

Vacancies in Society Parishes

Advice from Forward in Faith

Second Edition 2020

Changes to the text of the first edition are as follows:

Notes

Page vii, third para: amend the first line to read:

This booklet in its second edition reflects the law as it stood on 1 January 2020:[†]...

† The second edition incorporates a small number of clarifications and additions, together with amendments reflecting changes made by the Legislative Reform (Patronage of Benefices) Order 2019, which came into force on 1 January 2020.

2 Ministry during the Vacancy

Page 4, para. 2.2: insert at the end:

Any priest who conducts services in the parish must hold a benefice, licence or permission to officiate in a diocese of the Church of England. If he is to do so for more than a single period of up to seven days within three months, he must hold a benefice, licence or permission to officiate in the diocese to which the parish belongs.^{5A}

5A Canon C 8, paras 2 and 3.

3 The Resolution

Page 7, para. 3.5: in line 1, insert after ‘attempts are made’

by someone from outside the parish and congregation

Page 7, para. 3.6: in line 1, insert after ‘statements are made’

by someone from outside the parish and congregation

4 The Process for Appointing an Incumbent

Page 8, para. 4.3: replace the paragraph with this new paragraph:

If presentation has not been suspended, when a vacancy arises on the death of the incumbent the bishop must give notice to the ‘Designated Officer’ (who is often the

Registrar) ‘as soon as practicable after he becomes aware of the vacancy’. In other cases he must give notice of the vacancy no later than the day on which the vacancy occurs. On receipt of the notice from the Bishop, the Designated Officer must send a ‘vacancy notice’ to the secretary of each PCC for the benefice ‘as soon as practicable’. The ‘vacancy notice’ must specify (a) the date on which the benefice became, or is expected to become, vacant and (b) the ‘start date’ which begins the timetable for filling the vacancy. The ‘start date’ is either the date on which the notice is sent or a date no later than three months after the beginning of the vacancy. The ‘vacancy notice’ must also contain information about the procedure for filling the vacancy.

5 The Section 11 Meeting(s) of the PCC

Page 10, para. 5.1: amend the first sentence to read:

Unless presentation to the benefice has been suspended, under Section 11 of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 one or more meetings of the PCC must be held as soon as practicable after the ‘start date’ and in any event within six months of that date, for the following purposes:

Page 12, para. 5.7, line 11: correct ‘it if’ to:

Page 13: insert new para. 5.10

5.10 In multi-parish benefices, unless a scheme is already in place authorising a team council or joint PCC, it is the duty of the PCC Secretaries to convene joint Section 11 Meetings.^{9A} The joint meeting must appoint a minimum of four lay PCC members to act as representatives in connection with the selection of the incumbent, including at least one from each parish. At the meeting (or first meeting) the PCCs should decide whether they will prepare a parish profile jointly or separately. Where a resolution parish is part of a benefice including one or more non-resolution parishes, it should take particular care to ensure the profile properly reflects its theological conviction and needs.

9A Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986, Schedule 2.

6 Section 12 Meetings

Page 14, paragraph 6.1, line 2: delete ‘a meeting’ and insert
an optional meeting

Page 14, para. 6.1: insert a full stop after ‘PCC’ and replace the rest of the paragraph with the following new sentence:

If requested, this meeting must be held as soon as practicable after the ‘start date’ and in any event within six months of that date.

7 The Choice of an Incumbent or Priest-in-Charge

Page 16: insert new para. 7.7:

- 7.7 If the benefice remains vacant 18 months after the ‘start date’ (not including any period when presentation was suspended), the diocesan bishop may proceed, after consulting the lay representatives and others, to make an appointment without obtaining the consent of the parish representatives (except where the candidate is someone for whose appointment they had previously refused their consent). Before the bishop has decided on the priest to whom the benefice will be offered, the PCC may resolve that the archbishop of the province should instead make the decision, in which case the PCC secretary must send a copy of the resolution to the archbishop.^{9B} PCCs of resolution parishes will only need to consider this possibility where the diocesan bishop is known to be unsympathetic to resolution parishes.
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9B Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986, s. 16.

9 Key Questions and Answers

Insert new para. 9.12:

Q: *What is the start date?*

A: This is the date specified in the vacancy notice which begins the six-month period during which the Section 11 Meeting(s) (and Section 12 Meeting, if requested) must be held. (4.3)

and re-number paras 9.12 and 9.13.

Para. 9.12 (now para. 9.13): amend the Answer to read:

This is a meeting of the PCC which must be held as soon as practicable after the ‘start date’ and in any event within six months of that date, to take certain decisions. (5.1)