



press release

8 October 2013

New resource launched to reverse decline in churches during vacancies

A new resource to help churches grow and thrive during periods of vacancy has been produced by CPAS, the Anglican mission agency, in partnership with the Dioceses of Birmingham and Lichfield, St John's Nottingham Centre for Church Growth and Saltley Trust.

With two thirds of churches reporting a drop in attendance during the time between vicars, and most vicars staying in post for less than ten years, the mission agency sees addressing this issue as pivotal to growth in the Church of England.

The Ven Bob Jackson, director of the St John's Nottingham Centre for Church Growth, has written the resource, titled *Growing Through a Vacancy*, following research funded by St Peter's Saltley Trust, which showed that on average a church loses 1 in 6 people during a vacancy, and most don't return when the new vicar arrives.

The resource material identifies 15 practical steps to reverse this trend including communicating well, spreading the workload and welcoming newcomers. Bob Jackson said 'Doing a vacancy well can make a huge difference. By avoiding common mistakes and adopting some specific good practices, churches can not only avoid shrinking in vacancies but also thrive and grow.'

Growing Through a Vacancy consists of a handbook for wardens, readers and clergy and a smaller brief guide for PCC members. The resource is informed by CPAS' extensive experience of working with churches in vacancy through the mission agency's position as one of the UK's largest patrons with responsibility for over 500 parishes. Advisory groups made up of clergy in the Dioceses of Birmingham and Lichfield have also contributed to the resource.

Several dioceses have already shown interested in buying *Growing Through a Vacancy* in bulk for their parishes, and senior church staff have personally endorsed the resource. The Rt Rev Peter Hancock, Bishop of Basingstoke, said 'This is an invaluable resource, and I will be giving a copy to all PCCs where the incumbent is moving on. CPAS have once again produced a resource to help churches think, pray and plan how to grow and fulfil their mission. The message of *Growing Through a Vacancy* is clear – a vacancy can be a time of growth. This is something for every PCC to think and pray about.'

Growing Through a Vacancy is available from the CPAS website, with significant discounts available for dioceses and other groups wishing to purchase multiple copies. To buy the resource online or find out more, please visit www.grow-vacancy.org.uk.

Ends

For further information please contact Hazel Lancefield at CPAS on hlancefield@cpas.org.uk or 0300 123 0780 (ext. 4380).

Notes to Editors:

Growing Through a Vacancy is a CPAS resource, produced in partnership with St John's Nottingham Centre for Church Growth, St Peter's Saltley Trust and the Dioceses of Birmingham and Lichfield.

CPAS (www.cpas.org.uk) is an Anglican evangelical mission agency working with churches, mainly in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. It enables churches to help every person hear and discover the good news of Jesus Christ.