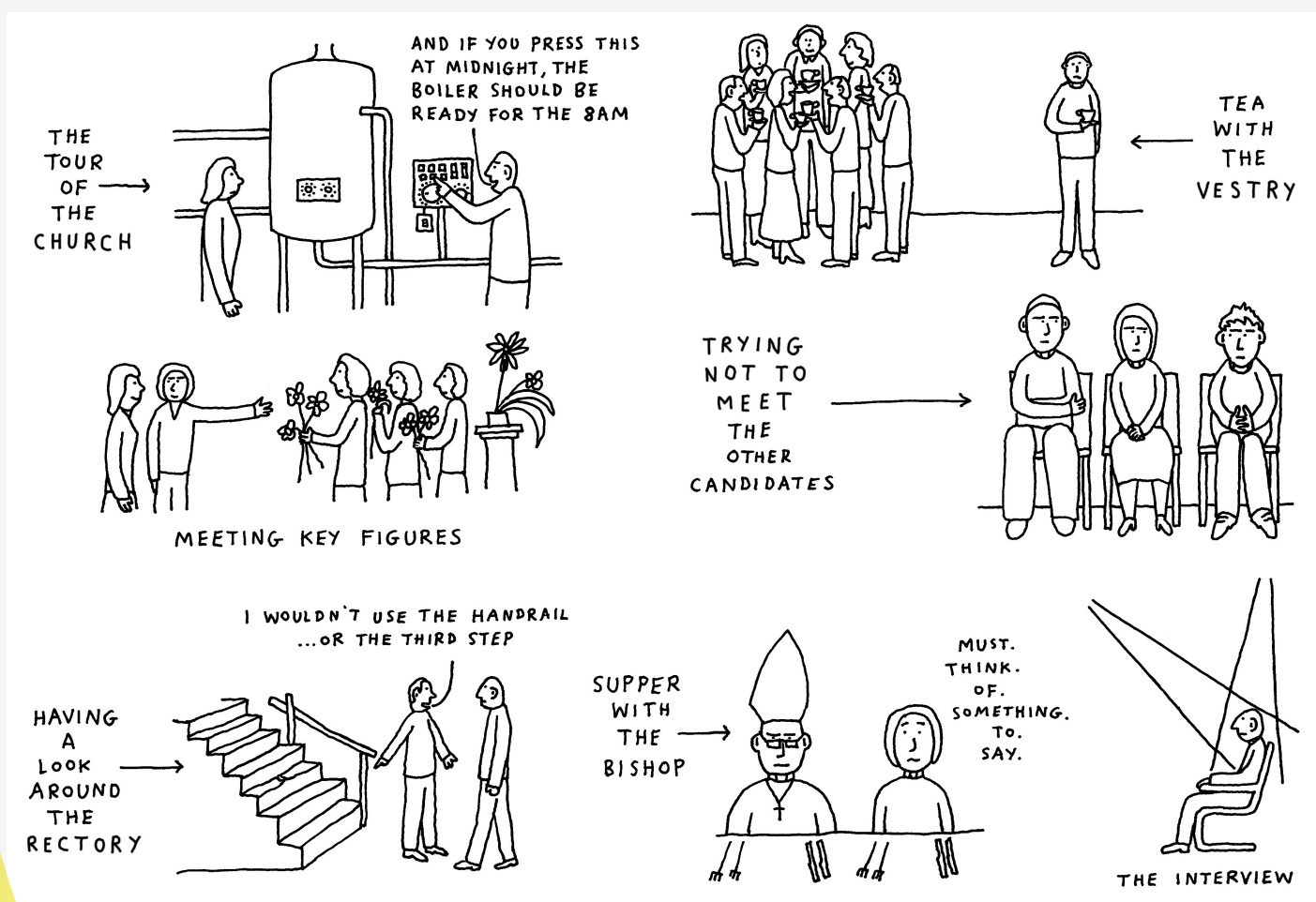


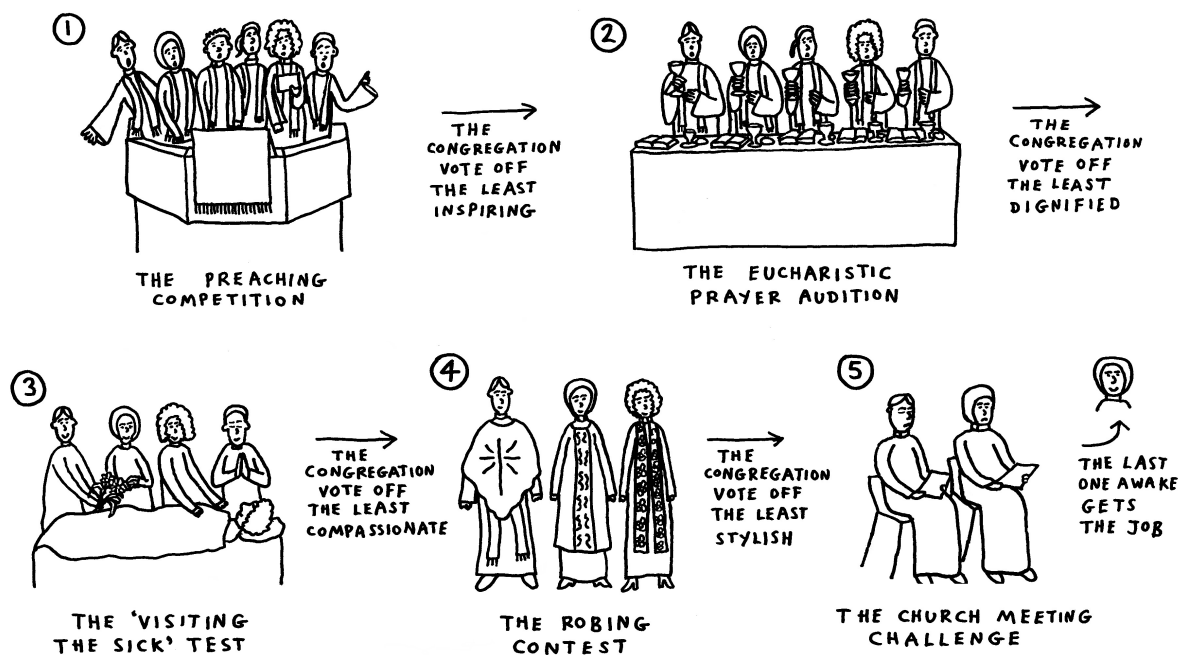
the CHURCH TIMES guide to happy recruitment

A handbook for congregations



APPOINTING A NEW PRIEST

THE PROCESS IS LONG AND COMPLEX



Introduction

Welcome to an insider's guide to replacing your Rector or Priest in Charge. Many people in the Scottish Episcopal Church are experienced at this, of course, but because of the turnover in roles such as Vestry members, Treasurers, and so on, many of the people faced with this task are complete novices. This booklet is for all of you. Now, not wanting to discourage anyone this early on, but if your Priest has just announced that they are leaving, it's a bit late to be reading this.

If the hall extension has just been opened, named after your current leader; or if they have just had a personal monogram stitched prominently into the altar frontal; or if there's a big festival coming up next year that depends entirely on their input — you could be reading this at just the right time. If, on the other hand, you're reading this while the Priest is enjoying the first flush of early success, congratulations: you're the sort of church that realises that staffing is an ongoing concern.

As many congregations discover, there are several factors at play when it comes to recruiting, and it's best to be aware of these at all times, even when you're basking in the glow of a happy and successful relationship with a leader who has declared publicly that they have no interest in ever going anywhere else.

Things can change overnight. This guide has been written to help you when they do.

The lie of the land

The first question to answer is: **when the Priest moves on, will the Congregation get another one at all?**

Despite the encouraging headlines about increasing numbers training for ministry, plain demographics and the legacy of decades of under-recruiting or lack of vocations mean that even PR-savvy officials in the Church admit that we might not see the current level of clergy increase again.

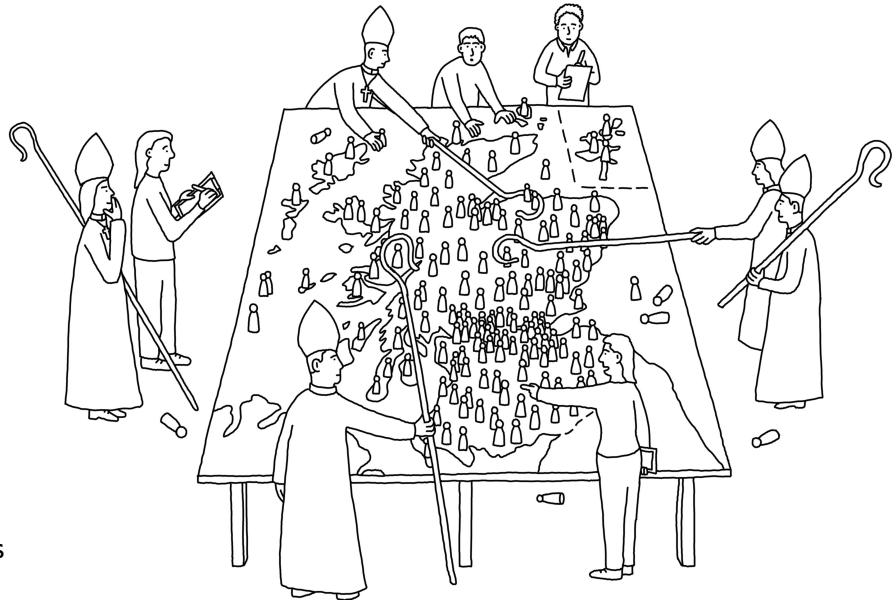
The effects of this decline in numbers — as well as a decline in the money to pay them — has already been felt, to the extent that a single-church may be becoming rarer. It stands to reason that, if there are fewer clergy to go around, they will have to be spread more thinly. Congregation members may fantasise about a cluster of eager clerics jostling to take on this congregation next, but the reality is that for many churches in the SEC there might just be one applicant — or none.

Managing the numbers of clergy and the expectations of congregations is important work so it's never too soon to have a chat to discover if there are any diocesan plans for amalgamations affecting your congregation.

But maybe the Bishop isn't the first person to speak to. The outgoing cleric, the Vestry, maybe other key people in the Diocese, such as the Dean and other local clergy — all these should have a good view of how things stand. The question to ask, then, is: will things stay the way they are? Or is a joint charge

CLERGY DEPLOYMENT

THE BISHOPS AND CHURCHES DECIDE WHO GOES WHERE



or an amalgamation (whatever name they might give it) on the cards?

Amalgamations are seldom welcomed, for obvious reasons. The frequency and times of services may have to be changed, the Rector or Priest-in-Charge often lives less locally, and so on. There are misguided attempts, perhaps embellished in urban myth, of uniting two neighbouring villages with no regard to centuries-old legacies of animosity (in one story, in a quarry area, rock-throwing was a regular Friday-night activity). Christian charity ought to cancel out such a history. Hasn't yet. On the other hand, a new grouping of churches, if well-judged and well-managed, can lead to the pooling of resources and new friendships.

What if you discover that you're not getting another Incumbent?

Sorry to stay in gloomy mode, but if your present incumbent is not going to be replaced, you won't need to read much further.

To be a little reassuring, you won't be set adrift. Some sort of provision will be made. Most probably it will be a joint charge with a neighbouring congregation; it might be a part-time or house-for-duty arrangement. If you don't think this is fair, you can try negotiating. The other thing you could do is to come up with other practical solutions: sharing with a different grouping of congregations to the one proposed; suggesting a part-time person with a diocesan responsibility; a house-for-duty clergy person; and so on. Several of these prospects will involve you in recruiting, so read on!

Vacancy

(sometimes called Interregnum)

You might as well know what the thinking is here. The chief use of this period of time is to treat it as a swallow of cool water between two different-tasting foods.

There are two common faults when looking for a new Priest. The first is to look for a younger version of what you have at the moment: the same experience, the same strengths, perhaps a bit more energy?

The second is the reverse of this: to breathe a sigh of relief and look for someone who is the opposite of the previous incumbent — someone who'll put a stop to the innovations that you haven't liked, and restore things to the way things used to be.

The responsibility of those managing the process of finding a new church leader is to clear a way through this thinking (starting with their own), and focus instead on the one big, simple question: What does the charge need?

Note: this is about the charge, not the present congregation. Note, too, that the answer to this question is beyond the scope of a single individual. A thoroughgoing audit will touch on areas of ministry that could and should be done without the incumbent's input. A vacancy is often a great time to discover the talents in the congregation, hidden up until now because not called upon.

In your audit, there will be things that you don't believe that the church can hope to provide, such as an end to poverty, knife-crime, loneliness, or whatever. Put them down on the list, none the less. For it is only when you have this bigger picture that you can start to see where your new leader could fit in, and therefore what gifts you'd like them to have.

Of course, in an open, self-aware congregation, this sort of thinking might be in place already, and you could be ready to advertise and appoint immediately after the previous person leaves. The job then is to convince the Bishop that you are in a good place to get on with the process and have taken enough time to reflect, pray and discern the way forward.

A couple of more practical thoughts: Is there anything majorly structural that you need to do? Yours wouldn't be an unusual congregation if it had a large building project under way — though clergy have an admirable tendency to stick around till the extension is built or the roof fixed, and disappear only when it becomes time to enjoy the fruits of the new larger/drier/ better-plumbed building.

If you do have something on the go, check what progress can be made. Is all the funding in place? Who takes over the project management? Is the departing person a necessary signatory? Think about the house, too. What repairs does it need? Redecorating should probably wait till the next person can have a say, but an unkempt house might put off a potential candidate. At least tackle the woodwork and windows, inside and out, together with anything serious like a new boiler or roof repairs. Decide what to do about the garden. If you have a notion that it might be empty for some months, think about short-term tenancies but check carefully all the implications of this.



Think about the
rectory: what
repairs does it
need?

The process, and timing

After your Rector or Priest-in-Charge has announced that he or she plans to leave, this is roughly the order in which things need to happen:

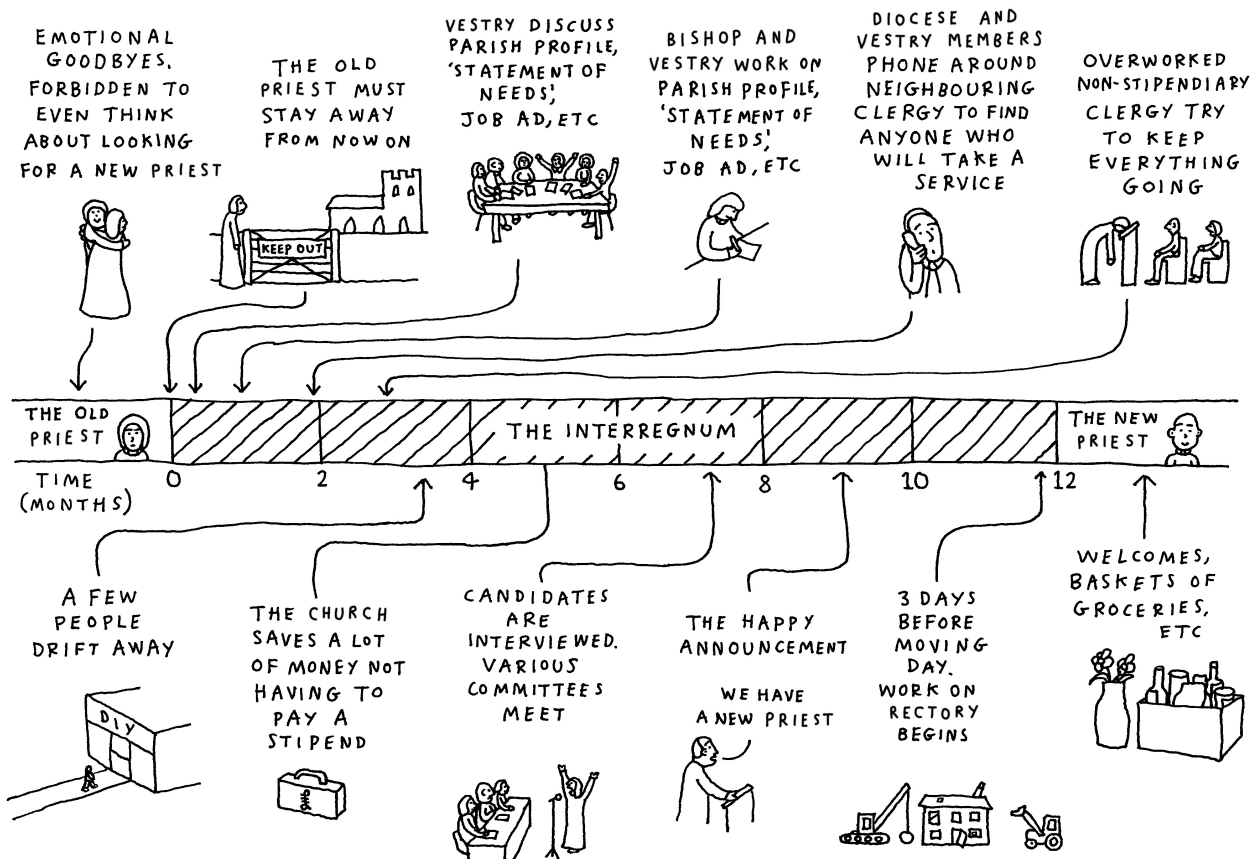
- Establish contact with the Bishop to arrange a meeting with the Vestry, which may include a review of the charge
- Identify with the Bishop a timeline of when the role could be advertised
- Determine the constitution/ membership of the Vacancy Committee
- Draw up a Congregational Profile —this process will help you decide what sort of person you want for what sort of ministry - then include that in

the Priest in Charge/ Rector's Profile .

- Advertise
- Interview and carry out background checks (the diocese will do the latter)
- Inform/consult all who need to be consulted/ informed
- Appoint
- Find out when the new person can move
- Announce
- Arrange a licensing/ induction/installation/ collation service
- Just listing these steps should tell you that this is not a swift process. Unlike almost every other organisation in the world, the Church seems to

believe that it's perfectly normal to be without a key leader for months — the average is about nine months to a year— despite the amount of notice given by the outgoing person.

THE INTERREGNUM



Brain-picking

The Vestry generally knows all that needs to be known in a congregation. But you need to be prepared for any eventuality. Maybe the leader has to leave suddenly or dies in office; an experienced Vestry member has moved away; and the Annual Meeting is a long time away where you can appoint new members. These things happen.

In any case, it is important to pick the brains of the person who is leaving, and get stuff in writing, if the Vestry Secretary hasn't already.

Most of the important bits about running the Congregation will be recorded somewhere (location of keys, bank-account passwords, that sort of thing). But are there important bits of information that your Priest carries around in his or her head? If so, you want

to find these out before they get caught up in packing.

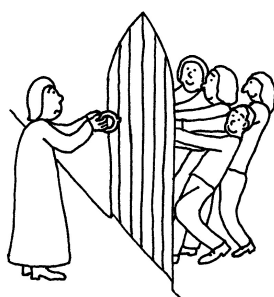
And then, beyond the congregation, there are all the connections and relationships that have been made.

Who are the most approachable people on the local council? What are the social services' support networks like? Who runs the local night shelter? How do you contact the imam? Do you share a youth club? There's a heap of stuff that it would be pointless to expect the new incumbent to have to find out afresh — besides all the use you'll need to make of it during the vacancy. More sensitively, beside the practical stuff, thought ought to be given to pastoral care. Who are the people who have been supporting pastorally? What is

to happen to them during the vacancy? Who can take over visiting duties, and what ought those people to know? Are there safeguarding issues? Some of this information may not be stored in a particular place. Take advice about confidentiality.

SUPPLY CLERGY

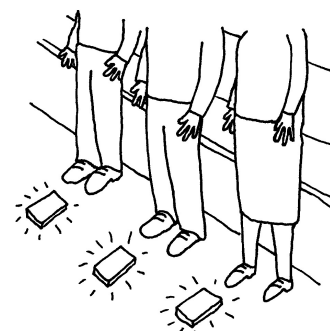
WHEN CONGREGATIONS MISBEHAVE



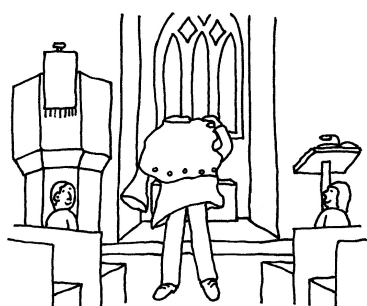
HOLDING THE DOOR SHUT



"WE HAD THESE READINGS LAST WEEK"



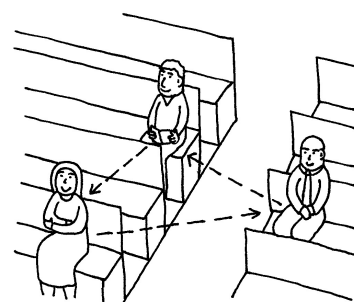
ALL DROPPING HYMN BOOKS AT THE SAME TIME



"WE DON'T HAVE A VESTRY"



MUMBLING THE HYMNS



SITTING IN THE WRONG PEWS

Audit

As part of your congregational audit, draw up an honest assessment of the strengths and weaknesses, not sparing the old incumbent's blushes. This is the starting-point for the Congregational Profile. The Profile is an essential bit of kit, describing the place to prospective candidates, but its compilation can be much more significant than that.

As advised above, you need to pull together ideas about where the church should be heading. Again, this is an auditing exercise that could happen at any time in the church's life, but a change of leader is a good time, knowing that whoever comes next will have different talents and potential. There is no formula for doing this, so it's up to you whether, for example, you set up a small working group to canvas opinion, or hold an extraordinary meeting of the Vestry or congregation. The key thing is to involve everyone who wants to be involved — even if they wouldn't naturally push themselves forward, e.g. the youth group, the mothers-and-toddlers meeting, the residents of the neighbouring care home.

Questions you will quickly become aware of: is the vision of the church shared by all? How do you balance the different views of the congregation? How much of the vision is focused on people beyond the congregation? Are there power bases that need to be acknowledged and persuaded to act generously? What areas of mission have been neglected, for what reason?

There are two reasons for this sort of introspection. The first is to prepare the ground for what you write in the Congregational Profile; but, more immediately, it gives you an insight into how the interregnum will shape up. A common problem in church life is a shortage of people willing or able to contribute their time and energy to the running of the church and its activities.

Naturally enough, the people who are most actively involved tend to have the greatest say in how things are done — indeed, what things are done. The danger here comes from human nature: we run things the way we want to, and soon the church can become like a club. Things then become circular: when outsiders see things being done a certain way, particularly by people who seem to be church fixtures, they assume there's nothing for them to do.

All this self-examination ought to be a regular habit even when you have a Rector or Priest-in-Charge, of course — and the existence of a cleric is by no means a bar to cliques and cabals. But it's particularly important that a congregation hangs together when you're without a leader/referee/professional theologian/etc., or whatever roles your Incumbent performs.

PRAYER

Sorry not to have mentioned this before — in a way, that's an indication of how all the practical stuff can predominate in this process. But constant, committed, faithful, informed prayer is an essential part of this process. There is no way to align your desires with God other than through prayer. And you won't pray for long without realising that only God can hold all the elements of this process together, from forging an agreement between those responsible for the choice to catching the eye of the right candidate, right through to developing relationships with the new incumbent when he or she arrives.

Praying, too, is an opportunity to appreciate that God's ways are not our ways: the God who chose Peter as the founding member of his Church can very easily throw a screwball into the process. Yes, do all the sensible stuff contained in this article, but be ready for the unexpected. Prayer also brings the congregation together. Not everyone can be on the interviewing panel (though it sounds as if some places have tried), but everyone can be deeply involved in the process through prayer.

The danger here comes from human nature: we run things the way we want to, and soon the church can become like a club.

The Congregational Profile

Draw up a Profile that is not too distant from this, i.e. still honest, but more succinct and forward-looking. Recruitment is a two-way street: you are looking for a suitable leader; he or she is looking for a suitable charge.

"Suitable" can mean many things here and does: every congregation has an unfinishable variety of tasks to be done; every cleric has an unfathomable range of talents. Sounding them out comes later, though. Right now, your job is to depict your charge in a way that will attract the right candidate(s). There's quite an art to this: here are a few basic thoughts.

In terms of format, there is a standard template for Congregational Profiles. And you can learn much simply by reading other Congregational Profiles online.

There are some basics: include the area — give standard details of demographics, number of churches, services, etc. Beyond this, the key is to be honest but positive: what does your charge

have going for it? Think congregation, activities, state of the buildings, school connections, location, finances, Rectory, support (e.g. Lay Readers, administrator, etc).

Next, what are the challenges? You need the same degree of honesty here as in the positive bits. Do any of the following sentences sound right to you: "Of course, we'll tell the candidates about that if they ask"; "If we mention this, no one will ever apply"; "When they've moved their family into the Rectory will be soon enough to tell them about that"? Hopefully not.

On the other hand, there is a way of presenting problems that tells the candidate that you're committed to finding a solution — which you are, of course. "The Vestry is aware that its ministry to a nearby estate has made little impact, and is looking for a fresh impetus to fulfil this vision." "Giving has dipped in the past three years. The Vestry is arranging a special prayer day to

focus on this problem." "Our music has always been a bit rubbish, but we've started recruiting some new people to the choir." Finally, what sort of person are you looking for? Are there any definite requirements? "The successful candidate will have at least three years' experience working in a multifaith environment." Or strong hints? "St Mary's has a reputation for fine musicianship in its services." Or directions you have identified in your soul-searching (see above)? "St Nicholas's wants to develop its ministry to the care homes in the locality."

Then there's what continues to be called churchmanship, or tradition. You might want to emphasise the bits of the tradition you favour: biblical preaching, informal worship, a commitment to social action, theological exploration, eucharistic discipline etc.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

You have done a bit of this in the Congregational Profile, but draw up a list of attributes you'd like the new Incumbent to have, in order of priority. To start with, devise some sort of forfeit for each person who jokes about wanting the Archangel Gabriel. That said, it's as well to recognise early

that your future leader is not going to be perfect in every respect. How much experience do you want them to have? Older clerics can bring well-developed skills to the post but might be set in their ways. Younger leaders might be a bit raw, but they can learn quickly. And there is

such a range of possibilities of prior experience from secular or church world that experience is much more nuanced.

Look for signs in the applications and references,

Continued on next page

and make sure you interview diligently.

Even then, it's as well to recognise that there will always be a margin of error. There are a few autocratic leaders who know instinctively and devastatingly well how to disguise their characters, and whose glowing references are written by people desperate to get rid of them.

On the other hand, there are able, imaginative Priests who are just hopeless at presenting themselves. When

they eventually get appointed, usually after being turned down several times, the congregation is astonished at how good they are.

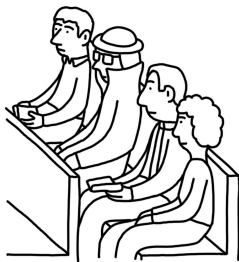
The key thing you're looking for is fit. If you have a couple of decent lay preachers, it might not matter too much if the new Priest is not the best preacher in the world. If you have an able administrator, it might not matter too much if the new Priest is a little disorganised. Increasingly, our leaders are expected to be initiators, forging new relationships across the

community, and starting new projects. Such people need sweepers, midfield players who can follow up and make sure that a proportion of the bright ideas come to something. If you don't have those sorts of people in the congregation, you need to limit your requirements.

Above all, don't forget to look for holiness. You do want your new Priest to be a person of prayer, don't you? And remember, prayer takes time.

UNDERCOVER CLERGY

CHARACTERISTICS OF POTENTIAL NEW CLERGY VISITING UNANNOUNCED DURING A VACANCY



TRYING TO BLEND IN



LOITERING NEAR THE RECTORY



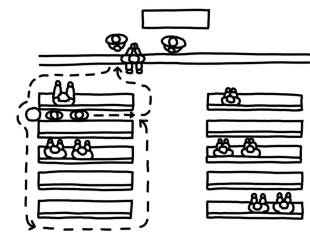
KNOWING A BIT MORE OF THE LITURGY THAN IS NORMAL



TAKING AN UNUSUAL INTEREST IN THE STATE OF THE FINANCES



APPEARING EVASIVE WHEN ASKED QUESTIONS



UNDERSTANDING HOW THE COMMUNION ONE-WAY SYSTEM WORKS

Finding someone

How do you find the right people who might potentially fill this post? It may be that the Bishop introduces you to somebody, or you may be advertising.

Obvious ways of advertising are on the SEC website and through the Church Times. There are other ways of getting your vacancy known — diocesan websites and social media — but assuming that you want your vacancy to be seen by as many people as possible, and share a commitment to open and fair recruitment, an ad in the Church Times is still the best way forward alongside the SEC website.

The shortage of clergy raises the question of the value of advertising. What's the point of spending all that money (the average is about £800-900) if you attract only one or two applicants, or fewer? There is an alternative view, of course: canny congregations realise that the fewer clergy there are around, the tougher the competition. They know that they have to advertise widely in order to attract anyone.

The Church Times also offers an "until-filled" option. For a small premium, you can re-advertise a vacancy for free if you don't attract anyone suitable the first time around. Or the second time. Or the third, etc. Most Church Times advertisements are now "until filled". There are a couple

of other advantages of using the Church Times for your advertising: there's a real person to talk you through the application process, making sure that your vacancy is seen by thousands of potential candidates who access the website regularly or read through the jobs pages. Also, the future of this paper relies on people like you who continue to use the service we provide. Put simply, the money you spend on recruitment not only finds you a priest but also supports everything else that the Church Times does: its weekly publication, its online news service, the resources it makes available to those who run the Church, and the myriad of additional projects: the Festival of Preaching, the Green Church and Green Health awards, the Festival of Faith and Literature, etc.

And what if you get only one applicant? First, be grateful.

Many congregations have to advertise two or three times before attracting anyone, especially in less appealing locations.

Second, take the Holy Spirit seriously: recruiting clergy should adopt the best practices of the secular world, but that doesn't mean that the process is wholly secular. It's important to try to discern when the Holy Spirit is at work, directing people


to the right place

Third, this is not an unusual way to appoint a new minister: several denominations work on the principle of considering only one person at a time.

Fourth, a low response might simply mean that you got your advertising right: a vague description of the vacancy which attracts a wide field of candidates can waste everybody's time.

But, of course, the applicant might be hopelessly wrong. A careful look at the application could well clarify matters. It's important not to drop your standards or compromise too much. Even though it might seem strange with just one candidate, you need to go through a formal interview in order to discern whether this is the right fit.

In the past, you might have been advised to advertise a second time to get a wider field of applicants before interviewing. Nowadays, there's no guarantee you'd get any more. So treat the applicant you have with respect, and go through the discernment process until things are clear.



Canny parishes realise that the fewer clergy there are, the tougher the competition.”

CLERGY ADVERTISEMENTS

UNDERSTANDING THE HIDDEN SYMBOLISM

SIGNS LIKE THIS MEAN THAT THE ADVERTISEMENT IS MORE LIKELY TO BE GENUINE, RATHER THAN ONE SUBMITTED BY A PRANKSTER

DIOCESE OF ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
 THE CHURCH OF ~~XXXXX~~ AND
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ WITH ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~, ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ AND ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

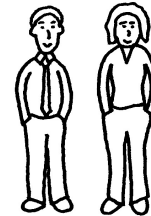
- WE ARE LOOKING FOR A PERSON OF PRAYER WITH GOOD PREACHING AND PASTORAL SKILLS
- THERE ARE SUBSTANTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MISSION NETWORKING
- THERE IS SCOPE FOR ENCOURAGING LAY PARTICIPATION
- WE NEED A VISIONARY LEADER WHO IS ENERGETIC, ENTHUSIASTIC AND PRACTICAL

WE HAVE BLOCKED OUT THESE DETAILS FOR OBVIOUS REASONS

"WE LOOKED AT ALL OF THE OTHER ADVERTISEMENTS AND COPIED WHAT THEY HAD WRITTEN"



"NO-ONE ELSE WILL DO ANYTHING"



"YOU CAN GO TO THE PUB IF YOU LIKE"



"YOU WILL HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING"



What if you get no applicants?

One option would be to move your church to a more desirable location! If that's not possible, don't panic. Although it can seem like a snub — "What's wrong with us, that no one wants to come here?" — it could simply be the result of any one of a number of factors.

The first, of course, is the general shortage of clergy in the UK. Beyond that, it might simply be a matter of timing: that one priest who is destined to come wasn't

free/wasn't in the right frame of mind/didn't see the advert. In case it's the last, re-advertise. The popularity of the Church Times's "until-filled" option shows that it works, and that you're not alone.

If that doesn't work, rethink the advert: does it accurately reflect the joys associated with the post

as well as the challenges? Or rethink your Congregational Profile and your Rector Profile. Or, in the last resort, rethink the post itself.

The Vestry is aware that its ministry to a nearby estate has made little impact, and is looking for a fresh impetus to fulfill this vision."

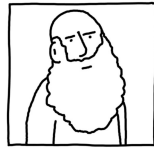
PREVIOUS INCUMBENTS



BUILT THE
TOWER



INSTALLED
GAS LIGHTING



MAGNIFICENT
BEARD



FOUNDED THE
SCHOOL



DID WONDERS
FOR THE ROSES



NAME ON
A PLAQUE



LARGELY
ABSENT



INTRODUCED
INNOVATIONS



ABOLISHED
INNOVATIONS



LEFT UNDER
A CLOUD



WROTE
A BOOK



BUILT CHURCH
ON NEW ESTATE



DAY OFF:
FRIDAY



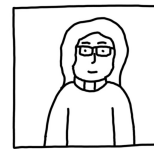
UPSET THE
FLOWER ARRANGERS



PUB OUTREACH
MINISTRY



BEFRIENDED THE
PRESBYTERIANS



STARTED THE
FOOD BANK



KEPT THE
PLACE GOING

Reading applications

The candidate's application form is their opportunity to introduce themselves to you. This document should give you enough data to feel excited about the prospect of meeting them in person, an insight into what they might be able to bring to your place and therefore what the future might look like together.

Before getting stuck into the applications, you need to return to the hard work that you have already slogged over in creating a Congregational Profile and Rector Profile for your ideal candidate. This is your criteria and at this point both a reminder of what collectively has been agreed about this post, and what you have communicated to potential applicants about expectations. Keeping hold of these guard-rails means that the read-through of applications should be grounded and guided by decisions already made, rather than driven by an instantaneous reaction (whether positive or negative) to their material. The school that the candidate attended, their previous career choice or the football team they support can hook us in or send us cold very easily without us recognising it. Unconscious bias is very powerful, even on paper.

Therefore, have a structured system in place which helps you read the applications with integrity, making connections between what your needs are and what the candidate has to offer. Identify from your Rector Profile what is essential and desirable for this job, being clear that if the candidate does not meet all that's on your essential list, they need to be taken out of the process. Being robust on this enables a safe process for the candidate and for you. Secondly, come to an agreement on how many candidates would be optimum to meet in person. This helps in making some short-listing decisions if there is a large field of candidates. These hard edges help to keep the process aligned with your original purpose.

Work through the applications looking for the evidence that connects with your essential and desirable criteria, and identifying gaps. As well as identifying competence from the content of the application ("does this person meet our criteria?") intentionally consider the "voice" that you are hearing. The candidate is introducing themselves as well as their skills: so what do you understand about them from how they have constructed their application?

Is there a clear voice which is relational? Or formal? Or measured? Or eager? Or desperate? Consciously recognising what you are sub-consciously picking up means that you can make some choices about what you need to do about this. It's very easy to infer and interpret without identifying what the evidence is.

As well as the hard scan of essential and desirable qualities, take some time in prayer to reflect on how this person's potential might fit in your place. Potential is difficult to measure - of course! However there may be some hints and ideas in their application which you can take note. Recognising that the candidate comes as a whole person who may have had great experience prior to ordination in other contexts which can bring value to the church: leading a team in a bank, a shop or in a high-pressured customer services environment is not the same as leading a team in a church context, but there are some key skills that will have been practised and honed there that will be useful to you.

In summary: what do you get from this candidate? If this was our leader, what would it be like working with them? How might they change the culture? Finally, what are your outstanding questions about this person that you would like to find out more?

Keeping legal & being fair

The Diocese will guide you through the legal process. Ensuring that the process is fair and that there is no discrimination is in everyone's interest and is a shared responsibility. This means both being aware of personal unconscious bias and keeping it in check, and ensuring that there isn't anything in the process which unfairly favours or hinders an individual due to their protected characteristics. Appointing the right person for your post seems like a rather obvious aspiration for this process, but it is easy to utterly undermine this hope by relying on bias and learned opinions as truths.

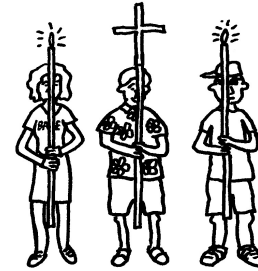
Unconscious bias is pervasive and powerful: unchecked it is possible to find strong rational arguments to back up the bias that we hold. Keeping strictly to the criteria on the person spec means that other factors (gender, race, sexuality, age etc) must be disregarded. Beware the alluring confidence that because your previous priest was

THE INTERREGNUM

THIS IS THE TIME BETWEEN THE END OF ONE PRIEST AND THE START OF THE NEXT ONE

GOOD THINGS ABOUT AN INTERREGNUM

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WEAR ALL OF THE PROPER ROBES E.T.C.



YOU CAN DO SOMETHING ELSE INSTEAD OF HAVING A SERMON



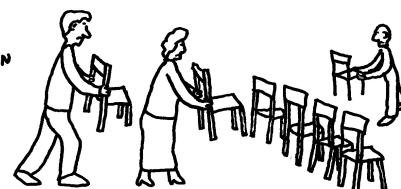
BAD THINGS ABOUT AN INTERREGNUM

SERVICES ARE CONDUCTED BY VISITING CLERGY WITH PECULIAR METHODS



TODAY'S SERMON WILL BE CONDUCTED VIA THE MEDIUM OF DANCE... AND I'D LIKE EVERYONE TO JOIN IN...

MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION HAVE TO DO THINGS

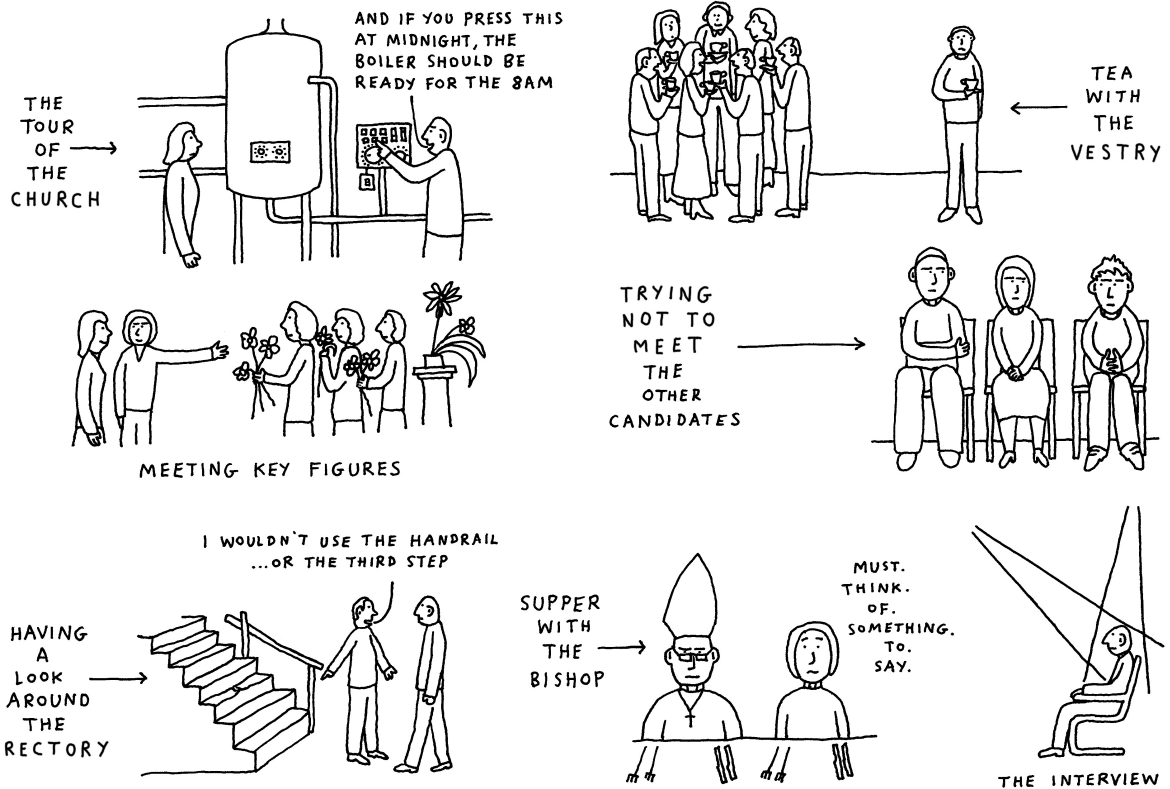


a 40-year old man, this next one needs to be too. That reliance on assumptions hides from you the gifts that God has given to and developed in each person differently. It is illegal and unfair to make decisions in this way, and is dismissive of God's great work.

As well as ensuring the process is free from discrimination, there's also a responsibility to keep confidentiality for the candidate, including who has applied, what was expressed at interview and what the outcome is. Their vulnerability and trust in the application and interview process need to be honoured, and mistreating candidates in this process is not acceptable.

INTERVIEWING

FOR A NEW PRIEST



Interview

The interview is a two-way sharing of data which allows both you and the candidate to discern whether this is a good fit. It's recommended that it isn't used as an opportunity to trip people up, put them under undue pressure or to make them uncomfortable unless this is the environment in which they are going to be working (In which case there might be some other work that needs to be done ahead of appointing a candidate). It is unfortunate that more people have seen The Apprentice on TV than observed good practice interviews: from both your side and their side, this is not a style of interviewing which is going to allow for data to be shared effectively and therefore good discernment to happen.

So the starting point for what should be asked at interview isn't revisiting the ghastly questions that you've had the misfortune of being asked at interview (If you were a tree, what tree would you be? What's the worst thing you've ever done? What are your weaknesses?). Instead go back to your paperwork and figure out what you need to know from this process so that you can collect

good data that will enable you to discern. Once you're clear on that, it's simpler to determine what will enable the candidate to demonstrate this to you: this might include interview questions (self-reported data), preaching (observable data which demonstrates theology, teaching style and connection) or "Grill a Rector" at the local school (data on engagement with children).... or many other options. Being intentional about what needs to be demonstrated, how you get that data and

The interview questions need to be agreed beforehand, and the same questions asked of all candidates.

what you're going to do with it will help you build a process which fits your post. This process will be worked out with the Vestry and the Bishop (or Bishop's representative, such as the Dean).

The interview questions need to be agreed beforehand, and the same questions asked of all candidates, although relevant follow up questions can be asked to probe further. This makes the process fairer and less open to the risk of discrimination and bias, which is the spectre prowling around the room as the possibility of reliance on gut feel colours objectivity. Asking candidates for examples provides more useful data than asking general or hypothetical questions, which may demonstrate their effectiveness at dreaming things up under pressure rather than actual evidence of what they have done and how they did it.

As well as activities that enable you to gather data about them, there needs to be opportunities for the candidate to gather data about you, to discern whether this is the right place for them now. This includes visits to the house, the church(es), the local school(s) or community projects and there is often a social gathering which is their opportunity to find out more from a wider range of people about what your place is like. For some, this is more daunting than the interview itself and therefore recognising that this can feel awkward and uncomfortable for the candidates (and therefore possibly not the best environment for them to get their data) is useful. Be kind.

Also, be kind in allowing them time and space to pray and reflect. Some places plan a "familiarisation" day separately from the interview day, which means that the candidates get a chance to observe, explore and discern without the pressure of performing. A packed, over-crowded agenda may mean that you do not get the opportunity to really see the candidate and what they might bring to your place - instead you meet an exhausted candidate who can't wait to go home. This is a two-way process of course and how they feel treated on their interview day gives them some data about how they might be treated in your place.


The interview will be chaired, often by the Bishop or a representative of the Bishop. Do take notes: this is going to be critical to the discernment that follows. Writing down what they say (rather than what you think they mean) is a useful discipline to

avoid bias. Noting down only observable data rather than perception or judgement is important also as the notes taken can be accessed through a GDPR data request. Keep in mind that the candidate might see your notes.

The candidates should be given the opportunity to ask the panel some questions at the end of the interview - this is really helpful for them to get some clarity on the post, or the place or what the future might look like here. (The candidates may also have a separate meeting alone with the Bishop and/or Dean before or after the main interview).

Once they have asked their questions, have been made clear on the next steps of the process and are sent on their way, the hard work for the panel begins in earnest. Prayer - again - and listening needs to be weaved in amongst this discussion. Once again, keeping tight to the criteria of what you need in your next post-holder is important for these discussions. Something exciting about one of the candidate's enthusiasm for frogs shouldn't derail this process - unless of course the frogs were identified as criteria right at the start. It's useful to have a clear structure for sharing data and collecting it in this meeting, so that everyone has the chance to be heard and any issues about the candidates' data discussed.

Once decisions have been made, invest some time in thinking about what needs to be shared as feedback. The candidate that isn't going to be appointed, having taken time and energy to participate in your process, needs to get some value from it so that they can continue to discern God's call on their life and learn from this experience. Feedback shouldn't be given in



Once decisions have been made, invest some time in thinking about what needs to be shared with each applicant as feedback.

the same phone call as being told “no” - that’s a lot to process and they won’t be as receptive as they could be. Useful questions to consider for feedback include:

- Who did we meet?
- What did we like in the data we were given?
- Where were the gaps (between the candidate and our criteria)?

For some candidates, the “no” might feel deeply disappointing to them. For others it will be a

relief! It’s important that they recognise that this is only a no for this post at this time, rather than a total rejection of them and their calling.

And for the “yes” candidate? It’s also good to give them some feedback about the process and how they came across. This is the start of a new ministry for both of you - and keep asking God for guidance about how to make this work for the good of the Kingdom as you begin this new season together.

THE NEW PRIEST

THE INCUMBENT IS PRESENTED WITH SYMBOLS OF THEIR IMPENDING MINISTRY



WATER
(FOR BAPTISM)



SPECTACLES
(FOR READING MANY
MINUTES OF MEETINGS)



ALARM CLOCK
(FOR FINISHING SERMONS
IN THE EARLY MORNING)



CHAIR-MOVING
GLOVES

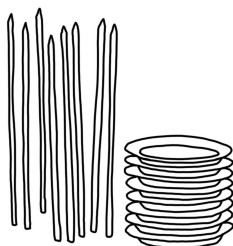


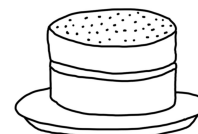
PLATE-SPINNING
SET



INVISIBILITY CLOAK
(FOR DAYS OFF)



SHOVEL
(VARIOUS USES)



CAKE
(EVERYONE LIKES CAKE)

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