



Diocese of Peterborough

**RESPONSIBILITIES DURING
A VACANCY**

Instructions from the Bishop of Peterborough
to Rural Deans and Churchwardens

February 2020



Diocese of Peterborough

This manual sets out instructions and guidance to Rural Deans and Churchwardens to help them discharge their duties during a vacancy.

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

+ Donald
Bishop of Peterborough

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RESPONSIBILITIES DURING A VACANCY

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.

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).

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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 vacancy, 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 retired clergy and others with permission to officiate (PTO) in the deanery.

Wherever possible, clergy who are licensed, or have PTO in the Diocese, and who live within the deanery (or its immediate neighbours), should be used in order to avoid heavy expenditure on travel. Furthermore, the Bishops, Bishop's Chaplain, 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 vacancy without the support of the Rural Dean and the agreement of the Bishop (see appendix 2). In some 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.

2. Baptisms, weddings and funerals

All requests for occasional offices should be referred to the Rural Dean or to the person to whom he or she has delegated the coordination of such arrangements, unless the Bishop has appointed a priest-in-charge of the benefice during the vacancy. 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 80% of this fee 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 signed 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.

3. 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 Churchyard Regulations.

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

4. Parsonage house

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

5. 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.

6. 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 notification from the Archdeacon 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 4 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 PARSONAGE/CLERGY 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 keep vacancies as short as possible and to only let houses if they are not immediately required and, otherwise, to prepare houses as swiftly as possible for occupation by a new incumbent.

Parsonage houses are managed by the Property Officer and Assistant Property Officer.

The Diocesan Property Officer, based at the Diocesan Office in Peterborough, will advise Churchwardens of any works which are to be carried out to a property whilst it is vacant, and will liaise directly with contractors, providing them with access.

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

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| Council Tax | Please forward any correspondence to the Diocesan Office at The Palace, Peterborough PE1 1YB. |
| Electricity | This should be turned off at the main switch board if it does not need 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 | If the parish is able to maintain the garden this is much appreciated. If not, the Diocese will arrange to maintain the garden during the vacancy using contract gardeners. |
| 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 week 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 "]. |

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| <p>Keys/Security</p> | <p>Notify the Property Officer that the house is empty and who holds keys. One set of keys together with the burglar alarm code should be sent to the Property Officer 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 of the Diocese, in the case of non-parsonage houses).</p> <p>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.</p> |
| <p>Post/Telephone</p> | <p>Please forward any mail, not personal to the previous occupant, to the appropriate person and dispose promptly of all “junk” mail and free newspapers.</p> <p>The telephone should remain connected to ensure the number is retained and any invoices should be forwarded to the Diocesan Office for payment.</p> |
| <p>Repairs</p> | <p>The Diocesan Houses Committee has the responsibility to maintain parsonages and other clergy houses (excluding any owned by PCCs). Therefore, please notify the Property Officer immediately if the house is in need of repair through storm damage, vandalism etc.</p> <p>Please do not instruct a contractor to carry out any work as the Diocese cannot pay for work carried out without authorisation.</p> <p>Minor repairs/maintenance will be noted in the inspection report when the house is vacated.</p> <p>Contact number for repairs are as follows:</p> <p>Diocesan Property Officer 01733 887024/887023</p> <p>The appropriate Archdeacon (in the case of an emergency outside office hours).</p> <p>Separate and more detailed guidelines are issued to Incumbents when properties are occupied, dealing with repair and maintenance issues.</p> |

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| <p>Trees</p> | <p>Please ensure that no trees are felled, lopped or topped without the consent of the Property Officer. This is both for your protection and because large fines are imposed for unauthorised work to trees which are subject to preservation orders or in conservation areas.</p> |
| <p>Water</p> | <p>If the house is to remain empty, the Property Officer may arrange for a contractor to drain down the system. Please ensure that no-one subsequently turns the water back on as the insurance policy will not cover frozen/burst pipes.</p> <p>The Property Officer will arrange for the system to be checked and refilled when the house is re-occupied.</p> <p>Please forward any correspondence from the water company to the Diocesan Office.</p> |

SERVICES DURING A VACANCY

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)

The Rural Dean is also able to authorise for reimbursement the cost of such mid-week services as are important to the maintenance of the life of the benefice during a vacancy. This would not normally exceed one weekly mid-week service per parish in multi-parish benefices or two per week in large single parish benefices.

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, lay pastoral ministers, licensed evangelists, churchwardens and others authorised to take services, 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 should be 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 vacancy. Payment will only be made on the following basis:

1. Retired and other clergy with Permission to Officiate

A fee for each service plus a car mileage allowance as detailed on the claim form.

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

Clergy who are licensed receive a car mileage allowance only at the rate shown on the claim form.

3. Readers

Services in church 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. This is available on the diocesan website (www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk) or from the Diocesan Office. 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 ensure that parish details are inserted clearly.) 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 a reasonable distance.

INSTITUTIONS, COLLATIONS AND LICENSINGS

Notes for the Rural Dean and Lay Chair

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 Archdeacon will arrange the date and time of the service, in consultation with the Bishop, the Rural Dean, the Patrons, the benefice and the candidate, and the Bishop's Chaplain will then be in touch with the Rural Dean with regard to the order of service. The choice of which church in a multi-parish benefice hosts the service needs to take account of parish "turns", as well as practical issues such as access in darkness.
3. Rural Deans should then arrange to contact the priest, to welcome him/her on behalf of the chapter and deanery, to advise them of the dates for future meetings for both these bodies, and to have a preliminary discussion about the service itself. The new priest is invited to choose suitable readings and well known hymns.
4. Rural Deans should meet with the Churchwardens involved to arrange the following matters:

Invitations

The Churchwardens should invite the following:

- The Diocesan Chairs of the Houses of Clergy & Laity, and the Deanery Lay Chair
- The Diocesan Registrar (for clergy new to the Diocese)
- The Diocesan Secretary
- Headteachers of schools within the benefice
- Local civic leaders and other representatives of the community
- A list of personal guests which they should ask the priest to provide
- Deanery clergy (inc. SSMs and curates)
- Deanery Readers, Lay Pastoral Ministers and Licensed Evangelists
- Other ministers (lay and ordained) who have officiated during the vacancy
- Local ministers of other denominations
- A representative of the Cathedral Chapter (for clergy new to the Diocese)

All of the above, where appropriate, should be invited to robe for the service

Note:

Invitations should also be sent to the Archdeacon and Bishop and all invitations should include spouses. 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 of the invitation and map 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, Registrar, Patrons and Rural Dean should be reserved and they should be informed where their parking spaces will be.

Order of Service

The Diocesan Order of Service will be provided electronically by the Bishop's Chaplain, as a template into which hymns and readings should then be inserted, and copies should be printed for use at the rehearsal and on the day.

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 the hymns. If an anthem is to be sung, it should replace a hymn, not be in addition to it.
3. **READINGS** – In addition to the Gospel, one reading should be used and a Psalm may be said or sung. The choice of readings and readers is made by the priest.
4. **THE RURAL DEAN'S PROCESSION** – Before the service begins, the Rural Dean's procession should enter in the following order: crucifer, choir, Lay Pastoral Ministers and Parish Evangelists, Readers, visiting clergy, the Lay Chair and Rural Dean. The Bishop's party (the Archdeacon and the priest, Churchwardens, Bishop, Bishops Chaplain, Registrar) then begins the service at the church door, after the Rural Dean's introductory notices. The font should be ready to have water poured into it, and the paschal candle should be already lit.

Once he or she has processed in with the Bishop's party, the priest sits with his/her immediate family across the aisle from the Patrons at the front of the nave. The Rural Dean may need to appoint a chaplain to assist the Bishop. The Bishop's chair is placed centrally on the chancel step.

5. **THE PRESENTATION** – The Patron or Lay Chair accompanies the priest and stands with him/her before the Bishop. The Patron/Lay Chair returns to their place once the candidate has said the words: *I am*.

6. **OATHS OF ALLEGIANCE** – These will usually be taken by the Registrar (or in her absence by the Archdeacon) during the service. The Rural Dean must ensure that a Bible is ready to be held by the priest and that a table, with fountain pen and blotter available, is suitably placed to enable the signing to be done during the service.
7. **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 to be introduced. The Rural Dean should give out the name and organisation of each welcomer in a loud, clear voice; those making a formal welcome should be audible and brief.
8. **THE COLLECTION** – This is taken during the offertory hymn. It should be received by the Rural Dean, who should check that an adequate number of sidespeople are on duty to assist with the collection.
9. **RECESSIONAL ORDER** – The churchwardens lead the Archdeacon, Bishop and new priest, Bishop's Chaplain and Registrar to the bell and then to the church door for the final part of the service. After the conclusion of the service, the Rural Dean's procession leaves in the same order as on entry.

Service preliminaries

The Rural Dean should specifically oversee the following matters:-

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 he/she has not been present at the rehearsal.

Advice to the 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. 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 it is due to take place.

Seating

This must be carefully planned especially when space is limited. Seats must be set aside for Bishop's and Archdeacon's spouses, 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 should be appointed by the Rural Dean to say a prayer with the visiting clergy and other ministers, before they process in. Visiting clergy should wear a white stole or choir habit.

After the service

Please ensure that the collection is sent by the PCC treasurer to the Diocesan Office. A full page in the service register, with the service already entered, should be available for signing.

The Bishops are grateful to Rural Deans for their help in organising these services.