



DIOCESE OF GLOUCESTER

NOTES FOR CHURCHWARDENS

WHEN THE VICAR LEAVES

date for applications. **Please note that this information is strictly confidential and cannot be shared by the Parish Representatives.** Once an individual candidate has been offered the post, the Archdeacon will liaise with the Bishop and with the Churchwardens over the date and venue for the licensing or Induction. **Once again Parish Representatives will not be able to share information about the appointed candidate until an announcement is made.** We very much hope that others will understand the reason for this.

Useful telephone numbers:-

Church House 01452 410022
Accounts Dept Ext 233/236 : Property Dept. Ext 229/230
Diocesan Website: www.glosdioc.org.uk

Any queries to the appropriate Archdeacon or to your Area Dean:-

Archdeacon of Gloucester
01452 528500 - email: archdglos@star.co.uk
Archdeacon of Cheltenham
01242 522923 - email: archdchelt@star.co.uk

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Further copies of this booklet and other forms can be downloaded from the diocesan website.

FILLING THE VACANCY

Once your priest has signed a Deed of Resignation or accepted a Patron's offer to move to another benefice, the procedures under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 will be put into operation. Papers relating to the vacancy will be sent out from the Archdeacon's Office, as well as full instructions about subsequent procedures.

At around the same time the Archdeacon's Secretary will contact the PCC Secretary to convene a meeting when the Archdeacon will explain the procedure for making a new appointment and to help the PCC begin drawing up a Parish/Benefice Profile. In the case of a United Benefice, this should be a joint meeting of all PCCs in the Benefice. The Archdeacon's Office will send out a draft agenda for the Secretary to copy and circulate. There should be no other business at this meeting. Consideration should be given beforehand to the appointment of Representatives who will join in the interview process. Twenty-eight days notice of the meeting must be given if the PCC is to vote on Resolutions A and B under the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood Measure.

The PCC Secretary will be asked to return all the relevant papers, to the Archdeacon as soon as possible after the joint meeting takes place, so that they can be forwarded to the Patron and Bishop. **It is essential that a copy of the finalised profile is sent electronically to the Archdeacon's office because this saves considerable time and money. We cannot place an advertisement in the press until this has been received.**

After the meeting the Archdeacon will agree an interview date and timetable with the Bishop. The Archdeacon's secretary will arrange another meeting with the Parish Representatives and the Patrons to shortlist candidates for interview and to discuss and plan the detail of the interview day. Copies of the application forms will be sent out to Parish Representatives a few days after the closing

BEFORE THE VACANCY BEGINS

Hopefully you will have a few month's notice that your priest is going to retire or resign to move to another parish, and this will give you a breathing space to ensure that your parish structures are all in place and functioning. This is not the time to initiate any grand new re-ordering scheme in the church, but it IS a good time to have a thorough tidy-up in the church and churchyard and find out where the Registers are kept and who has a spare key to the boiler house! **The average duration of a vacancy in this Diocese is 9 months** and you ought to plan accordingly.

- ⇒ During the vacancy, the Churchwardens will be responsible for liaising with funeral directors to arrange funerals. Find out from your priest before he/she goes which firms conduct the majority of funerals in your area and let them know who to contact in future.
- ⇒ Discuss with your priest exactly when he or she will vacate the benefice and which will be his/her last Sunday for conducting services afterwards. Before the vacancy begins, you should discuss the pattern of services with the Area Dean and agree a plan for the period of the vacancy, ensuring where possible that you do not repeat services for a small congregation at every church in the benefice on the same day. Your Area Dean and Archdeacon will be happy to help you plan services in the longer term using Diocesan staff, visiting, retired or neighbouring clergy.
- ⇒ If you have an assistant priest or Reader, they will of course be integral to your planning and, if there is a Local Ministry Team in the benefice, they will obviously continue to carry out all their duties during the vacancy. Liaise with them about their continuing pastoral work and ensure that they have the names of the sick and bereaved to visit. If they have been involved in taking part in leading worship it will be important to consult with them about the services for which they will be responsible and their involvement in other services. Visiting clergy will need to know which part of the service members of the Local Ministry Team will be taking, and whether other people read or lead intercessions.

⇒ About a month before your incumbent leaves, the Local Ministry Team should have prepared a statement of the things that they are currently doing within the benefice. They will give this to you and to the Area Dean so that all are aware of who is doing what and if any changes need to be made during the vacancy period.

Once your priest has signed a Deed of Resignation, the processes under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 will be put into operation, and you will find later in this booklet a section describing what will happen and how it will affect your PCC. The Archdeacon's office handles the appointment process and we will be in touch with you in due course about this.

First though, a few of the terms you are likely to encounter:-

Patronage - In the Church of England, historically, the appointment of an incumbent has been made by the benefice's Patron who has the right to present a candidate to the Bishop for institution to a vacant "living". However, in 1989 a new system of appointments came into being, which allows parishes to have a rather greater say about the priest they would like to see as their new incumbent through the appointment of parish representatives.

Pastoral Reorganisation - The days when one priest looked after one community and its parish church are long gone, and with the projected shortage of full-time stipendiary clergy in mind, the Bishop has to rationalise the placing and make the best use of those ministers who are available in the diocese. The Mapping process undertaken in the deaneries in 2005/6 has indicated possible changes in patterns of ministry in deaneries, often suggesting a more collaborative arrangement. No change to a benefice's status is possible while an incumbent holds the "freehold" without his or her consent. However, the Bishop may decide to "suspend" the Right of Presentation of the Patron, in order to carry out any vital reorganisation once the freehold incumbent has resigned.

Repairs - If there are any repairs during the vacancy please ring Church House for advice.

Telephone - Because the Vicarage number may be on notice boards and in various Church directories, you are strongly advised to retain it. A small charge may be made for this and it is certainly worth while. You may wish to consider having calls transferred to another person so that enquiries about parish business, including baptisms, weddings and funerals can still be received. If the house is let, tenants can easily arrange another number and then the Vicarage number can be transferred back when the new Priest arrives. If the house is to remain empty, the PCC may choose to keep the telephone connected so that it can be used for Parish calls. In all these cases the costs involved are the responsibility of the PCC.

New Appointment - As soon as a new appointment is made the Archdeacon will meet the new occupant and Property Services Manager to discuss necessary works for the house.

- 1) Notify the police of the date the house is to be vacant
- 2) Ensure all meters are read and services turned off. Church House will arrange for the central heating system to be drained if the house is likely to be empty over the winter period.
- 3) Please check regularly that all doors, windows and outbuildings are secure and notify Church House of any suspicious activity or signs of vandalism.
- 4) Keep the gardens generally clean and tidy and ensure that grass is regularly cut. If an interregnum extends for more than 9 months financial help from Church House towards the cost of grass cutting and garden maintenance may be available.

Because of the limited insurance cover during a vacancy it is not normal for the empty clergy housing to be used for parochial purposes. If a particular problem arises from this then we would ask you to contact Church House and ask for a specific concession to this general policy.

During winter months, we arrange for the water to be turned off and the heating system to be drained. **It is vital that this is not turned on again without an instruction from the Property Department.**

We expect the outgoing occupant to leave the house clear except for parish equipment. Where this is kept at the Vicarage, it must be moved if the house is let. Filing cabinets and records must be kept in a secure place.

Normally gas and telephone are disconnected during a vacancy although electricity is often kept connected for the purposes of light. Electricity should not be used to run electric fires as Church House will only meet the cost of the standing charge and modest electricity bills.

Suspension - Using the processes of the Pastoral Measure 1983, the Bishop is entitled to “suspend” the right of the benefice’s patron(s) to appoint an incumbent of their choice, and to licence a priest-in-charge to the benefice instead. There is no difference in practical terms between a priest-in-charge and an incumbent.

A benefice may be suspended for up to 5 years at a time and the suspension may be renewed at the end of 5 years at the Bishop’s discretion. There has to be a good reason, however, for suspension to take place in the first instance and once the pastoral reorganisation recommended to the Bishop by the Diocesan Pastoral and Mission Committee (which is the most common circumstance) has been achieved, the rights of the patron are re-instated. It is our practice in this diocese to involve the Patron in the appointment process in situations where the benefice has been suspended so that when the suspension is lifted the patron is content for the priest in charge to become the freehold incumbent. Some priests fulfil a part-time diocesan role in addition to their parochial duties and in practice their benefices tend to remain in suspension on a longer term basis.

The Archdeacon may write to you about the possibility of suspending the Right of Presentation to your parish. **NOTE: THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT NO APPOINTMENT WILL BE MADE.**

Once the ‘Clergy Terms and Conditions of Service’ Measure comes into effect, all clergy in freehold appointments will be invited to opt into ‘common tenure’, which will replace freehold appointments.

House for Duty - Sometimes a priest will be appointed on a house for duty basis. This is usually seen as a transitional ministry for a limited period of time. Where it is applicable, you will be given further information by the Archdeacon.

THE VACANCY

Services - You will need to consider, with the consent of the PCC, whether the pattern of services in the benefice needs to be temporarily changed, as it may not be practical to maintain your usual timetable. The Area Dean will help you draw up a list of stipendiary, non-stipendiary and retired clergy (who must have the Bishop's Permission to Officiate) and Readers who should be asked to conduct worship. The Archdeacons like to have an opportunity to lead worship in the benefice during a vacancy and we encourage the use of diocesan officers too. The Diocese will pay a service fee and travelling expenses up to a maximum of a 50 mile round trip for retired clergy but travelling expenses only to all other clergy and Readers, for services which are conducted on a Sunday or major Feast Day. If the PCC wishes to maintain weekday services, or invites a priest to carry out any other pastoral activity he or she should be reimbursed for travelling and/or service fee by the PCC.

Claim forms for Sunday services (FIN013) - Please be sure to check with the priest concerned whether you or he/she will make the claim! Further information may be obtained from the Accounts Department at Church House or downloaded from the Diocesan website.

Fees - You are required to remit all **fee income** to Church House on a monthly basis on the form (FIN014) and to list all vacancy-incurred expenses. If the income is greater than the expenditure please enclose your PCC's cheque for the difference, made payable to the *Gloucester Diocesan Board of Finance*. If you are in deficit, please claim this amount from Church House.

Parochial Fees - You are responsible for collecting these fees normally payable to the incumbent.

Weddings and Funerals - You should ensure that the proportion of the appropriate element of the fee is received and paid to the officiant at the time where it is appropriate to do so.

NOTE: Retired Clergy receive 2/3rds of the fee. House for Duty Clergy receive 1/3 of the fee in the benefice in which they are appointed. Stipendiary, Non-Stipendiary, OLM Clergy and Readers receive no fee but travelling expenses should be paid.

Baptisms — There is no fee payable for a baptisms but you should try to arrange for these to take place when a .priest is present for another service, to save additional expense.

Expenses - You may claim back from the Diocese all expenses properly incurred by the Churchwardens which relate solely to the vacancy e.g. telephone and postage costs arising from arranging Sunday and Feast Day services. Normal working expenses which would have arisen had an incumbent been in post are still chargeable to the PCC.

Registers and Inventory - You are responsible for the care of the Registers which should be kept in a locked safe, and for the maintenance of the inventory and log-book. The new priest will have to sign the inventory when admitted to the benefice.

Marriage Returns - The parish must make a quarterly return to the local Registrar of births, marriages and deaths of all marriages which take place. Special forms are available which will probably be kept in the Church safe. If no marriages have taken place in a quarter, a special "nil return" form has to be sent. Forms will be sent quarterly by the local Registrar, but have to be signed by a priest. You should ask a visiting priest conducting a service to sign this when it is completed, or alternatively send it to your Area Dean.

Care of the Clergy Housing—Whenever possible we arrange a short-term letting of a vacant house. This has various advantages both for the Parish Share, for the Incoming Priest and for the PCC.

Where this is not possible, we ask for parochial help particularly from Churchwardens to keep a careful eye on all clergy housing when it is vacant. The following steps are advisable: