



**Diocese of Southwark**

*So your vicar is leaving ...*

**Guidelines for Vacancies  
in  
Southwark**

MARCH 2007

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## SO YOUR VICAR IS LEAVING ...

- 1.1 Vacancies are an integral part of the life of all parish churches. Vacancies are a time for opportunity and growth, but for parishes they may also be a time of anxiety and difficulties.
- 1.2 This booklet is for parishes in the Southwark Diocese who are approaching or in the middle of vacancies. It has been written to help congregations get the most out of this part of church life. It is intended for those who have particular responsibilities during vacancies including PCC members and churchwardens, and for members of the congregation who want to understand the main processes.
- 1.3 We have written this guide in everyday language to make it as easy to read as possible. However the Church of England is governed by law. This guide is not intended to be a full statement of the law. Your Archdeacon is always available to help those who wish to know more.

## KEY ASPECTS OF A VACANCY

### *What happens during the vacancy?*

We have identified four aspects of a vacancy which form the main parts of these guidelines:

- In Part A, we discuss the last few months after your vicar has announced they are leaving
- In Part B, we address how to keep the church going without a vicar
- In Part C, we describe the search for a new vicar or priest-in-charge
- In Part D, we highlight welcoming the successful candidate.

### *Where can I turn for help?*

Neighbouring churches and the Diocese recognise that vacancies make particular demands on parishes and are ready to provide help.

Key helpers include:

- your Area Dean and (for parishes who are part of a Team) Team Rector
- neighbouring parishes
- your own congregation - vacancies frequently bring forward people with previously hidden skills
- these guidelines - hints and tips are included in each main section based on the experience of a wide range of parishes
- your Archdeacon who is committed to providing a personal and supportive service to parishes throughout a vacancy or others in the team
- your Area Bishop who is available to consult, through your churchwardens, as required.

Southwark Diocese is committed to making a vacancy an enriching experience for all and ensuring that the best levels of support are provided.

## A - THE LAST FEW MONTHS

A1.1 Your vicar has told you that they are leaving. It may come as a surprise, or you may have been expecting it for some time.

A1.2 There are not many “doing tasks” during these last few months. However, your congregation needs to come to terms with the change and start thinking about the vacancy. Early planning during this stage may come in useful. In addition, there are two detailed tasks:-

### *Handing over the Vicarage*

A2.1 When it is known that the parish priest is leaving, Trinity House will send them a “key form”. This will ask for their future address and the name and telephone number of the person(s) who will be responsible for holding the parsonage key. The form will also provide other information that will assist the Diocesan Property Department in helping to manage the property during the vacancy. (For example details will be included of the code for any intruder alarm installation. It is important that this code is not changed during the vacancy without letting the Property Department know the details!) The form will also require the outgoing occupier and a churchwarden to confirm that the property is being left completely vacant with no furniture, equipment, effects, rubbish etc. remaining within or without the premises, including the roof space.

*The original form should be returned to the Property Department within 7 days of the outgoing priest vacating the parsonage and a copy of the form sent to the relevant Episcopal Area Office.*

A2.2 In the sad event of a vacancy caused by the death of the vicar, the spouse is welcome to remain in the vicarage for at least three months.

A2.3 Should there be a tenant or lodgers of the outgoing vicar living in some part of the vicarage they must be given notice to vacate terminating, at the latest, on the day of the Vicar's departure. **This is vitally important.** The vicar's gas and electricity meters should be read to determine their own financial liability. Similarly they will be

responsible for their proper share of the telephone account. On departure the house becomes the joint responsibility of the churchwardens and the Diocese.

A2.4 Most parishes have found it useful to arrange a final formal meeting with the outgoing vicar and churchwardens for the purpose of handing over keys, parish records, confidential files etc. and ensuring that the house is empty of all furniture, rubbish and worn out floor coverings. Clearing the house in this way will facilitate a thorough inspection of the property. The churchwardens need to ensure that they know the whereabouts of parish registers, Baptism and Wedding Certificates and to discuss with the incumbent the best way to deal with enquiries for baptisms and weddings [see section below].

### *The Parish Profile*

A3.1 The Archdeacon will also send the outgoing vicar a **Parish Profile Form** to be completed by them with the assistance of the churchwardens. The Profile should be returned to the Archdeacon before the vicar leaves. A copy should be retained by the parish to assist the PCC in drawing up their **statement** (see section C4.3.)

### *Hints and Tips*

- Don't Panic!
- Take a deep breath and let it all sink in for some time
- Accept that for some members of the congregation it will be a time of great sadness - for others it may even be a relief!
- Begin to ask - what is it that the vicar does?
  - how are we going to cope without them?
- Ask the outgoing vicar to identify all those little jobs and co-ordination roles that they fulfil - most vicars are keen to help set up a good framework for the vacancy before they leave
- Begin planning well before they leave - don't wait until the morning after the Farewell Party!
- Enjoy and benefit from the last months of your vicar's ministry.

## **B - KEEPING THE CHURCH GOING**

[Please Note: Where the term "Vicar" or "Incumbent" is used, it may mean vicar, rector or priest-in-charge]

B1.1 There are five major activities that are key to keeping the church active during the vacancy.

### *Continuing an active and supportive Parish Life*

B2.1 A vacancy is not just a period of "marking time" or "keeping the show running", it is meant to be a time for creative discovery and for enjoying the benefits of co-operative ministry with neighbouring parishes. The pastoral and mission work undertaken during the previous incumbency should be continued and where appropriate extended.

B2.2 The Parochial Church Council should, under the chairing of the duly elected vice-chair, continue to meet regularly in order to

"promote the whole mission of the church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical". If an Annual Parochial Meeting takes place during a vacancy your Archdeacon or Area Dean may be invited to chair this meeting. Your Archdeacon may be free to attend meetings of PCCs by invitation.

B2.3 Normally the Area Dean has general oversight of the parish during a vacancy. An experienced curate, associate minister or non-stipendiary minister in a parish does not become priest-in-charge, even though such assistant clergy will undoubtedly find themselves bearing extra responsibilities. They should look for direction and support from the Area Dean and the Churchwardens. Particular issues arise when a training incumbent leaves the parish during the curate's training (or is absent for any reason for a long period). In this event, the Area Bishop (often acting through the Archdeacon) acts to put in place arrangements to ensure that proper training and supervision continue. The Diocesan Director of Ministerial Education, the Area Director of Initial Ministerial Education (IME) and the Area Dean will be involved in this process. The Archdeacon will make sure that the churchwardens are 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.

B2.4 Thought should be given to establishing or continuing a convenient office hour during which enquiries about baptisms and weddings may be made. The time and location of this office hour should be clearly indicated on the church noticeboard. Preparation and instruction for the actual service is best given by the officiating minister.

### ***Keeping the Worship and Church Services Strong***

B3.1 The churchwardens and the Area Dean are responsible for the maintenance of appropriate church services for the parish including provision for baptisms, weddings and funerals. It may not be possible to offer the full range of services that a particular parish has enjoyed under a previous vicar, for instance one Sunday service of Holy Communion and one during the week may have to suffice. In

arranging for services sensitivity should be exercised in the use of visiting and retired clergy to ensure that Curates, non-stipendiary Priests and Readers are neither under-used and led to feel undervalued nor over-used to the point of exhaustion.

B3.2 If your parish Reserves the Sacrament, consecrated elements may only be used for communicating the sick. Only with your Area Bishop's express permission may they be used for services in [or outside] the church building. Your Archdeacon should be informed of the arrangements for renewing the sacrament each week.

B3.3 Only those who hold the Bishop of Southwark's Licence or Permission to Officiate may officiate or preach during a vacancy.

B3.4 The churchwardens must safeguard and keep up-to-date all church registers.

B3.5 Morning and Evening Prayer may be taken by Readers. If your parish does not have a Reader, the Registrar of Readers for the Diocese will be pleased to suggest names of nearby Readers, (see the Readers' section of the Diocesan Directory).

B3.6 Your Area Dean and Archdeacon from their knowledge of local clergy [stipendiary, non-stipendiary and retired] may be able to assist. They also have the scale of fees for occasional duty during a vacancy. The treasurer also has a copy of the table of fees in the booklet 'Pay & Conditions of Service.' Travelling expenses should be offered to all, but only the retired stipendiary clergy should be paid fees for duty.

B3.7 Early consultation with the clergy of neighbouring parishes may usefully result in shared services as well as shared ministers.

### ***Caring for the Vicarage***

B4.1 During a vacancy, the churchwardens are responsible for the safety and security of the parsonage house of the parish. The Property Department at Trinity House are ready to help and advise (tel 020 7939 9400).

**B4.2 Security** There are very few areas of the Diocese where unauthorised occupation and vandalism are not potential problems. The police are unwilling to take action against unauthorised occupiers unless there is clear and immediate evidence of forcible entry. Legal proceedings to regain possession are both time consuming and expensive and the need to take such action might prevent a new Vicar being able to take up occupation. Both squatting and vandalism is invited if a house looks deserted. Curtains at windows, the occasional light on during the evening, which is off later at night, and particularly a tidy garden all help to protect a house. If vandalism or squatting occur please let the Property Department and your Archdeacon know immediately. Insurance cover against vandalism and water damage continues only for a limited period once the house is vacated even though fire cover continues indefinitely. It is a condition of this part of the Insurance cover that an empty house should appear lived in and should be visited and inspected at least twice a week both inside and out. A regular routine of such inspections is essential if insurance cover is to be maintained and appointing a particular person to be responsible for this issue can be a good way of making sure the matter does not slip. If this is not undertaken insurance cover is invalidated.

**B4.3 Vacancy Works** When it is known that the vicar is leaving, the Property Department will be notified by the return of the completed key form. This will trigger the vacancy inspection procedure. This inspection will be undertaken by the Archdeacon, a Surveyor and a parish representative. This will be the occasion when the state of the building is examined and the need for repair/improvement identified. It will lead on to the preparation of a schedule of works and its subsequent implementation. The scope of improvements will be at the discretion of the Archdeacon and the Surveyor and in some cases the Parsonage and Property Maintenance Committee.

**B4.4 Caretaking** Parsonage houses may be occupied on a rent free basis under licence (the licensee pays for gas/electricity/telephone bills) or very occasionally let. If there is likely to be a significant period before vacancy works are put in hand or between the

completion of the vacancy works and a new vicar taking up occupation it may be appropriate to have the property occupied by a caretaker. The Property Department will deal with all necessary paperwork and will advise appropriately. The Property Department should be contacted as soon as you know that your incumbent will be leaving. If for some unusual reason the vacancy is likely to be prolonged, letting the property may be appropriate. Again this will be dealt with by the Property Department. In such circumstances a vacancy inspection will still normally take place.

**B4.5 Caretaker's Licence/Tenancy Agreement** No one may be allowed to remain in occupation or to take up occupation of a vacant house without signing either a caretaker's licence or a tenancy agreement from the Diocesan Office. Were this to happen it could well mean that it is not possible to have vacant possession of the vicarage when it is needed for the next vicar. Licences and other agreements can be drawn up quickly, easily and at no charge. The Diocese is able to advise on suitable tenants and caretakers. It is wise to ask the Property Department to confirm that such a document has been signed by the relevant parties before parting with the keys to the property.

**B4.6 Water Damage** If a parsonage is vacant during the winter months and for some reason caretaking or letting arrangements cannot be made, it is essential that the central heating system is kept running to prevent freezing and to avoid problems of clogging, sediment or accelerated corrosion. It is desirable that between October and March the heating is left on with the boiler programmer set to run continuously at a room thermostatic setting of 10°C with the trap door to the roof space left open. This should ensure that in any severely cold period the water installation does not freeze. This is very important as a freeze up could also delay the next vicar moving into the parsonage.

**B4.7 Repairs** The Property Department must be informed without delay of any repair required, whether or not caretaker/tenants are in residence, to enable prompt action to be taken.

**B4.8 Utilities** Your outgoing vicar will have had all the meters read and the readings will be entered at the date of departure on the key form. When a caretaker or tenant arrives bills for services must be transferred into their name and not left in the name of the PCC. This ensures that any charges incurred during their occupation remain their liability. Because of the wide circulation of the telephone number of the vicarage it is important that the line is neither cut off nor changed. If there is no tenant or caretaker then the payment of these charges rest with the parish and should be charged to the sequestration account.

**B4.9 Parish Meetings** In consultation with your Archdeacon and any caretakers, it may be possible to continue any customary parish meetings held in the parsonage although this will not be possible during any building works. This is a matter that should be raised with the property department when the need for caretakers is first known. The PCC will meet any additional heating and lighting costs incurred.

The address of the Property Department is –  
Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, Borough High Street,  
London SE1 1HW.  
Tel: 020 7939 9400 Fax: 020 7939 9469  
E-mail: [property@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:property@southwark.anglican.org)

### ***Maintaining the Fabric of the Church***

B5.1 The responsibilities here do not change at all with the vacancy; the Churchwardens and the PCC remain responsible for the maintenance of the fabric of all their churches during the vacancy and the Churchwardens continue to have the legal ownership and custody of the moveable goods belonging to the church.

### ***Keeping the finances sound***

B6.1 Parishes need to maintain payment of their Fairer Shares assessments throughout any vacancy. The assessment is made on the basis of the stipends of all the clergy of the Diocese not just your own vicar.

B6.2 The Churchwardens are responsible for the keeping of the sequestration account. You are no longer required to open a separate bank account for this purpose, though you may do so if you wish, but it is essential to keep vacancy monies quite separate from PCC accounts.

B6.3 Payments into the Sequestration Account include the minister's fee for each wedding and funeral and any other payment normally made to the incumbent.

B6.4 Payments from the Sequestration Account to officiating ministers at weddings or funerals or occasional Sunday duties are only made to retired stipendiary clergy. Expenses should be paid to all visiting clergy and Readers on every occasion. Guidelines and details of these are found in the annual "Pay and Conditions of Service" booklet which is available from the Finance Department at Trinity House.

B6.5 At the end of the vacancy any surplus on the sequestration account may be credited to the PCC. Any deficit falls to be met by the PCC who will be able to offset the saving in working expenses for the period of the vacancy.

B6.6 Any rent from letting all or part of the parsonage house, garage or garden is paid directly to the Diocesan Board of Finance by the tenant, not to the sequestration account.

### *Hints and Tips*

- Lots of church members know little pieces of church life - few, if any, have a good grasp of the overall picture
- Hold a meeting for those with key responsibilities in your church's life to try to work out how it all fits together
- Allocate clear responsibilities - for example different people may look after regular worship, administration, special services, finance, vicarage
- Liberate churchwardens! In all churches they will hold the key role and should be freed of detailed responsibilities so they can concentrate on "co-ordinating" rather than "doing"
- Set up a regular monthly meeting of your 'co-ordination team' - perhaps those with staff positions (churchwardens, readers, SPAs, organist etc) or use your Standing Committee for this purpose
- Ensure the PCC stays fully involved - they are the key decision making body in any parish
- It may be appropriate to drop some activities - not everything that the previous vicar did may need to continue
- Draw on lay resources in neighbouring churches - perhaps readers or NSMs in training would like to preach
- Involve one another - most people in a congregation are keen to help at this time
- Keep the congregation well informed - how about a vacancy notice board or a regular slot in church notices
- Have a party - you need to support each other and that involves enjoyment and care as well as tasks and activity

## **C - FINDING THE NEW VICAR/ PRIEST-IN-CHARGE**

### ***The Process***

C1.1 The legislation that governs appointments is the Patronage [Benefices] Measure 1986. These notes are designed to help PCCs in understanding the Measure. Only the Measure, and not these notes, is authoritative. Questions about the legal implications should be addressed to the Diocesan Registrar.

C1.2 Each diocese appoints a designated officer to act as contact person between the interested parties and to check progress in the filling of a vacancy. In the Diocese of Southwark the Diocesan Registrar is appointed as designated officer.

C1.3 When a benefice is vacant or about to become vacant the Diocesan Bishop, after appropriate consultation, will decide on one of three courses of action.

- a. A 12 month restriction of the Patron's right of presentation (to appoint a new vicar).
- b. Suspension of the Patron's right of presentation for up to 5 years – in which case a priest-in-charge may be appointed. (The process of suspension is governed by recommendations made to the Diocesan Bishop by the Diocesan Pastoral Committee after due consultation with all interested parties.)
- c. To appoint a new vicar.

C1.4 The Diocesan Bishop may delegate his role in the administration of the appointment process to the appropriate Area Bishop and/or Archdeacon.

## THE APPOINTMENT OF A VICAR

**The following pages describe the process for appointing a Vicar. If a Priest-in-Charge is to be appointed then the process on pages 25 to 26 is to be followed.**

C2.1 The task of finding the new Vicar is that of the Patron. The process is governed by law. The Archdeacon will meet with the PCC to explain the process

### *The Roles*

C2.2 There are three different roles which need to be fulfilled by law. These are

- **the Patron** (who may be a private individual, a group of people or a corporate body and is sometimes the Bishop or a committee of which the Bishop is a member), who *nominates* a candidate
- **the parish representatives**, elected by the PCC who *affirm* (or *veto*) the Patron's nomination
- **the Bishop**, who may also *affirm* or *veto* a nomination and *institutes* the priest to the parish.

C2.3 This system has grown up over many centuries and provides some very important checks and balances. The Patron(s) cannot 'put a new Vicar in' by themselves. The Bishop (unless he is the sole Patron) cannot nominate on his own. And without an appeal to the Archbishop (which may or may not prevail) neither Bishop nor Patron can over-rule the veto of one of the PCC representatives.

C2.4 These three parties are the key players. Each has important responsibilities. Rather like the legs of a tripod, they bring stability to the whole process.

## **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROCESS**

C3.1 When a benefice is vacant or about to become vacant, the Diocesan Bishop serves a formal notice to the designated officer. Notice of the vacancy is then sent by him to the Secretary of the PCC using Form 31 and to the registered Patron of the living.

C3.2 Whoever is the Patron (see 2.2 above) will nominate an individual to act on their behalf and the designated officer will send their name and address to the PCC Secretary on Form 33.

C3.3 Within four weeks of the issue of Form 31, the PCC must meet in order to do the following:

- a. Prepare a statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish. This gives the PCC the opportunity to:
  - i. describe the parish
  - ii. write a Job Description and Person Specification. The Job Description should outline the key tasks and responsibilities of the new vicar. The Person Specification describes the skills and qualities essential for carrying out their ministry in the parish. Ideally, a broad field of candidates will respond and these documents will help potential applicants evaluate whether they feel able to undertake the post and provide a checklist for a selection panel or Patron to use to prepare a short-list or present a suitable candidate to the parish. The Person Specification also provides an objective set of criteria for questions to use in exploring with candidates whether they have the range of skills and experience for undertaking the role successfully.

A proforma called the Parish Profile will be made available to assist in this task (see A3.1). This statement becomes a public document and copies of it should be sent to the Area Office and to the Patron.

- b. Appoint two lay members of the PCC to act as representatives of the council in connection with the selection of the new Vicar. They need not be the churchwardens and must not be deaconesses, licensed lay workers or the spouse of the outgoing Vicar.
- c. Decide whether to request the Patron to consider advertising the vacancy. The method of selection of candidates is the responsibility of the Patron who can be asked to advertise but is under no obligation to do so. If the PCC request advertising they will be expected to bear the cost, not only of the advertisements in the church press but also of the increased administration involved in the process (including travel and hospitality costs of those invited to interview and their spouses). When an advertisement is to be placed it should avoid any stereotypical words which may deter any group from applying.
- d. Decide whether to request a statement in writing from the Bishop describing, in relation to the parish, the needs of the Diocese and the wider interests of the church.
- e. Decide whether to request a meeting with the Patron(s) or their representatives and the Bishop (or his representative) in order to exchange views about the PCC's statement (see above) and for the Bishop to have the opportunity to present to the PCC a statement of the needs of the Diocese and the wider interests of the church. Such a meeting may also be requested by the Patron or the Bishop. If you wish to consider asking for such a meeting you should speak to your Archdeacon at an early stage.
- f. Decide whether or not to pass a resolution under Section 3(1) or 3(2) of the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1994. These resolutions concern (i) whether the PCC would not accept a woman as a minister who presides or celebrates at Holy Communion within the Parish (Resolution A) and (ii) whether the PCC would not accept a woman as Vicar of the benefice (Resolution B). The wording of these resolutions is supplied by the Diocesan Registrar.

C3.4 As soon as practicable after the meeting(s) of the PCC to consider these matters, the PCC Secretary should send Form 34 (duly completed) together with a copy of the PCC statement to the Diocesan Bishop, the presenting Patron, the Registrar and their own Archdeacon.

C3.5 In the case of Team and Group Ministries there are special provisions for ensuring that consultation takes place with all the other members of the group or team. Where the Vicar will also be Priest-in-charge of another parish, the Patron is recommended to consult the PCC of that other parish before making any offer to the priest concerned.

### **APPOINTMENT BY MEETING A SUGGESTED CANDIDATE**

The PCC may have asked the Patron to suggest a particular candidate for the representatives to meet (as opposed to the process of open advertising). The following paragraphs describe this process. If there is to be open advertising see section C5 on pages 23 to 24.

C4.1 A visit to the parish is essential and the parish representatives decide how this is to be arranged. Experience suggests that the following is helpful.

#### **C4.2 People to See**

The representatives are the only people who have the right to meet the prospective incumbent but it is nearly always sensible for a candidate to meet the Area Dean, headteachers of church schools, any stipendiary and non-stipendiary clergy in the parish, readers, SPAs and in the case of a Local Ecumenical Project or partnership, appropriate ministers of other denominations. Others that may be invited to meet the candidate will include those responsible for music in the church, the leaders of young peoples' work and pastoral co-ordinators. The candidate has the right to meet anyone they think appropriate. However it is important to strike a balance between meeting the right people and exhaustion brought on by trying to meet too many individuals. Meetings over coffee or round a lunch table can

enable several people to meet a candidate at one time and in parishes with several readers, SPAs etc it may only be possible for candidates to meet some of them. It is very important that those invited to meet the candidates do not start to conduct interviews with them or give the candidate the feeling of being interrogated by a representative of every faction within a parish.

### **C4.3 Places to See**

Candidates should be shown the church, the church hall, vicarage, other properties in parish ownership and any church schools. They should have the opportunity to walk (or if necessary be driven) around the majority of the parish so that they get some idea of the housing, amenities and prominent features of the parish.

### **C4.4 Questions to Ask**

Formal questions should be asked only by the parish representatives and the Patron (or their representative). As the Diocesan Bishop has the right to accept or reject a possible candidate, it is sensible that his representative (in the form of Area Bishop or Archdeacon) is involved at this stage.

The Job Description and Person Specification will form much of the basis of questions that are asked of candidates. Candidates should never be treated less favourably on the grounds of their gender or racial origin or age. Be aware that there are also now legal issues about discrimination on grounds of disability, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. Discrimination can occur directly or indirectly. For example, questions about a woman's family or domestic circumstances not asked of a male candidate may lead to unfavourable treatment of the former.

Parish representatives may wish to refer to the following guidelines when interviewing candidates:

- i. Ask all candidates the same questions, although follow-up questions may be dependent on the answers given to the initial question.

- ii. Questions should be relevant and should explore the candidate's ability to do the job that has been specified.
- iii. Keep a record of the answers which a candidate gives you.
- iv. You will wish to explore a candidate's experience by asking them to describe their previous work and their particular interests in parochial work (pastoral, evangelistic, musical, youth work, liturgical, community involvement). You will want a candidate to indicate their understanding of the present needs of the parish and to indicate in which direction they might wish to lead the parish.
- v. 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. Do allow time for a candidate to ask questions of you. You will gain valuable insights from the perceptiveness of the questions that a candidate asks of you. You will want to evaluate a candidate's vision and intentions for the parish and be seeming to judge whether they are the right person to be the next Vicar of your parish. You will want to make an assessment as to whether the candidate's personality will relate well to the people in your parish and community, whether they are a person of prayer and spirituality and whether they will be the right leader for the next phase of your parish's life and growth.

C4.5 Appointing a Vicar is a task that some parishes and Patrons will be likely to undertake rarely. Consult your Archdeacon if you would like help in writing Job Descriptions and Person Specifications and with interviewing skills and good practice in applying principles of equal opportunity.

#### **C4.6 The Decision**

The choice of which candidate to offer an appointment is made by the Patron. The parish representatives have the right to accept or reject the Patron's choice. In considering the Patron's nomination the parish representatives may wish to take into account the views of others, but the right to accept or reject is the parish representatives alone. If your

decision is to reject the Patron's choice, you should give your reasons so that the Patron is helped to make a satisfactory choice the next time round.

#### **C4.7 The Decision of the Bishop**

The Diocesan Bishop has similar rights to the representatives. He also has the right to accept or reject a possible candidate. If the candidate comes from another diocese the Bishop will consult the relevant Diocesan Bishop for an opinion. This is confidential and cannot be seen by parish representatives. If it has not already happened the Bishop may wish for either himself or the Area Bishop or Archdeacon to meet the prospective candidate as part of this process.

C4.8 Whilst the three parties in the process have different roles to play, it can be a great help (and a considerable saving of time) if parish representatives, Patron and Diocesan Bishop (or his representative) can work together throughout the process.

#### **APPOINTMENT BY OPEN INTERVIEW**

In recent years there has been a growth in the practice of open advertising, short-listing and formal interviewing. Much of the guidance in the previous section about what to see in the parish, about forming questions etc will still apply. However, the process that is often used is as follows.

#### **C5 Advertising and Interviewing Process**

- a. The post is advertised nationally in the church press.
- b. Applicants apply for details and are sent the parish statement and other relevant information as agreed with the parish. This is normally handled by the relevant Episcopal Area Office. An application form is enclosed.
- c. Those who wish to apply return the application form. The Bishop of the Diocese is sent copies of all applications.
- d. The Patrons, Area Bishop and/or Archdeacon and parish representatives short-list the candidates, using the criteria drawn

up by the parish in its Person Specification.

References are taken up for the short-listed candidates. Confidential references are obtained by the Area Bishop from the Bishop of the Diocese from which the candidates come.

- e. The short-listed candidates are all invited to an informal visit to the parish (much as described in paras C4.1-C4.3 on pages 20 to 21). Any spouses and family of a candidate are invited to this visit. In some parishes this visit takes place on a separate day to the interview, in some it forms the first part of the formal interview day.
- f. Candidates are interviewed by a panel usually consisting of the Area Bishop and/or Archdeacon, the Patron and the parish representatives. The panel is normally chaired by the Area Bishop. In some places, the candidates may be asked to make a short presentation agreed by the panel. Questions should have been agreed between all parties beforehand and a short briefing meeting before the interviews start will agree who will ask which question. These should all be the same for each candidate.
- g. At the close of the interviews the panel, discuss and decide on the preferred candidate. This is not by a majority decision. All parties, the Diocesan Bishop (or his representative), the Patron and the parish representatives should all agree on one candidate.

## **OFFERING THE POST**

C6.1 Whichever method of appointment is used, if the parish representatives and the Diocesan Bishop agree that the preferred candidate is the right person, the Patron will offer the job. If the offer is accepted, the process ends and arrangements are made to proceed to an induction.

C6.2 If the candidate declines the offer or if either the representatives or the Bishop do not think that this is the right person, the process begins again. After nine months patronage will lapse to the

Archbishop of Canterbury but the role of the representatives continues with the same rights and responsibilities, (save that they do not have the power to refuse a candidate chosen by the Archbishop after consultation with them).

## **FINDING THE NEW PRIEST-in-CHARGE**

C7.1 If presentation to a benefice is restricted or suspended, the provisions of the Patronages [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 described above in “Finding the Vicar” are still relevant. A Priest-in-charge may be appointed either by the process of a parish seeing a preferred candidate or by open advertisement.

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.

### **C7.2 An essential difference in the process**

In any appointment of a Priest-in-charge, it is the PCC that the Bishop consults with. The PCC does not appoint parish representatives. However the PCC can delegate its responsibilities (for instance to the Churchwardens). This is particularly important if there is to be a formal interview when it would be impossible for a whole PCC to short-list and interview candidates.

C7.3 The PCC still needs to draw up a Job Description and Person Specification; it can request the Bishop to advertise the vacancy. See Section C3.3.a. on page 18, Section C3.3.c. on page 19 and Section C3.3.f. on page 19.

The relevant process is then followed as described in Sections C4 and C5 above on pages 20 to 24, including People to See, Places to Visit, Questions to Ask. It is imperative to check with your Archdeacon how these procedures operate in the appointment of a priest-in-charge.

C7.4 In the event of a formal interview for a priest-in-charge it is normally recommended that a maximum of two members of the PCC are charged by the church council to act on its behalf. The Patron (or their representative) will also be invited to participate.

### **C7.5 The Decision**

For the appointment of a Priest-in-charge the choice of which candidate to offer an appointment is made by the Bishop after consultation with the PCC. It is usually the case that the PCC will delegate this to two members that it has elected or appointed to act on its behalf during the appointment process. If the offer is accepted, the process ends and arrangements are made to license the priest-in-charge.

## **ANNOUNCING A NEW VICAR /PRIEST-IN-CHARGE**

C8.1 At the end of the process the chosen applicant will be contacted initially by phone. If they indicate that they are likely to accept the post, a formal letter offering the appointment is written by the Bishop or Patron – usually within a week.

When the candidate has replied to this letter in writing an announcement can be made. This needs to be done on the same day both 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 a new Enhanced CRB disclosure. Because this can take some time, an announcement can be provisionally made before this has been received but the words

“subject to the satisfactory completion of legal procedures” is added to any announcement made.

## **D. WELCOMING THE NEW VICAR OR PRIEST-IN - CHARGE**

D1.1 The new priest has been chosen. All will feel relieved. However, there is a lot to be done to ensure they are fully welcomed into their new parish, and probably several months until they are able to take up their new position.

### *Preparing the Vicarage*

D2.1 The works considered appropriate by way of repair and improvement to the vicarage will usually have been carried out during the early part of the interregnum. Diocesan funds will not run to the professional decoration of the interior of the house. When the vacancy works inspection is carried out an assessment will be made of the condition of the interior decoration of the property and an interior redecoration grant will be agreed. This amount, which is dependant upon the size of the house and its decorative state, will be paid to the new priest. It is unlikely that this would cover the costs of professional redecoration of the house, but could be a significant contribution towards the cost of reasonable materials. Practical help from the members of the parish to assist either financially or by way of a decorating working party will be greatly appreciated by the new priest who is responsible for undertaking the internal redecoration.

D2.2 Some parishes, with the agreement of their priest or previous incumbents have used part of the vicarage for parish purposes such as a parish office. Where such arrangements have existed there is no certainty that this arrangement will continue. The vicarage is the home of the priest and their family and it is their prerogative to occupy the entire building as they wish. This matter can be somewhat embarrassing for new priests and it is helpful for parishes to understand the circumstances and not feel aggrieved should the new incumbent wish to change the way in which the vicarage has been used.

## *Service of Institution or Licensing*

D3.1 Preparations for the service for the new parish priest will begin about three months beforehand. In the case of a Vicar it is a service of Collation or Institution (depending on whether or not the Bishop is the Patron of the living). A service of Licensing is held for a new Priest-in-charge. Where diaries permit, it is usually the case that the Diocesan Bishop will take the service if the new priest is coming from outside of the Diocese and the Area Bishop will preside if they are coming from within the Diocese.

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

D3.2 Churchwardens are asked to draw up with the Area Dean and the new priest, a list of those to be invited to the service. The clergy of the Deanery Chapter, the Lay Chair of the Deanery and their spouses as well as the spouses of the Bishop and Archdeacon should be sent an invitation. The list should include the Mayor, the local Member of Parliament and the Ministers of other Churches in the parish together with other community leaders such as local head-teachers and if appropriate other churchwardens of parishes in your area. All this needs to be done at least six weeks before the date of the service.

D3.3 The new priest should be asked to choose hymns for the service and they need to be chosen with due regard to the season of the year and their length. Their number will depend upon whether the service is in the context of Holy Communion or not. The Area Dean should conduct a rehearsal, with all those taking an active part, except the Bishop and Archdeacon, a few days before the service so that they know what they are expected to do and when.

D3.4 The Bishop will choose readings and approve a draft of the service before it is printed.

D3.5 Spaces should be reserved for the Bishop's car and for the Mayor's car on the evening of the service. Someone should conduct the Bishop to the vestry and the Mayor and Consort to their reserved

seats. The Bishop's chair should be placed at the entrance to the chancel, and arrangements made for its removal following the Peace when a Eucharist follows. All taking an active part in the service should be present at least 30 minutes before the service is due to begin. The Patron, the new priest to be instituted and the churchwardens should be in the vestry 15 minutes before the start of the service for the oaths to be sworn (where the Bishop is the Patron the Area Dean presents the new Vicar). It is important to ensure that a Bible is available in the vestry for the administering of the oaths.

D3.6 The Patron and the new priest should then take their seats in the first pew of the nave on the north side of the church if they do not enter with the procession. The Area Dean or other suitable person nominated by the Area Dean may give out any notices a few minutes before the service begins. They should be brief and on no account delay the start of the service.

D3.7 If the Mayor is present, a member of the congregation should take responsibility for leading the Mayor out before the congregation leave. This person should also care for the Mayor and spouse and the Bishop and his wife at the reception if one follows the service. The service book should be made up ready for the Bishop to sign when he returns to the vestry.

### *Hints and Tips*

- Don't give up now – there will be several months until the new priest begins their ministry.
- Don't try to over-involve the new priest before arrival. Allow them plenty of time to say good-bye to their old parish – remember how you felt when your own priest left.
- Your new priest will appreciate a more detailed briefing on the parish before they start. This might include some informal discussions with the churchwardens and other members of staff. Perhaps they would like to look through PCC minutes for the past year or so.
- We all feel apprehensive about a new job. For a priest, it is also likely to involve moving house and friends as well. The key thing is to *welcome and support*.
- Keep hold of all that you have achieved during the vacancy. New models of lay leadership are likely to have emerged. Don't just slip back to old ways!
- Some things will clearly be the role of the new priest. Some people who have been very involved during the vacancy may find these difficult to give up. Support them in this process. Talk issues through with your new priest.
- Hold a final meeting of your coordinating committee to document what worked well and what did not. Keep it in the church files. You may have moved on by the time your next vacancy comes along – these notes may prove invaluable to your successors.

## **A Final Word**

E1.1 The length and complexity of the Guidelines gives some indication of the responsibilities which need to be undertaken while your parish is without an incumbent. 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. The property department is always willing to assist with any property problem that might arise during the vacancy.

E1.2 A vacancy, too, brings additional opportunities. It can be a time when an enthusiastic and trained laity can begin to put into practice the principles of shared ministry which have been learned.

E.1.3 Much of what is written in this booklet arises from implementing the legal procedures that must be followed during a vacancy. However, the Diocese is concerned to ensure that the process runs as smoothly as possible. If you have comments on what has worked well or suggestions for improvements or observations on what has not been satisfactory through the course of the vacancy, these can be made through the churchwardens, in confidence, to the Diocesan Secretary, Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, Borough High Street, London SE1 1HW or email: [simon.parton@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:simon.parton@southwark.anglican.org).

E1.4 Thank you for reading this far. May God guide you as you seek to serve Him in this special way.

# NOTES