



Diocese of Peterborough

RESPONSIBILITIES DURING A VACANCY

Instructions from the Bishop of Peterborough and the Bishop of Brixworth
to Rural Deans and Churchwardens

Diocese of Peterborough

This manual sets out our instructions to both Rural Deans and Churchwardens so that they may effectively discharge their duties during a vacancy.

These are important responsibilities and you are assured both of our support and encouragement, and also of our appreciation for the hard work which will be involved. The Archdeacons and Diocesan Office Staff will also be pleased to assist you in whatever way they are able.

+ Ian
Bishop of Peterborough

+ Frank
Bishop of Brixworth

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Administration of a Vacant Benefice

When a benefice is vacant the responsibilities normally borne by the Incumbent or the priest in charge are given to a number of people - principally the Rural Dean and the Churchwardens of the parishes that make up the benefice. This manual sets out these responsibilities and the processes by which they are administered.

Sequestration

On a vacancy being declared church law provides that 'the churchwardens of every parish comprised in the benefice and the Rural Dean (and such other person as the Bishop may appoint, if he feels it desirable to do so) shall be the sequestrators of the benefice'. The parish is then in sequestration and under the care of the sequestrators.

The first formal act is for the Rural Dean to inspect and sign the terrier and inventory of the parish church(es), parsonage house and other church property after its checking and signing by the outgoing incumbent and the Churchwardens.

It is the responsibility of the sequestrators 'subject to and in accordance with the directions of the Bishop, to make provision for the performance of the ecclesiastical duties of the benefice'.

In conjunction with the Houses Committee, they are also responsible for the proper care of the parsonage house (see appendix 1).

ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY THE SEQUESTRATORS

1. **Provision of Sunday Services**

The Churchwardens and Rural Dean should liaise as early as possible after a vacancy is declared about the provision of services during the interregnum in order to make the necessary arrangements. The Rural Dean is responsible on behalf of the Bishops for agreeing the appropriate pattern of services in each parish and advising the churchwardens about the availability of clergy and other ministers with permission to officiate (PTO) in the deanery.

Wherever possible, clergy and other ministers who are licensed, or have PTO in the Diocese, who live within the deanery (or its immediate neighbours) should be used in order to avoid unnecessary expenditure on travel. Bishops' Advisers, particularly those without parish responsibilities, are often a useful source of help. The Bishops, Archdeacons and members of the Cathedral Chapter are always pleased to respond to invitations to officiate if they are able to do so.

No additional services beyond the usual custom of the parish should be introduced during the interregnum without the support of the Rural Dean and the agreement of

the Bishop (see appendix 2). In many cases the number of services may have to be reduced depending on the availability of clergy.

The diocesan office will only reimburse the cost of visiting clergy for those services authorised by the Rural Dean. Please follow the instructions set out in appendix 3 in order to obtain payment.

Under Canon C23 the Rural Deans must report to the Bishop the arrangements which they and their fellow sequestrators have made 'to secure the ministration of the word and sacraments and other rites of the church during the vacancy'. They must also ensure that where a PCC has passed resolution A in schedule 1 to the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993, nothing is done in contravention of that resolution (unless or until the PCC concerned resolves to rescind it).

2. (i) Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals

All requests for occasional offices should be referred to the Rural Dean (unless the Bishop has appointed a priest-in-charge of the benefice during the vacancy). However, no service in church should be arranged without the agreement of the churchwardens.

The incumbent's fee for weddings and funerals should normally be passed to the diocese, unless the service is taken by a retired priest with PTO in which case this fee or a part of it may be retained by the officiating minister.

If banns of marriage are published by a reader, churchwarden or other lay person, that person should sign the banns' book, but the certificate of banns must be issued by a Clerk in Holy Orders. The incumbent's fee should be sent by the PCC Treasurer to the diocese and the balance retained by the PCC.

(ii) Monuments in Churchyards

During a vacancy (unless a priest-in-charge has been appointed) the Rural Dean is responsible for considering all applications for churchyard memorials and for authorising those which fall within the limits of the Chancellor's general directions.

The incumbent's element of the fee should be passed to the Diocese and the balance retained by the PCC.

3. Parsonage House

Please read carefully and follow in detail the instructions concerning vacant houses, which are set out in appendix 1.

4. PCC and Parochial Meetings

The church representation rules make provision for the election of a lay member of the council as its Vice-Chairman and stipulate that 'during a vacancy ... the Vice-Chairman shall act as Chairman and have all the powers vested in the Chairman

unless the rights of presentation are suspended and a minister has been appointed by the Bishop as priest in charge.

Similar provisions apply to the Chairmanship of the Annual Parochial Meeting.

While Rural Deans are not automatically members of PCCs of vacant parishes, it is certainly helpful in view of their roles as sequestrators, if they are able, where it is appropriate and needful, to attend meetings of councils (and the annual parochial meetings) to advise on matters relating to the cure of souls in the parish. They have the Bishop's authorisation to receive copies of the minutes, and PCCs are encouraged to consider co-opting Rural Deans as members of councils during vacancies, or, if all co-opted places are filled to invite them to attend as non-voting members.

5. When an Appointment is made.

Details of the appointment procedures are contained in the companion booklet 'Appointment of a Parish Priest'.

Churchwardens and Rural Deans will receive official notification from the Bishop when an appointment is made. The Rural Dean has the responsibility for overseeing the arrangements for the service of institution, collation or licensing and will seek the assistance and co-operation of the Churchwardens in the benefice as together they make the arrangements to welcome the new priest. Appendix 5 sets out the Bishop's instructions to Rural Deans for the proper conduct of such occasions.

When an incumbent is instituted and all income received during the vacancy has been accounted for, the sequestrators' duties are complete.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that when a priest in charge is appointed the benefice remains technically vacant. However the Bishop expects the priest in charge to undertake the sequestrators' duties on their behalf, particularly the receipt of the incumbent's portion of any ecclesiastical fees and the subsequent payment of these to the diocese. As a result the duties of the sequestrators do in reality end on the day of institution, collation or licensing.

VACANT HOUSES

Sequestrators help is requested in taking care of the parsonage house while it is vacant, particularly in any period when the house is not occupied. It is diocesan policy to let houses whenever possible and it has been found this is advantageous both in terms of keeping the house in good condition and financially. However it is not always possible to do this given the timescales of some vacancies.

Parsonage houses are managed, on behalf of the Diocese, by the Diocesan Surveyor, Smiths Gore, The King's Lodging, Minster Precincts, Peterborough PE1 1XT.

Please contact either the agents or the Diocesan Property Officer if any problems arise. The following is a checklist for easy reference:

Council Tax	Please forward any correspondence to the Diocesan Office.
Electricity	This should be turned off at the mains UNLESS it needs to be connected to operate a burglar alarm. The diocese will continue to pay standing charges. Any correspondence should be forwarded to the Diocesan Office.
Garden	The diocese will normally arrange to maintain the garden during the interregnum using contract gardeners. However if the parish is able to offer assistance in the garden this is much appreciated.
Gas	This should be turned off at the main inlet. The diocese will continue to pay standing charges. Any correspondence should be forwarded to the Diocesan Office.
Inspections	Unless it is occupied please ensure the house is checked internally at least once every two weeks and that any correspondence is dealt with [see " Post/Telephone "]. A log of visits should be kept for insurance purposes.
Insurance	The diocesan policy ceases to cover for vandalism, theft and water damage (through burst pipes) 30 days after the property becomes vacant. Please ensure, therefore, that no one turns the water back on once the system has been drained down [see " Water "].
Keys/Security	Notify the Diocesan Office and Smiths Gore the house is empty and who holds keys. One set of keys together with the burglar alarm code should have been sent to the Surveyors by the outgoing priest, to allow access. If this has NOT been done please provide a set on request. Another set should have been given to one of the churchwardens, acting on behalf of the sequestrators or the diocese (in the case of other houses). Check all window and door locks. If there is an external opening to the cellar which cannot be secured, the internal cellar door must be locked.

Appendix 2

The Rural Dean will be prepared to authorise the normal Sunday Services, together with any weekday services on special holy days, which are customarily observed in the benefice. These will normally include.

The Epiphany

Ash Wednesday

Maundy Thursday

Good Friday

Ascension Day

All Saints' Day

Patronal or Dedication Festival, or Feast of Title (if not observed on the nearest Sunday)

Please note that the rural Dean is not able to authorise for reimbursement the cost of other non-Sunday services.

Other special services (eg Mothering Sunday, Harvest Thanksgiving, Remembrance Day, Christingle) should be included in the normal Sunday rota.

In the case of non-eucharistic services, the parishes are encouraged to make use of their Readers, Pastoral Assistants, Parish Evangelists, ministry team members and churchwardens whenever appropriate.

Payment for Church Services during a Vacancy

Visiting clergy should be paid any fees or expenses due to them by your PCC Treasurer. This payment is best made monthly by cheque. However, if the payment is made in cash after the service a receipt should be obtained and care taken that the transaction does not result in the netting down of the collection total in the service register.

The services for which reimbursement of payment will be made to the PCC are only those authorised by the Rural Dean on behalf of the Bishop at the start of the interregnum.

Payment will only be made on the following basis:

1. Retired and other clergy with Permission to Officiate
A fee for each service (this is at the rate of half the funeral service fee) plus a car mileage allowance as detailed on the claim form.

2. All other clergy - stipendiary and non-stipendiary and clergy licensed under seal

A car mileage allowance only at the rate shown on the claim form.

3. Readers

Non-Eucharistic Services conducted by a reader incur a fee which the Treasurer should pay to the Peterborough Diocesan Association of Readers on receipt of their account.

No mileage allowance should be paid to the reader as the Readers' Association will reimburse the reader direct.

A record of all such payments should be entered onto the claim form (see appendix 4). These should be sent to the Diocesan Office for payment at the end of the month or quarter, via the Rural Dean who will authorise payment to be made to your PCC's Treasurer. Please provide your Rural Dean with a stamped addressed envelope for this purpose. Please note that mileage allowances can normally only be paid to clergy living within the diocese.

Fees Form

Appendix 4

**THE RURAL DEAN & LAY CHAIR:
INSTITUTIONS, COLLATIONS AND LICENSINGS**

1. These are Diocesan Services led by the Bishop. Rural Deans have the responsibility for making the preparation for these services in the parishes of their deaneries. Care should be taken over them – they mark the beginning of a priest's ministry and an important new chapter in the life of the benefice. The service should be both a solemn and joyful occasion, mindful that there will be both visitors and members of the wider community present.
2. The Bishop will liaise with the Rural Dean as to the date and type of service.i.e. Institution or Licensing; normally it will not be a eucharist (but an Institution following an earlier Licensing could well be eucharistic.) The choice of which church in a multi-parish benefice needs to take account of parish 'turns', as well as practical issues, including access in darkness.
3. Rural Deans should then arrange to meet the priest, to welcome him/her on behalf of the chapter and deanery, to advise the dates of future meetings of both these bodies and to have a preliminary discussion about the service itself.
4. Rural Deans should meet the Churchwardens involved to arrange the following matters:-

Invitations

The Churchwardens should invite the following:

- The diocesan Chair of the House of Clergy & Lay Chair, and the Deanery Lay Chair
- The Diocesan Registrar
- The Diocesan Secretary
- Headteachers of (church) schools within the benefice
- Local civic leaders and other representatives of the community
- The priest should be asked to provide a list of people to be invited
- Deanery clergy (inc. NSMs and curates)
- Deanery Readers, Pastoral Assistants and Parish Evangelists
- Other ministers (lay and ordained) who have officiated during the vacancy
- Local ministers of other denominations
- A representative of the Cathedral Chapter
(all of whom should be invited to robe for the service)

NB Invitations should include spouses, and should also be sent to the Archdeacon & Bishop.

It is helpful for the details of the post-service reception to be made clear, and a map included if deemed helpful. (Please ensure a copy is also sent to the priest for information)

Parking

The Churchwardens should tell the police that the service is to take place and their recommendation about the parking of cars should be followed.

Parking spaces for the Bishop, Archdeacon, Bishop's Chaplain, Patron and Rural Dean should be reserved.

Order of Service

The Diocesan order of Service for both an 'Institution and Induction' and 'A Licensing and Installation' are on the diocesan website. It is preferable if they are down-loaded and adapted including the addition of hymns etc. printed for use on the day. Alternatively, copies may be borrowed from the diocesan office and sheets printed by the parish containing hymns etc.

1. **NOTICES** – These should be given by the Rural Dean immediately before the service begins and should include the fact that the collection is intended for the Diocesan Ordination Candidates Fund. The Rural Dean then invites the congregation to stand and announces the opening hymn.
2. **HYMNS** – The priest chooses four hymns, the other hymn for the Induction/Installation being "God is here, as we his People" (tune: Blaernwern). Additional hymns should not be included and if an Anthem is to be sung it should replace a hymn, and not be in addition to it.
3. **READINGS** – In addition to the Gospel, one or two readings may be used and a psalm may be said or sung. The choice of readings is made by the priest. A member of the benefice reads the (Old and) New Testament reading(s); a deacon or priest reads the Gospel.
4. **THE PROCESSIONAL HYMN** – The order is as follows:- crucifer, choir, Pastoral Assistants, Parish Evangelists, Readers, visiting clergy, benefice clergy, the Lay Chairman & Rural Dean, Archdeacon, Churchwardens, Bishop, Bishops Chaplain. n.b. the priest sits with his/her family and the Patron at the front of the north side of the nave and does not process. The Rural Dean may need to appoint a chaplain to assist the Bishop (usually only for the Suffragan). The Bishop's chair is placed centrally on the chancel step.
5. **THE PRESENTATION** – The Patron or Rural Dean accompanies the priest and stands with her/him before the Bishop. The Patron returns to the congregation once the candidate has said the words: *I believe that God has called me.*
6. **OATHS OF ALLEGIANCE** – The Bishop decides beforehand whether these are to be taken before or during the service. In either case, the Rural Dean must ensure that a Bible is ready to be held by the priest and a table, with fountain pen and

blotter available, be suitably placed to enable the signing to be done if during the service.

7. **THE INDUCTION / INSTALLATION** – Some imagination and discretion must be exercised at this point, and the priest should have a central place at the various stations. Some or all of the symbols of ministry may be presented, but please ensure that the symbols will be seen by the congregation. It is hoped that as wide a representative group as possible will be drawn upon to make the presentations. If the Lay Chair, Reader or a Pastoral Assistant is not present, their roles may be taken by other appropriate people (e.g. local doctor, headteacher etc.) Those who speak and present symbols must be heard by the congregation. It is particularly appropriate for younger members of the church family to be involved at some point in this section of the service. The verses of the hymn 'God is here' are sung as the Archdeacon's procession moves from place to place in the Church (if the church is small, a verse may be omitted, and at the rehearsal the Rural Dean needs to make it clear to the organist when he/she should play.)
In the procession around the church, the order should be: crucifer, (acolytes), Rural Dean & Lay Chair, Churchwardens, Archdeacon and priest. The Paschal candle if positioned by the font should be lit, and the font be ready to have water poured into it from an ewer.
8. **THE WELCOME AND PEACE** – The Rural Dean needs to guide the Churchwardens at the planning meeting and rehearsal as to who should welcome the new priest and how they are introduced. It is probably best if one person – not necessarily the Rural Dean – gives out the name and organisation of each welcomer in a loud, clear voice; those making a formal welcome should be audible and brief.
9. **THE COLLECTION** - This is taken during the hymn which follows the Peace. It should be received by the priest, assisted by the chaplain if necessary. The Rural Dean should check that an adequate number of sidesmen are on duty to assist with the collection.
10. **RECESSIONAL HYMN** – The Bishop's procession, leaves first, in the same order as at the beginning, except that the new priest walks at the Bishop's side; the crucifer then leads the choir and others back to their vestry/ies.

SERVICE PRELIMINARIES – Rural Deans should specifically oversee all the following matters:-

Advice to Bishop – The Rural Dean should inform the officiating Bishop of the names of those whose ministry has supported the parishes during the interregnum and also of any community representatives who may be attending the service about whom he should be particularly aware. This advice should be given in writing at least two days before the service. The Rural Dean should also inform the Bishop of the choice of readings and hymns and check that a draft copy of the service is with the Bishop at least two weeks before the date.

Seating – This must be carefully planned especially when space is limited. Seats must be set aside for Bishop's and Archdeacon's wives, the Patron or his/her representative, as well as all other guests to whom specific invitations have been sent.

Robing – The Bishop, Archdeacon, Bishop's Chaplain, Registrar, Rural Dean and the new priest robe in the clergy vestry or other suitable place.

A separate robing area for choirs, visiting clergy and other ministers should be provided; local conditions will dictate the actual arrangements. A person (often the Chapter Clerk) should be appointed to say a prayer with the visiting clergy and other ministers, leading them to the porch just before the service begins. Visiting clergy should wear choir habit (cassock, surplice, scarf and hood)

After the service – Ensure that the collection is sent by the PCC treasurer to the Diocesan Office.

A full page in the service register, with the service entered, should be available for signing after the service by the Bishop and those involved in the service, including clergy and other ministers, who should be alerted to this before the service by the Chapter Clerk; the Bishop's Chaplain being charged with the responsibility to see it is so signed.

Rehearsal – This should take place a few days before the service, minimally with the priest and churchwardens, under the supervision of the Rural Dean, also the Bishop's Chaplain if available. It is important that all taking part understand fully their particular role, including any movement within the service as well as what to do and say. Please ensure that any person taking part in the act of formal welcome feels at ease and understands exactly what to do, especially if s/he has not been present at the rehearsal.

Rural Deans and Lay Chairs are thanked for their care in overseeing the above.