverse publicity and penalties applied where accidents occur and no proof of H&S considerations can be provided, it is essential for responsibilities to be assigned to individuals who are competent to undertake the duty, providing them with check lists of their duties. The co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring that each nominated person is present at the event and if any nominated person fails to attend, reassigning their duties.

During the planning of many special liturgies at St Hugh’s, an overall co-ordinator is appointed and volunteers are sought for the special liturgical duties. Many of these volunteers would be ideal for taking on the additional H&S contingency activities – i.e. welcomers, readers, special ministers etc.

The following table provides a summary of the special activities which may need to be considered. They are based on the Risk Assessments which were undertaken by the Diocesan H&S advisor. It is not designed to be definitive or

exhaustive. The Liturgy Group should use this as a guide and tailor the H&S requirements based on their event plans.

	H&S Consideration
1.	Review services where those attending are likely to be more vulnerable to slips, trips and falls, i.e. Easter Vigil and Palm Sunday etc where participants process through the grounds. Identify potential trip points and assign ushers.
2.	Consider the potential dangers to the participants if the votive candle stands remain in use. For high capacity services, consider removing the votive candle stands and restoring them after the service.
3.	Ensure that someone is assigned to unlock the side, fire escape door when the church is initially opened to admit participants. This should be open for EVERY event in the church. The key is stored in the top drawer of the press in the Sacristy.
4.	Where additional seating is required in the church, ensure that only folding wooden chairs or chairs with solid plastic seats are used. These present a lower fire risk than chairs with padded/upholstered seats. Note : See 7 and 8 below.
5.	Ensure that fire extinguishers are in place and that access to them is not obstructed.
6.	Devise a plan for the emergency evacuation of the Church / Hall taking into consideration the safe evacuation of the disabled and vulnerable people. i.e. assign a helper to each door and ensure that they test the unlatching process before the service so that they know where the latches are and how they work. In the event of the need for an evacuation, their duty would be to ensure that the door was fully opened and assist those with special needs. Ensure wheelchairs and the more infirm are seated near a door.
7.	Ensure that anyone asked to undertake a service is adequately briefed and trained on what to do.
8.	Where chairs and tables are used in the Hall, ensure that those moving the furniture are lifting safely and within their physical capability. Chairs stored in the Hall must NOT be stacked more than 5 high to prevent accidents through toppling.
9.	Easter Vigil: Ensure that ushers are assigned to: a) clear any nightlights deployed around the church and grounds, b) deploy a fire extinguisher near the brazier and reposition it when the brazier is made safe, c) have buckets and water ready to extinguish the brazier and move it to a safe location after participants move into the church, d) secure the Hall during the vigil. The co-ordinator must review other risks arising from the specific plans for the service.
10.	Ensure that first aid trained personnel are on site for high capacity events / services or where there is an increased likelihood of accidents e.g. Easter Vigil.
11.	There is a First Aid kit and an accident book in both the Church and the Hall. Ensure that key helpers, (co-ordinator, welcomers, ushers, first aiders etc), know the location of these items and check the contents of the first aid kit ahead of the event.
12.	Where a service is planned to include the congregation holding tapers, (especially where young people are expected), consider how the safety aspects are to be managed. Carelessly managed candles cause fires – the primary risk in the church is people setting their clothes on fire – or someone else’s clothes. Consider the means of smothering flames and having buckets of water available. Who will manage this?
13.	Where incense is being used, the MC must ensure that the duties are assigned to a responsible server, (the thurifer), who is trained in the safe use, storage and disposal of the contents of the thurible after use.