



How to ...

Involve children and young people when appointing a new vicar

Vacancies are an integral part of the life of a parish church. When recruiting a new vicar often it is the adults in a congregation who are consulted when the appointment process is happening. This guide will help you include children and young people in the process so that they can have their say as well. This process could also be used when appointing a new children/youth worker or other key roles in the church.

So, you need a new vicar...

The vicar has retired, or moved to take up a new post, and the parish has started the process to appoint a new one. The first stage of appointing a new vicar involves discussions in the parish to identify needs and to see what gifts and skills might be required in the new vicar. Representatives from the parish will then work with the Archdeacon and the Area Dean to:

- Draw up a parish profile based on the local statement of needs
- Write and agree a job description and person specification
- Hold a selection and recruitment process to appoint a new vicar

As churches work their way through this process individuals and groups will be consulted for their input. However, there are circumstances when minorities are not consulted and all too often it is the children and young people who are overlooked.

Why involve children and young people?

Schools advocate pupil involvement in the appointment of Headteachers and senior staff. What about the Church? Children and young people are valued members within the life of the Church. Jesus was clear to his disciples about the significance of children in our attitude to faith (Matthew 18:13) and the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:13-15) and. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the rights of the child also states that; "every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously" (1989).

By omitting children and young people from clergy appointments the church is overlooking their rights to voice their opinions. So why should we include children and young people in the process?

- Because they are part of the church!
- It offers the opportunity for God to speak through them
- It values their views and opinions
- It offers a different and fresh perspective
- It challenges adult ideas and opinions
- It promotes dialogue and understanding across generations

Who could be involved?

Children and young people connected with the church (Sunday School etc.), uniformed groups with links to the church (Cubs, Beavers, CLCGB etc.), children and young people from other groups in the community, a school council or students from a local school or college.

What might you ask? Suggested questions for younger children aged 4-10yrs:

- What does a vicar do?
- What did you like about the vicar?
- What do you like about church?
- What do you think the new vicar should be like?
- How can the new vicar make church even better for you?
- How can the new vicar help children to know more about God?

What might you ask? Suggested questions for young people aged 11-18yrs:

- What did you like about the vicar?
- What do you like about the church?
- What should be the main aim of the church?
- What type of person should new vicar should be like? Why?
- What are some of the main issues the new vicar should focus on?
- How could the new vicar communicate more effectively with the younger generation?
- How could the new vicar draw more children and young people to church and God?

Suggested outline for a consultation session:

Aim to spend about 45 minutes with younger children and an hour with young people. Provide some drinks or snacks as the participants arrive and try and create a relaxed, informal and happy atmosphere so that the children and young people feel comfortable with the surroundings.

Start: Remind the children/young people of what they will be doing, briefly explain the process of appointing a new vicar and that their opinion is important to the process.

Activity 1: **What does the vicar do?** If possible, display a picture of the vicar who is leaving. Ask the children/young people what they think a vicar does. Ask participants to call out or write things on Post-it notes and stick them around the picture. You can also ask leading questions to find out their ideas on what a vicar does during the week (school assemblies, visits etc.) and use the suggested questions at the top of the page. Comment briefly on how much is expected of a vicar.

Activity 2: **What should the new vicar be like?** On a large piece of paper (the back of wallpaper works really well) draw around someone from the group. Give participants pens to write inside the figure anything that they would like the new vicar to be like. Encourage the group to write down things that describe the personality and skills they might like the new vicar to have. Younger children may need help writing down their thoughts.

Activity 3: **What should the vicar know about the church?** Allow the group time to think about anything the new vicar ought to know about the church/parish. Thoughts and drawings can then be scribbled around the outside of the figure. Alternatively ask for other comments and record the responses.

Activity 4: Invite the participants to create a short video which sums up their thoughts from the consultation. This could be shown to the Parish representatives, or even to the candidates as part of the interview process.
(optional)

End: Thank everyone for taking part. Let them know what will happen to their suggestions and what the next part of the process will be. You might want to consider involving youth representatives in the interviews.

Other things to consider when hosting a consultation:

- Who will lead the consultation? Dan Jones, the diocesan Youth and Children's Adviser, is available to help churches involve children and young people in the appointment process. Please contact Dan on 0117 906 0100 or daniel.jones@bristoldiocese.org for further advice.
- What would be the best time and venue?
- If working with a school or group outside of the church, you will need to ask for permission
- You may require consent to enable children/young people to take part (if you need advice please contact Dan Jones)
- How open will you be to the responses of the children/young people?
- How will you feedback to the children/young people?
- Is this a one off, or could you involve children/young people in other aspects of church life?

If you are interested in exploring ways to include children and young people in other aspects of church life, check out the following 'How to' guides; 'How to listen and involve children and young people' and 'How to Involve young people on the PCC'. There are also further resources/training provided by the diocese. Please contact Dan Jones on daniel.jones@bristoldiocese.org / 0117 906 0100 for more details.

Written by Dan Jones (Youth and Children's Adviser) and George Rendell (Transition Manager)

