

looking after people who have travelled a long way to take part in it.

### **Getting ready to welcome your new vicar**

#### **House**

Any queries related to the house should be addressed to the Archdeacon. There may well be works to the house during the vacancy, and these will be organised by the Diocesan Buildings Department who will also organise any letting of the house which is agreed during the vacancy. The incumbent-designate will probably need access in order to measure up for curtains, carpets etc. Although your new vicar will receive a re-settlement grant to help them pay for decoration and soft furnishings, it is unlikely to cover the full cost. Offers of help with decoration (in cash or in kind) are usually very well received and will make him or her feel welcome.

#### **Prayer**

Although you will have been praying your way through the whole process, it is important to remember to pray for your new vicar as they say goodbye to their old parish and prepare to move. It can be a time of uncertainty and stress, and your continuing support through prayer and practical kindness will be appreciated.

#### **Handover**

The Bishop's office will send you a checklist of the information which you need to hand over to your new vicar.



## **Oxford Area Vacancy Guidelines**



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The parish representatives have the right individually to veto the appointment of any candidate.

The offer of the post is made via the Bishop, Archdeacon or Patron. If it is accepted, it will be subject to a medical report, references and a DBS check. The Bishop or Archdeacon is responsible for contacting all candidates after the decision has been made. The identity of the new vicar must be kept confidential until the official announcement is made. This is normally co-ordinated between sending and receiving parishes. At this point, details of the appointment should be made widely known.

All paperwork connected to the interview process should be regarded as confidential and returned to the Bishop or Archdeacon at the end of the interview process.

### Licensing

Arrangements for the licensing service are the responsibility of the Area Dean and Wardens in consultation with the incumbent-designate and the Bishop's office. There is an agreed form of service for the licensing of a new incumbent, and it is customary for the incumbent-designate to choose the hymns. Invitations should be sent out as early as possible. In the Oxford Area these services are non-eucharistic to ensure that those invited from the wider community (e.g. Councillors, Headteachers) do not feel excluded from part of the service. There is usually a party after the service and some thought may need to be given to

shortlisting group, which is made up of the parish representatives, the patron(s), area dean and/or lay chair. Those on the shortlist are invited to interview. In addition, if you are part of a team ministry, the Pastoral Measure which created the Team may specify who else is involved.

### **Interviews**

Those who are in the shortlisting group also make up the interview panel. If there is a large number, the Bishop/ Archdeacon may split them into two or more groups of about 4 - 6 people. The Bishop/Archdeacon will discuss with the panel the content of the interviews. Good prayerful preparation for interviews is essential.

It will be helpful to design the programme for the time the candidate(s) spend in the parish in such a way that they meet a good number of people other than those interviewing them. This can be achieved in the way that hospitality is offered, transport around the parish/benefice is arranged, social encounters are organised and so on.

It is especially important that all members of the ministry team (curate, associate clergy, LLM, youth worker, administrator etc) get an opportunity to meet the candidates, since, although they do not play a formal part in the process, the Bishop will consult them for their views and will not license someone with whom they feel they could not work.

Likewise, the Area Dean and/or Lay Chair, whilst having no legal role, are always invited to share their wisdom in the appointment process and to ask candidates about their anticipated involvement in the life of the Deanery.

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## **Introduction**

These guidelines have been written to help churchwardens, PCC members and others who will be shouldering responsibility during a vacancy. Although they have been written as if the vacancy is in a single parish, they also apply to multi-parish benefices. Wardens, PCC Members and Parish Representatives will almost certainly find their work easier if this period is seen as a time of co-operation and collaboration between parishes and congregations.

The period of time between one incumbent leaving and the next arriving can be a time of great growth and development in lay ministry as people are encouraged to take responsibility for roles and tasks which may previously have been done by the incumbent.

## **Your vicar is leaving...**

Your vicar (rector/priest in charge) has announced that s/he is retiring or moving on, and you are left facing a period of vacancy with all the uncertainties that involves. The parish may well be feeling a sense of shock or bereavement, and it is helpful if there is some clarity about what happens next.

It is important that you should not feel isolated: there are several people who will be walking alongside you during the vacancy and helping you through the mysteries of the appointment process. A vacancy can also be a time of great creativity with a sense of everyone pulling together.

Prayer is important at this time, both for the future wellbeing of your vicar, and for wisdom and discernment as a new incumbent is sought.

To consider the Parish Profile prepared by the PCC

- To consider the procedure under the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986

In practice, discussing the Parish Profile often results in minor amendments being made and often helps the PCC(s) to decide on the final version.

## **Timetable for appointment**

After the Section 12 meeting, the Bishop will work out with you a realistic timetable for the appointment process. Normally all vacancies are advertised, so this timetable needs to allow time for adverts to be placed, applications to be returned (these normally go to the Bishop's office), interviews to be held, references to be checked, and once the successful candidate has agreed to take the job, for him/her to give notice in their current parish (normally 3 months).

When the Parish Profile is in its final form (with photographs etc), it should be sent to the Bishop's office in electronic form so that it can be sent out to interested applicants and put on the Vacancy page of the Diocesan website.

## **Advertising**

In this diocese, it is normal to advertise all vacancies in the Church press. The parish normally pays for this. The Bishop's office will advise on the content/size of the advertisement.

## **Shortlisting**

The Bishop or Archdeacon chairs a meeting of the

- the PCCs will normally have to pay);
- Request a Vacancy (or “Section 12”) meeting under Section 12 of the Measure – see below; (this meeting has to happen within six weeks of the Section 11 meeting)
- Request a written statement from the Bishop of Oxford describing in relation to the benefice the needs of the Diocese and the wider interests of the church;

If you are part of a multi-parish benefice, each PCC will have to deal with the Section 11 agenda, although in practice much of this can be done by a joint meeting of the PCCs.

### “Section 12” or Vacancy Meeting

This is a formal, and can be a very helpful meeting of the Bishop/Archdeacon, Patron(s), Area Dean/Lay Chair, and PCC members, chaired by the Archdeacon/Bishop.

The agenda for the meeting is as follows:

- Prayers
- To consider the statement provided by the Bishop

### What to do before your Vicar leaves

It will be important for the Churchwardens to sit down with the Vicar and discuss a number of issues.

1. **Information.** The vicar is often at the centre of the information network of a parish. S/he may well know the big picture, where others only know bits of it. So it is important that information relating to the running of the parish is written down. A ring binder is often a good idea, in which it can be noted, for example, who normally orders the communion wine, who has the spare set of boiler room keys, who normally plays the organ for Remembrance Sunday. This information folder can be kept in the parish office or vestry and will be enormously useful both to the parish during the vacancy and to the new incumbent.

2. **Unfinished work.** The vicar may have been involved in pieces of work which they will not be able to complete before their departure. These may include large projects, such as repairs/re-ordering or other smaller things. It is important for everyone to be clear what stage each piece of work has reached and whether any further action needs to be taken during the vacancy.

3. **Pastoral care.** If the vicar has been working with a pastoral care team, then any ongoing concerns can be shared with them. If the vicar has been doing much of the pastoral care by him/herself, then it is a good idea for any special concerns to be shared with a designated person so that the new incumbent can be properly briefed. Occasionally there are issues which are of a highly confidential nature and may be best held out of the parish, in which case the Area Dean is a good person to talk to.

4. **Finance.** The treasurer should ensure that all expenses owing to the vicar are paid up to date. If the vicar has been doing the fees administration for the parish, then this should be handed over. In this case, the vacancy may be a good opportunity to designate a fees treasurer and take this burden off the shoulders of the new incumbent.

5. **Before leaving,** the vicar should

- Hand over keys, parish records, confidential files etc.;
- Ensure the vicarage is empty of all furniture and rubbish;
- Make sure that all utility meters are read and the wardens as well as the utility companies are given the readings;
- Ensure the wardens know the whereabouts of parish registers, baptism & wedding certificates;
- Hand over any child protection paperwork/forms to be held securely during the vacancy.

### **Who is responsible for what?**

#### **Sequestration**

During a vacancy, the wardens and Area Dean become 'sequestrators', which means that they are responsible for the maintenance of services, care for the vicarage and preparation for the arrival of the new vicar. The sequestrators are also responsible for the money – see Fees and Finance below.

The Area Dean is a valuable resource, as well as holding joint legal responsibility with the wardens during the vacancy, and will be available to answer questions or

might need as a new incumbent to help you to move towards this calling.

There is a document available on the diocesan website called *Guidelines for drawing up your parish profile* which will help you as you think this through. [www.oxford.anglican.org/mission-ministry/parish-development-advisers/](http://www.oxford.anglican.org/mission-ministry/parish-development-advisers/) The Archdeacon (acting as Parish Development Adviser) will also be happy to help you, and you may like to plan an awayday or evening with him to help you to think through the profile.

If you are in a multi-parish benefice, it is very desirable that the PCCs agree to a joint wording of the Parish Profile, and that a joint drafting group be set up to take responsibility for coming up with a document which is acceptable to all. The Area Dean/Lay Chair will add a short section outlining the deanery perspective.

#### **“Section 11” meeting**

This refers to Section 11 of the 1986 Patronage (Benefices) Measure, and it should take place within four weeks of you receiving the legal notices from the Diocesan Registrar. It is a meeting of the PCC at which the following matters must be dealt with:

- Appoint two lay members of the PCC as Parish Representatives. These people will represent the interests of the parish at the shortlisting meeting and on the appointment panel;
- Make arrangements for drawing up a Parish Profile;
- Decide whether to request that the presenting Patron should consider advertising the vacancy (for which

### **Area Dean**

Shares legal responsibility for the parish with the wardens during the vacancy and should be first port of call for any problems. The Area Dean or Lay Chair will be involved in the shortlisting and interviewing to keep the deanery perspective in view.

### **Parish Representatives**

Normally two representatives (or two from each parish in a multi-parish benefice) who are chosen by the PCC(s) and who will be involved in the selection process. Individually at the interviews, they have a right of veto over any candidate.

### **Preparation of the parish profile**

This is a very important document – effectively the “shop window” of your parish/benefice. If well drawn up, it will greatly help potential candidates discern whether or not to apply for the post. A good profile will be descriptive of your church, congregation, community, area, activities, services and so on. It will be analytical of your strengths and weaknesses. It will capture your hopes, aspirations, and vision for the future mission of the church. And it will be clear about the qualities and characteristics you would like to see in your ideal new incumbent. It will also contain an outline role description for the new incumbent, which can be re-examined during the first 6-9 months of their tenure before it is signed off by the Archdeacon..

The process of drawing up the profile, role description and person specification can begin soon after your incumbent has announced that they are leaving, and will enable you as a congregation to really think hard about who you are, what God is calling you to be, and who you

help solve practical issues.

### **Management**

It is often a good idea for a small management group to help the churchwardens with day to day care of the parish (arranging rotas, pastoral care, worship provision etc.). This team could be the standing committee, or could be drawn from other members of the PCC. If there is a curate or associate minister (NSM, LLM) in the parish they should be included in this group. But note that the group is responsible to the churchwardens and the PCC, and this is not an opportunity for mavericks to get their own way!

In a multi-parish benefice, it is very useful for the wardens of the different parishes to meet regularly to share information and encouragement and to work co-operatively where this is most useful (e.g. it may be sensible to rationalise the service pattern for the duration of the vacancy if it is proving hard to get cover). This may take the form of regular Benefice Council meetings, or other, *ad hoc* gatherings.

In a Team Ministry, the Team Rector holds legal responsibility during a vacancy and will normally organise the day to day running of the parish(es). If it is the Team Rector's post which is vacant, then the Team Vicar(s) will normally organise the day to day running of the parish(es), although legal responsibility is held by the churchwardens and Area Dean.

## **The parish continues to function**

The life of the parish will go on: the PCC will continue to meet, services will take place, there will be enquiries about weddings, baptisms and funerals and pastoral needs will not go away. It may seem rather overwhelming, but with some thought and planning it should be quite possible to ensure that everything runs smoothly. And this will be an enormous gift to your new incumbent!

### **PCC**

The chair of the PCC is the incumbent and all PCCs should appoint a Vice-Chair. During a vacancy the Vice Chair takes the chair at the PCC. If your PCC is in practice normally chaired by a lay person, they simply continue in this role.

Your meeting pattern is probably well established, but there may well be a need for extra meetings during the vacancy so that everyone stays well informed and the parish's part in the process of making the new appointment can stay on track. It is therefore not a bad idea to meet monthly during a vacancy. If you have a large PCC this may not be feasible, and it might be better for the Standing Committee to meet monthly. In a multi-parish benefice, regular contact between the different PCCs is important, and this may take the form of regular wardens' meetings or more frequent Benefice Council meetings.

### **Sunday services**

As far as possible, your regular service pattern should be

The Bishop will confirm with the Area Dean that the Deanery Plan does not envisage any change to the current arrangements. Then, assuming that the parish is not suspended, the process, from the parish's point of view then normally unfolds in the following way.

### **Who will be involved?**

A number of people from outside the parish will be involved in the process of appointing your new incumbent. You need to be assured that they will be working together for the best outcome for the parish. Here is a 'who's who':

#### **Bishop**

The Bishop makes the decision whether to license a new incumbent or not and so has to be happy with the person who is selected. In the Oxford Area the Bishop of Oxford handles the legalities of the appointment.

#### **Patrons**

The Patrons 'present' the candidate to the Bishop.

#### **Archdeacon**

Often involved in place of the Bishop. Is a good person to ask for advice if the Area Dean is not available. The Archdeacon of Oxford also fulfils the role of:

#### **Parish Development Adviser**

Will be involved early on in helping you to think about your needs and aspirations for the development of the parish, and what needs to go in the Parish Profile.

Archdeacon may give special permission to claim from the Diocese. The Area Dean or the Archdeacon can help with further advice on particular cases.

Where a minister from outside the parish takes a wedding or funeral service, the minister's fee received should be sent to the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance, which stands in the place of the incumbent during sequestration.

Only retired stipendiary priests who have permission to officiate (PTO) may receive payment which is set at two-thirds of the minister's fee: clergy who hold a licence, whether paid or unpaid, may not receive a part of the fee. However, all may receive travelling expenses, which are normally paid in the case of funerals by the funeral director and by the PCC in the case of weddings.

Parish share has to be paid as normal during a vacancy, as it is a contribution towards the whole diocesan stipends budget, but there are obviously savings on incumbent's expenses.

### **The appointment process**

Soon after the resignation/retirement of your incumbent, you will receive a legal notice from the Diocesan Registrar. In the case of a retirement this will happen when they formally retire, which is often about a month after their final services. If they have gone to another post, then this notice will normally come after their licensing to the new post. This is when the vacancy formally begins.

maintained: this is not the time to make radical changes, although you may need some flexibility. Non-eucharistic services may be led by Licensed Lay Minister, but you will need a priest to take Communion services. It is possible that you may have to drop, temporarily, any weekday service which you normally have, depending on how difficult it is to find cover. If you are part of a multi-parish benefice, this may be a time when you increase the number of benefice services and come together more frequently as congregations.

The task of finding someone to take each service may seem onerous, but you may have access to retired clergy or associate ministers from other parishes. Do consult the Area Dean, who shares this responsibility with you and who will have the overview of what assistance is available from the Deanery, and may also be available to help out him/herself. Vacancies vary in length, but 6 months is not unusual, so forward planning is very much advised.

### **Parish policies**

There should be policies in place in relation to issues such as baptism and marriage of divorced persons. The Churchwardens and PCC should be aware of these and they have a responsibility to maintain them as far as possible. Again, this is not the time for individual hobby horses! If there is doubt, consult with the Area Dean.

### **Occasional offices**

This generally means baptisms, weddings and funerals. You may have a well-oiled parish or benefice office which deals with these enquiries, or it may have been an area of ministry which has been handled solely by the vicar. In any event, it is important to have a clear system in place

for dealing with enquiries and arrangements.

If you have a parish/benefice administrator, so much the better. If not, it is sensible to designate one member of the management group to be the contact person and ensure that arrangements are in place. It may be useful to discuss this with the vicar so that you have a clear understanding of what is needed.

### **Baptisms**

There is no statutory fee for baptisms.

- As a minimum, you need to: ensure that all Godparents have been baptised.
- Make sure that a certificate is given to parents and the register is filled in.

### **Weddings**

You need to be clear about your parish fee structure for weddings, including 'extras' such as organists, choir, flowers, bells. Weddings which have already been booked will need to be handed over to an ordained person to conduct. Because weddings involve legalities, (banns, registration) it would be sensible to involve the Area Dean or to seek advice from the Registrar before any wedding is booked in order that the couple's right to be married in the church can be checked.

### **Funerals**

You should contact the local funeral directors so that they know that the parish is in a vacancy. If you have no assistant clergy, they will normally ask someone from outside the parish to take the funeral, either at the

crematorium or in church. If a funeral takes place in church, it is normal for the parish to provide an organist, and there is a fee payable for this.

### **Fees and Finance**

The wardens and Area Dean are responsible for receiving fees and making payments during the vacancy. These should be recorded as usual and remitted to the Diocese in the normal way (if you are uncertain about what this is, ask your vicar before s/he goes).

Funerals and weddings involve the collection of fees. If you do not have a fees administrator, someone will need to be responsible for collecting them and for making sure that those providing elements of these services such as music, bells, flowers etc. are paid, as well as visiting clergy, where appropriate (see below). Up to date information about the fees due for occasional offices and fees payable to visiting clergy during a vacancy is available from the diocesan website <http://www.oxford.anglican.org/support-services/finance/parochial-fees/>.

In a vacancy, the parish can claim payment of casual duty fees and expenses from the Diocese direct to visiting clergy for taking Sunday services. The relevant forms, and general advice, may be obtained from Mrs Pat Burton at Diocesan House on 01865 208204 [pat.burton@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:pat.burton@oxford.anglican.org) .

If clergy are asked to do other pastoral work, such as sick visits etc, the parish is expected to be responsible for expenses. In the case of a team ministry where several members of the team are absent at the same time, the