

Simeon's Trustees



The Parish (Benefice) Profile

The 'Parish Profile' is one of the key documents to be produced as part of the process towards appointing a new Vicar, Priest-in-Charge, Team Rector or Team Vicar. It will be used to prepare supporting documents, adverts and questions asked at interview.

The process of preparing the profile and those directly involved should be supported by in prayer by the whole church. Encourage people to pray that those involved will have wisdom, insight and creativity.

The preparation process can be extremely valuable as churches reflect on where God has brought them, what the local community is like, and the direction in which God is calling them.

Although it is important not to rush the process, it is also necessary to keep to the timings set out in the paperwork the diocese will send out.

GETTING STARTED

Taking time to reflect and to gather the information is crucial. Ways to do this include:

- a parish or PCC 'away day' with time out from regular activities
- at a meeting of the whole church or PCC
- some other way of gathering the views of the congregation
- asking someone from outside your church to help

Questions to reflect on:

- What have been the most important developments over the last few years?
- What are our strengths and weaknesses?
- What do we believe our mission and ministry priorities should be? And what can we let go of?
- What, then, are the most important gifts and experience our next minister will need?

MAKING PROGRESS

The whole PCC has to accept and agree the finished profile. It is formally 'signed off' at a special PCC meeting called a Section 11 Meeting. At that same meeting the Parish Representatives are appointed.

However prior to that, usually, after the time of reflecting and considering what should go in the profile, most PCCs ask a smaller group of people to take responsibility for the detailed work.

The group, which should have the support of the whole PCC, ought not to be too large but have representatives of the various congregations (or parishes if a multi-parish benefice). It is a good idea to have a mixture of long-standing and more recent church members as well as people with writing and computer skills. If different people draft different sections it may help to have 'an editor' so that the finished document has a consistent writing style.

This group will produce draft versions which are shown to the PCC so that appropriate amendments and additions made. It is helpful to send a draft to Simeon's at this stage too.

WHAT TO INCLUDE?

Try to imagine who you are writing this for – a parish priest thinking about a move, perhaps to a new part of the country, and possibly with a family. He or she will be looking for a new challenge, and will want to feel that the church will be welcoming and supportive.

The Parish Profile should not be too long or detailed. A single parish might aim for a maximum of 24 A4 pages, including illustrations.

Usually the PCC will receive a **Diocesan pro forma** that lists the areas that ought definitely to be covered. Make sure you include all these, and answer all the questions there, although you will probably want to use a more interesting and attractive format than it offers.

The profile should include information on:

- The local area – including its attractions and facilities
- The local community – its social characteristics and important institutions (employers, schools, hospitals, care homes etc)
- A *brief* account of the history of the church and also the vision for the future
- The team of authorised ministers, lay and ordained, paid and volunteers and other forms of lay ministry being exercised including any administrative support.
- The worshipping life of the church(es), including a list of services and average attendances
- Numbers of baptisms, weddings and funerals, with some information about how preparation and follow-up is done
- Church activities and organisations – for all ages
- Church finances and stewardship. A summary of the accounts can be helpful.
- Church buildings and their condition
- Links with other parishes and any ecumenical partnerships, and involvement in other home and overseas mission
- Priorities and plans for mission in the community
- Your vision for the future of the church and its mission, including any Mission or Vision Statement or similar
- The parsonage house – with details of the accommodation and facilities.
- ‘The Next Parish Priest’ (see below)

This isn't an exhaustive list – but enough to be going on with! Remember, it should sound interesting and attractive, even exciting, but also be completely honest!

MORE THAN ONE PARISH?

If your parish is part of a united benefice or team ministry this should be reflected in the profile and usually it would be better to produce a Benefice Profile rather than a set of parish profiles. There will be information common to the benefice (local area, vicarage, person specification) though individual PCCS may contribute sections on each church.

THE NEXT PARISH PRIEST / ‘OUR NEW VICAR’

The contents of the profile, especially your vision and priorities, should point towards the qualities, gifts, skills and experience that the next parish priest should have. However there needs to be a section which is clearly the ‘person specification’. Careful and prayerful thought should be given to this section. What attributes fit with your mission priorities? What gifts and expertise are essential? What would be desirable?

If there are there any particular theological or pastoral views that are important to your parish and might be critical to this appointment you must indicate this in the Profile and Person Specification. But please be aware that the only circumstances under which the gender of a candidate can be taken into consideration is if Resolutions A or B under the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993 are passed by the PCC. Other personal circumstances (e.g. marital status or family) cannot be taken into account.

It would also be appropriate to refer to other roles (eg chair of school governing body) the vicar is expected to do.

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Some dioceses like to include as part of the package sent to enquirers, a Role Description but the Archdeacon will advise about this and is responsible for producing it.

PRESENTATION

You are not trying to produce a professional document or a work of art, but you will want the profile to be neat and attractive, 'easy on the eye'. A little bit of time and effort invested in this shows potential candidates that you care about the way the church presents itself.

Hopefully, someone in the congregation will have the computer skills to lay it out neatly, without too much text crammed into the space, and with pictures and other illustrations (maps etc). Photographs are extremely valuable both to 'describe' the area and the church facilities as well as to show people engaged in church activities. Remember to ensure permission has been obtained for people – especially children – photographed. Make sure you include photographs of the church buildings and the vicarage.

You could include quotes from members of the congregation (including children and young people, perhaps), and/or text boxes with special contributions from others.

The completed document needs to be available electronically.

IN SUMMARY

Does the profile say: Who we are Where we are going What sort of a person are we looking for

Does it: **Describe** the church and area **Determine** the vision **Define** the role of the next vicar?

For further guidance and sample profiles do contact

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