

**Going into Vacancy**

**A Practical Guide for**

**Churchwardens**

**Introduction**

This booklet is written to support churchwardens through the vacancy process. A second booklet is available that deals with the arrival of a new priest.

Where a vacancy has been carefully prepared for, and where the work is shared between a number of people in the congregation, some of whom may find themselves using gifts they have never before had a chance to discover, it can be an exciting and an encouraging time; there might always be some sense in which it is a waiting period, because during a vacancy parishes are requested only to make small changes to what is already happening.

During the vacancy, the churchwardens, supported by the Area Dean, have responsibility for:-

* All church services
* Safeguarding
* The parsonage house
* PCC meetings and responsibilities
* Some money

**Before the Priest Leaves**

Much of what a priest does in a parish/benefice, while appreciated in general, can be almost unknown in detail to most of the PCC and sometimes even to the churchwardens. When the priest decides to leave they are not expected to make arrangements for what happens during the vacancy but should generally help the parish to prepare for the period when it will be without a parish priest. The kind of preparation needed will depend on a variety of local factors but should ensure that churchwardens or church officers are not suddenly loaded with responsibility for arrangements about which they have no knowledge.

To help the churchwardens plan for the vacancy, it would be helpful if the outgoing parish priest leaves them details about the following, which will also be useful when the time comes to complete a parish profile. This list is also available as a checklist on the website.

* The format of the regular Sunday services.
  + Include details of sacristan duties
* Details of weekday services and any special services (e.g. Saints’ Days, Mothering Sunday, Christingle, Mission Sunday).
* Names of Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers), self supporting clergy and retired clergy in the benefice.
* Names of lay worship assistants, communion assistants, lay eucharistic ministers.
* Long term pastoral care situations (that are not confidential).
* Regular commitments for school assemblies/links with schools.
* Communion to the sick and housebound (state if usually taken by a lay eucharistic minister).
* Regular commitments for nursing homes/prisons/other institutions.
* Arrangements for booking baptisms, weddings and funerals.
  + Include details of local funeral directors.
* Details of any weddings and baptisms already booked.
* Churchyard arrangements.
  + Include details of grave diggers, monumental masons.
* The house.
* Parish paperwork for archiving.
* Any other helpful information.

**Church Services**

The churchwardens and the Area Dean should liaise as early as possible after the vacancy has been announced about the pattern of worship which will be maintained during the vacancy. Where possible, the normal Sunday services should always be maintained, including provision for at least one celebration of Holy Communion each Sunday in the benefice. It is helpful if the churchwardens in a multi parish benefice liaise with each other in arranging Sunday worship. The Area Dean will also want to know from the churchwardens whether there are any special concerns which ought to be taken into account with regard to assistant clergy, licensed lay ministers, or retired clergy living in the parish.

The Area Dean can also provide a list, with contact details, of local clergy who are licensed or have Permission to Officiate (PTO) in the diocese who would be willing to help out during the vacancy. The bishops, archdeacons, cathedral clergy, ordained diocesan officers and other senior clergy could also be invited to officiate. Details of fees for visiting clergy are covered in appendix 1.

The Area Dean can also suggest which local clergy would be willing to conduct occasional offices (baptisms, funerals and weddings). It must be remembered that no service in church should be arranged without the agreement of the churchwardens.

The churchwardens should ensure that visiting clergy and licensed lay ministers whose names are on the rota to lead services are reminded of the duty a few days before and that they have the correct time for the service and any other necessary information (e.g. with regard to readings, intercessions, hymns).

The churchwardens should arrange for the church to be unlocked in time for services and that there is access to the vestry for visiting clergy and licensed lay ministers. They will also need to ensure that the church is set up in advance for the service. If a service includes music, the churchwardens should also ensure that an organist (or music group) is on duty and that they are correctly briefed about the service.

The churchwardens must ensure that Banns of Marriage are called on the planned dates and that Banns Certificates are signed and issued. They are reminded that Banns must be called in the form prescribed at the principle act of worship on three Sundays. Generally, they should be published and signed by a clergy person. If a clergy person is not officiating they should be called by the authorised lay person officiating at the main service, who can be the churchwardens.

**Safeguarding**

In any vacancy, the Area Dean is responsible for all safeguarding documents presently held by the incumbent. It is the responsibility of the Area Dean to check with the priest before their departure if they hold any safeguarding documentation. They should be aware of any agreements with offenders, currently in place, and ensure these are passed to the new priest. They should check who has signed the agreement and liaise with the safeguarding adviser if any of the parish officers need support during the vacancy.

**The Parsonage House**

During a vacancy the churchwardens are responsible for the safety and security of the parsonage house, usually called The Vicarage or The Rectory. The property managers of the diocese can support you with this work. Information about the parsonage house will be sent to the churchwardens by the property department.

**PCC Meetings and Responsibilities**

The church representation rules make provision for the election of a lay member of council as its vice chair and stipulate that ‘during a vacancy the vice chair shall act as the chair and have all the powers vested in the chair’. The churchwardens should liaise with the lay vice chair of the PCC to ensure that PCC meetings continue to be held during the vacancy.

If the annual vestry and parochial meetings fall during the vacancy, the PCC secretary, together with the vice chair, should consult the Area Dean about the procedure for that meeting.

The churchwardens must remember that faculty jurisdiction procedures continue to apply and you should get in touch with the archdeacon in the event of any proposal to make changes or carry out repairs to the church building. You can also obtain advice from the DAC secretary (0113 3530 277).

**Money**

Fees payable for weddings, funerals and other items covered by the parochial fees tables should be dealt with as per the current system in place in the diocese. The PCC Treasurer should be familiar with this system.

Fees and travelling expenses for normal Sunday services and weekday services are covered by the Diocesan Guidelines on Casual Fees.

Hopefully, the PCC can take on responsibility for the parsonage house telephone, so maintaining the same number. If this is the case, the PCC can claim back these costs from the diocese. The majority of other expenses during a vacancy should be met by the PCC. If you have any questions about what can be claimed and for a claim form please contact the Team Co-ordinator of the Church Buildings and Pastoral Reorganisation team (Gemma Shearwood, [gemma.shearwood@leeds.anglican.org](mailto:gemma.shearwood@leeds.anglican.org), 0113 3530 226**.**

**Appendix 1**

**FEES FOR CASUAL DUTY**

***The fee for taking a public worship service on a Sunday or a weekday is £35. No more than £70.00 in total will be paid on any one day if several services are taken regardless of venue.***

**FEES**

1. Casual duty fees for Sunday or Weekday services are due to retired clergy, self-supporting ministers (SSMs) and chaplains not in receipt of a stipend during a benefice vacancy, subject to points (b) and (c) below:
2. It is not expected that non-stipendiary clergy would receive a fee for assisting in the benefice where they regularly worship (or are licensed) and that should be considered the norm during a vacancy. Casual duty fees for sickness, sabbatical or holiday are covered by the parish.
3. However, if a retired cleric or self-supporting minister has been asked by their Bishop or Archdeacon to take on long term (in excess of 3 months) pastoral care in any parish, they will be entitled to receive a fee for all services taken during the period they have been asked to provide pastoral care. This must be agreed by their Bishop or Archdeacon, and the agreement must be recorded, and notified in writing to the Finance Department.
4. **Stipendiary clergy** doing duty in other parishes receive no fees.
5. **Churchwardens** are reminded that the use of **licensed lay ministers** should be considered when services of Morning and Evening Prayers are being arranged. Fees are not due to licensed lay ministers conducting services, however, travelling expenses (see below) will be paid.

**PAYMENT**

1. Payment for covering ordinary services are made by the Diocesan Office through the monthly return form. A copy of the Form is attached to this notice and can be photocopied, or requested from the finance department ([finance@leeds.anglican.org](mailto:finance@leeds.anglican.org)).
2. Churchwardens should complete the form and send it to their **Area Dean** who signs it to authorise payment before forwarding to the Diocesan Office for processing.
3. Bank details and an e-mail address are requested to facilitate payment by BACS and e-mailing a remittance advice.
4. The full rate of 45p per mile is recommended for travel by car in accordance with the HMRC recommended rate and will alter in line with any changes HMRC may make in the future.
5. Stipendiary clergy, stipendiary chaplains and licensed lay ministers will receive only travel expenses. All retired clergy, SSMs and non-stipendiary chaplains will receive a fee as well as travel expenses.

**GENERAL**

1. **Churchwardens** during a vacancy have a duty to collect and account for all other fees due to PCCs, e.g. reading of banns, monuments etc.
2. This table may also be used as a guide in parishes when determining sums to be paid to visiting clergy or readers doing duty on other occasions (e.g. holiday or sickness relief). It is hoped PCCs would consider paying the fees at the same rates as the DBF.

The fee is linked to the DBF fee for a funeral and may change in line with any changes made to this statutory fee.

**Appendix 2**

**Clergy Cover in the Parish of: …………………………………………………………………………………..**

Diocese of Leeds, Church House, 17-19 York Place, Leeds, LS1 2EX DDI: 0113 200 540 Email: [finance@leeds.anglican.org](mailto:finance@leeds.anglican.org)

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**Please send form to Area Dean for authorisation.**

**Authorised by: .………………………………………………………………. Area Dean Date: ……**