

Guideline Leaflet PC03: Five Year Inspection Reports – Church Buildings

We recommend that all churches obtain a report on the condition of their building every five years. This leaflet explains what is needed and how to find a suitable architect or building surveyor. Identifying problems and creating a maintenance plan is important, especially for listed buildings.

PC03: Five Year Inspection Reports – Church Buildings

These notes are offered as guidelines by the Legal and Operations Team to provide information for Baptist churches.

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[L17 Legal and Operations Team – Regulatory Information](#)

These notes can never be a substitute for detailed professional advice if there are serious and specific problems, but we hope you will find them helpful.

If you want to ask questions about the leaflets and one of the Baptist Trust Companies are your property trustees, you should contact them. They will do their best to help.

If your church property is in the name of private individuals who act as trustees they may also be able to help.

FIVE YEAR INSPECTIONS

What are they?

An inspection and report on the condition of a building undertaken every five years by a suitably qualified architect or building surveyor. This is a particular kind of detailed report that gives a clear assessment of the condition, the need and priority for repairs. These reports are also called Quinquennial Inspection Reports. Listed buildings in particular benefit from having a report by an architect or surveyor with conservation experience and qualifications.

Why?

All buildings require maintenance and repairs even modern buildings. Sometimes defects in design or construction will emerge and cause problems. The five year inspection aims to ensure that any problems do not go unnoticed and suitable remedial action is recommended. Minor problems such as a leaking gutter or down pipe will, if left unattended or undetected, cause extensive damage to the fabric of a building. This will lead to costly repairs which could have been avoided if the problem had been identified and action taken earlier. A consultant is always more likely to be objective than anyone who is familiar with the building on a day to day basis. The report will help the church to set priorities over the next 5 to 10 years.

Purpose

The inspection will involve checking the building thoroughly where roofs and gutters need to be checked, ladders, scaffolding or a lifting platform may be needed.

The report following an inspection provides an indication of the condition of the building, an assessment of maintenance priorities and costs. It is not a full building survey as sometimes provided in a case of an acquisition of a property or a valuation for insurance or sale purposes, neither is it a specification for carrying out the work.

Overall, the inspection will help the church to gain a better understanding of their buildings, and to manage maintenance effectively in the context of resources and funds available. Problems can be addressed early, before they become unmanageable.

Who should undertake the Inspections?

For all buildings it is recommended that a suitably qualified architect or surveyor is chosen. That means appointing someone with proven experience in the type of building and the materials your building is made of. They will probably be a member of the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) or the RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors).

In the case of a listed building the consultant should also have conservation experience. In historic buildings defects may arise which would not be found in a modern building. It is essential to engage a consultant who will be able to correctly interpret and assess the materials and construction methods, identify defects and recommend appropriate remedial action.

The Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association could help with recommendations for suitable consultants (contact Andrew Shepherd, Elden Minns and Co, 01142 662458). In all cases it is preferable that the consultant appointed has significant experience of church buildings, their use and repair needs.

If a church member is either an architect or surveyor they may feel able to undertake this role, but the church should be aware of potential pastoral problems if something goes wrong. This can be very stressful to the life of the church. The person may not be covered by insurance and the church could be faced with suing a church member if a serious mistake is made. It is always preferable to appoint an independent consultant.

The Consultant's Appointment and Fees

The appointment of a consultant should be confirmed in writing to record the basis on which the inspection and report are to be provided, and fee arrangements. These will need to include printing and travel expenses and VAT. The consultant should also provide confirmation that they hold adequate professional indemnity cover. It is necessary to ask questions about qualifications and experience. The cost will vary dependent on the size and complexity of the buildings to be inspected. The minimum cost will be £500 to £600.

The terms on which a consultant will provide advice will normally contain limitations, which should be noted. These may include limitations if the inspection is undertaken without the use of temporary high level access such as scaffolding. There may be exclusions if carpets or other fixed coverings are not removed, although every effort should be made to allow a thorough inspection to be done. Service installations such as drainage, plumbing, cold and hot water, heating, gas, electrical and ventilation may be inspected but not tested. Most experienced consultants will be able to notice if something requires urgent separate inspection. However, the condition of these systems is still vital if the church is to plan maintenance properly and budget for repairs and renewal of damaged items. Engineers reports on electrical and gas installation might also be needed on a regular basis, and it would be sensible to co-ordinate these with the main report. Many churches find it useful to have a continuous ongoing relationship with their consultant.

The Consultant's Report

The consultant's report will include comments on the general condition of the whole building, inside and out. A draft check list is included on page 3 listing items which might probably be included in the report. A report upon specific items listed on any plan agreed in advance of the inspection is needed. Identifying defects, repairs and maintenance works requiring attention, together with recommendations on the priority of the works, and budget costs would be expected. Items requiring attention will normally be categorised into those requiring immediate attention, works to be undertaken within 1-2 years, and items requiring attention within 5 years.

The consultant will be required to take account of the way the building is used as well as advising those responsible of the need for fire risk assessments/plan, health and safety requirements including access audits, asbestos surveys and risk assessments.

The consultant is not required to carry out a fire risk assessment, asbestos survey, or access audit within the basic fee structure. Such additional services if required from the consultant should be agreed in advance.

The consultant should include in their report any matters that require further inspection or specialist investigation. For example, where movement/cracking is detected further advice from a structural engineer will often be recommended. The further advice from a glazing conservator may, for example, be required if there is historic glass seemingly in need of attention. The church should arrange for any further inspections after agreeing the fees and expenses for the consultant and/or specialists.

Undertaking Work

If repairs/maintenance are to be undertaken, depending upon the nature of work, it would be appropriate to ask the consultant to prepare a detailed specification to seek tenders for the works, and to oversee the implementation of necessary work once the report has been considered. This would be under a separate fee arrangement.

In certain cases works will fall within the provisions of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 (please see Guideline Leaflet PC05). In these circumstances the church are required to appoint a CDM Co-ordinator who will prepare a Health and Safety file and professional advice should be obtained on this from the start.

CHECKLIST

From the notes taken at the inspection the architect or surveyor should prepare a report covering the following points:

1. *Repair works or any new work carried out since the last inspection* should be recorded as a preliminary to the report
2. *General condition of the fabric of the building*
3. *Detailed condition of the different parts of the fabric of the building*
 - 3.1. Structural walls, piers, buttresses, etc, including notes on stability, damp, etc
 - 3.2. External wall surfaces
 - 3.3. Roof coverings
 - 3.4. Rainwater disposal system
 - 3.5. Door and windows
 - 3.6. External iron and wood, including condition of paintwork
 - 3.7. Any tower or spire, including bells and frames, clocks, or other structures
 - 3.8. Roof structures and ceilings
 - 3.9. Internal partitions and doors
 - 3.10. Internal plaster
 - 3.11. Internal decorations
 - 3.12. Glazing and ventilation
 - 3.13. Floors and galleries
 - 3.14. Furniture, fittings, organ, clock, etc
 - 3.15. Monuments
 - 3.16. Heating system: boiler, flue, fuel storage, safety, efficiency, insulation
 - 3.17. Electrical systems
 - 3.18. Lightning conductors
 - 3.19. Sanitary facilities
 - 3.20. Fire precautions
 - 3.21. Security
 - 3.22. Church grounds and any burial ground, including boundaries, paths, trees, etc
 - 3.23. Bats and protection of species
 - 3.24. Health and safety
 - 3.25. Asbestos
 - 3.26. Disabled access

Attention should be drawn to recommendations concerning the need for further advice by appropriate experts

4. *Works of repair in order of priority*
 - 4.1. Of utmost urgency
 - 4.2. Essential within the next eighteen months
 - 4.3. Essential within the next five years
 - 4.4. Desirable, ie future desirable repairs, renewals or improvements

Note The archaeological implications of any works recommended should be examined.

5. *Recommendations on maintenance and the care of the building and its contents*
6. *Recommendations on further detailed investigations*

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This is one of a series of *Guidelines* that are offered as a resource for Baptist ministers and churches. They have been prepared by the Legal and Operations Team and are, of necessity, intended only to give very general advice in relation to the topics covered. These guidelines should not be relied upon as a substitute for obtaining specific and more detailed advice in relation to a particular matter.

The staff in the Legal and Operations Team Baptist House (or your regional Trust Company) will be very pleased to answer your queries and help in any way possible. It helps us to respond as efficiently as possible to the many churches in trust with us if you write to us and set out your enquiry as simply as possible.

The Legal and Operations Team also deal with churches that are in trust with the East Midland Baptist Trust Company Limited, the North Western Baptist Association, South West Baptist Trust Corporation and Yorkshire Baptist Association (Incorporated).

If your holding trustees are one of the other Baptist Trust Corporations you must contact your own Trust Corporation for further advice. A list of contact details is provided above. If you have private trustees they too should be consulted as appropriate.

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Date of Issue: June 2013