

Plain Community Church

Caretaking Manual



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Introduction

Hello, new caretakers of Plain Community Church. You are now entering into a job that many wonderful, Christ-loving people have fulfilled before you. In fact, the caretaker's cottage used to be the parsonage. This job will give you one of the greatest opportunities to live into Ephesians 6:6-8,

Obey (your boss) not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good you do.

The reason for this scripture is that so much of what you do will go unnoticed. Yes, people will see the overall effect of a church and grounds well kept, and they will certainly let you know when the one thing they keep an eye on goes undusted, but for the most part you will be working straight for God. He will walk along with you as you pick up pinecones, sweep the floors, and unclog toilets. But you will be blessed all along the way. The best mindset to bring to this job is to think of the church – all its buildings and grounds - as your home. This is your home to care for, and you are always hosting friends. It is always open to everyone, so keep on keeping on, cleaning and mowing and plowing.

Outdoor Caretaking

Summer Tasks

1. Mowing

Keeping the grass at a respectable height will be your duty from approximately the end of May until the beginning of October. Depending on the weather, this time period may begin earlier or end later. When the weather is cold, there may be times when the grass can go two weeks without being mowed, but this is usually in the early or later parts of the season. The only reason that a section of grass needs to be mowed twice in 7 days is during the week before an outdoor service or community event. For you as a grounds keeper, the annual outdoor service is your big week, because everyone spends the service and picnic outside. You will want to mow the forty feet of field directly behind the church once midweek, and the day before the service. That section of grass has overlapping sprinklers, and grows heavy and thick. By that time in the season, the only way to avoid having cut grass spread all over the lawn in thick lines is to mow it twice.

a. Equipment

The church has some very nice equipment to keep that grass in line, so please use the equipment in a gentle manner. Repair things as needed, and don't let problems linger. Don't be afraid to ask for help when questions arise. There are many qualified people in the church who are happy to help answer questions.

i. Gas

There are three large gas jugs in the mower shed. These will last about three weeks depending on the amount of mowing you do. They can be refilled at Just Plain Grocery. When you pay, simply tell them it is going on the PCC account and they will let you sign for it.

The weed whacker and blower take a combination of gas and oil to run correctly. Small oil/gas mixtures for two stroke motors are in the mower shed, and can be added to one gallon of gas and mixed before being added to the weed wacker and blower. The small gas jugs have been used for this. One mixed gallon will typically last for the whole summer.

ii. Maintenance

If anything goes wrong with any of the equipment, please contact the Grounds Commission Deacon and the Pastor (for all caretaking needs and questions, contact these two so that there is adequate communication across the church as a whole). The Saw Shop in Leavenworth is where equipment has been repaired in the past.

iii. Club Cadet Mower (used weekly)

This fine and very plush mower will get used every week as your main tool in the fight against the ever heightening reach of the grass. For all lawns except the pantry, set the height to 2.75 inches. When mowing the pantry, set the height to 3.5 inches. There are two gas tanks on the mower, so you can fill them both. Spraying off this mower with the hose (and especially underneath where the blades spin) should happen every two or three weeks.

iv. Green Push Mower (used weekly)

This old, but faithful mower doesn't need the height adjusted. The only places where this mower is used is the side of the cottage facing the parking lot, the front of the cottage, and the Burgess Hall playground area.

v. Weed whacker (used bi-weekly)

The weed whacker can be used every other week to trim up all the edges of the grass around the church grounds. It can also be used to cut a small circle around each sprinkler head in the fields so that the grass doesn't choke the sprinkler heads when they pop up.

b. Pick Up Debris (weekly activity)

It's a very simple concept: pick up the stuff you don't want to mow over like branches and pine cones. In order to keep the blades of the mower sharp and effective, you want to avoid running over any objects such as these. Picking up pine cones and sticks around the parking lot, swing area, and church helps keep the grounds looking sharp.

c. Places to Mow

- i. Parsonage (weekly)
- ii. Cottage (weekly)
- iii. Flag pole lawn (weekly)
- iv. Burgess Hall playground (weekly)
- v. The field (weekly)
- vi. The Pantry lawn (bi-weekly)

2. Watering

Keeping the grass green and the flowers blooming is the primary responsibility of summer caretaking, along with cutting that grass. The water for the field, cottage, and flag pole lawn all comes from the Wenatchee-Chiwawa Irrigation District, and is supplied from mid-May through mid-October. When the irrigation is first turned on, allow it to run about 3 days to flush their pipes before opening our valve. Then it's the time to look for leaks in the pipes in the ground or leaky sprinkler heads. Dedicate some time to turning on all the different sprinklers and observing their spraying patterns and pressure. If not much water is coming out, it's likely there is a leak in the pipes, or the filter by the bridge is clogged. With a leaky pipe, you can usually find water bubbling from the ground close by the area with less pressure. Dig up the ground around where the water is bubbling and repair the line, then recheck the sprinklers and confirm the repair fixed the problem.

Changing sprinkler heads is a constant part of the job. Anywhere from 5 to 10 sprinkler heads usually need to be replaced each year. Throughout the year, it is important to walk across the field and check for places the grass isn't growing well or is brown (the result of it not getting enough water). This is usually a result of the surrounding sprinklers not functioning properly, or not having their spray level adjusted (the sprinklers have a small knob at the end where the water comes out that can be turned in order to make the water shoot further with less spray, or shorter with more spray).

a. Bridge Filter (Set to go off 3 times daily, manually clean as needed)

Although this is a self-cleaning unit, algae in the water sometimes clogs the filter and needs to be manually cleaned (this usually occurs in the spring and early summer when the irrigation water is filled with junk, it gets cleaner over the season). When this happens turn off the main valve from the pipe across bridge and run the unit to get all water out. Then, using a hammer gently tap the edges of the cover screwed onto the bottom of the unit until you can loosen it with your hand. Then, taking the pin and washer off the bottom of the filter (don't lose these!),

pull out the filter and use a brush to scrub away any algae. Placing the filter back on, put the washer and pin back in place to secure the filter, and push the filter back up into the unit. Then, take the cover, hand tighten it back on the unit, and turn the water valve from the bridge back on. The first time you do this every year, smear a little Vaseline on the treads of the unit filter cover. This helps the cover comes on and off with more ease.

You will need to turn on the unit in the spring and turn it off again the fall (do the same for the main field control box located on the parsonage). The control box is on the pole next to the cleaning filter connected to the pipe running across the bridge. The unit has four different times it comes on (which sprays the water through the filter, cleaning the unit). You will need to set the four times so that they occur throughout the night to keep the lines clean as the sprinklers run. Without the filter running, it will get clogged, resulting is low water pressure and the sprinklers not watering the grass adequately. You can also walk by any time and manually turn on the filter as needed. Set the run time for the filter to two minutes.

b. Sprinklers (changed as needed, observe spray patterns weekly)

The sprinklers need to be observed at a weekly rate to make sure that the grass is getting evenly watered. If there are brown spots, turn on sprinklers and adjust accordingly. Purchasing 5 to 10 sprinklers in the late spring is important so that you can change sprinklers that aren't working properly. These can be ordered by the Church Ministry Assistant or purchased at Lowes.

c. Sprinkler Lines (repaired as needed)

You can purchase supplies needed from Plain Hardware, where there is an account set up.

d. Timed Sprinklers (run daily)

The timer box for the field sprinklers is located on the side of the Parsonage facing the Church. There is a manual hanging inside that box, but the controls are very self-explanatory. In the beginning and end of the season, the sprinklers can run for an hour in each zone (there are 6 active zones). You can have 4 different programs with schedules. Program A runs all the normal zones at night, but you should additionally have a Program B running that runs zone 6 for 15-30 minutes each day as well. Zone 6 simply needs more water to live. And it likes its extra during the day. Perhaps that grass came from a desert region and needs a little extra to sustain the green. It is all part of the church lore.

In the peak summer months, the grass needs more water and will need to be adjusted by either changing the zone runs times to 75, or 90 minutes (depending on how hot it is), or by using the seasonal adjustment setting to raise the percentage of time during the months of July and August. In the peak months when you change the amount of time each zone runs, change the run times for the filter off the bridge, so that the filter will clean out the lines through the night at the same pace they come on.

e. Manual Sprinklers (4-6 times weekly depending on weather)

There are a few sprinklers that need to be manually turned on throughout the week. Because they are not on a timer, you can water for longer on certain days and save having to do it daily. The main goal is to keep grass and flowers looking lush and colorful, so use your judgement to determine how much time each place needs. Just don't go too many days between watering.

i. The Cottage

There are places around the cottage that will need sprinklers and hoses set up manually. Those sprinklers water the only places around the Cottage that aren't covered by the in-

ground sprinklers that must be turned on manually behind the cottage. Those hoses and sprinklers need to be drained and put away at the end of the summer.

ii. The Flag Pole Lawn

This lawn has in-ground sprinklers that need to be turned on manually with a small lever on the above-ground pipes behind the Cottage. There are two pipes, one turning on the in-ground Cottage sprinklers, and one turning on the in-ground flag pole lawn sprinklers. These two zone can be turned on together and left on for about an hour a day, or longer with a couple days in between. As the first lawn that people see when they drive into the church parking lot, keeping the flag pole lawn green is important.

iii. The Pots In-between the Church and Parsonage

The pots have small sprinklers in them that can be turned on at the valve that comes up by the ground at the end of the line toward the basketball court. These should be run every few days and can be left on for around 45 minutes.

iv. The Church Side Planters

These planters have a sprinkler in the back corner that waters almost all of the planter. The few plants in front of the trees need additional water that can be applied when hand watering the pots in front of the church.

v. The Pantry

The Pantry doesn't have any in-ground sprinklers, so you have to use hoses with sprinklers at the end and move them throughout the week to keep the grass green. There is a water spigot close to the Royal Ranger shed on the fence line. Use a splitter so that you can run two lines at the same time. Rather than spending time each day shifting the sprinklers back and forth, it is easiest to simply leave two sprinklers going in one spot for 12 hours, then shift them. After three days you have soaked all the area around the Pantry well enough for the week. Roll up the lines and take the rest of the week off. Repeat weekly, or as needed depending on hot or rainy weather.

vi. Hand Watering (4-6 times weekly depending on weather)

The pots in front of the Church and on the side need to be hand watered 4 to 6 times a week depending on how hot it is. At that time, you can also water the few plants in front of the trees in the corner planters.

3. Miscellaneous

Aside from the basic ongoing circle-of-life between watering the grass and giving it a haircut, these are the few other ongoing outdoor maintenance activities.

a. Blow Off Parking Lot (every 3-4 weeks)

There is a blower in the mower shed that can be used for keeping the parking lot dusted and clean. If done thoroughly at the beginning of the summer (a great task to assign during the Pine Cone Festival), the cleanliness of the parking lot can be maintained very simply by a quick blow off every 3 to 4 weeks. The blower can also be used to blow off the basketball court, sidewalks, and edges of the parking lot after mowing.

b. Parking Lot Lights (adjusted monthly)

The purpose of the parking lot lights is to keep things lit for evening activities at the church. As the hours of light change, so too the lights need to be adjusted. In general, the lights should come on at dusk. The light control box is located on the outside of Burgess Hall in the front

corner to the left of the front door. You also need to adjust the clock in that control box manually for daylight saving time.

- c. Wasp Traps** (put out in spring, refill attractant monthly, spray nests as needed)
Although bees make honey, we don't have a shortage. Therefore, the wasps at PCC are regarded as a nuisance, and not part of the Plain Community Farmers Association. Getting traps out in the spring is necessary, but even more important is refilling those traps with the attracting liquid in July and August. The peak of wasp season is the middle of the summer, and so refilling the traps is essential. Spraying nests is also important, as they like to build close to the church. The most common places for nests is the roof line right above the main church entrance, in the block wall around the front corner planter on the church, and the pots in the parking lot closest to the Parsonage. Good wasps go home and sleep at night, so that is the best time to spray them. You can purchase wasp traps and the attracting liquid at Plain Hardware.
- d. Moles** (shovel dirt piles and drop pellets 2-3 times a week)
Moles love the lawn at PCC. Although we welcome most worshipers, we frown upon those who dig up the dirt and throw it on the ground in piles that kill the grass (young children are sometimes exempt). Shoveling off dirt piles, and placing mole killing pellets down in the holes they create is the best way to remedy the problem. Most of the time, moles will leave a hole next to the place they have just pushed out the dirt. The more often you do this the better chance of actually getting them taken care of. Shoveling up the dirt also keeps the grass from dying in that spot, and makes the field more level for mowing. You can purchase the mole pellets at Plain Hardware.
- e. Weed Spraying** (done in early spring and mid-summer)
There are only a few spots we don't want to see green grass at PCC: in the parking lots and on the sand section of the baseball diamond. Spraying weed killer twice throughout the year, with small touch ups when necessary, will keep that pesky grass at bay. The weed killer is mixed with water, and there is a small hand sprayer in the mower shed. Walk over the parking lots and field while spraying a coat of the weed killer on a hot day, when there isn't rain in the forecast. The sun bakes in the weed killer and kills any grass. In the beginning of the summer, it is also a good idea to spray a small circle around all the sprinkler heads in the field, and the fence lines. This keeps grass from growing into the sprinklers and constricting the water flow or spray area. Weed killer can be purchased at Plain Hardware.

Fall Tasks

1. Equipment Storage

Finally, the fall is here and the mowing subsides. Please clean the mowers well and store them in the mower shed for the winter. You can park the mowers in the back, and move the snow blower to the front. You will still need gas for the snow blower, so make sure the gas cans are filled.

2. Watering Completion

When the irrigation is turned off, it is time to put away the sprinkler equipment and blow out the water lines for winter. All sprinklers and hoses can be organized and stored in the mower shed. To blow out the sprinkler lines, you have a couple choices. There are businesses that come by and do it for a small fee. This is a doable option if you catch them during the short season these services are available. You can also ask Mt. Springs Lodge to borrow their larger air tank and line blowing equipment. They have lent it to us for a few hours the last couple years, and it works very well. Before beginning either process, open the lower valve below the filter at the bridge and let all the water that will drain out of the lines (this saves blowing all that out). With the Mt. Springs equipment, simply attach the air hose

line to the spigot behind the Cottage, then when the air tank is full, open the manual lines that water the Cottage yard and flag pole lawn until all the water has been blown out. After closing those lines, refill the air tank and manually go over to the Cottage and turn on each zone one at a time until the water is out. Kris Norby has been the go-to person for help with blowing out the water lines.

3. Miscellaneous

After outdoor activities have subsided, pick up all balls and equipment in the field and store in Burgess Hall. The outdoor slides and toys in the playground next to Burgess Hall can also be stored for the winter. Finally, take down all wasp traps and any miscellaneous items that you don't want sitting through the winter in snow. As per every month, continue to adjust the parking lot lights, especially as the days get shorter, and the lights need to come on earlier.

Winter Tasks

1. Plowing (after every accumulation of at least 3-4 inches of snow)

The basic task of outdoor caretaking in the winter is keeping the church accessible by plowing, shoveling, snow blowing, and de-icing the entrances to the church.

a. Tractor

The church is blessed with a large, enclosed tractor with a heater. This changes plowing from a miserable experience into a wonderful, warm adventure that's very similar to playing with trucks in a sand box. The church parking lot is a large sand box, and your mission is to keep that sand box clean all through the winter. If any questions or maintenance concerns arise, please contact the Buildings and Grounds Commission Deacon, the Pastor and Mike McComas right away. Mike facilitates the ongoing maintenance on the tractor. The tractor runs on diesel, and can be refilled at Plain Hardware. Simply drive the tractor up there, and refill as needed. When the tractor is not in use, it needs to be plugged in. The tractor is typically parked in front of the storage sheds between Burgess Hall and The Pantry, and an extension cord can be plugged into the engine and the outlet on the closest flag pole.

b. Snow Blower

The snow blower stays plugged in inside the mower shed, and can be used to blow off the entries to the parsonage and cottage. Snow blowing takes place as needed. The snow blower takes gas, and can be refilled with the same gas jugs the mower uses in the summer.

c. Shoveling and Deicing

The entrances to the church need to be hand shoveled whenever there is snow. Shovels are stored in the mower shed, and in the shed between Burgess Hall and the Pantry. You can also spread deicer in front of the doors whenever ice builds up. A container of this is downstairs in the maintenance closet between the men and women's bathrooms. You can place the container outside to the left of the entry of the church during the winter months.

f. Parking Lot Lights (adjusted monthly)

Yeah, you still have to do this.

Spring Tasks

1. Prepare for Summer

The Spring and Fall months are the slow times of the year for outdoor caretaking, and a good reprieve for you of the more strenuous parts of the job. Typically, outdoor caretaking starts after the Pine Cone

Festival. In preparation for that, you can think through the things that will help you as a caretaker, and have people focus on those activities during the Pine Cone Festival. After that, take out the wasp traps, hoses and sprinklers, balls and equipment, and set everything up for the summer. Spraying the parking lot and field before they fill up with grass and weeds is essential. Also, the days start getting shorter, so your adjustment of the parking lot lights now goes the other way.

Facilities Caretaking

1. Cleaning

Keeping the facilities clean is an important part of worship. It's a reflection of our stewardship, and while most people won't notice the individual care of each spot you wipe down or vacuum up, they will notice the overall cleanliness and care that you put in each week. The summer and winter months are busier with plowing and mowing, but the fall and spring have fewer demands. Keeping the church clean is the consistent, weekly task of the caretaker. There will be a few times extra cleaning is needed (YD's Hot-dogging, weddings, funerals, etc.) but this is only a few times a year. When any supplies run low, the Church Ministry Assistant can order.

a. Bathrooms

- i. Dust
- ii. Sweep floors
- iii. Wet mop floors
- iv. Empty trash
- v. Clean mirrors/windows
- vi. Wipe down door handles
- vii. Wipe down sinks
- viii. Wipe down toilets
- ix. Use toilet bowl cleaner
- x. Refill soap as needed
- xi. Refill paper towels as needed
- xii. Refill toilet paper as needed
- xiii. Refill toilet seat covers as needed
- xiv. Change light bulbs as needed
- xv. Use air freshener as needed

b. Kitchen

- i. Dust
- ii. Sweep floors
- iii. Wet mop floors
- iv. Empty trash
- v. Clean windows
- vi. Wipe down door handles
- vii. Wipe down counter/sink/oven/refrigerator
- viii. Refill soap as needed
- ix. Refill paper towels as needed
- x. Change light bulbs as needed
- xi. Use air freshener as needed

c. Rooms/Hallways

- i. Dust sills/shelves/lamps
- ii. Vacuum floors
- iii. Empty trash
- iv. Wipe down door handles/hand rails
- v. Wipe down tables/counters
- vi. Clean mirrors/windows as needed
- vii. Spot clean carpet stains as needed
- viii. Change light bulbs as needed

- ix. Use air freshener as needed

d. Sanctuary

- i. Dust sills/stage
- ii. Vacuum floors
- iii. Empty trash
- iv. Straighten stage
- v. Take garbage out of pews
- vi. Restock pews and arrange Bibles/Hymnals
- vii. Vacuum under pews
- viii. Wipe down door handles
- ix. Wipe down tables/counters in foyer
- x. Clean windows as needed
- xi. Spot clean carpet stains as needed
- xii. Change light bulbs as needed
- xiii. Use air freshener as needed

e. Quarterly Deep Clean

Four times a year, it is important to set aside extra time to give the church a deep clean. Aside from the regular cleaning schedule, this is a time to take everything up a notch. Pull out things from the wall to vacuum less common areas. Wipe down the walls of the bathroom stalls. Wipe down the pews with wood cleaner on all the edges. Go crazy with spot cleaning the floors. In general, just do your normal cleaning routine on steroids. This way the facilities remain in great shape, and it allows for a more regular rhythm most months without getting too bogged down.

2. Facilities Maintenance

Aside from cleaning, there are small maintenance tasks for the caretaker as well. For anything above small maintenance, please report needs to the Grounds Commission Deacon and Pastor.

a. Light Bulbs (as needed)

Change light bulbs as needed around the facilities. All of the various bulbs are in the maintenance closet by the kitchen. The long florescent light bulbs are in the maintenance closet between the men's and women's bathrooms downstairs.

b. Furnace Filters (every four months)

Change the furnace filters at least every four months (one in the costume room of the church, two in the phone room of the church, and one in the downstairs closet opposite the boy's bathroom in Burgess Hall).

c. Water Salt System (2-3 bags each month)

Keep the salt level at 75% or better in the water salt tank located in the well-house on the side of the hill behind the cottage. This will most often mean adding a couple bags of salt each month. You can purchase more salt bags at Costco. It is easiest to purchase around 12 at a time, and have some unsuspecting youth carry them down for you before youth group.

e. Water Filter (change every 6 months)

Change the water filter in that same well-house every six months. There is a case of water filters in the well-house.