



How to ...

Involve young people on the PCC

PCCs are usually the place where discussions and decisions affecting the local church happen. Because they have rules and regulations about how they function, PCCs may not be the most natural places for children/young people to find themselves. However, young people may have something to contribute especially when key decisions are being discussed so their voice needs to be heard by PCCs.

If given the opportunity some older young people may want to explore being part of the PCC and serve in this way so this 'how to' guide will hopefully help them (and maybe others too) understand the PCC, what goes on and offer suggestions as to how a PCCs can listen to what young people have to say.

NOTE: This 'How to...' guide is written in such a way that its intended readership is young people themselves.

So what is the PCC? (Parochial Church Council)

The PCC is the legal governing body of the parish church. Its main function is to work with the Vicar 'to promote in the parish the whole mission of the Church'. That is a pretty big task! There will be a Chairperson (someone who leads the meetings), a Secretary (this person makes notes of everything that is discussed and decided) and a Treasurer (this person looks after the church budget and keeps an eye on the money). Most of the other members on the PCC are elected by the congregation to represent them on the PCC.

The PCC might find itself making decisions about:

- Ministry and mission
- Church buildings and land
- Money matters
- Pastoral care
- Legal matters
- Social and community concerns
- Worship
- Safeguarding
- Staffing
- Anything else to do with the local church - or even the national church

How does the local church and PCC fit with the rest of the Church of England?

The Church of England is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion of churches. It's rather like a jigsaw with many pieces! These include:

- 2 Provinces which cover the whole of England, the Isle of Man, the Scilly Isles, a little bit of Wales and continental Europe. The Archbishop of Canterbury leads the Southern Province, and the Archbishop of York leads the Northern Province.
- Each Province is made up of Dioceses. There are 41 Dioceses in England as well as the Diocese in Europe. Each Diocese is led by a Diocesan Bishop.

- Each Diocese in England is divided into parishes - and your PCC helps to lead your parish. (There are more than 16,000 Church of England churches!)
- The local PCC will contribute to and act on decisions made in other Church of England governing bodies such as deanery, diocesan or General Synod
- The Church of England Youth Council (CEYC) who represent the views and opinions of children and young people at a national level at General Synod

Can young people be involved with the PCC?

YES! Young people can be elected on to the PCC if they are: 1) aged 16 or over; 2) baptized; 3) on the church electoral roll; and 4) living in the parish or have regularly attended the church for at least six months.

When elected on to the PCC, young people's views and opinions are as valid as anyone else's whatever age they are. They can vote and be part of any smaller groups that the PCC sets up. They can also help the older members understand what younger church members are thinking.

What if I'm not 16 yet?

You can still have your voice heard! if there's something you are passionate about you could:

- Ask to attend a meeting so that you can talk to the PCC about your passion
- Talk with a PCC member and ask him/her to bring your concerns to the PCC
- Write a letter to the PCC
- Talk with your vicar about other ways that your voice could be heard

Top tips for young people on the PCC

- Team up with one of the experienced adults on the PCC for support
- Make sure you know when and where the PCC is meeting
- Always read the agenda and the minutes (notes of the last meeting) beforehand
- If there is anything you don't understand, ask someone to explain
- Think about what you want to say in advance. Write it down and read it if it helps
- Don't be embarrassed about expressing opinions and asking questions
- Speak clearly without repeating yourself
- Allow enough time to get an item on to the agenda (this may be quite a long time ahead)
- Try to always be constructive through offering positive suggestions
- Avoid putting down the opinions of others
- Try not to take things personally, especially if they don't go as you hoped
- Avoid getting caught up in arguments
- Know when to remain quiet!
- Avoid gossip about issues raised at the PCC, and if something is confidential don't talk about it!
- If a PCC meeting is becoming frustrating and you are struggling, take some time out

Top tips for PCCs with young people

- When a young person is elected on to the PCC or invited to be part of a meeting, offer them a Mentor who will talk things through beforehand, guide them through the meeting and answer any questions they have.
- Consider having a PCC induction session (which would be useful for ALL new members, not just younger ones).
- Think through where and when the PCC meets - adult needs might to sometimes give way in order for young people to fully participate.
- Look at the papers for the PCC - could a summary also be provided which is jargon-free and outlines the main points?
- Deliberately invite contributions in discussions from the young person.
- Don't allow older PCC members to dominate or look down on the younger members.

- Be open to hearing challenges and new possibilities.
- Enjoy being the people of God together!

Some helpful terms to know when serving on the PCC

- **Anglican:** another term for Church of England
- **Archbishop:** head of the Church of England
- **Archdeacon:** senior member of clergy responsible for an **Archdeaconry** (a group of deaneries)
- **Benefice:** parish or group of parishes served by one vicar
- **Bishop:** most senior member of clergy in a diocese (there are different levels of bishops)
- **Cannon law:** law of the Church of England
- **Churchwarden:** volunteer elected to oversee the administrative running of a church
- **Co-option:** process of getting a person on to the PCC
- **Deanery:** group of local parishes overseen by the Rural/Area Dean and Deanery Synod
- **Diocese:** administrative area that is run by a bishop
- **Denomination:** term given to different types of Christian churches
- **Ecumenical:** unity between denominations
- **Ex officio:** automatic membership of an organisation
- **Faculty:** legal permission to alter church buildings
- **Freehold:** right of a vicar to stay in their parish
- **General Synod:** Church of England governing body (locally **Diocesan Synod** and **Deanery Synod**)
- **Laity:** people in the church and those who serve in the church but who are not ordained
- **Lectionary:** rota of bible readings for worship
- **Quinquennial inspection:** structural inspection of church buildings every 5 years
- **Quorum:** least number of voting people present at a PCC meeting to make decisions legal
- **Quota:** money paid to a diocese for the cost of the vicar, running a church and supporting others
- **Standing committee:** sub group of the PCC
- **Stipend:** regular income given to a member of clergy (including their house and benefits)
- **Visitation:** annual legal enquiry (by an Archdeacon usually) into the affairs of every parish
- **Worldwide Anglican Communion:** all churches that affiliate with the laws and practices of the Anglican Church across the World

Common worship: a pick and mix of official liturgies (words, readings and prayers) that can be used during worship in an Anglican church

Baptism: for babies and children (often called a Christening) is when parents and godparents make promises on behalf of the baby or child, declaring to support them at the start of their journey of faith. Water is used to baptize the baby or child. The church also promises to welcome the child and to pray for them. Young people and adults can also be baptized but the young person or adult make their own promises and water is still used.

Confirmation: marks the point in the Christian journey when a person publically affirms their faith into which they have been baptized, declaring they want to live as a Christian. There is usually a time of preparation for those being confirmed and during the confirmation service a bishop says prayers and confirms the person through the laying on of hands. Before you can be confirmed you must have been baptized.

If you would like further advice please contact Dan Jones, the Diocesan Youth and Children's Adviser on 0117 906 0100 | daniel.jones@bristoldiocese.org

Written by Tony Cook

Tony is the Youth Adviser for the Diocese of Bath and Wells. In 2014 he was commissioned by the Church of England to write "Learn to Listen" a comprehensive range of resources which enables churches to explore and engage in listening to the voice of children and young people. For more information on "Learn to Listen" contact Tony on 01749 685133 | tony.cook@bathwells.anglican.org