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Church Society Trust holds patronage rights on behalf of Church Society which is a voluntary association of members of the Church of England.

Church Society exists to uphold biblical teaching and to promote and defend the character of the Church of England as a reformed and national Church. The Society is strongly committed to the supreme and final authority of the Bible as God's Word written.

Further information about Church Society and many other resources can be found on our website:

www.churchsociety.org

Information about the work of Church Society Trust can also be reached through:
www.churchsocietytrust.org.uk

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Clergy Appointments

Appointing an Incumbent under sole patronage



There is a lot of jargon associated with clergy appointments some of which is explained in our leaflet “Clergy Appointments - An Overview”. A flowchart showing the whole process is available on the Church Society website.

Appointing an Incumbent under sole patronage

This leaflet deals with the appointment of clergy to a situation in which they are to be Incumbent of a living to which Church Society Trust is the sole patron. It explains both the legal procedures and the Trust’s preferred way of working.

If a Benefice is suspended, or there is a possibility that it might be so, or if patronage is held jointly then please refer to other leaflets first.

Some Dioceses recommend that appointments be conducted in a specific way. However neither the old legislation nor the newer Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure lay down a detailed process merely certain fixed points. The decision about process is therefore in the hands of the Patrons, within the limits of the legislation, after consultation with the PCC and possibly the Bishop.

Players and Parts

An Incumbent can be a Rector, Vicar or Team Rector. The appointment of Team Vicars depends upon the details agreed in the scheme which created the Team Ministry.

There are four steps which are taken in an appointment.

- The Parochial Church Council(s) specify the post and the person they are seeking.
- The Patron(s) nominates with a view to later presenting a candidate.
- The Parish Representatives decide whether to accept the nominated candidate.
- The Bishop agrees to institute the incumbent, unless there are good grounds for not doing so.

Whilst this is the process in outline, it can be much more complicated in practice.

Precisely how the interview day is carried out depends upon negotiation but as there are several candidates to see it is possible that an overnight stay will be required particularly for those travelling from afar. Much the same observations as to the visit apply as were outlined under “headhunting” above regarding wives, who to meet and so on.

It is quite usual in this situation for the interview to be conducted by a panel including the parish reps, one or two of the Trust Directors and the Bishop or his representative. Again it is important to be careful in the conduct of interviews and it is especially important to be fair and consistent in the questions asked.

If the interview involves the patron, reps and Bishop then it is likely that having made a decision on the day that will be the final decision, although as before the Bishop will want to take references etc. Ideally, of course there needs to be unanimity and the patron must be prepared to nominate, the parish reps must be prepared to accept and the Bishop must be prepared to institute.

month of starting. The SOP will be quite general and apart from titles and names should be the same as published in the Diocesan Handbook. The service is part of the appointment process in which the various steps previously taken are publicly demonstrated as the Patron presents, the parishioners welcome and the Bishop institutes. If there was a Job Description this should be reviewed within 6 months.

Competitive Interviews

We have outlined above the traditional process which we have described as “headhunting” but in recent years it has become much more common to advertise and hold a competitive interview. Because the legislation assumes the traditional approach there is far less clarity and much more variety in how the competitive interview approach works in practice and although we have outlined the main way below there are countless variations.

The PCC will have requested advertising and the Trust Directors will agree with the PCC the form of advert to be used. It is expected that the PCC in requesting to advertise are also agreeing to pay! A decision will also need to be made on where to advertise. It is customary to advertise in one or both of the two main Church newspapers but other papers, such as Evangelicals Now, are also used. The Trust will put the advert on its own website, circulate it through the Church Society e-mail service and bring it to the attention of various clergy looking for a move. The Diocese will probably also put the advert on their website and in the Diocesan mailing and normally adverts also go to the Clergy Appointments Advisor who now mainly uses a website. The days in which some patrons only advertised in Horse and Hounds are not quite gone, but it is not unusual for adverts also to be placed in more specific publications.

Applications will be sent to the offices of Church Society and normally the short listing will take place at a full meeting of the Trust Directors. The Patron works from the Parish Profile which is why that document is so important. The Directors will then invite a number, normally 3 or 4, to interview.

Your Patrons

Church Society Trust is one of several large evangelical patronage societies who acquired their rights of patronage by various means in order to ensure the continuance of evangelical ministry knowing that at times in the past, and even sometimes today, there has been much hostility to such ministry in the wider Church. The Trust has a number of members some of whom are actively involved with patronage churches. The business of the Trust is conducted by seven Directors who are appointed from amongst the members of the Trust by the Council of Church Society.

The Trust Directors meet ten or eleven times a year to conduct their business as well as making visits to parishes, interviews, discussions with candidates and many informal contacts.

The Directors are assisted by the staff of Church Society including the General Secretary who also acts as Secretary to the Trust and himself visits Trust parishes. The Secretary and Directors are always pleased to receive invitations to preach or to meet with PCCs or clergy.

Many members of Church Society pray regularly for all the churches for which the Trust has patronage responsibilities. About once every 9 months the Society writes to parishes to ask for items to include in our prayer diary. In addition Church Society literature is regularly sent to clergy in the parishes where this is welcomed.

Starting the process

A vacancy can occur because someone moves to another post, retires, resigns, is removed from office by due process, or dies.

When the Bishop learns that there is to be a vacancy he will inform the “Designated Officer”. This might be the Diocesan Registrar, or Diocesan Secretary or Archdeacon.

It is possible at this point for suspension of presentation to be considered in which case please see our leaflet on suspensions. This present leaflet assumes no such suspension is taking place.

At the suitable point, no more than three months before a retirement and as close to the date of vacancy as possible in other situations, the Designated Officer issues a Notice of Vacancy to the Parish(es), Church Society Trust (CST) and other interested parties.

The Trust then has 9 months in which to make a nomination, otherwise their rights lapse to the Archbishop of the Province.

Once the PCC Secretary receives the notice of vacancy they must call a meeting of the PCC within four weeks. In most circumstances the PCC will know that there is going to be a vacancy and action can already have been taken and a meeting planned. Whether or not earlier work has been done this formal meeting must be held and certain business must be conducted, in particular:

- Approve the parish profile.
- Appoint parish representatives.
- Decide whether to consider resolutions under Ordination of Women Measure
- Decide whether to ask CST to advertise.

This meeting is normally known as the Section 11 Meeting. It is a meeting of the PCC and although sometimes an Archdeacon, or other person, may meet with the PCC they have no right to be present or attend the part of the meeting where the business listed above is conducted. There are exceptional meetings at which an Archdeacon may be present at or chair a PCC, but not a Section 11 meeting.

The PCC specifies

The first task of the PCC is to produce a Parish Profile, which will include a statement of needs and person specification. It is important that this is done well. Not only will it be how candidates learn about the parish but it gives a clear indication what the parish sees as its priorities for the future and the qualities required in a minister.

The PCC should not be afraid to be specific, nor of stating the obvious.

The Bishop institutes

Sometimes a candidate will arrange to see the Bishop on the same day that they visit the parish, though this is less common than it once was.

The Bishop will have a wider perspective on the ministry within an area and his wisdom is to be welcomed at every stage of the appointment process. However, within the formalities of the appointment the Bishop on receipt of the approved nomination must decide whether to institute.

There are certain situations under which he can refuse, particularly in relation to doctrinal and moral error and sometimes he will ask for a reference from another Bishop and have to treat the information in confidence. A candidate is entitled to see information passed over except in very limited circumstances relating to child protection. It is therefore possible, whilst being extremely rare, that a Bishop can have good reason not to institute without being able to share the details as to why.

Sometimes a Bishop may ask the reps to reconsider their acceptance of a nomination, but the Bishop has no legal authority to do this and it can amount to unfair discrimination.

If the Bishop has not stated reasons for refusing the nomination within four weeks then his agreement is deemed to have been given and the appointment can go ahead regardless.

The exception to all the above is the CRB check, which is now mandatory and sometimes does not come quickly. The normal way around this is to offer the post but subject to satisfactory clearance being obtained, however, often the announcement is not made until it has been completed.

The Appointment

Once all the above is complete an announcement can be made in both the parishes and agreement can be reached about when the institution will take place. The new Incumbent must be given a Statement of Particular (SOP) either before taking up post or within a

The Parish reps decide

The parish reps should now arrange to meet the candidate, show them round the parish and form a view as to whether they are the right person for this post. It would be normal to have a formal interview within this.

The Trust would also encourage the parish reps to make their own enquiries and, so long as it does not delay the process, to consider visiting the candidates present parish, incognito.

If the candidate is married it is likely that their wife will wish to visit as well - after all they are going to have to live in the place - but reps must be careful in how they handle this. People's circumstances vary widely and whilst a couple must be united in the call to ministry a clergy spouse should not be expected to fit a particular mould or perform certain tasks. Where there are such expectations on a the minister's wife it suggests that other members are not willing to serve as they should.

It is right that a candidate should meet others in the parish, particularly if there is a staff team. The candidate might also want to meet with the Area Dean. However, the reps must beware that the decision rests with them and asking for too many opinions can create difficulties and sometimes cause hurt. Wisdom is required in knowing just how much to involve others whilst at the same time giving the candidate a good idea of what they might be getting themselves into.

The parish reps and the candidate must now come to a mind as to whether they consider this appointment to be the Lord's will. Unless there are exceptional reasons this decision should be made fairly quickly, it is not fair to any party to delay this decision without very good reason.

If all the parties agree then there are forms to be filled in on which the patron formally nominates and the parish reps formally accept. This form then goes to the Bishop.

However, the danger of a profile is that it paints an unrealistic picture of a parish and sets out an impossible model for your future minister.

It is important to also keep in mind the wider climate in relation to discrimination in employment. There are some things it is appropriate to say, and some things it is not. This is particularly true in matters of age and whether the candidate is married. However, the Biblical priorities for ministry are vitally important and there is a climate which says you should not ask anything about personal life, whereas Scripture most definitely expects that you should. We cover this in more detail in our leaflet on Biblical Priorities in Leadership.

If there is more than one parish in the benefice then some mechanism will need to be agreed as to how the profile is produced. Sometimes it may be better to have a section agreed by all and then individual parts produced by each PCC separately, on other occasions it may be better to write it all together.

It makes sense for the PCC to appoint a small group to draft the profile but again that is a decision of the PCC, there is no hard and fast rule to be followed.

It is advisable and beneficial that a Job Description and Person Specification be drawn up at some point in the process. The Job Description has a particular use in relation to ministerial development, review and, potentially, capability. There is no requirement to draw these up nor is there any rule about who must do them or about how to resolve a difference of opinion. CST advises that they be produced at the same time as the Profile and indeed be seen as part of it. The alternative is to invite the Archdeacon or Diocesan HR staff to draw them up based on the profile.

The Bishop can ask that the Profile include a Diocesan statement of needs and this can be helpful, but the PCC is not bound to include it.

On receipt of the Profile the Bishop or the Trust can request a meeting of all the parties to discuss it and this will be done where it is felt that the Profile is unclear or where it says things that are inappropriate. This meeting is known as the Section 12 Meeting.

The PCC must also appoint parish representatives. Usually there are two reps but there can be situations where there are more, particularly where there are multiple parishes in a benefice. The role of parish rep used to fall to Churchwardens but that is no longer the case and the PCC is free to appoint any of its members. It can help if the reps have experience of interviewing in a secular context but it can equally be difficult for people to adjust to the fact that ordained ministry is a life, not a job, and that the Church's approach to appointments is not the same as the world's, not least because of the teaching set out in Scripture.

The PCC must also decide whether to consider the Resolutions on the ordained ministry of women. It is not necessary to vote on the resolutions, but consideration must be given to them. So, if the PCC has already passed Resolution A or B, or both, it must decide whether to reconsider them, or to continue without change. Likewise, if the resolutions have never been considered or were considered and not passed the PCC must now decide whether it wishes to consider them.

Passing Resolution B would mean that the PCC will only accept a man as incumbent. This resolution is binding on all the parties involved, representatives, patrons and Bishop. In multiple parish benefices if one parish passes the resolution it necessarily applies to the whole benefice.

Passing Resolution A means that a woman minister could not lead communion services in the interregnum or be appointed to other ordained posts in the parish/team. A parish cannot pass Resolution A if an ordained woman is already licensed to the parish.

There is no requirement to consider the so-called Resolution C (concerning extended oversight) but where a PCC has passed this it is usual for the Bishop exercising extended oversight to be involved at least informally in the appointment process and in such a situation the PCC should request this.

The PCC must lastly decide whether to ask the Trust to advertise. Patrons are not required to accept the request but if it does so then the PCC will be asked to pay for the advert. This point brings us into the two main ways in which an appointment can be made. The Trust prefers the traditional approach, which we think of as "headhunting"

and in which, whilst advertising is possible, it is not normally done. The second approach is the competitive interview in which advertising is usual, though not always necessary.

The two methods will be explained separately whilst admitting that the Trust prefers the former and no doubt the explanations are biased. It is possible, however, to have a mixed economy in which "headhunting" is tried first and if an appointment is not made then advertising and competitive interview takes place.

"Headhunting" - the Patron nominates

On receipt of the parish profile it is the job of the patron to find someone who fits what the parish is looking for, bearing in mind that even clergy are not perfect! The evangelical patronage societies together maintain a list of clergy seeking appointments and the Trust Directors in addition keep in contact with a large number of clergy.

Some clergy are not willing to apply for posts but will consider them if asked. This partly reflects the traditional system of appointments which many still prefer, partly it is because of the concept of the "call" to ministry and partly because applying for and being interviewed for posts can be disruptive and unsettling in ministry.

The Trust Directors are very open to suggestions as to people and word about vacancies travels fast in clergy circles.

If everything works smoothly the Trust Directors will start approaching individuals shortly after receipt of the profile, but they only do so one at a time. Some clergy respond immediately saying no, others ask for a few days to consider but if they are open to the possibility that this reflects the call of God then we would push for a prompt response.

If someone considers that this may be from the Lord then the Trust will contact the parish reps and invite them to consider the person. Taking this step means that the Trust Directors are prepared to nominate and present and they would not ordinarily expect to be involved in interviewing.