Challenge and opportunity

What happens when there's a vacancy …

This information is designed to help churchwardens and other parish officers when there is a vacancy in a parish or group of parishes

Further advice will be available from the rural dean (known as area dean or district dean in some parts of the Diocese of Lincoln) or the archdeacon

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1 INTRODUCTION

1. Why have we prepared this information?

- The document gathers together helpful information for the outgoing parish priest, the churchwardens and the rural dean for the whole of the period between knowing that a vacancy is looming to the arrival of the new incumbent (or priest in charge).
- It has been written primarily for churchwardens and parish officers, but those with whom they share responsibility have also been in mind - including the rural dean and the outgoing parish priest.
- The expression 'parish priest' is used for convenience in this document; but in many communities in Lincolnshire, a number of parishes share a parish priest as a benefice or a group. Ultimately, the new appointment will be to the benefice, rather than to an individual parish. A vacancy may be a very good opportunity to review how parishes in a group relate to and support each other.
- PCC treasurers will find a summary of the financial aspects of a vacancy in section 8.
- For some parishes, the departure of their parish priest may be the point at which they join with another parish or parishes as part of the deanery's Mission Area Plan. In such cases, most of the information in this document will not be relevant, as the new parish priest will already have been identified. However, there may be a period before the new priest assumes responsibility and there may be a vacant parsonage house – in which case, some sections of this document may be useful.

2. Understanding the vacancy

- A vacancy need not be viewed with foreboding. On the contrary, for many parishes, a vacancy can be a time when the gifts of parishioners emerge, and energy and vision are released which can be instrumental in taking parishes forward in terms of their mission and sense of purpose.
- Nevertheless, the careful organisation of the life of the church during a vacancy is important. A sense of insecurity can lead to tensions.
- In recent years, the average length of vacancy in the diocese has been up to twelve months – occasionally, vacancies are filled more quickly, but others take rather longer. Apart from the process of making the appointment, a new parish priest may not be able to move speedily. Issues of children's education and spouse's work often mean that moves have to be timed carefully.
- There are a number of phases to the vacancy process:
    - The parish(es) taking stock of where they are, how they want to develop and grow, and identifying the gifts and skills that they hope a new parish priest may bring,
    - The search for a new parish priest, and
    - The time between the appointment being made and the inauguration of the new priest's ministry.
- It is important, as far as possible, to keep things going as usual. This will be much easier in churches where there is a culture of collaborative ministry and where a significant number of people are willing to share responsibility. The vacancy can also provide a good opportunity of sharing the tasks as widely as possible.

- The churchwardens, working with the rural dean (known collectively as the 'sequestrators'), take responsibility for the life and work of the parish during the vacancy but they need to avoid carrying the full burden themselves. The local parish community should take great care to ensure that the churchwardens are supported in the task of keeping the worship and witness of the church alive during the vacancy. While specific attention needs to be given to provision of services, the pastoral care of the congregation and others is also very important (see sections 2 & 3).
- If there is another priest in the parish (for example, a curate, a non-stipendiary priest or an ordained local minister), he or she will have an important role in supporting the continuing life of the parish, but he or she must not be expected to take on the responsibilities or duties undertaken by the outgoing parish priest.
- Parishes with a curate in training may find that the curate takes a leading role within the worship and pastoral care of the church, but they must remember that such a curate is still in training and needs supervision, support and time for his/her programme of training and study.
- It will be important for churchwardens to draw on the gifts and experience of Readers, parish lay ministers and others who have gifts of responsibility and leadership.

3. The vacancy as 'opportunity'

- Vacancies can and should be creative opportunities. Many congregations speak appreciatively of the variety of ministry they receive during a vacancy. Clergy and Readers come from a spread of traditions and flexibility on all sides should be expected.
- A vacancy can be a time of consolidation and growth as people become more involved in the work and worship of the parish; as mentioned previously, it can also be a time of uncertainty which leads to an increased workload on a few individuals (especially churchwardens and rural deans).
- We hope that this booklet will help promote the former and minimise the latter.

4. Other resources

- The staff at the Diocesan offices – please do consult them (01522 50 40 50)
- See section 9

☺	Handy hint: ensure that the churchwardens have access to the Diocese of Lincoln's website – www.lincoln.anglican.org

2 MINISTRY DURING A VACANCY

1. **The rural dean**

- When there is no incumbent or priest in charge, the rural dean
    - Provides pastoral advice and oversight,
    - Helps the churchwardens discharge their duties,
    - Offers advice, and
    - Provide a list of helpful contacts.

2. **The Vacancy Consultation**

- The archdeacon will arrange a Vacancy Consultation meeting. This will usually be held around the time of the outgoing parish priest's final Sunday in the parish.
- This meeting is usually attended by:
    - The rural dean and lay chair of the deanery
    - The churchwardens
    - Any assistant clergy
    - Readers in the parishes
    - Representative parish lay ministers
    - Parish administrator or secretary
- The Vacancy Consultation meeting will:
    - Address the planning of services and service cover across the parish or group of parishes for the first few months of the vacancy.
        - *Notes:*

          Any retired or other clergy invited to take services *must* have permission to officiate in the Diocese of Lincoln (as this will ensure that they have proper clearance under the Diocese's Safeguarding procedures).

          It is best to plan well in advance and to prepare a rota for three months at a time.

          Try to ensure some continuity.

          This is a time for parishes to think about sharing their resources across the group and within the deanery.

          If Holy Communion by extension will be part of the liturgical provision during a vacancy, the appropriate area bishop must be consulted, and his advice about, and consent for, the arrangements must be obtained.

          The outgoing parish priest should *not* be invited back for normal Sunday or midweek services.
    - Look at what else needs to be done in preparation for the vacancy and agree who will take responsibility for the different areas of the parish's life (see the following section).
    - Explain the process of making a new appointment and discuss the implications of 'suspension' if there is the possibility of pastoral re-organisation.

- Encourage the PCC(s) to begin the process of drawing up their statement of conditions, needs & traditions of the parish(es) (also known as the 'parish profile'), and to discuss possible dates for a special PCC meeting once the formal process for beginning the vacancy begins (see chapter 6, below).

3. Planning for the vacancy

This check list may help – although not every section will apply to every parish and we may have missed important elements of your parish's life and ministry.

- Regular church services: is it possible or realistic to carry on with the same pattern of midweek and Sunday services?
- Hymns and readings for services: how are these chosen at present and how will they be chosen in the future?
- Intercessions: is there a rota for leading these and who will continue to prepare and distribute it?
- Festivals: how soon do you need to start thinking about next Christmas, Easter, Harvest Festival or whatever?
- Communicating with visiting clergy and Readers: who will do this?
    - They should be informed of the readings and hymns, and type of service.
    - They will also need to know how much you are asking them to do: eg, lead, preach, read the lessons, lead the intercessions, preside at a Holy Communion service.
    - They should be informed if banns are to be called during the service.
    - It is also useful if somebody can prepare a simple guide to the service – for example, to explain to a visiting minister when banns are read and notices given and whether the blessing comes before or after the final hymn.
- Fees and expenses: see section 8 for more details.
- Occasional offices (baptisms, weddings and funerals): discuss how these will be handled - who will be the parish contact person for each?
    - If you have a 'vestry hour' when people come to make arrangements, could this continue?
    - How will you inform the local community and the funeral directors of the new arrangements?
    - Who will make the actual arrangements with the family / funeral directors, the organist, the verger, the grave digger etc?
    - Who will ensure that the church building is open and staffed?
    - Who will ensure that the service registers are available and filled in?
    - Who will deal with the fees?
    - There may be occasions when the outgoing parish priest is invited to take a wedding, baptism or funeral. Churchwardens should consult the rural dean before agreeing to such a request.
    - Unless other local arrangements are agreed, consult the rural dean about requests for marriage – especially when either party to a proposed marriage

        - has been married before and subsequently divorced;
        - does not have UK nationality.
    - Unless other local arrangements are agreed, the rural dean will authorise
        - entries in the Banns of Marriage register;
        - Banns certificates; and
        - the quarterly (statutory) marriage returns to the local Registration Service.
- Churchyard issues
    - If there is an open churchyard, who will be responsible for the maintenance / care of the churchyard and for the upkeep of the burial plan for the churchyard?
    - Only the rural dean can consider applications for the introduction of memorials in a churchyard or the addition of inscriptions to existing memorials.
- Communicating with the PCC, congregation and community
    - This has a number of aspects:
        - Deciding who will take responsibility for what area.
        - Deciding how this will be communicated; for example, the parish magazine, notice boards, a weekly newsletter or pew sheet.
    - There are particular issues when there is a parish office – and especially when there are paid staff members (see below).
    - Be aware that communication during the vacancy will be an ongoing need and planning for this is essential to avoid duplication and frustration and to make the best use of human (and other) resources.
    - And if you don't tell people what's going on, you may find that they rely on rumour and gossip!
- Welcome and pastoral care: discuss how this will be provided during the vacancy.
    - How can this continue to be done?
    - Who will co-ordinate this?
    - If not already the responsibility of lay people, what will happen about home Communions?
    - If there are no parish lay ministers, is there a need for help or training for a few people *before* the vacancy begins?
- Members of the church with any leadership role: how will they be supported in their ministry during the vacancy?

  Possibilities include:
    - Regular meetings for discussion, prayer, support;
    - Use of diocesan officers;
    - Inclusion in the Sunday intercessions.

  Supervision for any curate in training will be arranged by the area bishop and the Diocesan ICME Officer.

- Church employees: who will take responsibility for issues arising with any paid employees (eg, organist, verger, administrators) and ensure they receive proper support and supervision?
- Other tasks undertaken by the outgoing parish priest: make sure that you get a list before the parish priest moves.

  Such tasks or areas of ministry may not be widely know and may include:

  - Editing the magazine or providing a letter for the magazine;
  - Chaplaincy work – industry, nursing homes, schools;
  - Involvement in local organisations – eg, the Royal British Legion (what is expected on Remembrance Sunday?), local charities.

4. Once the vacancy begins

- It may be helpful for the parish and deanery members of the Vacancy Consultation to plan to meet again (possibly every two months) to review the arrangements for each area in the previous section.
- It will also be important to monitor and discuss planning of services and service cover in the light of experience:
  - How do congregation members feel?
  - Are the people involved feeling over-used or under-used?
  - Is the present pattern sustainable?
- If it becomes clear that the pattern of overall activity in the parish is not sustainable (and especially if the parish is to join another group), it might be best to review this and make decisions *before* a new parish priest is appointed or a neighbouring parish priest has taken responsibility. But if you are planning about any major changes, please consult the rural dean or archdeacon.
- Are the arrangements working well for:
  - Welcoming and pastoral care?
  - Support of members involved in leadership and ministry?
  - Communication of the arrangements and of any news about the appointment process to the congregation and to the wider community?
  - Working with other parishes and churches in the benefice or group and the deanery?
- Are you in need of any 'outside help' in any area of church life and ministry? Might it be helpful to discuss this with the rural dean, archdeacon, or another diocesan officer?
- A vacancy can sometimes provide the opportunity for people to 'come out from the woodwork' and offer their gifts. Try asking around for untapped expertise!

3 TRANSFER OF INFORMATION BEFORE THE VACANCY BEGINS

1. **The outgoing parish priest**

   It is very helpful if the outgoing parish priest passes on information in written form to the churchwardens for general parish matters and to the rural dean and archdeacon about any confidential matters. The latter could be combined with personal reflections on the life of the parish to assist with the next appointment.

2. **Information to be given to the churchwardens**

   This should be copied to the rural dean, archdeacon and the Diocese's Property Department (and may then be passed on to the next parish priest)

   - Parsonage house
     - Keys and key holders
     - Alarm system details (including codes)
     - Utility details (please copy to the Property Department the final meter readings which you send to your utility companies)
     - Location of stopcock, fuse box, meters
     - Gardeners (if any)
     - Cleaner (if any)
     - Window cleaner
   - Church building (and halls) – if these details are not already known by the churchwardens and other parish officers
     - Keys and key holders (including safe)
     - Alarm system details (including codes)
     - Sound system details
     - Registers (including churchyard plan for burials if appropriate)
     - Other documents: eg, Quinquennial Inspection report, Inventory and Terrier (if not already in the church safe), guarantees and warranties for church equipment
   - Parish computer, photocopier and other office equipment: if the parish owns the computer, check the whereabouts of the machine and of software (back-up and installation discs) and password(s) for email (and who will check emails?).
   - Visiting lists
     - Home Communions
     - Residential and nursing homes
     - Housebound individuals
   - Lists of useful contacts (with telephone numbers and email addresses)
     - Funeral directors
     - Grave digger
     - Organist(s)
     - PCC members

    - Lay leaders
- Electoral roll
- Details of church schools and educational trusts
- Any parish policies, such as
    - Admission of children to Holy Communion;
    - Marriage of people previously married and divorced;
    - Fees and charges.

☺	Handy hint: this information should be passed on well before the parish priest leaves, giving sufficient time for any queries to be dealt with

3. **Information to be given to the rural dean, with a copy to the archdeacon**
    - The outgoing parish priest's role description.
    - Perspective on the parish, prepared by the outgoing priest
        - The rural dean may wish to feed this into discussions on the next parish priest's role description and the parish profile.
        - The archdeacon may wish to feed it into discussions at Bishop's staff meeting.
        - It could include:
            - A synopsis of developments in the past five to seven years;
            - A copy of any parish development plan;
            - Areas of parish life in need of consolidation;
            - Areas of parish life in need of development;
            - Information about particular opportunities;
            - Information about particular difficulties.

☺	Handy hint: the churchwardens should ensure that the Diocesan office has the correct mailing addresses for parish officers.

4 THE PARSONAGE HOUSE

1. General

- Day-to-day responsibility for all practical matters relating to the parish priest's house (the Vicarage or Rectory) rests with the Diocesan Property Department, led by Diocesan Properties Manager.
- Their work is governed by Church legislation, planning law and listed building regulations, and is overseen by the Housing Committee within set policies.
- Work is subject to budgetary limits (as decided by Diocesan Synod on the recommendation of the Finance Executive) and is financed through parish share and the Diocese's historic resources. In this way, the cost of providing suitable living and working accommodation for parish priests and their families is shared by all parishes.
- Some parishes, with the agreement of a previous parish priest, may have used part of the parsonage to assist with parish administration. *Where such arrangements have existed, it is Diocesan policy that the new parish priest will not be required to continue the arrangements.* This matter can be somewhat sensitive for a new parish priest and therefore it is helpful if alternatives are put in hand wherever possible. The archdeacon's advice should be sought when necessary.

2. When the former parish priest moves out

- As soon as the information is available, the churchwardens should alert the Diocesan Property Department as to the exact date on which the parsonage house will become vacant. Unless the Diocesan Property Manager directs otherwise:
    - Utility meters should be read within a day or two of vacation of the house, and the levels in any oil tank checked;
    - Keys should be retained by one of the churchwardens (and a spare set of keys sent to the Diocesan Property Department, who should be given the local keyholder's contact details);
    - The intruder alarm and any other security systems should be left set (and codes obtained from the outgoing priest);
    - The telephone line(s) must not be disconnected; an answerphone message should be recorded to redirect callers to assistant clergy, a churchwarden or other appropriate person (agreed at the Vacancy Consultation);
    - If a property is vacant any time between October and March the Diocesan Properties Department will arrange for the plumbing system to be drained down in accordance with the Diocesan insurers' requirements;
    - In the growing season, arrangements should be made for grass-cutting and other basic garden maintenance (a grant of £100 per growing season is paid to the PCC when it undertakes grass cutting; a larger amount *may* be payable in certain cases at the Diocesan Properties Manager's discretion)
- Personal mail should be re-directed to the former parish priest (ideally, the outgoing parish priest will have set up a redirection service with Royal Mail, although a consequence is that some parish correspondence will need to be returned to the parish if it has been addressed personally to the outgoing priest).

- Any correspondence addressed to the occupier or any utility bills should be forwarded unopened to the Diocesan Properties Officer.
- Arrangements should be made for a check on the house (usually at least twice weekly) as long as it remains empty.

☺	Handy hint: locate the nearest reliable congregation members to the house and ask if they would do a regular 'walk-round' check, if the house if not occupied by a tenant.

3. Vacancy inspection

- The Diocesan Properties Manager will arrange a date for an inspection of the empty house with the archdeacon (and possibly also the rural dean and the churchwardens).
- The Diocesan Property Department will arrange for the agreed and approved works to be carried out, from tender to completion including site supervision and inspections.

4. Letting during vacancy

- Unless either very extensive work is needed or (for whatever reason) the vacancy is likely to be very short, it is normal for vacant parsonage houses to be let for six months during the vacancy. This provides security for the parsonage house, together with an income that helps with the maintenance of the housing stock, and maintains insurance cover as an occupied building.
- The Diocesan Property Department is responsible for finding a tenant and, in conjunction with its agents, for the preparation of the necessary assured short-hold tenancy agreement, which avoids creating any security of tenure.

5. When a new incumbent is identified

- At this stage, the new incumbent and his/her spouse is invited to visit the house with the Diocesan Property Manager and archdeacon to identify any further minor works needed and (if appropriate) to agree details of any internal decorations that may be required.
- It is the policy of the Diocesan Housing Committee to provide appropriate floor coverings in the parsonage house (excluding bedrooms, for which the occupier is responsible).

6. When the new incumbent moves in

Alongside from the normal courtesies of welcome due to a new neighbour, the churchwardens (with the assistance of the Diocesan Property Department when necessary) should ensure that the new parish priest:

- Receives all keys to the house, garage and other outbuildings;
- Knows how to operate the intruder alarm and any other security systems;
- Understands the operation of the central heating system (and, if applicable, the answerphone);
- Is aware of the location of stopcock and utility meters;
- Has a list of church and local contacts, with telephone numbers.

5 THE CONTINUING LIFE OF THE CHURCH

1. **PCC meetings**

- The PCC is chaired by the lay vice chair of the PCC (elected at the first meeting of the PCC following the annual parochial church meeting).
- The PCC should continue to meet during the vacancy. The whole PCC must be involved in drawing up the statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish (usually known as the 'parish profile').
- The agenda for each meeting should be sent, in advance, to the rural dean and a copy of the minutes from each meeting should also be sent.
- If there are major items (eg, decisions about buildings, employment of church workers), it may be helpful if the rural dean is present to advise and support the PCC; dates for these meetings need to be set with this in mind.

2. **Annual parochial church meeting**

- If the annual parochial church meeting will take place during the vacancy:
    - Plan for this in good time, and
    - Consult your rural dean or the archdeacon if further advice is needed.

3. **Church schools**

- It is likely that the outgoing parish priest will have been involved in a number of ways
    - As an ex-officio foundation governor;
    - Taking assemblies;
    - Teaching RE;
    - Pastoral care of staff.
- Others in the parish may be able to be involved, with the consent of the school, in each of these areas.
- If you feel that there should be a foundation (church-appointed) governor to fill the gap during the vacancy, please contact the Diocesan Director of Education at the Diocesan office for advice. This could be particularly important if the school is likely to face an OfSTED inspection or if the Governing Body is already short of members. The archdeacon has the authority to appoint an acting ex-officio governor in place of the outgoing parish priest; it is helpful if the churchwardens or PCC can advise the archdeacon on people who might be suitable for such appointment.

4. **Educational trusts**

- If there is a church school or house or a former school or house, there may be an educational charity – in which case, the parish priest is usually a trustee.
- If parish church officers are trustees of such a charity (buildings or funds from the sale of premises), they must not confuse their role as church officer with that of trustee.
- All funds must be kept separate from PCC funds and used only in accordance with the terms of the educational charity.

- In some cases, the parish priest is the sole trustee; in this case, it would be helpful to advise the Trusts & Assets Officer at the Diocesan office, from whom further advice on any matter in connection with church and educational charities can be obtained.

5. **Safeguarding: the protection of children and vulnerable adults**

- If the outgoing parish priest has acted as the Child Protection Officer for the parish, someone else must be appointed and have the means to store confidential forms in a locked cabinet. Generally it is best practice for someone other than the parish priest to act as Child Protection Officer.
- During the vacancy, the rural dean can act in place of the parish priest in checking identification documents for CRB forms.

6. **Role of the rural dean towards the end of the vacancy**

- It is also a good idea for the rural dean to meet with the churchwardens or Standing Committee to discuss preparations for the arrival of the parish priest.
- Among areas worthy of discussion are:
    - Ensuring the PCC (or PCCs, in a multi-parish benefice or group) fully understand their responsibility for meeting full working expenses. The archdeacon's advice should be sought, if necessary. Guidance is available at http://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/remuneration-and-conditions-of-service-committee/the-parochial-expenses-of-the-clergy.aspx

☺	Handy hint: good practice suggests that expenses should only be reimbursed on receipt of a claim – lump sums cause problems with the parish priest's income tax arrangements.

    - Raising the issue of how they will minister and support the new priest (and his or her family). Most clergy seriously overwork, often at the expense of their families and their health. Local church leaders need to be aware of this danger.
    - Raising awareness that the new parish priest will be different from his or her predecessor. They will bring different skills and ways of doing things. They also need to be sensitive to the inherent 'tradition' or 'culture' of the parish(es).
    - Reminding the PCC that discovering God's purpose lies at the heart of Christian ministry. The new parish priest is not there to be simply a 'Customer Service Manager'. The parish priest must have space for prayer, study and reflection, and for enabling and supporting the ministry of others. It is always helpful if local ministry that has flourished during the vacancy is allowed to continue and grow.
    - Consideration needs to be given to the arrival and appropriate welcome of the family.
    - Churchwardens play an important part in helping the new parish priest to adjust to different surroundings.
- Careful consideration needs to be given to the service to inaugurate the new ministry (see chapter 7) and to the first Sunday in the new parish(es).

6 THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS

1. General

- The process of appointing a new priest to fill a vacancy is a complicated one, governed by church legislation, especially the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986.
- The main purpose of the process is to find, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a person who feels called to the parish(es) and who is acceptable to the parish(es), to the Bishop (who shares the cure of souls) and to the patron (if there is a body or individual other than the Bishop who has the responsibility of identifying and presenting a priest to the Bishop).
- The process depends on whether the new priest is to be appointed as an incumbent or as a priest in charge (the patron's right of presentation having been suspended), and on a number of other factors.
- In the Diocese of Lincoln, responsibility for liaison with the parish throughout the vacancy process rests with the archdeacon (up to the preparation of the statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish(es) [the 'parish profile'] and the role description), and the appropriate area bishop (for the process of identification and appointment of a new parish priest).
- Above all, it is important to remember that the parish or group of parishes will be given a full opportunity to take part in the process of finding a new priest.
- As a matter of good practice, the process does not normally start until after the former parish priest has left. This policy is intended to give the parish space and time to reflect on previous ministry, and to discuss its hopes and aspirations for future ministry.
- In recent years, the average length of vacancy in the diocese has been about twelve months – occasionally, vacancies are filled more quickly, but others take rather longer.
- This document explains the responsibilities of parochial church councils in the appointments process. The Diocesan Registrar will circulate a more detailed explanation of the appointments process and the legal responsibilities of the various participants.

2. The PCC's responsibilities: the 'Section 11' meeting

- When the new parish priest will be an incumbent (vicar or rector), notice is given to the Diocesan Registrar, who will write to the PCC secretary (or secretaries) and, when this applies, to the patron, giving formal notice of the vacancy and setting out in detail the procedure applicable to the particular case. This will usually follow the vacancy consultation (see chapter 2, above, and any decision about whether presentation to the benefice is to be suspended).
- Within four weeks of receipt of the notice from the Diocesan Registrar, the PCC or PCCs must hold one or more meetings (known as the 'Section 11 meeting' because it is described by that section of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure), jointly if the benefice has a number of separate PCCs, (from which the outgoing priest, his or her spouse, and the patron are excluded) to deal with six items of business:

- Preparing a statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish(es)

  Notes:

  - This is generally known as the 'parish profile'.
  - In a benefice containing more than one PCC, the PCCs may decide to prepare a single and jointly agreed statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parishes; or each PCC may decide to prepare its own statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish.
  - It may be more convenient for the PCC(s) to delegate the preparation of the statement to a small group, but the final document must be approved at a (joint) meeting of the PCC(s) in the benefice.
  - This is an important document, which will be studied carefully by the patron, the bishop, the archdeacon and (perhaps most significantly) by potential candidates. It should be prepared so as to give potential candidates a clear picture of the parish(es) and the opportunities for ministry there.
  - PCCs are encouraged to look at examples produced by other benefices (*Church Times* advertisements and diocesan websites are a good source of links to such documents).
  - The statement should describe the parish(es) and the communities they serve accurately and honestly, and should describe 'where the parishes are', 'how the parishes would like to grow and develop' and only then seek to identify the particular skills and gifts that their new parish priest might offer to help them in their journey.
  - The final document should be produced in a pdf format, so that it can be downloaded by priests interested in investigating the post. Good design and illustrations help – and photographs should show people (many parish profiles seem to include many pictures of empty buildings).

- Electing lay members of the PCC to act as parish representatives for the formal part of the appointment

  - *Notes:*

    These representatives should be empowered to speak for the PCC(s) in the process of consultation with the bishop, as the Patronage (Benefices) Measure requires the representatives' agreement to the appointment of an incumbent, and the Pastoral Measure requires the bishop to consult the PCC in appointing a priest in charge.

    In a single parish benefice, two representatives are chosen. In a multi-parish benefice, the meeting must appoint 'such number of persons, but not less than four, as will enable each of those parochial church councils to have at least one representative, but not more than two representatives, to act as representatives of those councils in connection with the selection of an incumbent'. In benefices with very large numbers of PCCs, the archdeacon will advise on the numbers of representatives to be chosen, so that the number is not so large as to prevent proper consultation.

The representatives may have to attend meetings and be involved in interviewing potential candidates, and must therefore be willing and able to devote the necessary time. The representatives must be lay people and members of the PCC, but need not necessarily be the churchwardens. Therefore, considerable care needs to be taken in choosing the most appropriate people to act as representatives.

- Deciding whether to ask the patron to advertise the vacancy
  - *Notes:*

    The patron's agreement is necessary and the PCC(s) may have to cover the costs involved.

    Advertising vacancies is neither the only nor necessarily the most effective way of identifying candidates.

    The method of selection of candidates is the responsibility of the patron.
- Deciding whether to request a joint meeting with the patron and the bishop (or their representatives)
- Deciding whether to request a statement in writing from the bishop describing, in relation to the benefice, the needs of the diocese and the wider interests of the church
  - *Notes:*

    The Patronage (Benefices) Measure lays down clear rules for the calling and conduct of such a meeting (**the 'Section 12' meeting**) with the patron and the bishop (or their representatives), but the aim is to allow an exchange of views on the statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish(es) and to discuss the bishop's statement.

    Such a meeting may also be requested by the patron or the bishop.

    A PCC wishing to consider asking for such a meeting should speak to the archdeacon at an early stage.
- Deciding whether to pass a resolution under section 3 (1) or (2) of the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993, or whether to rescind an existing resolution.
  - *Notes:*

    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 Incumbent of the benefice (Resolution B). The wording of these resolutions is supplied by the Diocesan Registrar.

    If both resolutions A & B are passed by the meeting, the PCC may further consider passing a resolution to petition the bishop requesting appropriate episcopal duties to be carried out in accordance with the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993.

3. **Suspension of presentation**

- If the bishop suspends the patron's right of presentation, an 'incumbent' (usually called a rector or a vicar) will not be appointed. Instead the bishop will normally appoint a priest in charge until the suspension is lifted.
- Right of presentation is usually suspended when there are proposals for pastoral reorganisation in the deanery's Mission Area Plan.
- Although a priest in charge differs from an incumbent in some legal and technical ways, his or her responsibilities in the parish are identical and most parishioners are unlikely to know that there is any distinction.
- If presentation is suspended, the usual provisions of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 (as in section 2, above) will not apply but the bishop will endeavour to follow the spirit of the Measure and will consult the patron, the rural dean, and the lay chair as well as the people of the parish in the process of making an appointment.
- PCCs are advised to use the procedures outlined in section 2 if presentation to their benefice is suspended.

4. **The archdeacon's responsibilities**

- Whether or not there is a formal meeting with the PCC, such as the 'Section 12' meeting mentioned above, the archdeacon will be in contact with the PCC(s), either directly or through the rural dean, as the statement describing the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish(es) (or 'parish profile') is being prepared. It is not unusual for the archdeacon to suggest that a first draft of the statement need further work before a final document can be offered for approval by the PCC(s).
- When the final version of the parish profile has been agreed, the archdeacon will use the statistical information supplied with it and the PCCs' views on the particular skills and gifts that their new parish priest might offer to prepare a role description, which will accompany the parish profile.
- The archdeacon will send the parish profile and role description to the bishop, so that the next stage of the selection process can begin.

5. **The selection process**

- When the bishop (and patron, if that is a body or individual other than the bishop) has received and studied the parish profile and associated information, he will contact the PCC representatives either by telephone or in a face-to-face meeting to discuss how best to organise the selection process.
- The bishop may have potential candidate(s) to suggest, or it may be decided (with, where necessary, the patron's consent) to advertise the vacancy. Details of visits by potential candidates and/or formal interviews will be settled. All of these aspects will be tailored to the particular case so that the parties involved have the best chance to reach a common mind. There is no such thing as a 'normal' process, as each parish or group of parishes is unique, and different patrons may have their own procedures.
- The process as a whole may take some time, and there may be periods when not much seems to be happening. It is, however, more important to make the right selection than to make a speedy one.
- The key to the parish's life and mission flourishing is the appointment of the right person as the new parish priest – rather than just the appointment of the best person from those

on offer. We have some recent experience of parishes being prepared to go through the appointments processes two (or even three) times; their patience has been rewarded by an appointment which has clearly been the right one in the end.

- The vacancy will be considered regularly at meetings of the Bishop's staff team.
- Once all parties (candidate, bishop, patron and PCC representatives) have reached informal agreement that a particular candidate is the right one, the bishop will arrange for a formal offer to be made, and for the completion of the formalities to confirm the acceptability of the appointment, as required by the Patronage (Benefices) Measure.
- There are some modifications to the legal procedures if presentation to the benefice is suspended and, therefore, if the new priest will be a priest in charge.
- The date when the name of the new parish priest is made public must be agreed with him/her and should coincide with the announcement in his/her present parish. The announcement cannot be made until the legal processed connected with the appointment are completed and until a satisfactory enhanced disclosure for the priest is received from the Criminal Record Bureau.

☺	Handy hints: ensure that the congregation are kept informed of the 'stage of process' reached and that there is regular prayer for the process in Sunday services.

7 THE SERVICE TO INAUGURATE A NEW MINISTRY

1. How is the service described?

- If the new priest will be a Vicar or Rector, the service is a 'collation and induction' when the Bishop of Lincoln is the patron; it is an 'institution and induction' when the patron is not the Bishop of Lincoln. If the new priest will be a priest in charge, the service is a 'licensing and installation'.

2. Date and time

- If the new parish priest is coming into the Diocese of Lincoln from elsewhere, the service is usually taken by the Bishop of Lincoln, in which case his Chaplain arranges the date and time after consultation with the key participants.
- If the new parish priest currently serving within the Diocese, the service is usually taken by the appropriate area bishop, whose secretary arranges the date and time after consultation with the key participants.
- Subsequent references in this section to the 'bishop' denote the Bishop of Lincoln, Grantham or Grimsby, as appropriate.

3. The invitations to the service

- These are sent out by, or on behalf of, the churchwardens, in consultation with the rural dean and the new parish priest. The invitations should include a date for replies, which is before the date of the rehearsal.
- Invitations are usually sent to:
    - The patron or patron's representative [and his/her spouse or partner]
    - The lay chair of the Deanery Synod [and his/her spouse or partner]
    - The Dean of Lincoln (or nominated representative of the Chapter or College of Canons)
    - Clergy and Readers of the deanery [and their spouses or partners] (with details of where to robe)
    - Clergy (and possibly Readers) of the deanery from which the new parish priest is coming (with details of where to robe)
    - Representatives of other denominations (with details of where to robe) - one of whom should be asked to say a sentence of welcome
    - Civic and community leaders, including a head teacher to represent the schools; they, too, are asked to say a sentence of welcome
    - Relatives and friends of the new parish priest, and representatives of his/her former parish (numbers should be agreed with the new parish priest)

☺	Handy hint: the earliest possible notice of the date of the service should be given to the Mayor or Chairman of the District Council, if his or her attendance is requested.

4. Orders of service

- The orders of service are prepared by the Bishop of Grantham's office (for services in the Archdeaconry of Lincoln) or the Archdeacon of Stow & Lindsey's office (for services in the Archdeaconry of Stow & Lindsey).

- Printing is the responsibility of the local parish(es), but the rural dean may be able to offer assistance if the parishes lack the necessary equipment.
- The rural dean will advise the new parish priest to select the hymns well in advance of the service, in consultation with the organist (and choir leader, if appropriate). The hymns will usually be printed in the order of service.

5. The rehearsal

- The rural dean arranges this, and the following should be present:
    - The rural dean
    - The churchwardens
    - The new parish priest
    - The organist (and choir leader, if appropriate)
    - Assistant clergy and Readers of the parish(es)
    - The verger and crucifer (if appropriate)

6. Practical arrangements

- These should be discussed at the rehearsal, noting the following:
    - The bishop's chair is placed at the chancel step before the service (making sure that there is sufficient access for those who will be seated in the chancel);
    - A small table is placed near to the bishop's chair, with a New Testament.
- The churchwardens should reserve car parking for:
    - The bishop
    - The archdeacon
    - Civic dignitaries
    - The patron
    - The rural dean

  and notify all people with reserved parking, in good time before they need to set out, where their parking spaces are to be found.
- The churchwardens should also decide where any coaches will park.
- The churchwardens should find out numbers and reserve sufficient seating for:
    - The archdeacon, the bishop's chaplain and the Dean of Lincoln (or nominated representative of the Chapter or College of Canons)
    - Robed clergy and Readers
    - The new parish priest's family
    - Invited civic dignitaries
    - The patron
    - The deanery lay chair
    - If appropriate, the spouses of any of the above
- The bishop will inform the rural dean if one of the local clergy is required to act as bishop's chaplain for the service.
- The rural dean should inform the bishop of the names of clergy and Readers who have offered particular assistance during the vacancy, so that he can acknowledge their contribution during the service.

7. The service

- The rural dean should check the seating arrangements before the service begins.
- A person appointed by the rural dean is responsible for marshalling the procession of clergy and Readers.
- Assistant clergy and Readers of the parish process behind visiting clergy and, if possible, sit in their normal seats.
- Processions during the service should balance speed with dignity.
- The organ may be played quietly during the processions, but must stop immediately each station is reached.
- The welcome to the new parish priest is informal, and speeches are firmly discouraged. Appropriate tokens of welcome may be given to the new parish priest.
- One churchwarden should be nominated to offer a welcome on behalf of all the churchwardens, but the other churchwardens should be given the opportunity to offer a handshake of greeting.
- The churchwardens should, before the service begins, provide the rural dean with a list of those who will be welcoming the new parish priest.
- The new parish priest responds briefly to the welcome and invites everyone to partake of refreshments. It must be made clear that this is not a time for him or her to preach or speak at length.
- The prayers of intercessions are usually led and concluded by the rural dean, who will be able to reflect the journey and hopes of the parish(es) more easily and more objectively than the new parish priest.
- The rural dean should discuss with the new parish priest the desirability of assistant clergy and Readers in the benefice being involved in the service.

8. After the service

- The churchwardens should detail members of the congregation to escort visitors to the place for refreshments and, if necessary, reserve car parking for them.
- The churchwardens should ensure that the PCC treasurer sends the gifts collected at the offertory (for the support of families of ordinands in training) to the Diocesan Board of Finance office at the Diocesan office. (The cheque should be payable to *Lincoln Diocesan Trust and Board of Finance*.)

8 SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL INFORMATION

1. **Parish share**

   - As the parish share is a contribution towards ministry throughout the Diocese of Lincoln, payments of parish share continue during the vacancy.
   - PCCs are asked to continue to make regular payments of parish share.

2. **The parsonage house**

   - Any repairs and minor improvements will be identified by the Diocesan Property Manager, following an inspection (see section 4). A report will be issued and any essential work identified will be carried out at the DBF's expense. PCCs should not commission or carry out repairs without permission in writing from the Diocesan Property Manager.
   - Major improvements to the parsonage may possibly be identified during the inspections carried out at the beginning of the vacancy. These will be subject to agreement by the Housing Committee.
   - Council Tax is not normally payable on empty parsonage houses which are awaiting occupation by a member of the clergy. Please inform the Diocesan Property Manager's office at the Diocesan office immediately the house becomes vacant. The local authority will be informed and will issue revised bills direct to the Diocesan Board of Finance.
   - The parsonage house will often be rented out on an assured short hold tenancy during the vacancy. The rent is paid to the Diocesan Board of Finance. The tenant is responsible for telephone and utility bills.
   - If the parsonage house is *not* occupied by a tenant, telephone rental and the cost of any calls are the responsibility of the PCC.
   - Essential running costs of the parsonage such as the cost of keeping the heating on low, the electricity standing charge and reasonable gardening costs are the responsibility of the PCC. In case of difficulty, please contact the archdeacon.

3. **Sequestrators' responsibilities**

   - There is no need for the sequestrators (who are the rural dean and the churchwardens) to open a special bank account for the vacancy; it is suggested that they use the PCC's bank account.
   - They should, however, keep a careful note of all receipts and payments so that they can account to the archdeacon, through the Diocesan Board of Finance's office, at the end of the vacancy.
   - Fees may only be paid to, or retained by, a member of the clergy if the arrangement is authorised by the archdeacon.
   - All fees normally payable to the parish priest (but *not* the portion of the fees payable to the PCC), should be paid monthly (or quarterly, if the amounts are small) to the Diocesan Board of Finance's office at the Diocesan office with full details (eg, fees for searching church registers, any fees received for marriages or funerals).

4. **Fees and expenses**

   - No fees are payable to stipendiary clergy. However, they should be offered expenses for travel (currently at 45p per mile).
   - Readers taking services should be offered travelling expenses (at 45p per mile).

- Retired clergy, with permission to officiate, are paid a fee for taking services and occasional offices and reimbursed travel expenses by the Diocesan Board of Finance on submission of a claim form, counter-signed by the rural dean.

5. **Any questions on this section?**

- Please contact the relevant archdeacon:
    - The Archdeacon of Stow & Lindsey, the Ven Jane Sinclair
      archdeacon.stowlindsey@lincoln.anglican.org
      01673 849896
    - The Archdeacon of Lincoln, the Ven Tim Barker
      archdeacon.lincoln@lincoln.anglican.org
      01529 304348

9 USEFUL RESOURCES

- The archdeacons
    - The Archdeacon of Stow & Lindsey, the Ven Jane Sinclair
      archdeacon.stowlindsey@lincoln.anglican.org
      01673 849896
    - The Archdeacon of Lincoln, the Ven Tim Barker
      archdeacon.lincoln@lincoln.anglican.org
      01529 304348
- The Diocese of Lincoln's offices

  The Old Palace, Minster Yard, Lincoln, LN2 1PU
  01522 50 40 50
- The processes and details mentioned in these publications may not match exactly those of the Diocese of Lincoln, but you may still find useful information and support within them.
    - Grove Booklets Pastoral Series

      65: Situation Vacant (David Parrott & D Field)

      67: Understanding the Interregnum (Tony Bradley)
    - So the vicar's leaving (Mike Alexander & Jeremy Martineau) Canterbury Press 2002
    - Temporary Shepherds (Roger Nicholson) Alban Inst 1998
    - Practical Church Management (James Behrens) Gracewing 2005
- For any matters connected with the church building: www.churchcare.co.uk
- www.lincoln.anglican.org

TRB / 31 January 2012