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## Clergy Appointments

# Conducting Interviews

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](http://www.churchsociety.org)**

Information about the work of Church Society Trust can also be reached through:  
[www.churchsocietytrust.org.uk](http://www.churchsocietytrust.org.uk)

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There is a lot of jargon associated with clergy appointments some of which is explained in our leaflet "Clergy Appointments - An Overview".

preservation and proclamation of what we believe to be the truth.

So, a question such as, 'What does being an evangelical mean to you?' can usefully tease out the mainspring of a candidate's ministry.

### **Concluding the interview**

Towards the end of the interview there should always be an opportunity given to the candidate to ask any questions of the Parish Representatives that he may have in mind, not least issues raised for him by the content of the Parish Profile.

At the end of the interview the candidate should be informed of what will happen next: e.g. 'we will now talk things over and contact you in the next 24 hours'. Once a decision has been made as to whether the Representatives consider the candidate to be the right person for the post the Patron should be informed.

This document, and links to other relevant material, can be found on the Church Society Trust web pages: [www.churchsocietytrust.org.uk](http://www.churchsocietytrust.org.uk)

### **Conducting Interviews**

Whatever system is used to identify the right person as the next Incumbent or Priest-in-Charge, sooner or later the Parish Representatives will be faced with the important task of meeting and interviewing candidates. There may have been informal meetings beforehand, and candidates may have met with key leaders in the local church, but it is the Representatives who have the responsibility formally to interview, and they will be required to signify in writing their agreement to any appointment.

### **What's special about interviewing clergy?**

Whether or not they have experience of interviewing in the secular sphere it is important to recognize that the Parish Representatives are looking for the kind of qualities outlined in the Pastoral Epistles as well as someone who has the necessary gifts and experience to tackle the particular situation in the parish(es) concerned. No candidate will be perfect (since clergy are as much sinners as anyone else!), but clergy are required to embody in their lifestyle the message they proclaim.

Furthermore we are interviewing someone not only for a post, but with a view to them and their family uprooting from their current environment and coming to live in a new community.

So we are looking for a life as much as a skill. We are looking for someone who we discern loves God and his Word, and will love the people of God who make up the church and the community in which the church is set.

The usual distinction which is made in secular circles between professional and personal life does not apply in the same way to clergy, who are called to 'be' as well as 'do'. For example, in writing to Titus, Paul exhorts him to 'teach what is in accord with sound doctrine' (Titus 2:1), and to live in such a way as to 'make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive.' (Titus 2:10)

## **The importance of prayer**

So, the interview process should be surrounded in prayer, not only by those directly involved, but by the parishioners who will be aware that interviews are taking place. We are seeking the person of God's choice, and we have a God who promises wisdom to those who ask (James 1:5).

## **Interview practicalities**

If there are several candidates to be interviewed following advertising and short-listing the Patron and possibly also the Bishop (or his representative) will be involved as well as the Parish Representatives. In such cases it will be necessary to agree beforehand who will ask which question, and it will be important that each candidate is asked the same main questions so as to ensure fairness.

Another issue will be the arrangement of the room so that as far as possible the candidate is not overwhelmed by facing a large interview panel. One way to do this is to sit in a circle.

Where the Parish Representatives are meeting candidates on a 'one-by-one basis' (the method preferred by Church Society Trust) they will be interviewing on their own. It is important that they allow a candidate sufficient time to do justice to himself and to the seriousness of a call to serve the Lord in a new post. A proper structure for the interview needs to be worked out and agreed beforehand. Others in the parish(es) may have met the candidate beforehand and the Representatives received comments from them, but they alone are responsible for the formal interview.

## **The interview format**

After prayer and an initial general question such as, 'What attracted you to apply for this post?', questions need to be 'open' rather than such as to invite a simple 'yes' or 'no' response. For example, rather than 'Do you have a baptism policy in your present parish?' it

is better to ask, 'Tell us how you set about preparing people for baptism in your present parish?'

It is significant that in the New Testament the only specific skills which are required of 'pastors and teachers' are that they 'manage their own family well' and are 'able to teach'. (1 Timothy 3:2-4). All the other qualifications are moral, lifestyle matters. (See the Leaflet 'Biblical Principles of Leadership')

So, Parish Representatives should be prepared to ask about how the candidate sets about preparing sermons, and creating other opportunities to teach the truth. Furthermore they should not be afraid to ask about doctrinal and ethical matters.

Possible questions might include, 'What is the place of the Bible in your preaching and ministry?', 'Tell us about how you approach evangelism in your present parish' and 'How do you react to the controversies in the church concerning such matters as homosexual practice?'

Questions related to issues raised in the Parish Profile are very important. The PCC will have spent a great deal of time preparing this and it is reasonable to expect that a candidate will have considered the contents of the document carefully.

In every Parish there are concerns about forms and styles of worship, and about the extent to which the church family is engaging with the needs and aspirations of the people of the locality. Questions need to be asked that relate to matters raised in the Profile where change is envisaged. 'Tell us how you introduced change in your present parish?' may help the Representatives discern how the candidate will relate to the people of their congregation(s) should he be appointed.

## **Churchmanship**

Church Society Trust is an evangelical Patron. It is important to grasp that when we consider candidates for Posts, we are not seeking to continue or establish an evangelical ministry because we do not like other traditions, nor do we seek to perpetuate our Reformed tradition for its own sake. We are concerned for the