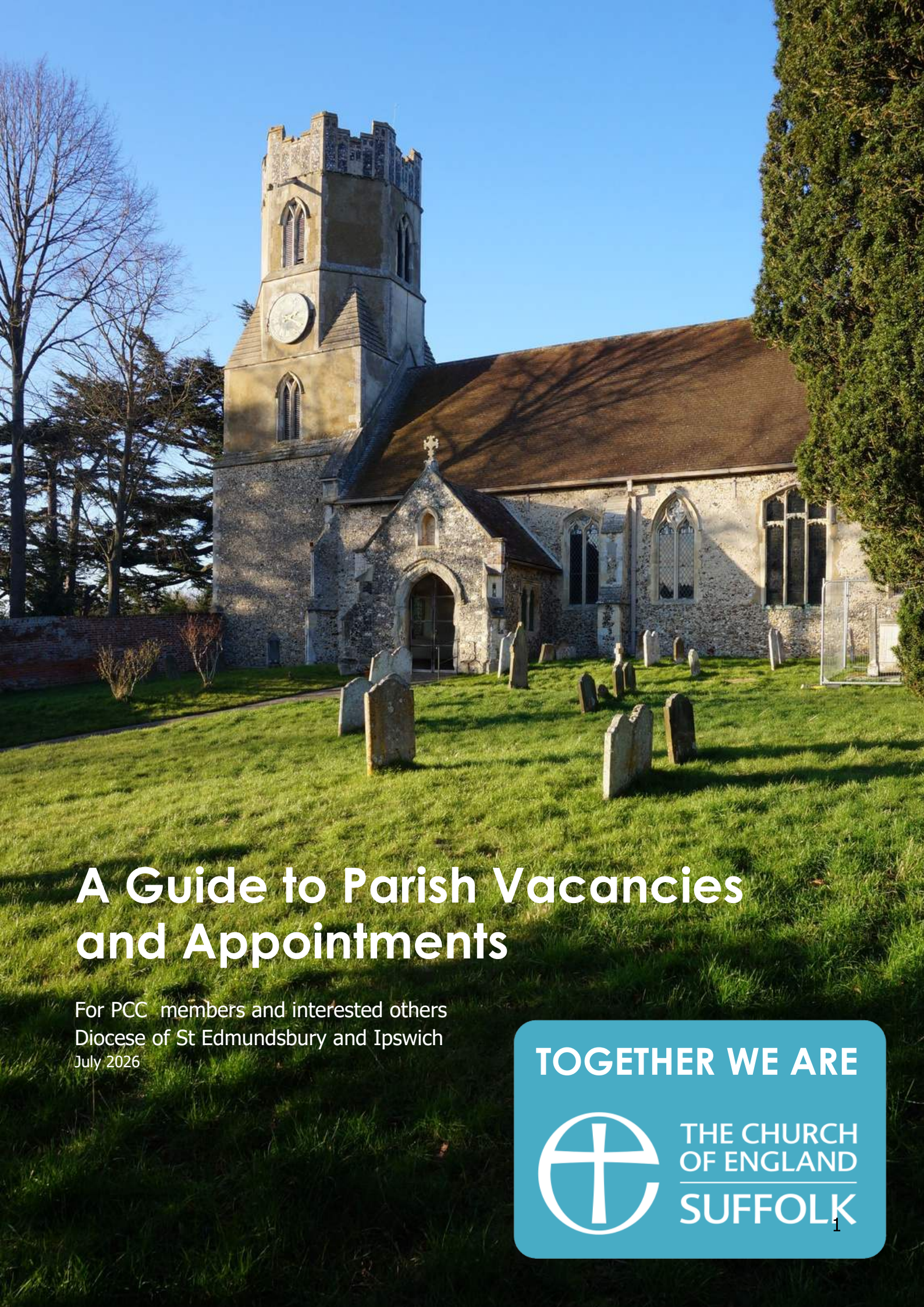


A Guide to Parish Vacancies and Appointments

For PCC members and interested others
Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
July 2026

TOGETHER WE ARE

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
SUFFOLK

Contents

Page 3 Welcome
Page 4 Useful contacts

Page 5 Preparing for the Vacancy
The outgoing priest
The churchwardens
The parochial church council (PCC)
The parsonage house
- Letting
- Churchwardens' responsibilities
- Utilities
- Keys
- Insurance
- Vacancy inspection
- Worship and visiting clergy

Page 10 The Appointment Process
Introduction
Patrons
Priest in charge or incumbent? – suspension of presentation
Administration
Starting the process
Support during the process
The meetings
- The pre-vacancy meeting
- The PCC (section 11) meeting
- Multi-parish benefices
- The joint (section 12) meeting

The Selection of the Incumbent
- Confidentiality
- Advertising
- Shortlisting
- The interview

Page 17 Welcoming the New Priest
The service of welcome: licensing or institution
The parsonage house
Useful information for your parish priest
So now you have a new priest!

Page 19 Appendices
Appendix A: Creating the profile
Appendix B: Advertising your post
Appendix C: Lightwave Guidelines
Appendix D: Vacancy Checklist

Welcome

Going into a vacancy may feel daunting. As the current parish priest prepares to leave, or indeed has already left, churchwardens, members of PCCs, rural/area deans, deanery lay chairs and others may find themselves wondering what happens next. What should they do to support the benefice and to ensure that the vacancy and the process of appointing a new parish priest go smoothly?

If you find yourself in this situation, then this document is for you! As archdeacons, we offer it as a guide to help you, to clarify expectations and procedures and to answer at least some of your questions. We will of course work closely with you through the vacancy. Ultimately, we all share the same purpose and goal: to work with God and to discern the leading of His Spirit, so that His kingdom may grow through the life and witness of our churches and people come to know the love of God in Jesus Christ.

This document deliberately tries to avoid too much technical jargon (there does have to be some!) and please note that for simplicity, whenever we refer to 'parish', we mean either parish or benefice, whichever the context requires. Most of our churches in this diocese are part of multi-parish benefices, although in a few of the largest, parish and benefice are one and the same.

Before we go any further, we want here to thank and acknowledge the wisdom of the registrar and of others from the diocesan office who have contributed to various sections.

Please feel able to contact any of us if you have any queries.

In the meantime, we will continue to pray and ask God's blessing on you as you enter this period of transition.

From

The Ven Dr David Jenkins, Archdeacon of Sudbury
The Ven Rich Henderson Archdeacon of Suffolk
The Ven Sam Brazier-Gibbs, Archdeacon of Ipswich



Useful Contacts

Archdeacon of Ipswich
The Ven Samantha Brazier-Gibbs
07802 428631
archdeacon.samantha@cofesuffolk.org

Archdeacon of Sudbury
The Ven Dr David Jenkins
07900 990073
archdeacon.david@cofesuffolk.org

The Archdeacon of Suffolk
The Ven Rich Henderson
07710 479497
archdeacon.rich@cofesuffolk.org

The Bishops' Office,
4 Park Road,
Ipswich, IP1 3ST

Designated Officer for Vacancies & Clergy HR Administrator:
Emily Fiddy | 01473 298546 | 07394 559887
emily.fiddy@cofesuffolk.org

Archdeacons' Personal Assistant
Alison Barker | 01473 298500
alison.barker@cofesuffolk.org

St Nicholas Centre
4 Cutler Street
Ipswich IP1 1UQ

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
Karen Galloway | 07785 621319
karen.galloway@cofesuffolk.org

Diocesan Registrar
Kevin Wilson | 01473 406270,
kevin-wilson@birketts.co.uk

Diocesan Surveyor & Head of Property
Dawn Gillett | 01473 298507
dawn.gillett@cofsuffolk.org

Diocesan website vacancies page:
www.cofesuffolk.org/about-us/vacancies

Our Growing in God prayer

O Lord, our God,
giver of life and growth,
grow in us a longing for you,
that we might deepen our faith;

grow in us a compassion for
your world,
that we might serve our
neighbours;

grow in us a vision for your
Kingdom,
that we might proclaim your love.

By the power of your Spirit, and in
Jesus' name.

Amen.

Preparing for the Vacancy

THE OUTGOING PRIEST

Saying farewell to a parish priest can be hard. You will no doubt want to plan some sort of farewell. They will be able to tell you when their final service is and might have ideas of how they would like to 'end' their ministry among you, but there may be additional ways you can mark the ending - perhaps a gathering, and/or a card or gift, to enable people to say their goodbyes.

Alongside this, there are practicalities that you need to consider. You may not be aware of all the different things your priest may have been involved with, so appendix D gives you a checklist designed to get everyone thinking – you may have other ideas too! Where there is a parish administrator, it is probably best to involve them in the handover.

Churchwardens, the other clergy, readers and licensed lay ministers are usually the other people who work most closely with the priest at this stage.

We suggest you give your priest a copy of appendix D in advance and then meet them to go through it. Your outgoing priest should prepare the service rota for the first three months after they leave.

THE CHURCHWARDEN

During the vacancy the churchwardens and the rural/area dean have legal responsibility for the parish (technically, they are known as sequestrators and the vacancy is known as a period of 'sequestration'). They ensure pastoral care and worship is maintained, fees for 'occasional offices' (baptisms, wedding and funerals etc.) and visiting clergy are administered correctly and PCCs continue to meet. Churchwardens please remember - your role is not to do it all, simply to ensure it is done!

Your most important role at this time is to encourage people to keep praying and to look after the morale of the congregation. Many new clergy comment on how encouraging it is to see the signs that the parish have been praying together for their new Incumbent. If you don't have a regular church prayer meeting is this something that could be set up?

Be positive, lend a willing ear and be ready to help – but remember to delegate areas of responsibility.

Many parishes have licensed ministers (e.g. readers, self-supporting clergy (SSM) and retired clergy (PTOs)) and elders who will take an active part in preparing and leading worship and providing pastoral care, for example, and who may be happy to oversee the rotas for services. Make use of the parish administrator, if you have one, and of the treasurer.

Teamwork and regular, clear communication, both within the team and with the wider congregation, are essential and lie at the heart of the smooth running of a vacancy.



You will at times need someone to turn to as a sounding board, particularly if unfamiliar circumstances arise. Please introduce yourself to the rural/area dean and archdeacon if you don't already know them. We are all there to help and will want to meet you to discuss the vacancy either before or immediately after the priest leaves.

Try to keep things going as before and to encourage everyone to take pride in keeping up standards. This is a real opportunity for members of the church to grow together and to share responsibility for ministry and mission. Indeed many people comment on how much they have grown personally through a vacancy.

If you haven't already been sent one, have a look at the CPAS document, 'Growing through a Vacancy'
www.cpas.org.uk/browse-everything/growing-through-vacancy-handbook
This includes some good tips worth thinking about.

You may need to consult the Church Representation Rules for technical provisions about PCCs and the Patronage (Benefices) Measure (see below). Links to these are:

www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/church-representation-rules

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/1986/3/



Safeguarding
Safeguarding is important for everyone and churchwardens will have done their basic and foundation level training. When a benefice goes into vacancy, it is important that at least two of the churchwardens in the benefice also complete the leadership level training so they are better equipped to support the benefice safeguarding officer(s) and are available as a point of contact in the absence of a parish priest. If churchwardens start leading worship in a vacancy, they should also complete the leadership level training. Leadership training can be accessed via the diocesan website - www.cofesuffolk.org/promoting-a-safer-church.

Communications
Try to ensure that your local community doesn't think that everything has stopped now that 'the vicar' has gone!

Think about what goes in any local magazine, on your noticeboards and website/social media page etc. and perhaps contact your local parish council.

If there is a potential or real 'crisis' that might hit the press, TV or social media platforms, please contact the rural/area dean and also diocesan communications: communications@cofesuffolk.org, or our 24/7 press office: Friel tel: 01473 561191 who help with our external publicity. Do not deal with the media yourself!

THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

A vacancy is a great opportunity for the PCC to take more responsibility for the running of the parish and for the congregation as a whole to work together in a common cause. The PCC represents the congregation and holds particular responsibility for the vacancy process as well as day-to-day matters.

A successful vacancy often depends on how much confidence the congregation has in those 'steering the ship', so remember to let people know what is going on. The churchwardens will rely even more than usual on every member playing their part. Constructive criticism, active participation, regular encouragement and practical support will all help the PCC work smoothly.

God's guidance and wisdom is always essential. Start and finish PCC meetings with prayer, making sure that you give it proper space and don't treat it as a mere formality. You might like to use the diocesan 'Growing in God' prayer (see page 4) or the Grace or the Lord's Prayer as well as praying for the meeting itself.

The PCC should not make any major changes to policies or service patterns or start major initiatives during a vacancy. However, small changes may demonstrate a desire to grow, so do not rule them out. Starting a prayer group, for example, is never a bad thing! If in doubt, please consult the rural/area dean, archdeacon or archdeacon for rural mission.

During the vacancy, the vice-chair will preside at meetings. It is usual, but not essential, that one of the churchwardens takes this role. The chairperson needs to be sensitive and have a light touch, but also be firm when needed. Try to keep meetings short and discussions inclusive of all. Business needs to be completed and accurately minuted, but meetings can be fun as well as focused.

THE PARSONAGE HOUSE

Letting

Legally, responsibility falls on the rural/area dean and churchwardens, but in this diocese, parsonage houses are managed by the diocesan office and are usually let during a vacancy. We normally agree to an initial six-month let, which can be extended as necessary. Before any letting, the diocesan surveyor will inspect the property and arrange for it to be put in a suitable condition.

The surveyor handles all negotiations and administration for the letting. Please remember to ensure that all possessions and equipment belonging to the PCC, e.g. photocopier, are removed from the house as soon as the priest has moved out.

It is usual to arrange a tour of the parsonage as part of the recruitment process. Contact the diocesan office to arrange this rather than speaking directly to the tenants.

Churchwardens' responsibilities

The churchwardens are asked to exercise general supervision of the property, its garden, land and any outbuildings while it is vacant. Please liaise with the diocesan property department to confirm what is required. Expenses incurred through upkeep of the garden may be chargeable to the parsonage committee, but please check with the diocese before agreeing to pay anyone for this.



Utilities
While the property is empty, payment of Council Tax, water, gas and electricity bills becomes the responsibility of the diocesan parsonage committee. Please forward immediately any such bills or notices from local authorities addressed to the house to the diocesan office (contact details on page 4).

It will have arranged with the outgoing priest to transfer responsibility for bills and will deal with payment. Please note, the diocesan office is not responsible for the cost of any telephone use by the parish during the vacancy (e.g. retaining the vicarage phone number and/or making use of voicemail on the vicarage office line). If you wish to put interim arrangements in place, please contact the diocesan office before doing so.

Keys
Having clarified arrangements with the diocesan office, the outgoing priest should leave all keys labelled within the house (in a secure place) and give the diocesan surveyor a main door key at the pre-vacancy check. Once the necessary works and checks have been carried out by the diocesan representatives, a key may be returned to the churchwardens/local person for weekly checks, depending on individual circumstances.

Insurance
The diocesan board of finance (DBF) insures the parsonage house, but while it is vacant cover is slightly reduced. For this reason the heating system will be drained during the winter months. Any property left in the house belonging to the PCC will not be insured, so please ensure that it is removed.

Vacancy inspection
When a priest is appointed and an occupation date has been agreed, the diocesan surveyor will arrange to inspect the property in order to assess any necessary maintenance. If the house has been let, this will usually happen after the tenant has left.

The incoming priest will be sent a schedule of any work the diocese will carry out before they move in and the diocesan surveyor will ensure that it is carried out.

Please note, the diocese ensures that public spaces (such as study, entrance hall and downstairs cloakroom) are in a good state of repair, and the incoming priest will receive a removal grant to cover any decorating, carpeting etc. they want to do elsewhere in the property.

It is not the responsibility of the parish to pay for or arrange for any of this. However, if the benefice wishes to help in any way (eg with decorating) they can let their Archdeacon know.

For any queries relating to the parsonage house, please contact the diocesan property team on 01473 298512 or email: property@cofesuffolk.org where someone will be happy to help.



WORSHIP AND VISITING CLERGY

The pattern of services should normally continue as before, and any services being taken by lay ministers or other clergy who usually take services in the parish can continue uninterrupted. However, we accept that occasionally a PCC may have to reduce the number or change the type of service (after discussion with the wider benefice where relevant), especially where it proves hard to find a priest to preside at Holy Communion.

You may need to invite clergy and lay ministers from outside the benefice to take services. Under sequestration, the diocesan board of finance (DBF) pays travel expenses (up to 100 miles return) for visiting licensed lay ministers (LLMs) and self-supporting ministers (SSMs) on receipt of a claim authorised by the archdeacon. Likewise, retired stipendiary clergy can also claim a fee of £25 for conducting a service (max £50/day), and for taking weddings and funerals. (N.B. Visiting stipendiary clergy claim expenses direct from the parish, but cannot claim fees.) SSMs and LLMs resident in the parish should continue to claim expenses in the same way as they did before the vacancy (i.e. from the parish or benefice account).

Please contact the rural/area dean for a list of ministers available to take services. They will usually ask the churchwardens to organise rotas and will work with you to make this as easy as possible. Churchwardens should of course also work with any benefice ministry team and the PCC where appropriate, although churchwardens have the final decision where there is a choice to be made. Don't forget that the bishops, your archdeacon and other diocesan clergy, such as those from the cathedral and diocesan office, may also be glad to come and take services for you.

In Ipswich there is a deanery vacancy officer who may be able to help you with this. Having different people to lead services each week can be an enriching experience. People often say how much they enjoy different styles, new ideas in sermons and seeing different approaches – even if it is not necessarily their preferred choice! It's an opportunity to enjoy the richness of ministry that God has given us.

Please be welcoming of visiting ministers – you know what you 'normally' do, they don't! Think too about how you offer 'hospitality': e.g. if they have travelled a long way, would they like a cuppa or need the toilet before the service? If it's an 8.00am service followed by another, would they like some light refreshment? Could someone in the parish bring a thermos of coffee and a croissant!? It is helpful to be in touch with the visiting minister a week or two before the service to confirm details. It is helpful to give them a contact phone number in case of a last minute need to get in touch. They might want to know a number of things e.g. what is the basic order of service; what are the readings; how many hymns – and whether they need to choose them; does someone lead the intercessions; what vestments are usually worn; will they be expected to sing any part of the liturgy; will any children be present?

The minister may suggest changes, so please be prepared to be flexible. On a practical note, they may want to know about microphones, parking, and whether there are toilets!

Some parishes prepare a set 'guide' to their normal service, which they send out to every visiting minister. Sometimes the outgoing priest prepares this before they leave. Ask your Archdeacon if you would value a 'guide' which you can then populate with local information and send out.

The Appointment Process

INTRODUCTION

The process of appointing a new priest to fill a vacancy is governed by the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 (as amended by later measures) www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/1986/3.

For legal purposes, the procedures are rather different when a team vicar is to be appointed and they don't apply at all to the appointment of a priest in charge rather than an incumbent (see the explanation of these terms below). Nevertheless, this diocese effectively operates the 1986 process in almost every case and that is what we describe here. The archdeacon or patron will inform the parish when there are slight variations. (N.B. The appointment will be for the whole benefice, but for simplicity, we refer here to 'parish', as each parish in a benefice will need to take note of the process.)

The aim of all appointments is to provide a framework to discern who God, through the Holy Spirit, is calling to be the next parish priest. This involves discussion and collaboration with three parties: the parish, the patron(s) and the bishop. Above all, it requires prayer and an openness to God's wisdom and guidance.

Please make prayer a core part of any meeting related to the vacancy and include praying for the vacancy process in the intercessions in services.

Patrons

Historically, the patron of a parish did actually select and appoint the priest, to whom the bishop would then give authority to minister. It was a valuable right and used to be freely transferable. Things have changed, but the role of the patron is still important and technically, it is the patron who presents the new incumbent to the benefice i.e. asks the bishop to appoint Revd. X (the right of presentation). For many parishes, the diocesan bishop is the patron, which simplifies the appointment process.

In other parishes, the patron may be an individual or a corporate body, and in some there will be several patrons who take it in turns to act or else do so jointly. Patrons vary in approach, but their role is to serve the best interests and traditions of the parish and to work alongside it. They can be very helpful and often take the lead in the appointment, working closely with you and the diocese. Your archdeacon can explain more and the corporate patrons often have websites with useful information.



Priest in charge or incumbent? - suspension of presentation

When a vacancy arises the bishop has the opportunity to suspend the patron's right of presentation. Suspension commonly happens where future pastoral re-organisation is envisaged e.g. uniting parishes, or putting them into one benefice or moving them between benefices. The process starts with discussions in the deanery followed by a recommendation to the bishop from the archdeaconry mission and pastoral committee. The bishop must then obtain the consent of the diocesan mission and pastoral committee and, through the archdeacon, consult with the patron, parish, rural/area dean and deanery lay chair. Instead of appointing an incumbent, the bishop will normally appoint a priest in charge, although the benefice technically remains vacant.

Whether or not the right of presentation is suspended, the appointment process for a priest in charge is for all practical purposes the same as for an incumbent. In both cases, all three parties – patron, bishop and parish - are closely involved. The final decision always lies with the diocesan bishop, who decides whether or not to license the nominated candidate.

Administration

Responsibility for liaising with the parish, bishop and patron lies with the archdeacon, who also works closely with the rural/area dean and deanery lay chair. Administration, including formal paperwork and any advertising, is routed through the Designated Officer for Vacancies from the bishop's office. If a benefice is not suspended, the patron has the right to take the lead and some do.

Starting the process

The vacancy process usually takes several months to allow for sufficient consultation and the preparation of the parish profile (see below). It may well start before the outgoing parish priest has actually left. A vacancy can be challenging for a parish, but it is also an opportunity to step back, give thanks for what has been and then to look forward and reflect on the needs of the parish rather than rushing to replace the outgoing priest immediately. However, because vacancies are becoming increasingly difficult to fill and the post may need to be advertised more than once, starting the process early can help avoid a long period without a parish priest.

Support during the process

In addition to help from the archdeacon, rural/area dean and deanery lay chair, training and support are also available for PCCs on request, tailored to their individual requirements. This may cover thinking through the parish profile, defining the qualities required in a new incumbent and/or preparing to take part in the selection panel/interview. Please contact the Revd Eleanor Goodison in the first instance (Eleanor.goodison@gmail.com, 07876 143579) if you wish to take up this opportunity.



THE MEETINGS

In this diocese, there are usually three meetings in the appointment process, the latter two governed by the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 and subsequent amendments:

1. The pre-vacancy meeting
2. The PCC (section 11) meeting
3. The joint (section 12) meeting

The pre-vacancy meeting

This is an informal meeting, usually initiated by the archdeacon, involving the churchwardens, the rural/area dean and/or deanery lay chair. It normally takes place once the vacancy has been formally announced (the outgoing priest may be asked to sign a deed of resignation before this happens.) Its purpose is to assure the churchwardens of the support of the diocese and to outline the process. Following this meeting, the PCC starts work on the parish profile (see appendix A for guidance on this) and collaborates with any other parishes in the benefice to create a draft benefice profile in preparation for the section 11 meeting.

As you consider the profile, you might like to involve Lightwave (if you are in a rural setting) and consider the part they might play in your benefice going forward, even if you don't currently have an active Lightwave group. If there is an active Lightwave group in the benefice, please see appendix C for further guidance on how the group might be involved in the vacancy process.

The archdeacon will probably also discuss with you whether the post is being advertised at the right level, eg if a half-time post needs to become a full-time post (if finances allow) or whether the benefice can sustain a full-time post or whether further consideration needs to be given about appointing a so-called 0.5 post (3 days/week plus Sundays) or a 'House for Duty' post (2 days/week plus Sundays) instead.

The PCC Section 11 meeting

The PCC will be asked to hold a meeting for:

- Agreeing the parish profile, which describes the conditions, needs and traditions of the parish. This should be sent as soon as possible to the archdeacon and the archdeacon's PA, who passes it to the bishop and the patron.
- Appointing two lay members of the PCC (but see ** below and appendix C) to act as representatives of the PCC in the selection of the new priest.
- Discussing the need and arrangements for advertising the post (see appendix B for guidance on this).
- Deciding whether to request a 'section 12' meeting. In practice the PCC doesn't need to do so, because in this diocese, that meeting will happen automatically to enable the bishop (and patron if they so wish) to hear the views of the parish and be actively involved in the process before interview.
- Deciding whether to request a written statement from the bishop describing the needs of the diocese, and the wider church. (Again, the PCC doesn't need to do this, because the bishop's office automatically supplies a statement for inclusion in the profile.

The section 11 meeting is for all members of the PCC, excluding the outgoing priest and their spouse/civil partner, and the patron. The bishop and archdeacon do not attend. The meeting is usually chaired by the rural/area dean, and the deanery lay chair may attend.

It should also agree a venue for the section 12 meeting (see below), which should be somewhere with sufficient parking, toilets and facilities for refreshments (e.g. coffee/tea and biscuits on arrival). The provisional date and time of the section 12 meeting will usually already have been notified to the churchwardens by the archdeacon, although this may be changed if the section 11 meeting feels that more time to prepare for it is needed (e.g. if the profile needs significant adjustment).

It is also useful for the section 11 meeting to think about where interview candidates will stay overnight if travelling from a distance. This may be with a parishioner or in a local hotel or bed and breakfast. The cost of this accommodation and of the candidates' travel expenses is met by the parish/benefice. Please liaise with the Bishop's Office about this.

Finally, the meeting should agree a potential venue for the interviews. There needs to be sufficient parking, and somewhere for candidates to wait, as well as a room for the interview itself. Toilets, simple refreshments and warmth are essential. The interview usually follows a service of Holy Communion where the bishop presides, so is often in or near a church.

You should nominate someone or a small group to take responsibility for planning the interview days (see below). Following some good experiences in 2020, some aspects of the interview may take place via Zoom, if desirable.

Following the meeting, the chairperson notifies the Bishop's Office of the elected parish representatives, the decision about advertising and any other decisions.

**** Multi-parish benefices**

Many benefices are 'multi-parish', comprising two or more parishes. In such a case, then, unless there is a team council or joint church council, the section 11 meeting should be of all the benefice PCCs together.

Ideally, the PCCs should try to agree a joint profile for the whole benefice, although individual parishes may wish to provide their own separate statements. Other decisions must be joint decisions.

Each PCC is entitled to appoint one or two representatives in the selection process. However, in some cases even just one for every PCC will still make a very large interview panel once the bishop, patron, rural/area dean and lay chair are also included - which might be a bit daunting for the candidate(s)! Therefore the section 11 meeting should decide that only a specified number of the PCC representatives will actually participate in the selection process, so that the panel remains representative of the benefice but is not overwhelming. The meeting will decide who they should be.

It is helpful if the meeting can agree on one person to be the point of contact between the archdeacon, patron, parish representatives and churchwardens.



The joint (Section 12) meeting
This meeting is for all members of the PCC(s) as for the section 11 meeting, and in this diocese it is usually chaired by a bishop and attended by the archdeacon, patron(s), rural/area dean and deanery lay chair.

Its purpose is to discuss and agree any final adjustments to the parish profile and the role description to clarify the situation about the parsonage house and any pastoral re-organisation, and to outline the next stages of the appointment process, including dates for advertising and interview.

Please note the requirement to start or oversee two new worshipping communities within the first five years of the appointment. A model agenda will be sent out by the Archdeacon or Bishop's Office.



THE SELECTION OF THE INCUMBENT/PRIEST-IN-CHARGE

Confidentiality
Throughout this part of the process, all details of applicants must be kept strictly confidential to the elected parish representatives. This can be very challenging as people will inevitably ask and want to know about potential candidates and the outcome of any interviews. Because of legal formalities and safeguarding checks, it may be two or more weeks before an appointment can be confirmed and absolute silence must be maintained until the official announcement.

The reply to any enquiry or 'fishing' must always be that the information is confidential and any decision about the appointment is in the hands of the bishop. Details (paper or electronic) must be destroyed shortly after they have been used for the interview and a selection made.

Advertising
See appendix B.

Shortlisting
The advert will state a closing date for applications. Once this date has passed, the bishop's office or patron circulates applications to the parish representatives and, if required, there is a process of shortlisting prior to interviews.

There may be only one suitable applicant, in which case the decision may be to go ahead with the interview or to consider re-advertising.

Sometimes something in the profile or advert may need tweaking to make the post more attractive but please note that the Church Times does not usually allow such changes to be made without extra cost.

The Interview
This usually takes place over two days. The Bishop's Office or the Archdeacon will provide sample outlines of interview days to help in the planning. The standard questions are also circulated to the panel in advance. The time between shortlisting and interviews can be quite short, which is why the section 11 meeting should consider the arrangements and decide who will take responsibility for this planning.

Day one
This gives the people of the parish the opportunity to meet candidates (and sometimes their spouses or close friends if they are single), and for the candidates to ask questions and get a feel for the context.

Remember this is a process of prayerful discernment both for the receiving parish and the potential parish priest: is this the person God is calling to minister here? However, day one is not the formal interview and candidates, though clearly 'on show', must not feel grilled! You don't want to put them off, so do be friendly, open and honest.

As you plan the day, make sure you include enough opportunities for food/drinks and loo stops! Remember not to exhaust the candidates – so don't finish too late. You and they will need time to reflect before the next day. As before, make sure that parishioners keep the candidates' details confidential.

Things you might like to include on the day:

- A visit to the parsonage house – liaise with the diocesan office property team about gaining access and timings. If there is a tenant, it may be necessary for all candidates to visit at the same time.
- A visit to the various churches (it may not be possible to visit all in a large multi parish benefice)
- A visit to a local school/college – arrange this with the headteacher. Again, it may have to involve all the candidates at the same time.
- A meeting with the 'ministry team' – e.g. SSMs, other licensed clergy in the benefice, readers, elders. This could be over lunch or tea.
- A meeting with children and young people's leaders, perhaps including some young people. Again, it could be organised around food.
- An evening meal/bring and share supper (often fondly called 'death by quiche'!) when a wider group of parishioners can be invited.
- Evening prayer/compline. Who will lead? – not the candidate!



Day two

The interview process starts with a short, said service of Holy Communion (which anyone, including the candidates and their spouses/friends, can attend) where the bishop presides.

The interview panel convenes immediately afterwards and is usually chaired by the bishop. The parish representatives, rural/area dean, deanery lay chair and patron are also present.

Each candidate will be asked the same questions, and these will be agreed and allocated by the panel before the interviews, based on the standard questions already received from the Bishop's Office.

The chair of the interview panel usually asks for any suggestions for supplementary questions to make the questions more specific to the particular post.

Each interview usually lasts between 45-60 minutes and often includes a short, prepared presentation or homily from the candidate. Candidates are free to go after their interview.

The panel meets to make its decision immediately after all the candidates have been interviewed. The patron may need to be consulted (if not present). The panel's decision is a recommendation to the diocesan bishop, who has the final say. Once this is confirmed (often on the same day), the bishop contacts the preferred candidate to offer the post and see if they want to accept it. The Bishop will also contact any unsuccessful candidates and offer feedback if desired.



Welcoming the new Priest

The announcement of the new priest is co-ordinated so that it happens in the priest's current benefice on the same day as in yours. Remember it may be two or more weeks after the interview. A priest usually has to give three months' notice, so you now have time to prepare to welcome them. When you finally meet them, please don't expect them to remember your name first time: they know nobody and so many new faces will take time to learn. If you can repeat your name when you meet them a second – and third - time, they will be very grateful!

The formal service of welcome - Licensing or Institution

The date for the formal service of welcome will have been agreed with the bishop.

Once you know the date you might like to do is to be in touch with your local press and radio station to see if they would like to advertise or cover the service. They are often more than happy to do this and it means that the wider community start looking forward to your new Priest too.

At the service, a new incumbent will be instituted (or collated if the bishop is the patron) and inducted; a new priest in charge will be licensed and installed. (The expressions are legal ones reflected in the wording of the document the priest receives and in physical aspects of the service in church.)

The bishop's PA will liaise with the churchwardens and the incoming priest to arrange the service, for which there is a set format. At the service there may be a collection which may be, for example, for the benefice, Kagera or the Bishop's training fund. The rural/area dean usually conducts a rehearsal a day or two before the actual service and the Order of Service is usually printed and paid for by the local church once it has been agreed by the Bishop's Office.

Invitations will need to be sent out by the parish. In addition to encouraging parishioners to attend, please invite all deanery clergy and lay officers (e.g. members of the Lightwave or Inspiring Ipswich teams), representatives of other local churches, and local 'dignitaries' such as parish councillors and headteachers, as well as the Diocesan Secretary, patrons and a representative from the Mothers' Union and cathedral.

The Bishop's Office will be able to give you the details of the patrons. The new priest will also want to invite their family and friends.

Think carefully about the venue: parking, seating, where clergy will robe, options for refreshments, and toilets are all important considerations.



The parsonage house
The diocesan property department will liaise with your new priest over their moving date, and will ensure that any necessary repairs etc. are completed before they move in. However, if you can do a quick final clean, check that lights are working, give the grass a final cut and leave a box of groceries/box of chocolates/ bottle of wine/ flowers to welcome them, the gesture will not go amiss!

A priest often moves in a week or two before the licensing/institution, so that they can settle in. Please don't expect them to engage with parishioners during this time – and do discourage parishioners from 'popping round'.

The priest may choose to meet with one or two people such as churchwardens or ministry team, but this should be minimal.

Useful information for your new priest
The information suggested below will vary, depending partly on what your outgoing priest left and what already exists, sometimes in a parish office. The suggested items may need to be repeated for each parish in a multi-parish benefice.

- A list of PCC members and officers with contact details (please follow your GDPR policy)
- A pastoral list of the congregation with names and contact details – possibly with photos too
- Contact details for other licensed ministers – SSMs, PTOs, readers, elders etc.
- Names and contact details of the chairs of local parish councils
- Information about local schools/pre-schools – contact details of the headteacher. (if there is a CofE school in the parish, the incumbent will be an ex-officio governor).
- Directions to the nearest post office/shop
- Details of bin collection days

So now you have a new priest!
Relief! Exhaustion! Excitement! Anticipation! Time to put our feet up?

A whole mixture of feelings, especially for those who have had particular responsibility during the vacancy. It may actually be hard for some to 'give up' the control and influence they have had. However you are feeling, your role now is to help your new priest to settle, and to be supportive and responsive to their questions.

There will inevitably be changes and you and your new priest will need to explore them together. A new future lies ahead, a new period of shared ministry, new hopes.

God has led you this far. Trust God to lead you onwards into God's future – whatever that holds.



APPENDIX A

CREATING THE PROFILE

The aim of the parish profile is to present a clear, attractive, upbeat and honest picture of the parish and the type of person you are looking for. It is the key document which candidates will look at (along with your website – so make sure that is also up to date and inviting!) Before you start:

- Find the previous profile - but don't be bound by it!
- Ask the Bishop's Office to send you some samples – or look on the diocesan website under vacancies.
- Agree who is co-ordinating – a small group? Someone from each parish? Do you have one or two people with particular IT/design skills who can create an attractive document?

Contents: some tips

- Front page – think of its visual impact, make it clear who you are and what the post is.
- High resolution, well-shot, up-to-date photos add impact. Try to have more pictures of people than buildings. Make sure you have permission for all your photos, especially the ones of children and young people.
- A contents page is useful.
- The first page or two is critical: first impressions!
    - Say what you are looking for in the new parish priest – what skills, gifts and personality.
    - Describe who you are – your vision/hopes/needs, your church tradition.
    - Aim in the first page or two to help the potential priest answer the question: "what is the 'job'? – and might I 'fit'?" They need to get a sense that there is a 'job' to do – so include something about where you see areas for growth as well as describing your strengths.
- Include any specific positives, e.g. run local food bank/pantry? Youth group
- Describe what you are aiming for (or achieving) eco awards, carbon net zero, contactless giving for example.
- Don't forget to assure the candidate that there are people who will support and work with them and care for their well-being such as respecting their days off.
- Say something about the local area. Candidates with families, for example, will want to know about schools. Healthcare, road and transport links and places to visit are also useful – sell Suffolk!
- A map is helpful to show where the benefice is.
- Details of the individual parishes. Each parish in a multi-parish-benefice could write their own section.
- Beware of giving too much historical information about the building etc. instead focus on key hopes, vision, specific aspects of the role that might attract someone to the post.
- Say something about your activities – and tempt them to find out more from your website!
- Include a bit about the rectory, including photos outside (and inside if you can)
- Layout
    - Less can be more – 'white space' around blocks of text is important. So think about the use of text boxes, different fonts, graphics etc.
    - Make it easy to read – visually attractive and factually accurate.
    - Dense text and too much information can be off-putting.
- Remember to give live weblinks where relevant.
- Ask the rural/area dean and lay chair to write something about the deanery.
- Ask the Bishop's Office to send you the sections about the diocese and Lightwave, especially if you are in the archdeaconries of Suffolk or Sudbury.
- See appendix C if there is an active Lightwave group in the benefice.
- Statistical/factual information about the benefice. However, much of this will already be in the 'role description', which is prepared by the Designated Officer who will ask you for help in preparing it, so there is no need to repeat it in the profile.

APPENDIX B

ADVERTISING YOUR POST

Normally, the post will be advertised and the section 11 meeting will agree details.

The archdeacon will draft the advert (based on the parish profile) and liaise with the parish representatives and rural/area dean about the wording.

There is a standard diocesan template (see right and below) and the archdeacon will ensure the post is advertised according to the parish's wishes. The advert will also have a line which indicates that the advert is subject to a DBS check, as this is in line with our diocesan safer recruiting policy.

The vacancy will automatically be placed on the diocesan website and in eNews along with the parish profile and role description.

The patron may also choose to advertise the post through their networks (e.g. New Wine, HTB, Forward in Faith etc).

It is for the section 11 meeting to decide if it wishes to advertise in the national church newspapers (hard copy and online versions).

The parish/benefice pays for this (unless you have a generous patron!). Most benefices choose to advertise in the Church Times. There are various size options, which affect the costs. Costs vary from about £800 for a standard advert to £1000+ for a larger version. None of the adverts allow for much text so it's worth thinking through what's really important. There is also the option of paying an additional 20% premium which allows the advert to be placed 'until filled'. This means that should the post not be filled first time round, the PCC/patron does not have to pay for a second period of advertising. It also allows the advert to run for four weeks before the closing date, rather than the standard two weeks. Many parishes choose this option.

If the parish elects to pay for an advert in the Church Times or elsewhere, the section 11 meeting should agree how the cost will be shared across the benefice. It is helpful if one person (usually a treasurer) is nominated to receive the invoice. Please notify the Designated Officer who this is.



TOGETHER WE ARE

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND SUFFOLK

RECTOR | NORTH BOSMERE BENEFICE

Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

We wish to appoint a Rector for our eight parish benefice in the beautiful mid-Suffolk countryside between Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich who will:

- Share a deeply rooted Christian faith, encouraging us in our prayer and worship
- Reach out beyond our regular worshippers, especially to families, children and young adults
- Further develop our work in our two Church of England VA primary schools
- Work collaboratively with our supportive, committed PCCs, lay and ordained ministry team and church members
- Offer sensitive pastoral support to the whole community

We offer:

- Practical, prayerful and loving support and friendship
- Time and opportunity to nurture your personal faith and achieve a good work / life balance
- Full payment of approved expenses, part time administrative support if required and a modernised four bedroom rectory with garden

Closing date: 23 February 2026

Interview date: 10/11 March 2026

For an informal conversation please contact:
archdeacon.david@cofesuffolk.org
01473 252829 | 07900 990073
Full details can be downloaded from **www.cofesuffolk.org**
Enhanced DBS check required

APPENDIX C

GUIDANCE NOTE FOR BENEFICES IN VACANCY WHERE THIS IS AN ACTIVE LIGHTWAVE GROUP

A vacancy can be a great time for churches in a benefice including Lightwave groups to seek to bless each other and to become closer in every way as everyone prays for and works together towards appointing a new priest.

The presence of a Lightwave group can be seen as a positive sign of the desire for growth and be evidence of a rich variety of worship styes and commitment to mission for any potential applicants.

Lightwave groups can be a significant presence in a benefice, especially where there are very small parish churches. It may therefore be appropriate to invite the leader to the pre-vacancy meeting so that they are aware of the process from the start, and for the group to have representatives attending the section 11 and 12 meetings.

It is very desirable for the group to be proportionately represented in both the parish profile and the interview process. It is for the statutory Section 11 meeting to decide what that proportionate representation should look like as this meeting is the place where the profile and interview panel is decided.

The Profile

Where there is a Lightwave Group in the benefice, this should be made clear in the profile and the Lightwave group should be encouraged to contribute something about itself including how it relates to the benefice and contributes to mission. It may be appropriate for a Lightwave representative to be part of the profile-writing group.

Where the Lightwave Group is under a Bishop's Mission Order, the leaders of the local Lightwave group will make sure a contribution to the Benefice Profile is written and checked with the chair of the BMO Council before submitting it.

The Interview Process

It may be appropriate for the Lightwave group to be included on the day the candidates visit, giving candidates an opportunity to meet with members of the group. The interview panel is agreed by the Section 11 meeting. Parishes usually agree two representatives from each parish, though some choose to reduce that number so that the panel size does not overwhelm candidates. Panel size is also an important consideration for the section 11 meeting in terms of how Lightwave groups might be represented. The section 11 meeting might consider the following:

A. If the Lightwave group in the benefice is governed by one of the PCCs, it will normally be for that PCC to include the consideration of Lightwave representation in the selection of their own parish reps. However, in some circumstances, for example where a Lightwave group is particularly active and well-established, the Section 11 meeting may agree that the Lightwave group should additionally have its own rep. Consideration of this and who this might be should be discussed in advance of the Section 11 with the Rural Dean.

B. If the Lightwave group in the benefice is governed by the Bishop's Mission Order Council, the BMO Council is the equivalent body of the PCC. In such a case it would be good for the Rural Dean to ask the BMO Council to recommend a representative or representatives. The BMO Council will make a recommendation in consultation with the Lightwave group leaders and take into account any advice communicated to them by the pre-vacancy meeting, the rural dean or others in the benefice. Whether to accept this recommendation will lie with the Section 11 meeting.

APPENDIX D

CHECK LIST

Pastoral
Do you have names and contact details of:
1. any who receive Holy Communion at home?
2. people whom the priest visits/phones regularly?
3. any residential care homes?
Who will:
4. be the main point of contact/take emergency calls?
5. take sick/home communions?

Baptisms
Make sure you know:
a) who deals or will deal with bookings for baptisms
b) who will do any baptism visits
c. who will deal with certificates/candles/cards/leaflets.

Weddings
Do you know:
a. who wedding enquiries will be made to?
b. about legalities relating to weddings e.g. divorcees?
c. about banns of marriage – the register, ensuring they are called, issuing certificates?
d. who to contact if you have a query (probably rural/area dean or registrar).

Funerals and churchyards
The outgoing priest should inform the funeral directors of the new arrangements for funeral bookings.
Do you know:
a. who will deal with funeral enquiries and organising funerals?
b. the contact details of funeral directors, grave diggers, organists, bell captains etc?
c. who will forward requests for monuments/inscriptions to the rural/area dean?

Church Services
The outgoing priest will normally organise the rota for the first three months if you ask them.
Do you know:
a. who will be responsible for arranging cover for Sunday/midweek services?
b. the contact details for local priests and readers who may be able to take services?
c. what needs to happen to prepare the church – who orders wine/wafers – including gluten free wafers, candles, the Advent wreath, palm crosses, Paschal candle etc.? Prepares the linen? Changes altar frontals etc.? Details of how much and when to order and costs. (There may be catalogues or online details.)
d. what are the key services already agreed in the diary? This may include seasonal services – e.g. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Remembrance, Harvest. Other special services – e.g. Mothering Sunday (who organises flowers?), Palm Sunday (who organises the donkey!?), Christingle (who prepares the Christingles?). Are there sample orders of service available (hard copy or electronically)?

Fresh Expressions
Do you know:
a. who is on the teams leading any Fresh Expressions in the benefice?
b. how leaders/teams will be supported and supervised in the vacancy?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX D
CHECK LIST

Licensed Lay Ministers
Do you know:
a. agreed arrangements for meetings of the ministry team in the vacancy?
b. specific arrangements for supervision and support for licensed ministers?

Schools
Do you:
a. have contact details of local schools?
b. know about arrangements for any school services and assemblies?

Financial Matters
Do you:
a. have a list of current parochial fees e.g. for occasional offices, memorials?
b. know about the payment of fees/travel expenses to visiting clergy/readers to take services?
c. know about the process for ensuring fees/expenses are paid?
d. have any bank account mandates that need to be changed? (The PCC treasurer should be able to help here.)
e. know the budget for the year ahead and the main financial/stewardship challenges?

Buildings
Who will:
a. ensure the church and other buildings etc remain insured with current certificates on view?
b. ensure the rural/area dean knows of any proposed changes to churchyard or church building and fabric?

Administration
(This may be in paper files or stored electronically.) Do you have:
a. access to all relevant parish-related documents – including any passwords to computers/parish equipment?
b. information about contracts for office equipment - e.g. photocopier?
c. keys/codes for the safe and details of the registers, terrier etc?
Have you thought about:
a. who will deal with any general correspondence?
b. who will produce any weekly newssheet and ensure distribution?
c. who will keep noticeboards and the website up to date?
d. changing email addresses if necessary?
e. changing any messages on phones?
f. PCC/APCM – are the vice-chair, the electoral roll officer and PCC secretary informed about calling meetings/preparations for the APCM?
g. whether the outgoing priest was ex officio a trustee of any local organisation? Notify it and check if and how contact may continue.

Ecumenical Links
Are there any links with other churches that need to be maintained?
b. How will this be done?

Getting help
Do you know how to access the diocesan office?
b. Have you got the contact details for the rural/area dean and archdeacon?

THIS IS WHO WE ARE. TOGETHER.

We pray to be generous and visible people of Jesus Christ























