

# 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 worshipping community 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 parish/benefice to change and grow.
- An opportunity to 'take stock' and prepare for the next chapter together.

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 prepare to welcome a new parish priest 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 the right 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 during this process are your Archdeacon and your Area Dean.

### Archdeacons:

The Venerable Hilary Dawson  
Archdeacon of Gloucester  
2 College Green, Gloucester, GL1 2LR  
01452 835555  
[archdglos@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:archdglos@glosdioc.org.uk)  
PA: Sue Strawbridge 01452 835583  
[SStrawbridge@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:SStrawbridge@glosdioc.org.uk)

The Venerable Phil Andrew  
Archdeacon of Cheltenham  
2 College Green, Gloucester, GL1 2LR  
01452 835594  
[archdchelt@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:archdchelt@glosdioc.org.uk)  
PA: Debbie Long 01452 835581  
[DLong@glosdioc.org.uk](mailto:DLong@glosdioc.org.uk)

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

With the assurance of our prayers and best wishes

**Phil Andrew & Hilary Dawson**

# **PART I**

## **MANAGING THE VACANCY**

### **I. Planning the vacancy**

During the vacancy the churchwardens are legally in charge of the parish (the 'sequestrators') acting on behalf of the Bishop.

#### **I.1 Safeguarding – information during a vacancy**

As the vacancy approaches 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 e.g. known domestic abuse situations

This is to ensure that any information can be passed on or handled sensitively during the vacancy.

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 well in advance should particularly be made to cover the major festivals including Christmas and Easter. Other special services (e.g. 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 with the PCC.

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 are then 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 (PTO) 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 Diocesan Board of Finance all specific 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 baptisms, 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 magazines.

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 signed and 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 parish safeguarding officer(s) in the parish/benefice should meet with the wardens to review arrangements for the vacancy and if there are particular issues (e.g. a member of the congregation subject to an agreement about behaviour) the Diocesan Safeguarding Officers should be consulted and their advice followed.

### **1.7 Care of churchyards**

During a vacancy the Area Dean is responsible for considering all applications for churchyard memorials in consultation with the wardens.

### **1.8 Church Schools**

Where there is a Church of England school or schools, contact should be made with the Education Department to ensure proper arrangements to cover ex-officio governor responsibility during the vacancy. It is vital to maintain close ties with schools during a 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 advise 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, unless advised otherwise by the Head of Property.

The Property Department Administrator will write to the church wardens advising them of the respective responsibilities of the PCC and the diocesan staff while the property is empty and of 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 a surveyor's inspection of the house.

You are encouraged to consider ensuring 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 mobile phone 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, drawn up by the Archdeacon and shared with the wardens, 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 Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Group will, as a matter of course, review all vacancies as they arise and consider whether the current pattern of ordained ministry is both appropriate and sustainable, or whether alternative arrangements should be considered.

In response the Bishop may, 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 before proceeding to fill the vacancy.

On occasion it may be appropriate to 'suspend the living' to allow alternative arrangements to be investigated and developed without unduly delaying the recruitment of a new ordained minister as 'Priest in Charge' (see Section 7 below for more details). Archdeacons will be happy to explore the reasons behind any such proposals.

#### **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. When a vacancy occurs all the patrons will be informed, regardless of whether it is their 'turn'. This is both out of courtesy and to check that the Registrar has up to date patronage information.

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 almost 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 and Archdeacons will endeavour to follow the spirit of the Measure and consult all the interested parties in making an appointment, including patrons, to ensure appointments are made within a reasonable and practicable time-table, according to circumstance.

Where a benefice remains unfilled for a period of 12 months, the rights of the patron(s) 'lapse' and fall to the Diocesan Bishop (or in certain cases to the Archbishop).

In some places there are **team ministries**. In these cases the **Team Rector** is appointed as incumbent and there are slightly different procedures for the appointment of **team vicars as laid out in the pastoral scheme which established the Team Ministry**.

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. Please note that it is now permissible for documents and notices to be sent via email.

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.

Throughout the process a number of meetings will be held to ensure good communication is maintained with all parties.

## 9. Meeting with Churchwardens

In most cases the relevant Archdeacon will seek to convene a meeting with the churchwardens and the Area Dean, if at all possible before the vacancy begins. This informal meeting will give an opportunity to run through this leaflet and seek to ensure that churchwardens understand their responsibilities through the forthcoming vacancy, as well as having an opportunity to ask any questions and share any concerns.

## 10. Preliminary Vacancy Meeting

The Bishop will give formal notice of a vacancy to the designated officer by the day the parish or benefice becomes vacant, at the latest.

The designated officer will give notice of the vacancy to the PCC secretary(ies) as soon as practicable after receiving the notice from the Bishop.

The notice given by the designated officer to the PCC secretary (ies) will:

- (a) state the date on which the benefice had become vacant;
- (b) provide the 'start date' for the statutory timetable for filling the vacancy;
- (c) provide information about the statutory process, especially with regard to the duties the PCC has in that process.

As soon as possible after the vacancy commences (or occasionally beforehand with the agreement of the outgoing incumbent) the Archdeacon, in consultation with the Area Dean and Churchwardens, will convene a **preliminary vacancy meeting**.

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 churchwardens. The Area Dean will also attend and the Deanery Lay Chair may also be invited. The outgoing incumbent if still in post and his/her spouse/partner, if any, may not attend.



## **Preliminary vacancy meeting agenda**

The Archdeacon and Area Dean will advise on the practical arrangements that have to be made in preparation for the vacancy, (see Part I above).

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.

The Archdeacon will give advice on the inclusion of children and young people in the process.

The Archdeacon will open up discussion on vision for the future.

## **Actions following the Preliminary Vacancy Meeting**

The following will need to take place within the first 6-month period of the vacancy:

- a. the PCC will–
  - i. agree its statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish (the profile),
  - ii. appoint parish representatives,
  - iii. decide whether to request the patron to advertise the vacancy, and
  - iv. decide whether to request a written statement from the bishop describing the needs of the diocese and the wider interests of the church.
- b. the PCC should decide whether to request a joint meeting with the bishop (or bishop's representative) and the patron (i.e. a section 12 meeting);
- c. the bishop and/or the patron should decide whether to request a joint meeting with the PCC (i.e. a section 12 meeting);
- d. where a joint meeting was requested, it would be held on a mutually convenient date arranged by the PCC secretary.

The PCC and others concerned will need to complete these matters by the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the 'start date'. This is intended to provide adequate time for the PCC to carry out its duties.

The preparation of the PCC's statement describing the needs, conditions and traditions of the parish will usually require consultation with various people, both PCC members and others in the wider parish, and needs careful thought and preparation. Although formally agreeing the statement will need to take place at a formal meeting of the PCC held within the six-month period following the 'start date', there will be nothing to prevent the PCC beginning the consultation and carrying out informal drafting work before that date.

Once all the matters set out above have been completed, the patron, bishop and parish representatives will be ready to undertake their respective roles in the task of identifying a priest for appointment to the benefice.

## Preparing a Profile

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. Further advice on the development of a profile is included as an appendix to this document.

A group will normally 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.

### 11. 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. Our experience is that an invitation to the Archdeacon and Area Dean as a matter of course is very helpful in building the sense of mutual collaboration implicit in the process and reduces the likelihood of any party wishing to call an additional (Section 12) meeting. 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. Formally 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. Formally decide whether to request a meeting under section 12 of the measure with the Bishop or patron if needed.
5. Decide whether to request a written statement from the Bishop describing the need of the wider church in relation to the benefice. (Though note that in practice the Appointing Bishop will invariably prepare their own letter to prospective candidates laying out their vision for ministry within the Diocese of Gloucester and including matters pertinent to the local context).
6. The draft timetable agreed at the preliminary vacancy meeting should be confirmed.

At the end of the meeting each PCC secretary should complete **form 34** detailing the decisions made and send them to the Archdeacon's Office.

## **12. 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.

Regardless of whether a Section 12 meeting is held the Archdeacon and/or appointing Bishop will aim, where diaries allow, to join the benefice for Sunday worship during the vacancy as part of the communication and information sharing process.

## **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's office will draw up the programme following consultation with the patron, parish reps and the Area Dean. The Archdeacon's office 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 visits to schools or 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 or their representative 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. **An 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 although where there is a clergy / staff team in the parish it may be appropriate for each candidate to meet with this team as a more formal part of the agenda.
6. **A formal interview** (usually of 50 - 60 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).

## 21. The Appointment

Following the completion of all interviews the Panel will seek to discern 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.

## **22. 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.

## **23. 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.

**Archdeacons Office January 2021**

## **APPENDICES: THE PARISH / BENEFICE PROFILE**

### **Appendix I – Some thoughts on writing your profile from the Senior Interim Minister.**

#### **Introduction**

So – you have been asked to put together the Parish Profile and you have until the Vacancy meeting. This is a straightforward guide to help you navigate the course. You might try to have a small group actually to put the Profile together, consulting of course widely. Accept from the start that you won't please everybody on the PCC.

You may be tempted to reach for the Profile for the last appointment. **Resist!** The world has moved on; the church has moved on and you are all a few years older and maybe wiser... It is good to think the Profile through from scratch rather than inevitably be constrained by the last one (which may have been based on the one before that, and...)

The Profile has a sole and very specific purpose – to provide information to a potential candidate who is interested enough to follow up an advert but is not yet committed to submit an application. This means it does not have to be comprehensive, but it does need to have sufficient information to help a potential candidate decide whether or not to apply. Remember that the Profile will first be read on line – it must look good on a tablet, a lap-top or a mobile. This does give great opportunities as we shall see in terms of including links to various websites.

It helps to know how long the Profile should be. I would recommend a maximum of eight pages of A4, including text, photos, graphs and white space on the page.

Before you begin, have a look at a couple of good profiles – your Archdeacon will be glad to point you in the right direction. Don't be daunted but encouraged – they started where you are now.

It is good to gather photos and some quotes into a 'bank' from which you can choose material for certain sections. Photos should be of people doing stuff and looking reasonably cheerful. Resist the temptation to have lots of artistic architecture.

#### **Organise!**

Begin with some broad headings – for instance

- Who we are
- Where we live
- Our Church life
- Our opportunities and challenges
- Our next Incumbent

You will also want a front cover and an Introduction. I recommend leaving these to write last when it is clear what you are introducing!

Of course you will find that some material doesn't fit comfortably into any one particular section. Don't worry about it – no structure is perfect.



## **Who we are**

This is your opportunity to introduce yourselves. Show rather than tell – a good collage of photos is appealing. A block of text is not.

Don't say something like *We are a friendly church*. Every church thinks that anyway, even if they aren't. Rather show – *A recent newcomer to our church said, 'I was so struck by the welcome here.'*

You can put a link here to your parish website, where interested candidates can learn more about who you are and what you do. Make sure the website is up to date before the Profile goes live, otherwise potential candidates might draw unhelpful conclusions.

This is your opportunity to introduce the Ministry team – photos are great. But be careful not to give the impression that you have everything so well covered that a new Incumbent is not really needed. If you are developing the ministry of lay people as pastoral assistants, worship leaders, small group leaders and so on – do say so.

If you are this kind of church you may like to put in links to YouTube clips or recordings on line of sermon series. These are good at showing the flavour of the church. You can also give the Facebook page or refer to the What's App group run for the men to share their concerns and prayers.

Likewise if you have links with particular festivals or pilgrimages – make a link with New Wine or Walsingham (or something between).

You may like to refer to your relationships with the Diocese, the Deanery and ecumenical partners. Is there a highlight ecumenical event sometime that you could show? Use website links rather than detailed text. Do refer to the Diocesan Life priorities at some point.

## **Where we live**

This is your opportunity to introduce the area. There may be suitable and helpful links to community websites. Try and look at the community through fresh eyes. For instance, you may have been there for decades and see it as a village with some new building around the edge. But someone coming there for the first time sees large estates with an older core. You could include a quote from someone who has recently moved into the area.

Introduce what is happening in the community. For example in a rural area the number of people actually engaged with agriculture is very small. Now you have a number of commuters and retired people. This has had a knock-on effect on house prices so that younger families have moved out to the nearest town.

What is thriving locally? And what might be struggling?

Are there any plans for house building in the area? If so, how many and where? Is the infrastructure developing accordingly?

What are the institutions locally, and what relationship do you have with them.

In this section put a map and annotate it to show where to find the church and the Vicarage/Rectory.

The Vicarage/Rectory – you and the candidate can assume that it fulfils the necessary standards, but what is particularly attractive about it. If it is more distant from the church it can be ‘peaceful location’; if it is close, it is ‘convenient’. How is access to the shops, main roads and schools. The latter is especially important if you want to appeal to candidates who may have children.

## **Our Church Life**

A cautionary note – church buildings by themselves rarely attract candidates. They don’t come because of the wonderful Norman tower and pews beloved of the Victorian Society. Candidates are more likely to be interested in the condition of the building and whether it is in need of major and therefore expensive refurbishment. If you have a good buildings committee and fund, they will be very pleased to hear it. They are very interested in the potential and flexibility of the church plant. Are there toilet facilities? Is there a Hall? Photos of people using the buildings are better than empty spaces.

In multi-parish Benefices, candidates are interested in common purpose and vision and asking questions about how well do the parishes work together. Again it is better to show than tell – e.g. the Benefice Council is currently considering how to develop communication across the parishes. You may like to refer to the individual websites of the parishes and introduce each parish briefly without giving the impression that you are really looking for six vicars. At some point you will want to introduce some figures about attendance, numbers of services, parish finance and so on. Try to present these imaginatively using coloured graphs rather than tables of figures.

It is helpful to be as precise as possible in painting an accurate picture of church life. For example, if you mention home groups, what Bible book or theme are you currently working through? With administration what support do you offer? Do you have access to good photocopying facilities? Do you have mission/overseas links? How is this expressed in terms of finance, communication, visits, etc?

Don’t be reluctant to have a sentence or two about difficult areas, e.g. your prayer life or evangelism. If you are aware of the need to address these, say so.

Schools – these are crucial in the mission of our diocese. Give web-links to the schools in the area, highlighting which (if any) are VA or VC schools. Candidates can look up details of the schools, but here you can show relationships. Do you have an Open the Book team? Are you welcome to lead Collective Worship? Quotes from children are wonderful to include. Recently I saw one that said, *I want a Vicar who comes to see us*. Keeping it simple is good. What has been happening recently in church life that is engaging? For instance, are you developing the Funeral Project in your deanery? Do you have ideas about running a nurture course or a Men’s Breakfast? A guerrilla gardening project locally?

Do remember that Church life is not churchy – we are in the business of being disciples of Jesus Christ 24/7. So how are you equipping people for this and how are you celebrating it?

## **Our Opportunities and Challenges**

In this section it is helpful to be as specific as possible. For instance, it is not helpful to say that you need to attract new people. A more specific way to put it is that you would like to develop an effective strategy to reach out to people who have just moved in to the newest estate.

It is perfectly fine to list these using bullet points.

Probably it is better to have more Opportunities than Challenges.

In this section it is important to give a clear sense of direction and travel in the Parish/Benefice and to show that there is evidence that the process is underway. It may not be developed but the reader will want to see that this is more than just aspirational.

### **Our next Incumbent**

Try and be clear about what you would like the Incumbent to **be**. If you can, be specific about personal spirituality, prayer, Bible teaching, having liturgical and pastoral skills. No Incumbent (no human being) can have it all.

Try and be clear about what you would like the Incumbent to **do**. Again try and be specific – e.g. to work with us to articulate a vision for the Parish and work with us in implementing this over the next five years.

Encourage the Incumbent to work with ecumenical partners, in the deanery and take advantage of all the opportunities available in the diocese. Encourage them to have a spiritual director and take a regular retreat. Show that you are committed to clergy well-being and that you pay generous expenses.

This section will be supplemented by the Bishop's letter, but it is your chance to express your thoughts.

### **Introduction**

Begin with something like *We are very pleased that you are taking time to read this Profile...*

Be engaging and personal, enthusiastic about the Benefice and the expectation of working with a new Incumbent.

### **And finally...**

You might like to end with a thanks for reading and expression of your commitment to support and work with the new Incumbent.

Find someone with more advanced IT skills to produce the final copy. There is no reason to have black text on white pages with neatly lined up photos of the same size. The basic text can be produced on Word, and then the final copy could be on PowerPoint or Publisher which give much more flexibility and opportunity to be creative. If there is no one suitable on the PCC, consider family members who might be persuaded, perhaps talk to the local schools or the Communications Department in Church House.

When you have produced the final draft, ask an experienced priest to read it through and give some feedback. Always bear in mind that this Profile is intended solely for potential Incumbents and not for members of the PCC!

And very finally – bear in mind that these are fallible thoughts on the process and you should not expect to agree with everything or follow any blueprint. **The Profile is yours...**

## **Appendix 2: A Brief ‘checklist’ for your Profile. Have we included something on the following (not necessarily in this order)?...**

### Context

- Parish/Benefice (not congregation) population figures, age, employment and social profile.
- Type of community – rural, urban, suburban, mixed etc.
- Local Institutions – prisons, hospitals, colleges, significant employers etc.
- Schools – Community or Church, nature of involvement by the church. Opportunities for more involvement?
- Local youth work
- Other community groups

### The Congregations

- Size of Electoral Roll
- Usual Sunday Attendance (adults and children)
- Are these from within the parish / benefice or are people drawn from a wider area?
- Children’s work
- Youth work
- Work with elderly
- House or study groups
- Magazine, newsletter, website or social media
- Chaplaincies (to hospitals, local groups etc.)
- Ecumenical links
- Overseas links

### Ministry

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

### Buildings

- Brief details of churches – include state of repair
- Halls
- Other property of the PCC
- Any major projects in hand or planned – including re-ordering
- The parsonage house (Rectory or Vicarage)

### Worship

- Service details
- Style (e.g. traditional, contemporary, BCP, use of incense, sacramental, charismatic, evangelical, etc.)

- Usual attendance at each (adults and children)
- What robes are usually worn (if any?)
- 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 in place? How and how often is this communicated?
- 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 (which should be that they are paid in full by the PCC)

#### The future

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

#### The new Incumbent:

What would we like? – but more importantly, what do we need?

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