



**Guidelines for drawing up  
your Benefice Profile, Role Description  
and Person Specification**



## Drawing up your Parish/Benefice Profile

The aim of the Profile is to showcase your Parish/Benefice honestly and succinctly. If well drawn up, it will greatly help potential candidates discern whether or not they feel God is calling them to apply for the post.

Benefices/parishes need to be clear about their needs and the specific gifts, skills and characteristics they are looking for in a new incumbent.

The tone and language used in this document is important. It will convey a sense of who you are and what is important to you. There is a tendency for profiles to become very formal and information-heavy, but we encourage you to use it as a way of enabling prospective candidates to sense something of the character and personality of your benefice, and how you are different from the other benefices advertising similar posts. Try to think about your story and how you will tell it.

You will need to include a clear description of the key roles and the personal attributes needed in your next priest. The roles and responsibilities will also form part of the Role Description and a template for this is given in Appendix 1.

Usually a small group taking overall responsibility for the production of the profile works well, ideally not more than 5 or 6 people. It is helpful, though not essential, if the Parish Reps are included. Working with a small group avoids the pitfalls of the whole PCC trying to draw up the documents by committee, but draws on the insights and perspectives of several people, not just one or two. Experience shows, too, that different skills are needed - for information gathering, writing and editing, and formatting and layout. These gifts are not usually contained within the same person!

The following pages are Guidelines based on much experience, but there is no need to stick rigidly to them – your profile might develop slightly differently.

### **A word about Photographs and Layout**

Photographs from the life of the parish(es) will play an important part in bringing the Profile to life. It is important that there are more photographs of people and activities than there are of buildings, though. You may already have a good library of photos or you may wish to ask a congregation member to take photographs of church and community activities especially for this purpose.

Do make sure that if you include photographs which have identifiable children in them that you have parental permission – this might be specific permission (probably good if it is a close up) or in the form of a blanket permission that you ask from parents each year.

Layout is important too. The most common format is A4 portrait, but an A5 booklet has been used to good effect, as has A4 landscape – mindful, for example, that many profiles will now be read electronically. Think, too, about what font you wish to use for the text – this can say a lot about you!

Please also keep in mind the visually impaired readers when developing typography. For example, for the partially sighted Arial 12 pt type is suggested as a minimum. Sometimes 16pt may be needed by some visually impaired readers.

## OUTLINE

Here we offer you an outline for developing your profile including the role description and person specification with suggestions on ordering of the various sections and on content.

### Section 1

#### Front page

Title of post, Title of benefice, logos (e.g. diocese, parish), photo/illustration etc.

Please remember that pictures of people rather than buildings on the front cover give a greater sense of life and mission.

#### Foreword from the Bishop or Archdeacon

Leave a page blank at this stage, so that a Foreword from the Bishop or Archdeacon can be added<sup>1</sup> at a later stage.

#### Introduction

- A paragraph or brief section which introduces the parish/benefice, it's context & location
- If you are in a Team Ministry, a letter of welcome or statement from the Team Rector
- If there has been recent pastoral re-organisation, or this is planned for the future, this should also be flagged here. It may be good to consult with the Area Dean on this. This might include changes to the role from that of the previous minister.

### Section 2 - The Mission of your Church

This section is the “heart and soul” of your profile. It is here that the vision, hopes and sense of direction for the mission and ministry of your church will be spelt out. This is the ‘story’ of your church – where it has come from, where you are now and where you hope to be in the future.

This section needs to be an accurate, honest and realistic reflection of where you are as a church and where you might hope to be in 5 years’ time.

It is from this sense of direction for the mission and ministry that the **key priorities for the role will emerge along with the key personal gifts, skills and attributes of the person appointed which will be needed to help you work towards your vision and mission**. Potential candidates should be able to see what the challenges and opportunities of your benefice/parish are and to judge how their particular gifts and skills might “fit”. This process will require consultation and discussion with at least the whole PCC to ensure agreement and “ownership” across the benefice/parish.

#### a) How your Benefice/Parish sees themselves

- ‘Headlines’/successes or causes for celebration. Where parishes are linked within a multi-parish benefice, the distinctiveness of each parish briefly appears.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bishop's statement*

If requested by the PCC under Section 11 (1) (e) of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986, the bishop produces ‘a statement in writing ..... describing in relation to the benefice the needs of the diocese and the wider interests of the Church’.

- The Vision the church/es has/have been working towards
- Strengths & 'weaknesses'. There are a number of tools a parish can use to help them understand themselves better, eg standard SWOT type exercise, Healthy Churches or the 'Angel of the Church' exercise.

### **Ministers**

It is helpful to give a sense of the people behind the roles, so include details of those currently licensed or authorised in your benefice or Team Ministry (e.g. Licensed Lay Ministers, SSMS, House-for-Duty, OLMs, Authorised ministers for Preaching or Communion by Extension, anyone in training). Photographs of the Ministry team would be helpful as this will assist candidates on Interview Day!

If you are in a Team Ministry, how do the parishes work together in reality, who's in the Team, how do colleagues work together?

### **b) Looking to the Future**

In this section, please outline

- the opportunities and challenges which you face as a benefice/parish;
- any priorities which you have identified and any mission strategies or plans which you have or are hoping to develop.

You could group the information under the headings used in your parish/benefice Mission Action Plan (MAP). Alternatively, you could group them under these headings, which are the ones used in the Role Description:

- Mission and outreach
- Leadership and working collaboratively
- Worship and preaching
- Pastoral Care
- Stewardship and benefice organisation

## **Section 3 – Describing the Role**

Here you should outline the key priorities of the role for the person you are appointing. In an appendix to your profile, or as a separate document, you should include a more formal and detailed Role Description as outlined in the template in Appendix 1.

Note that the Role Description included as an appendix to the profile is technically a 'Draft Role Description'. The reason for this is that within the first six months after the licensing, the Archdeacon will work with the new minister to review this draft Role Description and formally sign off an agreed Role Description.

The document may look scarier than it actually is! Much of it is generic to any role. Some of it (Sections One, Four and Five) simply needs some information inserting. The key section for you to work on, and which will be summarised here in the Parish Profile, is Section Three.

Here you will describe the key responsibilities specific to your local situation which you would like your Incumbent/Priest-in-Charge to exercise. These should relate to the plans and priorities identified under the headings in Section 2 of the Profile (Mission of the Church). The Role Description may be broad in nature or quite specific (eg ministry in the local school).

In any parish or benefice, substantial consultation across the whole church and wider community is highly recommended. Your Parish Development Adviser will be happy to advise you with this process and may come to facilitate a meeting of the PCC or wider group. In a Multi Parish Benefice, it is essential that the interests of the separate parishes, together with the life of the whole benefice, all come together in an agreed role description.

Further guidance on Role Descriptions is available [on our website by clicking here](#).

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## **Section 4 - Person Specification**

This is a description of the person you hope to appoint to the role. This focus here is on **what the person is like**, not what you want them to do. It is very important that anything you have as part of the Person Specification is based on something that is said in the Role Description or in the Profile. The Person Specification describes the skills, knowledge, experience, and personal attributes which a person will need to have or be able to acquire in order to fulfil the hopes and aspirations which you have described in this document. Substantial consultation across the whole church and wider community is highly recommended.

This section defines the role in human terms and is key to supporting the process of discernment through which all those involved in the appointment process assess whether someone has been called by God to serve in your parish.

It does this by

- focusing on the attributes that are essential to carry out the responsibilities of the post
- listing the qualities and skills which will enable someone to carry these out to a good standard
- avoiding unnecessary assumptions that might deter good candidates (eg- “have previous experience as an incumbent” – there may be an outstanding Curate who could do the role equally as well)

Areas which need to be considered are:

- Qualifications/training
- Experience
- Knowledge, skills and competences
- General attributes
- Other

You will find some guidance to inform your thinking in Appendix 2, but it is important that you formulate your own words where possible.

It is best to offer a summary of the key characteristics here, and then to offer a fuller and more formal, Person Specification, of the sort laid out in Appendix 2, in an appendix to your Profile. The more formal document will provide the basis for shortlisting.

## **Section 5 - Support you will offer**

Having highlighted what you are hoping for in your new incumbent, now outline what they can expect from you in terms of your care and support of them and commitment to the ongoing development of their ministry.

e.g

- encouragement to maintain a sustainable ministry, including days off, holidays, retreats, opportunities for learning and development, adequate time for family life, friendship and recreation.
- financial support for retreats and ministerial development
- shared commitment to meeting the challenges identified
- prayer, friendship, fellowship...

## **Section 6 - Detailed description of the Benefice / Parish**

Much general information is available via the internet. It is good to include here some weblinks to local schools, community websites, census information, county and district councils etc. This will help you to avoid lengthy descriptions in this section.

### **a) General Description of the Parish/Benefice and its context**

This section helps potential candidates to get a feel not just of the ministry in your parish or benefice, but of what it is like to live here.

**Map of the wider area and of the benefice/parish** - emphasise potential transport links with large centres, anything remarkable about general communications.

**Social Geography** - area, location, housing, industry/economy, culture, local councils, natural centres, schools, hospitals, key networks, shops, leisure facilities. *Refer to websites where possible.*

**Schools** - details of nearby schools in and beyond the benefice (to help a potential incumbent with children of school age). *Refer to websites where possible.*

**Issues and concerns** - closure of facilities, young people, house prices, rural issues, unemployment, projected by-pass, expansion etc.

**Safeguarding** - information about safeguarding arrangements in the benefice/parish and the name of the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

### **b) The Worshipping Community**

**Parish/Benefice/Team Parish boundaries, presence of other Christian churches or other faith communities** - Numbers on electoral roll. Any other staff or voluntary help. Parish Office/secretarial help.

**The Church Building(s)** - short history of church buildings, points of main interest – architecture, listing if any, main features (visitors, tourists), is the church left open? General state of repair and any issues highlighted in last quinquennial report. Any plans to re-order church buildings.

**Churchyards** - open or closed?

**Worship** - pattern and style of services (including average Sunday attendance for adults and children), mid-week & special services /occasions, Ecumenical links, books used, music, Mums and Toddlers, homes for elderly, prisons, home communions. Who leads/takes part in leading worship?

**Occasional Offices** - numbers of baptisms, weddings and funerals in the last calendar year. May be best presented in a table for comparison with the last couple of years.

**Life of the church** - Sunday School, Youth Group, After School Clubs, Choir, M.U., uniformed organisations, regular social events, house/study groups, nurture courses, prayer groups/partners, links with organisations. This could include something that gives the reader a “flavour” of your parish/benefice team unless you have put it elsewhere.

**Events** - Regular “specials” that you know will happen - fete, carnival, special links with village organisations, flower festival and so on.

### c) **Organisation and Finance**

**PCC/DCC/Benefice Council** - how many, how they relate to each other, other bodies, how often meetings are held, sub-committees etc.

**Giving and money** - some information about money, covenants, envelope scheme, about the congregation’s philosophy about money, stewardship of time and talents. You should include a brief summary of your accounts and a note of the Parish Share figure and whether you are “paying your way.”

**Local Trusts** - List the local Trusts of which the applicant would become a trustee, including what these trusteeships involve (eg is it one meeting a year to disperse £150 to time-honoured recipients or a meeting a month coping with £20000 pa)

### d) **Other Buildings**

Attached buildings - kitchen/ cloakroom, halls, foyer, side chapels etc

Other church buildings – halls, other houses, property

## **Section 7 - The Vicarage/Rectory**

General description, site in the benefice/parish relative to the church(es), age, garden, number of rooms – rather as an estate agent would describe – significant features, if any. This is where your new incumbent will be living, so please include a couple of attractive photographs!

## **Section 8 - Other Information**

*(if not already included in Section 1)*

### **Deanery perspective**

This statement is usually prepared by the Area Dean / Lay Chair and reflects the nature of the deanery and key strategic issues which affect this appointment, eg the Deanery Plan.

### **Diocesan perspective**

Your Parish Development Adviser will provide you with a brief summary of the Diocese of Oxford to include here.

## Appendix 1

### DRAFT ROLE DESCRIPTION (TEMPLATE)

#### SECTION ONE: DETAILS OF POST

<b>Role title:</b>	<i>[insert the title as described in the licence and Statement of Particulars (SoP)]</i>
<b>Type of Role:</b>	<i>[insert one of the following: full time stipendiary/part-time stipendiary/house for duty]</i>
<b>Name of benefice:</b>	<i>[insert name of benefice as described in the licence]</i>
<b>Episcopal area:</b>	<i>[insert area]</i>
<b>Deanery:</b>	<i>[insert deanery]</i>
<b>Archdeaconry:</b>	<i>[insert area]</i>
<b>Conditions of Service:</b>	Please refer to Statements of Particulars document issued in conjunction with this role description
<b>Key contact for Clergy Terms of Service:</b>	Archdeacon of <i>[insert area]</i> <i>This role falls within the Clergy Terms of Service formally known as Common Tenure. The Archdeacon of [insert area] is the designated person by the Bishop of Oxford to issue the Statement of Particulars for the post holder.</i>
<b>Accountability:</b>	Priests share with the Bishop in the oversight of the Church. Whilst, as an office holder, the individual is expected to lead and prioritise work in line with the purpose of the role, they are encouraged to inform the Archdeacon and Churchwardens about any issues exceptional or otherwise that have the potential to affect ongoing delivery of ministry
<b>Additional Responsibility:</b>	<i>[insert any additional responsibility here; otherwise state N/A]</i>

#### SECTION TWO: CONTEXT

##### Wider Context

With the appointment of the new Bishop of Oxford the Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft a new Common Vision is emerging for the Diocese of Oxford ...

The vision addresses what kind of church we are called to be – A Christ-like Church.

What are the marks of a Christ-like Church? To be the Church of the Beatitudes:

- Contemplative
- Compassionate
- Courageous

It also asks what we are therefore called to do together. This is currently a work in progress, but is likely to cover some of the following strategic priorities:

- Make a difference in the world
- Support and grow the local church
- Establish new churches and congregations
- Serve our schools
- Renew discipleship and ministry



These priorities will be supported centrally by resources, training, conferences, workshops, and much more. The diocese is inviting benefices and their priests to share a vision rather than demanding a response. It wants all its priests to flourish in ministry and to deepen their enjoyment of God.

## Local Context

*[Insert Brief description of local context including vision and Deanery Ministry Action Plan (MAP)]*

## SECTION THREE: ROLE PURPOSE AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

### General:

- A. To exercise the cure of souls shared with the bishop in *this benefice*<sup>2</sup> in collaboration with colleagues, including the praying of the Daily Office, the administration of the sacraments and preaching
- B. To have regard to the calling and responsibilities of the clergy (as described in the Canons, the Ordinal, the Code of Professional Conduct for the Clergy) and other relevant legislation including
  - bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making him known to those in your care
  - instructing the parishioners in the Christian faith
  - preparing candidates for baptism and confirmation
  - diligently visiting the parishioners of the benefice, particularly those who are sick and infirm
  - providing spiritual counsel and advice
  - consulting with the Parochial Church Council on matters of general concern and importance to the benefice
  - bringing the needs of the world before God in intercession
  - calling your hearers to repentance *and declaring in Christ's name the absolution and forgiveness of their sins*<sup>3</sup>
  - *blessing people in God's name*<sup>3</sup>
  - preparing people for their death
  - discerning and fostering the gifts of all God's people
  - being faithful in prayer, expectant and watchful for the signs of God's presence, as he reveals his kingdom among us
- C. To share in the wider work of the deanery and diocese as appropriate, for the building up of the whole Body of Christ

### Key responsibilities specific to the local situation

*[insert key responsibilities for each headline below]*

- Mission and Outreach
- Leadership and working collaboratively
- Worship and preaching
- Pastoral Care
- Stewardship and benefice organisation
- Personal development and spirituality

The key responsibilities listed above may be supported by long and short term objectives to be agreed between the post holder and the incumbent (in the case of an assistant priest) or the Archdeacon and Church Wardens (in the case of incumbents).

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<sup>2</sup> This may need adaptation to Team or post, depending on circumstances

<sup>3</sup> This may need deleting for Deacons

## **Other responsibilities**

- Participate in the Bishop's Ministerial Development Review scheme and engage in Continuing Ministerial Development
- Carry out any other duties and responsibilities as required in line with the benefice needs.
- Take care for their wellbeing including health and safety and building a good repertoire of spiritual and psychological strategies

## **SECTION FOUR: BENEFICE SUMMARY**

### **The Benefice of**

*[insert information for each headline below]*

Benefice:

Patron(s):

PCCs: (Names and numbers only)

Churchwardens:

Ministers:

Benefice paid staff:

Benefice unpaid staff/ volunteers (numbers):

Buildings:

Churchyard(s):

Church Tradition:

Pastoral Reorganisation proposals:

**For more detailed information, please refer to the Parish Profile.**

## **SECTION 5: KEY CONTACTS FOR THE ROLE**

### **Generic and specific to the role**

#### **Groups & committees**

- The PCC(s)
- Deanery Chapter
- Deanery Synod
- Deanery Pastoral Committee
- *[insert any other]*

#### **In the benefice**

- Churchwardens
- Ministerial Colleagues
- Head teacher(s) of local school(s)
- *[insert any other]*

#### **Support structures**

- Area Dean
- Area Bishop
- Archdeacon
- *[insert any other eg: spiritual director, work consultant, etc if they have been identified]*
- Staff at The Diocesan Office with key responsibilities for various aspects of supporting parish ministry

**SECTION SIX: OTHER**

This role description is issued alongside and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

The Ordinal

The Canons of the Church of England

Guidance for the Professional Conduct of Clergy

Bishop's Licence

Statement of Particulars issued to the office-holder on successful appointment

Diocesan Clergy Handbook

Parish Profile

Ministry Action Plans (MAPs)

Any objectives discussed and agreed between the post holder and the supervising minister

Role description signed off by: The Venerable *[insert name]*  
Archdeacon of *[insert area]*

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Date: XX.20XX

To be reviewed next on: XX.20XX

## **Appendix 2 - Examples of statements which could form a Person Specification**

***NB – it is important that you only use statements which are relevant to your situation. You will need to write some of your own, and delete many of the ones below.***

***Items which have \*\* next to them should be included in all Person Specifications.***

***Think carefully about what is 'essential' (this would exclude some candidates over others) and what is 'desirable'.***

### **Qualifications/Training**

#### **Essential**

- **\*\***Ordained priest within the Church of England, or a Church in communion with it, or a Church whose orders it recognises
- **\*\***Have satisfactorily completed Initial Ministerial Education
- Willingness to engage in further training that enhances the skills of [...]

#### **Desirable**

- Have completed a recognized course of study on [..... eg Fresh Expressions/Mixed Economy Church (e.g., Mission Shaped Ministry, Ordained Pioneer Ministry etc)] *Include this only if it is relevant to your situation*

### **Experience**

#### **Essential**

- Engagement with and pastoral support for people of all ages
- Priestly ministry involving vision setting and team development
- Responsibility in a complex organisation with substantial resources to manage

#### **Desirable**

- Leading mature and thoughtful all age worship
- The liturgical tradition that is catholic, orthodox and Anglican
- Experience of doing forms of church in creative, engaging and imaginative ways
- Congregations that include a number of people who worship in a different place from where they live
- Active engagement with local schools

### **Knowledge/Skills and Competencies**

#### **Essential**

- Ability to preach well in a variety of styles and formats to a broad range of listeners with varying outlooks, ages and understanding
- Ability to identify and respond to opportunities for mission
- Ability to make and build on links with individuals and community organisations whose involvement with the Church is limited
- Leadership skills including the ability to motivate, inspire and effectively coordinate volunteers

#### **Desirable**

- Collaborative working especially with volunteers and other churches
- Ability to organise resources effectively to meet a large number of demands

## **General Attributes**

### **Essential**

- Able to work in sympathy with the Eucharistic tradition of the Benefice
- A passion for starting and leading a new congregation
- An appreciation of the opportunities provided by the Church's place within the existing secular structures for developing links with those not actively involved
- Evidence of a deep prayer life and ability to draw on a wide range of spiritual resources

### **Desirable**

- An ecumenical outlook and willingness to work with local churches and faith groups
- A love of the arts in general and church choral music in particular and an understanding of how they can draw people to God

### **Other**

- A passion for learning and personal development.
- \*\*The ability to work to a Safeguarding Policy.