

# Guidance note

## Maintenance of Church Plate



### General

- Keep church plate in regular use.
- The most valuable pieces should only be cleaned by a specialist.
- As there may be little change in the appearance of church plate between annual inspections, keep long-term records including photographs to help to identify any changes.
- Keep plate in dry environmental conditions to reduce corrosion.

### Prevention

- Keep items of lead containing alloys, including pewter, away from sources of volatile organic compounds, such as oak, cardboard or MDF.
- Silver objects should be kept away from protein based materials, such as wool, silk or leather, as these contain sulphur

compounds which cause tarnishing.

- Surface coatings such as lacquer or wax may give long-term protection but are not a substitute for regular care and inspections and may not be suitable for all metals and objects.

### Cleaning

- Regular dusting is preferable to frequent polishing. Dust lightly with a clean, soft, lint-free cloth or a very soft bristle brush, taking care not to scratch the surface. Wear clean gloves in order to avoid unnecessary fingerprints.
- Wash silver items in regular use in warm water with a few drops of a mild detergent, rinse with clean water and dry. You do not need to use a silver cleaner on a regular basis.
- Remove traces of old candlewax with a wooden or plastic spatula, never a

sharp implement. Chill the object to make the wax brittle and easier to remove.

- Before cleaning, remove any dust as it can scratch the surface. Remove light tarnish and fingermarks on silver objects by gently rubbing with a tarnish inhibiting cloth made for silver. However, tarnish inhibiting cleaner or polish is not appropriate for items in regular use.
- Be cautious about removing tarnish or thick layers of corrosion. Chemical products to dissolve the tarnish are not suitable for communion vessels as they may leave toxic traces.
- Liquid polishes containing powder abrasives are not recommended as the powder can accumulate in crevices where it will attract moisture and encourage further corrosion.



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- Consult an accredited conservator for the best cleaning and polishing methods for significant pieces.

