

Policy: Working at height (on ladders)

The aim of this policy is to protect all staff members and volunteers from accident and injury when working at height within the church building or outside. The policy seeks to implement the guidance of the HSE and will be reviewed every three years.

Description of equipment:

The term 'ladder' includes portable ladders (e.g. pole, straight, extension, multi-purpose, telescoping and folding ladders) or steps and fixed ladders. It does not include the use of towers or work at high level.

Reasons for ladder uses:

- Undertaking internal or external routine maintenance, such as replacing lightbulbs;
- Accessing high level cupboards in the ambulatory;
- Decorating the building for events.
- Note: the ceiling area of the chancel and nave are designated as high level. Only approved contractors may work at high level and a tower is usually required for this work.

Checklist for safe use of ladders:

- Under no circumstances should furniture be used for access to height.
- Always make sure a second person is present at the base of the ladder.
- Always check the condition of the ladder before use - check the stiles, feet, steps, locking mechanism and platform have no visible defects.
- Only use a ladder on a clean level surface, check any locking devices are in place and that the ladder is safe and steady before climbing.
- Ladders should be set at a safe angle of about 75°, based on 1m from the wall for every 4m of height.
- Set up the ladder facing the work and keep your body central within the width of the ladder.
- Ensure the ladder being used is long enough, the top three rungs should not be used to work off.
- Always grip the ladder and face the rungs while climbing or descending and maintain three points of contact with the ladder while climbing and where possible while working.
- Only carry light materials and tools up the ladder.
- Return the ladder to its correct storage position once the work is completed, do not leave it lying around the building.

Maintenance of ladders:

All ladders need to be properly maintained and regularly checked for defects. If any problems are found, they are to be taken out of use immediately and reported to the Operations Manager.

Useful references:

Government guidance: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg455.pdf>

Insurance guidance: <https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/ladder-safety-guidance.pdf>