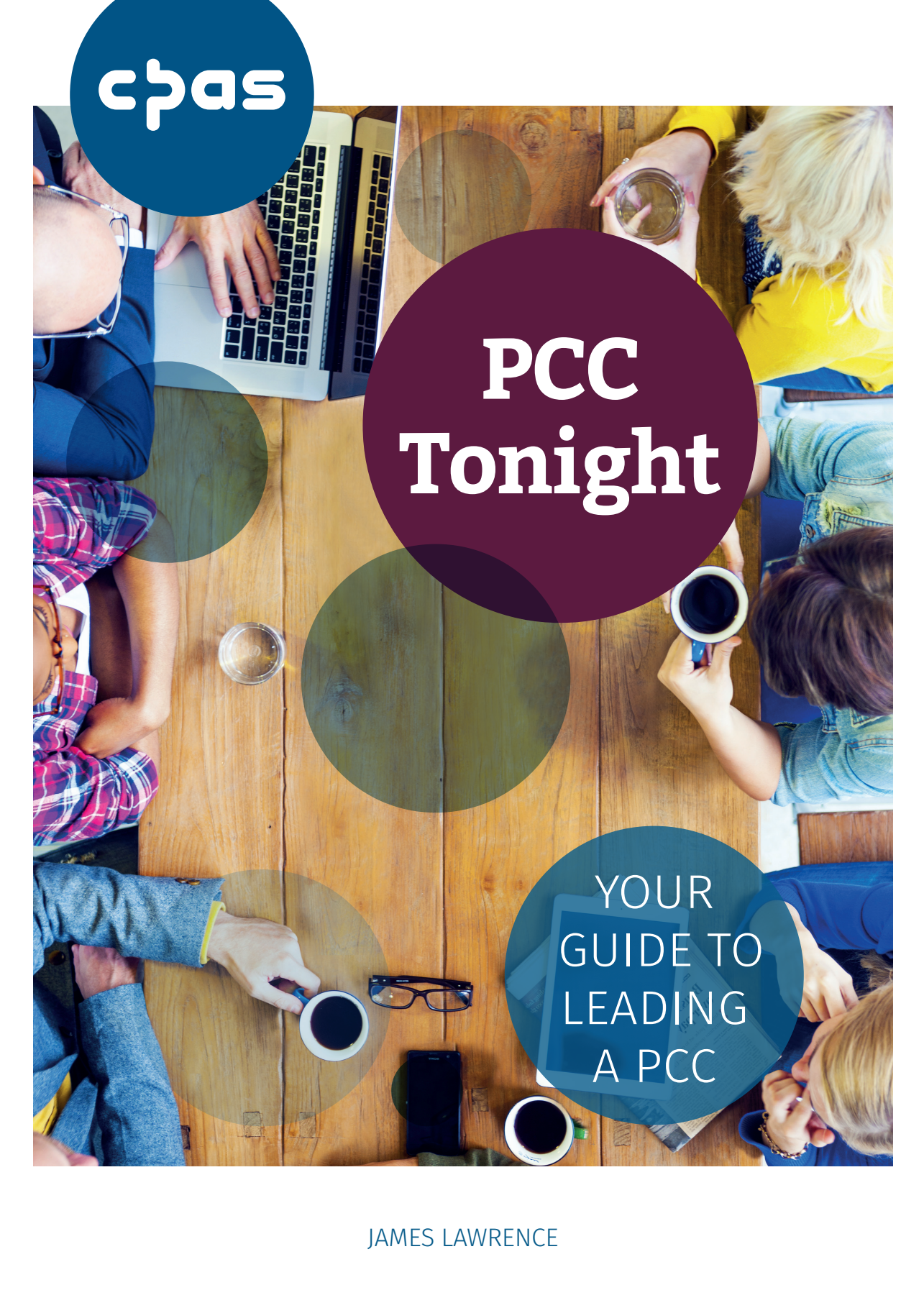




cpas

PCC Tonight

YOUR
GUIDE TO
LEADING
A PCC

JAMES LAWRENCE



Making Mission Possible

PCC Tonight

YOUR
GUIDE TO
LEADING
A PCC



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- Ideas for running a PCC in a non-book, UPA, multi-ethnic context, Andy Jolley.
- Leadership structures – a brief guide.
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- Principles for good communication.
- Social media guidelines, Coventry diocese.
- Trusteeship leaflet, Archbishops' Council.

Chairing

- A purpose statement for those who chair, John Truscott.
- Chairing a meeting, The Resource Centre.
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- Preparing for awkward moments, Charles Burgess.

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- Liturgy for a PCC meeting.
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PCC TONIGHT – AN OVERVIEW

Beep, beep, beep...

6.45am. The alarm beeps. Bleary-eyed Joan/ Injit/Winston/Bev (you choose the name) reaches out and turns the alarm off. Monday morning. What does the day hold? Normal day really, and oh, PCC tonight. With an audible groan, Joan pulls the duvet a little higher and hopes she can wake on a different morning.



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *PCC Tonight*, a resource for developing the life of a PCC in three parts:

1. A leader's guide (which you are currently reading).
2. Six sessions for a PCC (which are in the pack you purchased).
3. Over 30 downloadable aids (which can be accessed online at www.cpas.org.uk/pcctonight using the code on page 162).

There is a more detailed explanation of the resource below, followed by an index of all the different elements. If for any reason you are unable to access the internet, and you don't know someone who can access it for you, do contact us, and for a small charge we will be able to post to you a CD-ROM of the downloadable aids.

Throughout *PCC Tonight* you will find stories from PCCs around the country. In all but one case the names have been changed to protect the identity of those who have shared their stories.

If we can be of any help as you work with your PCC to enable them to lead your church well, don't hesitate to get in touch.

Purpose

PCC Tonight is designed to enable an incumbent to lead the PCC well in order that it may be:

- clear about its purpose
- confident in its identity and role and how that relates to other groups within the church
- competent in fulfilling its legal duties
- dynamic in the way it operates
- and enjoyable to be a part of,

so it may help the church fulfil the mission and ministry of Christ in that place.

It is written out of the conviction that PCCs are crucial bodies in the leadership of Anglican churches. They can make a significant impact for good on church life. Every parish has one, so it helps to embrace them and make them the best they can be.

It is written from the experience that most people (those who have to attend PCCs and those who choose to) don't break into a big smile when they hear the words 'PCC tonight'.

It is also written out of the belief that with prayer, encouragement, strategic thinking and some hard work it is possible to see a PCC move from a poorly functioning body to an exciting and creative group, committed to serving the church well.

Structure

PART 1 A GUIDE TO LEADING A PCC

The leader's guide is primarily for parish priests responsible for leading their PCC (or DCC), although other members of the PCC may find it of interest, in particular the vice-chair. It covers twelve common reasons why PCCs don't function well, and offers practical suggestions on how to address each of them.

PART 2 SIX SESSIONS FOR PCCS

These sessions are designed to be run as part of six normal PCC meetings, taking around 35 minutes each. They can be combined and used as part of a PCC away morning or day. They follow a simple structure based on a **PCC acronym**:



Pause



Clarify



Connect

For each session there is a leader's guide and a simple handout. You can choose to do them in any order which suits your context, over any time frame that works for you. Some may not be appropriate or necessary; just leave them out.

PART 3 MATERIALS FOR PCCS

This section contains a variety of materials to help with the running of the PCC. Where helpful they are in Word format so you can personalise them with the name of your church and other relevant information.

Beep, beep, beep...

6.45am. The alarm beeps. Bleary-eyed Joan/ Injit/Winston/Bev (you choose the name) reaches out and turns the alarm off. Monday morning. What does the day hold? Normal day really, and oh, PCC tonight. With a broadening smile, Joan relishes the prospect of seeing everyone again and all that the meeting holds.

Far-fetched? Let's see.



PART 1

A guide for leading a PCC

INTRODUCTION

A TALE OF TWO PCCS



SCENARIO CHARACTERS

The PCC

The vicar.

Mary, 69, retired secretary, likes structure and order.

Winston, 56, widowed refuse collector, still struggling after his wife died two years ago.

Simon, 46, businessman, recently moved into the area.

Ruth, 19, nursery worker, baptised in the church as a baby, and just elected onto the PCC.

Duncan, 73, butcher, knows everyone, been on and off the PCC for 38 years.

Joanne, 53, since her two children left home volunteers her time to a wide variety of charities and groups.

David, 61, recently made redundant from a sales job that he'd never really done very well at.

Ivy, 63, retired school teacher, family spread around the country so often away visiting them.

Deep, 57, deanery synod rep, quiet and thoughtful .

Plus others...



SCENARIO 1

The PCC meeting

It was meant to start at **8.00**, but by **8.10** only four out of the ten members were present. **Mary** was miffed. She disliked it when things didn't start on time, and the PCC never started on time.

At **8.17** **the vicar** called people to order, glad to see that three more people had arrived. **Winston** sat down at his place around the table and wondered what was on the agenda. He couldn't remember if anything had been sent out beforehand, but if it had it had got lost somewhere in the pile of stuff on the fridge at home.

8.23 **Ivy** drew her scarf round her neck. The church hall was always cold and a bit gloomy, and the chairs weren't very comfortable.

8.47 As **Simon** predicted, when he arrived they were still on matters arising. **Simon** had learnt early on that it wasn't worth turning up until this item was over.

8.52 **Ruth's** second meeting was proving just as confusing as her first. She didn't understand why some people seemed to sit and say nothing the entire meeting, but afterwards on the way out seemed to disagree with virtually everything that happened. It also seemed that **David** and **Joanne** were the only ones who said much and no one ever disagreed with them. And why did **the vicar** and the secretary sit behind that table separate from the rest of them?

9.10 The discussion about the colour of the carpet for the chancel was in full flow. It was the third time it had been on the agenda and **Joanne** was cross. She prided herself on her eye for interior design and couldn't believe the carpets others were choosing. She glared at everyone. **Ivy** was feeling very frustrated. There was the important matter of the young people in the community who were wandering the streets with nothing to do, and it had dropped off the agenda last time because of the carpet. It looked like doing the same again.

9.40 With no decision made about the carpet, **Ivy** was pleased that they had moved on to the youth. She found **David's** comments distressing. His willingness to write them off as a 'bunch of wasters' just wasn't right, but last time she spoke up on their behalf it had got quite unpleasant.

10.04 **Mary** couldn't believe that AOB had done it again. **Simon** raised a question about the finances, and the lack of a report on how things were going despite asking for one at the last three meetings. **Duncan**, the Treasurer, stated bluntly they were fine. **Simon** suggested that might be the

case but how would the PCC know if things weren't fine without any figures to look at. **Duncan** asked if he was questioning his competence... and now everyone was looking very uncomfortable.

10.17 ... Amen.

The vicar looked up from his closing prayer and wondered if it could be any different.

Mary left frustrated by a late start, a late end and an agenda which didn't help them make any progress.

Duncan left abruptly not saying goodnight to anyone.

Joanne and **David** swiftly followed and outside the church hall had an animated conversation.

Winston hung around to chat with anyone who would chat rather than going back to his empty house.

Simon smiled inwardly at how much money his company had invested in training him to lead great meetings and wondered whether to offer any thoughts.

Ivy noticed the young people in the graveyard as she left. She recognised two of them from her primary school class many years before. She waved, and rather awkwardly they waved back. She knew things hadn't been easy, and she knew they hadn't been saints, but surely the church could do something for them.

As **Ruth** placed her head on her pillow that night she wondered if she had made a mistake. She didn't really want to join the PCC but was persuaded by several people that she could make a valuable contribution. She wasn't so sure.



SCENARIO 2, two years later

The PCC meeting

Ivy hands a cup of coffee to Simon who has evidently come straight from work. She cuts him an extra-large slice of her special homemade lemon drizzle cake. He smiles gratefully and asks how her hip is doing following the replacement three months ago. He notices that Mary has once again done a lovely job of setting out the room.

7.58 The vicar asks everyone to take their seats as they will be starting in a couple of minutes. Duncan is the last one to arrive just before 8.00, apologising for being late.

8.15 They move from Mary's lounge, where they have finished catching up with one another and a brief thought from the Bible and some quiet reflection before saying the Lord's Prayer together, to sit around a table. It is the first time Ruth led prayers. She is glad now it is over that the butterflies in her stomach seem to have landed.

8.21 Simon is pleased with progress on the various action points from the last meeting. And when Duncan explains why he has not made as much progress as outlined on one matter, they all understand and work with him to solve the problem.

8.48 Ruth is surprised at how strongly people are disagreeing with one another on the proposal to reorder the choir stalls.

9.07 Having divided into two groups to discuss the item further, the groups rejoin to present their ideas and Winston offers feedback from his group.

9.13 Sitting in quiet prayer, Joanne finds her mind dwelling on the Bible passage from the start of the meeting and wondering how it might help them come to a good decision.

9.27 Decision made. Although people don't all agree on the best way forward, Ivy is delighted with the commitment expressed now to action the various decisions that have been written down. Mary is always so good at capturing exactly what needs to be recorded.

9.50 As they reflect on the meeting, a number of helpful ideas have come up on how to improve it for next time. Mary wonders if anyone else would like to host it, but it is clear how pleased she is when everyone says how much they appreciate her opening up her home and making them so comfortable.

9.58 ... Amen.

The vicar looks up from his closing prayer and smiles at how things have changed so much in two years. It was a pity to lose David, but he couldn't allow him to hold the group to ransom. It wasn't a conversation he'd looked forward to, but everyone knew he had to do something.

Mary begins to tidy away the cups and accepts Simon's offer of help.

Duncan chats with Winston and they laugh about the hopeless performance of their football team the night before.

Joanne leaves quickly explaining that she has an early start in the morning.

Simon washes the cups and looks forward to getting home. It's been a long day, but worth it.

Ivy notices the young people leaving the youth club in the church hall as she leaves. She recognises two of them from her primary school class many years before. She waves, and rather awkwardly they wave back. She knows one of them has expressed an interest in going to a Ventures holiday that some of the teenagers in the church attend. She hopes he will enjoy it.

As Ruth places her head on her pillow that night she gives thanks for a good meeting. In fact she thinks she may try and introduce one or two of the things that have helped the PCC to function well in her team meeting at the nursery.

Caricatures? Certainly. Far-fetched? Probably not. How can I be sure? Because I've based the scenarios on tales I've heard from PCC meetings around the country.

The majority of PCCs will lie somewhere between the two stories, but wherever a PCC locates itself on the spectrum from functioning well to functioning poorly, each one will have ways it can improve on how it operates.

A way ahead

When a PCC member wakes in the morning and their first waking thought is 'PCC tonight', what is their next thought? Surely we owe it to our PCC members that at that moment a broad smile crosses their face and they relish the prospect of another great PCC meeting. Now, just in case you think I'm living in cloud cuckoo land, I know in reality that the next thought of many PCC members is an inward groan. But the purpose behind this resource is to change that. Even severely dysfunctional PCCs can be changed, and most are not that bad.

This resource has been created to help you as an incumbent work with your PCC and develop it as a well-functioning group in the church. Such transformation takes time (measured in months and years) and energy (measured in sweat and toil) and may involve some difficult conversations (marked by heartache and tears). However, it is worth it.

MARGARET'S STORY as a first-time incumbent

When I arrived I discovered there was a reluctance to stand for PCC, especially from younger members of the congregation. Various conversations revealed three reasons:

- PCC meetings were long and finished very late.
- The PCC had become very tribal (traditionalists vs modernists) and destructive conflict and confrontation were common.
- Decisions were rarely made as any sense of consensus rarely emerged.

The PCC didn't have an agreed bigger picture or common vision to work towards and members saw its purpose as simply enacting the functional business of the church. Furthermore, poor behaviours were not challenged.

I wanted to change this culture so that the PCC saw themselves primarily as disciples enabling and facilitating mission, so in the early days I invited and persuaded mission-minded people to stand for the PCC. Initially, I gave specific ground rules of expected behaviour at PCC meetings. These are now jointly reviewed each year immediately after the APCM when new PCC members join us. Knowing the ground rules, members have stuck to them and meetings feel safe.

I also emphasised to PCC members that we were there to represent the whole church family and not solely our own agendas. PCC members are encouraged to seek the views of the church family through informal conversation.



Again, in the early days I (fairly relentlessly) introduced each agenda item by making its connection with mission. Later on we developed a clear vision together and so it became easier to keep 'drip-feeding' in how any particular issue would help facilitate our vision. Today, before making any significant decision in any area of the church's life, including the building, we ask ourselves whether or not it will help us grow as disciples and facilitate our vision. At the PCC's recent request we now give a third of each meeting over to thinking about the bigger mission picture.

All meetings are held in the church to emphasise that this is not just a 'business meeting', and begin with a short Bible study and open prayer. We try to thread prayer through the meeting and so pause to pray about difficult issues. I also encourage PCC members to pray about agenda items prior to the meeting.

We work hard to ensure all voices are heard and I will often break up the PCC to talk in twos or threes and then share their conclusions with a wider group. This is particularly helpful with difficult decisions.

My top tips for a PCC:

- To finish on time. We always finish at 9:30pm. People are willing to work hard in a short space knowing that the meeting will not go on.
- To leave space on each agenda for vision-related thinking, to dream dreams together. Once a vision is jointly owned, people will give a lot of their time and energy.
- To send out papers relating to topics which require decisions well before a meeting so that the meeting itself can focus on the key issues, enabling decisions to be made much more quickly.
- To not duck the big decisions; but equally, to allow time and space for consensus to emerge.
- To laugh a lot together.

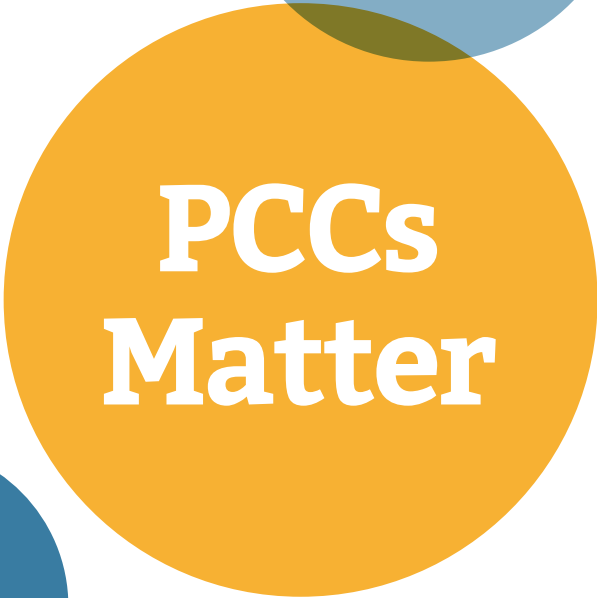
This resource is written to help such transformation happen in PCCs across the country.

Twelve dysfunctions are listed in Part 1 of this resource. Some will apply in your situation, some won't, and there will be others that aren't listed here (we had to draw the line somewhere). The sections vary in length because some are more generic issues relating to most groups, and some are very specific issues relating to PCCs.

Before we proceed, it may be helpful to identify a number of realities:

- **PCCs come in very different sizes** Some are as small as five or six, others as large as 35-40. The way a PCC functions will be partly influenced by the size of the group. For the sake of this resource I am imagining a mid-sized group of around 12-20 people, and therefore you may find it helpful to adjust things down or up accordingly.
- **Not all PCC members are 'leaders'** This, of course, depends on how you define leaders, but I think it is helpful to recognise that some on PCCs are people who neither think of themselves as leaders, nor are they thought of as such by others. It can then be hard for them to engage in some of the necessary 'leadership' work a PCC does. Handling this dynamic sensitively is part of the incumbent's role.
- **Not all PCCs function in the same way** Some operate as the group that exercises oversight of the life of the parish in co-operation with the incumbent. Some operate as a governance body delegating the more classic 'leadership' work to another group. Some, in essence, operate as a support group for the incumbent. Some operate as a major decision-making body, using the standing committee to do most of the work. This resource will try to identify the core functions of a PCC, and suggest ways to develop clarity around both what the PCC does and how it relates to other bodies.
- **Many clergy have multiple PCCs/DCCs** Multi-parish benefices are increasingly common, with some clergy having up to a dozen or more PCCs. How one operates in this scenario has to be different from a single church situation, whilst still making sense of the necessary functions a PCC/DCC performs.
- **The context impacts the 'flavour' of the PCC** Some PCCs are in deeply rural ('rural rural' as one incumbent in Carlisle recently described it to me) contexts, where numbers are small, 'professionally qualified' people are rare, and the distinction between congregation and community is minimal. Others are in the suburbs where numbers may be larger, many in the congregation have been trained to think strategically, handle finances considerably larger than the local church's budget, and are used to being 'in charge', and the majority of the parish don't even know the church exists. Traditional or progressive, Catholic or Evangelical, ecumenical or the only church in the community, inherited or emerging. Each context will shape the 'flavour' of the church and how the PCC operates.

These are some of the realities that impact PCC life. No resource can tackle every permutation or possibility, which means that some of the things referred to will work for your context, and some won't. The good news is that you know your context, your PCC, your people. Take what is helpful for them, and leave aside what isn't.

A large orange circle containing the text 'PCCs Matter' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The circle is surrounded by several other circles of various sizes and shades of blue and grey, creating a dynamic, abstract background.

PCCs Matter

PCCS MATTER

A healthy PCC?

A healthy, well-functioning PCC is a wonderful thing.

Margaret's story (name changed) demonstrates the power of an effectively functioning PCC or DCC. As the PCC met for their final time before the APCM and elections, meaning a change of membership, she recounted how people were nearly in tears at the thought of not meeting as the PCC again. They had learnt to treat one another with respect, had come to value the relationships within the group, had made some difficult but fruitful decisions over controversial issues, and had moved from functioning as a purely organisational committee to a group driven by a vibrant spiritual life.

An unhealthy, poorly functioning PCC is a dreadful thing. I probably don't need to describe it.

So what will motivate us to shift towards the former and away from the latter? There are many reasons, but they tend to be located in three areas: legal, theological, and practical.

1. Legal

The majority of Church of England churches have a PCC, and even those with a DCC are 'under' a PCC. Whether we like them or not, they are the legally constituted body that exists to fulfil certain obligations. There are, of course, a whole variety of ways one might seek to use the PCC, and a range of ways one might seek to create a healthy, enjoyable body of people, but ignoring the PCC isn't really a viable option. It is going to meet. It has to.

2. Theological

The New Testament offers us several critical insights into the nature of the Church and Christian leadership².

CHURCH AS BODY OF CHRIST

Biblically, leadership is best exercised with others, not on our own. In the New Testament, leadership derives its frame of reference from both who God is and the nature of the Church. God is Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit in community with one another. There is a relational dynamic at the heart of our understanding of God that is then reflected in our understanding of Church³. Our ecclesiology means that we recognise a church is not a disconnected group of people who happen to meet together as and when they choose. Church isn't a club to join where members can pay their dues and then choose at what level they make use of the facilities and relate to others within the club. It is a body, a body where each part is dependent on other parts to fulfil their role, so that the body can function well (1 Corinthians 12-14).



'Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.'

1 Corinthians 12:27

The body is a community of believers who acknowledge Jesus as Lord, exist to serve his purposes, commit to 'one-another' relationships, and in so doing reflect the relational dynamic at the heart of God. In this context leadership is not seen as somehow separate from the church, an individual enterprise imposed on the body. Instead, those in leadership are seen as part of the body, using their gifts to serve the people of God, to help the body be all that God wants it to be, so that it may be a blessing to the world⁴. And this leadership is plural, it is people working together as leaders in a dynamic relationship of trust and creativity where people complement one another and work towards a common goal (Ephesians 4:1-13). If we lead on our own we are in danger of denying something about not only the nature of Christian leadership, but also the nature of the church and the nature of God himself.

It is also a body where the central focus is knowledge of God, expressed in the threefold dynamic of up, in and out.

- Up to God, in personal faith and corporate worship and life.
- In to one another, expressing God's nature by being a loving community.
- Out to all around us, engaging in God's loving purposes in the world⁵.

CHURCH AS MISSIONARY ENDEAVOUR

There are certain distinctives that flow from this understanding of Church which mean we don't simply operate as an organisation, with a 'management group' committed to keeping the show on the road, or fixing the machine when it isn't working. The church is the body of Christ, an organism, with Christ as its head. Developing strategies, changing structures, sorting rotas will have a part to play, but more fundamental is growing in our knowledge of God, living out community life shaped by values and attitudes that come from our understanding of what it means to be Christ's body, and discerning our vocation as God's missionary people.

We don't engage in mission as a growth strategy for church. We engage in mission because God is a sending God, and we are a sent people (John 20:21). We don't exist for ourselves, but for others by being a blessing to the world⁶. We are caught up in the *missio dei*, and this drives our mission mindedness as God's people.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP AS SERVANTS AND STEWARDS

Our identity as the body of Christ (ecclesiology) and our understanding of ourselves as a missionary movement (missiology) impact our engagement with issues of leadership. We exercise leadership as servants and stewards.

Servant-heartedness governs our attitude as leaders who follow in the example of Christ (John 13; 17; Luke 22:24-27). We don't exercise leadership to rule over others, to get our own way (see 1 Peter 5:1-5), but to serve the purposes of God and the common good. As Steve Timmis puts it: 'Leadership is always about those for whom I have a responsibility of care.'⁷

That doesn't mean we do whatever others ask of us. Servant leadership isn't first about serving others. It is first about serving God, and through our service of God, serving others; a subtle but significant difference. If you do the former you can end up being the doormat on which people wipe their feet. If you do the latter you are a doorway into the purposes

of the King and the priorities of the kingdom. Members of the PCC are called to exercise servant leadership in order that the church might be further formed around the one who is its head, Jesus.

Theologically Christians also see leadership as stewardship. We don't own what we oversee as leaders, we are simply stewards of resources on behalf of God and others. Therefore we manage things with a kingdom perspective, neither burying our proverbial talent in the sand (hiding things away for a rainy day), nor foolishly squandering the resources God has provided (endlessly leaping from one new initiative to another without due consideration).

There are many ways we can constitute such leadership within church life, just as there are various models in the Scriptures, but in a Church of England context the PCC is one place for sharing leadership. Even if you think the PCC is best suited to deal with issues of finance, fabric and fundraising, or see it as a management group, it is still a place where shared responsibility and influence occurs. It is a group of people working together to help the church be about the work of the kingdom, and that group needs to function well in order to reflect some theological truths at the heart of a Christian understanding of leadership.

3. Practical

The third collection of reasons for motivating us to work towards a healthy PCC are practical.

- **An effective PCC** recognises that people bring different gifts, skills and experience to the task of running a church; that one person on their own simply doesn't have the necessary range of skills and gifts to do a competent job.
- **A flourishing PCC** places at the heart of church a model of Christian life and leadership that reflects something about the very gospel we believe and seek to share. It can also model the values and vision of a congregation in a way that cascades these throughout the congregational life. A dysfunctional PCC does the opposite.
- **A vibrant PCC** acknowledges that people's time matters. In broad terms there are around 12,600 parishes in the Church of England. Each PCC is meant to meet at least four times a year, but many meet more often, so let's average that at six meetings a year. Few will be smaller than eight people, many considerably larger, so let's average that at 10 and the meeting length at two hours. That means an average PCC uses 360 hours of people time over a three-year term, equivalent to 45 working days. If we scale this up to the whole of the Church of England, it means 125,000 people are involved in 1,500,000 people hours of meetings a year. That is 187,500 working days of meetings (or 513 years). That is a staggering amount of time and energy. It would be scandalous to waste so many people's time, or to expect them to commit to a regular gathering that few want to be at.
- **A healthy PCC** is a sensible way of protecting a church from the, at best, weird quirks of an incumbent, at worst, the dangerous tendencies of a manipulative or exploitative incumbent. It can also protect the church from a church member who fits either of these categories.

Driving forces

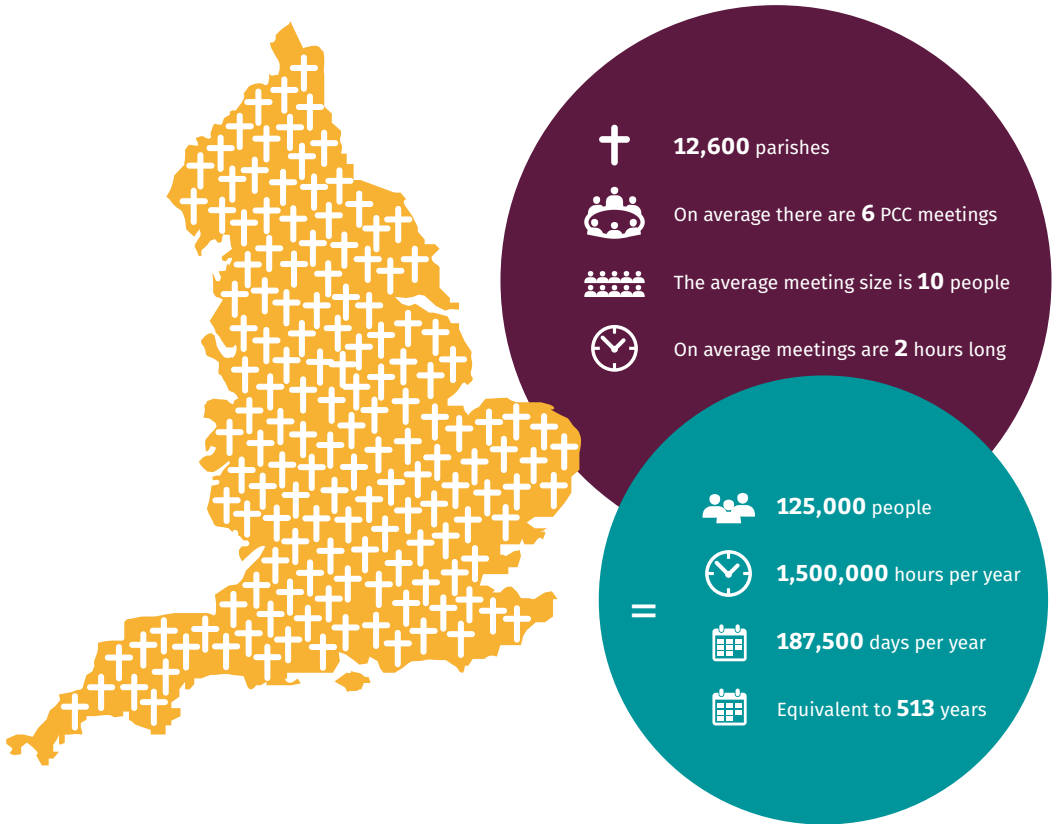
Whilst all three reasons can motivate us to shape healthy PCCs, I want to suggest the driving motivation should be theological and not practical or legal. Who God is, who we are as the Church and what God is about in his world are central to our self-understanding as God's people, and therefore central to how we understand Church. For these reasons it also needs to be central to how we understand the body the Church of England has established to oversee the life of a church. Practical and legal reasons have their place, but if we allow them to become the driving force we may well end up with an efficiently run organisation that isn't very different from any other charitable body concerned with the well-being of others.

We are the Church. We are different.

PCCs matter. They matter a lot. A good PCC can enliven the ministry and mission of Christ in a place, encourage and strengthen those in ordained roles, and act as a catalyst for change in the wider Church. A poor PCC can drain the life out of a church, discourage and debilitate those in ordained roles, and act as a roadblock to change of any sort.

So why do they sometimes not function as well as they might?

PCCs – basic statistics



Common Dysfunctions

AN OVERVIEW

COMMON DYSFUNCTIONS

AN OVERVIEW

PCCs are rarely dysfunctional in creative ways. They tend to follow common patterns of dysfunction, and the good news is that these are fairly easy to identify. If you'd like to identify where your PCC isn't working as well as it might, simply ask each member to write down their answers to these questions:

- In a sentence, why do you think the PCC exists?
- What do you least enjoy about PCC meetings?
- What do you find most frustrating in the ways we operate?
- If you could change one thing to improve the PCC what would it be?

Sharing the answers can lead to illuminating conversations (see 'Part 2 Six sessions for a PCC' for some ideas about how to do this), and provide a helpful way to clarify where your particular PCC may need to do some work.

Experience suggests that the issues are likely to connect with one or more of 12 common dysfunctions. In this chapter I will give a brief overview of each of them, and the following chapters look at ideas for addressing them.

1. LACK OF CLARITY ABOUT PURPOSE

Any group exists for a reason. Over time it is common for the reason the group exists to be forgotten, get watered down, or even be ignored. If the purpose is unclear then people's expectations will differ and frustrations are likely to ensue. Clarity of purpose is foundational to any group functioning well. However, there may be a deeper level at which the issue of purpose affects PCCs.

There may be a clear purpose, but it may not be a sufficient or comprehensive enough purpose. For example, some see the purpose of a PCC as a purely legal body concerned with the fabric and finance of the church. For others the purpose is defined by history, what the PCC has always done, subtly passed down from one generation of the PCC to the next. Clear, maybe; helpful, maybe not.

People's perception of the purpose of any group affects the way they engage with the group. This then creates a group 'culture' (the way things are done round here) that then permeates the life of the group. Often the purpose of a PCC is unclear, leaving people to have their own views on what it is and how they should behave.

2. CONFUSION OVER IDENTITY

When members of a PCC are unclear about its identity it will lead to further frustrations. Is it a committee, a management group, a leadership team, an advisory body, a support group for the incumbent? The likelihood is people will join the PCC with a diversity of ideas about what it is, and if this confusion isn't sorted it will cause further frustrations as people's expectations aren't met.

One person thinks of the PCC as a leadership team, and then struggles to understand why there is no synergy or team spirit. Another thinks of it as a management group and can't understand why time is spent on reading the Bible together. Another thinks of it as a support group for the incumbent, and feels it is inappropriate to disagree with anything s/he says. Confusion over what it is will exacerbate confusion over how it operates.

3. SIDESTEPPING

Healthy PCC functioning is also undermined when, rather than tackle the dysfunction within the PCC, another group is set up to try and sidestep the PCC and get on with the work that needs to be done. Two things flow from this.

Firstly, there is often a lack of clarity about how the new body relates to the PCC and the legal structures of an Anglican church.

Secondly, the drain of a dysfunctional PCC continues to exert its influence over the life of the church and its leaders. One parish priest told me how the whole community, not just those in the church but those in the village as well, knew when the PCC meeting was coming up and corporately held their breath for the fall-out that would follow from the meeting. What goes on in a PCC meeting doesn't just affect those in the meeting. It has ramifications that ripple out through those close to the members of the PCC (talk to clergy spouses about the post-PCC-meeting syndrome in the vicarage), through the church itself and into the wider community. I think it also ripples out into the culture of the wider Church as a whole, which is why when PCCs are mentioned in any wider gathering there is a mixture of internal groans, eye rolling and caustic humour.

Sidestepping doesn't deal with the issues that need working on within the PCC. There may be good reasons to establish other leadership bodies, but it is still important to give time to creating a healthy PCC.

4. TRICKY GROUP DYNAMICS

A PCC is first and foremost a group of people. It isn't a business meeting of disembodied entities directed by an agenda. Human beings meet, and whenever human beings gather in a group it helps to be aware of simple group dynamics and how to help them work. Why is it that perfectly reasonable people behave 'out of character' in a group setting? Why is it that small, relatively unimportant decisions unexpectedly become massive issues of contention? Why is it that normally able and articulate people act in passive aggressive ways? Why is it that a group concurs with a decision that half of them intuitively know is a poor decision? Group dynamics is part of the answer.

Leadership of any sort is a relationally oriented process. Leadership of a PCC requires an understanding of people and how they work in groups, and a degree of emotional intelligence – the ability to read people and pick up what is going on. In a healthy PCC, these things aren't just present in the 'chair', but are also fostered within the members.

5. POOR ORGANISATION

Preparing for a meeting takes time and effort. Practical details make a difference. Membership of the group, induction, venue, timing and frequency, paperwork, and refreshments are all things that need to be done before a group meets. When they aren't done well, a meeting is far less likely to run well.

Of course they take time, but actually most of them don't take that long, and once you get into the pattern of doing them they are quite easy to maintain. You would only bother to do them, though, if you really do believe that PCCs matter.

6. POOR PROCESSES

Within a meeting there are various processes that need to be managed well. Chairing the meeting, managing group dynamics, thinking creatively, facilitating robust discussions, handling conflict, making decisions, taking minutes (or action notes) and so on. When done well, these oil the flow of a meeting, enabling everyone to give of their best.

It is very easy for a group to get stuck in one way of doing most of these things, but there are a variety of approaches available that can breathe life and dynamism into a group that gathers on a regular basis over time.

7. NO FOLLOW-THROUGH

Even a great meeting is scuppered by lack of follow-through. If a decision isn't implemented, people become disillusioned because they see that all their hard work in coming to a great decision isn't of any value and nothing comes of it. Perhaps even worse is a decision that is agreed, and when the PCC re-gather a month later the decision has been changed and implemented without reference to the group.

I know of someone who joined a PCC with masses to offer, but after only a year they had resigned. Their reason? Nothing ever got done. It was a talking shop, and many of the conversations were stimulating, but in the end it made no difference because either decisions were never made, or they weren't followed through.

8. INAPPROPRIATE MEMBERSHIP

You may have people on the PCC who are square pegs in round holes. They may not have the necessary abilities to function well as part of a co-operative group of people; they may have a personal agenda that prevents them from accepting anyone else's point of view; they may have insecurities that manifest in bullying or manipulative behaviour. There is an interesting dynamic with bodies like the PCC that means they can attract an unusually high number of people with significant personal baggage.

Ignoring this reality will only make the situation worse. A friend of mine had only been in post a few weeks as a first-time incumbent when the PCC met. He was somewhat shocked when at one point an individual who had been on the PCC for many years stood and slammed the table, making it clear that they had better go with his suggestion or he would resign. My friend found himself firmly but gently saying that whatever else had gone on in previous years on the PCC, such behaviour was no longer acceptable, and that they would jointly come to a decision on the matter. Afterwards one after another of the PCC members thanked him for standing up to the

man. For years he had made such outbursts, tyrannising the PCC to do what he wanted. They all knew it was hampering them as a group, but no one had dared mention it or do anything about it. Knowing when and how to challenge unacceptable behaviour or to help someone off the PCC and into a more appropriate role are perhaps some of the most difficult leadership tasks. But if they need to be done, they need to be done.

9. RELATIONAL DIFFICULTIES

Groups work well when they are built on trust. If trust doesn't exist, people expend an enormous amount of energy 'guarding' themselves, which commonly involves a number of strategies: staying quiet, developing factions, dominating, absenting themselves from meetings, and so on.

The reality is that every member of a PCC brings with them their own baggage. Some are aware of this, some won't be. Alongside this, we also bring our sinful tendencies to want our own way, to push for our own preferences, to think about ourselves (even if we carefully disguise it under the well-worn phrase 'many people say...').

Every group has its relational difficulties. Some are frankly intractable, and only through a change of the membership of the group can they be resolved. Most are resolvable, but without trust it is very hard. Healthy PCCs are built on trust, and because of that they can have healthy conflict, healthy disagreement.

10. POOR COMMUNICATION

Aspects of this are part of the organisation and processes sections above, but it warrants a section of its own because it is such a common problem. There are two types of communication for a PCC:

- **Internal** This isn't only the formal communication before and after meetings (meeting times, agendas, action notes) but also the informal communication between meetings.
- **External** This is the way the PCC communicates with the wider church and other external bodies generally (diocese, patrons and so on), and with any other key leadership groups specifically.

The opportunity for miscommunication is always present, but the more significant issue is probably a lack of communication. Those at the centre of things tend to think they have communicated well, but those on the periphery tend to find they know less than they would like to know.

11. INADEQUATE TRAINING

It may also be true that a good number of clergy haven't been equipped to lead a PCC well. It certainly wasn't part of my training at theological college, and it wasn't until some years later that I went on a training day that got me thinking about how to run good meetings.

This can be exacerbated if the model of PCC that you experienced in your curacy wasn't particularly healthy. One friend found the PCC interminably boring and yet ended up believing that was just the way it had to be, so when he became an incumbent the first thing he wanted to do was minimise the number of PCC meetings to its legal requirement and set up another body to share leadership with him. There may be additional factors at work here. Even those who

have received great training in their previous career in running effective meetings may not have been helped to think theologically or Christianly about what is the difference between a meeting in their previous environment and a meeting of the PCC. If they unthinkingly adopt the same approach, they may find themselves undermining some core principles that make a Christian meeting distinctive.

12. A 'DEFENDED' VICAR

This is tricky to write about. A vicar I talked with reflected that she entered the role of incumbent with many good things to offer, but quite 'defended' as a leader. She was using terminology from Simon Walker's trilogy of books on leadership which explore the theme of the 'undefended leader'⁸. The defended leader is the one who keeps things 'back stage' that s/he doesn't want others to know about or see. But these things inevitably seep through to the front stage where their leadership is on public view. For example, criticise them in a PCC meeting and they respond with sulky behaviour or defensive explanations or an aggressive counter-attack.

The undefended leader is one who has managed to integrate the front and back stage in such a way that they are able to be vulnerable, handle criticism maturely, and deal well with pressures that come with their role. It isn't quite as simple as that, but the concept of the undefended or defended leader is a helpful way of reflecting on issues of power and trust in leadership.

A very 'defended' vicar will not be easy to work with. They are likely to manipulate the PCC or be easily manipulated by it. They are less likely to create a calm and conducive environment for collaboration, to be a 'non-anxious presence'.

Inevitably every vicar has their issues, their baggage, but if they aren't aware of it, aren't submitting it to the transforming work of the Spirit, aren't emotionally savvy enough to understand its impact on others, then there is increased likelihood it will have a negative impact.

Leading a PCC

Part of leadership is 'defining reality', having the courage to help people see what is actually going on in any given situation. Assessing where things are on a PCC can be a helpful way to begin the process of working out how to improve things. In Part 3 (downloadable from the CPAS website) you will find a questionnaire based on eleven of these common dysfunctions (number 12 is left off because if this is the issue it is unlikely to be helpful for you to be told about it through a questionnaire). It also enables people to identify other ones that may not be included in this list. Challenging as the results might be, creating an environment where it is possible for people to articulate their thoughts and feelings can create the necessary insight and dissatisfaction to make change possible.

Incumbents perceive their role in a variety of ways, partly influenced by theological tradition, partly experience, partly gifts, skills and passions. Yet every incumbent is de facto chair of the PCC, and has the opportunity to shape the life of the PCC for good and bad. This is an investment worth making, because a healthy PCC will help the church to be healthy, and a healthy church is going to be about God's mission in his world.

Inevitably some incumbents will feel better equipped for the work of oversight of the PCC than others. When I was first ordained, aged 24 and very inexperienced, I wouldn't have had much of a

clue how to lead a PCC. Today, decades later, I have learnt a thing or two about leading groups of people that mean I feel better equipped for such a role. However, none of us are omniscient, and ideally we will work with others, who bring gifts and skills we may not have, to shape the life of the PCC.

Engaging the gifts, skills and passions of others is part of the enabling role of leadership. However this does not remove the need for the incumbent to oversee the work of the PCC, providing the energy to make it the very best group it can be, and on occasions, when there aren't initially people around with the right skills, s/he may simply have to do what is required of them at that time, even though it may not play to their strengths or passions. That is the nature of servant leadership. We cannot limit ourselves to only doing what we do best, nice as that would be. Instead, we live by a different model, the one that shows us that core to a Christian approach to leadership is recognition that there are times where we do what is required, whether or not we are particularly good at it, or even want to do it.

Before looking at the suggestions in the following chapters for addressing each of the common dysfunctions, take a few minutes to reflect on the following questions:

- As you reflect on the common dysfunctions outlined here, which would you hazard a guess are the ones that most likely need addressing in your PCC(s) or DCC(s)?
- What leadership functions need to be exercised to address these issues?
- As you consider those on your PCC, what are the gifts, skills and experience that could be utilised to help the PCC function well? What about those in the wider life of the congregation or parish?
- What are the gifts, skills and experience you bring?
- What is the level of your motivation for creating a great PCC? What would help increase your motivation?

As you reflect on your answers to these questions, you may like to write a prayer expressing your hopes and longings for the PCC, and integrate it into your prayer life over the coming months. Or begin praying for the members of your PCC in a new way. I know one clergy person who exercises by swimming, and as he swims up and down the pool, he prays for each of the members of his PCCs one length at a time. What might the equivalent be for you?

1

Common Dysfunction

LACK OF CLARITY
ABOUT PURPOSE

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

LACK OF CLARITY ABOUT PURPOSE

Why do PCCs exist? What is their purpose? Lack of clarity around purpose leaves a PCC exposed either to the particular ideas of any dominant individual, or to a paralysing confusion of expectations. Neither is helpful. Clarifying the purpose of the PCC helps people take part with a common understanding.

PCCs aren't able to randomly decide why they exist. There are certain guidelines that shape the existence of PCCs, and a number of dioceses have documents that outline their history and background.

Here is a one from Hereford Diocese's guide to PCCs⁹:

Some history

In the long history of the Church of England, the Parochial Church Council is a relatively recent invention. Until the early years of the 20th century the administration and finances of a parish were the legal responsibility of the incumbent and the churchwardens. The members of congregations had little say in the running of the church except in electing the churchwardens. Parochial Church Councils were first given legal status in 1919. Since then a number of acts have defined and refined the composition, functions and rights and responsibilities of the PCC.

Currently the rules governing the PCC are set out in the *Church Representation Rules (CRR) 2011* (ISBN 0-715-1104-11) which are part of the Synodical Government Measure 1969.

Status of the PCC

The PCC is a corporate body, a separate legal entity, and is therefore separate from the members of the PCC. For that reason, changes in the membership of the PCC should not result in any changes to contracts entered into by previous members because it is the PCC, as a legal entity in its own right, which has entered into contracts. Another consequence is that individual PCC members should not become personally responsible for the liabilities of the PCC.

The PCC is a charity by virtue of its objectives, which are basically the advancement of religion and the making of provision for public worship, and the members of the PCC are the trustees of the charity.



PCCs are not, at present, required to register with the Charity Commission unless their income exceeds £100,000, as they are classified as excepted charities by virtue of the Charities (Exception from Registration) Regulations 1996. The regulations only remove the requirement to register (and therefore submit accounts and returns to the Charity Commission) but PCCs must comply with all other aspects of charity law.

Rights and duties of the PCC

The PCC has responsibility for a whole range of things including the care, maintenance and insurance of the church and its contents and the care and maintenance of the churchyard, responsibility for the conduct of the financial affairs of the parish, rights regarding women priests, rights in relation to church appointments, functions in relation to church services and so on.

It largely discharges its responsibility for the financial affairs of the parish by the appointment of a treasurer, but this does not absolve it of ultimate responsibility, and for that reason the PCC should require the treasurer to make regular reports on the financial position to PCC meetings.

The Charities Act 1993 and CRRs charge the trustees with the following specific duties in relation to finances:

- The keeping of proper accounting records. This means records that show from day to day amounts received and expended, including the matters to which they relate, and a record of assets and liabilities. The records should be sufficient to show the financial position of the PCC at any time.
- The preparation of annual financial statements and an annual report that complies with the CRRs and the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP).
- Appointment of an independent examiner or auditor and making arrangements for the examination or audit to be carried out.
- Presenting the annual report, financial statements and independent examiner's or auditor's report to the APCM, and displaying those before and after the meeting.
- As the annual report and financial statements are the responsibility of the PCC, the CRRs require them to be approved by the PCC and signed by the chair and one other PCC member before presentation to the APCM.

Another area of responsibility is that of notifying the Data Protection Commissioner where necessary, in respect of data held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Functions of the PCC

The Synodical Government Measure 1969 states: 'It shall be the duty of the incumbent and the Parochial Church Council to consult together on matters of general concern and importance in the parish.' Under the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 the PCC has the following functions:

- Co-operation with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.
- The consideration and discussion of matters concerning the Church of England or any other matters of religious or public interest, but not the declaration of the doctrine of the Church on any question.
- Making known and putting into effect any provisions made by the diocesan synod or the deanery synod, but without prejudice to the powers of the council on any particular matter.
- Giving advice to the diocesan synod and the deanery synod on any matter referred to the council.
- Raising such matters as the council consider appropriate with the diocesan synod or deanery synod.

The incumbent and the PCC each have their own particular rights and responsibilities in the life of the church, but the important theme here is partnership and co-operation.

More specifically, the PCC is responsible for the maintenance of the church buildings and churchyard, and, with the incumbent, for deciding how the church's money is to be spent. The PCC is formally the employer of any paid workers. The PCC has the right to be consulted about major changes to the forms of worship used in the parish and about the appointment of a new incumbent. It is also consulted about any pastoral scheme affecting the parish.

This is a helpful document, and out of it we can begin to summarise the purpose of a PCC.

1. IT EXISTS TO ENABLE THE CHURCH TO PLAY ITS PART IN GOD'S MISSION TO HIS WORLD

This often surprises people. They think the PCC is about looking after the fabric of the church, or keeping the books. But the first stated purpose is about mission, and suggests a model of co-operation between the minister and the PCC. This is about helping a church fulfil its purpose, to keep before a church why it exists. Just as PCCs can easily lose their sense of purpose, so too can churches. On behalf of the church a PCC constantly grapples with 'why does this church exist?' and 'where is God leading us at this time as we seek to fulfil Christ's mission and ministry in this area?'

2. IT EXISTS TO CO-OPERATE WITH THE MINISTER IN SHARING LEADERSHIP

Again, this often surprises people. Sometimes people's experience of a PCC has led them to think they exist to frustrate everything the minister wants to do. Others' experience suggests it exists to rubber-stamp whatever the minister wants to do. But it exists to co-operate with the minister, to work alongside in sharing responsibility for discerning how it will enable the church to be about God's mission and ministry in that place. The minister isn't the head of the church, neither is any other member of the PCC. Jesus is the head of his church, and the minister and PCC together are called to take their lead from Jesus. Jesus sets the agenda for his people, and the PCC and minister are tasked with the process of discerning what this might be at this time in the life of a church, and how it might be lived out. However, the incumbent also has some unique responsibilities in the life of the church, including the 'cure of souls in this parish'¹⁰, which mean there is a 'buck stops here' element to the incumbent's role.

Managing the relationship between the rights and responsibilities of the priest and PCC is not always easy, but considerable time and thought has gone into the 'rules' that exist to help the church do its work more effectively. It is possible for either the priest or the PCC to overreach their lawful authority, and for that reason it helps if both know and understand the rules as laid down¹¹.

3. IT EXISTS TO ENSURE LEGAL COMPLIANCE WITH CHARITY LAW AND ECCLESIASTICAL LAW, IN PARTICULAR IN THE AREAS OF SAFEGUARDING, FINANCE, EMPLOYMENT, AND APPOINTMENTS

Many PCC members may not realise they are trustees of a charity and therefore under obligation to fulfil charity law with due care to governance guidelines. Whilst this should not be seen as overly burdensome, it is important that PCC members understand their duty of care.

4. IT EXISTS TO CARE FOR THE BUILDINGS AND CHURCHYARD SO THAT THEY MAY BE BEST SUITED FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY AND MISSION

This probably won't come as a surprise. Understandably in many contexts this takes a considerable amount of time and energy. But it is important it doesn't become the dominant item on the agenda, because allowing this to happen will quickly skew the understood purpose of the group.

5. IT EXISTS TO BE A CHANNEL OF CONSULTATION WITHIN THE WIDER CHURCH THROUGH ITS SYNODICAL STRUCTURES ON MATTERS THAT AFFECT THE CHURCH LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY

These structures were put in place to ensure a means by which the Church of England could 'talk' about important matters, enabling local churches to have a voice in wider Church issues, and decisions of the wider Church to be permeated down through the life of local churches. A good example of this would be the extraordinary reception of the *Mission-Shaped Church* report, read and explored by many PCCs, leading to the birth of numerous fresh expressions of church over a ten-year period.

In summary

Clarity of purpose is needed for any group to function well. Without it PCCs can become single agenda groups, or be at the mercy of the most powerful person (which doesn't necessarily mean the loudest person), or be cauldrons of intense frustration as people's expectations aren't met.

Part 2 of this resource offers a way of helping a PCC to come to clarity of purpose. Generally this is best done not by imposing it on the group, but working with the group to help them work out how to articulate their purpose. Most of this is actually given through the various legal documents relating to PCCs, but there will be local ways of expressing this.

Once discerned it is equally important it is maintained. This is the job of the incumbent and vice-chair of the PCC. Here are a few ideas:

- Sharpen the purpose into a few well-worded sentences or bullet points (see below for examples) and design your agenda so they always appear as part of its layout (example agendas are included in Part 3).
- Refer to the purpose during the meeting, explaining how a particular discussion links in with one of the reasons the PCC exists.
- Remind the wider church of the purpose of the PCC, especially leading up to the APCM, so that prospective members are clear about the role of the group.
- Each year after the APCM when new people are joining go through a creative process of reconnecting with the purpose as a group.
- Ensure that you take time with new people to talk through the background, history and purpose of the PCC.
- Use the purpose to shape the prayers of intercessions on the Sunday before the PCC meets.
- Ensure that the purpose is clearly visible on any paperwork related to people joining the PCC.
- Have a section on the church website explaining the PCC and its purpose.

Below are two examples of how a PCC might sum up its purpose. They are deliberately quite different in feel. It will be up to each PCC to decide how they can best capture their reason for existence.

EXAMPLE 1

The PCC exists to share leadership of the parish with the minister so that we may all:

- Play our part in God's mission and ministry in this place.
- Steward our buildings and churchyard for the furtherance of God's kingdom.
- Conduct ourselves in ways which fulfil best practice in safeguarding, finance and employment.
- Contribute to the wider life of the Church of England.

EXAMPLE 2

The PCC is a group of people who, with the vicar, oversee the life of the church to ensure we are focused on what Jesus wants us to do. We aim to seek God’s will, work well together, reflect our values and take action for the future.



2

Common Dysfunction

CONFUSION
OVER IDENTITY

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

CONFUSION OVER IDENTITY

What is the PCC? This question is intimately linked with the previous one about purpose (why it exists). Together they form the base for how a PCC operates. Two legal realities initially shape our thinking.

A. IT IS THE EXECUTIVE BODY OF A CHURCH OF ENGLAND PARISH

The PCC is an ecclesiastical entity, defined as the executive body of a Church of England parish. An executive body exists to ensure a parish carries out its duties, and the PCC Measure lists what those duties are. So the PCC has a part to play in the leadership, management and administration of a parish. There is much debate about the differences between these three things, but here we simply need to emphasise that a PCC is the body to which a Bishop could turn and ask why certain things haven't been done. The expectation is that it will carry out certain duties as defined in ecclesiastical law (and charity law, see below).

B. IT IS A BODY OF TRUSTEES FOR A CHARITY

The PCC is also a legal entity, trustees of a charity. In a leaflet produced by the Archbishops' Council (*Trusteeship, An Introduction for PCC Members*)¹² it says:

'The fact that PCC members are also charity trustees should be seen positively. Trusteeship recognises that we have accepted a particular responsibility and are accountable for this. If we do this diligently and act lawfully, we have nothing to fear. Along with this responsibility comes the authority and power to act.'

As trustees there are certain legal responsibilities and also guidelines for best practice in terms of governance.

Seven marks of good governance

An effective PCC:

1. Is clear about its purposes, mission and values, and uses them to direct all aspects of its work.
2. Has adopted structures, policies and procedures that enable it to achieve its mission and aims and meet its objectives efficiently.



3. Sees sound governance as an important part of its stewardship. It has appropriate procedures in place.
4. Manages and uses its resources (including finance, skills, knowledge, experience and assets) so as to achieve its potential. It plans and budgets effectively, including periodic review.
5. Views accountability and transparency as key values, and recognises that it is accountable to wider constituents. It communicates effectively, explaining its activities and decisions in an open and transparent way whilst maintaining confidentiality where appropriate.
6. Is flexible enough to adapt to change appropriately. Avoiding complacency, the effective PCC will want to increase its effectiveness in meeting its core object of promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church.
7. Acts with integrity, and in accordance with its values.

Thus a PCC can be defined as an 'ecclesiastical' and 'legal' entity. There is also a third part to its 'identity'.

C. IT IS A PAROCHIAL CHURCH 'COUNCIL'

Whilst seemingly a fairly innocent part of the name, the word 'council' has some significant implications. An online dictionary defines council in the following ways:

- An advisory, deliberative, or legislative body of people formally constituted and meeting regularly.
- A body of people elected to manage the affairs of a city, county, or other municipal district.

This is a body that is formally constituted and has an elected membership. These two things mean it is not self-determining (it doesn't decide what it does but has a formal constitution that directs its activities) or self-selecting (people are elected, not selected, onto the council). The latter is one of the strengths and challenges of a PCC.

It is a strength, because like all elected bodies, it ensures there is the possibility of representation and appropriate safeguards against individual take-over bids. It is a challenge, because it is possible for people without the right abilities or understanding to be voted onto the PCC (we'll address this below).

So how does an understanding of a PCC's identity as a council relate to how it functions?

Council versus team

Some talk of the PCC as the leadership team of the church. Others think of it as a fabric and finance committee. Others will think of it as a management group. Some will use words like team, council, and committee fairly loosely, even interchangeably. Others will use these words with a tight definition and related expectations.

The terms are important because they shape people's expectations of the body they are a part of, which we see through the degree of 'judgement' associated with these words. So, mention 'committee' or 'council' and people tend to groan; mention 'team' and people tend to be a bit more excited. Implication? Teams are better than committees or councils. I want to argue that isn't the case.

The generic word for all these bodies is groups. They are groups of people who meet for particular reasons. Different types of group will best fulfil different needs. What we need is the right type of group for the particular purpose we are seeking to achieve. Teams are great, but they require considerable commitment and energy in order for them to function well. Not everything requires a team, indeed many things are better served by alternative groups of people like a committee or a council. A well-run committee can be an excellent body, as can a well-run council. A decision to form a team should be made in response to particular objectives or tasks in which teams represent the most appropriate organisational response.

Admittedly I am defining a leadership team here in quite a specific way:

A small number
of interdependent people
with complementary abilities
who choose to commit
to a common purpose
in order to achieve exceptional results
for the glory of God.

So where does this leave the PCC?

We've already established it is a council, legally constituted, with elected members. It differs from the technical definition of a leadership team in a number of ways:

- **Size** A leadership team normally works best with around 6-8 members. It can be smaller, and it can be a bit larger, but not much bigger. Many PCCs are considerably larger than 10 people, some even stretching to 30-35 people (the largest I've heard of so far is 40). This simply means they cannot function as effective leadership teams (as defined). It doesn't, though, mean they are not involved in leadership.
- **Membership** PCC members are elected, not selected, whereas generally you would select team members, not elect them. A PCC will also often have a number of ex officio members, adding to the complexity of the mix. With a team you can select people to complement one another, to create that vital synergy that makes teams so helpful. Whilst this might be possible with a PCC, it can't be guaranteed because ultimately the congregation will decide through a process of nomination and election.

- **Existence** Leadership teams may be formed and disbanded in churches. For example, in one church a Ministry Leadership Team was formed as part of a diocesan initiative to encourage collaborative leadership. When a new incumbent arrived, he wasn't so sure about the existence of the MLT and within a few months, in consultation with the MLT, it was disbanded. He could not have done the same with the PCC. It exists as a legal necessity and will continue to do so until such time as ecclesiastical law agrees a change.

So against this definition, it is probably unhelpful to call the PCC a leadership team; it is a formally constituted council, the executive body of a parish, and a body of trustees for a charity. This is its identity. I say probably, because there may be some contexts where using the language of leadership team may be entirely appropriate. If this is done, the vital thing is to be clear what one means by that word 'team'.

It may also help to recognise that team-like behaviours are part of any healthy PCC: care for one another, sufficient levels of trust and accountability, a desire to work well together, a commitment to a common purpose, good communication and a respect for others' views will all be helpful.

Whether you call it a leadership team or not, it is clear that the PCC is a leadership body within a parish. It exercises influence over the life of the parish in a number of ways. So whilst technically it may not be a leadership team, it is a leadership body, or part of the leadership of a church. How each church articulates this will depend on their overall leadership structure, but the key is to be clear. Words matter. If the purpose summarises why it exists, the identity summarises what it is. Calling it the executive body of the Church of England, a trustee body for a charity and a council for the parish may not be the most helpful way forward. Here are a couple of alternative ways of trying to express this. Again, it will be up to each church to find words that work for them.

EXAMPLE 1

The PCC is a group of elected people who, with the vicar, oversee (aspects of) the life of the church.

EXAMPLE 2

The PCC is a council of people legally responsible for the life of the church.

EXAMPLE 3

The PCC is an elected body who serve the church as:

- Members of the group responsible for the oversight of the church's life.
- Trustees of the charity responsible for safeguarding, finances and employment.

However we end up capturing its identity it helps to be wise about the way it operates.

For example:

- A council needs to function well as a group, and for it to do this it helps to take into account the task, individual and group needs. (We will explore these later in the section on tricky group dynamics.)
- How people are encouraged onto the PCC. Whilst ‘fixing’ the council so that they are a bunch of ‘yes’ people isn’t good, it is equally poor practice to not provide guidelines for those responsible for electing future members. Guidelines help to ensure those thinking about joining have real clarity about what they are joining and what will be expected of them.
- It’s possible to be creative about the way the PCC fulfils its duties. There are churches that only have four PCC meetings a year at which major decisions are made because the PCC has delegated its authority to smaller bodies (which might include other committees, a staff team, an MLT, or an eldership), resourced by the standing committee. These bodies know the parameters of their authority and report to the PCC on a regular basis.

The vital thing in all of this is that the PCC is clear about its identity: what it is, and what it isn’t.

Purpose and identity, a summary

Perhaps a way of summarising the purpose and identity of a PCC is to reflect on some key words that influence how PCCs operate.

CHRISTIAN

I know this can’t always be assumed. There are parishes where good people with a heart for the community serve on the PCC without themselves yet being disciples of Jesus Christ. But even if this is the case, it is important to hold onto the fact that this is a group of people tasked with serving a church. A PCC is a Christian group, and therefore its first priority is to follow Jesus, to seek God’s will for those for whom they have a responsibility.

This means that the way it meets will be influenced by those things that have guided God’s people throughout Church history; the Scriptures, prayer, dependence on and openness to the Holy Spirit, the wider Church (both global and historical). It means the PCC acknowledges Jesus as the head of his Church, and that its understanding of leadership is shaped by the servant-heart-edness that characterised Jesus. It means kingdom purposes direct its thinking about the life of the people of God and how a church serves the wider community. It also means kingdom values influence how it acts as a group.

EXECUTIVE BODY

This isn’t purely a social group. A PCC exists to conduct some business, to take action that will fulfil the reason for its existence, to serve the church and parish. There is work to be done, decisions to be made, accountability to be maintained.

MEETING

There is no point in having a meeting unless there is something beneficial that comes out of the meeting that can't be achieved in any better way. Sadly many people have poor experiences of meetings and therefore think of them as a waste of time. And poor meetings are a waste of time, but good meetings are extraordinarily productive ways of people spending their time. When people work well together the quality of what is achieved is greatly enhanced, and time is actually saved.

These three things can be captured in a sentence used to remind people about the way the purpose and identity shape any gathering of the PCC: 'In this meeting we aim to fulfil our responsibilities by seeking God's direction, working well together, taking action for the future and reflecting our values.'

3

Common Dysfunction

SIDESTEPPING

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

SIDESTEPPING

As mentioned earlier, healthy PCC functioning is also undermined when, rather than tackle the dysfunction within the PCC, another group is set up to try and sidestep the PCC and get on with the work that needs to be done. Two things flow from this.

Firstly, there is often a lack of clarity about how the new body relates to the PCC and the legal structures of the Church of England.

Secondly, the drain of a dysfunctional PCC continues to exert its influence over the life of the church and its leaders.

Sidestepping doesn't deal with the issues that need working on within the PCC. There may be good reasons to establish other leadership bodies, but it is still important to give time to creating a healthy PCC and clarifying the leadership structures within a church.

An unhealthy PCC

It is possible for an incumbent to 'sidestep' the PCC to get things done. Whilst this sometimes works as a short-term strategy, and may even be needed as such, it is not a long-term strategy for the healthy functioning of leadership structures within a church. If the PCC isn't functioning well, it is important to address this. There is no single way to do this. The right approach will depend on the situation, but ignoring the issue, or trying to sidestep it, is rarely the best choice.

There are broadly three levels of generic PCC dysfunction:

- **Simple** These are issues that can be worked through quite quickly and are likely to be administrative or organisational in nature. For example, poor organisation of a meeting can be addressed relatively quickly and easily.
- **Complex** These are issues that require time and energy, but one can generally see a way through if time is taken to diagnose them carefully.
- **Toxic** I was struggling with what word to use here, but I think toxic is the right one. Occasionally there are PCCs where things are so bad that it is a toxic environment. There are some PCCs where clergy person after clergy person has been chewed up and destroyed, where a stranglehold exists on the life of the church, where power seems to have taken on an almost demonic dimension.

How do we approach each of these?

A. SIMPLE

These issues can normally be identified relatively quickly using a number of simple methods.

- **Observation** Often a new PCC member or new incumbent simply observes some things that, if changed, would quickly make a difference. One vicar realised after her first PCC meeting in a new parish that three things would quickly help the PCC to function

better. She introduced refreshments, including nice food at the start, sought to inject fun into every aspect of the meeting, and determined to finish on time. Simple and yet transformative.

- **Assessment** Another way of gaining insight into simple issues is to use a questionnaire¹³ to allow members of the PCC to assess how they think it could be improved. These can be done on paper, or increasingly these days using an online free survey tool like www.surveymonkey.com.
- **Review** A review of each meeting at the end of any PCC gathering will ensure there is a continuous process for picking up small ways to improve the PCC.

These three things may be regularly done as part of our commitment to constantly improve how we operate.

GRAHAM'S STORY of changing the culture of an Anglo-Catholic PCC

On arriving at a two-church benefice in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, Father Graham explains how he decided to work on the culture of the PCC by introducing some changes:

- I allowed some fairly major decisions to be made by the PCC without clergy influence, in order to encourage the sense of ownership of the lay members and counter a culture of 'Father-knows-best' (clericalism). It was quite a risky thing to do, but has been effective.
- I increased the use of small group discussion on the principle that, like coaching children's football, the more people are able to be involved, the faster they develop their skills and the more enthusiastic they are about participating.
- I changed the model of clergy involvement when we had two PCCs (before the two parishes became one). We met together in the same venue, with the vice-chair leading each meeting. I moved between the meetings as a kind of 'consultant'. This was also effective in creating greater independence and ownership and was an idea borrowed from a neighbouring parish.
- I worked hard on careful agenda planning to make sure that the important business was near the beginning, and that longer and more contentious items were broken up by a few quick wins.
- I ensured material was circulated in advance – especially reports, proposals, and so on – so that nothing was a surprise on the night (never good for informed decision-making) and so that it was possible to concentrate on key issues.



B. COMPLEX

These are issues which require greater effort to understand and work out a way forward. For example, when reading through two years of PCC minutes, a consultant working with a church discovered that they never made decisions. On exploring further why this might be, it transpired there was a person on the PCC who saw it as their role to strongly disagree with any decision the vicar proposed, so the vicar had stopped leading the PCC to make any decisions. They only talked about things. Decisions were made outside the meeting, which deeply frustrated others on the PCC.

Another example of a complex issue is where two or three people on the PCC have a power base which they use to 'persuade' the PCC in certain directions. Power bases often include threats to withdraw finance or gifts (for example, the treasurer who knows they are the only one in the congregation competent to do the accounts), emotional pleas to honour past priorities (for example, the family who have been part of the church for many generations and remind others that the pews were given in memory of one of their relatives), aspects of bullying behaviour (for example, the group who shun anyone who dares to speak against their preferences whenever they meet them outside of the meetings), and manipulative tendencies (for example, the withholding of certain information so people don't have a full picture).

Tackling these sorts of complex issues requires skill, patience and wisdom. The following questions may help with the process of diagnosis and identifying a way forward:

What is the story so far? Think long term. It is not unusual for the roots of an issue to go back many generations. Has the PCC ever functioned well? If so, when and what was it like? When did things go wrong? Why was that? If not, why might that be the case? Talking to as many people as possible to get as wide a perspective as possible is normally a help at this point.

Who are the stakeholders? Stakeholders are those who in their mind will benefit or not benefit from change. The words 'in their mind' are important. It isn't what we think that matters at this point, it is what they think, however irrational this might appear to us. For example, it is not unusual for a new incumbent to find some on the PCC who are delighted about their arrival because they believe the new vicar will bring about much-needed change. What is at stake here is their perception of the change that needs to happen. They may or may not be accurate in their perception, but on one level this is irrelevant. If they don't see the change they are looking for, or as quickly as they want, their stake in supporting the new incumbent diminishes. How many clergy have discovered that those who seem most supportive and positive can quickly become the most vociferous opponents? Working out what is at stake for each person on the PCC gives a clearer picture as to why people may react in particular ways.

Who holds power at the moment? Power is always present in an executive body like a PCC. Some will recognise that, and may even have got themselves elected onto the PCC on the basis that they wanted power. Others will be naïve about power, perhaps their own, or the power of others over them. In an ideal scenario, power is focused in the group as a whole and not in any individual or subgroup. But things are rarely ideal. When spotting who holds power it helps to look not only at those who are members of the PCC, but also at those outside the PCC who may in effect hold considerable power over those on the PCC.¹⁴

What are the core issues that need addressing? It normally takes quite a time to be able to identify these, as it is nearly always more complex than it initially seems. Eventually, though, it helps to write down the core issues, all of them, and to write them as clearly and as non-judgementally as possible. Simple statements of fact are best. So not 'N is deliberately being a right pain' but rather 'N's aggressive behaviour when disagreeing with others prevents people from saying what they really think.'

What is the best way to approach each of these? When the core issues are listed, working out how to address each one involves a number of further questions. Which of these are important? Which are urgent? Which are major? Which are minor? Which could be sorted relatively easily? Which are likely to take a long time? Which are things I can do something about? Which are ones I can't do anything about other than pray? Getting a 'feel' for the issues in this way helps to shape the answer to the next question: which of these would it be wise to address first?

Who do I need to get on board to help? This is a critical question. Whenever possible, it is best not to tackle complex things on our own. There are many levels of gaining support.

- Support from colleagues or friends outside the parish who pray.
- Advice and oversight from those responsible for us; for example an Archdeacon or Bishop. I know a number of occasions when a wise incumbent has sought the advice of a senior colleague around an issue with a PCC, and then notified them of the action they are intending to take. It means if things go wrong or people don't like what is happening and the Archdeacon begins to get emails, letters or phone calls about it from disgruntled PCC members, it isn't the first they have heard about it.
- Agreement with key people in the church about what needs to be tackled and how. For example, working with the churchwardens to share the concerns and explore ways forward.
- Input from those who have travelled the path before us. This may be through books, websites, podcasts, or in conversation with a work consultant, mentor or facilitator.

C. TOXIC

It may take some time to realise it, but in certain rare circumstances the nature of the dysfunction is aptly described as toxic. What are some of the symptoms of a toxic environment?

- A history of clergy having breakdowns or leaving after a short time.
- A sense of constantly being manipulated or marginalised.
- A catalogue of bad decisions.
- A presence of 'fear' amongst a significant proportion of the PCC members.
- Unhealthy conflict that means a constant sense of open warfare.
- Lack of openness or transparency on matters of finance.

Any one of these could simply be a complex issue that needs addressing, but when you get many of these symptoms in one PCC, it may be an indication of something deeper going on.

In such circumstances it is vital to seek expert support and advice. History shows us that many good people have entered such situations thinking they will be the ones to turn it round, and years later they are having a breakdown or leaving. It isn't that such toxic dysfunction can't be addressed, but it requires a combination of a certain range of skills, a certain personality

type and a sense of calling to work through such a situation. Some dioceses appoint 'interim ministers' whose role it is to turn things round over a specified length of time before handing on the parish to a longer-term minister. These interim ministers bring specific gifts and experience and have the advantage of not being around for a long time, which can help with much-needed change.

When tackling toxic PCCs, an incumbent definitely requires the knowledge and support of those in senior leadership outside the parish or benefice in order to be in a safe place to tackle difficult issues.

Leadership structures

I mentioned that technically a PCC might not be best described as a leadership team, but that it is involved in leadership. The issue of leadership structures in an Anglican church is one which regularly comes up in conversations with clergy. My response is based on certain assumptions:

- **Leadership is best developed and exercised in community** As previously mentioned, I'm driven to this through a study of the Scriptures. The nature of leadership within the Church reflects the nature of the Church (body) which reflects the nature of God himself as Trinity. However it is structured, it is best not to model solo leadership within a church.
- **There is more than one way to structure leadership in a church** Different clergy, parishes and dioceses have come up with different ways of making it work. That should warn us about believing in one way. However, whatever structure is agreed upon requires clarity.

The legal components in any parish are the incumbent, the churchwardens, the PCC and standing committee. Clearly they make up part of the leadership exercised in a church. It is perfectly possible that they will constitute the formal leadership of the church without any additions. Functioning well, they can effectively lead the people of God to fulfil God's mission within their community and beyond.

But it is not unusual for parishes to have additional levels of leadership. A church may also have other licensed people (curate, SSM, OLM, Readers, other licensed lay ministers, retired clergy), staff (parish administrator, youth worker, director of music, and so on), a leadership team (called by different names including Ministry Leadership Team, Local Ministry Group and so on), a variety of people in leadership roles (choir director, Messy Church team, small group leaders, music group leader, children's group leaders and so on), and a range of committees (fabric, building project, finance, mission). All these contribute to the leadership of the church. There will also be informal ways in which people are exercising leadership. So how do we make sense of all this?

administrator
standing committee TRINITY
LEADERSHIP PCC members youth worker
COMMUNITY readers structure
incumbent church warden SSM
mission committee TEAM

Here are some guiding principles:

- **Be clear** Who is responsible for what, and why? The PCC has responsibility and authority for certain things. It can delegate this authority to other bodies to perform certain functions. For example, the PCC can choose to delegate its responsibility of overseeing the mission and ministry of the church to a leadership group. Here is an example from Gloucester Diocese on how they describe such a relationship.

The Local Ministry Team is the PCC's chosen means of promoting and leading day-to-day ministry and mission in the parish by:

- Growing in understanding of the purpose of the whole Church and investigating what this means for the life of the local church.
- Exploring, deepening, and working out the practical implications and implementation of the vision and priorities outlined by the PCC.



It is also possible that the PCC delegates certain authority to a mission committee, or that a staff team takes certain responsibilities. Whatever the particular combination, developing and maintaining clarity is vital. The latter is essential as the composition of groups change, and what was once known, agreed, and shared now is none of these things to the new people.

- **Be detailed** Things come unstuck when there isn't enough detail, in particular in terms of the purpose and identity of each body or group, and the nature of the relationship between groups. One person thinks that the relationship between the PCC and the Readers is x, another thinks it is y. But no one can be sure because it has never been written down. Two things that can help to develop and maintain clarity in sufficient detail are a simple organogram (showing how one group relates to another) and a written document outlining purpose, identity and terms of working (for example, budgetary limitations, parameters of authority, lines of accountability – see 'Terms of reference template for sub-committees' in Part 3 of this resource).
- **Be flexible** What works now may not work so well in the future. Things change, and structures need to be flexible to change with them. It is nearly always a warning sign when structures (beyond the legal requirements) are fixed rather than flexible to adapt to the changing needs. Ideally structures follow strategy, not the other way round.
- **Be open** Whilst sorting this may be done in darkened rooms through many a long night, it helps if people know about what is going on and the conclusions that have been reached. A simple explanation on the church website, or an attractive leaflet at the back of the church building, explaining the different groups and how they relate to each other, will help people know how to pray for each group and which group/person to go to when they have something they want to raise.

In [Part 3](#) you can find a number of resources relating to leadership structures, including some examples of how churches have attempted to handle the complexities of leadership structures in larger churches.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE?

Every PCC is required to appoint a standing committee which conducts business between meetings. The committee is made up of the incumbent, the churchwardens and at least two other members of the PCC¹⁵, normally including the treasurer. Its role is to carry on the routine work of the PCC in between meetings. It acts as a sub-committee of the PCC and is therefore accountable to it. Perhaps it is worth noting that the standing committee has no authority in law to overturn or significantly modify an existing PCC decision. When they have met, all their decisions must be an early item on the next PCC agenda. The PCC then decides whether to approve all standing committee decisions, and can choose not to do so, in which case the standing committee decision is reversed.

Often the standing committee will be used to draw up the agenda of the PCC meeting, and to prepare relevant papers to aid discussion and decision-making. Some incumbents see this as the key leadership group in the church. In particular in larger churches, where the PCC may number 30-40 people, the smaller standing committee of five to ten people provides an easier forum in which to discuss and decide smaller and more routine matters, and to do the initial work on some of the bigger policy issues. Sometimes trickier items can be aired in the smaller group, and many clergy use their standing committee as a confidential sounding board before taking the item to the larger PCC.

WHAT OF THE ROLE OF DCCS?

*The Guide to Accounting and Reporting – Legal Framework*¹⁶ offers the following helpful clarification of legally who is responsible for what.

In certain situations, teams may comprise a single parish and PCC, with individual DCCs for separate churches.

- This situation can arise when pastoral reorganisation has resulted in two or more parishes being combined into a single benefice and PCC, with DCCs created to retain the sense of local community of the former separate parishes.
- Statutory accounts must be prepared at the level of the PCC.
- Although certain tasks can be passed down from the PCC to DCCs, this does not apply to the PCC's responsibility for the safeguarding and proper application of its resources, which means that the legal liability must, by law, remain with the PCC. DCCs cannot hold assets, and do not have body corporate status. The PCC is the only legal entity that is able to enter into a contract.



- DCCs can prepare their own accounts but, until brought together at the PCC level, these have no legal standing. Where this situation applies, it is recommended that the individual DCC accounts are prepared in a similar format. This should enable the aggregated accounts for the PCC to be prepared as simply as possible.
- Where individual DCC accounts are aggregated to create the PCC accounts, this may result in thresholds being exceeded. For example, DCCs which would normally prepare Receipts and Payments accounts may have to prepare Accruals Accounts where the income of the PCC exceeds £250,000 per annum.
- Where a PCC includes one or more DCCs, the independent examiner's task may appear difficult, but the person responsible for the examination (or audit where thresholds have been exceeded) does not have to carry it all out themselves. In this way, each DCC could have its part of the aggregated accounts examined, with the individual examiners undertaking the tasks delegated by the PCC's examiner. The PCC's examiner will take overall legal responsibility for any work delegated, agreeing the programme of work of local examiners, reviewing their work and reporting personally on the overall accounts of the PCC just the same as with any normal PCC.

When operating with a PCC and one or more DCCs, once again clarity is key, not simply around the legal financial requirements outlined above, but also the more nuanced issues of:

- What is each body responsible for? For example, is the discerning of vision done at the DCC or the PCC or both? And if both, how do they relate to each other?
- How do the bodies relate to each other? For example, issues of trust are often helped by knowledge of people rather than simply an anonymous body. Is there ever a joint meeting? Do people gather for an annual day? Is there a termly prayer or social gathering?

Sidestepping some of the complexities of a PCC and DCC structure rarely helps in the long term. Clear, detailed, and flexible agreement is generally the more positive approach (see examples in 'Leadership structures - a brief guide' in [Part 3](#) of this resource).

What of multi-parish benefices?

With increasing numbers of parishes placed in multi-parish benefices many clergy face the prospect of multiple PCCs. An incumbent with 12 parishes could potentially face a minimum of 48 PCC meetings a year (over one a week once you have taken off holidays) and 12 APCMs. And there are already a significant number of clergy with more than 12 parishes. Even a clergy person with a mere five parishes will potentially have a minimum of 20 PCC meetings, one every other week. The amount of time attending standing committees, preparing for such meetings, and then following them up could be huge.

Some clergy decide to combine their parishes into a single parish (see the story below). Others identify creative ways to operate multiple PCCs. For example, one held all the PCC meetings on the same night in the same venue. They began with worship and prayer together, followed by any items that involved all of the parishes. They then broke into their PCC groups to conduct the normal business specific to their PCC with each group chaired by the vice-chair and the incumbent floating between the groups as and where he was most needed. And still others agree with their PCCs that they will not be able to attend all the meetings and ensure their vice-chairs are up to the job.

NIGEL'S STORY of restructuring the leadership of four parishes

Nigel recognised the need to streamline the leadership structures in his multi-parish benefice, and working with the PCCs identified that becoming a single parish was the most appropriate way forward in their context. Here are extracts from a report written just ahead of the final stage of the process (you can read more at www.hardingtonvale.org.uk/?Resources_%26amp%3B_Information:Hardington_Vale_News%26nbsp%3B).

There needed to be a lot more sharing of the load. Instead of all parish ministry being channelled through the vicar there should be space for everyone to fulfil their own vocation. This is not about bureaucracy but good theology, and is central to much of Jesus' teaching and that of the early church. For example, just before St Paul's beautiful poem on the gift of love ('if I talk in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love...') he tells the Corinthian church that they are the body of Christ and individually members of it, and all contribute different sorts of gifts, some healing, some teaching, some assistance, some leadership. Paul's point is of course that, if we are to truly represent today the Jesus of the Gospels, then everyone is involved, offering their particular gifts and sharing the most treasured of all; the gift of love.



The spaces we have created for an easier sharing of our gifts began with the setting up of 'Powerhouses'. These are teams of people who work together on the common issues across the benefice to do with:

- **Worship** – planning special services, looking for ways and ideas to inspire more people to join in praising God for the many good things in our lives.
- **Discipleship and evangelism** – taking action to encourage teaching of the faith to children and to adults, and creating stepping stones for people to grow in faith and understanding.
- **Community** – strengthening the way in which the church relates to the wider community, such as welcome and pastoral care in our villages, and how we relate to the wider world through issues such as justice and poverty.

The third space for offering our gifts is in the overall vision and strategy of the church and its effective resourcing. This of course is the job of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) working alongside the clergy and lay ministers such as Readers. This could not efficiently be done as four separate PCCs. We needed to become one PCC to which all the other groups would be accountable.

It is a major change merging four PCCs into one. It needs not only the support of each existing PCC but also the Bishop and eventually the Church Commissioners. Earlier this year, each of the PCCs returned to the issue and gave their overwhelming support to apply to become a single parish benefice. Since then we have been exploring the nuts and bolts of how to organise the changeover and particularly the finances.

These parishes took a courageous approach to their leadership structures. It was a long process driven by a desire to serve the mission and ministry of Christ in their area. They ended up with clear, detailed and flexible structures.

In summary

Sidestepping a dysfunctional PCC rarely improves the long-term health of a church. Muddling along with groups unclear about their role and how they relate to one another further undermines effective leadership. As so often, the role of the overall leader is to facilitate health through clarity and courage. Clarity is focused around the purpose and identity of each group and how it relates to other groups. Courage is needed to address buried issues, tackle power bases, and reconcile broken relationships.

4

Common Dysfunction

TRICKY GROUP
DYNAMICS

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

TRICKY GROUP DYNAMICS

Groups are complex. The longer a group exists the more complex it is likely to become. It was in the 1940s that Kurt Lewin coined the term group dynamics ‘to describe the way groups and individuals act and react to changing circumstances’ and created a field of study into ‘the nature of groups, the laws of their development and their interrelations with individuals, other groups and larger institutions’⁷.

Group dynamics can bring insight to the following questions: Why do perfectly reasonable people behave ‘out of character’ in a group setting? Why do small, relatively unimportant decisions unexpectedly become massive issues of contention? Why do normally able and articulate people act in passive aggressive ways? Why does a group concur with a decision which half of them intuitively know is a poor decision?

The simplest model I know for reflecting on the dynamics in any group of people that meets on a regular basis is from John Adair, one of the most renowned thinkers and writers on issues of leadership over the last 50 years. He suggests that there are three overlapping areas that need to be understood and worked with. These are around **task**, **individuals** and **the group**.



He suggests the task needs to be clearly defined so that people are able to understand the purpose of the group; the needs of ‘individuals’ must be accepted and valued, especially by the leader of the group; the group needs to function well, and grow and develop as a group with a common identity and a corporate sense of achievement.

Many of us have a predisposition to head towards one of these three areas, especially when under pressure. My default is ‘task’. When under pressure I become very focused on getting the task done. One of my colleagues is ‘individual’, always concerned about how people are doing in the midst of what is going on. It isn’t that either of us isn’t concerned about the other things; we *are* concerned. It is just that we have learnt where our default position lies. It helps to know, because the leader of a PCC is responsible for ensuring all three receive attention in order for the group to function well. An example may help.



AT THE PCC MEETING

Monday 8.03pm. Simon arrives a few minutes late and it is immediately clear he isn't his normal bright self. Rather than engaging with anyone he sits down around the table. One or two people cast glances across the table as the meeting begins, but no one says anything. As the meeting progresses Simon doesn't contribute much and when he does it is short, even abrupt.

What they do know is something is up. What they don't know is that he heard two days before that his mother has been diagnosed with inoperable cancer. He has come to the meeting because he is trying to maintain some sort of normality of life. He doesn't really want to be there.

The needs of the individual are impacting the group. The naturally pastoral ones in the group will be completely tuned in. Their empathy gene is working overtime. They are struggling to concentrate on the business in the meeting. The naturally task-orientated ones may have missed what is going on and in the course of a more heated part of the evening where some healthy disagreement is happening, one of them makes quite a tough comment about something Simon has previously stood for, without recognising the impact it has on Simon. The naturally group-orientated ones inwardly smart because they sense the feel of the group isn't good at this point and want to sort things out.

What does the leader of the meeting do? Press on regardless? Probably the worst option. There are a number of other possibilities, and choosing which one will depend on a whole host of factors (including how long the group have worked together, how well they know one another, how open they have previously been, and the relationship of the leader with Simon). But if the leader of the group doesn't recognise what is going on, or has a skewed view of the PCC, that it only exists to do business, then the group will cease to function well.

Adair's simple framework provides a great tool for thinking about a PCC meeting, both beforehand as we prepare how to address each of the three needs, and during as we try to work out what is going on at a particular meeting.

A group with a positive dynamic is easy to spot. Here's one description of such a dynamic: 'Members trust one another, they work towards a collective decision, and they hold one another accountable for making things happen. As well as this, researchers have found that when a group has a positive dynamic, its members are nearly twice as creative as an average group.'¹⁸ Yet this description is somewhat biased towards the task aspect of a group. It is also the case that groups with a healthy dynamic tend to have fun, enjoy being with one another, laugh and care for one another. This sort of group feels good as well as does good.

Here is how one incumbent introduced an idea to increase the feel-good factor on the PCC.



LIZ'S STORY of helping PCC members to know one another better

Having seen this modelled at a Leading Your Church Into Growth conference, I thought it would be good to introduce a brief interview of a PCC member at the start of each meeting.

I hoped it would achieve several things:

- Help members of a PCC from three different congregations to get to know one another better.
- Set the right tone at the start of a meeting.
- Focus our thinking on mission and how we grow as disciples.

It was also important that it should be something that could be done with minimal preparation or anxiety for those involved. The first couple of interviews were arranged with churchwardens, after which we asked for volunteers. After a year or so – as it became normal practice – we started to mix up who did the interviewing.

The kind of questioning was quite focused, and usually followed a similar format. We would begin with questions such as: 'Can you remember your first experience of church?', or 'What was your first experience of God?' Then we would look at experiences of our community with questions like: 'What was it like when you first came to worship with us?', 'What made you feel part of our church?', 'What has most helped your faith to grow in recent years?' The final question has always been: 'What three words would you use to describe who God is for you now?'

After about 15 PCC meetings, we have nearly been through our whole membership. We have heard very different stories of beginnings in the faith – some childhood experiences, some not till adulthood, all in very different contexts. We have heard about how people grew in faith, then became part of our church community. This has highlighted some really good things – welcome, befriending, help through troubled times – but also brought up our weaknesses too. For some, their early experiences of our churches turned out to be bafflement at what we were doing, or even hostility. We have heard the uncomfortable news that sometimes we are really good at welcoming people, but sometimes too we have ignored them. We have heard about what has made a difference in people's journeys of faith. Then we have focused our attention back to God by hearing in just three brief words how he is known by one of our members.

It has made a difference for us. There has been a change in the tone of PCC meetings, with a greater focus on how we make it easy for people to become part of our communities (and what kind of things can make that more difficult). There has been an increase in initiatives – and a greater sense of looking outward. This needs to be taken further, and probably the next step is to increase our awareness of the challenges of our parish communities too.

In contrast to this, a group with poor dynamics is the opposite: people's behaviour disrupts the tasks that need to be done; no one wants to be a part of the group; people feel uncared for; no one really knows anyone else in the group. It is not a fun place to be.

What causes poor group dynamics?

Group leaders and members can both contribute to a negative group dynamic. Here is a list of common problems that can occur¹⁹:

- **Weak leadership** When a group lacks a clear leader, a more dominant member of the group can often take charge. This can lead to a lack of direction, infighting, or a focus on the wrong priorities.
- **Controlling leadership** The controlling leader likes to have everything done in order, probably in their way. They may be dominant and aggressive in their control, or they may be charming and yet manipulative in the way they control. Either way, few people flourish under their leadership, and the PCC is likely to be seen as a rubber-stamping body, and if it should decide not to agree to something, the controlling leader may well react negatively.
- **Excessive deference to authority** This can happen when people want to be seen to agree with a leader, and therefore hold back from expressing their own opinions. For example, in a parish where there is a 'Father-knows-best' mentality, or a parish where people lack self-confidence, members of the PCC may agree with what the vicar suggests even though they have good reasons to believe it may be a poor suggestion.
- **Blocking** This happens when members behave in a way that disrupts the flow of information in the group. People can adopt blocking roles such as:
 - **The aggressor:** this person often disagrees with others, or is inappropriately outspoken.
 - **The negator:** this group member is often critical of others' ideas.
 - **The withdrawer:** this person doesn't participate in the discussion.
 - **The recognition-seeker:** this group member is boastful, or dominates the session.
 - **The joker:** this person introduces humour at inappropriate times.

- **Groupthink** This happens when people place a desire for consensus above their desire to reach the right decision. This prevents people from fully exploring alternative solutions. It can also happen under the pressure of time, for example when the meeting is getting close to its end and people are tired and want to get home.
- **Free riding** Here, some group members take it easy, and leave others to do all the work. Free riders may work hard on their own, but limit their contributions in group situations; this is known as 'social loafing'.
- **Evaluation apprehension** Members' perceptions can also create a negative group dynamic. Evaluation apprehension happens when people feel that they are being judged excessively harshly by other group members, and they hold back their opinions as a result. This is common when there have been dominant individuals on a PCC who have frequently dismissed the views of others and have ensured their opinions dominate any decision-making.
- **Role confusion** If members of the PCC don't know why they are there, don't feel they have anything to contribute, and can't answer satisfactorily in their own minds 'what is my role here?', they are less likely to contribute well to the group.
- **Personal insecurity** If members of the PCC struggle with insecurity this may manifest itself in one of two common ways. Some become overbearing, hiding their insecurity behind a mask of certainty. This may come across as aggressive, dictatorial, inflexible, even, sometimes, bullying. Alternatively some become very quiet, hoping not to be noticed, not daring to venture their opinion because in their minds it is unlikely it is worth hearing.

Improving group dynamics

There are a variety of ideas on how to improve group dynamics. Here is a summary of some of the core ones²⁰.

LEARN HOW GROUPS WORK

Those with responsibility for leading the PCC, the chair and vice-chair, can help the group by learning to monitor where the group is at in terms of its stage of life and the contributions of individual members. A PCC with significant change of membership following an APCM will be at a very different stage of functioning from one that has been working closely together for several years. The work done on stages of group life can be helpful²¹, although most of it relates to teams so needs to be handled appropriately when relating it to the life of a PCC.

There are also various ways of recognising the different contributions people make to groups. One of the early contributions in this area was Benne and Sheats' Group Roles²² which identifies both positive and negative group roles, and how they can affect the group as a whole. Having some awareness of such group dynamics means the leader of the PCC can act as an 'interpreter' of what is going on to make sense of various things in the life of the PCC. I once heard this described as a 'this is that' role. It can be extraordinarily helpful when someone says 'Let's take a step back from the discussion for a moment to identify what is going on in the group here...'

TACKLE PROBLEMS QUICKLY

Whilst many of us might prefer to let things roll for a little while, all the advice on helping groups to function well suggests it is helpful to intervene earlier rather than later. If we notice that someone on the PCC has adopted a behaviour that's affecting the group unhelpfully, act quickly to challenge it. This can be done sensitively in the group itself, especially if you have already agreed a PCC code of conduct²³ and have encouraged everyone to police it. For example, if someone begins to answer a text message during a meeting and the group has agreed that it won't do that, a light touch, ideally with a bit of humour, can gently remind someone that their action is breaking the code of conduct.

If it is a more serious breach, it may need to be stopped within the group, but then followed up outside the meeting. For example, if someone loses their temper and begins shouting at another member of the PCC, a quick intervention by the chair to stop the shouting is necessary, but the longer conversation about that behaviour is more likely to be helpful outside the meeting.

Then there is behaviour which isn't so obvious but seems to be becoming a habit that is undermining the functioning of the PCC. This also will be best tackled quickly, most often outside of the meeting, by providing helpful feedback that highlights the impact of their actions and identifies ways of changing behaviour. For example, the person who is always negative whenever anyone suggests an idea for doing something differently can be helped to see how that is squashing the willingness of people to suggest things, and offered alternative ways of expressing their concerns, or encouraged only to express them some of the time rather than every time.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

People who know one another well generally function better in a group. Trust is established, diversity is celebrated, care is stimulated. It is especially important to use ways of building relationships when new people join the PCC. There are a variety of things that may help:

- Have a meal together at the first meeting after the APCM to welcome new people to the PCC and provide a more relaxed atmosphere for people to interact.
- As part of subsequent meetings, ensure there are good refreshments and a break to enjoy them when people can chat informally as part of the meeting.
- Use specific activities to encourage people to get to know things about one another they are unlikely to know. For example, ask people to identify their favourite holiday destination, and describe why they have chosen that place. Or invite people to describe their life when they were 8 years old, or 14. Or give each person a minute to describe where they spend most of their week.
- In a prayer time, ask each person to identify one thing they would like the group to pray for them, and encourage people to pray for these things over the coming week.
- Another way to build stronger relationships is through appropriate vulnerability. It is likely the chair of the PCC will need to model this to help the group to trust that it is alright to speak openly and honestly about some of the things they find difficult, or would like people to pray for.²⁴

PAY ATTENTION

It is possible to miss the warning signs of poor group dynamics if we are overly focused on other things, so part of the skill of good leadership of the PCC is to watch out for tell-tale signs.

- If the group is always making unanimous decisions, there could be unhelpful groupthink, or bullying or free-riding.
- If there isn't any healthy conflict, it could be a sign of a lack of trust or understanding about the need for good conflict within the group.
- If some people never say anything in the meeting, it may be a sign that the group isn't using enough variation to ensure everyone is included in discussions.
- If people don't have the right paperwork to hand or are constantly caught out by surprise information, it may be a sign that communication needs some work.
- If the group doesn't respond well when someone is in need, it could be a sign of an overly task-orientated PCC.

MODEL WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

Ultimately the most powerful way to shape the dynamic of a group is to model the behaviour you are looking for. People will pick up how to contribute well to the life of the group through the example of others. This is why careful selection of the vice-chair is important, as you ideally want someone who will share with you as the incumbent in modelling appropriate behaviours.

In summary

Group dynamics play an important part in the functioning of the PCC. Time taken to understand basic principles is time that can be fruitfully invested in developing a healthy environment for individual people to grow and feel cared for, for tasks to be done effectively, and for the group to thrive and be a place people want to be.



SIMON'S STORY of a market town PCC

A couple of years into his role as incumbent and with a growing church Simon decided to reshape the PCC so that it focused on four areas:

High – worship and prayer.

Wide – evangelism and outreach.

Deep – welcome, discipleship, belonging.

Long – finance, buildings, staff.

He reflects: 'This enables us to improve the way that we cover the things that are really important to us. We invite other key leaders to join us for PCC once a term to form a larger leadership forum.

When we set this up the thing that stood out was that the majority of the existing PCC were natural "long" people, focused on finance, buildings and staff. We brought this to the PCC and talked through the reasons why it would be helpful to balance the PCC with people who had a natural focus on some of the other key areas. Some stepped down to make room and we now have a much better balance.'

5

Common Dysfunction

POOR
ORGANISATION

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

POOR ORGANISATION

Organisation impacts the ability of the PCC to function well. Take, for example, Ruth in this scenario. She is 19 and has just joined the PCC. It is her first experience of a group like this. She is understandably nervous.

SCENARIO 1

Ruth knows the meeting is on Monday night, and thinks **the vicar** said it was at **8pm** in the Church Hall, but hasn't had any paperwork about the meeting, so begins to wonder if she has got it right. When she arrives at 7.45 no one is there, and now she is sure she must have got it wrong. Just as she is about to leave at **7.56** the PCC secretary turns up with the keys. **Ruth** is let in but left to herself as **Mary** rushes around busying herself with various things. Over the next few minutes a number of other people arrive, some of whom **Ruth** doesn't know. Some say hello, some don't.

At just after 8.05 **the vicar** arrives apologising for being late due to a tricky pastoral situation and the meeting eventually gets under way. **Ruth** isn't quite sure where to sit but takes a seat which she hopes isn't anyone else's. **The vicar** welcomes her, acknowledging that everyone will know who she is after the elections at the APCM a few weeks ago, but forgets to introduce them to her. Everyone seems to have papers relating to the meeting, and when someone asks where hers are she says she isn't sure. **Mary** then rather embarrassingly apologises for the fact that she forgot to add her to the email distribution list.

Over the next two hours **Ruth** isn't really sure what is going on and how she should behave, so she just sits quietly watching, despite the fact that on one or two occasions she really wanted to say something. Several people enter animated conversation after the meeting, including **the vicar** who catches her eye and smiles as she quietly leaves the hall on her own.





SCENARIO 2

Having been elected at the APCM **Ruth** is nervous about the forthcoming PCC meeting in a week's time. She is pleased **the vicar** and the PCC secretary, **Mary**, are coming round to see her to talk it all through. When they arrive and she's making them a cup of tea, **Mary** slips into the kitchen to ask if there is anything she can do to help. There isn't, but **Mary** mentions how excited and pleased she is that **Ruth** is on the PCC and what fun it will be to work alongside her over the coming years.

The meeting is really useful. **The vicar** begins by reminding her what a PCC is, and reconnects her with the leaflet produced by the church which she received ahead of the elections with some helpful information on the background to PCCs. In addition, **Mary** gives her a single side of A4 with the purpose of the PCC, and some values and a code of conduct they seek to work by. On the back is a photo of each member of the PCC (including hers) with their name and a short biography. She's relieved, as she isn't good at remembering names and this way she can have a go at learning a few beforehand and use it as a crib sheet during the meeting.

They talk through a typical meeting, explaining various technical terms and procedures. **The vicar** is very clear that they really want her to be a full part of the PCC, contributing in any way she feels able. He acknowledges that she will be the youngest by a good few years, and that he knows she will see some things differently from others, but confirms that is a strength. She asks various questions and is left with a few other items to read ahead of the first meeting, including a document that explains the main items the PCC have been working on over the last year. **Mary** prays for her before they finish, and then lets her know that **Ivy** will pick her up to take her to the meeting next Monday at around 7.45. She leaves her number and asks her to phone if there is anything she is unsure about.

Monday comes round and **Ivy** picks **Ruth** up just before 7.45. When they arrive, **Mary** warmly greets her and introduces her to three others who are already there, and makes a point of personally introducing her to the rest as they arrive. **Ivy** stays with her until the meeting starts. At the beginning of the meeting **the vicar** warmly welcomes them all, and especially **Ruth**. He reminds them that whenever a new person joins the PCC it is a great time to review the purpose, values and code of conduct, and over the next ten minutes they engage in a fun and creative exercise which does just that by breaking them into groups of three.

Throughout the evening **Ruth** is gently included in what is going on, and when she asks a question about something she doesn't understand, **Duncan**, the longest-serving member of the PCC smiles and says he still doesn't understand that after 30 years on the PCC and hopes at last someone will explain.

At the end of the meeting **the vicar** asks how it has been for her and they chat for a while. **Ivy** takes her home and says how thrilled she is **Ruth** is on the PCC and how much she is looking forward to her contribution to its life.

Much of the disease in the first scenario could be improved through good organisation. Inevitably each of us brings different skills and experience to our ability to organise things.

Where would you place yourself on a scale from disorganised to organised? You may want to ask what I mean by organisation, but at this point simply place yourself somewhere on the scales below.



If you want to check the veracity of your own judgement, ask someone who knows you well, works with you closely, and whose opinion you trust, to mark you on the same scales. If their perception is similar to yours then you are probably now fairly clear about where you are on the scales. If their perception is very different from yours it might help to have a conversation with them about why they placed you where they did. Don't defend yourself, simply ask questions to gain greater insight and then go away and reflect on what they have said. They may be right, they may be wrong. If it helps, you can talk to a third person about their comments and your thoughts to try and gain a healthy view of where you are on each scale.

Why is this important? Each of us has a natural place where we sit on each of these scales. For those who are highly organised, have a low tolerance of disorder and a high attention to detail you may intuitively 'get' what this section is about. You don't need convincing. Indeed if you are the chair, you probably already run a well-organised PCC. For you reflecting on the following may be helpful:

- New ideas on how to do things better. Be wary of getting set in particular ways as there are always alternative ways of doing things.
- An awareness of becoming too controlling. Highly ordered people tend to like to order their environment (and, if they aren't careful, the people around them). But combine highly ordered with a controlling nature, often due to insecurity, and you have a potentially overly controlling environment. It may help to reflect on the following questions. What are the warning symptoms of being overly controlling? How could you tolerate a lower level of organisation than you would naturally like? What benefits would this bring to the PCC as a whole or to individuals within it? What does appropriate flexibility look like?

For those who sit at the other end of the scales 'disorganised, low attention to detail, high tolerance of disorder', this section is one you may well already have skipped. You know this just isn't you. Part of you may long to be more organised, part of you may have given up, and part of you may feel you're fine as you are.

In any role there are certain base line requirements organisationally. Parochial clergy need to be able to turn up at the right time with the right 'things' in the right place for a baptism visit, conducting a funeral, leading worship on a Sunday. If we don't, our organisation impacts others. When we are in a leadership role the impact of our personal (dis)organisation at this base level is multiplied because we have influence over numbers of people. If we struggle with organisation there are three things we can do:

- Ask someone else with organisational ability to take on as much of the organisation as we can give away. So for example, a really good PCC secretary will be able to ensure that all the paperwork for the meeting is well prepared, appropriately presented and effectively distributed ahead of the meeting. However, there is still a level of organisation needed by us, for example having the conversation with the secretary about the items on the agenda.
- Get a little better at it. A small increase in ability can make a significant difference. One of the best ways to improve is to find someone like you (not one of those annoyingly naturally-well-organised-types) who you can see is doing better at this than you are, and ask them how they've managed it. Tips and techniques really do help, but it is a matter of finding the right ones for you.²⁵
- Ask if it needs to be done. Sometimes things just don't need to be done, or don't need to be done in that way.

The one thing we cannot do is say: 'Oh, I'm a disorganised person, I'm wired that way, I can't do anything about it.' That simply will not do. A loving servant-hearted response is to see the impact our disorganisation is having on other people and do everything we can to minimise that impact. Similarly as the naturally highly organised person can't say: 'Oh, I know I have a tendency to over-structure things and struggle to go with the flow, I'm wired that way, I can't do anything about it.'

The organisation of a PCC breaks down into three phases, each with a variety of items that require attention.

- 1. PREPARATION**
- 2. RUNNING THE MEETING**
- 3. FOLLOW UP**

In this section we'll concentrate on the preparation phase, which involves a variety of things.

How to prepare: plan the meeting

When planning a PCC meeting it helps to ask some basic questions.

A. WHY ARE WE HAVING THIS MEETING?

Clarity about the overall purpose of the PCC is a great help, but it also helps to ask each time you prepare for a meeting why you're having this particular one. What is the thrust of what you're trying to achieve through this meeting? Can the purpose be better achieved in a different way?

B. WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO HOLD IT?

This works both on a macro-level, for example when generally is the best time to hold a PCC meeting, and on a micro-level, when is the best time to hold this PCC meeting? The time of the day and the day of the week will influence people's ability to function well in a PCC. For example, Friday night generally isn't a good night as people are tired towards the end of the week.

Establishing a normal time for the PCC will depend on your context and the members. Meetings after 10.00pm generally aren't a good thing, but in some rural communities where farmers are getting up very early, even after 9.15pm may not be a good thing. There will also be occasions when you deliberately change from the normal time because what you are trying to achieve is better served by meeting at a different time. For example, if you decide that the first meeting after the APCM when there are new members joining the group will have a less formal and more social feel, you might decide Friday evening is the best time to meet so that people can have a more leisurely time over a meal without feeling the need to rush away because of work the next morning.

There is also a question about frequency and length of meetings. The legal minimum for a PCC is four times a year, but many meet more often. The frequency will be dictated by the purpose and the way you construct leadership in your parish or parishes. There is no right or wrong, just what is appropriate in your context. The length will also vary, but it is important to start and finish on time. Two hours is generally regarded as a sensible time people can concentrate with appropriate breaks and changes in emotional temperature.

C. WHERE IS THE BEST PLACE TO HOLD IT?

The environment immediately communicates something about the meeting. There is more on this below.

D. WHO NEEDS TO BE THERE?

This also works on a macro- and micro-scale. Who do we want to be part of the PCC generally (see elections below)? Who might we need to be present for this particular meeting? For example, a discussion about the youth work may mean you invite those working with the young people to join the PCC for a meeting, or even some young people themselves.

These four questions help us in our preparation to ensure that, as much as possible, everything is in place for a good meeting.

Let's take a look at two examples where good organisation brings benefits.

EXAMPLE 1: ELECTIONS

Approaching the elections well can significantly impact the likelihood of getting the most appropriate people onto the PCC.

SCENARIO 1

Once again numbers were relatively low at the APCM. The reports had taken an interminable amount of time, and as always **Simon** had queried minor detail after minor detail on the accounts. At last it was the elections, and although **Ruth** wasn't sure it was a good idea to allow herself to be pressed into standing, there wasn't much she could do now. **Mary** had said that she would be a great asset to the PCC, and when **Ruth** had begun asking questions about what it was and why it existed, **Mary** had said those questions could be answered if she was elected; she had to get the nomination in after the service.

The vicar asked each of the candidates to stand so others could see who they were. At that point **Injit** suggested it would be a good idea if each was asked why they were standing for the PCC and what they thought they would bring. He explained it was something done in his previous church which he'd just left and it had worked really well. There was a murmur of approval. **The vicar** was slightly taken aback by the suggestion, but thought it was a good idea and so turned to each candidate.

Ruth was first. She froze. She didn't really know why or what she had to offer. She mumbled something along those lines and sat down very embarrassed.

She was surprised a few minutes later when she was elected. She felt that she had probably let herself be persuaded to do something she didn't really want to do.





SCENARIO 2

It seemed to **Ruth** that there were more people at the APCM than the previous year. She wasn't surprised. The vision laid out by the PCC for the future had been inspiring, and certainly some significant things had developed over the year. Although she was nervous about the meeting, the time spent with **Mary** exploring whether she might put herself forward for the PCC had been very helpful.

Mary had given her some useful leaflets and encouraged her to chat with others on the PCC. She found the one on the values of the PCC and what they were looking for in future members very informative. When she said she was prepared to be nominated **Mary** had explained that **the vicar** would meet with her before the APCM to explain the election process. He'd met with all the candidates as a group one evening and taken them through the process. He'd asked each of them to write a paragraph introducing themselves and offering a few thoughts about what they had to offer which would be circulated ahead of the meeting. He also explained that at the meeting people would be given a little space to ask any of the candidates questions about their hopes for their involvement with the PCC.

The vicar introduced the elections with a clear explanation of the process and what the PCC felt were its priorities over the coming three years. He invited all the existing members to stand so people were reminded who currently were part of the group. He then invited the nominated candidates to stand and introduced them, asking if anyone would like to ask anything of them. **Ruth** was relieved no questions were directed at her. **The vicar** then gave some helpful guidance on the principles of an election for such a body and invited the meeting to spend three minutes in quiet reflection before voting.

Ruth was surprised a few minutes later when she was elected, but felt it was probably an exciting way to serve the church.

Good organisation of the elections ensures candidates know what they are standing for and whether they have the right abilities to fulfil the role. They also know how the process works, and aren't surprised by any parts of it. The church also knows and understands the important part it plays in the election process. There isn't any last minute desperate press-ganging of people. Nominations are made on the basis of what the PCC has communicated they think they need at that time, and with full exploration by the potential candidate before agreeing that they can be put forward. People don't vote simply on who they know, but rather on what seems to meet the needs within the PCC.

EXAMPLE 2: INDUCTION

Once elected the process of preparing new members for their role and in particular for their first meeting begins. Some will need less help than others at this stage, but a clear process will ensure each person is enabled to give of their best. The scenarios at the start of this section offered some ideas of what might help.

- A photo and brief biography of each member of the PCC.
- Time with the chair of the PCC to talk through how meetings function.
- Practical support when attending the first meeting: a lift to the venue, someone who introduces them to others, a phone call the next day to see how it was for them.
- A creative way of acknowledging that the PCC has changed when new members join it. Ideas include: (a) As a way of emphasising new people are around and therefore the importance of getting to know one another, invite each member of the PCC to write their first name on a piece of paper and to think of something about themselves others are unlikely to know starting with each letter of their name. Depending on the size of the group these can then be shared as a whole group or in smaller groups. (b) Ensure that the new members are seated in chairs that existing members may traditionally see as their chair, and that they are spread amongst the group, not sitting together. (c) As a way of reviewing the existing 'code of conduct' and gaining ownership from the 'new' group, take the existing code of conduct and invite everyone to grade on a scale of 1-5 how important they think each statement is, and to answer the question: if you had to add an additional item to the code what would it be?

How to prepare: arrange the venue

Where a PCC meets will shape the feel and flow of the meeting. Walking into a cold, draughty, dreary room immediately influences how people feel about being at the meeting. Identifying the most appropriate venue may take time, and using it may involve some financial outlay, but a good venue helps a group to function well. A local pub, restaurant or coffee shop may provide the perfect setting. Someone's home may work really well. Think about heating, lighting, oxygen levels, comfort of the chairs, use of tables, and layout of the room. Ensure it is all ready before people arrive so that as they enter you can concentrate on people and relationships, not furniture-moving and lighting.

Even within a venue, be creative with its use. Different parts of the meeting may function best with a different layout. So, if you meet in a larger venue, set up two different areas, one where the chairs are laid out in a way that works well with refreshments, prayer, studying the Bible or sharing the Eucharist, and another around tables for the discussion of items on the agenda. Or, if in a home with a separate dining area and lounge, use both for different parts of the meeting. As a friend of mine says, 'You need a strong theology of space.' Move stuff around to fit what you are doing; don't get used to only one way of meeting.

Sometimes it can be helpful to meet in a completely different venue as a one-off because of what you are addressing at that meeting. Thinking about a refurbishment project? Meet in a refurbished church. Concerned about the provision for children's work? Meet where they meet. Considering how to reach out to those in the community? Meet in the pub.

How to prepare: provide good refreshments

The quality of the refreshments has a direct impact on how people 'feel' about being there. I realise some may not agree with this statement, but I have a hunch it is true. When we go to someone's for a meal and they have made an extra special effort with the food and drink we feel valued, we smile in appreciation, we relish the enjoyment of eating delicious food, sipping a wonderful drink. As someone who doesn't drink alcohol, I am always really grateful when a host has thoughtfully provided not only a nice wine but also a refreshing non-alcoholic alternative.

The same dynamic works when we attend a meeting. Instant coffee, plastic cups, a rich tea biscuit, no alternative for those who don't drink hot drinks or eat biscuits, all consumed around the table where business is one 'feel'.

The smell of real coffee as you walk in, a nicely laid side table with fruit and homemade cake, the offer of coffee, tea, herbal teas or a cold alternative, the table (around which business will be done) ready with glasses, water jugs and bowls of chocolates and grapes, gives a very different 'feel'.

Please don't get hung up on the detail. If you are not a herbal tea and cake parish, simply substitute whatever equals great refreshments in your context. Samosas and naan with dips? Doughnuts and Danish pastries? Pork scratchings and mini sausage rolls?

Great refreshments show someone cares, improves people's sense of being valued, provides simple pleasure (often needed in the more tricky bits of a meeting), and creates an environment that relaxes people and encourages interaction. You may have someone on the PCC who loves doing this sort of thing, and sees it as one of their ways to contribute to the healthy functioning of the group. You may simply ask at the end of each meeting who would be prepared to arrange refreshments for next time. You may have someone who isn't a part of the PCC who would be delighted to provide for it in this way. Or you may have none of the above, in which case as the leader of the PCC it becomes a way of serving those you lead.

How to prepare: think about prayer

We'll consider praying during a PCC meeting under 'Processes', but here I want to mention prayer for the PCC. This is unlikely to happen unless it is organised. The PCC meets on behalf of the church, serving them through discussion and decision-making that helps the congregation to glorify God and be a part of Christ's mission and ministry. Encouraging the congregation to pray for the PCC reflects the nature of the relationship between the two bodies. Ideas include:

- After the APCM 'commission' the new PCC in a service using a liturgical response and prayer (example in Part 3).
- During the prayers of intercession the Sunday before a meeting, invite the PCC to stand, and pray for them and the items they will be discussing.
- Interview a member of the PCC as part of a service, and then pray for them.
- Distribute a sheet with the photos of the PCC members for the year to the congregation, along with the dates of meetings for that year and likely major items of discussion, inviting them to pray for them through the year.
- Create a PCC display board with photos, names, items for prayer that change as the year goes on.

- Send out an email ahead of a meeting to the congregation with an abbreviated agenda asking for prayer.
- Use social media to let people know the meeting is happening that day (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp) and ask for prayer.²⁶

It also helps to encourage the PCC members to pray for the meeting as they prepare to attend. This can be done through the paperwork sent out beforehand, detailing particular items to pray about or offering a set prayer for them to use in the week leading up to the meeting. It can also help to have a buddy system on the PCC where each member is linked with another and commits to pray for the other person in between meetings.

How to prepare: sort materials

Great materials increase the likelihood of great meetings. But what do great meeting materials look like? The minimum is an agenda, but they may also include an appropriate paper on a topic you are to discuss, a specific prayer for people to use leading up to the meeting, a survey to be completed by PCC members ahead of the meeting, a piece of art to reflect on (perhaps related to a biblical passage to be studied, for example Rembrandt's *Return of the Prodigal*), a vicar's report outlining news from the period between the last and the upcoming PCC meeting, a video to watch, and so on.

THE AGENDA

Our word 'agenda' comes from a Latin word meaning 'to drive on or set in motion'. The purpose of the agenda is to enable a group of people to 'drive on' with the business they need to do, not to get lost or derailed from the matters in hand.

One guide suggests the objectives of an agenda include (1) familiarising participants with the topics to be discussed and issues to be raised, (2) indicating what prior knowledge would be expected from the participants, and (3) indicating what outcome the participants may expect from the meeting.

Creating an appropriate agenda is quite a skill, but thankfully one which can be learnt. A key word here is 'appropriate'. Just like refreshments and venue, agendas set the tone for a meeting before people even gather. How it looks is almost as important as what it contains, especially to those who are more visually than verbally orientated. It is possible for an agenda to be a few sentences in an email sent out the day before a meeting, but that is unlikely to serve the PCC well. Here are some things a good agenda includes:

- **Meeting details** A reminder of the date, time, venue and anything people might need to bring.
- **Meeting foundations** A reminder of the purpose and code of conduct of the PCC.
- **Meeting process** Details of the agenda for that meeting, including timing, item (ideally written as an aim 'to...') and the reason it is on the agenda (for information, review, discussion, decision), overview of the item (explaining any background, additional materials, things that need to be done ahead of the meeting), who is leading that item.

There is an example agenda template in Part 3 that illustrates how these various items can be laid out.

It helps to be realistic about timing of items. I tend to be far too optimistic about how much can be got through in a meeting, and have had to learn to put fewer items on the agenda, with more realistic timings.

Generally it is best not to include AOB on the agenda²⁷. Indeed, one vicar never had AOB, and discovered that it was a positive discipline that PCC members respected. He, along with others, had set up ways that additional items could be raised if absolutely necessary. For example, a PCC agenda must be circulated at least seven days in advance of the meeting, giving people time to think, pray and do what is necessary before the meeting. If a member of the PCC thinks it is necessary to add an additional item to the agenda during the week leading up to the meeting you can decide that it must be submitted to the PCC secretary and chair anytime up to 8pm the night before. This has a number of distinct advantages over AOB submitted at the meeting. (a) It tends to reduce AOB considerably, because people have to think about what they are submitting rather than just mention something that has come into their mind during the meeting. (b) It enables the chair to weigh up whether this item really does need to be included this time (and if it does how to present it to the PCC and, if they agree, for it to be slotted into a revised agenda) or whether it can be dealt with in another way or at a future meeting (in agreement with the person making the suggested addition). (c) It prevents a meeting being hijacked by a particularly contentious issue without anyone having had time to prepare for the item.

An excellent final item on the agenda is review of the meeting. If the PCC has agreed that they want to work well together, one way of helping this become a reality is to review each meeting within the meeting. It is quite simple, takes only a few minutes, and once the group have got used to it (and it does take a few goes) will provide meaningful ways to continue to improve the meetings. I generally ask two simple questions: what has worked well in this meeting? What could we change for future meetings that would improve how we meet? In one group I am a part of, which has been meeting for over 12 years on an almost monthly basis, we ask this question each time we meet, and we are still finding ways to improve our meetings.

This item on the agenda also has two side benefits. (a) People tend to behave a little better when they know how they act in a meeting is going to be reviewed. A little accountability is a good thing for most of us. (b) It minimises the after-meeting review that generally never gets fed back to the meeting. So often people grumble about something that happened as they leave or the next day (for example 'the meeting didn't start on time again') but exactly the same thing happens next time. Review of the meeting in the meeting is a way of ensuring ownership of frustrations and detailing ways of improving things.

It does take a while to learn how to do this well as a group, and it can lead to some awkward moments, but it also helps a group to behave in adult ways, and can be an extremely powerful way of transforming the life of any group.

Who creates the agenda for the PCC? Churches will have developed different 'traditions' around this, but legally it is the chair or secretary's role. Some will be set by the standing committee, others by the PCC secretary, others by the vicar, others by several people in discussion with one another. Again, there is no 'right' way to do this, but there are some helpful guidelines:

- The agenda is ideally set by those who have 'oversight' of the big picture and can prayerfully discern the items that will best serve the church at the next meeting.
- It helps if it is set by someone with some skills in agenda-setting.

- It is best if it is informed by an overview of the year ahead with likely items to discuss through the year. This can be done by the PCC as a whole or the standing committee to guide the PCC into its priorities for the year. The annual overview isn't 'set', but rather flexible to developments through the year.
- It needs to be distributed at least seven days in advance of the meeting so people can prepare appropriately.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

The agenda provides the framework for the meeting. On many occasions supporting materials will add some structure to the framework. These may include:

- **Background information** This may be things that don't need to be discussed at the PCC, but it is helpful if the PCC are aware of it in their role and as they come to discuss items. One vicar I know always sends out the 'vicar's notes' with the PCC agenda. It is his report of what has been going on in the life of the church since the last meeting. It might include significant achievements to give thanks for, people to be praying for, some wider things in the diocese. The report isn't discussed, but it is expected everyone will have read it before the meeting.
- **A paper** An item may require some initial thinking to explain the reasons why it is an issue, explore options before the PCC and even suggest recommendations. A good paper can greatly increase the quality of discussion (because people are informed, facts are clear, options outlined) and ease the time spent on an item by the group as a whole.
- **An experience** When discussing a vital aspect of the life of the church, it may help to ask each PCC member to 'experience' the item to be discussed, rather than simply go on impression or hearsay. For example, if the PCC is to discuss the closure of the evening service, it may be helpful if all the members of the PCC have attended in the month leading up to the discussion. Or if it is discussing the setting up of a Messy Church, a visit to a nearby Messy Church by the PCC as a whole will help them to have a more informed discussion.
- **A book, video, podcast, report** It may be helpful for members to read or listen to or watch something in preparation for an item on the agenda. Some PCCs have a book for the year and read a chapter ahead of the PCC and discuss it as part of their time together. Others have a short list of things to read or watch as guidance for their own personal growth and development through the year.
- **Prayer** Pointers for things to pray about, a set prayer to use, an e-bulletin for prayer items, are all ways to encourage the PCC to pray for their time together.
- **Creative exercises** To help people get into a particular item, a suggested creative exercise can unlock all sorts of insights. For example, when discussing how things are going in the church, ask each person to come having identified the church as an animal. Or when thinking about a stewardship campaign, give each person Rembrandt's drawing based on the parable of the talents in Matthew's Gospel and ask them to reflect on it using supplied questions and to bring any insights to the meeting. Or when talking about serving the community, ask each of them to go out with a camera (phone?) and take a photo of an aspect of the community that is important to them, or something they are concerned about within the community.

In summary

The more creative and flexible we can be the better. All meetings tend to get stuck in particular ways of doing things, and while routine is helpful as it provides people with a sense of continuity and safety, ruts are unhelpful as they lead us to behave and decide in set ways.

Preparing for a meeting requires considerable organisation, and takes time and energy. If we have overall responsibility for a meeting it doesn't mean we have to do all this preparation, but it does mean that, if we want our meetings to be the very best they can be, we will ensure all the preparation is done by us or by others. Well-organised meetings free people to contribute their best because they know why they are there, they know what they are being asked to do, they feel valued as a contributor, they enjoy being with the group, and have a sense of achievement as they leave.



HASSAN'S STORY of changing the way the PCC functioned

Following a Diocesan PCC day as part of Leading Your Church into Growth, I realised there was a level of dissatisfaction amongst the members of the PCC. This insight enabled me to feel I had permission to act.

Listening to the concerns we made some changes to how we operated:

- We now circulate timed agendas beforehand so members know how long we have for each item (with careful chairing to try and keep ahead).
- AOB items are usually given a cut-off the Sunday before the Tuesday meeting so that the meeting doesn't drag on just at the point at which people think it's about to finish.
- I carefully worked with the PCC and the congregation to encourage right membership – recognising it's not a 'fit' for everyone. We identified that simply 'liking coming along to meetings' wasn't a sufficient reason to be there. This involved some affirmation of people who thought about stepping down to ask them to stay, some acceptance of resignations so people could leave, and some careful invitation of newer members of the congregation to make sure the PCC wasn't just people who had been at the church 15 years or more (this is still an issue: 40-50% of the church have arrived in the last seven years but only two out of 16 PCC members are among them, and one PCC member is about to celebrate 40 consecutive years as a PCC member).
- We have taken steps to clarify the role of PCC members.

- I always provide coffee and usually homemade cake to say thank you for coming, part-way through the meeting.
- We split into small groups for discussion – this works so much better than a plenary among 16-18 people.
- We don't try to solve all problems with conversations amongst 18 people – often it's better to take it out to a working group to bring proposals back rather than risk unnecessarily long or conflictual discussion.
- I often have pre-meetings with individuals to solve a myriad of potential problems before they rear their head on controversial issues within the meeting.

We also changed the agenda significantly:

- We always start with worship, a Bible reflection (me or one of the Readers) leading into open prayer, especially for growth. Then the first two agenda areas are 'mission and evangelism' and 'vision and growth'. These areas give us a chance to discuss and enthuse about what God is doing and might do through us with regard to our outward focus as a church and the development of vision. We do these first while people still have energy. That's usually the first hour.
- Then after a coffee break and chat we go into the governance – minutes, matters arising, apologies, finance and related matters, then issues affecting discipleship and development of church ministries including services and events, then AOB and close, usually no more than two hours after we first sit down.

We've noticed a number of changes in the life of the PCC:

- Higher expectations. The meetings are greatly improved, but people's expectations of what we can do have also increased. Interestingly that leads to many still seeing the PCC as boring, so there is more work to be done.
- Laughter. There is generally a very good atmosphere among the group.

6

Common Dysfunction

POOR
PROCESSES

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

POOR PROCESSES

Having prepared for a meeting, all that hard work can be easily undone by poor running of a meeting. Several processes are involved in running a good meeting.

- Chairing.
- Praying.
- Creative thinking.
- Handling conflict.
- Decision-making.
- Recording.

Chairing

Someone needs to be responsible for steering those gathered through the agenda in order to achieve the desired outcomes from the meeting. This is classically called ‘chairing’ a meeting, a phrase which some may find helpful, others not. In essence it is about steering or conducting the meeting²⁸. Without it a meeting can and will go in any direction; witness a meeting with a poor chair, where items not on the agenda are discussed, where some people are allowed to dominate the conversation, or where poor behaviour goes unchecked.

The incumbent is the chair of the PCC, but s/he is able to delegate the steering of the meeting to the vice-chair, and sometimes this will be a sensible thing to do, especially if the vice-chair has been appointed on the basis of real gifts in chairing meetings.

A good chair helps the meeting to run smoothly and efficiently. They will make sure that:

- All the business is dealt with, guided by the agenda.
- Everyone’s views are heard.
- Clear decisions are reached.
- The meeting starts and finishes on time.

The skills they will need include:

- **Oversight** An ability to keep an eye on the big picture of an item, and not allow it to get bogged down in unnecessary detail or distracted by a red herring.
- **Impartiality** An ability to not take sides, or to impose their own views on the meeting.
- **Encouragement** An ability to draw out those who are less vocal and quieten those who are overly vocal.

- **Emotional intelligence** An ability to read the room, to understand what is going on in the interactions between people, and to know when to draw attention to a group or individual dynamic affecting the meeting.
- **Summarising** An ability to summarise where things are in a discussion and suggest the next step forward.
- **Assertiveness** An ability to 'police' the agreed code of conduct, to handle people who are getting angry, to appropriately move things on.

A FRAMEWORK

It can help if the chair has a clear framework for a meeting. The simplest I know is a great tool for planning and running a meeting. There are four parts: purpose, code, processes and outcome.

a) Purpose

This is a micro-version of the clarity about the big purpose of the PCC. To be able to answer why we are having this particular meeting, why this item is on the agenda, brings a sense of energy to a meeting. In preparing for a meeting it helps if the chair has clear and energising answers to the purpose question, and has framed that into the most energising sentence to use as an item is introduced.

SCENARIO 1

As people shuffled into their seats **the vice-chair** called people to order: 'Mmm, I think it is time we got started as we have a lot to get through, some of which is sadly a little tedious. I hope we've got the best order for the main items, but if not we'll muddle through. I suppose we'd better start with the formalities. **Vicar**, would you like to say a brief prayer?'

And a little later...

'Item 16 on the agenda is a long-term issue: the lack of attendance at the APCM. We seem to ask this question every year but never make any progress. Maybe we just have to accept that people aren't interested. Any thoughts anyone?'





SCENARIO 2

As people shuffled into their seats the vice-chair called people to order: 'Thank you so much for being prompt as it is great to be able to start on time. As always there is lots of important stuff to get through. Please remember that we serve the congregation through our discussion of items that will make an impact on the mission and ministry of the church. In a moment we'll be reminded about some of our previous decisions and have an update on the impact they've had, but I simply wanted to remind us of our commitment to seek God's will, work well together, reflect our values and take action for the future. We all know that we depend on God in all that we do, so let's acknowledge that through prayer. Mary is going to lead us.'

And a little later...

'Our next item is one that has taxed us on previous occasions, but I am confident we can make some significant progress if we work hard on it. Thank you to Winston and Ruth for clarifying some of the issues so clearly in their paper. Our aim is to come up with a concrete proposal for how we can galvanise attendance and participation at the APCM. To help us do that, we are going to start by imagining an outrageous scenario. Imagine Danny Boyle, of the London Olympics 2012 opening ceremony fame, was charged with running our APCM on a budget of £1000, what would he do? Let's break into groups of three or four. We've got 10 minutes to come up with what he would do in the light of the issues identified in the paper.'

In his excellent book *Death by Meeting*²⁹, Patrick Lencioni mentions lack of clarity about purpose is one of the reasons why meetings don't go well. He suggests that a good meeting needs drama to hold people's attention and that drama comes from a compelling reason why the meeting is being held and why this item is being discussed. The chair's role is to inject drama, to energise the meeting through clear purpose, so that people are inspired to give of their best.

b) Code of conduct

Any group that meets on an ongoing basis can benefit from an agreed way of working or code of conduct. Such a code is simply about clarifying expectations, agreeing how things are done. One of the ways to generate such a code is to ask the group 'what most frustrates you about meetings you attend?' (see Part 2 session 3 for a creative way of doing this), and use the results to help the group generate their preferred way of how the PCC

runs, their own code. It may cover things like starting and ending on time, not talking over one another, valuing difference, encouraging honest debate, mobile phones switched off, and ways of praying together. Once agreed, it is the chair's role to encourage adherence to the code.

The England rugby coach for the World Cup winning team, Clive Woodward, tells of how he got the squad to develop their code of conduct. It was captured in a little black book, and once agreed all were expected to abide by it. One agreed part of the code was that to participate in training you had to be ready, changed and on the pitch five minutes before training started; otherwise you weren't allowed to participate. Imagine the first time Martin Johnson, the six foot seven inch captain of the squad, arrives on the pitch four minutes before the training is due to start and Clive Woodward has to tell him he can't attend the training session. But he did, and no one was ever a minute late for training again.

Of course we might not want to be so draconian, but the power of a code of conduct is in two things: (a) It is not forced upon a group, but generated by the group, so they own it. They have decided it. (b) It is implemented; otherwise it is a worthless exercise. So if the group has agreed no mobile phones during the meeting (and there are good reasons why you might not decide this, but that is another issue³⁰), and someone's phone beeps with an incoming text message and they look at it and begin to reply, someone will gently call them on that behaviour.

c) Processes

The third part of a framework for a meeting is to identify creative processes that will facilitate the effectiveness of the meeting. We're going to address more of these below, and consider prayer and the Scriptures, creative thinking, handling conflict, decision-making and action notes. These are all things that, if run well, can improve the functionality of a PCC. A good chair will be thinking about which approach to use on each occasion, varying the processes to fit the purpose of a particular item, and also to create emotional variation during the meeting.

d) Outcome

This is linked to purpose but is subtly different. Purpose tries to identify why an item is being discussed. Outcome tries to identify what the result of the discussion might look like. For example, with the discussion on the APCM, the reason why it is being discussed is that few people are attending the APCM and that is a problem because... The outcome of the discussion might be a decision about ways to improve the next APCM to encourage people to attend.

Framing things well

Purpose and outcome provide energy and direction to a conversation. Code and processes provide a way of helpfully addressing the item. A good chair uses the combination of these four factors to 'frame' the meeting and items within it to enable the best possible way of doing business together as a group.

There are several downloadable documents in Part 3 with helpful ideas about chairing meetings, including one written by a colleague of mine who describes how to prepare for 'awkward

moments'. His contention is that many such moments are actually predictable, and therefore you can give some thought to them before they arise.

There is an additional leadership dynamic here that we should not lose. The PCC is a part of the leadership of the church, and therefore needs to lead by example what it longs for the church to be about. It is also true that the chair of the PCC needs to lead by example what the PCC is about and what the church is about. This is quite a responsibility, but one which we ought to take into account when reflecting on the chairing of a PCC. For example, it may be possible to elect a vice-chair who is technically brilliant at chairing meetings, but has no commitment to the direction the church is going in, or desire to follow Jesus in their own lives. Their life will model something which undermines the very reason the PCC exists. Imagine instead a chair who is only reasonably good at chairing the meeting, but who is a beautiful example of a disciple of Jesus and passionately committed to the church fulfilling the mission and ministry of Christ. Who is going to have the most helpful impact on shaping the PCC to be all that it needs to be?

Prayer and the Scriptures

Part of seeking God's will is fulfilled through a commitment to make prayer and the Scriptures a central part of the PCC, not simply 'a nod to God' at the start and end of the meeting. Like so many aspects of the PCC, how it prays and engages with the Bible is ideally best decided by the group itself. But sometimes it will be necessary to be more directive. For example, a newly appointed vicar with a PCC of people who want prayer to be a central part of their meetings, but aren't sure how to make this a reality, will need to take a different approach to a newly appointed vicar with a PCC of people who see prayer as something the vicar does on their behalf. There will be appropriate next steps for both these PCCs, but they are likely to be quite different.

The way a PCC prays will be influenced by many things, including the spirituality of the church. But pray it should. This is a Christian gathering with Christ as its head. We turn to him in prayer to express our dependence on him, to give thanks for all he is doing, to seek his direction and ask for his wisdom and help.

Here are a few ideas on how we can develop the prayer life of a PCC.

ENCOURAGE THEM TO PRAY FOR THE PCC

Providing each member with some materials to help them pray for the PCC is a good way to start. These might include (examples in Part 3):

- A page of photos and names of the members of the PCC.
- A bookmark with days of the week or month with an item or person against each day to pray for.
- A weekly text message or tweet encouraging PCC members to pray for a particular item.
- A PCC prayer to be prayed once a week.
- A list of things to pray for following a meeting and sent out with the minutes.

HELP THEM TO PRAY AS A PCC

Perhaps the wise advice often given by spiritual directors to those seeking to pray is also appropriate for a PCC: 'pray as you can, not as you can't'. There is no point in having ten minutes for extemporary intercession if no one on the PCC has ever prayed in that way before.

- Begin with a familiar shortened act of worship. Some PCCs use the shortened version of evening prayer, others a Eucharist. Whatever is chosen, the key is to make connections during prayer with what is happening at the meeting.
- End with compline, or some other act of night prayer.
- Create a simple liturgy as a way of praying as a PCC (there is an example in Part 3).
- If the PCC is used to the vicar saying a prayer at the start, add the joint saying of the Lord's Prayer as the next step.
- Give each person one of the items on the agenda on a slip of paper (some will be duplicated) and in the prayers at the start of the meeting ask each of them to pray for that item in silence.
- Invite each person to write a two- or three- line prayer around a particular topic. Give them two or three minutes to do this. Then ask them to place their prayers in a receptacle, mix them up, and invite each person to take out a prayer. Each person then prays aloud the prayer they picked out.
- Break the group down into smaller groups of three or four. Give each group an item on the agenda to pray about. Ask them to talk about the item and what they think it would be good to pray about for a couple of minutes. Then invite them to pray in silence; give one person in the group a set prayer to pray on behalf of the group. They simply have to read it out. Or, perhaps you have got to the point where you can invite them to pray either out aloud or in silence.
- If sitting in a circle, as part of the prayers invite each of them to pray for the person on their right so that everyone is prayed for as you go into the rest of the meeting. You can guide them through what to pray... 'give thanks for the person on your right, for all that they mean to God and for what they bring to this meeting... pray for God's blessing on them... ask God to help them as they contribute to the meeting to give of their best'.
- When discussing a topic and sensing it is appropriate, pause the conversation and invite the group to sit in silence for a few minutes to see what percolates to the surface. It is important not to use this as a way of avoiding conflict, or even worse as a way of manipulating the group ('God has told me...').
- When a decision has been made, before moving on to the next item, pause to pray for the action that needs to be taken and those who are tasked with responsibility for ensuring it happens. You can do this as the chair in the early days, but gradually invite others to pray at this point.
- When reviewing an item, pause to pray to give thanks to God for all that has gone well.
- Develop some short (fun!) liturgical responses that can be used by anyone during the meeting. One we've used over the years in a meeting I'm a part of is: 'God is good.' 'It's just as well!' These short responses are a way of catching something that is important and God-affirming.

- Create a simple prayer wall. Give each person several super-sticky Post-it notes and when discussing an item ask them to capture on the Post-it notes the things that they think it would be good to pray about, one per Post-it. Then invite them to stick them on a wall, flipchart or wherever they can be seen. You can either gather people around that area and ask people to pray as a result of what is on the Post-its, or read them out as part of a prayer you offer.
- Give people a visual item as a way of encouraging them to pray, both during and after the meeting. For example, I once gave a group a bulb, a plastic plant pot and some soil. In a discussion about developing others as leaders we ended the discussion with potting up the bulbs, with the encouragement for each person to think of someone they would like to see grow and develop as a leader, and to write their name on the plastic pot when they got home and pray for their growth over the coming months.
- Sing as a way of praying. It can be a very simple chorus (like 'He is Lord', or 'In our lives be glorified', or 'O come let us adore him') that everyone may know. You can do it unaccompanied. When I do this, because I can't sing well, I normally pre-warn someone in the group who can sing in tune and ask them to start the song on a nod from me.
- As part of a PCC awayday have a session which is focused on prayer. It might include a number of 'stations' which have been set up with creative and varied ways of encouraging people to pray.
- Hold an occasional prayer gathering for the PCC. You can invite others to come from the church, and have a high expectation that all the PCC members will be there.

Undoubtedly you will have read some of these ideas and thought they would never work in your situation. No problem; just create ones that will work. What we are trying to achieve here is a way of helping the PCC to pray together so that there may be a spiritual heart to the PCC. Most groups get stuck in a particular way of praying. Our job as leader of the PCC is to encourage growth and development, creativity and innovation, spiritual life and vibrancy. Your PCC may feel a million miles from any of this, but with a sensitive, loving and committed approach it can be different. Alternatively your PCC may be way beyond what is suggested here, in which case keep looking for ways to further grow the spiritual life of the group (and share your ideas with the rest of us).

ENABLE THEM TO ENGAGE WITH THE BIBLE

Some PCCs begin with a short biblical reflection given by the vicar. Others engage with the Scriptures through the liturgy of evening prayer or the Eucharist. Others have a Bible verse that is the 'theme' verse for the year. All these can be good things, and ideally they are part of a wider engagement with the Bible that keeps the Scriptures as part of the conversation within a PCC. If the PCC is operating as an oversight body, there will be many items on the agenda where a study of the Bible will bring much-needed illumination and clarity. Such engagement doesn't need to be complex or lengthy.

- A passage sent out with the agenda with a few carefully crafted questions to encourage the members to reflect on how the passage might help the group as they seek God's will over a particular item.

- A book of the Bible the PCC agrees to read together or listen to over a period of time to help inform their thinking. This can be done with or without a study aid.
- In a more biblically literate church, a pause in a conversation to ask ‘how might the Bible shape our approach at this point?’
- In a less biblically literate church, a little input on a particular theme, topic or passage to inform the PCC as they discuss and debate.
- Encourage the personal reading of the Scriptures for the PCC members through the daily prayer app, Bible reading notes, the use of a Bible reading plan through an app like YouVersion, or the listening to the Bible being read through CDs or podcasts.

Shaping the PCC’s understanding of God, the world, the Church and themselves through the Scriptures will enrich the spiritual life of its members, and enable them to shape the church they serve in such a way.



Creative thinking

Those who specialise in how groups function tell us of a common dynamic that most groups settle into – inherited thinking. It is sometimes described as a curse. If you’ve experienced it, you will know why. Inherited thinking can often be spotted by the use of certain phrases: ‘We’ve tried that before...’, ‘We’ve always done it that way...’, ‘If it aint broke, why fix it...’, ‘If it was good enough for us, it is good enough for them...’. It can also be spotted in the deafening silence that follows any question that suggests things might be different. And more subtly it can be discerned by a raised eyebrow, a knowing look across a table, a crossed pair of arms and a myriad of other tell-tale body movements that indicate someone has just stepped outside of what is acceptable thinking.

In essence, inherited thinking is the way any group begins to ‘think’ if they aren’t gently (and sometimes not so gently) encouraged to do otherwise. It is the default place a group gets to when it thinks it has thought about everything. The really scary thing is that if a new person joins such a group, they can quite quickly be ‘socialised’ to the group and adopt the group approach.

Psychologists have done experiments with groups of randomly picked people where an individual is placed into a group and asked to identify out of two lines which is the longer. The answer is clear. Line A is longer than line B. What the individual doesn’t know is that this seemingly random group is no such thing. All the other people have been told to identify line B as the longer line. Despite what is obviously untrue, 65% of people will go with the group’s decision.

Therefore part of the role of the leader of the PCC is to prevent such inherited thinking dominating the group. Two things will help this process:

THINKING IN BREADTH

To encourage a group to think laterally, beyond their first answers, involves two parallel processes.

The first is to develop a culture where this is the norm. This is likely to take time, especially if the PCC is fairly set in its ways. It begins by clarifying the purpose and identity of the PCC. It helps if it is clear the PCC isn't simply a group to rubber-stamp whatever the vicar wants. It exists to creatively engage with the issues that need to be addressed on behalf of the church. This purpose can then be reinforced by setting expectations through the way items are introduced.

'Our next item is to think through how we encourage greater financial responsibility for the ministry and mission of the church amongst those who regularly attend. We know that in the past many have worked hard on fundraising events and they have produced significant income. Yet in the light of our studies of the Scriptures over these past few meetings we've also gained some insights into stewardship that ought to affect the way we approach this issue. I want to be clear this evening that we will need to think creatively and differently from maybe how we have done before.'

Secondly we can use a variety of ways of helping the group to think laterally.

Brainstorming

The most widely known way of helping lateral thinking is brainstorming (or 'thought showers' if you want to use the more PC term). The idea is simple; people are encouraged to come up with as many ideas as they can. In practice it is quite a skill to run a good brainstorming session. Two things regularly reduce their effectiveness:

- a) Even if it has been introduced clearly ('all ideas are acceptable, and at this stage we don't make a comment on anyone else's idea, but just record them'), it normally isn't long before someone comments on something another person suggests. Then the conversation gets either side-tracked into a discussion over one person's suggestion, thus effectively closing the brainstorming; or a negative comment is made and others quickly pick up the message that certain ideas are more acceptable than others, thus effectively minimising creativity.
- b) The session isn't allowed to run for long enough. The typical pattern of a brainstorm is that in the first few minutes there is a flurry of ideas and thoughts. After a short while these dry up, and people begin to feel a little uncomfortable with the silence. At this point most leaders stop. Bad news. What has occurred in those first few minutes is that people have come up with most of the obvious ideas. Some of them will be new and different, but there is another level of ideas that are yet to come to light. These are the ones that lay beyond the obvious, that lay the other side of the embarrassing silence. A good facilitator will let the group know this: 'That's been a good few minutes of ideas. Now what often happens is a group dries up after a short while, and then the exercise stops. But if we hold the exercise for another few minutes, we'll begin to come up with another level of ideas that aren't so obvious, and you never know, in them might be the one that is ultimately

going to be most helpful for us. So let's stick with it for a while longer and see what else we can come up with.'

Once the exercise is really finished it helps to know how you are going to process the ideas. Sometimes they can be grouped into similar categories. Other times they can be placed under several headings (the headings will differ according to the issue being explored). Sometimes each one is explored with its pros and cons. The purpose of all this is to release some creativity so that the group moves beyond inherited thinking and identifies some new ways of thinking about something.

However before we get carried away with the idea of brainstorming, it is worth noting that research shows that its primary value is not in generating great ideas, but helping people feel connected. Indeed, research consistently shows that people actually generate more creative ideas when asked to think about an issue on their own than in a group session. Also, the larger the group, the poorer the quality of output, so if you do choose this method, it is better to have three groups of four doing the exercise than one group of 12³¹.

Use of image or story

Another way of encouraging lateral thinking is to use an image, picture or story. For example, in a discussion about evangelism, place some photos of well-known people from the community who aren't involved in church life in different parts of the room. Invite people to think why they don't attend church and what would attract them to the Christian faith. Inherited thinking will come up with things like 'Not interested', 'They were never taken as kids', 'If the services were more fun'. Encouraging them to use their imaginations as to what other reasons there might be for their non-attendance, or why trying to get them to come to church is never going to work, will reveal a far wider range of insights.

Or use an image that deliberately pushes people to think in a different way about an issue. It may be a work of art based on a Bible passage. It may be a more abstract portrayal of something familiar. It could be a video from YouTube or a contemporary song.

Thinking free

University of Southern California President Steve Sample outlines this third approach in his book *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership*. He writes about 'thinking free', removing constraints that lead to inherited thinking. He encourages people to go way beyond normal thoughts to discover alternative ways of doing things, and suggests outrageous scenario-setting as a tool to aid thinking free.

Outrageous scenario-setting involves coming up with a literally outrageous scenario related to the issue one is seeking to tackle. The outrageous scenario (the more outrageous the better) gets creative juices going without being hampered by the constraints of a normal conversation. For example, if a PCC is working on a Mission Action Plan to shape the future life of the church, an outrageous scenario might be...

The PCC receives a letter from the Bishop explaining that the diocese has declared itself bankrupt, and that Richard Branson has bought the diocese (I did say outrageous) and intends to make it a going concern through regeneration of the churches. He has decided to use your church as a pilot project, and is going to bring his Mission Action Plan to the PCC next week. He wants to maintain the faith-based nature of the congregation but is under no other constraints. What would his MAP look like?

Such an exercise will get people thinking differently, or thinking free as Sample calls it. It takes some skill to lead such an exercise, and perhaps it isn't the best of the three techniques to use as a starting point, but it is certainly one to have in the toolbox for when there is a degree of trust and openness to thinking creatively about issues.

THINKING IN DEPTH

The second type of thinking it is good to encourage on a PCC is thinking with sufficient depth about a subject, by which I mean avoiding the danger of missing the obvious. We become programmed to see things in the way we expect to see them, and can easily miss important details. Also we don't think something through sufficiently to spot the 'unintended consequences'. We plan to do A and believe B will be the outcome of A, but in fact there are two other outcomes we didn't see that are P and Z, and both carry serious consequences.

The primary tools to help a group think in depth are questions and space. The right question can unlock insight that is there but not yet seen or articulated. It may be as simple as 'What are the consequences of this suggestion that we haven't yet spotted?' Space provides an opportunity for reflection, in particular for those who are wired up to need time and space to think well. It also takes the heat, the impetus, out of a decision that sometimes obscures what would otherwise be seen. I am sure many of us have had the experience of making a decision and then on reflection realising why it was a poor decision.

Thinking in depth, pushing ourselves to explore possible outcomes and unintended consequences, can help us make wiser and better decisions. The bigger the decision the more important it is to take time to think well.

Handling conflict

Lencioni also mentions a surprising reason why meetings don't function well – lack of conflict. You may be sitting there thinking he obviously hasn't been to your PCC where the last thing you need is more conflict. One of the puzzling dynamics of PCCs is why people feel they can behave in ways in a Christian gathering that would never be acceptable in any other sphere of life. But hear Lencioni out.

He argues that a meeting where everyone agrees with one another is actually a pretty dull affair, and, even more importantly, it is a meeting where either the wrong items are on the agenda or people aren't being honest. The whole point of having a meeting is that something needs to be discussed and decided that is of sufficient importance and complexity to mean that it is vital more than one person applies their mind to the matter in hand.

If something isn't of sufficient importance, it shouldn't find itself on an agenda of a meeting unless there is a legal reason it has to. For example, whether the bench to be placed in the graveyard in memory of a much-loved parishioner is in oak or pine shouldn't take up PCC time. Someone who has the right abilities to make a good judgement needs to be delegated with responsibility to make that sort of decision. I am aware that such an item can often be a significant flash point, but it really is a decision to be made outside of the PCC.

I would say the same is true for the colour of the church carpet. Of course not everyone will like the colour when it is chosen, but spending hours on a PCC looking at samples is simply not an item important enough for such a gathering (and I say that as someone who does take seriously how important it is to get the best possible colour).

If something isn't sufficiently complex it shouldn't appear on the PCC agenda. It is important, but not complex. For example, the parish administrator's computer has started playing up. He will need a new one. It is important he gets one fairly urgently in order for his work to continue, but it isn't sufficiently complex a decision to mean that everyone on the PCC should invest their time in deciding which computer. Someone should be delegated that responsibility with a clear budget.

The items that are ideal for the PCC agenda are the important and complex issues. Such issues warrant a group of people giving their undivided time and energy to finding the best way forward. Because they are important they are likely to generate some heat, and because they are complex they are likely to lead to people holding different views. Perfect. Conflict guaranteed.

Lencioni is quick to point out, though, that there are two types of conflict in a meeting: the right sort and the wrong sort. The wrong sort of conflict is personal, where one person gets at, criticises, and belittles another, where it becomes a battle between two people wanting to get their own way. The right sort of conflict is about the issue, not about the person, where together people are trying to work out the best way forward on the issue.

The difference can be visualised in this way. Imagine a PCC sitting around a large table for their meeting. With the right sort of conflict the chair has placed an item in the middle of the table. Everyone is looking at it trying to make sense of it and decide what to do about it. People each have a different angle on the item, so they offer thoughts from their perspective. Others listen carefully, aware that they don't have the whole picture. People express different views, but bit by bit a growing sense of clarity emerges within the group about what the item is and the best way to deal with it.

Alternatively imagine a PCC where the item is placed in the centre of the table, and within minutes people have stopped looking at the item and started looking at one another. Someone says 'The trouble with you is....' Another person says 'I don't care what you want...', another 'It's not me, but people are saying you are...' Here the conflict is no longer about the item, it is between the people. Not good.

In reality the wrong sort of conflict is very common in groups, partly because they may not understand the difference between the two sorts of conflict, partly because no one 'polices' it when conflict turns into the wrong sort, but primarily because, Lencioni argues, there is a lack of trust within the group. Without trust it is very difficult to have healthy conflict.

Lencioni offers a simple yet effective model for people to work well together, the foundation of which is trust. When people are uncomfortable being vulnerable with one another, unwilling to admit their weaknesses, mistakes or need for help, there is limited trust within the group. People have to 'guard' themselves, fight their corner, and persuade others to join 'their side'. In essence the group operates as a bunch of individuals hoping (or even determined) to get their way. There is no sense of togetherness, of collaboration, of functioning as a group.

There are multiple reasons why a PCC may function in this way.

- It may be lack of understanding about the purpose and identity of the group.
- It may be painful past history where people have been hurt and reacted angrily creating a climate of suspicion and fear.
- It may be dominant personalities intimidating others into submission.

But very often it is simply a combination of smaller factors that can quite quickly be addressed: (a) People not knowing one another well enough, so there is little relational glue to hold them together. (b) A lack of clear leadership of the group to encourage trust and healthy conflict. (c) Little modelling of vulnerability which helps people to relate realistically and openly to one another.

The incumbent's role is to encourage trust through providing opportunity for the relational aspects of the group to develop: as mentioned before, everything from great refreshments and fun at the PCC meeting, to hosting a meal for the PCC or doing some simple activity together (go for a walk, paint the hall, clear an elderly person's garden).

The incumbent also needs to model weakness, vulnerability, openness. They can do this through sharing one or two of the struggles they are experiencing in their role and asking the PCC to pray for them; during a discussion about an item acknowledging that they don't have a clue what to do, but that they are convinced that as a group they will find a way through; conducting brief activities within the PCC to encourage greater openness.

And finally the incumbent can chair the meeting well so that healthy conflict is encouraged and people are helped to feel comfortable as it develops (especially if they are not used to such conflict). In the same way, a good chair can discourage unhealthy conflict by dealing with it well when it kicks off. Over time a group then learns how to have healthy conflict, and this itself builds further trust.

For some, like me, who don't find conflict of any sort easy, this is quite difficult to do, but over the years I've become convinced of just how important it is for me as a leader to quarry for conflict within a meeting so that the group can get to a decision that is genuinely better than if any one person had made the decision on their own. For others, your love of conflict may mean you need to hold yourself in check to ensure that the emotional temperature isn't too high for others within the meeting. A good way to monitor this is to agree as part of your code of conduct what to do if the emotional temperature is getting too high. That then acts as a pressure valve: not that the lid is taken off and all the pressure released, because then the item won't get cooked (if you are with me on the analogy), but rather that the pressure is released sufficiently so that things don't explode and create an unpleasant mess.

A healthy PCC will have lots of conflict – good natured, issue focused, and purpose driven.



Decision-making

A healthy PCC will also take action for the future by making decisions that influence the life of the people of God they are overseeing. This is the nature of leadership. The reason we pray, study the Scriptures, engage in creative thinking and purposeful conflict is to make great decisions. But even here there are processes that can help good decision-making.

In essence there are three options when it comes to decision-making in a group.

- **A closed decision**, where an individual (or sometimes a number of individuals working together) makes the decision with or without any input from others. In a small way the chair of the meeting will be making this type of decision fairly often in order for the group to function, and if done appropriately no one will mind.
- **A consultative decision**, where input is sought from the group and together they formulate the best way forward and make a decision, often on a 'vote' (be it formal or informal, a simple majority or a 'super-majority' threshold i.e. at least 75%). Those who research these things tell us that in most groups 70% of decisions are made this way.
- **A consensus decision**, where all need to be in 'consensus' with the decision (which doesn't mean unanimity or even agreement, but united about the decision). Much is written about this approach to decision-making, one approach being rooted within the Quaker tradition³².

Each of these approaches, and the many variations within them, has strengths and weaknesses. What helps a group to function well is to know which approach is being used for this particular item and why, and for a group not to be locked into only one way of doing things.

It also helps if decision-making takes into account personality type. Some people are external processors of ideas and information. They think by talking things through with others and process their thoughts externally as the conversation happens. Other people are internal processors. They think best by reflecting internally on things, normally away from other people and with some space and time to chew on things. My wife and I are at opposite ends of this spectrum. I tend to want to talk something out and come to a decision there and then (external processor). She prefers to talk about something and then go away and reflect on it before coming to a decision (internal processor).

On most PCCs there will be a mix of people, some like me, others like my wife. How do we enable both to contribute their best to decision-making? Here are a couple of ideas:

- **Create space** The simplest way to engage different processor types is to create space in a meeting for people to reflect and think. It can be as short as a minute ('We're going to have a minute's quiet to reflect and think for a moment') to a longer period where we provide some activities to help people reflect. There is an argument that every meeting should have such 'breathing spaces' in them to aid the full engagement of all present.
- **Take three meetings** For a significant decision, the first time it is on the agenda it is there as an introduction to the topic. There may be a paper or a presentation that outlines what the issue is, why it is important and what sort of decision the PCC will need to come to. The second time on the agenda it is there for discussion, but no decision. This has the twin advantage of taking a little of the heat out of the item, because no decision is going

to be made at the meeting, and it also allows others to reflect on the discussion between meetings before having to decide their position. At the third meeting it is on the agenda for decision, introduced by a brief review of where the discussion got to, and an invitation for any new thoughts to be offered before the decision is made. Now this may sound like a long process, but for certain items it is a great way of allowing everyone to be part of the decision, recognising the different ways people process things.

- **Make decisions in rounds** In this approach it all happens in one meeting, but you adopt a very focused approach. The item is introduced with sufficient clarity and detail to ensure everyone knows what the issue is and why it is important. The process is explained. You then go round the group listening to each person in turn. They are invited to contribute their thoughts on the best way forward and encouraged to adapt their ideas in the light of what others say. No one is allowed to interrupt or interject when someone is having their turn. The discussion lasts for as many rounds as is necessary. Interestingly three rounds is all it often takes before some clarity emerges. This approach encourages people to listen, prevents domination, enables everyone to speak, and is often quicker than the more common conversational approach. It is best used with highly emotional and complex issues.

When making the decision it can help to check what level of commitment people are giving. For example, if a decision is made on a simple nod of the head, yes I agree, at that point we don't know what is meant by 'agree'. It could mean 'This is so important I am prepared to die to make it happen' or 'I am really not sure about this but the general view seems to be that it is a good idea, but if it starts to go wrong don't expect me to stand up for it' or 'For goodness sake we've been talking about this for so long and it is getting late and I am tired and want to go home, yes I agree.' Checking the level of agreement gives a clue as to what people are actually saying. There are a number of ways of doing this:

- Invite a simple show of fingers on the hand. Ask people to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 equals not at all committed and 5 equals totally committed to the decision.
- Hand round a slip of paper with a scale or boxes for people to tick against statements, and then collect them in to 'weigh' the agreement level.
- For a slightly more sophisticated version look up Dotmocracy³³ online and download or create your own version of this process using sheets to help people clarify their position.

One further factor in decision-making is what it means for the PCC to 'own' any decision made. Lencioni's third common dysfunction of groups working together is a lack of commitment to implementing decisions. This normally occurs because either the decision is ambiguous or the group don't own it as a whole. Ambiguity can be removed by reviewing any decision made by asking some questions:

- What exactly have we decided?
- Is that how everyone understood the decision?
- Who is responsible for ensuring it is actioned?
- When do they need to do this by?

The response to these questions is ideally written down and read back to the group to check everyone is happy with the way it has been recorded. I've been in far too many meetings where

decisions have been made, the secretary to the group has quietly recorded them, and when the minutes come out what has been recorded is not what I thought had been decided, or is unclear, without anyone's name against it and with no timeline. Tedious as it may sound, these simple questions ensure clarity and therefore increase the possibility of people being committed to action being taken.

With regard to ownership of the decision, the roots of this are in clarity of purpose and identity of the group. If the members of the PCC understand that they aren't there to get their own way, but rather to work well together in serving the church, if there is a sense of 'we're in this together and of course we're going to disagree but we trust one another enough to have healthy conflict', then people will know that decisions will be made which personally they may not agree with, nonetheless they are committed to seeing them implemented regardless of initial disagreements. What does this look like?

- When a PCC member is in a personal conversation and they mention the decision that has been made, even though they personally thought it wasn't the right decision, their response is 'It was a hard decision that one, but as a group we came to an agreed position and now we are all working hard to implement it.'
- When six months later it transpires the decision wasn't the best one, the individual who didn't agree with it doesn't say (and in an ideal world, even think) 'I told you so, if only you'd done what I suggested...' because they share the pain of it going wrong, and want to find a way out of the mess.
- When a decision made is heavily influenced by one individual in the group, no one says afterwards 'We'll see if he was right' because the decision wasn't his decision, it genuinely was the group's.
- When after six months it has turned out to be a success the group shares the sense of achievement together; it is not focused on one individual.

Good decision-making includes everyone in the process of getting to the decision, and involves genuine ownership of whatever decision is made. A healthy PCC will make many such decisions because the group doesn't exist for itself, but as a servant of the wider church body responsible for making decisions on their behalf.

ROGER'S STORY of inheriting a dysfunctional PCC

The PCC I inherited was one that I had been a member of as a priest in the parish. When I became an incumbent, I knew it needed to change. It was used to having up to 30 items on the agenda and yet regularly finished within the hour. That might sound quite efficient. The vicar liked an early night so ploughed through the agenda with every item 'for information' rather than 'for decision'. Things came to a head one night when item 23 arrived entitled 'choosing a carpet for the new church refurbishment'. The vicar showed the range of carpets available with one sample missing – the one he had returned to the carpet fitter when he had made the order for it.



When I took over as chair, I noted three things that were dysfunctional. Firstly, the PCC did not attract the parish 'movers and shakers'. No one with any initiative would stand for election as the committee was little more than a rubber stamp. If they did join, they would quickly leave. Secondly, although the vicar got an early night, the PCC members did not. The 'after-meeting' in the car park could often last for longer than the real meeting as members moaned and grizzled about the decisions made. Thirdly, the vicar had to take early retirement due to stress. His fear of losing control took its toll and brought about a whole range of physical conditions which congregation members could see were a product of his anxieties.

I soon realised that for the sake of my own health, and that of the church community, we needed some changes. We maintained a pretty efficient air over the reporting back of items of business, but loosened the agenda to enable discussion around the matters of real strategic importance. People loved discovering a voice and making a contribution, and gradually the PCC became more representative of the whole community. The meetings finished a bit later, but people went straight home afterwards and far from giving myself a headache, I now look back on those days as days of joyful co-operation.

Recording

The PCC is a legal body, so an official record of the meeting needs to be taken, circulated and verified. The origin of 'minutes' is that they were intended to be a record of what was done at a meeting, not what was said, that could be read in a minute. Taking minutes is quite a skill, and there are lots of places one can go for helpful advice³⁴. In 'An introduction for PCC secretaries' in Part 3 of this resource there is some advice for the PCC secretary on taking minutes. Here are a few tips:

- Try to ensure that the secretary of the PCC either has experience of minute-taking that convinces you s/he has the right skills to do it well, or has the skills required to be a good minute-taker even if they haven't done it before.
- Use a template to help the process of minute-taking (there is an example in Part 3 of this resource), be it on paper or laptop or tablet.
- Encourage the person taking minutes to always ask for clarification if they are unclear what to record. Always.
- Emphasise it is not about recording who said what unless absolutely necessary, but rather the gist of what was said.
- Ensure they are 'written up' within 24 hours of the meeting, and not left to be written up just before they need to be distributed ahead of the next meeting.
- Have them checked by the chair of the meeting as soon as they are produced.

- Circulate them within three days asking for any comments or clarifications that can then be placed in the official minutes taken to the next PCC meeting. This will also mean everyone has a record of action to be taken.
- Make them look as attractive as possible. It will help people to read them. Just because they are a legal record doesn't mean they can't be attractively presented.
- Be sure to post them in a variety of places where others within the congregation can see them: PCC notice board, website, sent out in an email, linked to a Facebook page.

As the leader of the PCC it is our responsibility to ensure good minutes are produced as a tool to facilitate the healthy functioning of the group. Therefore if this isn't happening it helps to quickly take action to sort out whatever the problem is.

In summary

Processes may appear a little mundane to some, tedious even, but they make such a difference to how a PCC functions. Good processes will enable everyone to contribute their best, ensure the PCC fulfils its purpose, and encourage fun and friendship amongst the members.

7

Common Dysfunction

NO FOLLOW-
THROUGH

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

NO FOLLOW-THROUGH



SCENARIO 1

Simon notices that he is drumming his fingers on the table and stops. He's not sure he will stay on the PCC any longer. Eighteen months with so few clear decisions made, and then when decisions are made most of them not being implemented. This last one beats them all. After another long day at work and no time to get home and see the family before coming to the PCC meeting, he wonders why he bothers.

Winston can feel the tension in the room, but isn't quite sure why it exists.

Mary is feeling flustered, trapped even. She knows they decided at the meeting two months previously that several of them had been tasked with particular pieces of work to forward the Mission Action Plan process they were considering as a church. As the secretary she had recorded the decision in the minutes. She also knows from her previous conversation with the vicar just how much pressure he's been under with the two funerals, one a teenage suicide and the other the death of a young mum in the community through cancer leaving two young children. And it now seems as if **Duncan** hasn't progressed things either.

Duncan stares belligerently at **Simon**. Who is he to question whether anything has been done since the last meeting. He dislikes these incomers who think they have better ways of doing things.

The vicar realises nothing has been done since the last meeting, and knows he is partly to blame. An awkward silence fills the room, and no one dares speak. He knows it was up to him to try and rescue the situation.



SCENARIO 2

The review of the decisions from the last meeting was always a positive part of the meeting. Each person spoke about the actions they had taken.

Duncan started with the financial projections for the next three years to help the PCC be clear about their position as they considered the Mission Action Plan (MAP) process. The summary distributed with the meeting agenda had elicited some helpful questions.

The vicar then spoke about his meeting with the diocesan MAP consultant and offered a diagram on the flipchart which gave them all a greater understanding of the process and the timescale they were looking at.

Mary distributed copies of the book they had agreed to get for everyone to read.

Simon smiled as he reflected on the progress that had been made and sensed a rising degree of energy for the process they were about to embark upon. Whilst initially sceptical that it would make any difference, he was beginning to see how seriously everyone was taking it, and was excited about the changes that might come about as a result of the MAP process.

Nobody likes turning up at a meeting, contributing their best to a discussion and decision-making process, and then leaving knowing that at the next meeting nothing will have been done, and the chair won't draw attention to the lack of progress. Actually when I say nobody, that isn't quite true. There may be a small number of people for whom the status gained by being part of a group is sufficient reason to turn up. They are there to fulfil a personal need, and are not necessarily that interested in the group completing any tasks.

As we identified earlier, a PCC exists for a number of reasons, and in order for it to fulfil its reason for existence, it will need to make wise decisions about complex and important matters that will make a difference to the mission and ministry of Christ in the community and beyond. Once those decisions are made they need to be implemented. It is the group's responsibility to ensure that happens. If implementation isn't possible, the decisions are revised to take into account new information or a change of circumstances.

Here are some ideas to help with implementation:

- Be sure that the action point is clearly recorded as mentioned above.
- At the end of a meeting, summarise action points and invite anyone who has their name against an action point to make a note of it at the meeting. This will do two things. It helps the person to own the action point, and check that they have understood it. If it isn't clear, as they write it down they are more likely to ask. Secondly, it means they have a note of the action point that they can take away with them and place somewhere to remind them. Using Post-it notes can be helpful, as people can literally stick them somewhere visible.
- Distribute the minutes ideally within 24 hours or at the latest within three days so everyone has a record of the action points and can start working on them. Generally the most effective time to work on an action point is straightaway, while it is fresh in the mind.
- Mid-point between the PCC meetings circulate a summary of the action points via email and invite people to update you or the secretary on how things are going. Or, if you have the time, ring each person to ask how their action point is going. This means that if someone has forgotten, they are prompted to get onto it with enough time still to do something about it. It also means that if someone is struggling they can chat it through with someone and hopefully find a way forward.
- Review action points at the start of the next meeting, remembering to review ones from earlier meetings that still haven't been completed, with an expectation of progress.
- When an action has been completed, celebrate in a way which is appropriate for the action. A small action may simply be a verbal recognition of job done and a word of thanks to the person who has done it. A medium size action may be a pause to highlight the good things that have come from the completion of the action, a space to pray and give thanks to God, and a personal word after the meeting with the person who did the work to thank them for all they did. A larger action may involve a party to celebrate. Everything from a special cake and a glass of something nice, to a full-blown party where the whole church gathers to celebrate what has been accomplished. A hand-written personal card of thanks to the key people is a good way of thanking them and recognising their hard work.
- When an action isn't completed, a gentle but persistent exploration of what has held it up and what can be done about it will be good. Sometimes the timeline will need adjusting. On other occasions, for unforeseen reasons, it may no longer be possible for the original person to complete the action and it needs to be handed on to someone else. And on still other occasions the decision may need revising in the light of new information.

Good meetings help further things, make progress, and part of the culture of a good PCC is that people know they will be held accountable for actions that they have agreed to take. Follow-through ensures this happens.



8

Common Dysfunction

INAPPROPRIATE
MEMBERSHIP

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

INAPPROPRIATE MEMBERSHIP

This is a difficult subject. What does ‘inappropriate’ mean?

- **Legally** there are certain guidelines that govern who can be on a PCC. If these guidelines are broken, someone may be deemed inappropriate. For example, a PCC member must be 16 or over.
- **Practically**, perhaps there are more people on the PCC than there should be. Guidelines give the recommended ratio of elected PCC members to the size of the electoral roll (see Part 3 ‘Electoral roll and the size of the PCC’).

Such ‘inappropriate membership’ is relatively easy to sort out. But there is a further type of inappropriate membership which is much trickier to handle.

For example, is it appropriate for a person who doesn’t attend church to be on the PCC? Jill arrived as vicar of several parishes in a multi-parish benefice. On one of the PCCs in a small rural community there were eight members. The regular congregation at the church was five, three of whom were on the PCC. Of the remaining five PCC members, three attended church at festivals, and two hardly ever.

Or what of the person who seems deliberately intent on sabotaging every suggestion or idea that could lead to change?

Or the PCC secretary, who is unable to take minutes, struggles to put a decent agenda together, always misses deadlines, and rarely turns up for meetings on time?

Or the person who subtly but systematically bullies others on the PCC through a combination of persuasive charm and aggressive outbursts?

Or the PCC member who really wasn’t sure what the PCC was, but allowed someone to persuade them to stand and clearly doesn’t want to be a part of it?

Or the much-loved treasurer who is now in her 80s, has been treasurer for 48 years, but is clearly losing her ability to keep up with the increasingly complex accounts, and has recently presented a number of account summaries with significant inaccuracies?

Each of these scenarios may require a different approach, which is why this common dysfunction is difficult. In addition, in many contexts it isn’t as if we have huge numbers of talented people lining up to join the PCC with lots of time and energy to give. Indeed, the opposite is commonplace, struggling to find anyone who is able to be the treasurer, anyone who wants to be part of the PCC. However, what is clear is that if any of the above scenarios aren’t addressed it will impact the life of the PCC, normally in an unhelpful way.

A) THOSE WHO DON'T ATTEND CHURCH

Knowing a person's faith status is never simple. Those who attend church may well be moving in a direction away from Christ, have a heart of stone, be in an inappropriate relationship which no one knows about, and yet faithfully turn up every Sunday and recite the Apostle's Creed. Those who don't attend church may be moving in a direction towards Christ, be servant hearted, be working hard to live a 'holy' life, and yet don't attend church regularly because it simply doesn't fit with their weekly routine or season of life.

The vocation of the church is to make disciples, and that includes those on the PCC, so one way forward would be to see it as a great opportunity to nurture faith and grow disciples. I know of vicars in such situations who gently introduced things into the life of the PCC that have led to people growing in faith, and the revitalisation of the PCC members has then spilt out into the congregation as a whole. Has it happened overnight? Certainly not, but over some years. With love and patience people have been nurtured into a vibrant faith in Christ.

What is clear is that everyone on the PCC needs to understand the spiritual nature of the work they are called to, aided by the clarity of identity and purpose of the PCC and the code of conduct created by the PCC to inform the way it operates.

B) THOSE WHO ARE SQUARE PEGS IN ROUND HOLES

Sometimes this is necessary because there don't seem to be any round pegs for the round holes, although there may be an alternative way of configuring the hole. For example, in a rural multi-parish benefice of eight parishes, finding eight treasurers for the eight PCCs was never going to happen. So the incumbent invited someone with ability as a treasurer and some time as a recently retired person to be the treasurer for all the PCCs, without actually being a member of any of them (secretaries and treasurers do not have to be elected members of the PCC).

Yet someone who is a square peg in a round hole is best avoided if at all possible, for two crucial reasons:

- Ultimately, it is likely they will find themselves de-energised and frustrated by the role, as most people can pick up when they aren't doing something well, or when others are frustrated by the way they are doing the role. It is not fair on them to leave them struggling in a role for which they are not gifted. Much better to find them a role which does fit their abilities and passions.
- When someone is in a role for which they are not suited it puts extra demands on others, and often leads to things not functioning as well as they might and to other people being overly stretched.

Moving people from a poor fit is nearly always tricky, even if the person is relatively secure in who they are, not threatened by feedback, and open to change. It becomes highly charged if the person is insecure, closed to feedback and wedded to the role, either because their identity is tightly connected to the post or because they enjoy the power that the role affords. It is for these reasons that this is one of the bigger challenges one faces in leadership. How do we act in such situations?

Sometimes we may need to accept that someone may not be in the right role, but removing them would destroy trust, or so severely damage a relationship, that now is not the right time to do anything about it. There is a balance in such decisions between the relational and task aspects of leadership. Here are a few ideas to help wise discernment.

Look before you leap

Is Fred really inappropriate for his role on the PCC? Check, and then check again. How do you know? It can help to ask questions of others and gain a wider perspective, although you need to choose carefully those you talk with. To help gain clarity ask yourself: 'If it were an appointing decision, would you appoint Fred again? If he told you he was resigning, would you feel terribly disappointed or secretly relieved? Why?'

Identify reasons

Why do you think Fred is a square peg in a round hole? Is it an issue of faith? Or is it a character issue? A competence issue? Has Fred been in the role too long? Does he use power inappropriately? Was he good in the role once, but life-stage, illness or age means this is no longer the case? Our course of action will vary according to our answer to these questions.

If Fred is a square peg in a round hole, create a climate for an honest review where the issues can be explored. Generally, it is more helpful to lead people into the right-shaped role than to try to prise them out of the wrong-shaped one. This may well take time, but it is worth it if you can get to a good place with the individual.

It will also send clear messages to others that you care about people and are willing to invest in their development. However, there will be occasions when, for a whole variety of often complex reasons, things won't go smoothly. Then the leader has to make a decision about what to do. Generally we are more likely to make the right decision if we talk with others about it rather than do it on our own. But a decision, however tough, does have to be made.

And what if Fred is a round peg in a round hole – but has simply become tired, or has lost a sense of vision and enthusiasm? We can either re-envision him or invite him to resign. Re-envisioning may involve specific and positive affirmation, further training, an invitation to train others, a sabbatical. If resigning seems to be the best option, it may help Fred to identify that a 'season' has come to an end and to explore with him future opportunities for service.

Involve others

Don't work alone. It makes sense to involve others in decisions and processes which are rarely straightforward, often complicated, and sometimes toxic. Include churchwardens, and where necessary Rural or Area Deans or Archdeacons.

Take time

We are dealing with people, who deserve to be treated carefully, sensitively and with respect. Others will be watching.

Take action

John Maxwell suggests that one of the hardest decisions a leader has to make is to move someone on from a role for which they are not suited. But he also urges that we cannot afford not to do this when the situation demands decisive action. The implications are too serious: others will suffer; the person concerned will not be served properly – and people will fear that other tough decisions may be shirked.

C) THOSE WHO BEHAVE INAPPROPRIATELY

It is a sad reality that sometimes one comes across people on PCCs who treat people badly, manipulate information for their own preferences, and even bully others. Such behaviour can present in a wide variety of ways: belligerence, passive aggressive, open hostility, tantrums, charm, holding back information, shouting, sulking, super-spirituality and so on.

When we observe such behaviour two questions may help us to discern what to do about it:

1. Is this behaviour we are witnessing a one-off, a rare occurrence, or a persistent pattern?
2. Where on the spectrum from unpleasant to abusive does the behaviour lie?

A one-off unpleasant act is likely to be something that will surprise everyone, and probably has links to a wider reality beyond the actual event that sparked the behaviour. Such behaviour is generally best handled with love, care and forgiveness.

Ongoing persistent unpleasantness will require a firm confrontation, and if necessary a request for the person to take an absence from the PCC for a period of time to reflect on their position, and/or to receive help to explore the reasons for such behaviour. Of course such a request (and it can only be a request, as they are an elected member of the PCC) may not be received well. I have heard of a number of clergy whose lives have been made miserable by unpleasant behaviour of a PCC member. Often such behaviour is accompanied by clever and manipulative ways that mean the perpetrator makes it even more difficult to tackle them on the issues.

Abusive behaviour ideally is dealt with carefully and directly, but many incumbents will feel unsure of how to do this. At this point seeking experienced or qualified help is a good thing. If it is possible, talk through the issues confidentially with your churchwardens, or if the churchwarden is the source of inappropriate behaviour, with a trusted member of the PCC. There may be a more experienced clergy colleague in the deanery (or in your network of clergy friends) who has had to deal with such a person in the past and has some wisdom to offer. Alternatively the Archdeacon may be a person to talk with about the situation. There are also resources online and books that can provide useful insights into how to handle such behaviour³⁵.

In all of these scenarios, and the many others that exist, as incumbent we have a duty of care for those on the PCC that means we won't allow inappropriate behaviour to continue. It also helps to realise that there are likely to be times when we are the one behaving inappropriately. Because we hold considerable power through our role, talking honestly with one or two trustworthy people about what to do when they see us acting poorly is an important safety net for ourselves and those we lead. It may involve the churchwardens, asking them to come and meet with you privately if they think you have crossed the line somewhere, and if they are not satisfied with your response over time, to encourage them to go to the Archdeacon, who you have already alerted to this process being put in place, to ask for his intervention. Sound over the top? It may be when all is well and we are behaving well, but sadly inappropriate behaviour (and even abuse of power) can happen from the direction of clergy to PCC as well as from PCC member to clergy. Protect your people by putting in place a simple safeguard mechanism.

Being proactive rather than reactive

All of the above are responses to scenarios where we are responding to square pegs in round holes. The key in church life is to do all we can to ensure that people within the body are encouraged to find their part to play in Christ's mission and ministry. Start with people before roles. Develop people to fulfil God's call on their lives, and where there are roles to be filled, equip people to make wise decisions about whether to go for the role or not. This may include:

- Clear information about the function of the PCC and the role of being a PCC member (see 'The PCC – An introduction for new members', downloadable from Part 3 of this resource).
- Good explanation ahead of the elections from the PCC about who is stepping down and what sort of people are required at this time on the PCC to ensure a good balance of ages, personalities, experiences and expertise needed to help with the items likely to be addressed in the next three-year period.
- Positive messages coming out of the PCC from all its members about the privilege of serving on it and the responsibility to guide and shape the mission and ministry of the church.
- Continued prayer within the life of the congregation for those on the PCC and the decisions they make.
- Genuine celebration of achievements when the PCC has seen through a major piece of work or navigated a tricky situation well.
- Personalised ways of thanking people for their service at the end of their term of office.

SAM'S STORY of addressing unacceptable behaviour

Sam discovered an individual on the PCC was undermining him as the incumbent. Here he describes how he approached the individual.

'On my arrival at this post, there was an older person who had been on the PCC for a very long time. This person was somewhat strong-willed and used to having their own way. As we began implementing a more outward-looking vision for the church, I discovered that (outside of PCC meetings) this person was often speaking negatively about the new direction of the church and of my leadership. Partly out of respect and partly out of fear, most other people who had heard that this was going on simply backed off from addressing the matter. It was only later I heard what was being said.

I arranged a one-to-one meeting with this person, and challenged them about what was going on; asking the person if it was true, if they were speaking to people behind my back, and if they were building a collection of



‘concerned people’ who would simply agree with the person’s own concerns?

There was some denial at first, but then some admission. We had a conversation about their behaviour and the new vision for the church, and what it meant for the PCC to be of one mind (in this respect). I commented that, no matter how long a person had served on the PCC, or however well respected they were within church, speaking behind someone’s back was unacceptable behaviour.

After a few moments of silence, the person agreed and apologised. Several weeks later I spoke with them again, and it was obvious that the person had really not liked the confrontation. They were upset and still felt that I was wrong, but had changed their pattern of undermining behaviour.

Now, after a year or two has passed, relationship with this person is in fact good. They don’t have anywhere near the same level of influence anymore, but we still can give appropriate honour for long years of service. They realise that I am not a push-over, and that as a PCC we work together on decisions and then back up those decisions in our conversations outside the meeting.

In hindsight, if I was faced with this scenario again, I would include another person in the meeting. But tough as they are, it seems to me such conversations are necessary when people are behaving in unacceptable ways.

9

Common Dysfunction

RELATIONAL
DIFFICULTIES

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

RELATIONAL DIFFICULTIES

Our ninth common issue for PCCs is around relational difficulties. The focus of these is normally twofold:

- People not understanding how others' preferences differ to their own.
- Longer-term unresolved conflicts that permeate every encounter between two particular people or two groups of people.

SCENARIO 1

Mary just didn't understand why **Joanne** was being so obstructive. It was clear, a decision needed to be made and they had explored the option before them. What was the point in opening up other possibilities, endlessly talking about 'alternative creative solutions', when they could make their decision on what they already knew?

Joanne was feeling squeezed into a corner. She noticed that her breathing was shallow and deliberately took a long, slow, deep breath as her doctor had taught her. Why did **Mary** want to push a decision through so quickly when they hadn't had time to explore the many other options that were swirling around her mind? Surely taking more time would enable them to tap into the creativity of the Spirit, to free themselves from the shackles of limited options.





SCENARIO 2

Mary knew of herself that she liked to come to judgements quickly, and tended to see things in fairly black and white terms. If she was honest, for years she thought this was the way to do things, and struggled to understand why anyone would want to approach decisions in any other way.

When the PCC took a day away to explore personality differences she went grudgingly, but it was actually a fun and interesting day. The facilitator from the diocese was excellent, and the exercises were both hilarious and enlightening. At one point she realised why she had always found Joanne a slightly awkward person to get on with. They were exact opposites on one spectrum. Apparently Joanne liked to endlessly explore possibilities, and preferred delaying decisions until the widest range of options had been explored.

What really struck Mary was the exercise when they looked at how their very different approaches, when combined in a creative way, actually meant that better decisions were achieved more quickly.

As the discussion heated up, Joanne was about to contradict Mary and then remembered that Mary was good at seeing things in clear terms. She decided to ask Mary to clarify how she saw the issue and to explain why she thought one option was infinitely preferable to the other.

There are a variety of tools one can use to help people understand difference in personality (see below), but at its simplest a good chair can draw these out as they steer the conversation in the PCC meetings. If the chair understands that people have different preferences when it comes to where they draw their energy, how they make decisions, how they like to have information presented to them, s/he can explain these preferences as part of the way that s/he summarises or introduces people's contributions. For example, 'Jane, we know you have an ability to come up with creative possibilities. Any thoughts on how we might tackle this issue differently?'

It also helps to recognise the difference between character and personality. Personality is about preferences and is value neutral. If you are an extrovert that doesn't make you a better person than an introvert, just different. Each of us has preferred ways of doing things and helping members of the PCC know their own preferences and other people's preferences can be a helpful way of maturing how a PCC works together.

Character carries a value judgement. We speak of people of good character and of poor character. As disciples of Christ we are called to grow in Christ-like character, with virtues that reflect the one we follow: truthfulness, faithfulness, integrity, respect for others and so on.

When considering relational difficulties on the PCC a good starting place is to try and discern if the difficulties are around personality or character issues. If they are around a simple lack of awareness of preferences, one of the following tools can help people grow in self-awareness and provide practical strategies for working well together.

Some vicars and PCCs resist such tools for a number of reasons:

- They see them as unrelated to the work of the PCC.
- They dismiss them on the grounds that they aren't biblical or are 'psychobabble'.
- They don't think there is time to use such tools in the midst of all the work that needs to be done.
- The PCC functions perfectly well as it is.

Each of these is understandable, and may well be a good reason not to utilise such inventories. However, countless groups have found that time invested in understanding one another and how to maximise the contribution of every person has not only saved many hours in the long term, but also led to more harmonious and more effective meetings in the short term. The irony of course is that when a PCC hits a relationally fraught season it is the most difficult time to engage such tools. Much better to use them when things are going reasonably well.

Here's an example of one incumbent who gained a new insight from one of the psychometric tools³⁶.



CHRIS'S INSIGHT from Myers Briggs

It was one of those clarifying moments when over about two minutes, the person giving a presentation outlined an off-the-cuff idea, and I thought (a) I've never thought of that, (b) that's really important, and (c) if that's the only thing I learnt this conference, it's been worth the price of the ticket.

It's something else about the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator, and if you're very familiar with it you might find what he said pretty basic, but for me it was a light-bulb moment.

You remember the four basic pairings: crudely put they are Extrovert and Introvert (what drains you, and where do you get your energy – action or reflection); Sensing and iNtuition (are we facts and data people, or those who tend to see underlying patterns); Thinking and Feeling (biased more to working out the task, or how people feel about the issue); and Judging and Perceiving (do we like closure, or are we more open and unguarded).

Forget the first and last pairings. Most people who lead tend to do so from the N-T selection. That is, the dominant function of a leader is to clarify complex information into an organised task.

Here's the thing: it is therefore critical not only that I have people around me with the other two functions, but that I must deploy us all, in deliberate sequence: S>N>T>F.

S – facts first. Get these people to gather the information. Your bias will be towards generating the central insight, but you need to give yourself the best possible chance of getting your hunch right.

N, T then we leaders come in, making our special contribution, 'This is what it all means, and this is what we're going to do about it.'

F – finally, get the Feelers to crawl all over it. Who will be affected? Who will mind? Is this an extreme idea, or a majority one? How can consensus be built around it?

Or, in Bible terms, I need the other parts of the body – very particular parts, and in an orchestrated set of moves. Not to compensate for my weaknesses, but to make us all stronger.

Find your S F friends, and work hard together.

(For those for whom this is basic information try this advanced level observation: most leaders tend to be either ENTJ or INTJ. Match that against Jim Collins' insights, and ask yourself, which is more likely to be the Charismatic leader, and which the Level 5 leader? See Jim Collins, *Good to Great*.)

I should add that it wasn't the only thing I learnt at the conference, and my mind is still buzzing thanks to CPAS and Peter Brierley.

A guide to some common tools

INTER-PERSONAL STYLE

Perhaps the simplest of the tools available, Inter-personal style, can be completed through a brief questionnaire (available online, Google 'interpersonal style questionnaire'). It measures people's style on two axes: assertiveness/dominance and responsiveness/sociability. These then form a matrix which helps people to understand their own preferred way of doing things in four ways (amiable, expressive, driver, analytical) which are further nuanced into 16 areas. The tool then helps people to understand how to relate to someone with a different preference.

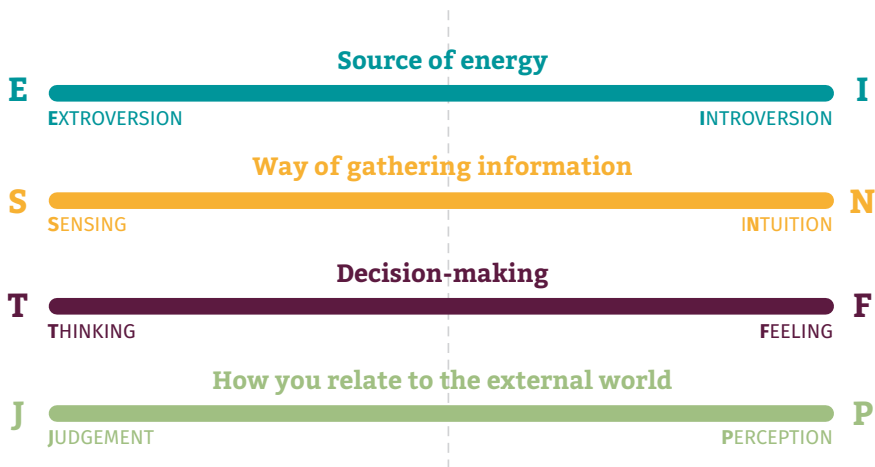
This tool is relatively cheap to use, is the simplest of the tools to understand, and if done well has some pretty immediate take-home insights³⁷.

MYERS BRIGGS (MBTI)

MBTI is probably the best-known psychometric tool. Whilst it is also possible to complete this online, it isn't preferable to do it this way. Myers Briggs is best done with a trained consultant who will administer the profile, explain how it works, offer feedback to each person and then work with a group to explore the insights that come from it. It offers people four continuums: Extrovert-Introvert, Thinking-Feeling, Sensing-INTuition, Perceiving-Judging.

MBTI is well known in many contexts so you may find people have already done this and you can capitalise on the insights learned from it. It is mid-price to do MBTI, but many dioceses have trained consultants within their staff team.

MBTI: Four Preferences



INSIGHTS

The Insight profile is also best administered by a qualified person. Through an assessment people are located on a wheel with eight words, each falling into one of four colours:

- Reformer
- Director
- Motivator
- Inspirer
- Helper
- Supporter
- Co-ordinator
- Observer

The tool indicates a person's primary colour and how that relates to other colours within the wheel, and provides a visual way of remembering where your preferences lie. I know people who have four Lego bricks in front of them when meeting together to remind each other of their particular colour make-up so that people may relate well to one another.

The strengths of Insights is that it provides a slightly more nuanced way of understanding how you operate and how that relates to others around you. It is also mid-priced but does require a qualified person to administer it.

16 PERSONALITY FACTORS 5

This is a comprehensive psychometric tool that has to be done by a qualified person (normally an occupational psychologist). It assesses people on 16 different continuums and then creates a very comprehensive profile that needs interpreting by the consultant. We use this on the *Arrow Leadership Programme* we run, and people find it enormously helpful, often unlocking significant insights that help them understand themselves better³⁸.

16PF5 is more costly to use, but also provides many levels of insight into issues of personality preferences.

Longer-term unresolved issues

In some cases the relational difficulties are at a far deeper level than simply people not understanding one another's preferences, or struggling with a difference of opinion. In a rural context the friction between two PCC members may literally go back hundreds of years to disputes originating, for example, in the War of the Roses. Deeply entrenched animosity between two people or two groups of people can wreck a PCC, as well as a church community.

Often others in such situations have created coping strategies around the conflict, which can include:

- A careful navigation around sensitive issues – 'treading on eggshells'.
- Avoiding any discussions that might cause conflict, because everyone knows the two people will polarise on opposite sides.
- Resignation that things aren't going to improve so why bother to change anything?
- Gossip about the individuals involved that is widespread and accepted, but no one ever tackles the issue.

Once again it is the responsibility of those in leadership to try and work out what is going on, and draw on whatever resources are necessary to unblock an impasse. Many situations can be resolved through courageous conversations³⁹ facilitated by the incumbent or someone else respected within the community. In severe situations of ongoing conflict it may be best to invite an outside facilitator in to work with the individuals or groups involved. There are a variety of organisations and individuals who can help in this way⁴⁰.

Code of conduct

As part of a code of conduct, it can be helpful to draw up guidelines based on Scripture as to how people will operate when relational difficulties develop.

- In the first instance, speak with the person concerned (Matthew 18:15).
- If there is no settlement, invite a respected church leader to facilitate a conversation (Matthew 18:16).
- Throughout, pray for the person, bear with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2); don't demonise them but recognise they are a fellow brother or sister in Christ (Ephesians 4:25); be slow to anger and don't sin in anger (Ephesians 4:26); don't speak badly of them or behind their back about them (Ephesians 4:29); be quick to forgive (Ephesians 4:32); be careful about seeing a speck in their eye rather than the log in your own (Luke 6:41-42).



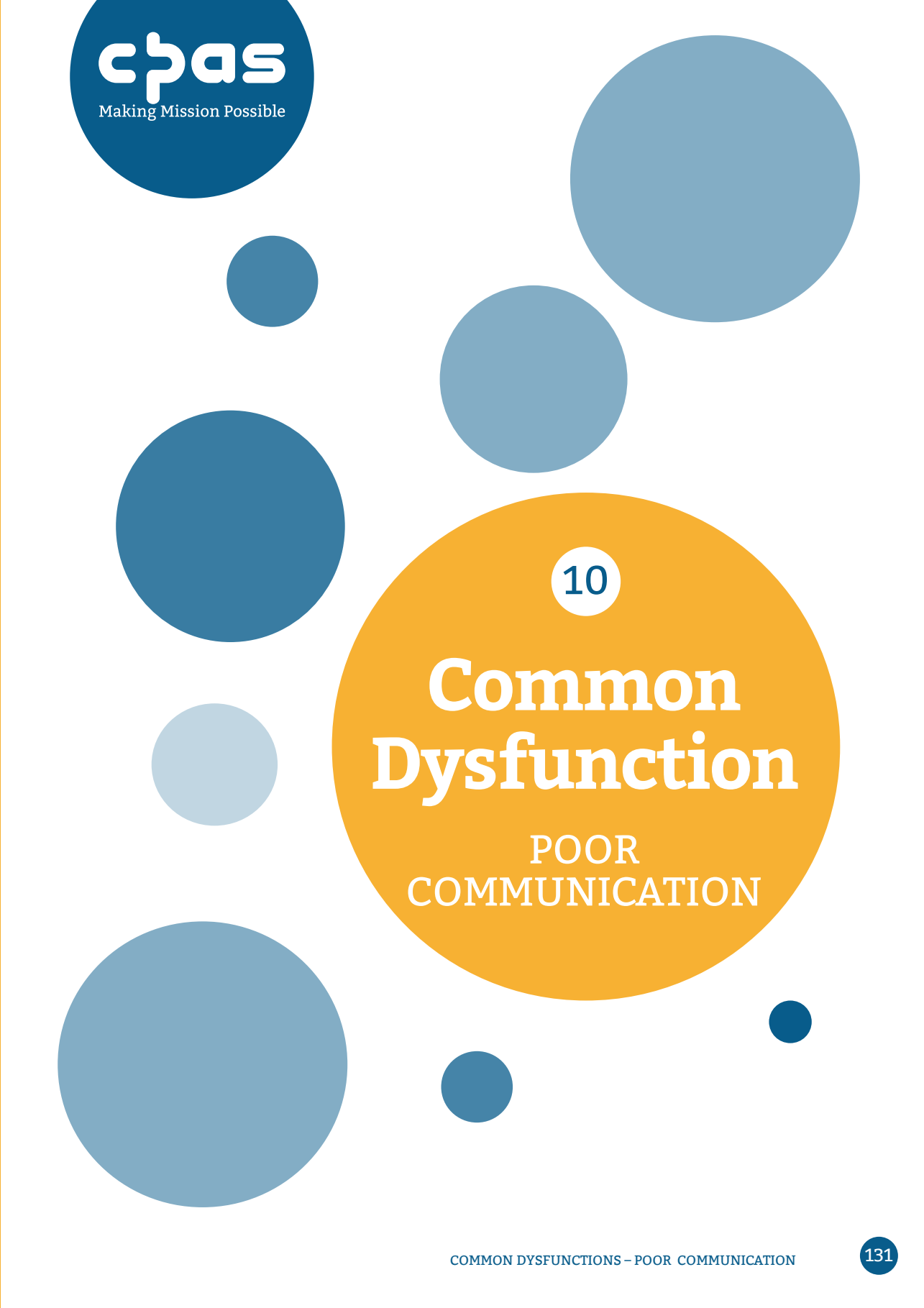
'If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses".'

Matthew 18:15-16

In Part 3 there is an example of how one church put together some guidelines based on these principles which they invite their church members to live by: 'Principles for good communication'.

In summary

Relational difficulties will occur. They have done from the earliest moments of the church (for example, see Acts 15:39). They should not surprise us. Nor should they define us. It is how we respond when such difficulties occur that should mark us out as God's people. It is our handling of these situations that can define us as those who, even in the complexities of relational tensions, 'love one another'.

The page is decorated with several circles of various sizes and shades of blue. A large orange circle is positioned in the center-right, containing the main title. Other blue circles of different diameters are scattered around the page, some overlapping the orange circle.

10

Common Dysfunction

**POOR
COMMUNICATION**

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

POOR COMMUNICATION

I am not sure I have encountered any organisation which has completely sorted communication. It is complex even between two people who know each other well and have one another's best interests at heart. Factor in numbers of people, an average amount of self-interest or disinterest, busy lives, and you have the perfect ingredients for miscommunication.

In the overview of the common dysfunctions I mentioned there are two types of communication for a PCC:

- **Internal** This isn't only the formal communication before and after meetings (meeting times, agendas, action notes) but also the informal communication between meetings.
- **External** This is the way the PCC communicates with the wider church and other external bodies generally (diocese, patrons and so on), and with any other key leadership groups specifically.

Internal

In the section on processes I have covered a number of the more formal aspects of communication before and after a meeting (agenda-setting, minutes and so on) and during the meeting (code of conduct, chairing, decision-making, conflict). Alongside these are the more informal aspects of communication.

- **The quick check up** After a meeting you may be aware that a member of the PCC (a) didn't seem to be 'quite their normal self' (b) was clearly in a minority of one during a discussion (c) seemed to be upset. When spotting such situations it is worth a quick check-up (which of course may not be quick in practice, depending on the reason for their perceived behaviour). A call, an email, dropping by or simply having a quiet chat when you next see them, are all ways to find out if the person is alright.
- **The extra 'thank you'** Perhaps someone did an exemplary piece of work ahead of the meeting, or went out of their way to provide some great refreshments, or handled a potentially tricky discussion with grace. A card of thanks, or a text thanking them for what they did may only take a matter of moments to write or type, but can be so affirming for an individual to receive.
- **The encouragement** Sometimes after a meeting everyone is feeling a little discouraged or 'bruised': it's been a tough meeting, strong opinions were expressed, not much progress was made, and the situation is unresolved and holds a lot of pain. At these times an email to everyone to thank them for their hard work, to assure them of God's ongoing grace and guidance, to strengthen them for what lies ahead, can steady those who are feeling lost, and re-envision those who are feeling dispirited. These are often hard to write because you may well be feeling all these things for yourself, but it is exactly at times like this that exercising leadership is so important. Often you will have a bigger perspective on things. You may have experienced a similar crunch time before in other situations, and your assurance can help people trust that all will be well.

- **The reminder** At some point mid-way between the PCC meetings a ‘reminder’ can reconnect members of the group with things you want them to focus on. It might be a reminder to pray, or a reminder about a piece of work you have all agreed to do, or a reminder about an event that is coming up in the life of the church. Most people on the PCC won’t be thinking about church matters 9 – 5. In fact, many people are likely to be very busy with the other aspects of their life, and a gentle reminder will help them to keep connected.

These informal aspects on internal communication are easily neglected in the busyness of parish life, but they are often the small things that make a big difference. If like me you may struggle to remember them, a quick check after each PCC meeting as part of your post-meeting rhythm to ask if it is appropriate to diary time to do any of these between now and the next meeting can be a good discipline.

External

The other angle is communication with those outside the PCC, which includes the rest of the congregation(s) and external bodies.

THE REST OF THE CONGREGATION(S)

The opportunity for miscommunication is always present, but the more significant issue is probably a lack of communication. Those at the centre of things tend to think they have communicated well, but those on the periphery tend to find they know less than they would like to know.

I was chatting with a member of a diocesan team recently who was reflecting on being a member of a congregation without an official leadership role after 20 years of being a vicar. He was saying that he was amazed how many times he felt he didn’t know what was going on, or why a particular decision had been made, or why something was happening. As he reflected he realised that when he was a vicar these were exactly the comments people made to him.

It would be great to think that all we had to do was post the minutes of the PCC meetings on the notice board, or put them in the church notice sheet and on the website, and everyone would read them and make a note of the things they could pray about, and identify the questions they wanted to ask to clarify anything they were not sure about.

The reality is that it helps to identify a range of ways to communicate with the wider congregation so that as much as possible is shared. Some of these methods of communication are the necessary formal routes (notice of meetings, agendas and minutes). Others are creative ways of involving a wider group. Here are some ideas:

- The PCC can help the communication flow by asking a simple question at the end of each item: what needs to be communicated to whom by when?
- After each PCC meeting identify the key thing to communicate with the wider congregation and then talk about that over at least two Sundays in the various services. Be creative in the way it is done. For example, you could interview a PCC member about the item, or create a PowerPoint presentation that runs before and after the service, or write a poem or reflection, or include the item in the sermon, or have a five-minute discussion around the item, or give people a specific handout/leaflet about the item.

- Have a 'from the PCC' section on your website and ensure that after every PCC meeting someone updates the webpage with the important information from that meeting.
- Create an email distribution list and send a well-written email to everyone after each PCC.
- Invite people to contribute their thoughts on an agenda item ahead of a meeting through a Twitter feed, a Facebook page, an online survey, a paper survey.

In all of this, following a few principles of good communication can help.

PRINCIPLE 1

Communicate...

- As much as you can.
- As often as you can.
- In as many ways as you can.
- On as many different occasions as you can.

It helps to be careful about when we communicate things as we don't want to cause information overload, but the reality is that people need to hear things many times and in a variety of contexts before they will actually take it on board.

PRINCIPLE 2

When communicating something ask yourself if you have covered the following areas:

- Information – what is it about?
- Imagination – why should I be involved?
- Inspiration – why would I want to be involved?
- Instruction – how can I be involved?
- Immediacy – what can I do now?

PRINCIPLE 3

When communicating with a diverse group of people, just when you are getting bored of saying something is probably when people are beginning to pick it up.

PRINCIPLE 4

Remember, the further away from the place where discussions are held and decisions are made, the more likely it is people don't know what is happening or why things are being done. That is not their problem, it is ours.

PRINCIPLE 5

Just because we have said something it doesn't mean it has been heard.

External bodies

Inevitably the PCC will have to communicate with a range of external bodies: the diocese, other agencies, solicitors, service providers, builders and architects, tradespeople, safeguarding officer, and so on. Every piece of communication will give an impression of the church and the PCC. When we don't reply to emails, or don't return requested information in the timescale outlined, we communicate something about the church.

If things aren't getting answered, it may help to work out how to handle external communication. Who is responsible for what? What is the agreed timescale for responding to incoming emails, letters, telephone calls? What needs to be signed off before it is sent out? A simple grid can be used to ensure there is clarity within the PCC and with other people (for example, a parish administrator, centre manager) about who does what. Below is an example which will of course need tailoring to each context, potentially with sub-groups of the categories (for example emails may need breaking down into several different sources of emails to the PCC).

Type of communication	Who handles it	Timescale for reply	Who to ask if a problem	Who needs informing	Does it need signing off? If so, who?
Emails to PCC					
Letters to PCC					
Diocesan returns					
Grant applications					
Bill payments					
Faculties					

In summary

Communication is a constant challenge in any body of people, possibly even more challenging when that body of people only meets occasionally, is primarily run by volunteers, and is multi-layered in its work. Therefore any processes that help the PCC to communicate effectively both internally and externally are worth putting in place. I heard of one PCC where they invited the church to elect onto the PCC someone whose primary role was to manage the communication flow. It worked!

11

Common Dysfunction

INADEQUATE
TRAINING

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

INADEQUATE TRAINING

A colleague emailed me about a PCC meeting he'd just attended. They had met in a church building sitting in the choir stalls. It was freezing cold, and sitting in two rows on either side they couldn't all see each other. The meeting 'drifted' through the agenda and it was no surprise that the members of the PCC were palpably relieved when the meeting ended.

In contrast, another colleague came back from a PCC meeting raving about how brilliantly it had been led. The venue was well laid out, the agenda clear and informative, the chairing sensitive and firm, and at the end no one really wanted to go home because they were all having such a good time.

Such a difference.

Of course I don't know the back story to these two PCC meetings, and there may be many factors which led to the meetings happening as they did. But my hunch is that quite often PCCs are poorly led due to our eleventh common dysfunction – inadequate training.

Some, like me, won't have received any training on how to run a PCC, and find themselves responsible for running PCC meetings, but without much of an idea of how to do it.

Others who end up chairing PCCs will have been trained to lead meetings in a previous job. There will nearly always be transferable skills that are a great help, but it may also help to reflect further on what is and what isn't appropriate to take from the shop floor, teacher's common room, or the boardroom to the PCC meeting.

1. THOSE WITH NO TRAINING

The essential skills for running a PCC have been addressed throughout these common dysfunctions. They include:

- Organising: how to prepare materials and venues to aid an effective meeting.
- Chairing: how to drive an agenda; how to draw the best contributions from people; how to use different processes to engage people in creative thinking and decision-making; how to summarise and draw things to a conclusion; how to handle group dynamics and steer a group accordingly.
- Leading: how to draw on prayer, worship, the Scriptures and tradition to ensure we are engaged in a Christian meeting; how to know when to share leadership and when to retain it.

Some will instinctively know their need for further training in these areas. Others may have a natural ability to function reasonably competently in them. But the reality is, whichever group we may think we are in, if we have had no training in running a PCC we can all improve.

Such training can come in a variety of ways.

- If you are fortunate your vicar will train you up as part of your curacy. This hands-on training is probably the most effective method, especially if your vicar allows you to not simply observe how s/he does it but also gives you an opportunity to set agendas, chair meetings and so on, offering thoughtful and constructive feedback afterwards.
- A number of organisations and individuals offer training in this area⁴¹. I found it enormously helpful when I attended a training day run by John Truscott on meetings.
- Some dioceses offer training in this area.
- There are plenty of books and online resources you can read.
- Work-shadow someone who is great at running PCCs in a different context. Afterwards reflect with them on why they do what they do. Then do the same again with another incumbent.

We can also invite others with skills in these areas to take the lead in various aspects of the meeting process. However, there will always be some meetings where we have to lead the process, so improving in this area is really an essential part of clergy leadership development.

2. THOSE WITH PREVIOUS TRAINING

Ruth McCarthy explores the potential differences between a profit sector and not-for-profit sector meeting (see her article 'Creating a thinking environment in not-for-profit meetings' in Part 3). Although not writing from a specifically Christian perspective, she helpfully identifies how values of the different types of organisation may lead to different types of behaviour in their meetings. For some, this may be a little too stereotyped, but it engages with some important issues that often need to be clarified when meeting with people who have diverse experience of meetings.

For example, in a PCC three things quickly become clear (a) profit is not the driving force in our decisions (b) creating an environment where great thinking occurs is a priority (c) valuing people must be high on our list of best practice.

Lewis Thomas comments that all too often 'Debating is what committees really do, not thinking. Take away the need for winning points, leading the discussion, protecting one's face, gaining applause, shouting down opposition, scaring opponents, all that kind of activity – and a group of bright people can get down to quiet thought.'

We meet to think carefully about things, valuing the contribution each person has to make, so that the outcome is one which enhances the value of each person's contribution into something which is greater than the sum of the parts.

For those who have extensive experience of leading meetings in other contexts, a helpful question to reflect on might be: if we explore the Judaeo-Christian tradition, what discoveries might we make that could shape our approach to Christian meetings?

In summary

Training is a good way to address skills and knowledge deficits. Developing appropriate meeting skills is a way we honour the time of those who attend our PCCs, so that we can create the best possible environment for a good meeting. Alternatively you could simply follow the list below to ensure any meeting you lead is ruined.

How to ruin a PCC meeting

- Invite everybody who could possibly have an opinion to a particular item.
- Be vague about the subject, for example 'service times'.
- Don't prepare.
- Have no objective and don't even think about an agenda.
- As soon as the start time arrives, run out to answer a phone call.
- When someone arrives late, explain everything they've missed in great detail.
- Don't make decisions and under no circumstances convert anything into action points.
- Assume everyone thinks like you.
- Ignore the elephant in the room, no matter how large it is.
- Never hold anyone to account for their actions in a meeting; anything goes.
- Don't recap at the end of the meetings.
- Don't ever review how the meeting went.
- Call an end to the meeting only when half of the attendees have wandered off.
- Never send out minutes, ever.
- Put the chairs in a straight line facing the front.
- Occasionally pounce on a quiet person with a difficult question.
- Allow people to interrupt, speak over one another.
- Never have any variety in presentations in meetings.
- Frown on any sign of humour.





12

Common Dysfunction

A DEFENDED
VICAR

COMMON DYSFUNCTION

A 'DEFENDED' VICAR

As I mentioned in the overview of common dysfunctions, I introduced this dysfunction after I talked with a vicar who reflected that she entered the role of incumbent with many good things to offer, but quite 'defended' as a leader. She was using terminology from Simon Walker's trilogy of books on leadership which explore the theme of the 'undefended leader'⁴². The defended leader is the one who keeps things 'back stage' that s/he doesn't want others to know about or see. But these things inevitably seep through to the front stage where their leadership is on public view. For example, criticise them in a PCC meeting and they respond with sulky behaviour or defensive explanations or an aggressive counter-attack.

The undefended leader is one who has managed to integrate the front and back stage in such a way that they are able to be vulnerable, handle criticism maturely, and deal well with pressures that come with their role.

A 'defended' vicar will not be easy to work with. They are likely to manipulate the PCC or be easily manipulated by it. They are less likely to create a calm and conducive environment for collaboration, to be a 'non-anxious presence'.

Inevitably every vicar has their issues, their baggage, but if they aren't aware of it, aren't submitting it to God's work of grace, aren't emotionally savvy enough to understand its impact on others, then there is increased likelihood it will have a negative impact.

Many years ago I was involved in some work with a PCC where initially all seemed fine, but very quickly it became apparent that the vicar was 'tetchy', inconsistent, and occasionally verbally abusive. In my conversations with the vicar there seemed to be no awareness that his behaviour was actually causing many of the issues he wanted to resolve. It was all 'their fault'. Herein lies one of the challenges with this dysfunction, that we aren't able to see our own stuff as easily as we can see other people's. Jesus' teaching on not removing the speck in someone else's eye when there is a log in our own should be sufficient warning about the ease with which we judge others without seeing our own faults. How does one grow in self-awareness as a leader?



'...set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.'

1 Timothy 4:12

When Paul tells Timothy to 'set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity', he goes on to say 'watch your life and doctrine closely...' (1 Timothy 4:12,16). This paying attention to ourself involves appropriate self-awareness; not an inappropriate navel-gazing, but developing an understanding of ourselves which is accurate to how others see us, to how we come across. Here are two things that can help with this.

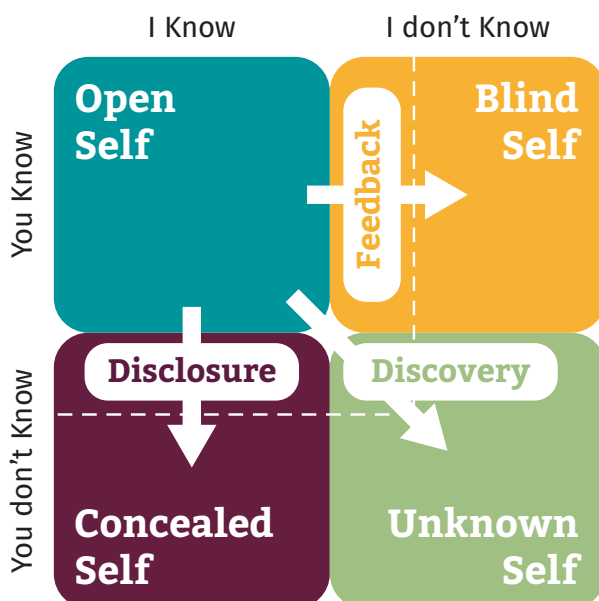
1. Constant reflection on the Scriptures

As we read the Bible it helps us to see more clearly who God is and who we are in relation to him. It pinpoints areas of our life where God wants us to grow in Christ-likeness. He convicts us of sin as the Spirit of God illuminates things that need attention. If as part of our devotional reading we also journal on what we sense God might be saying to us, we can begin to see trends over time that can helpfully clarify areas for work.

2. Openness to feedback

Some years ago two psychologists developed a way of understanding the place of feedback in helping us to grow in self-awareness. It is called the Johari window (after the two psychologists, who were named Jo and Harry). The diagram below shows four 'panes' in the window.

- **Open self** This is what I know about myself and you also know.
- **Concealed self** This is what I know about myself and you don't know. I shrink this pane through disclosure, where I choose to let you into my life through openness and vulnerability. This is important to do as a leader, otherwise we become inaccessible, allow ourselves to be put on a pedestal, although one does need to be wise about how one does this.
- **Blind self** This is what I don't know about myself, but you do know. You observe this through my behaviours and have valuable insights for me if I am open to receiving them from you through feedback.
- **Unknown self** This is the area where I don't know things about myself, and you don't know them either. Only God knows, and we can be open to his revealing of this through the study of the Scriptures, the work of his Spirit, and membership of the body of Christ.



One of the things we can do as incumbents is to create a culture of feedback. It is through feedback that people can grow. It is through feedback that a PCC can improve its way of working. It is through feedback we can develop our own leadership.

We can do this by inviting feedback on ourselves from those whom we know and trust. I've learnt over the years the importance of not being defensive, but choosing instead to listen carefully to what is being offered, to commit to engage well with what is said, and occasionally to ask clarifying questions (for example: 'May I explain why I did N and then ask for your reflections on what you've said in the light of that?'). Feedback is a friend, and it is remarkably difficult to grow without it. Yet the longer we are in a position of leadership and the more 'senior' we become, the less likely we are to receive 'helpful' feedback. We will need to work hard to create the context where it occurs.

Through such feedback we begin to see ourselves as others see us, we identify things we may need to work on, we grow in our ability to manage our defensive tendencies and open ourselves to the possibilities of working in healthier ways with others.

One framework for understanding this area a little further is the five components of emotional intelligence as articulated in Daniel Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence*⁴³. Whilst EQ is not without its critics, it can be a helpful way of thinking about what are the characteristics of an open leader who is able to manage themselves well in order to draw the best out of others.

Those of us in church leadership owe it to those we have pastoral responsibility for to be open to feedback, to grow in self-awareness and to do the hard work of dealing with our stuff so that we can relate well to people and handle ourselves well in meetings. Anger, addictions, lust, a need to control, fear, jealousy, ambition, envy, a critical spirit, an inability to rejoice in others' blessings, competitiveness, a lack of generosity, a judgemental attitude, pride, covetousness, lack of self-control, and so on, all impact our role.

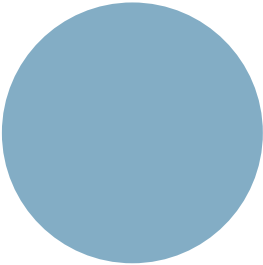
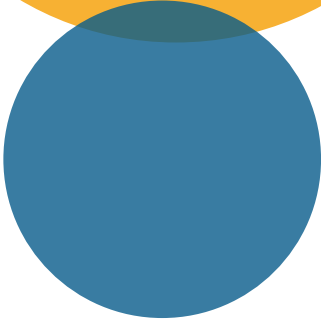
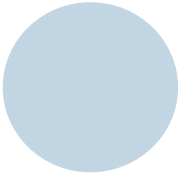
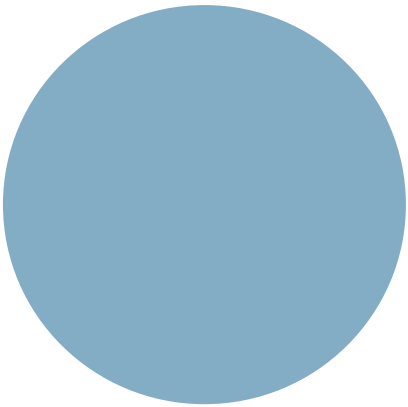
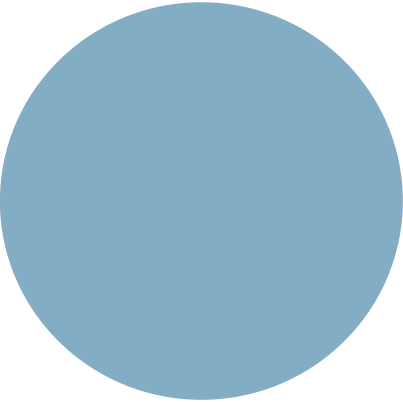
In the pressures of ordained life this isn't easy. In fact it is far easier to ignore such things and get on with the job. Yet the thrust of the New Testament on leadership issues is that the inner life stuff is the key to effective leadership (2 Timothy). We neglect it at our peril.

Whether we explore this through Simon Walker's books on the defended leader, or through *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership* by Gary McIntosh⁴⁴, or through conversations with those who know us best and love us, or through some counselling, or some other way, giving time and attention to this is part of the way we serve those we are called to lead.

PCCs function best when there is an undefended incumbent leading the group, open to the ideas of others, excited by the contributions people make, able to handle criticism and conflict, and comfortable to stand firm when necessary.

Thankfully the grace of God that we long for others to embrace is also available to us, and it is by his grace that the work of transformation occurs.

	Definition	Hallmarks
Self-management		
Self-awareness	The ability to recognise and understand your moods, emotions, and drives – and their effect on others.	Self-confidence. Realistic self-assessment. Self-deprecating sense of humour.
Self-regulation	The ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods. The propensity to suspend judgement – to think before acting.	Trustworthiness and integrity. Comfort with ambiguity. Openness to change.
Motivation	A passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status. A propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence.	Strong desire to achieve. Optimism, even in the face of failure. Organisational commitment.
Relationship skills		
Empathy	The ability to understand the emotional make-up of other people. Skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions.	Expertise in building and retaining talent. Cross-cultural sensitivity. Service to clients and customers.
Social skill	Proficiency in managing relationships and building networks. An ability to find common ground and build rapport.	Effectiveness in leading change. Persuasiveness. Expertise in building and leading teams.



In Conclusion

IN CONCLUSION

Twelve common dysfunctions. These aren't the only things that are likely to affect a PCC, but perhaps they are the ones we are most likely to come across, and therefore addressing them has the potential to make a significant difference. As I conclude this section, here are a few final thoughts on how to proceed:

- Don't try and address all of these dysfunctions at once. Wisdom will help us decide which ones it would be best to tackle first, and the best way to address them.
- Also, don't try all the ideas at the same time. There are loads of suggestions of ways to approach things in this resource. Some of them might work in your situation, others won't. If you try to implement all of them straightaway people will flounder under an avalanche of change. Take it a step at a time, bit by bit, prayerfully discerning what next.
- Don't see change in terms of months, but years. As I have listened to the stories of those who have seen significant change in the life of a PCC, it is nearly always measured in years, often three to five years. This is a long-term piece of work.
- Don't be put off by setbacks. The reality is that the journey to a healthy, functioning, fun PCC won't be a straight line, but one full of setbacks, cul-de-sacs and wrong turns. When things don't go well, or an idea doesn't work out, or someone seems to scupper all the good progress recently made, it isn't the end, or even a return to the starting point. It is just a setback. Press on.
- Don't start where you aren't, start where you are. It is very easy in church life to look across parish boundaries and wistfully think 'if only'. 'If only we had their PCC secretary...' 'If only we had the resources of a more middle-class context...' 'If only I was a more charismatic vicar...' 'If only I had four churches and PCCs instead of ten...' 'If only...' We can't change where we are, but we can change where we will be, and to do that we have to start where we are. What is your next step? What one thing could you give energy to that would make a difference?
- Don't be unrealistic in how much time and energy you can give to this. In busy parish life there is much going on, and the PCC is only one of many things requiring your time and attention. A colleague of mine says that the average 'wiggle room' of an incumbent is pretty small when they have sorted all that needs to be done. In other words, we don't have a lot of free time or unused energy to play with. So, be wise in the amount you take on. Be realistic about what can be achieved.
- Do believe that change is possible, and work towards that change with love and perseverance. A healthy, fun-filled, vision-led, dynamic PCC is a great place to be, not only for those who are members of the PCC, but also for you as the incumbent of the church. Even more importantly, it helps the church to fulfil Christ's call for us to be the people of God about his mission in the world.

The privilege of writing this resource has been listening to many incumbents talk about their PCCs with such enthusiasm, and hearing the stories of transformation. Here's a final story to conclude Part 1 of this resource.



MICHAEL'S JOURNEY with a PCC over eight years

Over the last eight years we have been on a great journey with the PCC, where from being a body not sure of what its role was (and therefore fairly fractious) the PCC is now a vibrant, vision-led group focused on strategy and vision. I love chairing it.

There have been several key decisions and changes we have made to bring about this change (in no particular order):

- We introduced timed agendas so that we were clear about how long to give each item. In eight years we've only had one meeting finish after 10pm.
- We decided that it was important to keep things off the agenda, so we could ensure we focused on a few main items. AOB has to be notified before the meeting.
- We send out briefing papers in advance for any item that needs significant reflection and discussion so that PCC members can think, pray and ask questions before a meeting takes place.
- We have clarified the relationship between the PCC and staff team, and found using a school governance model provided a helpful framework, in which the PCC is akin to the governing body and the staff team akin to the senior management team.
- We now use the PCC as the main body to decide the annual budget. This takes the form of three meetings in the autumn. In September we look at the overall vision for the next calendar year, including any significant new initiatives or challenges. This usually takes the whole meeting. In October we take a high-level look at the budget, focusing on new areas of spend and associated income increase. We spend at least 90 minutes doing this. In November we discuss and agree the budget and review the communication process around it. This is usually a shorter discussion of 30-45 minutes. The December meeting is there just in case but we have thus far not had to use it.
- This development has meant that we have abolished the Finance Committee which used to lead on the budget process. We still have a Treasury team that provide quarterly finance reports for the PCC, but there were two problems with the Finance Committee route (a) the Finance Committee was not as up to speed on vision as the PCC was, and therefore lacked confidence in taking courageous decisions, and (b) the PCC tended only to see the budget once, when it was too late to make any substantial changes. The PCC now fully owns the budget, and not just approves it.

- To feed into this process we spend a day away as a PCC during May to reflect on the vision of the church and key things we believe the Lord is saying to us. I give some input on the vision of the church, but much of the time is spent listening to God and each other. Contributions from PCC members have often been very significant in discussions later in the year.
- I ask the churchwardens to review any papers I write before they go to the PCC. This always improves them and means that we are usually prepared for questions and discussions that will come.

None of these things may seem particularly strategic, but the net result is significant change. When I arrived the PCC was quite anxious, often kept in the dark about big decisions, and thus spent time arguing about smaller items. People still remembered PCC discussions about photocopiers. It is now a committed, prayerful PCC which can face up to substantial issues and cope with tough decisions. They are clear on the vision of the church and a joy to work with. Of course I have made mistakes along the way, and we have had some tough meetings, but I am passionate about the possibilities of turning a moderately dysfunctional PCC into a healthy, fun body of people serving the church well.

Beep, beep, beep...

6.45am. The alarm beeps. Bleary eyed Joan/ Injit/Winston/Bev (you choose the name) reaches out and turns the alarm off. Monday morning. What does the day hold? Normal day really, and oh, PCC tonight. With a broadening smile, Joan relishes the prospect of seeing everyone again and all that the meeting holds.

May God help us make this a reality.





Making Mission Possible

PART 2

Six Sessions for PCCs

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Life is busy. Church life is sometimes even busier. With a limited number of meetings and a relatively short amount of time, the average PCC has lots to get through. The urgent practicalities of running the church can easily push aside the important work of thinking about what we are doing and where we are going.

Every church is heading somewhere. Even those that seem somewhat directionless are still going somewhere. They are fulfilling the dominant view of why the church exists within that congregation, even if that view is for the church 'to see me out'.

The word 'leadership' comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word which meant route, way, path, direction. So those in leadership are responsible for discerning the route or path to follow, and for those on the PCC it is about discerning God's route, his way ahead.

These sessions are designed to help the PCC do just that, to take a pause from activity so that we can think about why we are here and what we are currently doing, then to clarify where we think God might be leading us. Finally we can connect that with the reality of where things are in such a way that it begins to make a difference.



Pause



Clarify



Connect

There are six sessions:

In the pack you purchased.

Session 1 Why does the church exist?

Session 2 Why does the PCC exist?

Session 3 What is the best way to conduct our meetings?

Session 4 Reviewing church life – worship.

Session 5 Reviewing church life – mission.

Session 6 Reviewing church life – community.

Accessed online at www.cpas.org.uk/pccTonight using the code found on page 162.

Session 1 Posters – one another verses.

Session 2 Posters – functions of a PCC.

Session 4 Handout – SWOT exercise.

Session 5 Handout – cards activity.

Session 6 Handout – one another verses.

Each session is around 35 minutes long and can be used in a number of different ways.

- You can use a session at the start of your PCC meeting as the first item on the agenda, doing one each time you meet over a number of meetings, or perhaps every other meeting.
- You can easily expand a session to make it a longer item, up to 60 minutes.
- You can link several sessions together and use them on a PCC away morning/day.

The approach (**Pause, Clarify, Connect**) can be adopted for other items that a PCC might want to explore in the future. In that sense it is trying to model something that could become part of the DNA of how a PCC functions.

Practicalities

WHO LEADS THESE SESSIONS?

Ideally they will be led by two people, a man and a woman, modelling collaborative leadership. One of these is very likely to be the incumbent, and the other might be the lay chair of the PCC. It is possible for them to be led by one person, but preferable for it to be two. At a practical level the change in voice and approach will help keep people engaged and interested. At a more developmental level it will ensure someone else is trained up to lead these types of activities within the PCC, and discourages any clericalism that might exist.

HOW DO WE ADJUST THEM TO FIT OUR PCC?

As acknowledged throughout this resource, PCCs come in many different shapes and sizes and are located in very different contexts. A small rural PCC of six people who have lived in their community all their life will have a very different dynamic to a large suburban PCC of 30 people in a commuter suburb where few people have lived in the community longer than five years. Here are a few ideas on how to approach the material according to size and context:

- The larger the group size the more likely it will operate with increased 'formality'. This is simply a way of ensuring things get done well, but when it comes to these sessions you want to generate a context where open discussion can occur. Normally this will mean breaking the large group down into smaller groups to encourage people to contribute.
- Smaller PCCs where people have been together for a while may suffer from a sense of everyone thinking that they know what any other individual thinks. Providing some space for personal reflection, and then creative ways of each person being able to articulate their thoughts can help break down unhelpful assumptions.
- If you are working in a non-book context, minimising paper related to the sessions, and maximising pictures, images, stories and videos will help people's engagement.
- In a multi-ethnic context, mixing the small groups up so that those of different ethnic origins engage with one another can aid understanding of one another as well as enrich the outcomes of the sessions.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL IT TAKE TO PREPARE?

Good news – not too long. The material is not complex and 30 minutes, preparation should be sufficient. But please do prepare. It will quickly become evident to members of the PCC if you haven't thought about how to run a session, and is likely to decrease both the engagement of the PCC members and the effectiveness of the session.

WHERE DO THEY BEST FIT INTO A NORMAL PCC MEETING?

You could pretty much place them wherever you want, but they will probably work best after your normal welcome and prayer, either before you go to minutes and matters arising or after them as the first main item on the agenda.

WHAT ABOUT PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY?

Each session contains some suggestions for Bible study and prayer. With the prayer suggestions the first one in each session is for a PCC that isn't very confident in praying with one another. The idea is that you choose one of the suggestions; don't try and do them all.

You can use these as part of your normal pattern of prayer and Scripture reflection at the start of the meeting, or within the sessions themselves. If you are in a PCC where the current practice is only for the vicar to pray aloud in the meeting, the prayer suggestions are designed to take you on a journey of encouraging others to pray within the meeting. The idea is to build people's confidence step by step without asking them to take too big a leap.

OUR PCC HAS NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE, WILL IT WORK?

The honest answer to this question is, 'Yes, if you lead it well.' Now of course it is not exclusively dependent on your leadership (if the material was useless it would be very hard to make it work), but it is primarily dependent on it. For example, if a good leader reads the material and sees something that they know won't work in their context they will change it, finding a better way to approach that particular section that will work in their context.

The sessions are inspired by some material originally designed by a number of us working for Springboard (the Archbishops' initiative for evangelism) for use with PCCs back in the 1990s. They were incredibly simple, but the feedback from the majority of PCCs was that they worked in a wide variety of contexts, even with PCCs who had never done anything like this before.

WHAT MATERIALS WILL WE NEED?

Each session includes a materials check list, but this has been kept deliberately low key. All the materials are well within the scope of even a resource-challenged PCC.

WHAT ABOUT THE BEST VENUE FOR THESE SESSIONS?

One of the issues addressed in part 1 of this resource is finding an appropriate venue, and when you have identified one, ensuring it is used in the most helpful way. These sessions might provide an excuse for changing your normal venue, or re-arranging the one you currently use. The sessions will benefit from a relaxed and informal layout with space for people to break into smaller groups.

DO WE NEED TO USE THEM IN ORDER?

No, you can change the order to suit your context, although there is a natural 'flow' to the order they are in.

WHERE DO WE GO FOR HELP?

Do contact us if you would like to talk through any aspect of this resource. Our contact details can be found on www.cpas.org.uk

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PART 3

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**Materials
for PCCs**

ONLINE RESOURCES

Part 3 of this resource is a range of materials available to download from the CPAS website.

Go to **www.cpas.org.uk/pcctonight**.

When prompted please enter the code:

PCC2015TN

You will then have access to the following:

GUIDES

- A brief guide to church finances, Archbishops' Council.
- A guide to accounting and reporting, Church of England.
- Ideas for running a PCC in a non-book, UPA, multi-ethnic context, Andy Jolley.
- Leadership structures - a brief guide.
- Leadership structures, an example from a larger church.
- Principles for good communication.
- Social media guidelines, Coventry diocese.
- Trusteeship leaflet, Archbishops' Council.

CHAIRING

- A purpose statement for those who chair, John Truscott.
- Chairing a meeting, The Resource Centre.
- Creating a thinking environment in not-for-profit meetings, Ruth McCarthy
- How to chair meetings – an orchestral approach, John Truscott.
- Major decisions, John Truscott.
- Mapping out a meeting, John Truscott.
- Preparing for awkward moments, Charles Burgess.

PRAYER

- Liturgy for a PCC meeting.
- Liturgy for commissioning a new PCC.
- PCC prayer card.

PCC SECRETARY

- An introduction for PCC secretaries.
- Countdown to the APCM.
- Electoral rolls and the PCC.
- PCC agenda.
- PCC minutes.
- Notice of PCC meeting.
- Role profile – secretary.

PCC TREASURER

- An introduction for PCC treasurers.
- Role profile – treasurer.

OTHER AIDS

- PCC code of conduct.
- PCC induction.
- PCC meeting evaluation.
- PCC members' list.
- Terms of reference template for sub-committees.
- The PCC – an introduction for church members.
- The PCC – an introduction for new members.

The majority of these items are copyright CPAS. Purchase of the PCC Tonight pack gives you permission to photocopy these resources for use within the parish(es) where you are based.

Guides by John Truscott are used with permission, and you can find further helpful guides on his website at www.john-truscott.co.uk. Take a look at TN71 on 'Seatings for meetings', A24 on 'Mission shaped Church Councils', and A20 on 'Annual meetings can be different'.

We will be adding to the materials in Part 3, and if you have things you think may be of help to others please send them to us at CPAS.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ DCC (District Church Councils) are often established when pastoral re-organisation has resulted in two or more parishes being combined into a single benefice and one PCC, with DCCs created to retain the sense of local community of the former separate parishes. Throughout this resource much of what is discussed relating to a PCC will also apply to a DCC. See 'A guide to accounting and reporting' in Part 3 for more on the technical responsibilities of the two bodies.
- ² See James Lawrence, *Growing Leaders*, BRF and CPAS, and Graham Cray, *Discerning Leadership*, Grove Leadership Series 1 for more on this, both available from www.cpas.org.uk/shop
- ³ This also impacts our understanding of humankind, that we are inherently relational beings, only ever able to be fully human in relationship with God and one another.
- ⁴ See Chris Wright, *Mission of God*, IVP.
- ⁵ See Robert Warren, *Developing Healthy Churches*, CHP, pp.4-7. Fresh Expressions also talk about the 'of' aspect of church life, relating to both the historical Church and the global Church. These are sometimes related to the credal phrase one (up), holy (in), catholic (of) and apostolic (out) Church.
- ⁶ See Chris Wright, *The Mission of God*, IVP and Graham Tomlin, *The Widenin Circle*, SPCK.
- ⁷ Steve Timmis, *Gospel-Centred Leadership*, Good Book Company, p.61.
- ⁸ Simon Walker, *Leading Out of Who You Are, Leading with Nothing to Lose, and Leading with Everything to Give*, Piquant Books.
- ⁹ Available from www.hereford.anglican.org
- ¹⁰ Taken from the institution and induction of a new priest where the bishop says 'Receive the cure of souls, which is both yours and mine. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.'
- ¹¹ For further details see John Pitchford, *An ABC for the PCC* (fifth edition), Mowbray, pp.138-140.
- ¹² You will find a downloadable copy in Part 3 of this resource.
- ¹³ There is an example questionnaire to use in Part 3.
- ¹⁴ See Roger Preece, *Understanding and Using Power*, Grove Books Leadership Series 5, available from www.cpas.org.uk/shop
- ¹⁵ See *Church Representation Rules*, Appendix 2:14
- ¹⁶ You can find a downloadable copy in Part 3.
- ¹⁷ Wikipedia.
- ¹⁸ www.mindtools.com/pages/article/improving-group-dynamics.htm
- ¹⁹ This list is an adapted version of www.mindtools.com/pages/article/improving-group-dynamics.htm
- ²⁰ Adapted from www.mindtools.com/pages/article/improving-group-dynamics.htm
- ²¹ See for example www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm on forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning.
- ²² See www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMM_85.htm
- ²³ See Part 2 session 3 for a way to draw up such a code within a PCC and Part 3 for an example code of conduct.
- ²⁴ See Brene Brown's TED talks www.ted.com, 'The Power of Vulnerability' and 'Listening to Shame'; and Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Wiley and Sons.
- ²⁵ See Mark Forster, *Do It Tomorrow*, Hodder, a book written by a naturally disorganised person on personal organisation. His website has helpful ideas and articles as well, markforster.squarespace.com.
- ²⁶ See Anna Drew and Richard Moy, *Leadership and Social Networking*, Grove Books Leadership Series 6, for more ideas about the use of social media in church life. Available from www.cpas.org.uk/shop
- ²⁷ The *Church Representation Rules* indicate that any item needing a decision must be pre-notified in the agenda. So technically AOB (save at the APCM) is contrary to law, even if notified at the beginning of the meeting.
- ²⁸ A metaphor John Truscott uses for chairing a meeting; see his guide to chairing meetings in Part 3.
- ²⁹ Patrick Lencioni, *Death by Meeting*, Wiley and Sons.
- ³⁰ See James Lawrence, *Engaging Gen Y: Leading Well Across the Generations*, Grove Books Leadership Series 8, available from www.cpas.org.uk/shop
- ³¹ See Susan Cain, *Quiet*, Penguin, pp.86-91. This is a fascinating book on the place of introverts in a world that is often more extrovert-friendly.
- ³² See Wikipedia for a good introduction to the topic.
- ³³ A good place to start is www.dotmocracy.org with a free downloadable handbook and sheets.
- ³⁴ For example take a look at www.ubiquis.co.uk/transcription/minute-taking-tips/; www.businesstrainingworks.com/Mechanics/PDF/Free-Minute-Taking-Guide.pdf

- ³⁵ See Andrea Adams, *Bullying at Work*, Virago. Also www.nhs.uk/Livewell/workplacehealth/Pages/bullyingatwork.aspx; www.mentalhealthintheuk.co.uk/Howtodealwithbullying.pdf
- ³⁶ Chris Green at ministrynutsandbolts.com/2014/10/16/leaders-need-others-myers-briggs-again/
- ³⁷ Norm Beers and Susan Schaeffer of Lumiere Consulting offer churches a really helpful introduction to IPS. Contact them on normbeers@gmail.com
- ³⁸ Alex Volcansek is an occupational psychologist who uses 16PF5 with church groups; you can contact her at coaching@alexvolcansek.com
- ³⁹ See Bruce Patton, Douglas Stone, Sheila Heen, *Difficult Conversations*, Penguin. Also a talk given at the Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit 2014 by Joseph Grenny on Crucial Conversations.
- ⁴⁰ Bridge Builders offer a conflict resolution service, www.bbministries.org.uk; Acorn Christian Healing offer a process for reconciliation, www.acornchristian.org; a number of dioceses also offer support in this area.
- ⁴¹ John Truscott, www.johntruscott.org.uk; CPAS run a day called 'Meetings Matter', contact 0300 123 0780.
- ⁴² Simon Walker, *Leading Out of Who You Are, Leading with Nothing to Lose*, and *Leading with Everything to Give*, Piquant Books.
- ⁴³ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam Books. See also Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis, *The New Leaders*, Sphere, for a development of the impact of EQ on leadership.
- ⁴⁴ Gary McIntosh and Samuel Rima, *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership*, Baker.

PCCs Matter

They matter a lot. A healthy functioning PCC enables a church to focus on what matters most. But such PCCs don't just happen; they come about through thoughtful, loving and creative leadership. This book is part of a resource designed to enable incumbents and vice-chairs to lead a healthy PCC, so the PCC may help the church fulfil the mission and ministry of Christ in that place. Covering 12 common dysfunctions of a PCC, it offers practical advice on how to create a dynamic, fun and faith-filled PCC.

'PCC Tonight is excellent. I wish it had been around when I started as an incumbent. Even now there is much I found new and stimulating.'

Philip Plyming, Vicar in Claygate

'Whether you're working with one PCC or trying to juggle four, six or more... this resource will inspire you to encourage your PCCs to become creative, competent and visionary.'

Pam Macnaughton, Pioneer Minister in a multi-parish benefice in Yorkshire

'Engaging stories, practical tools, pithy summaries. This resource will help further the mission and ministry of Christ by enabling PCCs to focus on what matters most.'

Mark Brown, Vicar in Tonbridge

'Exactly what is needed to help prepare me for leading a PCC. I can't recommend it highly enough for curates and associate vicars wanting to prepare wisely for this responsibility.'

Becky Jones, Associate Vicar, inner city Birmingham

'This is a practical, accessible toolkit, not only for transforming your PCC, but also in working on your own leadership style and techniques to help form a healthy and productive team of people.'

Kylie Hodgins, Priest in Charge in rural Cambridgeshire

'This is a great source of inspiration for leading a PCC and full of solid practical advice and ideas.'

Father Nicholas Cheeseman, Vicar in Reading



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information about CPAS go to
www.cpas.org.uk



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Making Mission Possible

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SESSION
1

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**Why
does the
Church
exist?**

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**PCC
Tonight**



Overview of the six sessions

This session is part of the **PCC Tonight** resource, which aims to help PCCs function well. If you haven't read the leaders' guide it will be worth doing so before running these sessions. There is also an introduction to the six sessions towards the end of the leaders' guide which covers lots of the practicalities on how to run these sessions.

Session 1: Why does the church exist?

Session 2: Why does the PCC exist?

Session 3: What is the best way to conduct our meetings?

Session 4: Reviewing church life – worship.

Session 5: Reviewing church life – mission.

Session 6: Reviewing church life – community.

In addition there are some downloadable aids to use when running these sessions. They can be accessed online at www.cpas.org.uk/pcctonight using the code found on page 162 of your leaders' guide.

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SESSION

1

WHY DOES THE CHURCH EXIST?

Introduction

Such a simple question, but one that is rarely asked: why does the Church exist?

In most PCCs you will have a wide variety of views on this matter and therefore a diverse range of ideas on what a local church should look like. Clarifying why the Church exists, and ensuring that everyone takes as their starting point the theological truths that Jesus is the head of the Church, and therefore the one we turn to in order to find an answer, and that God is a sending God, is a good starting point for a PCC.

Aims

- To reflect on why the Church exists and ensure we take our understanding from the head of the Church.
- To excite the group about the benefit of these sessions.

To be aware of

- There may be some on your PCC who are good people, perhaps God-fearing people, but who are not regular attenders of services or necessarily yet followers of Jesus Christ. They may have all sorts of reasons for offering to serve on the PCC, but may not see Jesus as head of his Church. Think about how to handle such a dynamic in your preparation. Imagine the various possible scenarios that might play out (or reflect on ones you have already observed) and identify how you might respond to each of them in a way that keeps the session focused, respects their views, and ensures progress is made.
- If there are a number of people who rarely say anything during PCC meetings, it will help to break into smaller groups to provide an easier environment for them to share their views. Think carefully about these groups, and if necessary allocate people to groups that are most likely to work.
- Don't have too high expectations if you haven't done anything like this before in your PCC. It takes time for a group to learn how to interact in new ways, and whilst this first session might feel awkward, with less contribution and energy than you would like, experience shows that over a number of sessions people will settle into this way of working, and for the vast majority it will be a very positive experience.
- You will know how thoughtful your PCC is on the question of why the Church exists. If you know they have explored this issue recently and have come to a settled mind about the answer you may not need to spend long on Pause and Clarify, and can spend more of your time on Connect.

LEADERS' NOTES



Pause

7 minutes

Invite the PCC to get into groups of three or four and give them 3-4 minutes to answer this question: imagine you were conducting interviews of people within your community who don't attend church, and you asked them 'what does the church exist for?', what answers do you think they would give? Ask someone to keep a record of their answers.

Gather them back as a whole group and get some feedback. Keep it lively and light.

A variation of this exercise is to buy some super-sticky Post-it notes and distribute them among the groups. For each answer they come up with ask them to write it up legibly on a Post-it note – one answer per Post-it note. Then create a wall of answers by sticking up the Post-its and invite people to look at them all and comment on any themes they see or reflections they have.

Then ask them to take a moment to personally complete the statement 'the Church exists to...' Explain they will not have to share their answer, but encourage them to think why they came up with the answer they did.



Clarify

18 minutes

Explain that virtually everyone has a view on why the Church exists. Some of them will be shaped by personal experience (positive and negative), some by views that exist within society, some by things we have read or heard.

It is important for any group of people to know why it exists. Why does a school exist? Why does the golf club exist? Why does Oxfam exist? The answer to this question guides both what the body of people do and how they do it. The same is true for a local church. The difference is that our founder is the one we need to turn to in order to find the answer, not the members. It is not our church in this sense, it is always his church. There are several occasions where Jesus seems to guide those who seek to follow him on their priorities.

Divide the PCC into groups of three people. Ask half the groups to read Matthew 22:34-40 (sometimes referred to as the great commandment), and the other half Matthew 28:16-20 (sometimes referred to as the great commission) and reflect on these questions:

- What strikes you from these readings?
- What would a church living by these priorities look like?

Get feedback from the groups and encourage some discussion. Draw out key insights.

Summarise this section using the quotation and/or diagram below (or your own preferred way of capturing the heart of these two passages).

‘The church exists primarily for two closely correlated purposes: to worship God and to work for his kingdom in the world... The church also exists for a third purpose, which serves the other two: to encourage one another, to build one another up in faith, to pray with and for one another, to learn from one another and teach one another, and to set one another examples to follow, challenges to take up, and urgent tasks to perform. This is all part of what is known loosely as fellowship.’

N.T. Wright, formerly Bishop of Durham in *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*



- **Up** to God in personal faith and corporate worship and life (the ‘worship’ dimension).
- **Out** to all around us; engaging in God’s loving purposes in the world (the ‘work for his kingdom’ dimension).
- **In** to one another, as an expression of God’s nature by being a loving faith community (the ‘fellowship’ dimension).



Connect

10 minutes

Remind people that the PCC is part of the leadership of the church, with oversight of much that the church does. Invite each person to reflect for two minutes on this question: how might the clarity we have obtained about why a local church exists shape what we do as a PCC?

If appropriate, ask each person to simply share their thoughts on this without anyone offering any comment in between.

Reflect on their suggestions, particularly highlighting where there has been overlap and agreement.



PCC Prayer suggestions

Choose one of the following suggestions for prayer, or come up with a way of praying that you know will work with your PCC.

- **Get people into pairs** Ask them to identify an aspect of your church's life they want to give thanks for. After a minute or two, invite them to simply mention these things to the rest of the group and then as the leader offer a prayer giving thanks for all these items.
- **Say together the following prayer:**
Almighty God,
We thank you that you have called us to be your body here on earth,
worshipping you and working for your kingdom.
Fill us with your Spirit,
so that we might love you, love one another and love our neighbours,
and share the good news of Jesus.
Help us as the PCC to order the life of N around your mission and ministry,
to the glory of your name.
Amen.
- **You may like to use the Collect for the fifth Sunday after Trinity:**
Almighty and everlasting God
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church
is governed and sanctified:
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people,
that in their vocation and ministry
they may serve you in holiness and truth
to the glory of your name;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
- **Take the 'one another' verses from the New Testament**
Download them from the website 'Session 1 Posters – one another verses'.
Spread them on the floor or stick them on a wall. Place A5 pieces of paper and felt tip pens nearby, and invite people to write a prayer as a result of one of the verses and then to place or stick them near the verse.



For further resources and information about CPAS go to www.cpas.org.uk

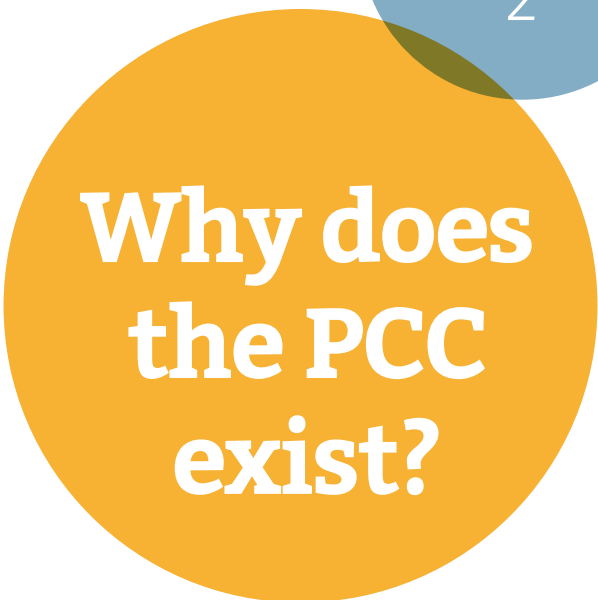
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Making Mission Possible

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SESSION
2

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**Why does
the PCC
exist?**

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**PCC
Tonight**



Overview of the six sessions

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SESSION

2

WHY DOES THE PCC EXIST?

Introduction

It is not unusual for people to join the PCC with little understanding of what it is, why it exists and how it operates. Some may have been on the PCC for a very long time (possibly with some breaks) and are quite fixed in their views. Others may be just starting out, feeling somewhat nervous and wondering if they really want to be there.

The most helpful thing for everyone is clarity. It makes such a difference when people know:

- Why the PCC exists.
- What the PCC is.
- How it operates.

This session focuses on what it is and why it exists. Session 3 focuses on how it operates.

Aims

- To identify five functions at the heart of a PCC's work.
- To help the PCC begin to shape its work around these functions.

To be aware of

- If you are new as the incumbent and want to bring about change to the way a PCC operates, be sensitive to the 'back-stories' that exist. It is worth taking time to meet with each member of the PCC to find out what their story is and in particular what their experience has been of the PCC. For example it may help to know: two years ago there was a 'fight' at a PCC meeting when one member swore at another and stormed out. Or seven years ago the vicar had an affair with the PCC secretary. Or over the last year it is clear the vice-chair has lost their faith.
- It helps to approach things in a way that doesn't make people feel inadequate, but rather builds up their confidence. How you approach this session in a professional middle-class community will differ significantly from how you approach it in an under-resourced disadvantaged area, where people may lack confidence in their own ability.
- Before the meeting, ensure everyone has a copy of 'The PCC an introduction for new members' (downloadable from Part 3 of this resource) and ask them to read it in preparation for the session. Also re-read Common Dysfunctions 1 and 2 in the leaders' guide.
- As with all the material, feel free to tailor it to your context.

LEADERS' NOTES



Either

Refer everyone to the resource guide you sent out ahead of the meeting and invite people to comment in pairs on:

- What struck you as you read the resource guide? Perhaps something they didn't know, or something that made sense of their experience.
- What question are you left with? Perhaps something unclear, or that they didn't understand.

Give them five minutes and then ask people to share their insights and questions. You may like to capture these on flipchart paper. If you do, be sure to display the answers to each question side by side when you have finished.

Or

Invite them to do this exercise in pairs.



Imagine you are in a department store lift and just before the door closes someone you know but haven't seen in a while enters the lift. You get chatting and they indicate they are in a bit of a rush but say they would love to meet for a drink next Monday evening to catch up. You respond: 'Sorry I can't make Monday, I have a PCC meeting.' They say: 'What is a PCC meeting?' You have 15 seconds to respond before the lift reaches the top floor. What will you say?

Give them five minutes to come up with an answer, and then share the different answers with the whole group. Keep it light hearted and fun. Recognise how difficult it can be to explain simply and briefly what a PCC is and does.

Either

If you did the first exercise above, now take the questions that people raised and seek to work on them to bring clarity. We want to inspire people about the function of the PCC, not depress them, so come prepared with inspiring examples or stories that illustrate each of the five functions outlined in the resource guide.

1. It exists to enable the church to play its part in God's mission to his world.
2. It exists to co-operate with the minister in sharing leadership.
3. It exists to ensure legal compliance with charity law and ecclesiastical law, in particular in the areas of safeguarding, finance, employment and appointments.
4. It exists to care for the buildings and churchyard so that they may be best suited for the purpose of the church's ministry and mission.
5. It exists to be a channel of consultation within the wider Church through its synodical structures on matters that affect the Church locally and nationally.



If possible select examples or stories from the recent history of your PCC. If there aren't any or many, tell some stories from other PCCs.

Or

If you did the second exercise above, take the good examples of what people have said in their 15 seconds; build on these to come up with an agreed 15-second definition that captures the essence of what the PCC is about. If people have struggled to come up with good examples, use that to illustrate how difficult it is on the spur of the moment to answer the question and therefore how helpful it is to think about the answer beforehand. Suggest an answer and get people to interact with it, refining, honing and developing it.

Here's one suggestion: The PCC is a group of people who, with the vicar, oversee the life of the church to ensure we are focused on what Jesus wants us to do. We aim to seek God's will, work well together, reflect our values and take action for the future.

If you are able to come up with a clear, succinct purpose statement for the PCC, make sure it appears on future agendas as a reminder of what you are about as a PCC. Link items on the agenda to your purpose statement.



Connect

7 minutes

A range of options here:

- Take the five functions and reflect on how much time you spend on each of these five areas in your meetings. Are they apportioned equally? Disproportionately in one or two areas? Discuss how each area of business might best be done. How might the agenda most helpfully reflect this? What can be done by the standing committee?
- This one is best done with a PCC where people know each other reasonably well and are comfortable with their own preferences. Place five A4 sheets each with one of the functions of the PCC on it (see 'Session 2 - functions of a PCC' Posters available as a download) around the walls of the room. Then invite people to stand by the one that most interests or excites them. This will highlight where the 'energy' of the current members of the PCC lies. It will highlight any gaps that might need addressing. Discuss the implications of where people are standing.
- Take a sample agenda and explain how the five areas relate to the way the meeting agenda is constructed, and how the standing committee and other committees/task groups relate to achieving all five functions.



PCC Prayer suggestions

- **Introduce some moments of quiet** in which people can offer their own silent prayers to God as they reflect on the session, and then pray the Lord's Prayer together.
- **Divide the group into five.** Allocate each group one of the 'posters' of the five functions of a PCC, and ask them to write a brief prayer for that aspect of the life of the PCC. Invite each group to offer their prayer. You can also use these prayers in future meetings.
- **Take the purpose statement** for the PCC you have created. Invite people in threes or fours to identify things they would like to pray for related to this purpose statement. Either share ideas with the whole PCC and then pray together in whatever way is suitable for your group. Or encourage each smaller group to be still with one another and silently to pray for some of the things they have identified.



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Making Mission Possible

SESSION 3

**What is
the best way
to conduct our
meetings?**

**PCC
Tonight**



Overview of the six sessions

This session is part of the **PCC Tonight** resource, which aims to help PCCs function well. If you haven't read the leaders' guide it will be worth doing so before running these sessions. There is also an introduction to the six sessions towards the end of the leaders' guide which covers lots of the practicalities on how to run these sessions.

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Session 2: Why does the PCC exist?

Session 3: What is the best way to conduct our meetings?

Session 4: Reviewing church life – worship.

Session 5: Reviewing church life – mission.

Session 6: Reviewing church life – community.

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SESSION

3

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO CONDUCT OUR MEETINGS?

Introduction

This session is linked to the session on why the PCC exists, and explores how a PCC operates. You may do them in either order, which is why one of the 'to be aware of' items is the same for both sessions.

Most PCCs will have a combination of good things and not so good things in the way they work. Some of these will be 'institutionalised'; they are part of the culture of how things are done, and therefore changing them can be quite hard work.

Healthy change normally occurs when you tap into people's dissatisfaction (see the pet peeves exercise below) and offer them an alternative way that inspires people. However, it would be naive to think that everyone will immediately want things to change.

Aims

- To identify creative ways to value one another's different gifts, personalities and passions so that we work well together.
- To draw up an agreed code of conduct for our meetings together.

To be aware of

- If you are new as the incumbent and wanting to bring about change in the way a PCC operates, be sensitive to the 'back-stories' that exist. It is worth taking time to meet with each member of the PCC to find out what their story is, and in particular what their experience has been of the PCC. For example it may help to know: two years ago there was a 'fight' at a PCC meeting when one member swore at another and stormed out. Or seven years ago the vicar had an affair with the PCC secretary. Or over the last year it is clear the vice-chair has lost their faith.
- Do reflect on Common Dysfunction 4 in Part 1 of this resource, in particular the Adair model of groups, before running this session. Being aware of your default position (task, group, individual) will help you understand where your preference is and help you to ensure the other areas are equally prominent in the discussion.
- You may like to use 1 Corinthians 12 as part of your prayer/Bible study at the start of the meeting, exploring questions like: what does this passage teach us about the value of every Christian person? What are the implications of all being part of the one body?

- Where you are unable to agree as a group, it may be helpful to place those items on one side, acknowledging that the group can't currently agree, and explaining that you will reconsider them on another occasion.
- Part of this session is to draw up a suggested code of conduct, or meeting guidelines, that will help the PCC to function well in the future. Be sure to follow through on writing this up and distributing it soon after the meeting, and then introducing it at the start of the next PCC.

LEADERS' NOTES



Explain that the focus of this session is to clarify how the PCC operates when it meets together.

Either

Send out the meeting evaluation questionnaires ahead of the meeting (you will find this as a download in Part 3 of this resource). Ask for them to be returned to you ahead of the meeting so you have time to collate the responses. Present the results of the survey, preferably visually using a handout or via PowerPoint, Keynote, infographics, flipcharts (if you are used to using one of these methods, perhaps try a different one to bring some variety).

Or

Invite them to get into groups of three. Ask them to consider these two questions:

- What works well when we meet as a PCC?
- What are your pet peeves about our meetings?

Give them five minutes, and then feed back to two separate flipchart sheets the answers from both questions.



Remind people that as a PCC you are seeking to work well together, and that you want the PCC meeting to be the best meeting they attend in any given month. One way to help move towards this is to address people's pet peeves and draw up a code of conduct which the group owns and lives by.

Divide the PCC into three equal-sized groups. If you did the first exercise above, give each group three of the areas to be addressed from the list below (adjusted according to results of the survey). If you did the second exercise above, adjust the areas according to the pet peeves insights. For each area ask them to:

- Identify your current practices.
- Name what is good.
- Clarify how it could be improved.
- Be ready to suggest a short way of operating as a PCC for each area.

Areas to address

- Setting and distributing the agenda.
- Chairing the meeting.
- Prayer and worship.
- Bible study.
- Ensuring every member is valued.
- Making decisions.
- Handling conflict.
- Implementing decisions made.
- Use of mobile phones/tablets.

They may not have time to get through them all. Focus on the ones that most closely relate to the pet peeves that came out of the earlier exercise. They have 10 minutes, then feed back to the larger group and see if you can get some consensus around how you will operate as a PCC.

If you want a visual way of doing this, get hold of a large sheet of card (or paper) and cut it up into eight interlocking sections of roughly equal size (a simple jigsaw). Using chisel-tip marker pens give each section a different colour edge. Write in the middle the italicised words from the list above (or your own list). As you discuss each area place it somewhere everyone can see, fitting the different pieces together so they can see how it forms a whole.



Connect

5 minutes

Explain that you will write up the group's ideas and send them out following the meeting as a suggested code. Ask them to check what you have written, and to let you have any further thoughts within a set period of time. Be sure to make it clear that the code is not set forever and can be reviewed and changed over time.

Discuss briefly the question: how do we ensure we live by our agreed code of conduct? Capture any good ideas and use them when introducing the code at the next meeting.



AN EXAMPLE CODE OF CONDUCT

Over the years, the PCC has developed a set of 'ground-rules' which underpin the conduct of the meetings. Some may feel a little prescriptive but over time they have proved their worth in facilitating trust, honesty and accountability.

These 'ground-rules' are as follows:

- Contributions to discussions are made through the chair.
- We aim to listen carefully to one another.
- While verbal discussion about agenda items with members of the congregation and other council members is to be encouraged, to avoid confusion and factions, it is asked PCC members do not use emails, letters or social media as a means of discussing council decisions following a meeting or of debating an issue prior to a meeting. If a PCC member is unable to attend a meeting and wishes their views to be taken into consideration, an email or letter outlining these views should be sent to the chairperson who will then ensure that the views are fed into the discussion at the meeting.
- Discussions at PCC are confidential, but decisions and Minutes belong to the whole church and will be communicated later.
- Discussions are to be conducted with grace and love, speaking and listening to each other with respect - particularly when we disagree with one another - remembering that we are elected to represent the views of church members not just our own agenda.
- If a decision is taken by the majority of the council it is the responsibility of the whole council to then support it.
- If there is a paper or indeed any supporting document that is maybe of interest or help to the whole Council, relating to an agenda item, it should first be sent to the vicar.



PCC Prayer suggestions

- **Invite each person to identify something** they want to give thanks for in the life of the PCC, and one thing they would like to see change. Offer a few moments of quiet in which people offer these things to God, either out loud, or in the silence.
- **Invite each person to give thanks** for the person on their right by doing prayer in the round. Each person simply says 'Thank you for N' and then the next person does the same until the whole group has been named before God. You can start and end the prayer time with appropriate words.
- **Distribute the profiles of the PCC members** and ask each person to pray for the other members of the PCC between now and when you next meet. You could go round the group asking if there is anything in particular they would like prayer for.



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SESSION
4

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**Reviewing
church life
– worship**

The text 'PCC Tonight' is centered within a light blue circle. The circle is located in the bottom left corner of the page.

**PCC
Tonight**



Overview of the six sessions

This session is part of the **PCC Tonight** resource, which aims to help PCCs function well. If you haven't read the leaders' guide it will be worth doing so before running these sessions. There is also an introduction to the six sessions towards the end of the leaders' guide which covers lots of the practicalities on how to run these sessions.

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SESSION

4

REVIEWING CHURCH LIFE – WORSHIP

Introduction

This is the first of three sessions reviewing three aspects of church life: worship, community, and mission, also known as up, in and out (see Session 1 and the article at www.freshexpressions.org.uk/guide/about/proper which links the up, in, out and of dimensions to the phrase in the creed 'the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church').



This session focuses on 'up', our worship of God and growth in relationship with him in both our corporate and personal life.

Aims

- To identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for growth in the 'up' dimension of church life.
- To identify a next step that will lead to action being taken.

To be aware of

- How you approach this (and the following two sessions) will significantly depend on prior conversations you have had as a PCC about these areas. The material is designed to start conversations and help you identify your next step forward. It may lead to use of other material to help identify an action plan for the future development of the church, for example Mission Action Planning (MAP) or Appreciative Enquiry.
- The report *From Anecdote to Evidence* has a helpful way of defining growth in three dimensions. 'The Church, in undertaking its mission, seeks to grow in the following ways: (1) The holiness, transformation and commitment of her members (growth in depth) – both individuals and churches. (2) Increased number of disciples of Jesus Christ (growth in numbers). (3) The fruit of social righteousness and a transformed society (growth in the outworking of our discipleship). You may like to make the report available to members of the PCC. It is freely downloadable from www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk
- Getting people to talk about their own faith journey isn't always easy, so the exercise in the Pause section will need to be handled sensitively. However, it is a gentle way to encourage conversation about faith, and can help people to get to know one another a little better. Combined with the prayer suggestion, it can also build faith as we see God at work in people's lives.
- Some of the SWOT analysis may be a little critical of aspects of gathered church life. If you are the minister try not to become defensive, but rather encourage people to be honest about what they think.
- The temptation of some will be to focus on adults in these conversations. But children and young people are vital to the health of the church. Even if you don't have any children or young people connected with your church, be sure to give this session an all-age perspective.

LEADERS' NOTES



Pause

10 minutes

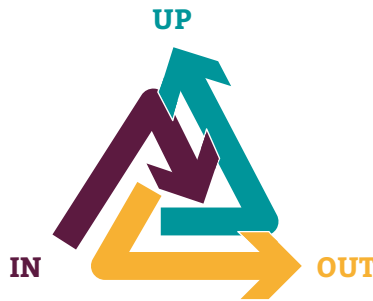
Either

Explain that this is the first in a series of three sessions on the up, in, out of church life. Remind them of the quotation and model from Session 1 (see below). In this session the focus is on 'up', how we grow in our relationship with God in both our personal lives and our corporate life as a church, so that we love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

'The church exists primarily for two closely correlated purposes: to worship God and to work for his kingdom in the world... The church also exists for a third purpose, which serves the other two: to encourage one another, to build one another up in faith, to pray with and for one another, to learn from one another and teach one another, and to set one another examples to follow, challenges to take up, and urgent tasks to perform. This is all part of what is known loosely as fellowship.'

N.T. Wright, formerly Bishop of Durham in *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*

- **Up** to God in personal faith and corporate worship and life (the ‘worship’ dimension).
- **Out** to all around us; engaging in God’s loving purposes in the world (the ‘work for his kingdom’ dimension).
- **In** to one another, as an expression of God’s nature by being a loving faith community (the ‘fellowship’ dimension).



Ask them to get into pairs and to take two minutes each to describe their own faith story. If it is helpful, either give them a few ideas about what they might mention in their story, or tell your own story as an illustration of what you are asking them to do. Alternatively you could ask them how they became a part of the church family. If you have members who don’t attend church, you could ask them what led them to be part of the PCC. You will need to keep time and after 90 seconds say ‘30 seconds to go’, and then call time at two minutes and invite them to swap over. When they have finished telling their stories, ask them to answer this question: as you review your own journey of faith, what has most helped you grow in your relationship with God?

After two more minutes gather the whole group back together and invite feedback on the question.



Read Mark 4:1-9 and make the simple comment that the seed is designed to grow but that certain conditions make it hard to do so. The role of the PCC is to do everything it can to create good conditions for growth.

Either

Get them into groups of four and ask them to conduct a SWOT exercise on how the church currently helps people to grow in their relationship with God. Give half the groups one area and half the other:

- To increase our resourcing of people to grow in their relationship with God in their personal lives.
- To increase our resourcing of people to grow in their relationship with God through our corporate life.

Ideally give each group a flipchart sheet with a SWOT grid already on it which they can complete, and distribute the SWOT exercise handout to each person for their own personal reflections or

record. It may help to identify a facilitator for each group ahead of the meeting, explaining what you are asking them to do – to ensure the group keeps to task and everyone can contribute. The facilitator can also give feedback at the end of the exercise.

After 12-15 minutes invite each group to present their insights briefly. Look for commonality across the groups and invite any reflections.

Or

In groups of three or four ask them to discuss the following questions:

- If a new Christian were to arrive at our church service this Sunday, what would we want to have in place to help him or her grow in faith?
- How can we better arrange our services so as to foster growth?
- How can we better arrange our mid-week activities so as to foster growth?
- How can we foster a transforming spirituality at the heart of our corporate life together and our personal lives?

After 12-15 minutes invite each group briefly to present their insights. Look for commonality across the groups and invite any reflections.



Connect

8 minutes

Summarise some of the key things that have come out of your conversations so far, and ask ‘where do we go from here with this?’ The aim here is to get the PCC to identify the next step forward. It may be a simple item that can be actioned between this and the next meeting, or may be there is some further research to be done before the next meeting, or it may be that they want to allocate more time to discuss the issue. It doesn’t matter what they choose as the way forward, the key is to get the group to a consensus about the next step.

If it helps you could introduce this Connect section by saying: ‘imagine the Bishop (or choose someone else: Richard Branson, Jesus, Mother Theresa) was helping us with this aspect of our life as a church, what do we think they would say at this point to focus what we do next?’



PCC Prayer suggestions

- **Place some lining paper** somewhere everyone can gather round it (2-4 metres depending on the number of people on your PCC). Place a timeline on it with the birth year of the oldest person at the left hand end, and the birth year of the youngest person at the right hand end (i.e. 1937-2004). Using marker pens, invite people to place a line on the timeline which marks a significant point in their faith journey and to write the year and a word or phrase to describe it. When this is done, ask people to stand back to view the timeline and give thanks to God for all he has done over the years in whatever way is appropriate for your PCC.
- **Gather round the SWOT flipchart** sheets and encourage people to lead the group in short prayers in response to what they see.



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SESSION
5

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**Reviewing
church life
– mission**

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**PCC
Tonight**



Overview of the six sessions

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SESSION

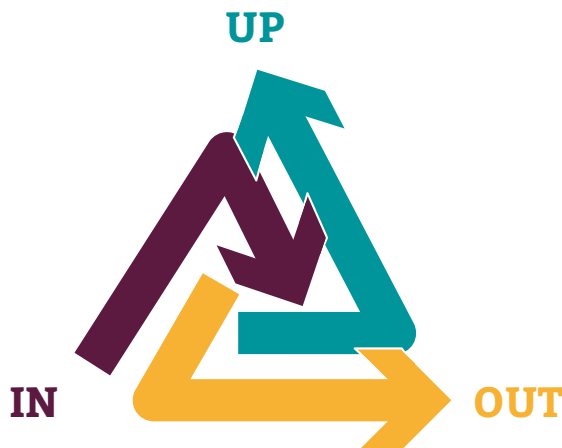
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REVIEWING CHURCH LIFE – MISSION

Introduction

In Session 4 we considered 'up' in our relationship with God; in this session we focus on 'out' to all around us, the mission aspect of the church. This encompasses many things including:

- The proclamation of the gospel.
- Running social concern projects such as CAP or food banks.
- Supporting mission partners in other parts of the world.
- Caring for the environment through involvement with organisations such as Fair Trade or A Rocha.
- Campaigning on issues of social justice, such as Stop the Traffic.
- Supporting overseas projects working with the disadvantaged, such as Tearfund or Christian Aid.
- Helping church members show and share their faith in their Monday to Saturday lives.
- Encouraging people to consider mission work in another part of the world.
- Enabling people to live as disciples of Jesus wherever he places them.



Aims

- To explore the variety of ways a church can engage in the 'out' dimension.
- To identify a next step in one area.

To be aware of

- The church is both a gathered and sent community. We gather and are built up in our faith. We are sent to show and share the faith. However, if there is a common tendency within church life, it is to focus on the former and not the latter, to spend our time and resources on the gathered aspect of church life and little on resourcing people to be church when they are scattered.
- LICC (the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity) has done some great work on growing whole life disciple-making disciples. You can find their resources at www.licc.org.uk.
- There is also some interesting research conducted by the Evangelical Alliance on discipleship amongst evangelical Christians, available at www.eauk.org/church/resources/snapshot/upload/Time-for-Discipleship-PDF.pdf
- This session requires a little extra preparation time to create the sets of cards for use in two of the activities and for one of the prayer suggestions.

LEADERS' NOTES



Remind people of the up, in and out diagram and explain that this session explores the 'out' dimension of church life, our working for the kingdom in the world, loving our neighbour as ourselves. Here is how the PCC Powers Measure 1956 sets out the first function of the PCC: 'co-operation with the minister in promoting in the parish the mission of the church, pastoral, social, evangelistic and ecumenical'.

Before the session prepare as many sets of the cards (Session 5 handout downloadable from Part 3 of this resource) as you will need for groups of five or six people. Print them on card (if you can, different colour card for each group), cut them up and place a rubber band round each set.

Divide the PCC into groups of five or six people. Either create space on the floor or around separate tables. Give each group a set of cards, and explain the instructions carefully. Something like this: 'This activity is to be done in silence. There is a series of cards about the outward-focusing aspect of church life. The first person takes a card and places it down. The second person then takes a card and places it either above or below the first card depending on whether

you think this is more important or less important. The third person then takes the third card and places it above or below either of the first two cards. They can move the existing cards to fit their card in, but can't change the order of the other cards. This continues round the circle until all the cards are used up. Then there are two more rounds. Each person has two more goes where they can move any card to any position in the ladder. Remember the activity needs to be done in silence, and you have five minutes to complete it. Any questions?

When all the groups have completed the activity invite people to wander round looking at what others have done. Then break the silence and ask for comments and reflections on the activity and the results.

Acknowledge how difficult it can be to decide what should take priority and how people will have different ideas on what is most important.



Read Luke 4:16-21.

Either

Invite people in threes to discuss the following question: in what way are we as the body of Christ caught up in Jesus' manifesto?

Or

Offer a few reflections on the passage outlining what Jesus may have meant and how as his people we are caught up with this manifesto.

Now invite the groups to take the same cards and in discussion lay them out horizontally on a scale from 'we don't do this very well (if at all)' to 'we do this reasonably well' (middle of the scale) to 'we do this really well'. When they have agreed an order, ask them to identify one card they would like to see move along the scale to the right, and to suggest one way that might happen. Give them 10 minutes.

Again encourage people to move around and look at the different ways groups have ordered the cards. Then invite one person from each group to identify the card they would like to move, and their suggestion of how that might happen.

It may be helpful for someone to take a photo of each set of cards to send round following the meeting.



Connect

8 minutes

As in the previous session, summarise some of the key things that have come out of your conversations so far, and ask 'where do we go from here with this?' The aim is to get the PCC to identify the next step forward. It may be a simple item that can be actioned between this and the next meeting, or may be there is some further research to be done before the next meeting, or it may be that they want to allocate more time to discuss the issue. It doesn't matter what they choose as the way forward, the key is to get the group to a consensus about the next step.



If it helps you could introduce this Connect section by saying: 'we have been given £5,000 towards one of these projects. Which shall we spend it on and how shall we best spend it?'



PCC Prayer suggestions

- **Ask each person to take one of the cards** that they feel most passionately about. Gather in a circle and invite them to place their card in the middle of the circle where it can be seen, leaving 10 or so seconds between each one so people can pray about that area in silence. Start with an introductory prayer and place your card down. At the end either say the Lord's Prayer together or some other appropriate prayer.
- **Gather materials for several prayer stations** around the room, for example a map of the local area with the parish outlined on it; information from the mission partners or charities you support as a church; newspaper headlines about issues in the world at the time; cards naming where each person on the PCC is at 11am on a Monday morning (or, even better, photos of those places); some material relating to a community project you're running. Make the areas look as visually attractive as possible; perhaps place a candle at the centre of each area, or print off a Bible verse. Invite people to walk around the stations and use the materials to prompt their prayers. They can stay at one station, or move between several.



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SESSION
6

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**Reviewing
church life –
community**

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**PCC
Tonight**



Overview of the six sessions

This session is part of the **PCC Tonight** resource, which aims to help PCCs function well. If you haven't read the leaders' guide it will be worth doing so before running these sessions. There is also an introduction to the six sessions towards the end of the leaders' guide which covers lots of the practicalities on how to run these sessions.

Session 1: Why does the church exist?

Session 2: Why does the PCC exist?

Session 3: What is the best way to conduct our meetings?

Session 4: Reviewing church life – worship.

Session 5: Reviewing church life – mission.

Session 6: Reviewing church life – community.

In addition there are some downloadable aids to use when running these sessions. They can be accessed online at www.cpas.org.uk/pcctonight using the code found on page 162 of your leaders' guide.

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SESSION

6

REVIEWING CHURCH LIFE – COMMUNITY

Introduction

In Sessions 4 and 5 we considered 'up' in our relationship with God and 'out' to all around us, the mission aspect of the church. In this session we explore 'in', the fellowship aspect of church life, which is an expression of God's nature in communal living. Tom Wright captured it well in the quotation we have been using:

'The church also exists for a third purpose, which serves the other two: to encourage one another, to build one another up in faith, to pray with and for one another, to learn from one another and teach one another, and to set one another examples to follow, challenges to take up, and urgent tasks to perform. This is all part of what is known loosely as fellowship.'

N.T. Wright, formerly Bishop of Durham in *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*



In essence this is God's people living out the 'one another' verses of the Scriptures.

Aims

- To explore the variety of ways a church can engage with the ‘in’ dimension.
- To identify a next step in one area.

To be aware of

- For some members of the PCC, the communal dimension of church life will not be high on their priority list. They may see faith as personal and even private. They are content to attend a church service, help out with a few things, but don’t want to ‘do life’ with others in the church. This may be for cultural reasons (the way they were brought up), personality reasons (they prefer their own company, keeping things to themselves), or experiential reasons (they have been hurt in a previous community, and don’t want to expose themselves to such hurt again). For others, the community aspect is the whole of what church is about. To put it bluntly, for them the church operates as a social club, a place to belong and enjoy the company of others, with a rather annoying tendency to introduce God into things.
- It helps to have a clear picture of what might be, and a clear picture of how things are, without being naively optimistic about the future or unduly pessimistic about the present. The gap between current reality and preferred future is where energy is found for change. Part of the overall leadership’s responsibility within a church is to nurture both these things (dissatisfaction with what is and an idea of what might be) so that progress can be made towards the communal aspect of church life that the New Testament encourages. It isn’t usually a quick journey, but one that takes years.

LEADERS’ NOTES



Pause

15 minutes

Remind people of the up/in/out diagram and explain that this session explores the ‘in’ dimension of church life, our fellowship together (from the word *koinonia*, which shares the same root as the word for Siamese twins, sharing life together, dependent on one another).

Either

Explain that the Bible uses a variety of metaphors for church (for example, body, bride, building). Sometimes people use more contemporary metaphors:

- Church as hospital, for those who need to be made well or whole.
- Church as training camp, preparing people for active service.

- Church as lifeboat, rescuing people from the ravages of the world.
- Church as cruise liner, for people to enjoy escape from normal life.
- Church as club, for people who share a common interest/passion.
- Church as warship, actively engaged in a battle.

In groups of four, invite people to choose a metaphor to describe their church. The group has to come to a common consensus and be able to give their reasons why they have chosen that metaphor.

After 7-8 minutes, gather the whole group and ask for feedback. If there is someone artistic in the group, ask them ahead of the meeting if they would sketch the metaphors on a flipchart as people offer them so you have a visual representation at the end of the feedback. Encourage a healthy level of fun and playfulness in this exercise.

Or

In groups of four, invite people to choose an animal that describes their church. You may need to give an example to illustrate: 'Our church is a *N* because...' The group has to come to a common consensus and be able to give their reasons why they have chosen that metaphor.

After 7-8 minutes, gather the whole group and ask for feedback. If there is someone artistic in the group, ask them ahead of the meeting if they would sketch the animals on a flipchart as people offer them so you have a visual representation at the end of the feedback. Encourage a healthy level of fun and playfulness in this exercise.

Acknowledge that every church has particular things that are true about the way they are, the way they exist. The New Testament offers us a variety of ways we can assess how our current practice aligns with God's purpose for the 'in' aspect of church.



Either

'The church also exists for a third purpose, which serves the other two: to encourage one another, to build one another up in faith, to pray with and for one another, to learn from one another and teach one another, and to set one another examples to follow, challenges to take up, and urgent tasks to perform. This is all part of what is known loosely as fellowship.'

N.T. Wright, formerly Bishop of Durham in *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*

Invite people to get into threes and to consider Tom Wright's summary of this third aspect of the Church's existence. Give out the handout, or project his words, and ask them to briefly discuss the following:

- Can you give an example of a 'one another' he mentions from church life in the last year?
- What do you think he means when he says the third purpose 'serves the other two' (the 'up' of worship and the 'out' of mission)?
- What are the inherent dangers of a church becoming too 'in' focused? Or of not giving enough attention to the 'in' aspect of church life?

After 12-14 minutes invite feedback from the groups and generate some discussion around the ideas shared.

Or

Read Acts 2:42-47.

In groups of four invite them to reflect on the passage and discuss:

- What surprises you from the passage?
- In what ways would it be appropriate to reflect such a 'common life' in our church?
- How could we do this?

After 12-14 minutes invite feedback from the groups and generate some discussion around the ideas shared.



Connect

5 minutes

As in the previous session, summarise some of the key things that have come out of your conversations so far, and ask 'where do we go from here with this?' The aim here is to get the PCC to identify the next step forward. It may be a simple item that can be actioned between this and the next meeting, or may be there is some further research to be done before the next meeting, or it may be that they want to allocate more time to discuss the issue. It doesn't matter what they choose as the way forward, the key is to get the group to a consensus about the next step.

If it helps you could introduce this Connect section by saying: 'in the recent Archdeacon's visitation, s/he not only audited the fabric of the church, but also the fellowship aspect of our life together. S/he has identified three things that need attention over the next five years. What do you think they are?'



PCC Prayer suggestions

- **Take the 'one another' verses** from the Bible (see the handout) and give them to each person, inviting them to choose one as a focus for their prayers and action until the next PCC meeting. Encourage them to put it somewhere that will remind them of it. Alternatively cut the verses up and place them on a table upside down. Invite people to choose one to take away and pray and act upon until the next PCC meeting. If appropriate, suggest that at the start of the next PCC there will be an opportunity for people to reflect on what has happened as a result of their praying and action.
- **Use the images drawn earlier in the session** as a way of encouraging people to pray about the life of the church. You could get them to gather in small groups around the image that they connect with most, and then ask them to mention one good thing that comes as a result of that image, and one thing not so good. Then invite them to give thanks for the positive and pray about the less positive.



For further resources and information about CPAS go to www.cpas.org.uk