



Advent & Christmas



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Our churches are busy places during the season of Advent. With Christmas trees and the greater use of naked candles during service, extra care is needed to minimise the risk of fire and personal injury.

With the increased risk of fire, it is important that you update your risk assessment. Check exit doors are freely accessible, fire fighting equipment is in place and sufficient stewards are trained and on duty.

Candles

If you are using candles or having a candle-lit procession, follow these simple safety tips.

- Take extra care in positioning naked candles.
- Keep candles clear of combustible materials including flammable decorations, foliage, paper and electrical equipment.
- Never leave lit candles unattended.
- Watch out for long hair, veils, trailing clothes and hoods on coats.



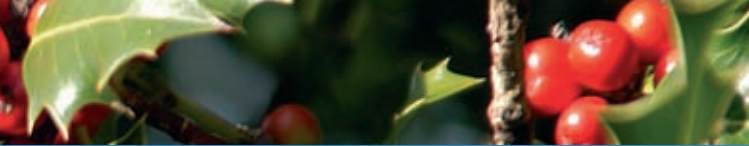


- Space a candle-lit procession out well and give clear instructions to all.
- Good quality slow burning candles are best.
- Remember that molten wax can damage clothing and surfaces.
- Take extra care in extinguishing all candles before locking up the church.

Christmas Trees

Whether you are having a Christmas tree inside the church or in the grounds, the risk of a fire can be reduced.

- Site the tree carefully and away from sources of heat – trees become very dry and highly flammable when cut.
- Make sure the tree is stable.
- Place lights carefully on the tree, especially if you need to work at height.
- Check the lights and dispose of those that are damaged or old with brittle wires – invest in new ones.
- Look for safety marks on lights, such as a BS Kitemark.
- New lights are transformed down to 24 volts for added safety or may be double insulated.
- Make sure the lights are fed through a close protection device or residual current device (RCD) for added protection against shock.
- Don't overload sockets with lights.
- Don't leave the tree lights on when the church is unattended.
- If bulbs blow, replace them.
- Don't insert or remove bulbs when the lights are switched on.
- Don't use indoor tree lights outside.



Nativity Scenes

If you are having a Nativity scene, then it will probably have been in storage for the last twelve months. If you plan to illuminate the crib please consider the following tips.

- Low voltage wiring and fittings are the safest – run the scene from an earthed 12 volt transformer.
- If a mains system is used, the temporary mains feed cables should be of the 3 core type and not bell flex.
- Trailing wires should be avoided.
- Mains electricity should be fed via a plug-in RCD circuit breaker.
- Light bulbs should be of low wattage to avoid the build up of heat.
- Make sure straw cannot be ignited from candles and other sources of heat.





Church grounds

With more visitors to your church and the possibility of bad weather, take extra care to make the premises safe.

- Ensure there is adequate external lighting, which is switched on during the hours of darkness.
- Remove leaves and debris from gutters and drains, which may cause a blockage and overflow.
- Remember that steps, paths and car parks can become a greater hazard when covered in snow or ice.
- Make sure you have a supply of grit or salt available to help keep paths and walk ways safe.





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