



The Diocese of
Southwark

Guidelines for a Parish in Vacancy

Christ Centred | Outward Focused

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Foreword From the Archdeacons

A vacancy is the time between one incumbent leaving and the next starting. Vacancies are an integral part of the life of all parish churches, and although they can be a time for opportunity and growth, they may also be a time of anxiety and difficulty.

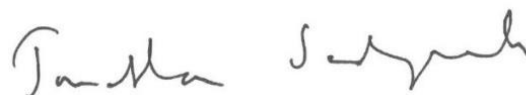
This booklet is for parishes in the Southwark Diocese approaching or embarking upon a vacancy and offers useful guidance on best practice. The booklet is intended for those who have responsibilities during vacancies, including PCC members and Churchwardens.

They are written in such a way as to make the information as accessible as possible. However, the Church of England, including its vacancy and appointment processes, is governed by law, so technical terms are sometimes used. These guidelines will help you understand these, and the process. However, it is in no way a definitive reference tool and should always be read in conjunction with information and advice from your Archdeacon who is available to help those who wish to know more. Your key points of contact can be found on the next page.

With our best wishes,



The Venerable Chigor Chike
Archdeacon of Lewisham & Greenwich



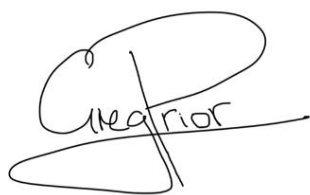
The Venerable Jonathan Sedgwick
Acting Archdeacon of Southwark



The Venerable Bridget Shepherd
Archdeacon Designate of Wandsworth



The Venerable Simon Gates
Archdeacon of Lambeth



The Venerable Greg Prior
Archdeacon of Croydon

The Revd Dr Geoff Dumbreck
Archdeacon Designate of Reigate

Who's Who & Contact Details

While your Area Dean will probably be your first port of call if you have an issue during a vacancy, since they share the responsibility for the church with the Churchwardens, you may also call your Archdeacon or their Personal Assistant.

Croydon Episcopal Area



The Venerable Greg Prior, Archdeacon of Croydon
greg.prior@southwark.anglican.org
020 8256 9633



The Revd Dr Geoff Dumbreck, Archdeacon Designate of Reigate
[TBC](#)
020 8256 9633

Kathleen Bailey, Personal Assistant
kathleen.bailey@southwark.anglican.org
020 8256 9633



Kingston Episcopal Area



The Venerable Simon Gates, Archdeacon of Lambeth
simon.gates@southwark.anglican.org
020 7939 9400



The Venerable Bridget Shepherd, Archdeacon of Wandsworth
bridget.shepherd@southwark.anglican.org
020 7939 9400

Charlie Watkins, Personal Assistant
charlie.watkins@southwark.anglican.org
020 8545 2442



Woolwich Episcopal Area



The Venerable Dr Chigor Chike, Archdeacon of Lewisham & Greenwich
chigor.chike@southwark.anglican.org
020 7939 9413



The Venerable Jonathan Sedgwick, Archdeacon of Southwark
jonathan.sedgwick@southwark.anglican.org
020 7939 9409

Richard Coe, Personal Assistant
richard.coe@southwark.anglican.org
020 7939 9413



The Vicar is Leaving

The announcement

One Sunday morning, it will be announced in church that the Vicar is leaving. Losing the Vicar triggers a range of emotions among the congregation. Some will be sad; others may even be relieved. These feelings need to be recognised and acknowledged. And then everyone needs to recognise that a new phase of parish life is about to begin.

Soon, the Vicar's last Sunday will be announced. It is important for everyone that an incumbent has 'a good leaving' which is carefully and thoughtfully planned. After all, it can be hard to say 'goodbye'. The parish needs to enjoy and benefit from the last months of a Vicar's ministry.

The Vicar's formal resignation

The Vicar formally resigns their post in writing to the Bishop of Southwark. In former years, this was not always needed, but the change to Common Tenure has changed the formalities.

Leaving the vicarage

Before the Vicar leaves, the Diocesan Property Department will send a 'key form' which must be returned to them within 7 days of the Vicar vacating the property (see page 14).

Please see page 14 for more information about the Churchwarden's responsibilities.

The Vicar to brief Churchwardens

Before leaving, the Vicar should brief the Churchwardens about:

- Parish files
- Confidential information
- The transfer of relevant parish material on the incumbent's own computer
- The different areas of ministry undertaken; about who is responsible for areas of work that have not been the Vicar's responsibility and the unusual/occasional items that only the Vicar knows about.
- Clergy who might cover services in the first few months of the vacancy. It is usual for the Vicar to arrange before departing; later months are the Churchwardens' responsibility and the Area Dean can assist with finding cover.



The Churchwardens should also meet with the Area Dean to discuss ministry during the vacancy.

Life in the Parish Continues

Planning for the vacancy

During a vacancy, the Area Dean and Churchwardens legally become ‘sequestrators’, i.e., the Bishop’s officers in the parish and therefore take on extra responsibilities during a vacancy. The Area Dean will be the first point of contact for Churchwardens and others seeking advice and support in the day-to-day running of the parish.

A vacancy is not just a period of ‘marking time’ but may be a time of creative discovery and for enjoying the benefits of co-operative ministry within the church and with neighbouring parishes. The Area Dean and Archdeacon can help you with this.

Overseeing the life of the parish

The Churchwardens, with the PCC, will need to decide whether the Churchwardens, Ministry Team or Standing Committee are the core working group for overseeing the life of the parish during the vacancy. Other licensed and authorised ministers and those with leadership roles in the church also have a part to play, in the practical aspects of church life.

It will be important to publicise the list of who is going to look after, but not singlehandedly running, different areas of church life - enquiries about baptism, pastoral visiting, home/study groups, church rotas etc.

The Parochial Church Council

The PCC should be chaired by the elected lay chair. The PCC continues to meet regularly to promote the whole mission of the church.

An experienced curate or non-stipendiary minister does not become Priest-in-Charge in the vacancy, even if they find themselves bearing extra responsibilities.

The Area Dean or Archdeacon can advise about the running of the Annual Meeting if one falls during the vacancy.

Assistant clergy and others

The Area Dean will advise on the supervision of curates, Readers, SPAs and the work of others in the absence of the incumbent. If there is a training curate, the Area Bishop (often acting through the Archdeacon) works with the (Assistant) Director for Clergy Formation, with advice from the Area Director of IME and Area Dean to ensure that suitable supervision is put in place. The Churchwardens will be kept fully informed, and they will need to be aware of the importance of the curate continuing in their pattern of study and attendance at IME training.

Keeping worship and church services strong

The Churchwardens and Area Dean are responsible for the maintenance of appropriate church services for the parish. This includes provision for baptisms, weddings and funerals. It may not be possible to offer the full range of services that a parish enjoyed before the Vicar left, at least temporarily. For instance, it may be appropriate in some churches to ensure that there is one midweek service where it is not possible to provide a daily Eucharist.

Finding service cover

It is usual for the Vicar to arrange before departing; later months are the Churchwardens' responsibility, and the Area Dean can assist with finding cover.

Be sensitive in arranging services to ensure that curates, NSMs and Readers are neither left out nor exhausted. A vacancy is a good time to invite neighbouring clergy, including the Archdeacon and Area Bishop to minister.

Who may officiate or preach during a vacancy

Only those who hold the Bishop of Southwark's licence or Permission to Officiate may officiate or preach during a vacancy.

Exceptionally, priests who are licensed or have Permission to Officiate in other dioceses may be invited by the sequestrators to officiate or preach at one service in the Diocese per year, providing that they are on the National Register of Clergy without further reference to the Bishop's office.

To check the National Register of Clergy, please visit www.churchofengland.org/about/national-register-clergy

Priests from other dioceses need Bishop Christopher's Permission to Officiate if they are to officiate more than once per annum. For advice, contact the Bishop of Southwark's Chaplain (alun.ford@southwark.anglican.org).



Morning and evening prayer on Sundays

Morning and evening prayer on Sundays may be taken by Readers. If the parish does not have a Reader, the Area Warden of Readers will be pleased to suggest names of those who live nearby.

If the parish reserves the sacrament

Do remember that if the parish reserves the sacrament, consecrated elements may only be used for communicating the sick - not at a Sunday service.

Church registers

The Churchwardens must safeguard and keep up-to-date all church registers.

Briefing sheet for visiting clergy

It is helpful for the outgoing incumbent or the Churchwardens or others, as appropriate, to provide a simple briefing sheet (hopefully no more than a side of A4 per service) describing key points that a visiting priest might like to know before taking the service - so that they at least know the expectations of the congregation. One of the fruits of a vacancy is for congregations to experience different styles of preaching and leading/celebrating without visiting clergy being unwittingly or knowingly insensitive!

Expenses of those who cover services

Travelling expenses should be offered to all clergy and Readers who travel from another parish to help out.

Fees

Only retired stipendiary clergy should be paid fees for duty. These are set out in the Diocesan booklet Guidelines for Clergy Conditions of Service available here

<https://southwark.anglican.org/download/24582/?tmstv=1734517953>

Payments are the responsibility of the parish - which will not be paying incumbent's expenses during this period.

Buildings

The Churchwardens and PCC remain responsible for the maintenance of the fabric of all their church buildings during the vacancy.

The Churchwardens continue to have the legal ownership and custody of the moveable goods belonging to the church.

Churchyard memorials

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

Finances

Parishes need to maintain payment of their Parish Support Fund pledges throughout any vacancy.

A proportion of the fees for weddings and funerals belongs to the Diocesan Board of Finance and should continue to be paid to the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) at Trinity House.

The detailed breakdown of fees is set out in the Table of Parochial Fees found here

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/life-events-parochial-fees-and-guidance>

Communication

Good communication is essential to ensure the smooth running of parish life, particularly when the incumbent, one of the main channels of communication, is no longer there. Weekly and monthly notices and notice-sheets and the parish website are all important ways of keeping people aware of the continuing life and worship of the church. At all costs, avoid putting across the message that 'without a Vicar there is no church'

The Parish needs to be kept aware of the progress that is being made in seeking a new priest. Clearly certain matters are confidential (names of short-listed candidates), but the whole church can be asked for contributions to be considered for inclusion in the Parish Profile. When there are clear milestones in the process, encourage prayer both privately and in the church intercessions - when the post is advertised, a short-listing meeting, and interview dates are obvious examples. It is good that people know who the parish representatives are so that they can be upheld in prayer as well. Some churches devise a special 'vacancy prayer' to be used each Sunday until an appointment is made.



Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

During the period of vacancy, the Churchwardens take on the incumbent's role in ensuring compliance with Diocesan Safeguarding Policies and Procedures. A list of these responsibilities can be found on page 3-7 of A Safe Church here https://southwark.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ASC_Section_3_Responsibilities.pdf. In addition, Churchwardens must continue to fulfil their own responsibilities, outlined on page 3-10 in the above link.

The PCC's Safeguarding policy remains in place.

Any questions about safeguarding should be referred to the Parish Safeguarding Officer or to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser as soon as possible by telephone 0207 939 9441 (Mon to Fri 9am - 5pm) or by email safeguarding@southwark.anglican.org

Ongoing safeguarding issues or allegations

If there is a current safeguarding issue or allegation at the time of the departure of the previous Vicar, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser will inform the Area Dean of the details. A meeting between the outgoing Vicar, the Churchwardens, the Area Dean and the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser may be appropriate.

If there is a current or previous safeguarding issue which impacts significantly on the parish, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser will meet with the new Vicar before they are instituted. Churchwardens should also ensure that they brief the new incumbent fully.

New allegations or concerns

If an allegation or a concern about a child or vulnerable adult is raised during the vacancy, the Churchwardens, in co-operation with the Parish Safeguarding Officer, should immediately inform the Archdeacon and/or the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. They must seek advice to ensure that Diocesan and Parish Safeguarding Procedures are followed.

The procedures can be found in section 6 of A Safe Church here
https://southwark.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ASC_Section_6_Allegations_and_concerns.pdf

The Area Dean may be asked to fulfil the role of the Incumbent during this process.

Parish school

The *ex officio* foundation governor place on the school's governing body should be filled on a temporary basis and under the school's Instrument of Government, it is usually the responsibility of the Archdeacon to make this appointment. Archdeacons usually look to other local clergy, readers, Churchwardens or PCC members to take this on to ensure continuity during this period.

The school and the parish will need to work together regarding collective worship, involvement in the school's Faith Group/Committee, prayer groups and other established activities and links.

Occasional Offices

During a vacancy, requests for baptisms, weddings and funerals will continue and need to be responded to well. This is a very important part of the ministry and mission of the parish which need to go on.

Parish policies relating to occasional offices

Parish policies relating to aspects of these ministries should not be altered during this period. For instance, regarding the admission of children to communion before confirmation or about marriages where one or both parties have been married before with a previous partner still living.

Existing policies need to be stated in the Parish Profile.

Baptisms

The parish will need to identify a person in the parish (if the point of contact was previously the incumbent) to receive enquiries for baptism, unless arrangements are already in place. In churches where there is an established Baptism Team/Visitor, it is important that it continues to function, liaising with the priest who will take the service so that any follow-up, sending of birthday or anniversary cards takes place.

Establishing eligibility and setting a date

Once it is established that a family are eligible either by being parishioners, regular worshippers or members of the Electoral Roll, the request should be referred to the Churchwardens and the Area Dean. No guarantee of a particular date should be made until this has been done.

Fees

There are no fees for baptisms.

Baptism register, cards or candles

A member of the church should ensure that the baptism register is completed and any baptism cards or candles are prepared.

The minister taking the service

The minister taking the service may be able to visit the family ahead of a service, or failing that, phone them.

Visiting clergy should be briefed beforehand about local 'house style'.



Marriages

When a marriage is requested in church, the person responsible for taking details should refer it to the Area Dean before proceeding any further. This needs to be done before confirming a date for the service.

Establishing the right to marry in the church



The parish must establish that the couple have a right to marry in the church. This can be by residence in the parish, attending for at least six months, or other Qualifying Connection. The couple will need to produce proof of this connection.

If all of this is in order, the Area Dean will arrange for one of the local clergy to take the service and they will liaise with the couple and the parish.

If required, the Area Dean can also advise about the proper calling of banns.

Establishing proof that the couple are both ‘relevant nationals’

In addition, since 1 July 2021, banns and common licences are available only if both the couple are ‘relevant nationals’.

The definition of ‘relevant national’ is limited to the following 3 categories:

1. British citizens;
2. Irish citizens; or
3. people who have settled or ‘pre-settled’ status under the EU Settlement Scheme.

The EU settlement scheme designed to preserve the accrued rights of EU/EEA/Swiss citizens and their families who had already made the UK their home on or before 31 December 2020. It cannot be newly applied for now. Holding settled or pre-settled status under the EU settlement scheme is the only way in which persons without British or Irish citizenship may marry by banns or common licence. Nationals of countries within the EEA who live in England and have Settled or Pre-settled Status under the EU Settlement Scheme may be married by banns and will not usually require a licence.

If either of the couple is not a relevant national, neither banns nor a common licence may be used as marriage preliminaries. In this case, the couple must be asked to obtain a Superintendent Registrar’s Marriage Schedule from their local civil register office.

Fees

Local arrangements about music, choir, flowers, bells etc should continue, which are all extras and can be charged for.

Any costs and expenses incurred in respect of routine administration (including arranging dates and times and the making of entries in registers), making the church available and lighting it, are already included in the fee and so are not permitted. Only the statutory fees may be charged.

A proportion of the fees belongs to the Diocesan Board of Finance and this should be paid to the DBF by the parish treasurer. All visiting clergy officiating at weddings should be paid expenses only by the PCC.

The detailed breakdown of fees is set out in the Table of Parochial Fees found here <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/life-events-parochial-fees-and-guidance>

Funerals

The outgoing incumbent, in consultation with the Area Dean, should have informed local undertaker that there will be a vacancy in the parish.

Who can cover funerals

If there are assistant or non-stipendiary clergy or Readers trained to take funerals, they will be the first port of call. They may, depending on availability or volume of requests, be able to cover funerals. If they are unable to do so, contact the Area Dean.

If there is no one within the parish who can take funerals, contact the Area Dean who will arrange for another local minister to take the funeral.



It is good practice for the parish to be informed by the Area Dean or officiating minister of such funerals for inclusion of names in parish intercessions, bereavement follow-up, invitations to Memorial/All Souls services etc.

If a funeral for a parishioner is to be held in the church, the Area Dean and/or officiating minister will contact the appropriate person (Churchwarden, parish office, etc) to ensure that local arrangements are made.

Fees

Local arrangements about music, choir, flowers, bells etc should continue, which are all extras and can be charged for.

Any costs and expenses incurred in respect of routine administration (including arranging dates and times and the making of entries in registers), making the church available and lighting it, are already included in the fee and so are not permitted. Only the statutory fees may be charged.

No fee is payable in respect of a burial of a still-born infant, or for the funeral or burial of a person dying within eighteen years after birth.

The fee for a burial in a churchyard or cemetery on a separate occasion applies when burial does not take place on the same day as, or on the day before or the day after, a service in church.

A proportion of the fees belongs to the Diocesan Board of Finance and this should be paid to the DBF by the PCC Treasurer. All visiting clergy officiating at weddings should be paid expenses only by the PCC.

The detailed breakdown of fees is set out in the Table of Parochial Fees found here <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/life-events-parochial-fees-and-guidance>

Asking the Vicar to return to cover services

Please do not ask the minister who has left to return to cover these. Doing so makes it hard for the priest to settle in their new parish or adjust to retirement and makes it difficult for the incoming incumbent if their predecessor is still active in ministry in the parish.

If it is pastorally necessary, the Area Bishop should be consulted before the invitation to the minister is made.

The Vicarage

Property handover form

The Property Department will send a handover form to the incumbent before they move out, to be returned to Property.

The form will:

1. Ask for the Vicar's future address
2. Ask for the name and contact details of the person(s) who will be responsible for holding the parsonage keys
3. Ask for the utility readings. *The gas and electricity meters on moving-out day to determine the amount the Vicar is due to pay.*
4. Provide other information that will assist the Property Department in managing the property during the vacancy.
5. Require the outgoing Vicar and a Churchwarden to confirm that the property is being left completely vacant. This means no furniture, equipment, effects etc. inside, outside, in the loft or on the roof. This is very important since the parish must pay for the removal of anything the Vicar has left behind.



Churchwardens' responsibilities: caring for the vicarage

During a vacancy, the house becomes the joint responsibility of the Churchwardens and the Diocese. Day to day, the Churchwardens are responsible for the safety and security of the parsonage house of the parish, when it is empty and below you will find a summary of what will be required.

1. Inspections

Arrangements must be made for someone in the parish to visit and inspect twice weekly, both inside and out (this is an insurance requirement).

The date and time should be recorded (the forms will be provided by the Property Department).

Appointing a particular person to be responsible for this can be a good way of making sure the matter does not slip.

2. Meter readings

If not already done, the Churchwardens will arrange for the gas and electricity meters to be read, and the closing bills forwarded to the outgoing incumbent.

3. Services (gas, electricity, and water)

These should NOT be disconnected but should be transferred into the name of the Diocese. Central heating will be set to a low thermostatic setting and left running for 24 hours a day in the winter months.

4. Telephone

The telephone should be left connected (to keep the number if the parish wish for the telephone number to be retained), but the outgoing Vicar must paid what is owed.

The Churchwardens should transfer the telephone into the name of the PCC and either fitted with an answerphone or redirected to the Parish Office.

5. Utility and council tax correspondence

If any utility or council tax correspondence should arrive at the property, they should be sent to the following address or by email to property.utilities@southwark.anglican.org

Property Utilities
Diocese of Southwark
Trinity House
4 Chapel Court
Borough High Street
London
SE1 1HW

6. Lighting indoors

Ensure that the occasional lights come on during the evening, which turns off automatically later at night

7. Heating

During the winter months, it is essential that the central heating system is kept running to prevent freezing and water damage. The heating should be left on with the boiler programme set to run continuously at a minimum temperature of 10C with the trap door to the roof space left open.

8. Water supply

The water supply must be turned off at the mains.

9. Gardening

During the 'growing' season, the lawn will need cutting regularly, shrubs trimmed and borders weeded, hopefully by volunteer labour.

10. Squatting and vandalism

There are very few areas of the Diocese where unauthorised occupation and vandalism are not potential problems. Legal proceedings to regain possession are both time consuming and expensive and the need to take such action might prevent a new Vicar



Reporting problems and repairs

The Property Department must be informed, without delay, of any repair required or problems, whether tenants/ caretakers are in residence or not.

Call 0207 939 9477 or email
property.repairs@southwark.anglican.org

being able to take up occupation. If a house looks deserted, squatting and vandalism are invited.

The following are useful points to follow:

- Ensure there are curtains at windows. If there are none when the Vicar leaves, these can be purchased and reimbursed by the Property Department.
- Ensure that the occasional light comes on during the evening and turns off later at night. If you need to purchase a timer, this can be reimbursed by the Property Department.
- A tidy garden helps to protect a house and make it look occupied.
- All locks and bolts on doors must be used and an intruder alarm, if there is one, should be set.
- If vandalism or squatting take place, please inform the Property Department and your Archdeacon immediately.

Vacancy works

When it is known that the Vicar is leaving, the Property Department will arrange a vacancy works meeting. This will be undertaken by an Assistant Diocesan Surveyor, the Archdeacon and a Churchwarden (you will be notified of the date and time).

The vacancy works meeting is the occasion when the state of the building is examined and the need for repair/improvement identified. This will lead to the preparation of a schedule of works and its subsequent implementation. The scope of the works will be at the discretion of the Archdeacon and Assistant Surveyor.

Whilst the vacancy works are being undertaken, the appointed contractor will have responsibility for all matters relating to the Vicarage and the parish will not be able to have access during this time.



Letting and caretaking

There may be a significant delay between the vicar moving out and the works beginning, so it may be appropriate to let out the property. If the period is too short for a tenancy, the house may be occupied on a rent free basis under licence by a caretaker. In these cases, the licensee pays for utilities and council tax. The Property Department will deal with all necessary paperwork and will arrange for a caretaker (according to careful criteria).

When the property is occupied, whether by tenants or caretakers, the Churchwardens are not responsible for the security for the property.

If you have concerns about tenants or caretakers, please contact the Property Department (020 7939 9400).

The Vicar's tenants or lodgers

If the Vicar had tenants or lodgers, they must be given notice to vacate by the Vicar's departure date. Although this is the Vicar's responsibility, the Property Department need to know that it has been done.

Use of the house after the Vicar has left

Various parish activities may have taken place in the parsonage at the invitation of the previous Vicar. When it is known that they are leaving, alternative venues and arrangements must be made for these.

It needs to be remembered that the parsonage is primarily a home and different clergy will have different perspectives on how and if the parish may use parts of it and their decision needs to be respected. This may be especially sensitive if the previous incumbent has permitted a room in the vicarage to be used as a Parish Office. Such use needs to stop before the Vicar leaves and cannot continue during the vacancy. Please don't assume that the next Vicar will be comfortable with such use of their home.

Preparing the vicarage

When the inspection is carried out, an assessment will be made of the condition of the interior decoration of the property and an interior redecoration will be agreed by the Assistant Surveyor and the Archdeacon.

Considerations at a Vacancy

The appointment of a priest is not the same as a secular recruitment process. The period immediately after an incumbent has resigned/retires leave the benefice in vacancy. A vacancy gives the opportunity to explore new, different and sometimes innovative patterns of ordained and lay ministry. There will be discussions initiated by the Archdeacon or Area Bishop with the Churchwardens and the PCC about the likely provision to be made for authorised ministry in the parish for the next stage of its life. This may be a process leading towards the appointment of a full-time stipendiary priest or to other provision - a part-time minister, oversight offered by a non-stipendiary minister or a reconfiguration of ministry across the area. Attention will also be paid to the Mission Action Plan (MAP) (see page 25 for more information on the MAP).

Legislation

The legislation governing appointments in the [Church of England is the Patronage \(Benefices\) Measure 1986](#), as amended by the Patronage of Benefices Order 2019 which sets out the duties of the presenting patron and the PCC on the filling of a vacant benefice. The following notes are designed to help the PCC in understanding the Measure, but only the Measure and not these notes, is authoritative.

Choosing a course of action

When a benefice is vacant or about to become vacant, the Diocesan Bishop, after appropriate consultation with all parties (the PCC, Patron, the Archdeaconry Mission & Pastoral Committee and the Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee), will determine on one of the following:

1) Appoint

To appoint a new incumbent.

2) Restriction

A 12-month restriction of the patron's right of presentation (this is a temporary restriction of a Patron's right to present an incumbent for appointment to a benefice, i.e. the patron will not be able to appoint an Incumbent while a parish is restricted).

3) Suspension

A suspension of the Patron's right of presentation for up to 5 years to present an incumbent for appointment to a benefice. In which case, a Priest-in-Charge may be appointed (see page 42 for more information).

The two main reasons for considering suspension are:

- a) plans for proposed or impending pastoral reorganisation or
- b) plans to replace the parsonage.

The parties Involved in the appointment process

There are three different parties involved in the appointment process whose roles are set down in the Patronage Measure <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2019/1183/made>.

In the Diocese of Southwark, all three of the following parties work together on the process:

The Patron

The Patron *nominates* a candidate

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.

The Parish Representatives

The Parish Representatives are elected by the PCC who *affirm (or veto)* the Patron's nomination.

The Bishop

The Bishop may also affirm or veto a nomination and *institutes* the priest to the parish.

Implementing the Vacancy Process

Preparation for the appointment of a Vicar or Rector

The Archdeacon will coordinate the appointment process, together with the Patron(s). The process outlined below describes the process for the appointment of a Vicar or Rector under Common Tenure.

Much of this process is followed if a Priest-in-Charge is to be appointed and a separate note outlines the important differences - see page 42.

The Designated Officer

Each diocese appoints a Designated Officer to act as the contact between the interested parties (i.e. PCCs, Patrons, etc) and to ensure that the legal process is followed. In the Diocese of Southwark, the Diocesan Registrar, Mr Jon Baldwin (based at the law firm of Winckworth Sherwood) is the Designated Officer.

Preliminaries

When a benefice is vacant or about to become vacant, the Diocesan Bishop serves a formal Notice of Impending Vacancy (Form 30) to the Designated Officer.

The Designated Officer then sends a formal Notice of Vacancy (Form 31) to the PCC Secretary and to the registered Patron.

The Patron may nominate an individual to act on their behalf and send their name and address to the PCC Secretary.

Vacancy meetings with the Archdeacon

Meeting the Churchwardens

The Archdeacon will usually meet with the Churchwardens as soon as it is known that the Vicar is leaving. The purpose of this meeting is to talk about the practicalities of the upcoming vacancy, including looking after the vicarage, cover for services, etc.

Preliminary or pre-vacancy meeting (aka Pre-Section 11)

The Archdeacon, along with the Area Dean, will arrange to meet with the PCC either just before an incumbent leaves (with their permission), or just afterwards.

The purpose of this meeting is for the Archdeacon and Area Dean to support you throughout the process of filling the vacancy.

At the meeting advice will be given on:

- Practical arrangements
- Advice on the procedures that must be followed in making an appointment
- How to compile parish/benefice profile
- A draft timetable will be discussed for the interview process

Who attends a preliminary vacancy meeting / Pre-Section 11 Meeting

We would expect the following to attend:

- Members of the PCC
- Churchwardens
- Area Dean
- Others who may attend include assistant clergy, Readers, members of any local ministry team and such others, as the Archdeacon agrees with the Churchwardens.
- The Patron (or their representative) may attend this meeting, particularly if they are dealing with the paperwork of the process.

In multi-parish benefices which do not have joint PCCs, the Pre-Section 11 meeting should be a meeting of the PCCs in the benefice together.

The outgoing incumbent or their spouse/partner must not attend.

Section 11 meeting

The PCC Secretary will have received the formal notice of vacancy (Form 31) from the Diocesan Registrar which triggers the Section 11 meeting. The meeting is referred to as a 'Section 11' meeting because it is described in Section 11 of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986. It is where important decisions are taken and the agenda and requirements for the Section 11 meeting is clearly specified in law and the measure is available here <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/1986/3/section/11> (see Section 11).

No other business should be transacted at the Section 11 meeting. It is possible for an ordinary meeting of the PCC to follow on from the Section 11 Meeting but this must be distinct.

It is good practice to have reached conclusions on all five of these matters prior to the Section 11 meeting. The meeting itself can then be a rubber stamping of decisions already made by the PCC.



Section 11 agenda

1. Parish Profile

To agree the Parish Profile, which describes the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish.

2. Elect Parish Representatives

The PCC appoints two lay members of the PCC to act as the Parish's Representative in connection with the selection of the new Vicar. They need not be the Churchwardens and must not be clergy, deaconesses or licensed lay workers or the spouse of the outgoing Vicar.

It is helpful if the meeting can agree on one person to be the point of contact between the Archdeacon, Patron, Parish Representatives and Churchwardens.

The elections:

- Normal voting procedures should be followed as per any normal PCC matter.... either a show of hands or vote by ballot.
- Every PCC member, including ordained members, gets one vote per candidate, although of course ordained members cannot be a representative.
- The person putting their name forward gets one vote per candidate and if they wish to vote for themselves, they can.

A note for multi-parish benefices!

Each PCC is entitled to appoint one or two representatives in the selection process (dependent on what is stated in the Pastoral Scheme - available from the Archdeacon's PA). However, in some cases even just one for every PCC will still make a very large interview panel once the Bishop, Patron, Archdeacon are also included - which might be a bit daunting for the candidate(s)! Therefore, the Section 11 meeting should decide that only a specified number of the PCC representatives will participate in the selection process, so that the panel remains representative of the benefice but is not overwhelming. The meeting will decide who they should be. Please seek advice from your Archdeacon.

3. Advertising

To decide whether to request that the Patron(s) advertise the vacancy (the patron is under no obligation to do so but it is rare for them not to respect the PCC's wishes).

The parish/benefice normally pays for advertising and the Archdeacon's PA will advise on the most appropriate advertising platform and provide templates.

4. Bishop's Statement

To request a written statement from the Area Bishop describing in relation to the benefice, the needs of the diocese and the wider needs of the church.

5. Section 12 meeting

To decide whether to request a Section 12 meeting. This is a joint meeting with the Patron and the Bishop to exchange views about the PCC's statement and the Bishop's Statement.

The meeting must be held within six weeks of the request (and in the case of the Bishop and Patron the request must be made within ten days of receiving the parish's statement). The Area Dean and Deanery Lay Chair are also invited to the meeting.

Note: A Section 12 Meeting is called if there have been serious problems that need discussing with the Bishop or the Bishop's representative and any other patron, or where the PCC is divided over the future needs of the parish.

The patrons may also request a section 12 meeting (sometimes in order that they might meet the people and better understand the needs of the parish).

If the groundwork has been done at the preliminary vacancy meeting, we find this is very rarely necessary in this diocese.

When to schedule a Section 11 meeting

The Section 11 meeting must take place within 6 months of the start date as stated in the formal Notice of Vacancy (Form 31). It must not take place before the start date.

The Section 11 meeting is usually short as the meeting itself can then be a rubber stamping of decisions already made by the PCC.

In person or zoom

The Section 11 meeting can be held either in person or on zoom, provided everyone with the right to be present has the IT means to be present

Who attends

The Section 11 meeting is for all members of the PCC.

Who does not attend

The outgoing priest; their spouse/civil partner; the Patron; the Patron's Representative; the Bishop; nor the Archdeacon.

Multi-parish benefices

In multi-parish benefices which do not have joint PCCs, the Section 11 meeting should be a joint meeting of the PCCs in the benefice together.

After a Section 11 meeting

After the Section 11 meeting, the PCC Secretary must complete Form 34 (see example on the right). This document was sent to the PCC Secretary at the outset of the vacancy by the Diocesan Registrar.

The PCC Secretary sends the completed Form sent to the Bishop of the Diocese, the Patron, the Designated Officer, and copied to the Archdeacon's PA. If required, the Archdeacon's PA can provide their contact details.

FORM 34

PATRONAGE (BENEFICES) MEASURE 1986
Appointment of Parish Representatives

DIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK

BENEFICE OF XX

To:

The Bishop of the Diocese
The Presenting Patron
The Designated Officer

1. I hereby give you notice that at a duly convened meeting(s) of the Parochial Church Council which took place on
(and) the following persons were appointed as the representatives of the Council in connection with the selection of a new Incumbent

#Name.....

Address.....

#Name.....

Address.....

2. I attach a copy of the statement prepared by the Council describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish
3. The Council resolved -
- * (a) to request the presenting Patron to consider advertising the vacancy;
(b) to request a meeting under Section 12 of the Measure
(c) to request a statement in writing from the Bishop describing in relation to the benefice the needs of the diocese and the wider interests of the Church

Dated this day of 2024

Signed _____
Secretary to the Parochial Church Council

If the Crown (defined as His Majesty, the Duchy of Cornwall and the Duchy of Lancaster) or the Lord Chancellor is Patron

In this instance, the PCC Secretary does not return Form 34. Instead, the names of the Parish Representatives should be sent to the Patron's representative, the Bishop of Southwark, and Diocesan Registrar. If required, the Archdeacon's PA can provide their contact details.

Mission Action Planning

Mission Action Plans (MAP) are a vital source of information and reflection during a vacancy, especially when writing a Parish Profile. While many parishes will have an up-to-date MAP, some may not have one at all, and others may have one which is due for review or which reflects the priorities of the previous incumbent more than those of the church as a whole.

Writing a MAP

A MAP written during a vacancy will focus on the first stages of the MAP process. It will be a useful exercise both for planning priorities for the vacancy period and discerning the opportunities for mission and church growth that you will want a future incumbent to develop with your church.

Stage one

- a) The first step is to do a church audit of your strengths, weaknesses and resources (people, gifts, time).
- b) The second step is to do an audit of your wider parish community: what are the social needs and demographics, what are the mission opportunities, what are you already doing that could be built on, where are their possibilities for partnership with others?
- c) Out of these two audits you can begin to prayerfully discern a realistic and bold vision for where you want your church to be in five years time.

Stage two

Stage two of developing a MAP is to write an action plan around a set of specific objectives.

Each action in the plan needs to be SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Timed.

In a vacancy period, you will need to discuss which of your priorities you can develop and which you need to leave for future action. You won't want to make a very detailed plan that doesn't leave space for discussion and prayer with the new incumbent when they arrive.

If you don't have the capacity to start any new activities, identify the key areas of church life that need to be maintained and nourished for the church to be in a good place to move forwards with your vision once the new incumbent is in post.

Reviewing an existing MAP

A vacancy is a good time to review an existing MAP; or create one if you currently do not have a Mission Action Plan.

Questions to ask include:

- What has been achieved/not achieved from your stated objectives?
- What has gone well/not gone so well?
- What have you learned about your church and the wider community?
- How far have the vision and actions been owned by the congregation?

Out of this review process you can modify and update your existing MAP objectives for the period of vacancy.

It will be important to focus your resources on key areas of your church life and mission, so you may need to be strategic in choosing to work on fewer key objectives from your MAP, leaving some to be picked up again once a new incumbent is in post.

How to guides and templates

Guides and templates are available on the Diocese of Southwark's here

<https://southwark.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MAP-booklet-FINAL-2020.pdf>

<https://southwark.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MAP-Resources-and-templates-booklet2020.pdf>

Who to approach for help

Joanne Gavin, Mission Support Officer, Diocese of Southwark

E: joanne.gavin@southwark.anglican.org

T: 020 7939 9479

The Parish Profile

Whilst the PCC gives final approval to the Parish Profile, it is helpful and advisable to consult and involve a wide range of people in the preparation of it. This might be done by asking the congregation to make written comments or by holding one or more congregational meetings - exploring the strengths, challenges, needs, hopes and vision of the church.

The Area Dean will work with the PCC in the development of its Profile. The Archdeacon must have had sight of the draft profile before it is finalised.

The Mission Action Plan (see pages 25-26) will be an important document to feed into the statement and should be submitted as part of it.

The outgoing incumbent may also have some factual information to contribute before they leave, for instance, about organisations they have been involved within the parish. They should be asked for this before they leave - but not for their views about the future direction of the parish!

The working group

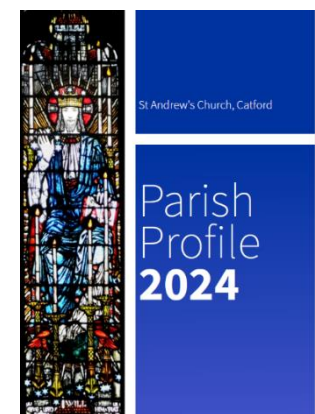
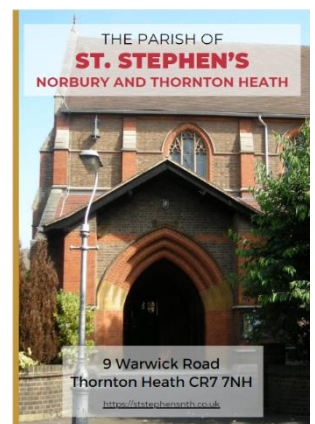
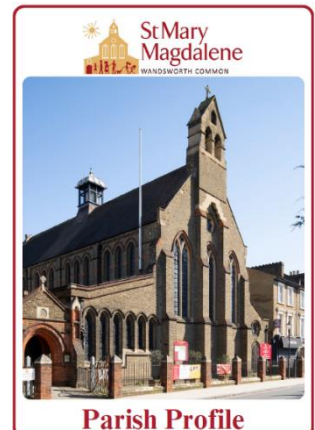
As many people will be involved in providing input to the document, it is advisable for the PCC to appoint a small working group to work on it to present to the PCC for final approval.

A suggested checklist

The information in the profile is intended to provide prospective incumbents with as clear and accurate a picture as possible of the current life of the wider parish and the local church.

The Profile should include (*this list is illustrative not exhaustive and not all will apply in every case*):

- a description of the population, size, nature and features of the parish
- a description of the church(es) and other church buildings and properties
- a list of services (forms and style of services, average attendance)
- a note of other ordained and lay ministers and colleagues (if any)
- details of the profile of the congregation
- average number of occasional offices and forms of preparation and follow up
- the nature and extent of lay leadership and involvement in mission and ministry
- a list of church activities and groups



- details of the financial position of the church, including whether Parish Support Fund payments are up to date and whether clergy expenses are paid in full
- a description of other churches in the parish and the nature of links and activities ecumenically
- a note of other establishments and institutions in the parish and the nature of engagement and involvement with them
- the nature and extent of pastoral ministry within the parish
- a brief description of the vicarage.

It may be helpful to consider these sorts of questions:

- What is distinctive about this parish - what makes it what it is?
- Where would we like the parish to be in five years time?
- What are the strengths and resources of the parish to help it to achieve this?
- What are some of the barriers and challenges along the way?

Equally important as the factual description is a picture of the current state of the parish - its achievements and challenges, its aspirations and fears, its hopes and anxieties.

The profile needs to offer an accurate picture of the life of the parish which is why it is important that it is written and presented with honesty and care.

Photographs

Remember to include photographs that show the breadth and diversity of parish life (having sought the necessary permissions to use them first!).



Research shows that the choice of language in advertisements and role specifications has a strong influence on the number and variety of candidates attracted to a post.

Affectionate	Co-operate		
Cheerful	Dedicated		
Collaborate	Dependable		
Committed	Emotional	Loyal	Together
Communal	Empathy	Nurture	Trust
Communicate	Honest	Responsible	Understand
Compassionate	Interpersonal	Sensitive	Warm
Connect	Interdependent	Sociable	
Conscientious	Kind	Support	

- Enable creative thinking about....
- Support and encourage the church family in change....
- Nurture the church community as it grows in depth and breadth...
- Committed, collaborative team...
- Develop networks of relationships in the local community...
- Highly emotionally intelligent...
- Empathise with young people...
- Connect more fully with...
- Preaches with sensitivity and understanding...
- Bring people together to engage with...
- A skilled and sensitive communicator experienced at juggling complex demands...
- Desire and skills to draw people...
- Share our commitment to...
- A committed and compassionate priest...
- Person of grace and passion...
- Motivator of people...
- Community minded....
- Release the gifts of ...
- Offer experience of...
- Share God's love in the community...
- Nurture individuals in their own ministry...
- Flexible approach to worship....
- Explore imaginative approaches to...
- Long for a loving and hospitable church

Please contact your Archdeacon's PA who would be happy to share some exemplars with you.

In a multi-parish benefice, the PCCs should try to agree a joint profile for the whole benefice, although individual parishes may wish to provide their own separate statements. Therefore, the PCCs will need to work together on the description of the new priest.

It will usually be laid out as:

1. a joint introduction
2. a joint description of the sort of priest, their gifts and skills, you believe is being called to the post (it is important to have one description of the priest)
3. and finally, information about the individual churches.

The parish school

The Southwark Diocesan Board of Education has provided the following checklist of information that could be incorporated into the Profile (available as a stand-alone form from the Archdeacon's PA to share with the Head Teacher to complete and return to you).



SOUTHWARK DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
Developing Church of England Education Checklist

- ✓ information about the school, with brief information about the school's size, status, name of the headteacher and chair of governors
- ✓ links to the school and Board of Education websites
- ✓ reference to the governance arrangements; ex-officio role and PCC appointments to the school governing body
- ✓ a brief outline of the core role and responsibilities in relation to the school and a short statement, prepared by the headteacher and chair of governors, about the school's aspirations for the future
- ✓ information about the future plans for the school and any issues relevant to the appointment of the new incumbent following discussion with the headteacher and chair of governors
- ✓ details of any chaplaincy arrangements in the school and arrangements to participate in the planning and leading of collective worship
- ✓ explicit reference to the incumbent's responsibilities towards the school
- ✓ reference to the school in any advertisement
- ✓ all schools in the parish, including other church schools, community schools, academies, free schools and independent schools.

Person Specification

In the light of the Parish Profile, it will then be possible to draw up a statement of the qualities, gifts and attributes which the parish discerns are needed in the next incumbent and the tasks that will face them. It will provide a set of criteria by which prospective applicants will evaluate whether this is a possible next step for them in their ministry. It is also an objective set of criteria for questions in the interview process.

To avoid the Person Specification being too long and too idealistic, it will be helpful for the parish in looking forward to focus on at most seven or eight essential attributes - even if it includes a further three or four 'desirable' ones.

Person specifications examples and the importance of language

The following are two examples of person specifications for an imaginary parish, illustrating two possible uses of language. The qualities sought in the person specifications are the same; they are simply expressed in different ways.

Version A

Uses language shown by research to **attract** a greater breadth and number of applicants.



The Diocese of
Southwark

**THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWARK WISHES TO APPOINT
A VICAR OF ALL SOULS, LONDON**

We are looking to appoint a committed and compassionate priest who will:

- Be community minded and develop networks of relationships locally.
- Support the church community through change and enable creative thinking about our Mission Action Plan.
- Nurture individuals in their own ministry and encourage collaborative working.
- Preach with sensitivity and understanding, communicating the Gospel in an inclusive and engaging style.
- Enable the Church community as we grow in depth and breadth.
- Be resilient, caring and sociable.

Version B

Uses language that will restrict the range and number of applicants



The Diocese of
Southwark

THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWARK WISHES TO APPOINT A VICAR OF ALL SOULS, LONDON

We are looking to appoint an able and visionary priest who will:

- Have a high profile locally, being visible, active and engaged in the town.
- Manage the parish through a process of change and lead a review of our Mission Action Plan.
- Build up lay ministry and form teams.
- Be a competent, confident preacher, teaching theology and the Bible in a challenging manner.
- Lead the Church into numerical and spiritual growth.
- Be robust, pastoral and have a good sense of humour.

Information provided courtesy of the Diocese of St Albans.

Appointment by Interview Process

Advertising

Under the Benefices (Patronage) Measure 1986, the PCC has the right to request the Patron to advertise the vacancy. If the PCC chooses to make such a request, the Patron will usually agree to do so, on the understanding that the PCC will meet the cost.

Church Times

If the post is to be advertised, the PCC may choose a paid advertisement in Church Times, normally for two - four weeks. The Church Times offers a deal whereby for the payment of an extra 20% the post will be advertised until filled. The Archdeacon's PA can provide more information on costs.

Pathways

Regardless of whether a paid advert is chosen or not, all posts are advertised on the Church of England Pathways job site (free) where applicants can view the Parish Profile, the Bishop's Statement, etc, and make their application online.

Diocese of Southwark's website

All posts are advertised on Diocesan website (free)

<https://southwark.anglican.org/about-us/who-we-are/vacancies>

Who deals with the adverts?

Although the parish will write the adverts, the advertising process is usually handled by Archdeacon's PA (although on occasions by the Patron). They will share the necessary templates with you to help you to prepare the advert.

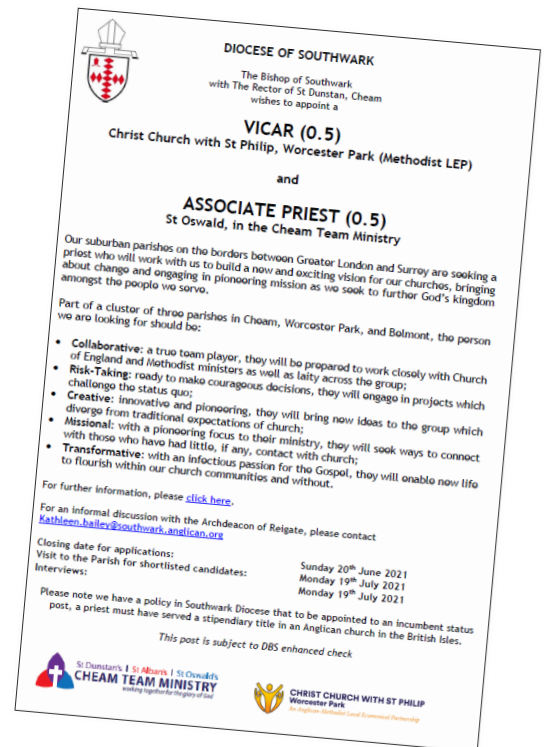
Shortlisting

When the advert closes, the interview panel will receive the candidate's applications to shortlist based on the criteria in the person specification.

Following shortlisting, the Archdeacon's PA contacts the candidates inviting them to interview and receives their responses (although on occasions, shortlisting is handled by the Patron).

References

The Archdeacon's PA takes up reference for the short-listed candidates (although on occasions shortlisting is handled by the Patron).



Confidential references are obtained by the Area Bishop from the Bishop of the Diocese in which candidates are currently working.

Options when a vacancy is not advertised

The PCC may ask the Patron not to advertise the post, but instead to suggest a particular candidate for the parish to meet. If this is the case, the same process will apply as in the open advertisement process:

- A candidate will need to complete an application form and supply references.
- They will need to make an informal visit to the parish for their own benefit.
- They will be formally interviewed by the Parish Representatives and Archdeacon. Depending on the patronage, the Bishop and/or his representative will also be involved in this - as might the Patron.

At the end of the interview, the Parish Representatives will need to determine if they are minded to accept or reject the Patron's nominated candidate. The Diocesan Bishop has similar rights. Therefore, it is preferable for all parties to work together.

In this method, each candidate needs to be assessed on their merits - a candidate can only be rejected or accepted and not put on hold to see 'if there is another alternative'.

It is perfectly permissible for a parish, subject to the PCC agreeing, to move sequentially from one process to another (for instance asking the Patron to suggest a particular candidate in the first instance and if that does not bear fruit, to advertise). It is not possible to run both processes in parallel!

Appointment in other circumstances

Parishes which cannot afford the cost of advertising, but which would like to interview more than one candidate may:

- Ask the Archdeacon to encourage applications
- Consider advertising only on the Church of England's Pathways Job Site and the Diocesan website.

In either case, the appointment can then proceed as detailed in 'Appointment by Interview Process' on page 33.

Candidate's travel and accommodation expenses

Reasonable travel expenses and subsistence allowance (in accordance with General Synod regulations) are allowed and payable by the PCC.

If a candidate requires overnight accommodation, the parish may wish to offer an overnight stay in a congregation member's home. Or, the parish may wish to suggest a suitably priced venue nearby, although the parish and Archdeacon must be agreed on this in advance.

The max rates that can be claimed for overnight accommodation outside of London is £110 per night (in accordance with General Synod regulations).

If a candidate travels by car, they may claim mileage of 0.45 pence per mile.

The Archdeacon's PA will ask candidates to bring their receipts or total mileage with them to interview, along with their bank details for a BACS payment.

Discretion and confidentiality

Everyone involved in the interview process must remember the need for discretion and confidentiality at all times, particularly over the names of candidates for the post.

Before the appointment is announced, the identity of the new priest should be carefully safeguarded, for a variety of reasons. The Bishop's and Patron's communications with the Churchwardens or Parish Representatives need to be private and confidential, not even to be shared with the PCC. The PCC and congregation need to be patient and trusting. Parish Representatives will need to resist giving a blow-by-blow account of how the search for a new Vicar is going.

The Parish Visit

The purpose

Shortlisted candidates are invited to an informal visit to the parish.

The purpose of a visit is to enable candidates to see something of the parish as part of their process of discernment as to whether this might be the right place for them to serve.

A parish visit is for the benefit of the candidate and it is an opportunity to show the parish at its best and most honest light.

A parish visit is not an additional or pre-interview, nor is it a social event. This will need to be made clear to those who will be meeting the candidates.

Who co-ordinates the parish visit?

The parish co-ordinate the practical arrangements and the final timetable and once finalised, it must be shared to the Archdeacon's PA to inform the shortlisted candidates. At this time, the candidate's dietary requirements, whether their spouse/partner will attend, and whether they require accommodation will be obtained and shared to the Parish Representatives.

Sample Parish Visit Programme

- 10:30 Candidate arrives for coffee with church leaders
- 11:00 Tour of church and other property
- 11:30 View the rectory/vicarage
- 12:00 Drive around the parish, area and visit to school
- 13:00 Light lunch with parish members
- 13:45 Candidate's break (*time alone*)
- 14:00 Formal interview
- 15:00 Depart



A Parish Visit could include:

- A tour of the Vicarage
- Tour of the church and hall
- Tour of the local area, including the local school(s) and other key places of interest or significance
- Meet and greet over coffee or a lunch

Candidates could meet:

- Any stipendiary or non-stipendiary clergy in the parish, SPAs and Readers and other ministers in a Local Ecumenical Partnership.
- Churchwardens, but only if they are not the Parish Representatives to prevent it seeming like an extra interview.
- Those responsible for music, children and youth work, pastoral co-ordinators, the treasurer, house group co-ordinator, etc.
- Other members of the staff team, such as Parish Administrators.
- The Area Dean and Lay Chair to provide the wider Deanery context for ministry.

When should the visit take place?

The visit can either take place on a separate day to the interview or form the first part of the formal interview day. If the visit takes place on the same day as the interview, the candidate's arrival times must be staggered.

What should candidates see?

Candidates should be shown the church and other properties in parish ownership. They should have the opportunity to be escorted around the parish to get an idea of local context, amenities, and prominent features.

As far as possible, each candidate should be offered the same experience i.e., to see the same things, meet the same people, of similar length, etc. More often, the same programme runs in parallel with candidates doing the same things but in a different order. Please bear this in mind and try as hard as you can to avoid the candidates being in one place together, where they will feel they are competing with each other.

Who should candidates meet?



The parish visit is not a chance for everyone to meet the candidates. It is for the candidates to meet the key people, not for the benefit of everyone in the church to feel involved.

In determining who should meet candidates on such a visit, it is helpful for them to meet people by virtue of the office which they hold or the role which they undertake in the life of the church.

A lunch or coffee morning can enable these introductions to take place in a more informal setting and the candidate can be joined by their spouse/partner.

Feedback from those involved in meeting the candidates should not be expected or given, unless they are in a Team, Group or Ecumenical Partnership where licensed clergy and clergy of other denominations in an LEP have a right to be consulted on the appointment and share their views.

The candidates will have had a long and intense morning, therefore it is important that candidates are provided with a break alone before their formal interview.



Spouses / partners and children

Candidates may well wish their spouses/partners and children to have a chance to take part on the parish visit and will therefore be included if requested. This will be communicated to you by the Archdeacon's PA.

Parish school

If there is a parish school, a visit to the school whilst it is in session should form part of the parish visit, co-ordinated with the Head Teacher. Candidates should be asked to engage with a group of local primary school children (usually Year 6) on a visit lasting up to 30 minutes.

A suggested parish school programme

- The candidates are not asked to prepare anything. Instead, the children are asked to come up with questions they'd like to ask, and the teacher can help them prepare their questions in advance. It can be anything they want, i.e., what's the candidate's favourite food or bible story, etc.
- A nominated person from the PCC could sit in on the sessions as an observer so that they can feed back to the interview panel in the afternoon
- It is helpful if the children can be different for each candidate so that they don't get tired and therefore disadvantage one candidate.
- Candidates should also have contact with the Headteacher and Chair of governors. Feedback from both should be sought and communicated to the interview panel.
- Questions to consider:
 - Does the candidate build a good rapport with the children?
 - Is the language they use appropriate for the age group?
 - Do they engage with the children, i.e. asking them questions, what they think, etc?
 - How do the children react, i.e. are they engaged or bored.



The Interview

The venue and practical matters

The interview needs to take place in a quiet and relaxed setting where there will be no interruptions, preferably in the parish.

It is important to have a second space available for candidates to arrive and settle (and depart) - with one other person briefed to welcome and offer drinks etc.

Ensure there are comfortable chairs and refreshments available - a glass of water for the panel members and for each candidate during their interview.

A simple sandwich lunch for the interview panel is most welcome.

To have someone available to welcome candidates when they arrive and generally acting as a host. If a spouse/partner comes along, this person can also entertain them while the interview takes place.

Sample interview programme

11:00	Interview panel pre-meet with coffee
11:30	Interview 1
12:30	Interview panel lunch
13:00	Interview 2
14:00	Interview 3
15:00	Deliberations
16:00	Depart



The interview panel

The interview panel will consist of the Patron(s), the Area Bishop, and/or Archdeacon and Parish Representatives.

A full day may need to be set aside for the interview process. Roughly one hour per candidate is allowed for each interview.

Interview panel pre-meet

The interview panel normally meet together for at least 30 minutes immediately before candidates are scheduled to arrive. This gives the panel the opportunity for prayer and discussion of the task they have been given, and for questions to be allocated to different members of the interview panel.

Candidate's presentation

There may be a short presentation which the candidates will have been informed about ideally at least a week before the interview, such as preaching a short homily on the gospel of the day.

Interview questions

The questions will have been discussed together beforehand and formally agreed electronically in advance. The scope of the questions should be determined by the Person Specification and Parish Profile. They will therefore explore the candidate's ability to do the job that has been specified.

There should be opportunity in the questions to explore a candidate's experience by asking them to describe aspects of their relevant current and previous work and their particular interests and emphases in ministry.

All candidates should be asked the same substantive questions - although follow-up questions will be dependent on the initial answer that is given.

Questions should be open ended, simple and presented in a friendly way. The objective is to get the candidate to talk - not to respond with 'yes' or 'no' answers to lengthy questions.

Candidates need to be allowed time to ask questions of the panel and valuable insights are often learned from the perceptiveness of the questions that a candidate asks of you.

No questions should be asked that relate to the candidate's gender, age, race, sexual orientation or disability. The chair of the panel will stop the interview if this happens.

The Archdeacon's PA will be able to provide you with a list of possible questions.



Making the decision

In making the decision, it is important to remember the three different roles which the Patron, the Bishop and the Parish Representatives play (see the 'The parties Involved in the appointment process' on page 19).

In practice there will usually be a discussion at the end of the interview day in which the three parties will discuss together which of the candidates is best suited to be the next incumbent and about whom all three parties are agreed (decisions are not taken by a majority decision).

There should never be a sense of 'choosing someone who might do'. If the three parties do not agree or do not believe that any of the candidates that they have seen is right, then it is best to start the process again. It is never right to appoint someone on the grounds that it will shorten the vacancy.

The formal offer

Once everyone is agreed, the Patron will then offer the job to the preferred candidate - and if they indicate that they are likely to accept the post, a formal letter offering the appointment is written by the Patron - usually within a week.

The announcement

An announcement can only be made when the candidate has replied to the formal offer in writing to accept.

The announcement must be made on the same day in all the churches of the new parish and in the churches of the parish from which they are coming.

Every new priest must complete current safeguarding procedures. As this can take some time, an announcement can be provisionally made before this has been received and the words 'subject to the satisfactory completion of legal procedures' is added to any announcement made.

The announcement is co-ordinated by the Archdeacon's PA in collaboration with all parties.



The Diocese of
Southwark

Announcement

Sunday 4th May 2025

**Appointment of Vicar of St Francis of Assisi &
St Mary of Nazareth Churches, West Wickham
(United Benefice) by The Bishop of Southwark**

We are pleased to announce today, Sunday 4th May 2025 that The Reverend Matthew Drummond, presently Team Vicar of The Mardyke Team (comprising: St Michael's, Aveley; All Saints, Belhus Park; St Nicholas', South Ockendon; and St Stephen's, Purfleet-on-Thames) in the Diocese of Chelmsford, has been appointed Vicar of St Francis of Assisi & St Mary of Nazareth Churches, West Wickham (United Benefice), subject to completion of the necessary procedures.

Further details, including the date of the Licensing service, will follow in due course.

Appointment of a Priest-in-Charge

If presentation to a benefice is restricted or suspended, the provisions of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 do not apply and legally the living is filled (after consultation with the PCC, by the Bishop).

In practice, many of the procedures are like those for finding a Vicar and the section on Implementing the Vacancy Process (page 20) can be followed, especially:

- the Section 11 meeting
- preparing the Parish Profile
- advertising
- interview process.

The Parish Profile

The profile should contain a statement (agreed with the Archdeacon) as to why the living has been suspended and some indication of how the plans are developing either for rebuilding the parsonage or for pastoral re-organisation.

The Patron

The Diocesan Bishop has a duty to consult the Patron, but in this Diocese, it is considered good practice to involve the Patron in the process (even though they have no legal responsibilities). This is because when the restriction or suspension is lifted, there is technically again a vacancy in which the Patron has the right to present a candidate. In many, but not all, cases a shortened procedure will be followed whereby the Priest-in-Charge will be appointed as incumbent to the living following due process involving parish representatives, Patron and Diocesan Bishop. It is as well therefore for everyone to contribute to the appointment from the start.

Lay Representatives

In the appointment of a Priest-in-Charge, the Bishop consults with the PCC, which does not appoint Parish Representatives. However, the PCC can delegate its responsibilities to the Churchwardens as lay representatives. This is particularly important when it comes to a formal interview where it would be impossible and inappropriate for a whole PCC to short-list and interview candidates.

Service of Institution, Collation, or Licensing

Preparations for the service for the new parish priest will begin about three months beforehand. Where diaries permit, usually the Diocesan Bishop will take the service if the new priest is coming from outside the Diocese. The Area Bishop will preside if they are coming from within the Diocese.

Depending on who is taking the service, their PA or the Bishop's Chaplain will contact the Churchwardens to agree a date. Once agreed, the Churchwardens and Area Dean will be sent information and templates to help you to prepare.

The Area Dean is responsible for overseeing the service and ensuring everything goes smoothly.

Collation, Institution or License: what's the difference?

Collation and Induction

In the case of an incumbent where the Patron is the Bishop and the living is being given, it is a service of Collation by the Bishop and Induction by the Archdeacon.

Institution and Induction

In the case of an incumbent where the Bishop is the joint Patron, or someone other than the Bishop is Patron, and the living is being given, it is a service of Institution by the Bishop and Induction by the Archdeacon.

Licensing

In the case of a Priest-in-Charge, the service is a Licensing and it can be led by either a Bishop or an Archdeacon.

The invitation list

At least six weeks before, the Churchwardens, working with the Area Dean and the new priest, draw up a list of those to be invited to the service. A list of those invited should be kept and passed to the new Vicar as a good indication of local people for them to make contact with.

The invitation list should include:

- those on the Parish Priest Designate's list, i.e. family and friends, past parishioners, etc.
- the external Patron or their representative (if there is one)
- the Mayor
- local MP and Councillors
- clergy of the Deanery Chapter
- the Deanery Lay Chair
- ministers of other churches in the parish
- representatives from the local church school (if there is one) and other local schools and other community leaders
- and last, but not least, the congregation!

An invitation template

Invitations can be sent by email or printed.

The Churchwardens and Parochial Church Council(s) of

request the pleasure of your company
at the Celebration for a New Ministry of
The Reverend as
by The Rt Revd Bishop of
and The Ven..... Archdeacon of

at Church
.....
on..... at pm

and afterwards for refreshments in

RSVP toby.....

Robing (Choir Dress) for Clergy/Readers to take place in

The order of service

The service is normally one of Holy Communion.

Templates

The office of the Bishop or Archdeacon (whichever is leading the service) will send information and templates to help you to prepare.

Hymns

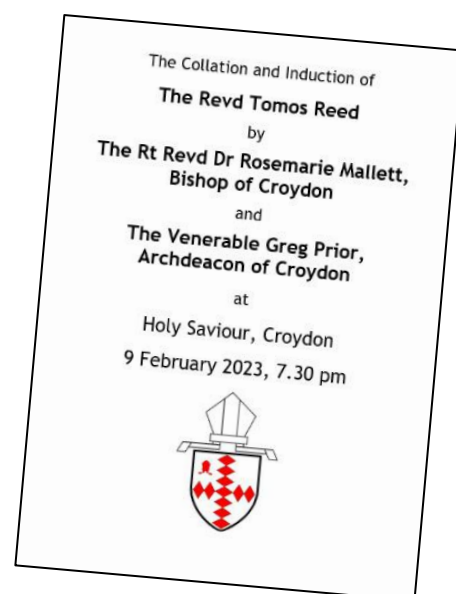
The new priest is usually asked to choose the hymns.

Readings

The Bishop or Archdeacon (whichever is leading the service) will choose the readings - which are normally those set for the day.

Printing

The Bishop or Archdeacon (whichever is leading the service) must approve a draft of the service before it is printed. Responsibility for printing the service lies with the parish.



Rehearsal and preparations

The Area Dean will conduct a rehearsal with all those taking an active part (except for the Bishop and Archdeacon) before the service so that they know what they are expected to do and when.

Chaplain

If the Diocesan Bishop is conducting the service, his Chaplain normally accompanies the Bishop. If the Area Bishop conducts the service, he/she will need one of the local clergy or a Reader to act as chaplain for the service (someone with local knowledge of the church).

Robing

Particular attention needs to be paid to robing arrangements for the Bishop's party and other robing clergy and readers; the order of processions in and out; seating arrangements for participants and visitors; arrangements for the administration of Holy Communion.

Swearing the oaths

In preparing the service, it will have been made clear as to whether the oaths are to be sworn during the service or in the vestry before the service begins. In the latter case, the Bishop, Archdeacon, Patron (or Area Dean representing them), Churchwardens and new priest should be in the vestry fifteen minutes before the service.

Seating

The Patron and the new priest should take their seats before the service in the first pew/row on the north side of the church if they do not enter with the procession.

The welcome

The Area Dean (or other suitable person nominated by them) should give out notices a few minutes before the service begins (brief so they don't delay the start of the service). The Area Dean co-ordinates the welcomes given to the new priest in the course of the service. (This will also mean that the Area Dean is best placed to brief the Bishop on guests that he should especially welcome and greet at the beginning of the service).

The Mayor

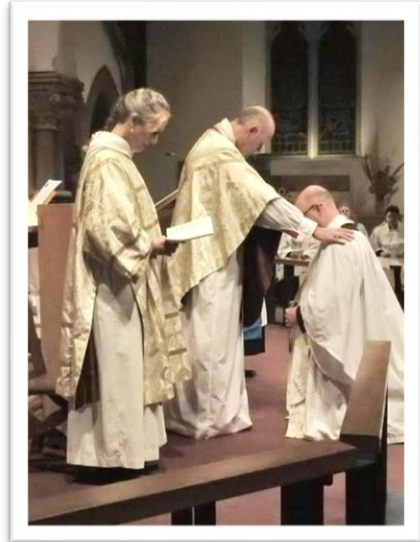
If the Mayor is present, someone should escort the Mayor and Consort to reserved seats, lead the Mayor out before the congregation leave, and take care of the Mayor at the reception.

Service register

The church's Service Register should be made up ready for the Bishop to sign.

Parking

Parking spaces should be reserved for the Bishop, Archdeacon and the Mayor.



Handing Over to the New Priest

Don't try to involve the new priest in the work of the parish before their arrival. Allow them plenty of time to take their leave of their last parish - remembering how it felt when your own priest left. Take your cue from them as to whether in the time between the announcement of their coming and their arrival they would like to be copied into PCC minutes, monthly news-sheets etc.

Your new priest will appreciate a more detailed briefing on the parish before they start. This might include some informal discussions with other members of staff and with the Churchwardens.

The new priest will not only be starting a new ministry but will have moved house and location as well. They will need some help and guidance in finding their way around. Welcome and support that is sensitive but not over-bearing makes a very good start to a good working relationship.

Keep hold of all that has been undertaken and achieved in the vacancy. New gifts and skills amongst the congregation may well have been identified and exercised - make sure that people don't hand back everything they have taken responsibility for in the vacancy.

The length and complexity of these guidelines gives some indication of the responsibilities which need to be undertaken when the parish is in a vacancy. Throughout this time your Archdeacon and Area Dean are always willing to share these responsibilities with you. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with them.



Welcome

NOTES