



The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

# Help and Advice Group

Northern Synod Office, 4 College Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8JJ (0191-232 1168)

## Bulletin 7: CARE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The Help & Advice Group was set up by Synod in 2009, to support local churches in being informed and effective in their life and mission. The Group is made up of five members of local churches, together with administrative support from the Trust Officer. We are willing to try to provide specific advice or organise training days on particular topics. Please get in touch if you have questions or wish to suggest a training or discussion event.

This article is part of a series giving an overview of particular subjects of interest for local churches. We also circulate general updates from time to time. Bulletins will also be posted on the members' area of the website with direct links to other websites.

Where readers are directed to web-based resources, the Synod Office is willing to respond to reasonable requests for printed out information for readers without web access, although they may find it more satisfactory to follow up their interest through their local library's web access.

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### Care of Historic Buildings

Most churches and some manses were built using traditional methods and materials, and if they are well-maintained they can last for hundreds of years. However, it is important that you use contractors who are experienced in working on historic buildings, as they often require a different approach.

For example, most properties built before 1930 have solid walls, rather than modern cavity walls. Such buildings were designed to "breathe", so modern damp-proofing materials actually have the effect of trapping moisture within the walls. Also, usually soft lime-based mortars and renders should be used when repairing old buildings, rather than hard cement-based ones which can cause bricks and stones to crack, spall and dampen. Similarly, stained glass windows need specialist attention. (Windows and roofs tend to need renewing after 100 years or so). Bad repairs can end up causing a great deal of damage to a building in the long run.

The Building Conservation Directory, [www.buildingconservation.com](http://www.buildingconservation.com), provides details of contractors who are experienced in buildings such as yours.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings has produced a Good Maintenance Guide, and also runs training courses around the country. All churches received a copy of their 1-hour DVD a couple of years ago, and this provides an excellent and informative introduction to caring for your church building – even if it isn't particularly old. Comprehensive advice and guidance is also available from their website [www.spabfim.org.uk](http://www.spabfim.org.uk).

English Heritage also provides some advice on its website, [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk).

Advice and training are also given by Inspired North East, [www.inspirednortheast.org.uk](http://www.inspirednortheast.org.uk) 0191-270 4116 and 0191-374 6018, which although based in the Dioceses of Newcastle and Durham is available to all churches.

## **Contractors**

Local building contractors include:

- TCUK (The Cyrenians) of Newcastle 0191-256 5043 ([www.tcuk.org/ps](http://www.tcuk.org/ps))
- Team Force Restoration Ltd of Blyth 01670-542865 ([www.team-force.co.uk](http://www.team-force.co.uk))

Local glass specialists include:

- Iona Art Glass of Warkworth 01665-711533 ([www.iona-art-glass.co.uk](http://www.iona-art-glass.co.uk))
- Ashley Sage Stained Glass Design of Morpeth 01670-519300 ([www.facebook.com/pages/Ashley-Sage-Stained-Glass-Design/185770816577](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ashley-Sage-Stained-Glass-Design/185770816577))

Other contractors of course exist, and no particular recommendations are given here. Churches are in any event advised to ensure their proposed contractors are sufficiently experienced in the work they will be invited to undertake.

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