

Parish Stewardship Healthcheck

**A Vision for
Resourcing and Developing
Mission and Discipleship**

INTRODUCTION

This pack enables and encourages your PCC to do its own quick assessment of the Parish approach to Christian Stewardship. It then points to ways of addressing priority areas which would add strength to what is already going on.

For each of ten healthy attributes, there is a summary of

- What it involves
- Why it is important
- Keys to success
- Parish Issues / Choices
- Help resources and contacts

We suggest that you begin by looking at “what it involves” for each topic and then tick the boxes for those which you consider are met in your Parish. In order to get a balanced view, you could ask all PCC members to give their own assessment.

Don't be discouraged if you are left with quite a lot of blank boxes – the idea is that the “help resources” for each topic should enable you gradually to address most of them.

We hope ‘Healthy Stewardship Parishes’ will be a valuable tool in assessing Stewardship activity and enhancing what is already happening.

Do contact your Diocesan Stewardship Adviser if you need any further help or clarification, or if you can add to the list of resources.

Parish Stewardship - A Health Check

Experience shows that these are the attributes which are typically displayed by parishes which have a healthy and effective approach to stewardship.

Each parish is invited to consider how many boxes it can honestly tick. The compilation of PCC members' responses is a good way to do this.

- The parish vision and future plans determine the resources we require rather than 'what can we afford?'
- There is a regular pattern of prayer for the sufficiency of financial and committed skills / talents
- There is an established approach to teaching and preaching about stewardship of money and of our 'time and talents'
- The PCC takes leadership responsibility for Christian Stewardship of our money and our personal giftings
- There is an individual or group responsible for promoting Christian Stewardship within the parish
- We undertake annual renewal of our planned giving and occasional full PFP (or other) stewardship campaigns, as appropriate
- Regular attention is given to encouraging people to discern, develop and use their skills and talents
- There is an annual budgetary process connected with renewal of planned giving needs
- The parish commits 10% or more of its unrestricted voluntary income to outward giving
- We are actively concerned for the environment and its resources

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Parish Score

Now refer to the relevant sheets if you would like to explore further any of the ten topics.

**The Parish Vision and future plans determine the resources we require,
rather than 'what we can afford?'**

What does it Involve?

- Organisations and individuals have choices about how they use their financial resources. whether they are meagre or plentiful. A Parish and its people are no exception.
- A cultural and spiritual shift occurs within a parish when it resists the temptation to begin from "What can we afford?" but to first ask "What is God calling us to?"
- A clear vision for the future can
 - ❖ Inspire leadership, the church family and even the local community
 - ❖ Provide a sound basis for prioritising the use of available resources
 - ❖ Encourage existing and potential givers to respond to a clear (and shared) challenge
- For a Parish, the creation of such a vision requires us to listen to what God has in store for us through prayer, conversation, sharing ideas and corporate commitment

Why it's Important

- With God at the helm we can achieve more than we dare to imagine
- We put our needs and resources into his hands, rather than limit God by our lack of generosity and any needless rationing of resources

Keys to Success

- A clear vision shared and owned by the leadership and the 'grass roots'
- Extrapolation of the vision into realistic priorities and practical plans
- Frequent explanation and communication of the vision, priorities, plans and their impact across the church family (and the local community)
- Regular review of the progress becomes a priority in PCC business

Parish Issues / Choices

With the enormous range in size, location, tradition, history and many other factors affecting our churches, there are bound to be variations in how they will go about vision forming and what will emerge. For some it will be a new start, for others a natural continuation. It is essential for each parish to understand its particular context and to be honest about where it is starting from.

What is our context?

Are we for example

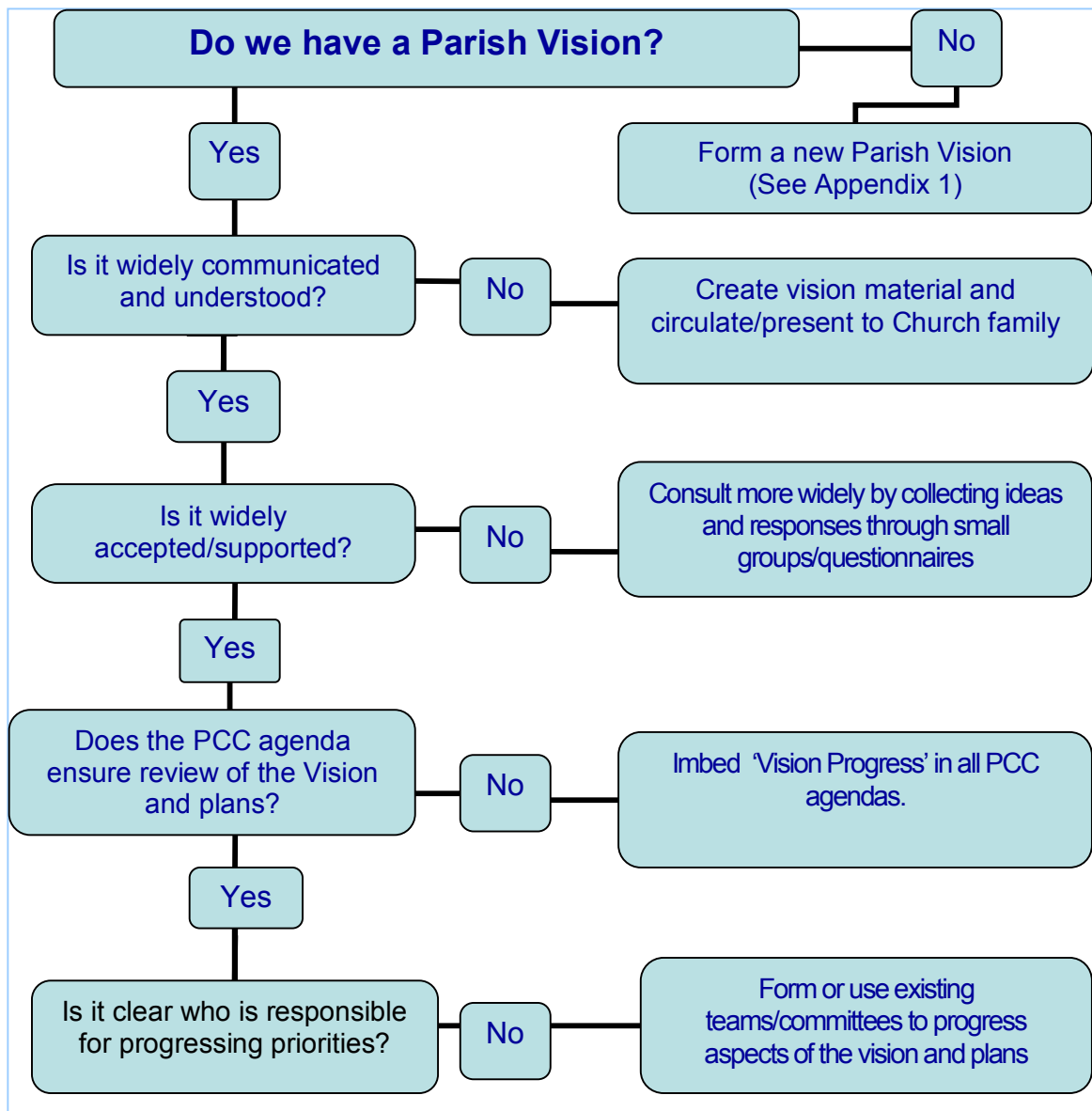
- a large urban church within a multi-ethnic context?
- a rural church with responsibility to a local community?
- a church whose tradition attracts a significant proportion of its church family from beyond its parish boundaries
- one of a group of small churches in rural areas?

There are many more contextual questions about our profile, our tradition and our natural preferences. For each the intentions of vision forming are:

- to recognise where we are and what we do
- to discern what possibilities God lays before us
- to form priorities and plans
- to consult and communicate
- to inspire and to gain 'ownership'

Do we have an effective Parish Vision?

The following flow chart sets out some questions for the PCC to ponder – and suggested responses



Whatever the context and starting point, a vital first step is for the church leadership, including the PCC, to recognise the importance of vision forming as a prelude to decision making, allocating resources and optimising regular giving.

Help Resources and Contacts

- [Forming a Parish Vision, Priorities and Future Plans](#)
- Giving in Grace www.givinginrace.org/leadership/parishplan_L12.html
- Parish Funding Programme (Step 4) Presentations 1-5
- Healthy Churches Handbook www.chpublishing.co.uk/feature.asp?id=69165

**There is a regular pattern of prayer for sufficiency of financial resources
and committed skills and talents**

What does it involve?

- Regular and significant prayer by the church community to seek God's will and help for resourcing His mission through committed giving of money, time and talents and to intercede for those whose task it is to bring about that resourcing, e.g. the PCC and Parish Stewardship Officer or Stewardship Group.

Why it's Important

- Prayer brings the power of God to bear on a situation, provided of course we pray in line with his will.
- Prayer opens to us new possibilities as we hear from God, it is His mission that we are resourcing. It is important that we give time to listen to God.
- Giving (money, time and talents) is a spiritual issue, i.e. a response to God's grace. Therefore it should be done in a spiritual way, which of course includes prayer.
- In prayer our spirits are touched with the Holy Spirit which improves our relationship with God and helps to transform us to be more in line with his will.
- Without prayer we are merely fundraising. It is very easy to adopt a secular attitude to giving, such an approach vastly misunderstands the purpose of church.

Keys to Success

- Should be regular, deep and earnest, not the odd sentence in occasional intercessions.
- Prayer for Christian Stewardship should occur naturally within the prayer life of our church.
- Prayers of thanksgiving regarding good stewardship of time talents and money should be regularly included.

Parish Issues / Choices

- Some may need educating regarding the reality and effectiveness of prayer.
- Generate a sense of expectancy to hear from God.
- Encourage individuals to pray regularly about stewardship issues and to give thanks.
- Overly familiar forms of prayer may lack ability for people to engage meaningfully with God.
- Thanking God for what he has given through people, taking care to pray to God not talk to the people under the cover of prayer.

Help Resources and Contacts

- Giving in Grace www.givinginGrace.org/prayer/prayer.html
- Parish Resources www.parishresources.org.uk sections on preaching and worship / enhancing the offertory
- A general search on the web for Prayers for Stewardship
- Guildford Diocese Parish Funding Programme (Pp 35-40)

**There is an established approach to teaching and preaching
about stewardship of money and our 'time and talents'**

What does it Involve?

- Within the regular cycle of teaching / growing disciples, there are sessions which deal with Christian Stewardship, including generosity, giving, how we use our money, how we can offer and develop our time and talents
- Connected with these sessions are complementary sermons
- The messages / material and timing of teaching / sermons prepare attendees for regular stewardship renewal

Why it's Important

- Whatever the stage of their Christian journey, people need to recognise how the stewardship of possessions and time is a vital part of discipleship
- Teaching and preaching offers the opportunity to help people grow in their discipleship , recognising that stewardship is:
 - ❖ inclusive, not exclusive (it's not just about money)
 - ❖ about the whole Christian life (it's about discipleship, learning to follow Christ)
 - ❖ about using and managing our God-given resources appropriately and responsibly
- It's important for people to learn how they should manage their God-given resources for the effective proclamation of the Gospel ("Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" – 1 Peter 4: 10)
- To be a Christian Steward is to intend to be aligned with God's mission in his world. To this end, we make the best use of all our resources – both personally and corporately as the Body of Christ
- The Scriptures, from start to finish, make it clear that our giving (money, time and talents), is our response to God's overwhelming grace and mercy
- People need to be prepared to make decisions about uses of money and 'time and talents' when renewal time comes round

Keys to Success

- Direct, inter-active exploration which promotes
 - ❖ peer group discussion (Home / Cell Group study; Lent Courses)
 - ❖ personal reflection / vision (individual Bible study notes; encouragement to read relevant books
www.parishresources.org.uk/preach/reading.htm)
 - ❖ inspiration based on reality
- Connection with the declared Vision and Mission of the parish

Parish Issues / Choices

- Use of existing study groups
- Interactive sermons / discussions
- PCC leadership
- Seminars / workshops

Help Resources and Contacts

- Parish Resources
www.parishresources.org.uk/preach/preachingstewardship.htm
- Steps in Giving
www.stedmundsbury.anglican.org/pages/admin/finance/SixSteps.pdf
- Money Revolution
www.themoneyrevolution.net/Downloads.htm
- Stewards in a Slump
www.parishresources.net/slump.htm
- Giving in Grace
www.givinginrace.org/preaching/preaching.html
www.givinginrace.org/interaction.housegrp.html
- Young People
www.parishresources.org.uk/issues/young%20people.htm

The PCC takes active responsibility for our approach to Christian Stewardship of our money and our personal giftings

What does it Involve?

The PCC has an important leadership role in ensuring that the Christian Stewardship has a high profile and is effective within the life of the Parish. This is evidenced in the teaching, preaching, prayer and all other aspects contained within the HSP checklist.

A review of progress with Christian Stewardship should be a regular PCC agenda item. The HSP checklist provides a suitable resource for this.

The PCC's leadership responsibility also implies that individual PCC members will commit themselves personally to planned giving and to their time and talents, according to their normal capacity, in the same way as other members of the congregation are asked to do.

The PCC will also recognise and support the role of the PSP and/or others involved in Christian Stewardship within the Parish.

Why it's Important

- The PCC has a corporate responsibility for vision, strategy and direction within which Christian Stewardship plays a vital role.
- Christian Stewardship is fundamental to discipleship and the practicalities of parish life.
- Regular involvement of the PCC helps to confirm the necessary profile of Christian Stewardship
- The PCC holds the balance between what we want to do and what we can afford

Keys to Success

- The PCC treats as a priority the formation and refreshment of the Parish Vision and plans
- The PCC is fully apprised of financial needs and the contribution of Planned Giving
- PCC members receive teaching and pray about their own Christian Stewardship
- The PCC receives and discusses an annual report on Christian Stewardship from the PSP /Stewardship Committee
- All PCC members are planned givers to the extent of their individual circumstances.

Parish Issues / Choices

The extent and regularity of the PCC attention to Christian Stewardship will depend on many factors (such as size of church / availability of volunteers). However essential ingredients are the 'keys to success' indicated above and it should be possible for all PCCs to achieve those reasonably quickly.

It is normally acceptable for the Stewardship Recorder or equivalent to prepare for the PCC a statement that x% of members are planned givers without divulging any individual information

Help Resources and Contacts

Giving for Life – PCC Guide

There is an individual or group responsible for promoting Christian stewardship within the parish

What does it Involve?

The ideal situation is that each parish has an individual who has the lead responsibility to promote Christian Stewardship (A “Parish Stewardship Promoter”)

In practice this function might be carried out within a shared role (e.g. with the Gift Aid secretary) or through the stewardship committee.

The principal responsibilities are:

- Promoting Christian Stewardship as a continuing priority within the Church community
- Prompting the actions set out in the HSP checklist
- Regularly making the PCC aware of its parish performance using the HSP performance checklist as an assessment tool

Fuller details of the roles and responsibilities and personal specification are found in the Parish Stewardship Promoters Pack (see Help Resources and Contacts)

Why it's Important

- Christian Stewardship is a vital part of personal and corporate Christian discipleship
- Parish mission needs financial resources and our personal giftings
- The impact and profile of Christian Stewardship can only be increased by focus and commitment – it won't just happen!
- Parish Stewardship Promoters perform a valuable form of ministry

Keys to Success

- Regular attention to the HSP checklist and annual reviews
- Support and recognition for the role from Incumbent/PCC/Treasurer
- Personal qualities (see Parish Stewardship Promoters Pack)

Parish Issues / Choices

The positioning of the role of Parish Stewardship Promoter might vary according to the size of parish and the available talents and skills. In smaller parishes the role may need to be part of a related function (e.g. Churchwarden/Gift Aid Secretary). Only exceptionally should it be undertaken by the Treasurer. The support and involvement of the Incumbent are vital (especially in the areas of teaching and preaching). Alternative models for sharing key tasks are found in the PSP Roles and Responsibilities schedule (see Parish Stewardship Promoters Pack). Larger parishes may have a group or committee which can carry out the roles and responsibilities associated with promotion of Christian Stewardship.

Help Resources and Contacts

- Parish Stewardship Promoters pack/Parish Giving Officers pack
- Parish Resources www.parishresources.org.uk/giving.htm
- Giving for Life www.parishresources.org.uk/givingforlife/index.htm

We undertake annual review of our Planned Giving and occasional full Stewardship Programmes

What does it Involve?

It is prudent to establish the practice of an annual review of planned giving, which is clearly linked to parish plans and budget.

- Annual reviews of planned giving should
 - ❖ refresh / review parish plans / objectives
 - ❖ communicate priorities and financial implications of the choices available
 - ❖ remind / recruit / thank planned givers of their importance to the overall
- Occasional fuller campaigns will
 - ❖ emanate from new / renewed vision and plans
 - ❖ incorporate significant new initiatives
- Wills and Legacies policy should be agreed by PCC and implemented to include annual review
- Success is celebrated through worship and social activity

Why it's Important

- There is a need for regular communication which connects mission priorities and financial realities
- Planned Giving typically provides 75% of voluntary income and needs annual review alongside the budget
- Giving through Wills and Legacies is an important element in Christian Stewardship
- There is a continuing need to respond to teaching that Stewardship is a sign of discipleship

Keys to Success

- Good presentation of shared vision and plans
- Clear connection of budget and planned giving target with vision and plans
- Broad consultation and involvement
- Direct and honest request for new and increased Planned Giving
- Thought through follow-up to time and talents responses
- Good team(s) responsible

Parish Issues / Choices

- Consider how well formed and / or understood are the Parish Vision and plans – is there a need to refresh or re-communicate? (See 'Requests for money are led by the Parish Vision and Future Plans')
- Do we need a full Stewardship Programme or an annual renewal?
- Should communication be by letter / e-mail or group presentation?
- Consider what time of year is best for a Stewardship approach – the most fruitful are likely to be Jan-Mar, May- June or Late Sept-mid November

Help Resources and Contacts

- [Parish Funding Programme PFP pack](#)
- Giving in Grace www.givinginrace.org/communication
- Parish Resources www.parishresources.org.uk/giving.htm
- Church Legacy www.churchlegacy.org/resources.htm
- Will Aid www.willaid.org.uk

Regular attention is given to encouraging people to discern and use their skills and talents

What does it Involve?

It is important to recognise that Christian Stewardship is not restricted to the giving of money. All our God given 'time and talents' also form a vital part of what we can give. In order to develop the potential within us, we can

- Establish an environment, in which all are encouraged to recognise and value their God-given skills and talents
- Support people in being confident in recognising how they and others are equipped for all aspects of life
- Encourage people to offer their giftings in pursuit of the church vision

Why it's Important

- We gain from understanding what giftings we, and others, have received from God and how they be used
- A profile of giftings informs a parish of the range of skills and talents at its disposal
- It can help to encourage people to respond to God's call in parish life and beyond

Keys to Success

- Full involvement in a well-planned process
- Opportunities to discuss findings in small groups
- Sensitive good follow-up, matching personal giftings with requirements contained within parish needs, vision and plans
- Good follow-up

Parish Issues / Choices

- Linking gifting process to parish needs or taking a more passive approach
- Existence of groups which naturally support discussion of findings from questionnaire
- Willingness to complete questionnaire within Worship Services

Help Resources and Contacts

- [Living the Vision Leaflet](#)

There is an annual budgetary process connected with renewal of planned giving

What does it involve?

- A person, often the Treasurer, prepares an annual budget after full consultation with leadership / budget holders, taking into account any initiatives / changes incorporated in parish vision and plans.
- Budget highlights future planned giving requirement.
- PCC discusses and approves a final budget and planned giving target, which is then communicated to parish.

Why it's Important

- Enables PCC to make informed financial decisions to help meet its objectives.
- Budget links parish vision and plans to finance ensuring appropriate resources are allocated to objectives.
- Provides a mechanism to control and monitor finances.
- Ensures money goes to planned commitments.
- Acts as a brake on impulse spending.
- Provides a basis for making / delegating decisions.
- Sets targets for future planned giving.
- Allows visibility of financial church priorities.

Keys to Success

- Good consultation and involvement with the appropriate people.
- Make adequate time for budgeting process.
- Use last year's figures where appropriate but only as a guide.
- Create realistic budgets.
- Simple and direct format.
- Clear and concise communication to PCC and beyond.
- Link with stewardship (planned giving in particular).
- Spending and income regularly reviewed against budget plan and necessary actions taken.

Parish Issues / Choices

- PCC responsibility / Treasurer's role.
- Parish share explanation as it is usually a significant portion of budget.
- Mission focussed rather than keeping the show on the road.
- Effective communication.
- Size / complexity of parish.

Help Resources and Contacts

- Guidelines on how to prepare a budget for your church. (See Appendix 2)
- Parish share explanation from Diocesan Office.
- www.parishresources.org.uk – Other Issues – Tool 3, A Budget Planner.
- ACAT Handbook www.acat.uk.com/acat/index.htm

The parish commits at least 10% of its voluntary income to outward giving

What does it Involve?

- When approving its annual budget, the PCC agrees that 10% (or more) is to be sent to external Charities in keeping with the Parish Vision for its mission in the local community and its membership of the global Christian church.

Why it's Important

- As a vital part of the wider Church at local, national and global levels, parishes have an important role in supporting the whole of the Anglican Communion through prayer and financial giving
- General Synod has consistently encouraged every parish to give at least 10% of their general fund income to support other Christian churches and agencies, before spending on anything else (see 'First to the Lord' 1999). A 1996 General Synod resolution encouraged PCCs to give at least 5% of their income to Anglican World Mission agencies
- Analysis of PCC accounts suggests that most churches which encourage generous support of other Christian agencies often attract higher levels of support for their own local needs and expenses. External giving appears to enhance local giving, not replace it
- The parish should model Christian Stewardship and proportional giving to its members, by giving X% of its resources as mutual support within the global Christian family

Keys to Success

- Choosing external charities / agencies / projects / individuals that complement the parish's own vision for its local ministry and outreach, and its members' interests
- Most external agencies are supported on a medium to long term basis
- The parish is learning from its partners how to improve its own local mission – not just giving money and praying
- An active parish 'champion' for each substantial external partner
- Parishioners are encouraged to get involved with the agencies (regular prayers, visits, letters and e-mails, Christmas / Easter cards, visiting speakers, fundraising events etc)
- A clear PCC-led policy, which is regularly communicated throughout the parish

Parish Issues / Choices

- Balance between how much is given centrally by the PCC and how much is left to individual members' choices
- Balance between evangelistic mission and social work (poverty, ill health etc)
- Giving to Anglican agencies – CMS, USPG, Children's Society etc – versus ecumenical and para-church organisations – Bible Society, Christian Aid, SU etc
- Local giving – community projects and schools, support for other local churches etc
- Regional giving – diocesan projects
- National giving – national charities, Church of England agencies etc
- Global giving – Mission and development agencies, overseas link churches
- Balance between Christian faith-based organisations and secular ones – PCC gifts to secular charities must be for purposes that are compatible with '*promoting the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical*' (PCC Powers Measure 1956)

Help Resources and Contacts

- Partnership for World Mission – the Church of England’s network of Anglican agencies – www.pwm-web.org.uk with lots of useful ideas about improving parish links
- Global Connections – the UK network for global mission – www.globalconnections.co.uk – brings together both evangelistic and international relief organisations
- Diocesan mission / overseas council / adviser

We are actively concerned for the environment and its resources

What does it Involve?

- As a parish, we treat, as a priority, our concern for protecting God's world and using its resources carefully
- We have an Environmental Policy which contains one or two priorities which we enact corporately

Why it's Important

- As a Christian organisation, we should give a positive lead in our attitude to God's world
- Stewardship of our world is an important segment of our responsibilities to steward all God has given us responsibility for

Keys to Success

- A succinct and practical Environmental Policy approved by the PCC, containing practices which can be implemented, and seen

Parish Issues / Choices

- Environmental issues likely to be seen as low priority – those having a local impact may generate more commitment
- Consider whether there is a link with 10%+ outward giving
- Younger people may be the best 'Champions'

Help Resources and Contacts

- Shrinking the Footprint, www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org
- The Carbon Trust www.carbontrust.co.uk
- Centre for Sustainable Energy www.cse.org.uk
- Department for Trade and Industry, Low Carbon Buildings Programme gives grants and information, resources and contacts 0800 915 0990 www.lowcarbonbuildings.org.uk
- Energy Saving Trust www.est.org
- The Environment Agency www.environment-agency.gov.uk/
- Recycle-more www.recycle-more.co.uk
- Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) www.sd-commission.org.uk
- Christian Ecology Link www.christian-ecology.org.uk
- Climate Care www.climatecare.org
- The Conservation Foundation www.conservationfoundation.co.uk
- Eco-congregation www.ecocongregation.org
- European Christian Environmental Network www.ecen.org
- Operation Noah www.operationnoah.org
- Bath and Wells Environmental Policy
http://bathandwells.org.uk/diocesan_information/EnvironmentallIssues.php
- Diocese of Southwark Environmental Policy
<http://www.southwark.anglican.org/what/environmental-policy-background-paper>

Forming a Parish Vision, Priorities and Plans

Why do it?

Because the result can be:

- a transforming difference to the parish and community
- a conscious and shared desire to discover God's will for our parish and its people
- a common purpose to bind together our work and prayer for God's kingdom
- a firm foundation for decision making and allocating resources
- a source of inspiration for personal and parish commitment

Keys to Success

- An open-minded and prayerful readiness to embrace new possibilities
- Commitment by the church leadership, including the PCC, to the process and its outcomes
- Wide consultation with within the church family (and the local community)
- Communication and explanation of the resulting plans
- Clear responsibility for making the plans a reality
- Regular review and communication of progress
- All supported by a foundation of continuing prayer

How do we go about it?

This guide explains the following steps:

- Forming and communicating a new parish vision, priorities and plans
- Refreshing and communicating an existing vision
- Clarifying responsibility for executing plans
- Reviewing progress
- Creating the foundation of prayer

Forming a new Parish Vision, Priorities and Plans

There are many possible catalysts for embarking on a new Parish Vision. Typical examples are:

- The arrival of a new incumbent or lay leadership
- A perceived lack of direction
- A prelude to a Stewardship/Funding programme
- Difficulty in making decisions
- An interregnum leading to a selection process
- Several years have passed since the last one was formed

Different catalysts will affect such things as urgency, expectations, format of presentation. Variations will also arise from location, tradition, history and available skills / personalities. Notwithstanding the context, there are vital steps which are common to all successful vision forming. These are now described.

Commitment by the Church Leadership

This is the crucial first step. Whatever the context, there needs to be a shared commitment by the church leadership

- to discern God's will for the church / parish
- to the process and its outcomes
- to support a small 'vision team' to spearhead the process

In order to take this step, the leadership (typically the incumbent / clergy team and the PCC) should prayerfully consider why a new vision is needed and when is the right time to commit to the process. An external input (e.g. a Diocesan Parish Resources Officer or equivalent) to a PCC meeting often helps the PCC to understand the potential benefits, the practicalities and timing issues.

As well as passing the relevant PCC resolution, PCC members should commit to support the consequent stages, such as the PCC Away Day (see below)

'Top Down and / or Bottom Up?'

There is no single 'right' way to go about forming a Parish Vision and Plans. It is important to take into account the context of the church or parish.

A good question to answer at the outset is how best to combine the discernment by the leadership with the views and contributions of the wider church family and, in some circumstances, the local community.

These considerations lead on to two principal models

'Top Down'

PCC leads the process with a PCC Away Day, which generates draft priorities

- Priorities for the next three years
- Plans for the next twelve months

In some cases, the incumbent and / or the 'leadership team' will first define some vision priorities for the PCC to 'buy into.' However, a preferred option is for the PCC (perhaps with other key people) to work unfettered in the first instance.

The PCC output is then shared with the wider church family by a personalised invitation to comment on the outline priorities and plans. A particular effort should be made to elicit support / enhancement from people who are (potentially) involved in the priority areas, which have been identified.

This feedback is then assessed by the Vision Group to enable the PCC to consider amendments / change in emphasis to their original outline vision and plans.

'Bottom Up'

The perceptions and priorities of the church family are collected through a questionnaire, analysed and considered by the PCC. From this, the PCC discerns the priorities for the parish at a PCC Away Day, together with outline plans as in the 'top down' model.

The attached 'Parish Development Profile' provides suitable templates for the questionnaires, identification of priorities and future plans, by the 'top down' or 'bottom up' methods.

In either method, it may be a good idea to involve the local community at the consultation stage. This is most likely to be effective in smaller village locations, where the church is recognised as central to the community.

For a more comprehensive community consultation, 'Discerning Church Vocation' provides a more detailed resource.

The PCC Away Day

The purpose of the PCC Away Day is to focus on the process of discerning God's vision for the parish and forming some outline plans for the future. It is a crucial step, whether using the 'top down' or 'bottom up' model. The full commitment of the PCC to participate is needed.

An outline Agenda is circulated to the PCC prior to the Away Day, and again on arrival at the venue.

The PDP (or other) questionnaire is completed by PCC members on the day, or in advance, by the congregation.

The profile of results is completed by the facilitator and presented to the PCC for initial discussion. The gap analysis highlights the topics, which appear to warrant priority consideration.

Groups are formed to discuss the priority areas (one or more groups for priority areas)

The groups are asked to discuss and commit to flip charts for each project:

- What we already do
- What we aspire to
- What we plan to do

A good way of expressing this is for each group to complete flip charts which say:

- We are already
- In 3 years' time, we want to say
- So, during the next 12 months, we plan to

Each flip chart is presented to the rest of the PCC for comment / refinement.

The completed flip charts are then handed over to the Vision Team to present to the next PCC Meeting for acceptance / amendment as the working document, to be used for wider consultation and eventual agreement of specific plans.

Footnotes

- It is often a good idea for key people who are not currently on the PCC to join the PCC Away Day (e.g. leaders / workers – such as Children and Youth, Pastoral Assistants, House Groups, PCC sub-groups). Also articulate newcomers who can contribute.
- If a 'bottom up' approach is taken (see above), the PCC Away Day may be preceded by
 - (i) A parish Survey (using the PDP Questionnaire or another model). The output from that would form the profile to be presented by the facilitator to the PCC
 - (ii) A Parish Away Day, from which the priorities for attention have been distilled through a similar process
- The PDP Questionnaire might be re-worded to the preference of the church context, without becoming unwieldy
- As well as opening worship and prayer, there should be opportunities for prayerful reflection during the Away Day, and the following meetings of Vision Team / PCC to ensure that the entire enterprise is grounded in prayer and a shared desire to seek God's will
- It is usually preferable for the PCC Away Day to be held at a pleasant location outside the parish, so that the chances of distraction are minimised
- The role of the facilitator is to enable and encourage attendees to take part and make their contribution, not to present their own views. An experienced, external facilitator, who is familiar with the PDP or other process is recommended.

Vision Day Templates

The following templates are offered:

- The PCC Away Day Agenda
- The PDP Questionnaire
- A completed PDP profile and gap analysis
- A format for 'Plans and Responsibilities' for observing future progress

Communicating and Consulting

Although the leadership role of the PCC is crucial, it is also vitally important that the wider church family is fully involved in discernment of God's vision and commitment to the resulting priorities.

In the 'bottom up' approach, the consultation will have taken place through questionnaires or a Parish Day prior to the PCC Away Day.

In the 'top down' approach, the output from the PCC Away Day (and subsequent PCC Meeting), should be shared with the wider church family, with an invitation to:

- add comments
- offer support for any specific initiative

In either case, the final 'Vision and Plans' should then be presented to the church family. The best way to achieve this will vary, but the most probable approaches are:

- (a) a parish event with refreshments, or
- (b) during worship services and / or
- (c) publication of leaflets, brochures or articles

[A template for presentation of Vision & Plans emanating from a PCC Away Day](#)

Clarifying Responsibility for Executing Plans

A Reality Check

The immediate impact of the PCC Away Day is usually very positive. There is often a positive feeling arising from:

- recognition of what is already being achieved
- possibilities for the future

However, there will also be some feelings of concern:

- the possibilities are great, but they are also daunting
- the existing stalwarts will be asked to do even more
- the incumbent will be expected to do everything

Momentum can easily be lost, with a resultant feeling of disappointment.

Making it Happen

In order to make sure that the potential from the Away Day (and all that accompanies it) is turned to advantage, (three) issues are important:

- underlying prayer
- commitment to small steps

Underlying Prayer

The following steps are suggested:

- A Parish Vision Prayer to be published and prayed at services / meetings (and individually) throughout the follow-up to the PCC Away Day
- House Groups / Prayer Groups to talk and pray about the priorities arising from the PCC Away Day presentation
- A monthly (electronic) prayer letter celebrating prayers and confronting challenges to be circulated

Commitment to Small Steps

Typically, the PCC Away Day will generate a list of potential initiatives. One of the tasks of the Vision Group and the PCC is then to home in on a manageable number of small steps, which can build momentum, as more people become committed

The context of the church will influence the reality of how this can be done. In most cases, there will be two options at the outset:

- (i) establish new team(s) / group(s), each to take responsibility for one topic / initiative
- (ii) ask an established team / committee to consider how to progress the new initiative

In either case, the responsible team / group does not need to be populated by the PCC and gives an opportunity to approach newer arrivals / young people to become involved. During the consultation process, some potential candidates may well have expressed views or support.

The team / group should report its progress and challenges to PCC meetings, and for inclusion in the prayer letter.

One of the most important benefits of the vision process can be to involve people who previously have not been involved in core activities of the church. It can be the beginning of a new journey of faith.

FOOTNOTE:

The Rural Churches Toolkit at www.parishresources.org.uk/rural.htm provides a range of resources to assist smaller churches.

Guidelines on how to prepare a budget for your church

A budget is a plan of expected income for a year, and of how the PCC is going to use that money.

It is important to prepare a budget plan in as much detail as you are able, to get best accuracy and that the PCC is able to monitor the actual expenditure against planned giving for each individual component of the overall budget.

When preparing a budget, it is important to consult with the people who are going to be responsible for working within it.

Preparing the Budget

1. List all expected sources of income, e.g.

- Voluntary income
 - Planned giving
 - Gift Aid donations
 - Tax recoverable
 - Give as you earn
 - Others
 - Collections
 - Grants
 - Sundry donations
 - Tax recoverable
 - Legacies
- Income from investments
 - Dividends and interest
- Income from Church activities
 - Church Hall lettings
 - PCC and related fees
 - Social events
 - Fundraising events and activities
- Other incoming resources

2. List all expected expenditure, e.g.

The more detailed you are, the better and more useful will your budget be.

- Church Activities
 - Missionary and charitable giving
 - Diocesan Parish Share
 - Clergy costs
 - Upkeep of church
 - Utilities
 - Maintenance

- Upkeep of church grounds
 - Upkeep of church hall
 - Worship costs, e.g. organist, wafers and wine tec.
 - Discipleship costs
 - Evangelism costs
 - Fellowship costs
 - Young Church / Sunday School
 - Ministry training

- Church Management and administration
 - Secretary wage
 - Bank charges
 - Stationary and postage
 - Other admin costs

- Other ordinary expenditure
 - Repayments
 - Thank you gifts
 - Other

- Extraordinary expenditure
 - Roof
 - New equipment
 - Other

3. Compare planned expenditure with planned income

When both of the above are completed, compare the total expected income with the total expected expenditure. If income is higher than expenditure, then you can think creatively how best to use the difference to further enhance the mission of your church.

If planned expenditure is higher than expected income, you may well have to reduce your planned expenditure to match. Alternatively it may point to the need for a targeted Stewardship Programme. The budget will enable you prayerfully to consider the options in an organised and most effective way.

4. Monitor budget, expenditure and income on a regular basis, at least quarterly

If there are any discrepancies, then the budget should be adjusted accordingly as quickly as possible.