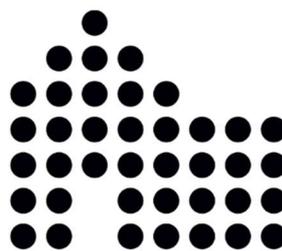


# LOOKING FOR A VICAR

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
APPOINTMENT PROCESS



Church  
Society

BUILDING ON THE  
FOUNDATIONS

## THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS

The appointment of incumbents – vicars, rectors, priests in charge - is governed by the Patronage Benefices Measure 1986. Various minor alterations have been made, but the Guidelines and Appendices published in May 2013, confirmed the position of the 1986 Measure.

These days each diocese has its own approach to appointments, and parishes will do well to familiarise themselves with these, although it will usually be explained at the pre-vacancy meeting. A book that many dioceses are using is 'How to Make Great Appointments in the Church' by Claire Pedrick & Su Blanch, published by SPCK.

The table below is taken from the May 2013 publications:

What	When	Who
Vacancy arises – notice of vacancy sent to patron.	Patron has 12 months in which to nominate a new incumbent.	Vicar, diocese, patron
Archdeacon / Patron meets PCC		
Section 11 meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To agree the Parish Profile;</li> <li>• To decide whether to request advertising;</li> <li>• To appoint parish representatives;</li> <li>• To decide whether to reconsider any resolutions concerning the ministry of women as Bishops.</li> </ul>	4 weeks from notice of vacancy.	PCC only
Section 12 meeting, if required.		Diocese, patron
Candidates sought/advert placed.		Patron, PCC
If advertising then shortlisting.		Patron
Candidate(s) 'interviewed'.		Parish representatives
Decision reached.		Parish representatives & patron
Nominee meets Bishop; Bishop to Bishop reference taken up.		Bishop
Forms filled out.		Patron & diocese
DRB & CSSL taken up.		Diocese
Formal announcement.		Parish representatives, <i>et al</i>
Institution.		Church, diocese, patron

## **PREPARING FOR A VACANCY**

When is the right time to be thinking about your next incumbent? Today.

1. You do not know when that day will arrive. Even if you have only recently appointed a new vicar, anything may happen, and you may be looking again much sooner than expected.
2. You will do well to be prepared ahead of time. The better informed a PCC, the better decisions will be made. There will not be that sense of panic and rush, you will know what to expect, when and how long you have to do various things and to whom you can look for advice.
3. Have an annual PCC review of the Parish Profile and use the opportunity to teach about the qualities required of a church leader, according to the NT.
4. Use the time before a vacancy to build a good relationship with a supportive patron. This will help both parties during the appointment process. You could also use this time to change your patron to one that is more supportive of evangelical ministry. *[Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986, 2006 version – Part I]*

## **THE PRE-VACANCY MEETING**

This allows the Diocese and/or Patron to meet with the PCC in order to inform them about the appointment process and answer any questions. It is a good opportunity for a well-briefed PCC to quiz the Diocese or Patron on what will happen, when and why. This will be particularly important if the Diocese's approach differs from the 1986 Measure or the May 2013 Guidelines.

## **NOTICE OF VACANCY**

This is issued by the Chancellor of the Diocese and marks the start of the appointment process. *[Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986, 2006 version – Part II section 7-9]*

## **SUSPENSION**

When the rights of the Patron to present a nominee are suspended, the Bishop takes over the appointment process. In most cases the Diocese will still involve the Patron but they will lead the process and the parish would still have a major say in the appointment. There are two grounds for suspension: the first is pastoral reorganisation; the second a change of vicarage. The 1986 Measure makes it clear that when it comes to pastoral reorganisation there must be a concrete plan for the future. The current practice of whole deaneries being suspended is against the Measure.

*[Pastoral Measure 1983 section 67; Pastoral Measure Code of Practice 2009 section 9.21-25]*

## **THE SECTION 11 MEETING**

This is a meeting for the PCC at which important decisions are taken. It must take place within four weeks of the issuing of the Notice of Vacancy. The Notice of Vacancy is sent out by the Diocese to the Patron and begins the appointment process. Many Dioceses delay the issuing of the Notice, either due to poor administration or to serve other purposes, such as making a late decision to suspend. This can be damaging to the Patron as it eats into the twelve months the Patron has to nominate a candidate, and frustrating for the Parish as it creates an unnecessary delay.

The Section 11 meeting is a meeting of the PCC; neither the Diocese nor the Patron is to be present. However, Dioceses sometimes ask to be present, often under the guise of 'helping' the PCC. An appeal to the 1986 Measure should prevent this. On other occasions when the Diocese calls a meeting with the PCC during a vacancy it would be advisable for the PCC to ask the Patron to be present as well, and/or the Bishop of Maidstone under the Women Bishops' provision.

There are four things the PCC must do at the Section 11 meeting:

1. Sign off the Parish profile
2. Decide whether or not to request the Patron to advertise the vacancy
3. Appoint parish representatives
4. Decide whether to reconsider any Resolutions concerning the consecration of women as Bishops

Ideally the PCC will have reached conclusions on all four of these matters prior to the Section 11 meeting. The meeting itself can then confirm the decisions already made.

*[Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986, 2006 version – Part II section 11]*

## **THE PARISH PROFILE**

This is a description of the parish or benefice which will include information about the locality and amenities, as well as the life of the church. The temptation is to make things seem better than they are but, as with everything, honesty is the best policy. It is usual to include things like attendance figures and the last year's accounts as appendices. In a multi-parish benefice it will usually be appropriate for each parish to write a section about their church, and for someone to oversee the rest.

When writing a profile try to think ahead to the next five to ten years rather than back to the last five or ten years. It is good to include a section which captures the PCC's hopes and fears for the immediate future, as that will have a direct bearing on the person they are seeking.

As an introduction there should be a statement as to what sort of a church this is. It is important to include key words and phrases that will put off inappropriate candidates as well as attracting desirable ones. Key words and phrases to secure an Evangelical future would be: 'conservative evangelical', 'expository preaching', 'penal substitutionary atonement', 'complementarian'. It is a good idea to ensure that these also appear throughout the Profile.

### ***The person specification***

This, along with the role description, is the most important section of the Profile. It tells any applicants what you are looking for and provides the key criteria for shortlisting and interviews.

Avoid writing the person specification based on your previous incumbent – whether positively or negatively! Instead, think about what the person who will lead you through the next phase of the life of the church is going to need to be like. The key words and phrases mentioned above are also vital in this section as you will want evidence that the candidates believe and teach those things.

You do not need to write a very long list of qualities you are looking for and it does not have to include 'good sense of humour'! It can be helpful to split the list into 'essential' and 'desirable' characteristics.

### ***The role description***

This tells the applicants what it is that you want them to do should they be appointed. It will also provide the basis for a six month review and the future ministerial development of the incumbent. It is therefore linked to the hopes the PCC has for the next few years, and you will be seeking evidence that the candidates have some experience of what you require, but not necessarily everything. For example, a curate might have demonstrated leadership by running a CYFA Venture, or managing a team of volunteers, but won't have experience of chairing a PCC meeting. Highlighting some priorities within the list will help the candidates as well as those making the selection.

### ***Statement of Particulars***

This is a section that the Diocese sometimes chooses to put into the Profile. It is a stand alone section that belongs to the Diocese and not to the Parish.

### ***Other***

The flavour of a parish/benefice can also be conveyed by the inclusion of any resolutions concerning women's ministry, membership of Church Society, GAFCON, Reform or the Anglican Mission in England, conferences church members are encouraged to attend,

mission agencies supported, and a position paper on where the church stands on certain issues of the day, for instance signalling that Keith Sinclair's statement in the Pilling Report is the position of the PCC. It might be wise for the PCC to agree a paper on the expectations they have of Bible teachers or leaders within the church.

## **ADVERTISING**

It is common practice for advertisements to be placed in the Church Times, although increasingly this is done online. Dioceses advertise their vacancies, CPAS are hosting a list of evangelical openings, and parishes will usually make their Profile available on their own website. An advert is usually written by the Diocese or Patron, but a well-prepared PCC would do well to ask to have some input. The cost of advertising is borne by the PCC and not the Patron, although some Dioceses will pick up the bill.

Church Society prefers head hunting to advertising, whilst recognising that good and bad appointments can be made using either method.

The Evangelical Patrons Consultative Committee, administered by CPAS, provides a list of clergy looking for a move and curates coming to the end of their title post. Patrons will also be aware of others who, if approached would consider a move but are unlikely to apply both to a list or an advertisement.

## **PARISH REPRESENTATIVES**

Two members of the PCC are elected to represent the parish in finding a new vicar. In some multi-parish benefices, each parish may only appoint one representative, and it is not unknown for Bishops to only deal with the church wardens when a parish is suspended. These two must have the complete confidence of the PCC and be trusted to act for the PCC in the process. Fellow PCC members must support them as they keep confidences, and they should be the buffer between the representatives and the congregation. It is not uncommon for a small group to work with the two representatives and to be bound by the same confidentiality.

## **RESOLUTIONS CONCERNING THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN**

Parishes which have passed a Letter of Request are invited to decide whether or not they wish to review their position. Dioceses will often apply pressure to PCCs during a vacancy to remove such a resolution, blaming the extreme views of the previous incumbent and suggesting that the PCC would do well to be open to a more inclusive ministry this time around. The PCC should therefore be alert to extra meetings called by the Diocese and be ready to call in reinforcements.

Parishes may apply to their Diocesan Bishop for oversight from a Bishop who shares their convictions on women's ministry: the procedure for this is outlined in GS Misc 1077. To make such a request is to send out a clear message as to where the PCC stands and will ensure the appointment of a Conservative Evangelical minister, or an Anglo Catholic. While this may go beyond the personal convictions of some PCC members it could be a vital step in securing the evangelical future of the parish.

There are some for whom the making of such a request will not be possible for theological and ecclesiological reasons. These PCCs will need to spell out their position very clearly in the Parish Profile.

### **THE SECTION 12 MEETING**

This is a meeting between the PCC, the Diocese and the Patron and can be called by any of those bodies if they have concerns about the statement agreed at the Section 11 meeting. It must be called within 10 days of receiving that statement, and held within 6 weeks of the notification.

*[Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986, 2006 version – Part II section 12]*

### **SHORTLISTING AND INTERVIEWING**

There is no set pattern among Dioceses or Patrons as to who should be involved in the shortlisting process. For example, CPAS shortlist at their regular Trustees' meeting. Church Society selects candidates one at a time to be considered by the parish. More often than not the shortlisting process is conducted by email. When a parish is under suspension some Dioceses will invite comments on candidates from Patrons and Parish Representatives before they make the final decision.

The most common practice for selection of the successful candidate is the panel interview. Ideally this will have been preceded by a visit to the parish and vicarage by the prospective candidates and their spouse. The interview will be led by either the Archdeacon or Bishop, or the Patron. The candidate may be asked to give a short talk on the lectionary readings from the previous Sunday or the day of the interview. Sometimes a short response to the Parish profile is also asked for.

Interview questions should be agreed beforehand and divided up between the panel. It is important that all candidate are asked the same questions. Follow up questions will of course depend on the answer given by the candidate. In some cases interviewers might be asked to keep a score of how well they think each candidate answers each question, these may be totted up at the end to give an idea of how the candidates have performed.

The parish profile should be used as the key measure for both shortlisting and interviewing. Does the candidate fit the Person Specification, has he the proven skills and abilities that are being asked for, for instance is he an expository preacher? Does his experience match up to the job that he is applying for, for instance has he previously worked in a deprived area? A record will be kept by whoever is leading the interview so that the unsuccessful candidates can be given feed back as to why they were not offered the position.

A discussion between the panel will follow at the end of which the successful candidate will have emerged. In that discussion it is important to reflect the priorities set out in the Profile. In some cases attempts have been made to focus on one of the 'desirable' characteristics, at the cost of the 'essentials'. Once again the representatives need to stand firm and hold their line as stated in the Profile.

In some situations Parish Representatives have asked for time to talk together, maybe even to ask further questions of one candidate, before they reach their decision, which they communicate to whoever is leading the appointment process.

If the Bishop is not part of the interview, s/he will meet with the nominated candidate.  
*[Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986, 2006 version – Part II section 17]*

## **ACCEPTANCE, ANNOUNCEMENT AND INDUCTION**

Once all parties are in agreement and the successful candidate has accepted the position, and safeguarding and other paperwork issues have been taken care of, an announcement can be made. This would usually happen on the same Sunday in the candidate's current church and the receiving church. There can often be quite a delay waiting for the paperwork to be completed, so on occasions an announcement will be made subject to the paperwork being in order.

Arrangements will then be made for the institution, licensing, collation or whatever other name that is given to the occasion. During the service the Patron will usually present the candidate to the Bishop, who will lead and preach; the Archdeacon will also have a role to play; and the new incumbent will choose the hymns, lead prayers and give the notices.

*Church Society produces a variety of resources to support and strengthen local parish churches in biblical ministry. See [churchsociety.org](http://churchsociety.org) for recent articles and also <http://archive.churchsociety.org/cstrust/appointments/index.asp>*