

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Single PCC

- 1. Why change?** The short answer is that church attendance and the number of clergy has *fallen* over recent years, the number of PCCs remains *unchanged* and expectations of governance have *grown*.
 - There is duplication of work and responsibilities at parish level within each benefice.
 - Finding PCC officers is a struggle in many places.
 - Clergy and lay time is disproportionately being taken up in governance rather than service and mission.
 - A single PCC can best coordinate the mission and ministry across the whole benefice for the growth of the church.
- 2. What are the benefits?** Working more closely together, building trust, supporting one another and better communication. Safeguarding: better, more coordinated oversight. One place for and set of documents for legal/statutory requirements. Economies of time, scale and potentially cost. *Laitly have more time for local activities rather than meetings. Maintains local engagement with building, events and care.* Multi parish benefices are harder to appoint to.
- 3. What are the challenges?** Growing in a wider loyalty than one's own church. Potential impact on giving (though this can be avoided by setting up good structures). Greater burden on PCC officers (though this can be mitigated by sharing many aspects of the roles). Enhancing administration across the benefice. Building trust.
- 4. What kind of support would be provided for this process?** Such changes necessarily involve a pastoral scheme which would be run by the diocesan Pastoral Secretary with support from the Archdeacon. They would guide and lead parishes through the process. Parishes can also be put in touch with other parishes which have successfully navigated this process.
- 5. How do the single parish proposals help in a way that retaining the existing benefice does not?** The Church of England is set up in a way that local leadership is shared between the incumbent and PCC. A benefice may have multiple PCCs which commits the incumbent to a high number of necessary governance meetings. Coordinating the mission and ministry of the church across the benefice is the work of the incumbent, having to do this through each separate PCC is unnecessarily complex and time consuming – time better spent in ministry and mission which can lead to growth. A single PCC can best coordinate the mission and ministry across the whole benefice for the growth of the church (and well-being of the incumbent).
- 6. Are there any working examples of other parishes that have gone through similar reorganisation – and what lessons can be learnt from them?** In terms of simplifying governance yes: Parish of the Resurrection, Itchen Valley, Avon Valley and Pastrow (the latter two still in process) – each with its own individuality, and approach founded in prayer and mutual support.

7. **In what way is your proposal an improvement on the current arrangements with each local PCC looking after the church?** The PCC is the legal body, having Local Church Committees (LCCs) as sub committees of the PCC with delegated authority in many areas, would mean the LCC doing the work of looking after the local church, with PCC responsibilities held in one place. This arrangement means the PCC can concentrate on the 'big picture', ie strategy, vision and appropriate governance, and LCCs can do the day to day running of the church building and churchyard.
8. **How will individual churches be managed under the overarching single PCC?** Local Church Committees are one good way of doing this, focussed sub committees are another option.
9. **How would members of the PCC be selected?** You have choice in how this is set up within the Church Representation Rules¹. You could choose to have one (or more) person elected from each church/former parish² and this may help as a starting point for a new PCC. Wherever they come from, members of the new PCC should understand their role as being to lead and manage the *whole* of the new parish. All licensed clergy are members. Churchwardens are ex officio members (this also may affect how many Churchwardens you think it is suitable to have). Deanery Synod representatives are also ex officio members, as are licenced lay workers³. You can always invite additional observers to attend meetings.
10. **Churchwardens are elected at the Annual Church Meeting, which usually precedes the APCM. With just one PCC for xx churches, how will this operate in the future?** With one parish you would have one ACM. Notice has to be given in line with the national guidance/regulations.
11. **Election processes - do people only vote for their local members or the entire benefice? How will APCMs work if we have deputy wardens/treasurers etc?** With one parish you will have one APCM, and it will depend on how you choose to set things up. Treasurers are appointed at the first PCC meeting following an APCM. Deputy wardens are not a legal position and you can choose how they are appointed (if you have them).
12. **How would the changes affect the number of churchwardens?** Every parish church usually has two churchwardens. A chapel of ease does not need churchwardens. Where a parish has more than one parish church two churchwardens can still be appointed for each parish church. Alternatively, the scheme which unites the parishes to create one parish can also stipulate that there will only be one churchwarden for each parish church etc (therefore two churchwardens for the whole parish if you have two parish churches, three wardens if you have three parish churches and so on). This can help to keep the numbers manageable, if that is an issue. All the churchwardens are churchwardens of the whole parish except so far as they may arrange to perform separate duties in relation to particular churches in the parish.

¹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/church-representation-rules>

² See 13 'What happens with the ER?'

³ For further details see Church Representation Rules M15(1)

13. **What happens with the Electoral Roll?** There is one ER for a parish. Parishioners can be asked whether they would like to declare their affiliation to one or more church by virtue of residence and/or habitual worship, which would be noted on the ER.
14. **Will there be an overall Safeguarding officer in the main PCC doing DBS checks and booking people on courses with a safeguarding officer in the previous benefices for people to call with concerns over a safeguarding matter, which is what we have at present?** Any PCC must have a safeguarding officer, but the responsibility for safeguarding belongs to the whole PCC (and in many ways to all church members). Whilst one person would be named and in charge, as with other roles, there can be assistants helping with aspects of the role.
15. **What might the relationship be between the local church community and the new PCC in the future?** An example is available in the Avon Valley booklet (if you have not received this please ask). NB this is one example not a blueprint.
16. **What happens if some parishes wish to become part of a single benefice PCC and other parishes do not?** We need to find a way forward for the whole benefice; if there are compelling reasons for a different model to the one being suggested we would want to hear these. This is a consultation process.
17. **As PCCs are staffed by unpaid volunteers there are no operational cost savings to be achieved by scrapping individual PCCs for a single PCC – so what is the point of a single PCC?** The simplification move is about all the reasons given above (ie more to simplify overall governance and administration, and to enable the church's mission and growth), not principally cost savings (though there may be some found through better coordination).
18. **What freedom does the local church have to operate independently of the new PCC?** This will depend on how you set it up. The Avon Valley booklet gives an example. There has to be accountability along with responsibility, so an LCC cannot be totally independent, but significant delegation can be agreed between the PCC and the LCC.
19. **Is this a take-over by a bigger parish?** We believe these proposals can help free up the *local* to focus on the work of the church *locally* with better support being available from a larger single PCC, rather than being swallowed up or losing identity.
20. **Will there be any changes in administration?** This will be up to you. Experience shows that paying for good administration is a very worthwhile investment for the sake of the clergy, other lay volunteers and whole benefice. We can put you in touch with other benefices who have done this.
21. **The proposed benefice is too big.** We are proposing an increase in ministerial provision through a larger benefice ministry team. In addition, the simplification of governance is proposed to assist clergy to manage their time and be better placed to oversee growth of the church. A benefice ministry team can flourish and encourage whereas a single clergy

person might be isolated and cut off (please see the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing⁴).

22. **Who will have responsibility for the day to day running of the church?** The incumbent and PCC, with delegated authority to the LCC (if that is the chosen direction).
23. **A single PCC will have to deal with service schedules, resource allocation, maintenance of up to xx churches, insurances, safeguarding et al. Resulting in long meetings, perhaps heated meetings.** Many multi church benefices have (usually employ) an administrator of some kind, to take on such tasks and to avoid tying down the clergy and to support the lay officers.

Finances

24. **Will our CMF contribution change?** Each parish's CMF contribution is worked out on the basis of two factors: the socio-economic assessment of the parish and the Community of Worshippers (CoW) total. Combining the parishes may change the overall socio-economic band. Combining the CoW figures may result in the 'large congregation' reduction being applied.
25. **What happens with the finances of each church?** The new PCC will be responsible for overall financial controls, spending and reporting. Restricted funds remain restricted to the named church. You can structure the PCC accounts with separate designations for each of the different churches. You can structure budgets and fundraising to support each local community and minimise unnecessary bureaucracy.
26. **If finances are centralised within the PCC how can extra costs be avoided, eg hiring part time professional accounting help?** We would hope it will not be necessary to hire professional help, though across the C of E there are parishes (small and great) where this happens. Sharing out aspects of the statutory roles is vital in most parishes.
27. **Fundraising events such as open gardens, auctions of promises, coffee morning - if the funds aren't seen to be going to the local church, the hard-working organisers will do it for other charities - or not at all.** We very much recognise the importance of the local lead in fundraising. This can be managed in such a way as to not be a problem. A conversation with the Parish of the Resurrection may be helpful for reassurance of ways the finances can be managed so that the local remains vital in these regards.
28. **Over half of our 60 regular givers do not attend church at all but believe that it is central to the village. If what they give goes to mend churches in other villages, they will find other charities to support.** As referenced above, financial structures can be set up to avoid this problem. In the accounts each church could have a designated/restricted fabric fund which cannot be used by other churches and donations for them would have to be strictly adhered to. The Parish of the Resurrection can share their set up in this regard.

⁴ <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/national-clergy-hr/supporting-clergy-health-and-wellbeing/covenant>

29. **If it is essential to have professional auditor what about the extra cost?** Please see C of E website for when an auditor is required⁵.
30. **Where will we find a treasurer to take on responsibility for 6 or 7 LLCs under 1 PCC?** As above, depending on what your treasurer is able to offer in time, many areas of the role can be shared out with other volunteers. You may decide that your best interests are served by paying for some of these activities but that is a local discernment (the PoTR and Itchen Valley have two different set ups in this regard).
31. **Papers state that ‘restricted funds remain restricted to the church’ but can an LCC still decide how these funds are spent or will the central PCC take all these decisions?** The PCC is the legal trust body and has overall responsibility for the finances. However, you can set things up with a high degree of delegation in various areas. Avon Valley’s paper provides some thoughts on this, the Parish of the Resurrection can also share their set up. Restricted funds must remain restricted to the purposes for which they were given.
32. **How will restricted funds be defined – will current reported designations already reported as part of the annual accounts be used – or will the central body try to redefine exactly what is restricted so that they can control as much of the funds of every church as possible?** As above, good care needs to be taken in setting up financial structures which both attend to the local need and voice in local decisions whilst the PCC holds due responsibility for the overall finances and system.
33. **Concern that the proposed re-organisation will lead to a decline in voluntary giving.** Again, there is no reason why this need be the case. You can set up the finances to ensure significant local influence over fundraising and spending.
34. **What will happen to the financial Reserves for those churches who have them?** You can set things up so that separate accounts continue, though now under the overall responsibility of the PCC. Local income and expenditure can be from these accounts or designated accounts. We would expect the PCC to move on from a fully separated set up but you could begin with a high degree of this and move when ready. The PCC would need an account for joint expenditure and for funds for various areas of work.
35. **What expenditure will come out of which fund? Eg what expenditure goes against every day running costs and what expenditure will go against the fabric fund?** One way of organising the finances is for the PCC to agree with LCCs their local budget and they can then spend locally within that without constantly checking back. Where there is a fabric fund it would make sense to keep it designated for that purpose.
36. **Will Gift Aid and Parish Giving be managed on a whole Parish basis across all the churches?** Our stewardship adviser can help with this, there are options.
37. **Will there be one Treasurer for the Parish? (Will this be a salaried role?)** A parish may have only one treasurer. However, depending on how you set things up (and possibly the

⁵ <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/pcc-accountability-guide/chapter-11>

person) there are aspects of the role that can be shared out (eg banking, gift aid, parish giving) and you may want to keep someone covering aspects of the treasurer role (a smaller role without all the necessary PCC aspects) in each LCC. We would recommend there is value in the current treasurers meeting together (possibly with a treasurer or two from other places further down this track) to discuss the set up that would work best for you.

38. **In developing the reorganisation proposals were the resulting savings solely to achieve those required by the Diocese; or was there any recognition given to the need of individual churches also to achieve significant cost savings, the main one of which being CMF (the Parish Share)?** We all are the diocese. Approximately 80% of our diocesan expenditure goes on parochial clergy posts and 80% of our income comes from CMF (parish share). If CMF goes down we cannot afford so many clergy. The way we can change this is principally by increasing congregations.
39. **Parish giving: will there be allocation of regular giving? How will costs be allocated?** You can decide this as a PCC. Most places still apportion percentages to churches based on the same CMF formula that apportions to benefices.

Services

40. **Will our pattern of services be affected?** The pattern of services in a parish is the responsibility of the incumbent working with the PCC. It is likely that the pattern agreed for a multi parish benefice would not be affected by the change to becoming a single parish, as the pattern is normally dependent on the preferences of each local church, priorities for growth and what the ministry team can support.
41. **To what extent can the local church request/require services to take place?** Within any parish the pattern of services is decided by the incumbent and PCC together. Whether in a multi parish benefice, or a single parish with multi churches, the pattern needs to work for the ministry resources you have in the benefice. The PCC also has a significant responsibility for clergy wellbeing (see the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing).
42. **How would this affect baptisms, weddings and funerals?** There need be no changes to where and how these happen.
43. **What, if any, involvement will be needed from those who have been serving the church for many years, eg as sacristans?** There should be no need for change in roles such as sacristans.
44. **What about future generations of people who experience fewer services? Fewer opportunities to go to church will lead to the community lessening its links and engagement with the church.** The pattern of services in a parish is the responsibility of the incumbent and PCC together. It will depend on the authorised ministry resource that you have (ordained and lay). The variety and number of services is the PCC and incumbent's consideration.

45. **With everything so much larger and diluted we are likely to lose members of the congregation.** We would certainly hope not. We see larger in this respect as you having greater resource and with a larger ministry team you may find greater continuity of support and variety offered, and, we pray, growth.
46. **What will happen to the choirs and music directors?** The draft proposals should not affect these decisions (though where anyone is employed this is by the PCC and a music director is responsible to the incumbent).

Schools

47. **Will the reorganisation affect relationships with the Church Schools?** We hope it will build on what you have established. It is usual to highlight schools' ministry in a parish profiles so that clergy appointed are committed to this vital area of ministry. In addition, across a larger benefice you might find you can build a schools' team to share in schools' work and ensure all foundation governor roles are filled.

Mission/Outreach

48. **How does your proposal help the church's mission in rural communities?** These proposals should increase the ability of the incumbent with one PCC together to coordinate the work of mission and ministry across the whole benefice.
49. **In a rural environment the unit has to be the village. Anything else will cut the ownership link.** The proposal is to better support and co-ordinate the Church's mission to the local.
50. **Village communities identify more positively with a village parish church than a benefice wide parish.** With a wider ministry team you may find greater continuity of cover and support and variety offered which will benefit the local.
51. **The parish/benefice will be too big, it will be impossible to provide ministry, pastoral visiting and oversee xx churches, xx church schools, provision for children's services and Sunday School even with lay ministry help.** Better coordination of ministry across the benefice should better serve you all.
52. **How are younger generations of people going to be stimulated to remain with/become part of the church? How will a bigger benefice help attract future generations and families?** Again, this would be building on current work but with a larger pool of resource. Some other larger benefices have found their new larger size has meant it affordable to employ a children and families' worker of some kind, to support and develop their ministry in this area.

Clergy

53. **With the loss of a full-time stipendiary priest in the benefice who will fill the gap?** We have been training and supporting ever increasing numbers of laity and clergy (stipendiary and self supporting) in ministry teams; ministry has to be shared (and already

is in many ways), the clergy cannot deliver all parish ministry alone. The model of one vicar in one parish has long gone in many places. We are looking at benefice ministry teams to grow fruitful ministry. Ministry will still happen, just in a different way.

54. **Concern that until a clear path for organisation has been settled, this will make recruitment of clergy to fill expected vacancies on the team less attractive to good candidates.** We believe it is potentially an exciting time to join and help shape a new benefice. Multi parish benefices are harder to appoint to.

Buildings

55. **How would the changes affect the status of our churches?** You have a choice when the scheme is made as to which churches you want to keep as Parish Churches (you can have more than one Parish Church in a parish) and which you want to move to just being a church. There are fewer obligations on churches that are not Parish Churches (an explanation of church buildings is available, if you have not received it please ask).
56. **Will we have to deal with quinquennials for all churches?** Quinquennials will continue to be required.
57. **Why cannot we remain as we are with a reduced number of clergy and parishes and retain our autonomy?** We hope the reasoning provided above gives good sense to the simplification of governance proposed. We are re-structuring for growth.
58. **Why not initiate a plan of periodic benefice meetings with delegates from parishes to attend: ie for worship planning?** We think that whilst this is a step in the right direction, going the extra mile will be beneficial to all.
59. **Will the existing rectories continue to be used as accommodation for the incumbent and the associate?** A pastoral scheme must name the parsonage house of the benefice. The best location for the parsonage house and the associate's house can be agreed through conversation with the diocesan team.

Process

60. **Do you regard these proposals as fixed in tablets of stone, can we reject all or part of them?** This is a draft proposal for consultation, it is not fixed in stone, where you suggest improvements, we shall certainly take these seriously. The overall savings have to be effected, how this looks in detail in every parish is the work of this consultation.
61. **To what extent can you impose your solution upon us (if you so wish). What rights do we have to challenge your proposal?** The three stage consultation process of the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 (summary sent to you after the briefing) means your right to challenge exists at each stage. Different bodies assess the proposals and any challenges /representations /objections made; including the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, the Bishop and the Church Commissioners.

62. **Can we please be told how the churches in towns and cities are affected by the current restructuring plans?** We cannot yet share all the details as not all of the proposals have been rolled out. However, currently around 140 parishes, urban, suburban and rural are affected with 11 post savings in each of the northern and southern archdeaconries. The towns are certainly taking a significant loss of posts alongside rural areas.
63. **PCC members are clear that we should not be part of xx Benefice on the basis we have no common historic or social identity.** The more of the pros and cons we understand the more helpful it is to the ongoing discernment. The proposals have been carefully considered through a number of conversations with the deanery leadership; this stage of informal consultation is as important in guiding any further refinement.
64. **We have no community or social connections with xx Benefice, but have incredibly strong and historically significant connection with yy Benefice.** As above. In most multi church benefices there will be some on the edges where other links are possible. Weighing up the mission rationale related to these places is particularly important; again, your thoughts and input in this regard is very much welcomed.
65. **This is a top down proposal from a diocesan perspective.** As a diocese we are having to face very difficult and painful decisions. To effect the necessary savings we need to cut 22 posts. To do this the process has to have begun with oversight of the whole, so that the draft proposals bring as much equity in criteria and discernment as possible. Having developed this initial work with the deanery leadership we now come to learn from parishes where there may be things we have missed and where improvements can be suggested and brought to these proposals.
66. **There will be a loss of ownership and sense of community.** We do not believe this needs to be the case, we trust these answers and other documents can help show why we believe this.
67. **Have Patrons been involved in the discussions? Have they been informed of the proposals?** Yes, they have been written to and have to be consulted at each stage of the pastoral process.
68. **What would happen to the patronage?** This is worked out in the pastoral scheme. Usually, the existing patrons would become patrons of the new benefice (should they so choose), though it is slightly different where the Crown is one of the patrons. Patronage can be shared (jointly) or taken in turns. It can even be assigned to a Special Patronage Board (where the number of patrons is high).

General

69. **We recognise that many involved in the church today are getting older and while happy to continue, in the not too distant future may need to reduce their involvement.** One of the advantages of the current draft proposal of simplification is that it can lessen the load of some volunteers.

70. **Concern regarding loss of identify, loss of participation in the churches.** The local matters and we do not believe these proposals need to lead to loss of local identity.
71. **Concern that the emphasis so far has been on the financial reasons for change, little has been said about the continued growth and mission of the church.** One of the emphasised reasons for simplification of governance is that we are currently structured in a way that prioritises governance over mission; what we are aiming to do is turn this around and free up more time and energy for growth and mission; restructuring parishes so that this work is better coordinated and delivered with the people, talent and financial resources parishes have.
72. **Are we able to have a phased approach as we move forward?** This could be possible, but it will be important to think through the pros and cons of such an approach.
73. **Has the diocese thought of creating a system in which one can identify and share “best practice” across benefices to assist parishes is dealing with issues such as funding for capital works, recruiting PCC members, and targeting the “the lost generation” - under 40 year olds? As something like this could be very beneficial when trying to unite large groups of parishes into one Benefice.** The lessons from the Benefice of the Future project are being written up for sharing. Various of the diocesan office parish support staff, area deans, archdeacon and suffragan bishop can often put you in touch with places and people who would be good links, depending on your particular need and questions.

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