

Quick Guide...

Storage of Sacramental Vessels

Prepared by the Committee on Church Art and Architecture

Each year the Committee receives a number of enquiries regarding the storage and safe-keeping of communion ware. Because of the amalgamation of congregations some new charges are finding they now have considerable quantities of items to care for. High Street Banks' policies on safe custody are also being reviewed, some banks declining to take items any longer, others moving them out of the branch for storage in a central depot. Some which did not charge for safe custody in the past are now doing so. With the closure and amalgamation of the branches of many banks, some boxes of communion ware have been moved to other branches and occasionally lost sight of. Further complications arise where the signatories to a deposited box have not been kept up-to-date, leading to some difficulties in retrieving boxes of plate.

Ministers and Kirk Sessions are trustees in an ethical as well as a legal sense, caring for items which have been entrusted to their care for succeeding generations, and it is CARTA's wish to help them to do so effectively. One advantage could be that more of the items come into regular use and are seen by the congregations to which they belong.

The following solutions have been adopted and found to work by congregations and are now offered to others by the Committee. Churches should of course advise their insurance companies of any change, and seek approval.

In light of the project which has been carried out over the last eight years, congregations who are now more aware of what they have may wish to review which items are kept in safe custody. Items of pewter now not in use might be kept in a locked glass fronted display cabinet on church premises where something of the congregation's history may be

seen by worshippers in an attractive and interesting display. Some churches which once had a boiler room for a solid fuel heating system have converted that into a 'strong room' where it is dry, lit, shelved, and accessible, and can be made lock-fast.

Where the number of items is not too large, some congregations have purchased a gun cabinet (or two) for such storage. These are generally very robust, made of steel, have strong locks and can be bolted to a wall almost anywhere that is suitable. Since these have to satisfy police regulations for the storing of firearms they seem a good option.

Many congregations will have amongst their members, solicitors, or other professional people who have strong rooms in their offices and many are more than willing to store items for a local congregation, usually without charge.

With the closure of bank branches there are firms operating businesses in redundant bank premises which have safes. There are also safe custody firms springing up in many towns and cities. They offer a service worth exploring.

It is of course possible to purchase new or second-hand reconditioned safes which can be installed in a suitable site in a church.

Some churches have reinforced an existing, sometimes 'walk-in' cupboard by lining the inside of the door with a metal sheet and installing a more sophisticated locking system.

Further information

Further information can be found on the Resourcing Mission website: www.resourcingmission.org.uk/carta/resources.

Whom to Contact

Anyone wishing to contact the Committee should complete an enquiry form which can be found on the Resourcing Mission website (www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/carta) and email it to: gentrustees@churchofscotland.org.uk. Alternatively, you can telephone 0131 225 5722 and ask to speak to someone in the CARTA office.

CARTA Quick Guides

Other Quick Guides include advice on audio visual schemes, dementia friendly church buildings, access for all, stained glass and lighting. These can be accessed on the Resourcing Mission website (www.resourcingmission.org.uk/resources/quick-guides).

About the Author

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