



# A CHANGING SEASON FLOURISHING IN A TIME OF TRANSITION

Information for Church Wardens and PCC Representatives



DIOCESE OF TRURO  
DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM  
GROWING THE CHURCH



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# WELCOME TO A SEASON OF CHANGE AND OPPORTUNITY

Your benefice's transition is a time to take stock and plan for the future. Here's what it means to be in a season of change and opportunity.

**'For every time there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.'**

**ECCLESIASTES 3: 1 - 8**

So writes the author of Ecclesiastes (traditionally thought to be Solomon) in the Old Testament, as he soothes his readers about the passage of time. He is right, of course: we do live in a world of constant flux; a world where change is the norm, where we are called to show faithfulness and steadfastness, even when everything around us is moving at a dizzying pace.

That makes the call upon us during a transition in our parish or benefice especially important. It is a season of change for which we need give thanks and praise to our Lord God. We also need to listen for His word in our midst and His will for the parish or group of parishes that we love.

## A GUIDE TO THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to help you through this changing season. It gives you clear signposts about what you need to do, and when you need to do it. That way, you can concentrate on the most important things of all: ongoing worship and service in the name of the Lord, and prayerful discernment about what He is calling your community towards, and who He is calling to help you get there.

More importantly, what follows is intended to empower you with a profound sense of your Christian calling. In this time of transition, we hope you'll take the chance to cast a vision for the future of your church and benefice, and think carefully

about what you are, and what you are becoming. The days, weeks and months ahead of you are an opportunity for growth, during which you can build a joyful and flourishing church that lives the good news and celebrates the great excitement of life in Christ.

Please read this guide, using the checklists and posters to stimulate discussion about your future. Display them in your churches, so that congregation members and others in the wider community have a good sense of how things are going, and are empowered to participate in your shared conversation. This will help everyone feel involved in what is happening, and help you retain a sense that this is an important endeavour in which the whole community has a stake.

Most important of all, remember that your primary call as Christian disciples is to serve God, and fix your sights on the promise of His glory. When making decisions, be patient, wise and faithful. And don't forget to pray, unceasingly. You'll find that everything goes much more smoothly when it's wrapped in prayer.

## A PRAYER FOR PARISHES IN A TIME OF TRANSITION

Dear Lord, our God and Father,  
in this time of transition,  
give us eyes to see Your presence in our lives,  
ears to listen to Your will,  
lips to speak Your words,  
and hands to do Your work.  
Grant us grace and go before us,  
as we seek Your Holy Spirit's counsel,  
as we live in community during this time,  
and as we prepare for the arrival of a new priest  
in our midst.  
In Your name we pray, in sure and certain hope of  
Your promises to us.

**Amen.**

# SIX THINGS TO DO NOW

ONE

## MEET FOR PRAYER

Call your Churchwardens, PCC members and wider congregation together in prayer. This isn't a moment for developing grand plans. It's simply a chance to form the habit of praying in community with each other, giving thanks for your outgoing priest, and putting yourselves in the way of God for the period ahead.

TWO

## PREPARE TO MEET YOUR ARCHDEACON, RURAL DEAN AND TRANSITIONS ADVISER

As soon as a parish priest announces their intention to move on, the Archdeacon will meet with the Churchwardens, Rural Dean and transitions adviser.

This is a chance for you to work with your transitions adviser to begin discerning a shared vision for the future. The meeting will also signpost key milestones in the process of appointing a new parish priest, so that everyone knows what to expect and has a clear timetable.

There is no need to worry about any of this. Your current priest will continue to help you as you prepare for the transition.

THREE

## THINK ABOUT YOUR CHURCH AND ITS FUTURE

The transitions process isn't principally about managing without a parish priest. It's a chance to cast a vision for your churches. A chance to continue dreaming of the kingdom, to find out where God is at work in your communities and respond to His call upon your lives, as individuals and as Christ's body on earth. This is an exciting time and your transitions adviser will help you through a process of discernment about your past, present and future. That way, you'll see growth, joy and flourishing in the next phase of your church life.

Naturally your current priest will help you build upon your churches' mission and ministry to date.

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Your priest has just announced his or her intention to move on. You'll probably have at least three months' notice before he or she goes. That's ample time to start planning and laying foundations for this period of growth and vision. Be mindful that time moves quickly, especially if you have lots going on. So use the list below to help you prepare as effectively as possible for the months ahead. This is a time of anticipation and excitement. **Make sure you use it wisely.**

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→ **FOUR**

## WORK OUT SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

Once a transition gets underway, Churchwardens and PCC members have shared responsibilities for a variety of aspects of their church's life. Full details are given in this document. In order to make sure you discharge these duties effectively, apportion them as early as possible according to people's strengths and gifts. There is a checklist below to help you allocate tasks.

Sometimes, vacancies provide church members with an opportunity to discover new ways of serving the Lord. Taking responsibility for an aspect of church life is an important facet of individual growth in Christ, whether it is to do with administration, leadership, maintenance, worship, music or pastoral care.

Here's one suggestion for the months leading up to your parish priest leaving: try to identify people who have a calling either to lead worship or help out with pastoral care (or both). This will give them time to train before your priest leaves, meaning they can offer a new ministry among God's people, helping the whole community to grow in Christ.

→ **FIVE**

## CONTACT LOCAL RETIRED CLERGY AND READERS

With the support of the Rural Dean, you should contact local retired clergy and Licensed Readers who may be able to help out with services during the transition, including occasional offices like funerals, marriages and baptisms. It is especially important to secure priestly cover in churches with a strong sacramental tradition.

It is also worth discerning who among you is prepared to lead services. Remember, Churchwardens have a legal duty to maintain their church's worshipping life – but they can enrol the help of their fellow congregation members, thereby helping everyone discover their vocation in Christ.

→ **SIX**

## MAKE A LIST OF KEY CONTACTS

It's helpful if everyone involved in the church's ministry and mission has access to a list of key contacts. This should include diocesan staff who support parishes in transition, local organists, funeral directors, bell ringers and choir leaders, the Rural Dean, transitions adviser and Archdeacon, retired clergy and Licensed Readers, and, of course, Churchwardens and PCC members. That way, everyone knows how they can get hold of whoever they need to.

# RESPONSIBILITIES IN A TRANSITION

## WHO'S DOING WHAT?

This page contains a table detailing all the tasks that need managing in a benefice during a period of transition. It's a practical tool, intended to help you prepare for a period without a parish priest. But you should also view it as an invitation to explore your vision for your benefice, and help all God's people discern His call upon their lives.

Use this checklist and take copies to your initial meeting with the Archdeacon. With the help of your current priest try to give some time to allocating these tasks, so that you know exactly who is responsible for them once your parish priest leaves. Then display the checklist in church, being sure to review it regularly.

TASK	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?
1. Drawing up service rotas for the benefice/parish and arranging cover when needed.	
2. Preparing for special events in the liturgical year (e.g. Carol Services, Holy Week and Easter, Harvest Festival).	
3. Dealing with emergency calls, and coordinating a response (this may be a good role for a priest or Reader in the benefice).	
4. Dealing with Baptism enquiries, coordinating baptism preparation, booking services and ensuring clergy availability.	
5. Baptism visits.	
6. Dealing with wedding enquiries, completing banns forms and banns certificates, booking services (including bells, organists, priest, etc.) and sending quarterly marriage returns to the Registrar.	
7. Marriage preparation.	
8. Dealing with funeral enquiries (note: the Rural Dean has responsibility to help with this).	
9. Funeral visits and follow-up pastoral care.	
10. Passing requests for monuments in the churchyard to the Rural Dean, and liaising with families who make enquiries in this regard.	
11. Pastoral visiting, especially of the sick, dying and bereaved. It is helpful to have someone who can coordinate this provision in the parish or benefice, with a team of trained people to undertake pastoral visiting.	
12. Reimbursing visiting clergy/Reader expenses and fees for leading services in the transition.	
13. Looking after the Rectory/Vicarage and liaising with Diocesan Property management. This includes being a keyholder for the property during the period of transition.	
14. Arranging meetings to plan for the appointment process, including liaising with Diocesan officers.	
15. Arranging PCC/Benefice Team meetings, chairing them and taking minutes.	
16. Managing access to important paperwork, such as Quinquennial inspection reports and faculty applications.	
17. Dealing with church correspondence, including utilities bills and insurance certificates, as well as Health and Safety.	
18. Managing the parish newsletter/pewsheet/website. You may need a team of people to work on these things.	
19. Handling other fees and sending quarterly fees to the Diocesan Office at Church House.	
20. <b>Safeguarding</b> is the responsibility of the PCC and churchwardens, any concerns or issues should be shared with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.	

# WHO'S WHO IN A TRANSITION AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

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Want to work out who does what during the months ahead?

**Here's a brief guide to help...**

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## THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD

The whole people of God share in the ministry and mission of the local church, discerning gifts that will contribute to its flourishing, joyfulness and growth.

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## CHURCHWARDENS

Churchwardens are responsible for maintaining the worshipping life of their church, and take on some legal responsibilities during a transition. The Diocese provides full support with this.

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## PCC VICE CHAIRS

PCC Vice Chairs are expected to chair meetings during the transition period. The Diocese can provide training for those who would like to develop their skills in this important area.

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## PCC MEMBERS

PCC members work together for the flourishing of their parish church. They may be asked to take on additional responsibility, as the church and benefice builds a leadership team that will help it pursue its vision for the future.

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## PARISH REPRESENTATIVES

Parish Representatives act on the PCC's behalf during the process of recruiting and appointing a new priest.

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## TRANSITIONS ADVISERS

transitions advisers work with parishes throughout the period of discernment and seeking a new priest. Their role is as a critical friend – a trusted companion along the way who will stimulate, challenge and empower you to discern God's call and respond appropriately.

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## THE RURAL DEAN

The Rural Dean oversees the smooth running of your benefice, and serves as the Incumbent for many legal matters (e.g. requests for monuments in churchyards).

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## THE ARCHDEACON

The Archdeacon oversees the appointment of a new parish priest and plays an active role in shortlisting and interviewing.

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## THE BISHOP

The Bishop delegates responsibility for the process to the Archdeacon and Rural Dean - but a Bishop normally chairs the interview panel. It is important to get an interview date in the Bishop's diary early in the process.

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## PATRONS

Patrons formally present candidates for appointments as Vicar or Rector, whenever the rights of presentation have not been suspended.

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# MEET YOUR TRANSITIONS ADVISER

As part of its commitment to helping your benefice flourish, the Diocese will provide you with someone to walk with you, every step of the way.

**Your parish priest will help you prepare for the transition. Among the things you will need to do is 'end well', saying goodbye properly and celebrating your parish priest's ministry among you. To help you do this, you'll meet with a transitions adviser. This person has been appointed by the Diocese to partner you through the months ahead. Their role is to draw out the gifts and enthusiasms of the people in your midst. They will be a critical friend, a listener and a companion along the way. They will facilitate your growth in Christ, helping you discern how to serve God joyfully and faithfully as a Christian community.**

## DISCERNING A VISION

One of the most important activities for your church communities in the coming months is to continue setting a vision for your participation in God's good future. With support from your transitions adviser, you'll need to think about every facet of your life together, and discern how as a community you will create vibrancy, health and wellbeing among all God's people.

- If you have not already done so you may want to think about developing a leadership team who will take prime responsibility for setting the direction of travel for the benefice as a whole.
- You may want to think about building your identity, as individual churches and as a benefice.
- You may want to consider how you worship together, and seek new ways of expressing your commitment to God in community with others.
- You may want to consider developing particular areas of ministry – among children and young people, say, or with disadvantaged members of society.
- You may want to think about how you encourage discipleship and growth among individual church members, and about how you all share in mission and evangelism.

In fact, it's probably the case that you'll want to think about all these things, and pursue actions that will help you bring your vision to life.

## WHAT DOES A TRANSITIONS ADVISER ACTUALLY DO?

Your transitions adviser will take particular responsibility for certain processes over coming months. These are:

- Attend an initial meeting involving PCCs, the Archdeacon and the Rural Dean;
- Meet with PCCs to help them discern a vision, and find ways to pursue it;
- Help identify a transitions or leadership team, and work to draw out their gifts for the good of the whole church community;
- Help congregations think about their local church, and identify opportunities for new growth;
- Facilitate the development and expression of a shared vision for the whole benefice;
- Support the Archdeacon as he/she oversees the process of recruiting a new parish priest.

As you'd expect, every element of the transitions adviser's work is undergirded by prayer, and a deep love of God. You will no doubt develop a strong relationship with each other, as you work in partnership for the Gospel.



# GIVING, THANKS AND PRAISE

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The day has come. Your parish priest's leaving service is now a memory, and you're preparing for a new phase in your church's life. This is an exciting moment of transition and challenge. But it's also one of profound opportunity, as you come together with your brothers and sisters in Christ to seek a joyful and flourishing community and a growing church.

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## WORKING TOGETHER IN CHRIST

The most exciting aspect of the coming months is that you have a chance to develop leadership teams that will contribute to the flourishing of your benefice, and the church communities that form it. By praying together for discernment of God's call upon you both individually and corporately, you will grow in Christ's image and help prepare for the coming of His kingdom in fresh, joyful and inspiring ways.

## WORSHIP

Perhaps most importantly, you will want to ensure the worshipping life of your parish church is vibrant. This will involve drawing on the gifts of those in your communities who are called to lead worship, whether they have lots of experience or are relatively new to this important ministry.

If you've managed to identify worship leaders and train them in the months leading up to your parish priest's departure, you'll be in a strong position to continue with a vibrant pattern of services in your benefice.

You may need to think about the balance between Eucharistic and non-Eucharistic worship in the benefice, in order to make the very best use of priests who are available to help out. For example, if you have one visiting priest coming to the benefice, it may be worth asking if they can lead two services, to minimise your travel expenses.

This period can be a wonderful opportunity to try different worshipping patterns, and it is sensible to coordinate across the benefice to minimise clashes and ensure a good variety of services. Indeed, you may also consider worshipping as a whole benefice on a regular basis; this can be a great time of shared discernment about the future of your group of parishes, as well as helping to build a sense of community and common purpose.

## WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

You'll need to plan ahead to ensure cover for funerals and weddings. If you have appointed someone from the benefice to coordinate cover from licensed ministers, you'll find this much easier. Remember that the Rural Dean will help you find clergy cover when the need arises – something that's especially helpful when it comes to arranging funerals, often at short notice.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**The amounts paid by each parish in the Diocese towards the Mission and Ministry Fund (MMF) are calculated on the assumption that each will spend a proportion of their time in transition. As a result, you should continue to meet your MMF contributions throughout your transition: it's an important aspect of your church's sharing in the Diocese's vibrancy and wellbeing as a whole.**





## PAYING VISITING PRIESTS AND READERS

If a priest or a Reader from outside your benefice comes to lead an act of worship, they are entitled to travelling expenses at a rate of 45p per mile (unless they have already covered 10,000 claimable miles since the previous 1 April, in which case they should be reimbursed at a rate of 25p per mile).

The only people who are entitled to claim a fee for leading Sunday or midweek services (other than funerals and weddings) are retired stipendiary clergy from outside your benefice. They can claim £30 for a service with a sermon, and £15 for any subsequent services on the same day, up to a maximum of £60 per week.

These travelling expenses and fees should be met from the PCC's funds.

The rules are different for funerals and weddings. Any licensed minister who conducts a funeral and is **not** in receipt of a stipend is entitled to claim 80 per cent of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) fee, with the remaining 20 per cent going to the DBF. This rule also applies to priests who conduct marriage ceremonies.

Note: this fee does not cost your church anything. It is taken from the fees payable for marriages and funerals.

**Further information about these arrangements is available on the Diocesan Website:**  
[www.trurodiocese.org.uk/transitions](http://www.trurodiocese.org.uk/transitions)

## WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

Even with the best planning, there may be occasions when a priest doesn't turn up to lead a Eucharist, or has to cancel at the last minute. If you cannot find another priest, you will need a layperson to lead a non-sacramental act of worship.

If this happens with little warning, you may find the most accessible liturgies are Matins and Evensong (or Morning and Evening Prayer) in either Common Worship or the Book of Common Prayer (BCP). Churchwardens are automatically authorised to lead these services in their parish churches, as are Readers and Local Worship Leaders. But *in extremis*, any other lay person may be appointed by the Churchwarden to lead the service – meaning you can still worship as a community, even if you have to provide a service with very little notice.

**The services of Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer for today, yesterday and the next four weeks are available: [www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/join-us-in-daily-prayer.aspx](http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/join-us-in-daily-prayer.aspx). There is also a free Daily Prayer app to make it even easier to access Daily Prayer wherever you are and this is available on Android and iOS on the above webpage.**

As a simpler form of worship, you could listen to the day's readings and pray the Collect together, before offering intercessory prayers and the Lord's Prayer and ending with the Grace. Alternatively, you could simply keep silence together in church as a form of worshipping God. This helps you form community in the Lord's presence, and can sometimes provide a moment of deep discernment about his call upon your life.

# CARING AND SHARING HOW TO DEVELOP PASTORAL CARE TEAMS

One of the signs of a healthy church is that members share responsibility for pastoral care. That way, all God's people can share in his love and justice.

**We are all empowered to respond to God's call to show pastoral care to our brothers and sisters. This is an important part of our Christian witness and we should all visit friends or neighbours to show them love and concern.**

The period of transition is an opportunity to develop your church's pastoral care. As well as informal concern for the church community, it involves people who serve others as public representatives of the church. They offer something more than a friendly face and warm word. They are called, and usually given some formal authority by the church, to bear witness to Christ's promises, so drawing people into God's life through prayer and loving service.

## IDENTIFYING PASTORAL CARERS

Think about the people in your church communities. Pray together, and alone, for discernment of God's still small voice of calm. Do you think you may be being called to offer yourself as a pastoral carer? Can you think of someone else in whom you discern such a vocation?

If so, don't hesitate to explore further. This can be through a conversation with a trusted friend or member of the ministry team. It could be through a chat with your transitions adviser or Rural Dean. It could be through a shared, corporate discernment of each other's gifts, so that together you grow in Christ and take on particular responsibilities within the ministry and mission of the Church.

Remember, this is a time of growth and opportunity. Participating in the Church's care of all God's people is an important part of that. It is the beating heart of mission.

## A WINDOW TO THE WORLD

When it comes to the public profile of your church or benefice, a website is crucial. Most people look to the internet when they're searching for information. That means if someone needs to get in touch with their local church – to plan a funeral, baptism or wedding, say, or to find out service times – they'll go straight to the web.

A great website needn't cost the earth. Many communities have IT-savvy people living in them, who are only too happy to help local churches establish a web presence. A basic site is simple to set up, and makes all the difference to your public profile. In many ways, it's an outworking of mission.

Developing a website is a great project during the transitions period. You could invite a team of people to work on it, as part of the exploration of your shared vision. You should also ensure that your church's entry on the 'A Church Near You' website is up to date and refers people to your church website. A decent website will have the added benefit of making your benefice look all the more appealing to prospective applicants. Your transitions adviser can offer guidance to help you get started.



# THINKING ABOUT PROPERTY

**It is the responsibility of the Truro Diocesan Board of Finance (TDBF), to provide and maintain accommodation for those in paid ministry.**

A clergy house is a valuable asset. It is the duty of the TDBF to maintain the structure and fabric of the property and the services to it, in good order. The occupier has the duty and responsibility to take proper care of the clergy house, being a duty equivalent to that of a tenant, to use and keep the premises in a tenant-like manner, notifying the property management section of any repairs appearing to them to be necessary or other issues that affect the accommodation.

The clergy house often represents the heart of the parish, serving not only as a home but also as a base for the priest's ministry. Meeting these responsibilities, allows the diocese to provide the all-important base to support the work of the priest and the church's ministry.

## MOVING OUT

When preparing to leave, imagine that it is you entering the property next and ask yourself what you would hope and expect to see.

Gas and/or electricity meters should be read on departure date, and final bills forwarded to your new address. Supplies should then be transferred to the TDBF. Please inform the managing agent of the name of the supplier, together with the final readings.

At the end of an occupancy, there is an expectation that you will leave the property in a tidy condition, in good decorative order, with all minor repairs completed and the property thoroughly cleaned. There is also an expectation that you will remove all extraneous items in order that the TDBF does not have to incur any expenses in their removal, once you have left.

## SUPPORT FROM THE PCC

In a transitional period, and while the clergy house remains the principal responsibility of The Truro Diocesan Board of Finance (TDBF), and in the situation when the property remains vacant, we would ask the local PCC to particularly attend to the following areas:

- Please also make sure that before the priest vacates the property that he/she has settled any outstanding bills
- Please ensure that they have read the electricity and/or gas meters
- Ensure the garden remains tidy, with regularly cut lawns and weeded flowerbeds where necessary.
- Forward any post to the property management agent.

## OUR PROMISE

Our promise to you is that we will keep the Churchwarden(s) fully informed about the plans for the property; whether refurbishment works will be carried out, the extent of these works and also whether there are short or long term plans to let the property.

It is possible that the property might be let during the transition period, this is to enable us to generate valuable funds for the TDBF. Most importantly it can help ward deterioration of an unlive-in property. You will be kept informed if there is a plan to let the property so that you know when your responsibilities will come to an end for looking after the property. We do not expect the PCCs to be involved in the letting process, but you may like to welcome the new residents into the community, and make clear to the new occupiers that they are members of the public rather than clergy.



# YOUR NEXT PARISH PRIEST BEGINNING THE SEARCH

**While the focus of this period of transition is very much on casting a vision for your church, this will help you to discern what qualities, gifts and skills you should be seeking in a new priest.**

## SHARING HOPES AND DREAMS

One of the first things that will happen as you look for a new priest is a meeting with your Archdeacon, Rural Dean and transitions adviser to discuss your aspirations as a Christian community. This will be especially important if your previous priest was full-time and your new priest is part-time or able to commit less time to individual churches. This is not only played out by reference to what you're looking for in your next parish priest. It's also, and most crucially, a part of the process of seeking a joyful, flourishing and growing church.

As a result, this meeting will be well-seasoned with prayer. It will include some important formal business, which traditionally comes in what is known as a 'Section 11 Meeting'. Here's a guide to what you'll cover.

- Outline of the recruitment process: The Archdeacon will give you a sense of timescales for the appointment, and let you know what should happen in the weeks and months ahead. This will include identifying the process for producing the parish profile and advertisement, advertising, shortlisting procedure, and interview.
- Appoint a transition team: This involves selecting the people from within your parishes who will work with your transitions adviser to discern and articulate a vision for the next phase of your life together, and produce the documentation that will be sent out to prospective applicants.
- Elect PCC representatives: These people will sit on the interview panel and play an important role in selecting the successful candidate. They do not need to be the same as the transition team, though they can be if you wish. It is usual practice to appoint two representatives from each parish, but if you are a large multi-parish benefice, you may choose to select just one representative each. That will ensure the interview panel is not too large.



## APPOINTING PARISH REPRESENTATIVES

How do you choose your Parish Representatives? This is a challenging question, and it's often assumed that Churchwardens are best placed to take on the role. This is a perfectly legitimate decision to make, but you should note that Parish Representatives don't have to be Churchwardens. Indeed, given how much else they have to do in the transition period, you may prefer to appoint someone else from your PCC who has a bit more time to give to the process.

Ideally, you'd like a blend of skills from the group of Parish Representatives. People with some experience of interviewing are always helpful, as are those with a deep understanding of their local church and its needs, and a view for the vision of the wider benefice.

They need to be well-organised, able to sift through applications and identify who best meets the job specification, and keen to play an active part in the recruitment process.

People to avoid include those who have an idiosyncratic view of the church, or a particular personal agenda to push. For this process to be effective, it needs people who share a commitment to the flourishing of God's church and world. With that in mind, it is worth praying together for discernment about who to appoint as your Parish Representatives. They take a lot of responsibility on your behalf, and will need your ongoing prayer in the months ahead.

# THE PARISH PROFILE

A good Parish Profile can make all the difference in your search for a new priest. **Here's how to get it right...**

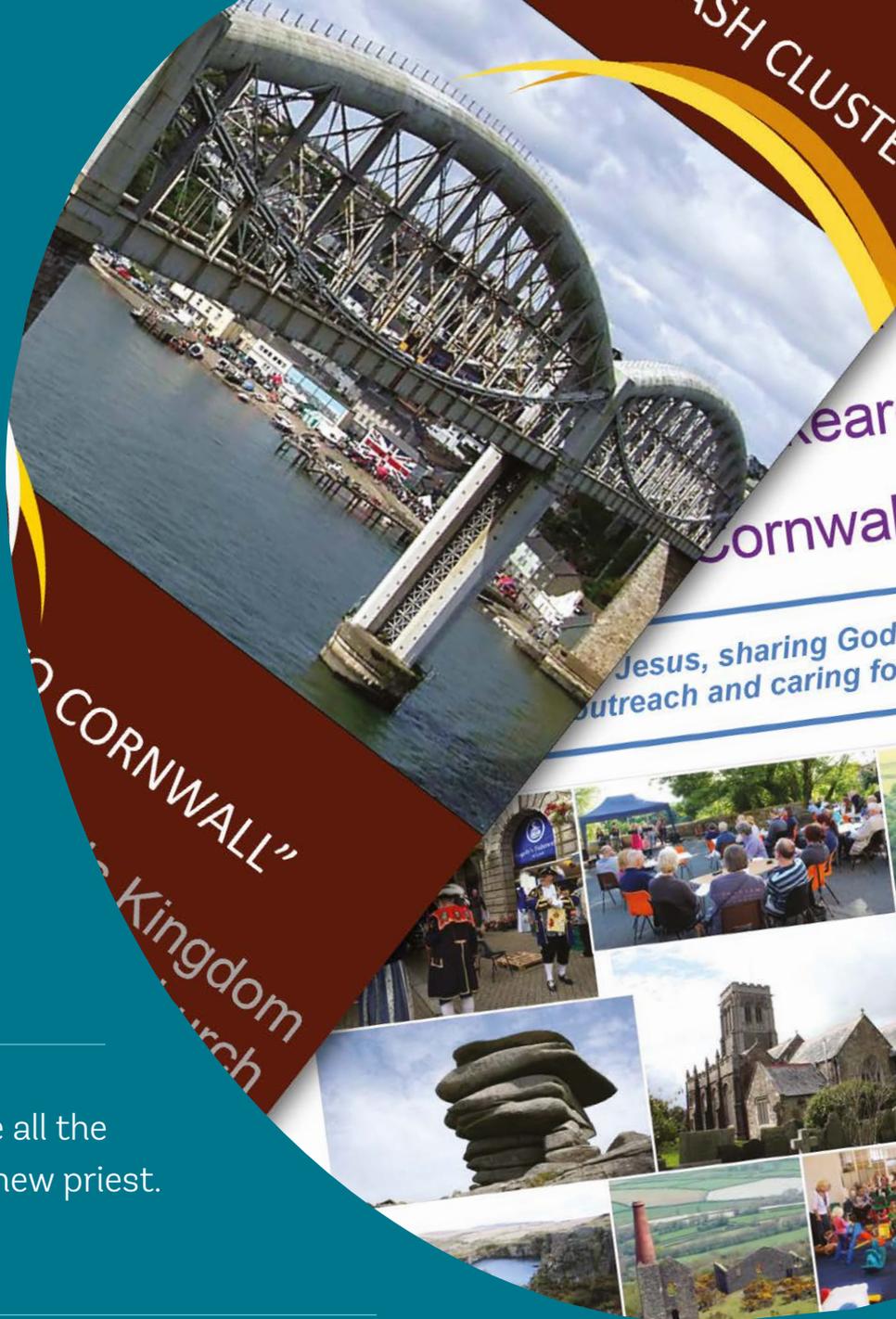
When searching for a new parish priest, it pays to have the best possible shop window. That's what a good Parish Profile provides – as well as a chance to think about your vision for a flourishing church.

The technical term for this document is **The Statement of Conditions, Needs and Traditions**. Writing it is your chance to paint a picture of your local context, identify what you're looking for in your new parish priest, and begin to cast a vision for a future in which God's presence is discerned and embodied in your towns, villages and hamlets.

Moreover, with the help of your transitions adviser, developing the Parish Profile provides a great opportunity to start making your vision come to life. As part of this process, you can put a leadership team in place, and encourage all God's people to play a part in the church's ministry and mission.

So this is an exciting document. Producing it should be stimulating, thought-provoking and fun. With support from your transitions adviser, the transitions team should aim to consult widely in your communities, with local schools, clubs and societies, neighbouring benefices and members of Deanery Synod (especially the Lay Chair), other religious leaders, and local hospitals. Your new parish priest will be called to serve all of them, and consulting them is a good way of showing that they're involved in the process of finding the right person, too.

Obviously, you need to leave room for your new priest to contribute something to your future. Few applicants will find a benefice that appears to have everything sorted very appealing. Far better to show that you're capable of imagining a bright future, that you've begun moving towards it, and need help to continue with this journey. That's sure to catch the interest of any clergyperson.



# PARISH PROFILE MUST-HAVES

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## THE WORLD

**God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**

**JOHN 3: 16**

The Church is called to be the incarnate body of Christ, marking His presence in the world and bringing hope into its midst. With that in mind, any priest applying to live and work in your benefice/cluster needs to understand the wider context, and ask themselves if they can participate in God's mission in that place.

**Your profile should therefore include:**

- Statistical information about each parish, including a map. Your transitions adviser will help with this, and you can also look at <http://www2.cuf.org.uk/lookup-tool>. If there are especially interesting characteristics of your local area, such as ancient monuments or interesting cultural attractions, this is a good place to draw candidates' attention to them.

- Details of all Anglican churches in the benefice, stating dedication, seating capacity and Grade listing if relevant.
- Details of other denominations' churches in the benefice, including worshipping communities that do not meet in church buildings. Finding out this information is a good opportunity to invite other ministers to contribute to your parish profile.
- Details of any schools in the benefice, indicating whether they are County Funded or Voluntary Controlled/Aided Church schools. Try to contact the head teachers to see if they have anything to contribute to the profile you're writing.
- Details of any other institutions in the benefice, such as agricultural colleges, hospitals or prisons.

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## THE CHURCH

**There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling.**

**EPHESIANS 4: 4**

Your distinctive call as Christian disciples is to take your place within the body of the Church, and to play a part in its flourishing for the good of the world. It is therefore important to give a clear, honest and inspiring picture of the churches in your benefice, so that your prospective parish priest can see what they have to work with.

With support from your transitions adviser, you should have confidence in your vision, and the ways in which you're seeking to make it real. Signpost your successes and your aspirations. Remember, this is your chance to draw a priest into your vision, so you can walk together in faith and hope for God's good future.

**Your profile should include:**

- Details of the membership of each church in the parish, which can be taken from your most recent Statistics for Mission form. If you can, it's always good to provide

a bit more content – perhaps give an age profile of your congregation, and an indication of the number of occasional offices (baptisms, funerals and weddings) in each parish per year. That will help your prospective parish priest get a feel for what's happening in the worshipping life of your benefice.

- Details of your pattern of worship, including a sample rota to show the balance of services in an average month.
- Information about your policies regarding: baptism, children and Holy Communion, and remarriage in church after divorce. If a parish in the benefice has passed resolutions relating to women's ministry, you should consult the Diocese for guidance.
- A sense of the tradition of each church in the benefice, to give a flavour of the styles of worship that are favoured, and the theological assumptions that underlie them.
- **Your Parish's Vision.** You should have taken part in a planning process in order to discern your vision, plans and priorities for ministry and mission, and work with your transitions adviser will develop this further. Your Vision and Plan is a helpful document to draw on when giving a sense of what you value as a benefice, and where you see your future. What's more, a clear Vision and associated plans are often very appealing to candidates, as they show a benefice that is on the move.
- An account of the ministry team and wider human resources in the benefice, and how they work to bring the plan to life.
- Your last set of annual accounts.

## THE CANDIDATE

Then the Lord called, “Samuel, Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!”.

1 SAMUEL 3:4

In order to make your shortlisting and interview process as transparent as possible, it is helpful to articulate clear expectations of your candidates. This provides a helpful way of evaluating their suitability for your post, and a means of communicating and justifying your decision.

**With that in mind, your profile should include:**

- A list of up to five key hopes and aspirations for your benefice, worked out with support from your transitions adviser. This will grab the attention of candidates and fire their enthusiasm. You can then ask them at interview to explain why they are drawn to them, and how they'll help you bring them to life.

- A list of up to five important qualities you are looking for in your next parish priest. Again, you can use these to bring objectivity to the shortlisting and interviewing process. As well as helping candidates work out if they are a good fit for you, it provides a way of explaining, if asked, why unsuccessful candidates were not appointed.

Once you have covered this detail, you should take the chance to say anything else that you really feel candidates should be aware of, but which hasn't been covered in the sections above. This could include a comment about what makes your benefice special, or why you believe it offers a unique opportunity for ministry and mission. It's your chance to sell yourselves – and given that there are currently more clergy jobs than there are clergy, that may be well worth doing!

## 10 TIPS TO HELP YOU WRITE A SUCCESSFUL PARISH PROFILE

Writing a Parish Profile is an important task. It's your chance to show what you can offer, and provide a sense of what you're hoping for in your next parish priest. Here are ten tips to help you produce a successful document.

### 1 BE UPBEAT

No one wants to read a dreary profile with no hope. Keep it light and positive in tone, and accentuate your good points.

### 2 BE HONEST

That said, you need to give an accurate portrayal of your benefice. If your largest congregation is five for a Sunday Eucharist, don't pretend otherwise. Remember – clergy are drawn to a challenge.

### 3 CAST A VISION

Give candidates a sense of your openness to God's good future. They'll be inspired by your vision.

### 4 SHOW HUMILITY

Don't give the impression that you've got it all sorted. The chances are you haven't. And besides, your next priest will want something to do.

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## 5 INCLUDE PHOTOGRAPHS

A picture is worth a thousand words. Don't just tell candidates about the wonderful things you do. Show them with beautiful colour photos, including photos of the Vicarage.

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## 6 PRESENTATION COUNTS

If someone is in the market for a clergy appointment, they'll wade through countless parish profiles. Make sure yours is attractive and well laid out, and you may just stand out from the crowd.

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## 7 WRITE CLEARLY

Short sentences. Sharp paragraphs. Ample use of bullet points. Do what it takes to communicate clearly, concisely and with a dose of humanity. It'll make all the difference to your profile.

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## 8 AVOID MISTAKES

Once you've drafted your profile, be sure to ask a couple of people who haven't seen it yet to proof-read it. They'll almost certainly weed out mistakes that the rest of you won't have noticed.

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## 9 AVOID SOAPBOXES

Okay, so you think the Eucharistic life of the rural church is under grave threat. But now isn't the time to say it. A parish profile isn't a tract. It's a shop window for your parishes.

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## 10 ENJOY YOURSELVES

How often will you have a chance to take stock of your benefice, consider its many wonderful qualities, and have a think about the future? Enjoy the process and it will come through in what you write.

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## PRODUCING AN ADVERT

With your Parish Profile in place, you'll also work with your transitions adviser and the Archdeacon to produce an advert. This is crucial to attracting the right sort of candidate, so it pays to spend a good amount of time getting it right. Use accessible, friendly language, but avoid gimmicks. Come up with a concise way of explaining your desires and describing your context. And if you can think of a way to attract someone's attention as they scan the classifieds in Church Times, go for it. It's a competitive market out there. You need to do all you can to get noticed. Vacancies will also be advertised on relevant websites, at no cost to the PCC.

## GOING LIVE

Once your advertisement has gone live, you'll have a lull in the recruitment process while you await a flurry of applications.

Throughout this period, it's a good idea to keep people in your churches and communities informed of progress. People like to know exactly what's going on and to support the process in prayer. Try to give weekly updates in church about where the process is: adverts are live; adverts are still live; the deadline is next week; we shortlist tomorrow; we're interviewing in a fortnight.

This provides good information to people who aren't directly involved in the process. It's also a really good way of remembering to hold it in your prayers, so that God's grace can be discerned even in this lull between advertising your opportunity and interviewing candidates.

Meanwhile, you can continue to share in God's mission as a Christian community, releasing each other's gifts, responding to God's call, and participating as faithful people in a joyful community that proclaims the good news to the world.



# VISIT & INTERVIEW

One of the very practical things you need to do is plan an interview process, with the support of your transitions adviser.

**It doesn't do to overstate the issue, but interviewing your next parish priest is probably one of the most important contributions you'll ever make to your benefice. So if you've been called to be a Parish Representative, it's a role to treat with seriousness and commitment.**

Not everyone has extensive experience of interviewing, and that is fine. The Diocese can work with you to refine your interviewing style. Moreover, the Archdeacon and Rural Dean will have been involved in countless clergy appointments, so they will be able to guide you through the process.

First, though, you need to plan the nuts and bolts of what will happen. You should have agreed an interview date with the Archdeacon/Bishop and it should be fixed in your diaries. Now, with the support and guidance of your transitions adviser, you need to work out how you'll spend the time.

The visit and interview are two rather different things. The visit is for the sake of the candidates and you should definitely invite

the spouse (if relevant) since the accommodation will be their home, too. The interview is a chance for mutual discernment of whether the candidate is the right person. **Here are some of the elements you'll need to include:**

- Venue: Where will the interview take place?
- Length: One day or two?
- Benefice tour: Who will show candidates around?
- Rectory viewing: When will candidates have a chance to see their potential new home?
- Social event: Will there be a chance for a social event involving members of the wider community?
- Time to relax: Being interviewed is stressful and tiring. Be sure to give your candidates, and their spouses, some time to unwind. They'll also want to talk through their perceptions in private.
- How will you organise everybody so that candidates are not tripping over each other? They'll need their own space if they are to have a fair chance in the process.

# HOW TO SHORTLIST

It is best practice to use a scoring system to compare applicants, and you'll reach a more objective judgment about who to invite to interview. **Here's how...**

Remember those characteristics that were included in the parish profile as important in your next parish priest? Now is the time to refer to them, and ascertain whether or not the people who have applied satisfy them. **You can do this by assessing whether each characteristic is evident in the application form and mark using the following approach:**

- 1** = characteristic is **not really evident** in the application form
- 2** = characteristic is evident, but only **partially**
- 3** = characteristic is evident, but perceived to be **average**
- 4** = characteristic is evident to a **good** extent
- 5** = characteristic is evident to an **excellent** extent

This use of the words in bold is important. Ask yourself which one best describes the extent to which the applicant meets each criterion, then apportion a score accordingly. You can do likewise for the extent to which they show a commitment to, and understanding of, your mission objectives, if you like. Then, at the end of the shortlisting process, you should have a score for each candidate, making it relatively easy to select the three or four you'd like to interview.

## AGREEING ON THE SHORTLIST

As all Anglicans know, our tradition is characterised by a deep and profound willingness to disagree with each other, while continuing to abide in relationships of love. That's what it means to be a Church that is both diverse and unified.

When shortlisting, you may find that your judgments don't quite coincide with those of your fellow Parish Representatives, or with the patron's representative (if applicable) or Archdeacon. The same could happen when you deliberate after the interviews.

If that's the case, you need to adopt the Anglican practice of dialogue in order to reach a conclusion with which you are all happy (if not in complete agreement). The Archdeacon or Bishop will help with this, but in essence it involves praying for God's still small voice of calm in your midst, to guide your decision and ensure that a loving community remains even in the face of conflicting judgments.

Feelings can run high at this time, and it's important to be hospitable and brotherly or sisterly towards each other. Try to see each other's perspectives, and ask for the Spirit to guide you. Remember, you're bound by a common purpose, which is the flourishing of God's church, for the good of His creation.

	PRAYER LIFE	MISSION FOCUS	PASTORAL SKILLS	LEADERSHIP ABILITY	Y/N
FRED BILLINGTON	4	2	4	1	no
NAOMI CLEWLOW	3	3	4	4	Yes
ELIZABETH FRANKS	1	2	3	3	No
	1	4	3	2	yes

# A GUIDE TO INTERVIEWING

If you're faced with the task of interviewing your next parish priest, you'll no doubt feel a mix of privilege, pride and trepidation. But it's important not to be overwhelmed by the responsibility. It's a great chance to get involved in the Church's discernment of the Spirit, and to come prayerfully alongside your brothers and sisters in Christ as you seek God's will for your benefice. **Here are some tips, to help you enjoy the experience.**

## 1 ASK OPEN, NOT CLOSED, QUESTIONS

Rather than asking questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no", ask questions that invite a fuller response. So, if you want to establish whether your candidate has a deeply sacramental theology, say something like, "Please explain the basis of your theological worldview," rather than, "Do you think the Eucharist is important?"

## 2 DRAW OUT THE CANDIDATE'S EXPERIENCE

You want to see how candidates can evidence what they're saying, by reference to their experience in life and ministry. So invite them to describe previous experiences, especially if they relate to things that have jumped out at you from their application form.

For example, you may say something like: "You obviously have had a great deal of success with Messy Church in your current parish. Please can you tell us more about this experience?"

## 3 TRY TO SOUND NATURAL

Agree on a set of questions before any candidates arrive. This is a sensible way of ensuring that the ground is covered, and that everyone has a chance to speak. The danger is that such questioning can seem scripted, and you lose the ebb and flow of the conversation.

Try to keep your interview as friendly and natural in tone as possible: it should be a two-way exchange between the panel and the candidate as you seek God's will together. Think of it as a conversation rather than a question-and-answer session, and pick up on any points that you'd like the candidate to develop. That's how you'll really get to know each other in a relatively short space of time.

## 4 REMEMBER TO SMILE

You'll no doubt feel a bit nervous as the interview gets underway. But you can be certain the candidate will be much more nervous than you. Try to put them at ease by greeting them warmly, making eye contact regularly, and smiling. It's amazing what a difference that makes to their confidence.

## 5 DON'T GET ON YOUR HOBBY HORSE

You may well long for the next priest in your village to start building relationships with the primary school, and you probably feel a bit peeved that your last vicar never got round to doing so. But now is not the time to discourse at length on this topic. Of course, it's fine to ask about the value the candidate attaches to schools ministry. But try not to get stuck into a lengthy ramble about your opinion on the matter. Time is short, and it's the candidate's views that everyone wants to hear, not yours (which they've probably heard already!).

## 6 KEEP A LID ON NUMBERS

In a large benefice, the number of people on an interview panel can quickly swell and become unwieldy. That means no one has a satisfactory conversation, and candidates feel overwhelmed by the sea of faces before them. Try to keep your interview panel as small as possible. You'll find it will greatly enhance the experience for everyone. Remember that Bishop, Archdeacon, Rural Dean and Patron's Representative may also be present.

# THE INTERVIEW AS AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

**Jesus said "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Matthew 18:20) As we meet together with candidates, God is present. This means that our gathering is a spiritual encounter.**

With this in mind, you should see the interview as a chance not only for Christian fellowship but also as a moment to recognise God's real presence. So yes, it is a rigorous process that needs to assess the candidates' suitability to be your next parish priest. But it is also a meeting of the faithful, drawn together in God's company to discern His will for the future.

To help you prepare, you may like to reflect on Andrei Rublev's icon. It is called 'The Hospitality of Abraham'. Most Christian thinkers see this as a representation of the Trinity. It is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, inviting us into their midst. Notice how the eyes of each person in the icon draw you in, inviting you to join them at the table.

Do pray through the icon, asking that your encounter with your fellow Christian disciples will be holy, faithful and full of grace.



↑ The Hospitality of Abraham, Andrei Rublev

FineArt / Alamy Stock Photo

# INTERVIEWING AREAS TO CONSIDER

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To make sure your interview covers ground that will help illumine your decision about who to appoint, you may find the following crib sheet useful...

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## WORSHIP

Things change when a new parish priest arrives. They will have their own experiences, gifts and preferences with relation to worship. So ask what enthuses them, and how they go about planning worship. Then you'll get a feel for how they fit with your context.

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## PREACHING

You may want to ask candidates to reflect on the nature and purpose of preaching or even invite them to preach a brief homily in the context of the interview. If you're used to a seven-minute sermon on a Sunday and they like to preach for half an hour, you need to know. This will also give you an opportunity to discover something of their theological thinking.

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## EDUCATION

Loving God with all our minds involves thinking and reflecting upon God, the world and our ministry. You will want to know how the potential parish priest plans to nurture faith and Christian thinking, for example, through discipleship courses.

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## SPIRITUALITY

You want a priest that prays, right? Ask candidates about their prayer life, how it informs their ministry and how they give expression to it in their pastoral care. You could also ask how they intend to share it with your community.

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## PASTORAL WORK

If you have a leadership team for your benefice and/or LPMs and LWLs and Readers you might want to ask your prospective priest how they'll work with these people, to ensure Christ's love and compassion is shared with the world.

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## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The interview is a good opportunity to work out what makes your prospective parish priest tick. Ask them their views on social issues of the day, or invite them to tell you about any causes that are dear to their hearts. This is where you'll see something of their passions in life.

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## TEAM WORK

You'll have been growing a leadership team for your church and benefice in recent months. Try to get a handle on how your prospective parish priest will work with these people to further God's kingdom. You may find their answers illuminating.

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## MISSION AND EVANGELISM

Priests are called to participate in God's mission and spread His Word, and empower others to do likewise. Ask candidates to explain their understanding of mission, and give examples of the ways in which they have engaged missionally with the world, and encouraged others to grow in Christ. This should be a moment at which they come alive in the interview. You'll definitely want to pay close attention to their answers.

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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It is important to ascertain whether candidates are committed to ongoing personal growth in Christ. If they're not, how on earth will they lead others on a similar journey?

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## ADMINISTRATION

We all know that administration is an important part of church life, even if we're not very enthusiastic about it. But priests have particular legal responsibilities, and it's important to ensure your appointee is organised enough to execute them.

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# MAKING YOUR MIND UP

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Once the interview is complete, the interview panel will seek to discern who God is calling to your midst.

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**With Rublev's icon before you, you should enjoy the experience of interviewing candidates, as well as the conversation that ensues regarding their suitability to be your next parish priest.**

Once you have interviewed every candidate, it is worth taking a few moments to process your reflections. Spend some time in quiet prayer and contemplation. Give thanks that he has entrusted you with his call and vocation to further his mission.

When you are ready, you need to discuss your perceptions and seek consensus. The Bishop should chair this discussion. If you have patrons present, their rights will be made clear (depending on whether the benefice is suspended or not).

You need to listen carefully to each other. Don't ignore views with which you disagree. Be open to stirrings of the Spirit that surprise you, or that you weren't aware of in the interview itself. You are not looking to appoint the Angel Gabriel, but a human being who will have a range of gifts and vulnerabilities. That is the nature of our call to discipleship; that is what it is to be a priest.

You may find there is a clear favourite in the field, and everyone is agreed that the post should be offered to them. This is an ideal scenario, but you'll still need to consider why the other candidates are not suitable, not least because they could ask for formal feedback to help them in future interviews. With that in mind, the Archdeacon will need to keep a record of every interview for six months afterwards.

If you cannot reach consensus, the Bishop will guide you through the appropriate steps. The hope is that, at the end of the process, every member of the panel will be happy with the judgment reached, and confident in owning it on behalf of their parishes. If you feel that you haven't been listened to, you need to make this plain before a final decision is reached. And if you feel you need another break before reaching a judgment, just ask. While you'll all be tired after a long and arduous process, it is important to get it right. There's a lot at stake.

## MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY

Once a decision has been reached, members of the interview panel are required to keep it confidential. There is a high chance that your new parish priest will be leaving a job elsewhere, and will need to announce their departure in a way that is sensitive and timely. So try to resist phoning your friend in Little Fitzwarren and asking what their vicar is like, because he's coming to you next. That's how rumours start, and they can be hard to quell.

This also puts you in a tricky position with the other members of your congregations and wider communities. Most people will know that an interview has taken place, and will be itching to learn the outcome. You must agree on a form of words with the interview panel that preserves confidentiality.

This all supports the need for ongoing clear communications with your congregations. Provide an update at the next service explaining that the interview process is complete and further news concerning the appointment will be made in due course. That will ensure everyone has a clear sense that things are still moving, and that the lull in proceedings is a perfectly normal part of the process.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T APPOINT?

One of the toughest decisions any interview panel can make is not to appoint. Sometimes, though, the candidates you meet just don't satisfy your expectations, and you don't feel able to offer the post to any of them.

Although this can commit your benefice to an extended vacancy, and mean you have to go through the appointments process again, it is important to have courage in your convictions if this situation arises. The only thing worse than no candidate is the wrong candidate.

The Archdeacon will be on hand to guide you through the implications of not appointing. It is not at all uncommon, and is an important part of discerning God's will. Sometimes His word to us is a "No." or a "Not yet." We need to listen attentively for this, and understand that the unveiling of His plan for the created order is a gradual process, which takes place in His time, not ours.

# PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS

The word is out. You've a new priest coming. Now's the time to share the news – and continue your shared growth in Christ.

**The announcement of a new parish priest is very exciting for any benefice. It heralds the start of a new era, with new leadership and a new personality to get to know.**

Your transitions adviser will help you plan the announcement in your churches, which should coincide with the successful candidate announcing their departure from the current position.

But while it's important to celebrate this milestone in your life together, it's also important not to lose the impetus in your shared journey over recent months. You've worked hard to establish new models of ministry and mission, with a leadership team that is taking responsibility for the direction and growth of your churches. A new parish priest is appointed to work alongside these initiatives, rather than to replace them.

So keep up your momentum. Retain your focus on living joyfully in the Gospel and helping others participate in God's life in Christ. Maintain your energy for mission and evangelism, for youth work and reaching out to society's lost souls.

Most important of all, keep praying. For yourselves and your neighbours. For your new priest and their family. For the people in the benefice they are leaving. For the growth of Christ's Church throughout the world. Pray, and all manner of things will be well.

## THE LICENSING SERVICE

One of the most important moments in your new parish priest's ministry will be their licensing service. This is a major event for the whole community, and the Archdeacon's Office and your transitions adviser will help you plan accordingly.

At the heart of the licensing is an act of liturgy that is a chance to give thanks and praise to God and welcome your new priest. It is led by the Bishop, with assistance from the Archdeacon and Rural Dean, but there are lots of opportunities for local people to get involved.

Clergy and Readers from the local area will be invited to robe for the service, as will representatives of other denominations. If any of your churches have choirs, it's a good idea to combine them into a benefice choir especially for this service. They can perform an anthem and lead the singing of God's people in prayerful thanksgiving for His good works.

There is a standard liturgy that is used for the licensing service, and the Archdeacon's office will provide this in electronic format. Ideally, you will be able to personalise this with the names of your new priest and their family, and add in their choice of hymns. Then have it printed for the service, being sure to order plenty of copies. It provides a nice keepsake for your new priest, and a reminder to the congregation that they were a part of this special occasion.

Be sure to make this service a celebration of ministry in general, rather than of your new priest in particular. Yes, it's an opportunity to welcome the new arrival and their family. But it's also a chance to give thanks and praise for your shared growth in Christ over recent months. This is a special moment in your life together. You deserve to celebrate it as a community.

## WHO TO INVITE TO THE LICENSING SERVICE

You should send formal invitations to the Licensing Service, and ask someone from your benefice to coordinate responses. Here's a list of the people to invite:

- The new priest and his or her family, plus special guests
- Clergy and Readers from the benefice and deanery
- The Deanery Lay Chair
- Local dignitaries and representatives from community groups such as the Scouts, Cadet Force and clubs and societies
- The Patron (s)
- Parishioners from your new priest's previous post

✓ THE NEW PRIEST

✓ CLERGY AND READERS

✓ THE DEANERY LAY CHAIR

✓ LOCAL DIGNITARIES

✓ THE PATRON

✓ PREVIOUS PARISHIONERS



## A BRIEF APPEARANCE

Here's a strange thing about the licensing service: even though your new priest will be very much on show, he or she doesn't say much throughout the liturgy. There are some scripted liturgical responses confirming their commitment to the benefice, and to their priestly orders. But the only part of the service where they speak off the cuff is in giving the notices, soon after they are installed.

This is symbolic moment, when they claim their status as your new parish priest. For many, it's highly emotional, and they can't conceal their excitement and fear. Try to remind them that this should only be a brief welcome, detailing the services for the coming Sunday, details about the reception, perhaps a mention of the collection. More detailed thanks should be reserved for the party afterwards.

## PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE SERVICE

You'll need to prepare the logistics of your new priest's welcoming service.

**Here are some things to consider:**

- Parking
- Seating plan
- Service orders
- Food

# WELCOMING A NEW PARISH PRIEST

**It's time to draw breath. The welcome party's over and it's a drizzly Monday morning in September. You're all adjusting to a new order. There's a priest in the Vicarage, who you don't yet know. But you did enjoy the joke she cracked at the Licensing Service reception. The question facing you all is simple: where do we go from here?**

First up, remember that it takes time to learn the soil of a new environment. Don't expect your new parish priest to be an expert on everything in the first few months. Some very experienced priests say it takes years to fully know a place and understand its dynamics. So give your new priest time, and plenty of it, to settle in, work out who they are called to be in this place, and begin to make their mark.

## SHARING THE VISION

The last few months have seen your benefice go through an exciting process. A time of growth and change, of joy and flourishing. Your new priest will want to get involved in this. They won't want it to come to an abrupt halt.

Don't lose your enthusiasm for your vision. Hold onto it and nurture its flame. No one can do anything alone, and your new priest will relish exploring God's call for your community in companionship with other Christian disciples like you.

Alongside this, be sure to exercise appropriate humility as you go about supporting their ministry in this place, and keeping your church vibrant and alive to the Spirit. Be open to change, willing to consider new ideas, and accepting of different ways of going about things. Our tradition is characterised by its deep hospitality (remember Rublev's icon, which we considered in the previous section). Now is the time to show that spirit to your fellow Christians, and to your new priest.

Together, you'll be able to discern signs of God's kingdom and work towards its embodiment in this world, with joy in your hearts. One of the ways we do that is by listening to each other, growing together, and continuing to enfold our lives and our shared ministry in prayer and thanksgiving.

## THREE STEPS TO HELP YOUR NEW PRIEST SETTLE IN

### 1 BE HOSPITABLE

Treat your new priest and their family as you would any new neighbour. Introduce them to people they haven't met. Give them information about the local area that may be useful. Offer to show them local footpaths and recommend activities for their day off. That's how they will become a part of your community. It's how they will come to call this place home.

### 2 BE REALISTIC

Don't expect too much from your new priest in the early days. It takes time to learn a new context. Give them the space to start slowly, tentatively, as they find their way in these new communities. That way, any decisions they make won't be hurried, and will be more truly grounded in their discernment of God's will.

### 3 BE OPEN-MINDED

You've discerned an exciting vision for the future of your benefice. You now have a deeper and more vibrant faith, and a firm understanding of God's ongoing call on your life. Don't lose that, but be open to new stirrings of the Spirit, to singing a new song. Change may well come. You need to embrace it and build on all that you've achieved over the last few months, in fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ.



## EMBRACING A NEW SEASON

It's been a long road, travelled in community with faithful disciples. Now you have a new parish priest, a new face with fresh perspectives and an awesome task ahead of them.

Naturally, you'll do all you can to support your new priest, and affirm their ministry. But you also need to take stock of all that's happened over the last few months. Remember to thank all the people who have supported your benefice from outside: visiting clergy and Readers who have kept your worship alive, people who have offered expertise to help you through the appointments process, funeral directors who have shown patience when you've been short-staffed or not quite sure of what to do.

The community of the Church is called to serve the world. Transitions often bring the local church into closer contact with the wider community, raising its profile and fostering new relationships. Don't lose these relationships as you settle back into life with a parish priest. They are of the Church's essence, and important to the growth of the kingdom. It is the

responsibility of every Christian disciple to retain their focus on the interactions between the Church and the world; to point to God's glory and remain faithful to His will.

So thank you, for all that you've done in this time of transition. You've shown creative fidelity to God's word, obedience to his will, and openness to his Spirit. You've grown in Christ, corporately and individually, and have helped establish a vibrant, healthy and joyful church community.

Now is a time of celebration, a time to give thanks and praise. Now is the moment of our calling and our sending. It is God's time, and we delight in the experience of living in its midst.

**May God go before you and bless you richly as you take your next steps together in faith.**



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Diocese of Truro, September 2017

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T 01872 274351

E [info@truro.anglican.org](mailto:info@truro.anglican.org)

[www.trurodiocese.org.uk](http://www.trurodiocese.org.uk)

Church House, Woodlands Court,  
Truro Business Park, Threemilestone,  
Truro, TR4 9NH



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