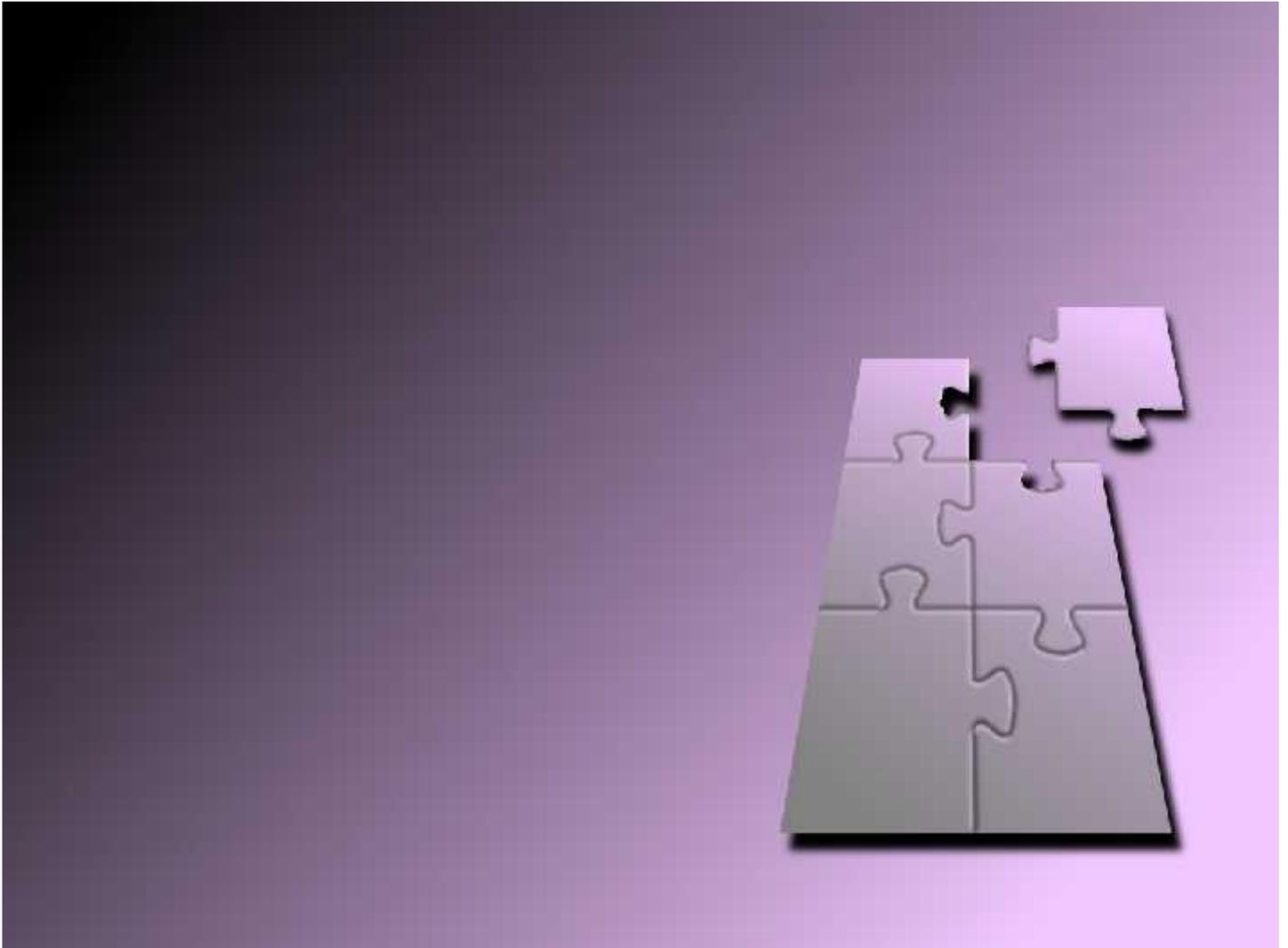


Writing a successful Parish Profile



Then the Lord called, “Samuel, Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!”

1 Samuel 3:4

December 2012

Welcome

The Parish Profile is your opportunity to “sell” your parish to your next priest. Clergy are looking for as complete a picture as possible, for honesty about your strengths and weaknesses, and for a sense that you have a vision and know where you are going.

Ideally you will already have a Growth Action Plan and your Parish Profile will reflect this. If not, I encourage you to describe how you would like your parish and church to have moved on in the next three to five years. This really does give a potential parish priest a good feel for who you are and how you tick.

As a Diocese we are looking for clergy who will help our churches to grow. We are not in the business of managing decline, or even of holding the ship steady. If you in your Profile can honestly say that you are open to the leadership and to the changes that can make growth more likely, you are much more likely to attract a good priest.

Your Archdeacon is responsible for the appointment process, working with the Bishops, the Patron (if there is one) and the elected parish representatives. The Rural Dean, the Deanery Lay Chair and the Guild of Centurions are also able and willing to support you in various ways. I am very grateful to the Centurions for compiling this guide. I trust that it will help you produce an honest and attractive Profile, and result in the appointment of an excellent new priest.

+Donald
Bishop of Peterborough

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Introduction

When a new incumbent or parish priest is needed, the PCC is invited to produce a statement of the conditions, needs and traditions of their benefice / parish, so that the vacancy can be advertised. This document is called the “parish profile”. All parishes are encouraged to have an up-to-date profile, rather than waiting for a vacancy to prepare a document that describes the vision, future direction and life of the church.

This guide is designed to help PCCs prepare a successful parish profile. In a separate document, we have prepared a parish profile template with supporting guidance notes for its completion. Benefices / parishes can choose to use their own template to prepare their parish profile.

When a vacancy occurs, the role of the Archdeacon is to co-ordinate and manage the Appointments Process and to guide the benefice / parish through the process. The first step is normally for the Archdeacon to meet with the PCC to describe the process for their benefice / parish and explain the next steps. The role of the Area/Rural Dean is to work with the churchwardens to help organise services, occasional offices and other key activities during the vacancy.

If you have any questions regarding the appointment process and/or how to complete your parish profile, you should contact your Archdeacon. The Mission Enabler, Miles Baker, can assist you to prepare a Growth Action Plan as mentioned in Bishop Donald’s opening letter. Their contact details can be found in the Peterborough Diocesan Directory and on the diocesan website.

If you would like support with any or all of the following, this can be provided by the Diocese of Peterborough - Guild of Centurions. You should contact Cheryl Goddard, secretary to the Guild of Centurions, on landline 01933 392696 or e-mail – cheryl.cfgbusiness@googlemail.com or on her work email secretary.northampton@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

- Planning how and by when to produce your profile
- Identifying the key messages to be reflected in your profile
- Creating a vision, mission and future directions statement to include in your profile
- Reading your profile and providing independent feedback

A Prayer

God our Father,
send your Holy Spirit on us
at this time of uncertainty and change
to fill us with the vision, understanding and energy needed
to create a Parish Profile
that will inspire the right candidates
to apply for our vacancy.

Amen

Purpose of the Parish Profile

Your parish profile is your opportunity to tell potential applicants about the life of your benefice / parish and your community and what you can offer to potential candidates. It enables you to reach out to the right candidates for your vacancy and persuade them to apply. Done well it will greatly help them to discern whether or not to apply and greatly assist with the appointment process. Equally, it will help you to clarify what you are looking for in a new incumbent and help you keep this in mind during the selection process.

Your profile should cover:

a) **Who are you?**

Make the name of your benefice / parish clear at the beginning of your profile. Candidates may well be looking at several possible posts at the same time.

b) **Where are you?**

The right candidates for your vacancy may come from anywhere in the country. It is therefore important to explain:

- Where you are (with a clear map showing the location of the benefice / parish)
- What are your main transport links
- What are the key characteristics of your local community
- What schools and other amenities are in the area
- What are the other churches in your benefice / parish/area

Candidates will often bring with them a spouse, children, elderly parents or other relatives to live in and be part of the local community. It is therefore important to create a brief picture of your local area and what it can offer to candidates and their families.

c) **What is your vision and mission for your church?**

A successful profile will bring to life where you are going as a church, what are your key opportunities and challenges, how you plan to grow your church by building on your existing strengths and working on your key areas for development. It will also show how the right candidate can make a difference to your benefice / parish.

It should bring to life your connections with other churches in the area and the local community, e.g. through the local schools and community groups.

d) **What sort of worshipping community are you?**

You should try to give a flavour of church life in your benefice / parish. It is therefore important to cover:

- Current pattern of Sunday, weekday and special services and the normal level of attendance
- Styles and pattern of current services – such as what robes are worn, level of formality, level of lay involvement (children and adult) and styles of music
- Range of church tradition

- Support available to the candidate – lay ministry, church administration and other key resources available
- Current pattern of occasional offices/rites of passage– numbers of baptisms and thanksgivings, confirmations, marriages and funerals in the past year
- Current pattern of church and outreach activities – e.g. Bible study groups, Prayer groups, Youth groups, Mothers' Union, guiding and scouting groups, contacts with the wider community
- Current pattern of pastoral care – e.g. home communion and visits, prayer cycles and requests and parish magazines and newsletters
- Description of Schools in the Benefice and current engagement with them
- Description of church buildings and their state of repair, including any major projects that are underway or planned
- Churchyards – whether open or closed. Whether maintained by the local authority
- Description of the incumbent's house – remember that this is where the priest appointed and their family will live
- Summary of the financial position of the benefice / parish, including whether you are able to pay your Parish Share and clergy expenses in full and the number of people on the electoral roll
- Summary of how you are organised – i.e. PCC structure and details of the other committees and working groups that report into it
- Report on whether your PCC has passed any resolutions under the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993

e) **What are you looking for in your new incumbent?**

You should describe the qualities and attributes that you would wish to see in the new incumbent in the light of what you have said in the profile about the church and its vision, mission and activities. It is important to be realistic and to focus on the essential qualities that your new incumbent needs to display. By taking the time prayerfully to describe the right person for your role, with the help of the Holy Spirit you can hope to inspire the right candidates to come forward and apply for your vacancy. It will also make the selection process easier, for you will know more precisely what you are looking for.

A separate Role Description will be prepared by your Archdeacon using information from your parish profile.

Multi-Parish Benefices

You should create one profile covering all of the parishes within your benefice. As far as possible, the document should be written at a benefice level. If the individual parishes are very different in character and needs, you can include a section on each parish within the profile to bring this to life for potential applicants.

How to create a successful profile

The aim of this section is to help you plan the successful and timely production of your profile.

When you need to have your profile ready will be dependent on:

- Whether the vacancy creates the opportunity for the Diocese to re-organise the benefice, e.g. to move individual parishes into and/or out of the benefice – your Archdeacon will advise you if this applies to your vacancy. This may delay the production of your profile and the advertising of your vacancy.
- Whether a Section 11 meeting is needed to agree the profile – your Archdeacon will explain whether this is the case for your benefice / parish. If so, you will need to have your parish profile ready for sign-off by the PCC within 4 weeks of the benefice / parish being notified of the vacancy by the Diocese.

If not, the Archdeacon will agree the timescales for completion of your parish profile with you.

It is important that you know when your parish profile needs to be ready, as this will strongly influence your plans for its production.

The following hints and tips are designed to help you plan the production of your profile.

Stage 1: Planning

- Understand from your Archdeacon which legal process and timescale applies to your vacancy
- Agree with your Archdeacon when they and your Rural / Area Dean should see a draft version of your profile and when the final version needs to be signed-off by the PCC
- Identify who has the key skills and time needed to oversee the production of your profile, so that it is completed by the deadline
- Agree key roles and responsibilities for the production of your profile – who will collate the information needed for the profile, who will be involved in the hands on writing and updating of the profile, who will design the look and feel of the profile, who will edit it and who will proof read the final version
- Create a timetable of events for the production, review and sign-off of your profile, taking into account the involvement of the Diocese and the time needed for reviewers to read and feedback on draft versions
- Recognise that getting to the first draft is a key milestone – it allows you to see where there are gaps in the content, issues that need to be resolved and opportunities to present your key messages more clearly and with more impact
- Share and agree the timetable with your overall Benefice and individual PCCs, so that they know what is expected of them and when
- Book overall Benefice and individual PCC meetings in diaries as soon as the timetable of events has been created – it's important that committee members feel that they have been involved in the profile's creation as they will need to formally approve it
- Keep your overall Benefice and individual PCCs updated on progress, issues and solutions

- Keep your congregations up-to-date with what is happening and share a published version of the profile with them

Stage 2: Design and Preparation

- Find a template that works for your type of benefice (single or multi-parish) and your style of benefice (i.e. so that its look and feel reflects the image that you want to portray to those interviewing and to potential applicants). You can use the template that accompanies this guide or design your own.
- Map out the content that is required, from whom and by when to bring the design to life – this should work with the overall timeline for the creation of your profile
- Identify existing documents and photographs that can be used to source the content needed – as this will save time getting to a first draft

For example: Benefice / parish website, Annual Report & Accounts provided at the last APCM, church and church groups literature and photos of recent events

Stage 3: Creation

- Recognise that the successful creation of your profile is a major time commitment – identify who has both the time and the skills to make this happen
- Recognise the skills needed to write and to design and produce your profile – look beyond the PCC if necessary
- Appoint either one person or a small group to write / prepare your profile, as this will help it to have a consistent style and flow that reflects the image that you want to portray to potential applicants
- Whilst it is helpful to look at examples of good profiles, remember that your profile is unique to you and should reflect the key messages that you want potential applicants to receive from reading your profile. For this reason, you should avoid copying content directly from the profiles of other benefices / parishes.
- If your journey ahead needs updating or creating, a simple way to do this could be to run a session within a PCC meeting by

Splitting the PCC into groups

Each group brainstorms potential items to include under vision, mission, future direction - opportunities and challenges

Each group picks their Top 5 messages, with reasons why they have chosen them

Each group shares their Top 5 messages with the rest of the PCC

All of this output can then be given to the lead writer / writing group to combine and build into the draft profile for the overall Benefice and individual Parish PCCs to review and agree.

- A brainstorming approach can also be used to identify the key characteristics that the new incumbent will need, based on the vision, mission and activities of your church

Stage 4 – Review and Sign-Off

- Agree who will act as reviewers – i.e. who will review all updates, who will review key versions and the final draft, and who will proof read the final version
- Set deadlines for comment and sign-off – electronic review and feedback helps speed up the process

- Highlight the changes when issuing updated versions – this saves reviewers having to re-read the whole document every time
- For multi-parish benefices, a joint meeting of the benefice’s PCCs has to sign-off the final draft before it is submitted to your Archdeacon. A quorum of representatives from each PCC needs to be at this sign-off meeting
- For single parish benefices, the PCC has to meet and sign-off the final draft before it is submitted to your Archdeacon

Stage 5 – Post Publication

- If your profile is successful in attracting the right person for your vacancy, you might find it useful to look back at the profile after one to two years to review your progress with the key opportunities and challenges and update your vision, mission and priorities
- If you are not successful in finding a new incumbent and/or attracting applicants, you may need to meet with your Archdeacon to reflect on what has happened and explore possible next steps
- Consider whether any of your existing literature should be updated to reflect the content created for your profile, such as the material provided to visitors and new church members

Top 10 Writing Tips

The following are our top 10 tips for writing a successful profile.

1) **Be upbeat and positive**

You are trying to attract the right person so you should tell them why your benefice / parish is a good place to be. There are always good things happening, positive stories to tell about the life of a benefice / parish.

2) **Be honest**

There is no point hiding the truth. If you have been through a tough time or there are major problems that you are trying to fix then state them. You can also show that you are willing to work with the right person to overcome any problems and move things forward.

If some things are “work in progress”, say so and show how the right person can make a difference to their successful completion.

3) **Keep it simple**

If it is difficult to read people won't bother. Write short sentences and paragraphs. Use headings and lists to break up the text. Use plain English not jargon. Make your facts and figures easy to read and understand.

4) **Make it look nice**

Design matters. It does not have to be designed by a professional but making the profile look attractive will help the reader. Use photographs to illustrate what you are saying. They will help the reader visualize your parish. Remember to use a mixture of buildings and people, as this will help bring both the physical church and its family to life.

For more tips on how to design a successful profile, see the next section. A template that you can use to complete your parish profile accompanies this guide.

5) **Make it e-mail and on-screen friendly**

As well as being available in paper format, your parish profile will be e-mailed to people interested in your vacancy. We will therefore need an electronic version of your profile in PDF format. If you need any help with this, please contact your Archdeacon's Office.

6) **Keep it human**

Candidates will want to know about the kind of people that they are likely to be working with in the benefice / parish. Adding quotes and pictures from different people in the congregation about different aspects of your church will help add colour and flavour to your text.

7) **Don't try and put everything in**

Candidates can be put off by too much information. You want to inspire them to want to know more. By covering the key aspects of the life of your church and leaving some gaps in terms of detail / activities will encourage candidates to ask questions. This will help you work out who is interested enough to want to know more about you.

8) **Remember who you are writing this for**

The best profiles assume that you are writing for someone who knows nothing about you and may want to know more. You want to try and introduce yourself and help them get a handle on who you are and what you are like. This is particularly important for multi-parish benefices, so that you help the reader build up a picture of the different parishes that make up the benefice, the overall pattern of services and other activities that take place on a Sunday and during the week and the key areas of focus across the benefice.

9) **Be inspiring, challenging and supportive**

The best profiles make it easy for the reader to see what is going well in the benefice / parish, where the challenges are, what may need to change, where they can make a difference and how the benefice / parish will support their new priest. This will inspire the right person to want to lead the benefice / parish through these changes and beyond them.

10) **Check it with others**

A fresh pair of eyes will be able to see whether the key messages come across clearly in your profile, whether anything needs to be explained better or whether there is anything important that you may have missed.

And finally... When you've checked it for accuracy, clarity and completeness read it through again and ask yourself: "Does this read like a place to which the right candidates will want to come – to worship with us, to witness with us, to make their home with us and to lead us?" If the answer to that question is a resounding "yes" then you know you've done a good job.

Top 10 Design Hints

You don't have to be a design or graphics expert to make your profile look good. Here are our 10 Top Design Hints.

1) **Keep it simple**

The aim is to make people want to read the content not confuse them with lots of different colours, fonts and styles. Pick a simple single or two column page layout that looks good and stick to it throughout the document. If you need help getting started, you can use the template that accompanies this guide.

2) **Use a logo**

If your church has a logo, use it. Also, if you have a colour scheme you use in other material, you may want to consider using it for your profile.

3) **Pick a clear font**

You should try to limit the number of fonts that you use. At most, you should have one font for all your headings and one for the main text. Good fonts to use are Arial, Calibri and Verdana. Do not use Times New Roman. Choose a good text size. Usually it is best to be around 12pt in size.

4) **Think about the points that you may want to highlight**

Sometimes it is good to highlight a quote or a paragraph. This draws attention to the important point you are making. You can do this by increasing the font size or changing the text colour.

5) **Don't use block capitals, underlines or fully justified text**

Research has shown that these confuse people when they are reading, especially speed readers.

6) **Limit the colours**

You probably don't need to use anything other than black and white for the text. If you do choose a colour then stick to one for the headings.

7) **Think about images**

Photos and other images are not just there to make the document pretty. They help to tell your story. It is best to have ones that are relevant to your church and show your people, buildings and activities. Remember to obtain permission for pictures of children and young people. As a rule, it is better to use one big strong image than a number of smaller ones. It may also be helpful to caption some pictures.

8) **Don't be afraid of white space**

Whilst you shouldn't go over the top and waste space (and paper), it is good to leave white space on each page rather than cram everything in.

9) **Proof read the profile**

Having put all the hard work into the production of your profile, it would be horrible to have someone point out a typing error or spelling mistake! Give your profile to someone who has not been involved in its production, as it is very difficult to proof read your own documents. They will also be able to tell you how well it reads and looks.

10) **Make it on-screen friendly**

The final version of your profile should be saved in Adobe Acrobat (pdf) format. This will allow it to be compatible with most personal computers and laptops. If you need any help with this, you should contact your Archdeacon's Office for further guidance.

The size of your final document should be no more than 4 mb. If your document exceeds this limit, you should talk to your Archdeacon's office.