Health and Safety at the Parish Church of St George

As a Church, we understand that we owe a duty of care to ensure the safety of those who use or visit our Church, hall or Churchyard. We are aware that as an employer, we must meet the requirements of health and safety law. In particular, we know that if an employer has five or more employees, they are required to have a written health and safety policy, under Section 2(3) of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974. Whilst this does not apply to St Georges because we have fewer than 5 employees, the Select Vestry is required to provide a Health and Safety statement for the Parishioners and all who use the Church buildings and car park.

Our policy is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that all activities at St Georges are carried out safely and do not pose a risk to the health of employees, congregation, volunteers, visitors and others who may use the Church, Churchyard or other parts of the building we are responsible for.

Whilst it is the duty of every individual to exercise personal responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others, the Select Vestry have overall responsibility for maintaining the safety of the buildings, regarding maintenance and repairs, modifications, inspections and tests and addressing any hazards. For example, we have regular electrical risk assessments and fire extinguisher servicing; we provide strict guidelines for the use of the kitchen; we are currently arranging for contrasting tiles to be laid at the steps of the Chancel, to make the steps more visible; and we are having a further hand- rail constructed, to assist the congregation in approaching the communion rail.

Accident and Incident books are maintained and are currently kept in the bottom kitchen drawer beside the cooker. All issues recorded are reported to the Select Vestry who will address any issues re repairs, change of practices etc.

Precautions are in place regarding the possibility of unknown persons gaining access to the building when activities involving the children of the Parish are taking place and when parishioners are working alone in the building.

Where problems cannot be corrected immediately, interim steps are taken to prevent danger. For example, regarding difficulties encountered in the Churchyard, we liaise with Belfast City Council, PSNI, and staff from the Welcome Centre, regarding safe practices.

Where necessary, we appoint someone who is competent to assist us in meeting our health and safety obligations, for example in maintaining the first aid kits and defibrillator and liaising with the organisation Safe Hands, who provide us with emergency aid training, including the use of the defibrillator. It is our aim in the very near future to arrange for a number of people to undertake First Aid training.