

What Happens when the Vicar leaves

- *Managing the vacancy*
- *Appointing a new priest.*

**A Guide for
Churchwardens and
PCC members**



Introduction

You will be reading this most likely because your Vicar (or Rector or Priest in Charge) has either just left or has announced his or her intention to leave.

This can be a daunting time for a church but it is also an opportunity:

- An opportunity to celebrate the strengths of the mission and ministry of your church/es which you will want to build on for the future.
- An opportunity to recognise where you are ready as a church/benefice to change and grow.

It can therefore be exciting as you look to the future and to the new things God is going to do in you and in your church as you welcome a new Vicar to work in partnership with you in the ministry and mission of the parish/benefice.

This is a time when you will be well supported by your Bishops, your Archdeacon and your Area Dean. Each have different roles to play but each will want you to know that they are there to work with you so that the vacancy is a positive experience and that together we make a really good appointment for your next parish priest.

This leaflet sets out all you should need to know about managing the vacancy and the appointment process but there are bound to be times when you will have other questions to raise. Your key points of contact are

The Archdeacons

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Your Area Dean

Please do not hesitate to contact us – we are here to help.

With the assurance of our prayers

Archdeacon Jackie and Archdeacon Phil

PART I

MANAGING THE VACANCY

I. Planning the vacancy

During the vacancy the churchwardens are legally in charge of the parish acting on behalf of the Bishop.

I.1 Safeguarding – information during a vacancy

At the time of the vacancy the Incumbent and Churchwardens should ensure that there is clear information shared regarding any specific issues known, such as:

- Vulnerable Adults in the church
- Current child protection issues
- Other people who may be particularly vulnerable eg known domestic abuse situations

This is to ensure that any information can be passed on or handled sensitively during the vacancy. If in any doubt at any time Churchwardens should be in touch with the Archdeacon or the HR and Safeguarding Department at Church House.

All Offender Agreements should be passed to the Churchwardens before the start of any vacancy process – and the Churchwardens should notify the Archdeacon so that senior clergy are aware of a parish situation and the group of people who support any agreement that is in place.

If in any doubt at any time Churchwardens should be in touch with the Archdeacon or the HR and Safeguarding Department at Church House.

I.2 The appropriate pattern of services in each parish

This should as far as possible reflect the established service pattern. Additional services should only be introduced in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the Area Dean. Arrangements should be made for Christmas, the Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Ascension Day, All Saints' Day, Patronal or Dedication Festival, or Feast of Title as needed. Other special services (eg Mothering Sunday, Harvest Thanksgiving, Remembrance Sunday, Christingle etc) should be included in the normal Sunday rota. In some cases the number of services may have to be reduced depending on the availability of clergy and authorised ministers and this should be done with careful consultation.

When the parish is in vacancy, the PCC may reclaim fees for qualifying services and related travel expenses from the Diocesan Board of Finance, in accordance with the latest diocesan policy.

There is a claim form FIN013 for this available at <http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/parish-resources/parish-finance-gift-aid-legal-advice/> or by post from the Finance Department at Church House. The PCC make

these payments to those ministers who take such services and then are able to make a claim either monthly or quarterly from the Finance Department at Church House.

1.3 **Arrangements for cover**

It is the wardens' responsibility to arrange for clergy and other ministers to conduct these services. The Area Dean will advise the churchwardens about the availability of clergy, Readers and other ministers with permission to officiate in the deanery encouraging the use of local clergy in order to avoid unnecessary expenditure on travel. The Bishops, Archdeacons, members of diocesan staff and the Cathedral Chapter are also pleased to respond to invitations to officiate if they are able to do so. In the case of non-eucharistic services, the benefice is encouraged to make use of Readers, ministry team members and those who hold the 'Bishop's Certificate in the Leadership of Worship' whenever appropriate.

PCCs may claim back from the diocese all expenses incurred by the wardens in making such arrangements e.g. telephone and postage costs. Normal working expenses are of course the responsibility of the PCC.

1.4 **The duties of assistant clergy, Readers and the local ministry team and the pattern of meetings they will hold with the wardens**

Care needs to be taken to ensure that associate/assistant clergy, curates, Readers and the local ministry team are valued and involved in the vacancy but they are also protected from unreasonable demands and that it is clear to all they are not expected to simply 'step in' for the incumbent. They should meet regularly with the wardens during the vacancy (suggested frequency is at least once a month).

1.5 **Arrangements for the occasional offices**

The wardens in consultation with the Area Dean are responsible for arrangements for baptism, weddings and funerals during the vacancy.

There should be a clear agreement as to who parishioners (and importantly funeral directors) are to contact to arrange occasional offices. These should be clearly communicated on parish notice boards, the parish/benefice website, newsletters and magazine.

No service should be arranged in any church without the knowledge and agreement of the wardens.

If banns of marriage are published by a Reader, churchwarden or other lay person, that person should sign the banns book, but the certificate of banns must be issued by an ordained minister.

PCCs are responsible for **collecting the fees for marriages and funerals** (there is no fee for a baptism). These should be detailed on form FIN011 which is available at <http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/parish-resources/parish-finance-gift-aid-legal-advice/> or by post from the Finance Department at Church House. This form should be returned to the Finance Department with payment being made by BACS or cheque for the proportion of the fee payable to the DBF. The PCC is expected

to submit these returns at least quarterly unless a different arrangement has been agreed with the Finance Department.

1.6 Arrangements for pastoral care

The wardens should ensure that the departing incumbent passes to them a list of all those in the parish/benefice who receive communion in their home or who have particular pastoral needs, and that arrangements are made to ensure their continuing care; ensuring due regard to data protection requirements.

As at all times care should be taken to ensure that all necessary safeguarding procedures are followed. The nominated person(s) in the parish/benefice for Safeguarding should meet with the wardens to review arrangements for the vacancy and if there are particular issues (eg a member of the congregation subject to an agreement about behaviour) the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer should be consulted and his or her advice followed.

1.7 Care of churchyards

During a vacancy the Area Dean is responsible for considering all applications for churchyard memorials.

1.8 Church schools

Where there is a church school or schools, contact should be made with the Education Department to ensure proper arrangements to cover ex-officio Governor' responsibility during the vacancy.

2 PCC

The Church Representation Rules make provision for the election of a lay member of the council as its Vice-Chair and stipulate that 'during a vacancy...the Vice-Chair shall act as chair and have all the powers vested in the chair'.

Similar provisions apply to the chairing of the Annual Parochial Meeting (APCM).

Area Deans will be happy to advice PCCs as needed.

3 Parsonage house

The departing incumbent is asked to hand all keys to the wardens who should retain one set returning the others immediately to the Property Department at Church House.

The Property Department Administrator will write to the church wardens advising them of the respective responsibilities of the parish and diocese while the property is empty and any intention regarding letting. They will also be advised of any proposed works or alterations that are to be recommended to the Resources Committee following the surveyor's inspection of the house.

You are encouraged to ensure that the telephone line (and its associated number) is not disconnected during the vacancy and that those calling either hear a message redirecting them to another number or ideally that the call is forwarded to another number that will be answered. The PCC might consider purchase of a pay as you go mobile to which all such calls can be forwarded and which can be shared by the wardens and others on a rota basis.

4. Interim minister

The Bishop may, after consultation, decide to appoint an interim minister for the duration of the vacancy. The exact responsibilities of the interim minister will be set out in a working agreement, which will cover pastoral care and sacramental ministry and administration. The churchwardens remain legally in charge of the parish and a close working arrangement with the Interim minister will be essential

5. Parish or benefice review

The Bishop may also, after consultation, appoint a suitably qualified person to conduct a review of the parish or benefice and make recommendations for the future provision of ministry.

6. Local Ecumenical Partnerships

Where there is a LEP in place the County Ecumenical Officer should be consulted for advice on arrangements for the vacancy from an ecumenical perspective. S/he should also be consulted in the process of the preparation of the parish or benefice profile.

PART 2

The Appointment Process

7 Legal framework and spiritual context

Every benefice in the Church of England (whether it consists of a single parish or a group of parishes) has a **patron**, whose responsibility it is to nominate a new incumbent (vicar or rector) to the Bishop when the benefice falls vacant. This is called the **right of presentation** to a vacant benefice.

The patron may be the Bishop, an individual, the Diocesan Board of Patronage, a college, a society or a group of individuals. If more than one body is involved, patronage is either exercised *jointly* or *by turns* depending on the provisions of the pastoral scheme which created the benefice.

Under the provisions of the **Pastoral Measure 1983** the Bishop has the power to suspend the right of presentation of a patron to a vacant benefice in order to allow plans for pastoral reorganisation to be considered or implemented. If the Bishop wishes to suspend the patron's right of presentation there will be a full consultation with all interested parties, and a **priest in charge** will be appointed until such a time when the patron's rights will be reinstated. Although a priest in charge is legally different from an incumbent, the responsibilities in the benefice are identical and most parishioners are unlikely to know that there is any distinction.

If the patron's right of presentation is suspended, the usual provisions of the **Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986**, the legal framework upon which all vacancies are filled, will not apply. However, the Bishop will endeavour to follow the spirit of the Measure and consult all the interested parties in making an appointment including patrons.

In some places there are **team ministries**. In these cases the team rector is appointed as incumbent but there are slightly different procedures for the appointment of **team vicars**.

Whatever the exact nature of the post the next stage in the life of the benefice must be seen in a **spiritual context** and a discernment process, and the best way to discern God's will is through prayer and waiting upon God. This must underpin all that is done.

8. Administration

The Archdeacon acts as the Bishop's Representative in the appointment process. Any paperwork should be sent to the Archdeacon's Office. There is no need to send copies to the Bishop.

In each vacancy the Diocesan Bishop will decide if s/he or the Bishop of Tewkesbury will be the appointing Bishop and the Archdeacon will advise the PCC/s of this. The advice of the appointing Bishop can be sought at any stage.

9. Pre Vacancy Meeting

The Archdeacon in consultation with the Area Dean and Churchwardens will convene a **pre vacancy meeting** as soon as practical after the vacancy is announced.

This meeting is for all members of the PCC(s) any assistant clergy, Readers, members of any local ministry team and such others as the Archdeacon agrees with the church wardens. The Area Dean will also attend. The outgoing incumbent if still in post and his/her spouse/partner, if any, may **not** attend.

10. Pre vacancy meeting agenda

1. The Archdeacon and Area Dean will advise on the practical arrangements that have to be made in preparation for the vacancy, (Part I above)
2. The Archdeacon will advise on the procedures that must be followed in making the appointment and will talk the meeting through the process from beginning to end.
3. The Archdeacon will give advice on the inclusion of children and young people in the process with reference to the policy of the Mission and Ministry Department.
4. The Archdeacon will open up discussion on vision for the future.
5. Advice will be given on how best to prepare "The Statement of Needs" (the parish/benefice profile). This document should identify and agree the needs of the parish or benefice and the gifts, skills and attributes that are sought in the new incumbent. A well presented document containing all the necessary information is essential. A check list of information that should be included is provided at the end of this booklet - you are encouraged to be imaginative in the way such profiles are created.
6. A person or group will be designated to prepare a draft profile and the PCC(s) should be asked to appoint one representative to act as **Co-ordinator** to have the responsibility of liaising with the Archdeacon concerning progress on the draft profile, **including sending a draft copy for comment**. This profile must be complete by the time the formal Vacancy Meeting is held.
7. A date should be agreed for the formal **Vacancy Meeting**. This should be no later than three months after the beginning of the vacancy. (Note the formal vacancy begins from the date of retirement or resignation and this may be later than the date of the incumbent's final service.)
8. A timetable will be agreed detailing advertising, closing, short listing and interview.

11. Formal Notification of Vacancy

28 Days before the date of the Vacancy Meeting the Archdeacon will send to each PCC secretary the formal notification of the Vacancy. The PCC Secretary is then required to give PCC members formal notification of the holding of the Vacancy Meeting on the date agreed in 10.7 above

12 a. The vacancy meeting (also known as the Section 11 meeting under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure)

This should be a specially convened meeting of the PCC (held jointly when there is more than one PCC involved). It will be chaired by one of the lay vice chairs and may be attended by the Archdeacon and/or Area Dean, at the invitation of the PCC, as appropriate. After opening in prayer the agenda is as follows

1. Formally agree the parish/benefice profile
2. Appoint lay members of each PCC to act as their representatives in the selection of the new incumbent.

Note:

- a. The measure allows each PCC to appoint two representatives. Our guidance is that where there are five or more PCCs involved it should be agreed to limit this to one each otherwise the appointment panel is simply too big.
 - b. Such representatives must **not** be an ordained minister or a licensed lay worker
3. Decide whether to request that the vacancy be advertised.

Note there are two possible routes to appointment:

- a. A sole candidate – where the Bishop may seek to offer to the parish/benefice and the patron a priest for consideration whom s/he, after taking advice, considers to be well suited to the post and worthy of very serious consideration for appointment.
- b. Advertising - this is usual practice in the diocese and the DBF will pay for an advert in the Church Times. The PCC may with the agreement of the patron advertise in other publications (such as the Church of England Newspaper) but at their own cost.

Note also that the PCC can only request advertising and that the final decision in this matter rests with the patron.

4. Decide whether to request a meeting under section 12 of the measure with the Bishop or patron.
5. Decide whether to request a written statement from the Bishop describing the need of the wider church in relation to the benefice.
6. The timetable agreed at the pre vacancy meeting should be confirmed

At the end of the meeting each PCC secretary should complete **form 34 (or S1)** detailing the decisions made and hand them to the Archdeacon or to the Area Dean to be sent to the Archdeacon (See Appendix 4).

12b. Section 12 Meeting

Under the Patronage Measure it is possible for the PCC(s), the Patron(s) or the Bishop to call a 'Section 12 Meeting', the purpose of which is to 'exchange views' on both the parish profile (agreed by the PCC at the Section 11 meeting) and the Bishop's view of the needs of the Diocese and the wider church in relation to the benefice. In practice in Gloucester Diocese this collaborative approach to 'exchanging views' often takes place at the Section 11 Meeting when the Archdeacon and Area Dean are invited to attend. If a Section 12 meeting is called by the Bishop, the Archdeacon will normally attend this meeting (along with the Area Dean and Lay Chair, who should be invited by the PCC secretary) in place of the Section 11 Meeting.

13. PCC Representatives

It should be clear from this that the PCC should give very careful consideration to the choice of its representatives as from the moment of their appointment the PCC is effectively delegating its responsibilities for the appointment to them. They should be able to represent the breadth of the congregation and have the confidence of all.

14 Sole candidates and/or Advertised Post

- **Sole candidates:**

If the Bishop desires to introduce a sole candidate the Archdeacon will initially seek the views of the parish representatives (and patron(s) if appropriate) to see if such an approach would be acceptable.

With the agreement of the parish representatives and the patron the Archdeacon will arrange an initial visit to meet the parish representatives and have a tour of the benefice.

If all parties wish to continue the candidate then completes an application form and references are taken.

The Archdeacon then arranges a formal interview with the Parish Representatives (and Patron(s) if appropriate).

If the Parish Representatives (and Patron(s)) wish to appoint and the candidate agrees to accept the post the process continues at 27.

If the Parish Representatives (and Patron(s)) do not wish to appoint and/or the candidate does not wish to accept the post then the process continues with advertising as follows.

- **Advertising**

Unless the Bishop is intending to introduce a sole candidate at this stage the Archdeacon's office will arrange for the post to be advertised in the Church Times, and on the diocesan website. The text of the advertisement will be based on the profile and be agreed with the Bishop and Patron. The advertisement will detail the closing date for applications and the interview day.

In addition, the profile and introductory letter from the Bishop and the Roles and Responsibility document (a requirement under common tenure and prepared by the Archdeacon) will be made available on the diocesan website.

Following the closing date all completed applications will be sent to the Bishop, Patron and Parish Representatives omitting, for the latter, section 7 (confidential information). Please note that this information is strictly confidential and cannot be shared; paying due regard to GDPR.

15. Short listing and interview preparation meeting

Short listing is usually undertaken by the Archdeacon, Parish Representatives and Area Dean. The Patron and Bishop may also attend.

All applications will be considered against the needs of the parish or benefice set out in the profile and supporting documents. In usual circumstances up to four candidates may be called for interview.

In addition to short listing there will be careful preparation at this meeting for the interview day, deciding on any task candidates are to be asked to complete and the process by which the questions are to be decided and who is to ask them. Where interview panels are large, not all members will be able to ask questions.

The Archdeacon will contact candidates following this meeting to inform them of the outcome of this meeting and give more details of the interview process.

16. References and DBS checks

The Archdeacon will seek references from those short listed. The Archdeacon will also ensure compliance with the DBS and Equal Opportunities requirements

Interviews

17. Preliminaries

Venue. The interview will normally take place in the parish/benefice. In addition to the interview room there needs to be a place for candidates to wait and a room for other activities, such as DBS checks. Rooms need to be comfortable and warm, with drinking water.

Those interviewing include the Bishop (usually chair), the Patron and the Parish Representatives and the Archdeacon.

Lunch. The parish is responsible for the provision of a buffet lunch, to which a limited number of guests including the Deanery Lay Chair should be invited. Invitations should stress the need for confidentiality.

The programme The Archdeacon will draw up the programme following consultation with the patron, parish reps and the Area Dean. The Archdeacon will confirm access arrangements to the parsonage house with the property department. There should be people ready to assist with hosting, tours etc. Again these should be

limited in number and briefed as to their duty of confidentiality. The Archdeacon will ensure copies of the programme are sent to all parties including the Bishop, Parish Representatives, Patron, Area Dean and candidates

Families. Candidates may bring their spouse/partner if they wish, though not children. A spouse/partner should be included in the visit to the parsonage house and tour of the parish but not other aspects of the day. Arrangements should be made for a suitable place for a spouse/partner to wait while his or her partner is being interviewed.

A spouse/partner is not part of the formal process of interview and appointment and their attendance or otherwise should have no bearing on the decision of the interview panel.

18. The Area Dean

The Area Dean will normally be present throughout the interview day to welcome candidates, answer questions and ensure the smooth running of the process outside the interview room. The Area Dean should either conduct the tour of the parish if he or she knows it well or accompany the person who does.

The Area Dean usually joins the appointment panel for the discussion and deliberation following the formal interviews offering feedback on the candidates from their perspective of the day.

19. Other Feedback

Only the Area Dean provides any feedback to the panel, from the tour, unless feedback is specifically arranged as part of the school visit.

20. The shape of the interview day

The interview day will consist of a number of elements

1. **A welcome** for all candidates from the Area Dean checking that everyone is clear as to the programme and that any immediate questions are answered. The Area Dean will open the day with prayer.
2. **A tour of the parish** planned by the parish representatives in consultation with the Area Dean including the church building(s) but also major areas of housing, places of employment or leisure or other significance.
3. **A visit to the parsonage house**
4. **A visit to the local schools** (especially if there is a Church School), to include meeting with pupils if possible.
5. **A informal opportunity to meet other people** with whom the candidate may have to work including other clergy in the team, employees of the PCC, any Churchwardens not acting as parish representatives, children, young people and their leaders, and the lay chair of the Deanery Synod. It should be stressed to all involved that this is not part of the appointment process, but rather an opportunity for

candidates to find out more about the parish. The confidentiality of all candidates should be assured. This may be most usefully combined with lunch.

6. **A formal interview** (usually of 50 minutes in length) which should include a **short presentation** (often in the form of a sermon or homily on the readings for the day or the following Sunday).

22. The appointment

Following the completion of all interviews the Panel will seek to discern the God's call. This process will balance the roles of Patron, Bishop and Parish Representatives all of whom must give their agreement to the appointment.

On occasions the panel may not feel it right to appoint any of the candidates and it is important that this is recognised as a possible outcome. It is far better to wait rather than make an appointment where there is doubt. If this does happen the Archdeacon will advise on the next steps in the process.

23. Announcement of Appointment

Announcement of the appointment is by agreement with the Archdeacon who will coordinate this with all parties. It can usually only take place when the diocese has valid DBS clearance for the appointed candidate.

24. The induction or licensing

It is the Area Dean's responsibility to organise the licensing service in accordance with the Bishop's directions and in consultation with the Bishop and the Church Wardens.

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Appendix - Check list for the Parish or Benefice Profile

Have you included details of:

Context

- Parish/Benefice (not congregation) Population figures, age and social profile.
- Type of community – rural, urban etc.
- Local Institutions – prison, hospital etc.
- Schools – Community or Church, nature of involvement
- Local youth work
- Other community groups

The Congregations

- Size of Electoral Roll
- Usual Sunday Attendance (adults and children)
- Numbers living outside the parish
- Children's work
- Youth work
- Work with elderly
- House or study groups
- Magazine, newsletter or social media
- Chaplaincies (to hospitals, local groups etc.)
- Ecumenical links
- Overseas link

Ministry

- Other clergy – active and retired
- Readers
- Local Ministry Team
- Other active groups and lay leaders

Buildings

- Details of churches – include state of repair
- Halls
- Other property
- Any major projects – including re-ordering
- The parsonage house (Rectory or Vicarage)

Worship

- Service details
- Style (eg. traditional. contemporary, BCP, use of incense, sacramental, charismatic, evangelical, etc.)
- Usual attendance at each (adults and children)
- What robes are usually worn (or note)
- Is the sacrament reserved
- Christmas and Easter services with usual attendance
- Number of occasional offices in last year (baptisms, weddings, funerals)

Finance

- Is there a stewardship scheme
- What state are the finances in
- Other fund raising events
- Parish share – diocesan target and level achieved
- Details of any capital projects underway or under consideration
- Policy on expenses

The future

- What are the PCC's and congregations hopes for the future ministry of the church/es
- What is going well?
- What could be better?
- What is the vision!

The new Incumbent:

What gifts and skills will he or she have? For example:

- Preaching,
- Prayer and Spirituality
- Theological
- Pastoral
- Liturgical
- Character
- Experience

And Remember

- Look at some other profiles for ideas – what do you like/what doesn't work
- Be Honest.... About what is good and what could be better
- Include photographs – with people doing things not just empty buildings!