

GROWING THROUGH A VACANCY

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of interviewer:

Name and place of church:

Name of interviewee and their position in the church:

Start and end dates of the vacancy (year and month):

Part 1: Church Profile

1. IS THE PARISH PRIMARILY:

- Village-rural
- Village-commuter-rural
- Small or market town
- Suburban
- Estate
- Inner urban
- City centre
- Other (specify)

3. AT THE START OF THE VACANCY, HOW MANY PEOPLE BELONGED TO YOUR CHURCH COMMUNITY AND ATTENDED AT LEAST ABOUT MONTHLY?

- Under 50
- 50-99
- 100-199
- 200-399
- 400 plus

2. IS THE CHURCH'S TRADITION MAINLY:

- Traditional catholic
- Liberal catholic
- Central
- Traditional Anglican
- Conservative evangelical
- Open evangelical
- Charismatic
- Other (specify)

4. WHAT PROPORTION OF YOUR CONGREGATION AT THE START OF THE VACANCY WERE AGED UNDER 16?

- None or hardly any
- Under 10%
- 10-24%
- 25% plus

5. AT A GUESS WHAT PROPORTION OF YOUR CONGREGATION AT THE START OF THE VACANCY HAD JOINED THE CHURCH IN THE PREVIOUS THREE YEARS?

- None or nearly none
- Under one in ten
- Between one in ten and one in five
- One in five or more

6. AT THE START OF THE VACANCY ROUGHLY WHAT PROPORTION OF YOUR ELECTORAL ROLL LIVED IN THE PARISH?

- Over three quarters
- Half to three quarters
- Under half

7. IS YOUR CHURCH:

- A single-parish benefice
- Joined with one other church to form a benefice
- Joined with two or more other churches
- Part of a Team Ministry or Local Ecumenical Project
- If a Team Ministry is 'your' minister the Team Rector or a Team Vicar?
Yes
No

8. AS THE VACANCY STARTED DID YOUR CHURCH HAVE A MISSION ACTION PLAN OR A CLEAR VISION STATEMENT?

HOW FAR DO YOU THINK THIS WAS KNOWN AND OWNED BY THE CONGREGATION?

9. WHAT WAS THE GENERAL TREND IN ATTENDANCE AND MEMBERSHIP IN THE THREE YEARS PRIOR TO THE VACANCY?

- Significant decline (at least 5% pa)
- Slow decline
- About steady
- Attendance down but membership up
- Slow growth
- Significant growth (at least 5% pa)

Part 2: Church Organisation

10. HOW LONG HAD THE PREVIOUS INCUMBENT BEEN IN POST?

Under five years

Five to ten years

Over ten years

11. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE LEADERSHIP STYLE OF THE OUTGOING INCUMBENT?

Not a lot of organisational leadership (mainly a personal ministry)

Authoritarian (useless to argue)

Directional (vicar set the direction but some freedom within that)

Consultative (talked to people but the vicar was the main decision-taker)

Collaborative (decisions made together)

Decentralised (authority over aspects of church life handed to other leaders)

Laid back or weak (no overall direction or control)

11. PAID STAFF – WHAT PAID MINISTRY-STAFF (AS OPPOSED TO CLEANERS, PA, ORGANIST ETC.) WERE IN POST DURING THE VACANCY?

None

Curate

Youth, children's or families minister

Administrator or Operations Manager

Other (please specify)

13. APART FROM THE WARDENS AND PCC WHAT OTHER LEADERSHIP GROUPS WERE ACTIVE DURING THE VACANCY?

Standing committee

Local ministry team

Eldership team

Heads of departments meeting

Staff meeting

Others (please specify)

14. WHO, IF ANYONE, APPEARED TO BE 'IN CHARGE' DURING THE VACANCY?

- The wardens
- Ministry or vacancy team
- An individual such as the lay chair of the PCC or a Reader
- A curate or other paid staff member
- The treasurer
- Someone from outside such as the Team Rector or Rural Dean
- Other individual (please specify)
- PCC
- Ambiguous – nobody

15. DID THE CHURCH HAVE AN 'INTERIM MINISTER' OF ANY SORT (E.G. RETIRED CLERGY OR SELF SUPPORTING MINISTER)? IF SO, PLEASE DESCRIBE THE ARRANGEMENT

16. WHO LED THE SERVICES AND PREACHED DURING THE VACANCY?

- A rota of clergy and readers from other churches
- Your own self-supporting clergy or readers
- Retired clergy
- Lay people from within the church

17. HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE INVOLVED IN LEADING SERVICES AND PREACHING OVER THE PERIOD OF THE VACANCY?

- Mainly one person
- Just two or three people
- Four to nine people
- Ten or more

WAS YOUR LEVEL OF CONTINUITY OR VARIETY IN SERVICE LEADING AND PREACHING AN ASSET OR A LIABILITY?

18. HOW WAS PASTORAL CARE ORGANISED IN THE VACANCY?

	Adults	Children
No new arrangements or formal organisation (we tried to look after each other)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A designated person in charge but no other structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Done through existing small groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Congregation divided up between a number of pastoral leaders and/or pastoral care team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. DO YOU HAVE A SYSTEM OR PROCESS FOR THE WELCOME AND INTEGRATION OF NEWCOMERS INTO THE CHURCH COMMUNITY? IF SO, WHAT IS IT AND HOW WELL DOES IT WORK?

20. DID YOU OFFER CHRISTIAN BASICS COURSES (E.G. ALPHA, EMMAUS, START!):

Part 3: The Dynamics of the Vacancy

21. LOOKING BACK, IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU THINK THE OUTGOING INCUMBENT HAD BEEN PREPARING THE CHURCH FOR THE VACANCY, EITHER BEFORE OR AFTER THEIR DEPARTURE WAS ANNOUNCED?

Nothing specific

Stopped innovating

Shared jobs around

Gave verbal advice about organisation and keeping the show on the road

Left a written down list of who was responsible for different aspects of church life and what needed doing to keep the church functioning

Gave instructions about pastoral care, welcoming newcomers and Christian ministry

Other (please specify)

22. WHAT OUTSIDE HELP DID YOU RECEIVE TO HELP YOU WITH THE VACANCY FROM THE DEANERY, THE DIOCESE OR THE PATRON?

PRACTICAL:

MISSIONAL:

CAN YOU THINK OF ONE THING YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN AT THE START OF THE VACANCY IN ORDER TO HELP THE CHURCH THRIVE AND GROW THROUGH IT?

23. WHAT ASPECTS OF YOUR CHURCH'S LIFE OR PROGRAMME DID YOU LET GO OF IN THE VACANCY? (E.G. NURTURE COURSES, LENT COURSE, EARLY COMMUNION SERVICE, NATIVITY SERVICE).

24. APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY NEW PEOPLE CAME AT LEAST ONCE OR TWICE AND MAYBE CONSIDERED JOINING THE CHURCH DURING THE VACANCY?

AND HOW MANY OF THOSE HAVE CARRIED ON COMING?

WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE TRIED YOU OUT AND WAS THERE ANY PATTERN TO THOSE WHO STAYED? (AGES, LIFE SITUATION, VARIETY).

25. APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY PEOPLE DIED OR LEFT THE CHURCH DURING THE VACANCY?

26. DID YOU NOTICE THAT NEWER OR FRINGE MEMBERS WERE MORE LIKELY TO DRIFT AWAY OR LEAVE THAN LONGER-STANDING CHURCH MEMBERS? IF SO, WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE TO STOP THIS HAPPENING?

27. DID YOU GET THE IMPRESSION THAT SOME PEOPLE CAME TO CHURCH SERVICES LESS OFTEN DURING THE VACANCY?

Part 4: The Culture of Your Church

28. HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERISE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND ITS CLERGY OVER THE YEARS?

29. HOW WOULD YOU FINISH THE SENTENCE: 'IT'S JUST TYPICAL OF THE WAY THINGS HAPPEN AT OUR CHURCH THAT ...'

30. AT THE TIME, WHAT SORTS OF COMMENTS DID YOU RECEIVE ABOUT THE VACANCY FROM MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION?

31. HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERISE THE GENERAL UNITY AND HAPPINESS OF THE CHURCH COMMUNITY?

Serious and open conflict or relationship breakdown

Outwardly okay but significant tensions rumbling along under the surface

Peaceful but not a lot of depth in relationships

A fairly united and functional community

A united church community with quite a lot of joy and laughter

A foretaste of heaven

32. WERE THERE POINTS IN THE VACANCY WHEN THE MOOD OF THE CONGREGATION CHANGED AND WHAT LAY BEHIND THAT?

33. LOOKING BACK ON THE VACANCY WHAT DO YOU THINK WORKED REALLY WELL ABOUT THE WHOLE PROCESS?

34. AND WHAT DO YOU REGRET OR WISH HAD BEEN HANDLED DIFFERENTLY?

35. THROUGH THE VACANCY PERIOD WHAT WOULD YOU SAY WAS THE MAIN STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH?

AND THE MAIN WEAKNESS?

Part 5: After the Vacancy

36. IN THE EARLY MONTHS (UP TO ONE YEAR) OF YOUR NEW INCUMBENT HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERISE THE PACE OF CHANGE?

No real change yet

Gentle

Significant

Major

37. WHAT HAS BEEN THE MAJOR CHANGE SO FAR?

38. WAS ANY ATTEMPT MADE TO LIST AND VISIT PEOPLE WHO SEEM TO HAVE STOPPED COMING TO CHURCH DURING THE VACANCY? HOW WELL DID IT WORK?

39. HOW MANY NEW PEOPLE OR LAPSED MEMBERS TURNED UP IN THE EARLY WEEKS OF THE NEW VICAR TO CHECK THEM OUT? HOW MANY HAVE STAYED?

40. IS THE CHURCH NOW GROWING OR SHRINKING AND WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS FOR THE TREND?