



Making Mission Possible

PCC Tonight

YOUR GUIDE TO
LEADING A PCC:
**SESSIONS FOR MULTI-
PARISH BENEFICES**

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Published by:
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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 a number of churches 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 meaning route, way, path or direction. So those in leadership are responsible for discerning the route or path to follow – for those on PCCs in churches this means discerning God's route, his way ahead.

These sessions are designed to help your PCCs do just that, to take a break from the activity of doing so that we can:

- **Pause** to think about why we are here and what we are currently doing, then
- **Clarify** where we think God might be leading us, and then
- **Connect** that with the reality of where things are in ways that begin to make a difference.

These sessions can also be easily adapted for online use in a Zoom session where necessary. See the notes on page 8 for further help with this.



PAUSE



CLARIFY



CONNECT

Introduction

These sessions are based on the format of the original PCC resource, PCC Tonight (available from www.cpas.org.uk/pcctonight), which helps PCCs to review their purpose and working practices.

Here, we concentrate on some of the specific issues that arise in multi-parish benefices (MPBs). You may find these sessions extremely helpful as a follow-up to the original PCC Tonight sessions. However, if your PCCs are already functioning well, and are focused on the three key aspects of church life – worship, mission and community – then these sessions work well as a stand-alone resource to help all your churches flourish.

They could be used in each PCC across a group, or with a group council or in special meetings of PCCs joining together. The Covid-19 pandemic may well have made it even more important to tackle these topics across an MPB.

These six sessions cover:

1. Joys and challenges in a multi-parish benefice.
2. Relating well across the group.
3. Hospitality.
4. Nurturing leaders.
5. Better together.
6. Vision for the future.

Each session is around 35-40 minutes long and can be used in a number of different ways.

- You can use a session at the start of a PCC meeting as the first item on the agenda, doing one each time you meet over several 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 or day.

The approach (Pause, Clarify, Connect) can be adopted for other items that your PCCs 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 PCCs function.

You might also want to see our third set of six sessions that concentrate particularly on the ways in which PCCs can shape their churches to become more effective in evangelism.

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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 or Group Council. It is possible for them to be led by one person, but preferable for it to be two. At a very 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, especially if you are running it several times in the different PCCs, and discourage dependence on ordained leadership.

HOW DO WE ADJUST THEM TO FIT OUR PCCS?

As acknowledged throughout PCC Tonight, PCCs come in many different shapes and sizes and are located in very different contexts. A small rural PCC, part of a group of eight churches, and with just six members who have always lived in that village, has a particular dynamic. It will be wildly different from that of a 30-strong PCC in a suburban church, which is one of a group of three churches in a commuter suburb where few people have lived in the area longer than three years.

So, 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 down the large group into smaller groups to encourage people to contribute.
- Smaller PCCs where people have been together for a while may suffer from a sense of all presuming that they know what everyone else thinks. Providing some space for personal reflection, followed by creative ways for each person to articulate their thoughts, can help break down any unhelpful assumptions.
- If you are working in a non-book context, minimising the use of paper, and maximising the use of pictures, images, stories and videos will help people's engagement.
- In a multi-ethnic context, mixing up the small groups, so that those of different ethnic origins engage with one another, can aid mutual understanding 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 PCCs, or Group Council, if you have not thought about how to run a session, and is likely to decrease both the engagement of those attending, 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 reading and prayer. The idea is that you chose one or two of the suggestions. Don't try to do them all. They will work best at the end of your PCC Tonight course session as they reflect the things you have talked about. The hope is that, if the members of your PCCs are not familiar with praying aloud together, these suggestions will enable them to engage in prayer in creative ways and grow in confidence.

“
Good preparation will enhance the experience, but it doesn't have to take long – just 30 minutes should be sufficient.
”



OUR PCCS HAVE NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE, WILL IT WORK?

The honest answer to this question is, 'Yes, if you lead it well.' While it is not exclusively dependent on your effective leadership, the latter will make a vital difference. For example, if a good leader reads the material and sees something that they know will not work in their context, they will change it to something with similar outcomes but of more appropriate style.

WHAT MATERIALS WILL WE NEED?

Each session includes a materials' checklist, but this has been kept deliberately short. All the materials are well within the scope of even a resource-challenged PCC.

WHAT ABOUT THE BEST VENUE FOR THESE SESSIONS?

Hopefully, you have already given thought to finding the best possible venue for your different PCCs or Group Council. You will have thought about warmth, comfort, oxygen levels and the ability to work easily in one group or smaller groups when necessary. However, for these sessions, you may want to find a special space – like a room in a pub or someone's home – so that people will relax and engage well. Think carefully about how you will lay out the space before people arrive so that it is welcoming and ready for action. If you have the original PCC Tonight book, see page 79 for further help in thinking through using a meeting space well.

CAN I RUN THESE SESSIONS ONLINE?

To make these sessions work well online, use appropriate online versions of: flipchart (e.g. whiteboard); projections of words for prayer or discussion; and breakout rooms for smaller groups, appropriate to the section. Group tasks can be done on pen and paper by all; objects can be replaced with images on the screen or by asking people to bring their own to the screen, such as in session 1, where each person needs an orange and a stone; material can be sent to all in advance. Welcome everyone well, encourage them to bring their own drink – and invite them to use their own creativity to respond to the sessions. You may find that some quieter members contribute more because they are in their own space. Be prepared to give each and every person the opportunity to speak.

You may also like to take a look at our free guide on [How to Lead a Zoom PCC Meeting](#). It contains details on how to use five of the most helpful Zoom tools, as well as insights into some of the nuances of how to help people engage well online.

DO WE NEED TO USE THESE SESSIONS IN ORDER?

No, you can change the order to most suit your context, although there is a natural flow to them as they are supplied.

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.

PLEASE BE AWARE

- There may be some on your PCC who are wonderful people, perhaps also God-fearing people, but who are not regular church attenders or even not, as 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 particularly relevant to 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 PCC members 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.
- Many PCCs in MPBs find it easy to concentrate on the needs of their own church, and harder to think about the issues – for good and ill – around all the churches in a group.

They may well need careful encouragement to think more widely than usual. There may also be some anger or disappointment as some of the issues are aired – particularly in areas where churches have not been joined together in an MPB for long. Those leading these sessions will need to be patient, resilient and well prepared for these meetings, so as not to be overly defensive, and so they can share some of the joys and challenges of the MPB from their point of view too. It is up to those leading the session to model sharing ideas well.

- There may well be people on your PCCs who want to challenge the policies of diocese and national Church over the increasing number of MPBs. Whilst acknowledging their frustration, assure them that this is a live issue in diocesan and national discussions, and various places are trying different experiments with new patterns of working. However, the task here is to focus on the local, and on the opportunities of the current situation.
- Each of these sessions has some points of action to plan, for beyond the end of the meeting, so careful follow up of these will be needed to get the maximum benefit from the course.

Sample



1

JOYS AND CHALLENGES IN A MULTI-PARISH BENEFICE

Introduction

There are many joys and challenges for PCCs and group councils, lay people and clergy, in working with churches in multi-parish benefices (MPBs). These have been heightened by the Covid-19 pandemic, which may be causing significant stress about what the future holds. This first session enables PCCs to start voicing and exploring some of these joys and challenges, which can often remain unacknowledged. Here we start to bring them into the light and think about how we can maximise the joys and work with the challenges.

AIMS

- To acknowledge and reflect on the joys and challenges of worship, mission and community across all the churches in your MPB.
- To help each PCC plan to maximise one of the joys, and ease one of the challenges.

PLEASE BE AWARE

- If you have not done the first set of the PCC Tonight sessions, this might be the first time some people have stepped back to think about the life of the churches, rather than concentrating on the relentless matters of business and all the demands of the pandemic and its aftermath. It may take time for people to feel confident about what they are doing.
- It is sometimes easier to look for the challenges of MPB working than the joys, so be prepared to push a little and take extra time if necessary, to help people identify the joys.
- The more relaxed the leaders can be in leading this session, the more people will be enabled to relax themselves and enjoy it.

“There are many joys and challenges for PCCs and group councils, lay people and clergy, in working with churches in multi-parish benefices.”



MATERIALS' CHECKLIST

- Enough oranges for one each, and a bowl to put them in for the prayer time. If you are working online, ask people in advance to be ready to show on their screen an orange and a stone.
- Enough rough stones for one each, and a bowl or basket to put them in for the prayer time.
- Flipchart, paper, and a selection of working marker pens including black, orange and red.
- Sticky tack or masking tape for displaying the flipchart sheets on the wall.
- Copies of the prayer from the prayer section, the means to project it, or put it on chat if you are online.

Leader's Notes



PAUSE

10 MINUTES

Divide the PCC members into groups of three or four, or online breakout rooms. Give each group an orange and a rough stone. Ask them to pass around the objects, or hold up to the screen in turn, and for each person to talk briefly about one thing that is fresh and lovely about being in a group of churches, and one thing that is difficult.

Take some feedback and ask someone to write up the good things on a flipchart sheet, or online whiteboard or [Padlet](#) board under the heading 'Joys', and the difficult things on another sheet headed 'Challenges'. When the lists are done, use an orange marker to put a border round the joys, and a red one for the challenges. Stick the sheets up on the wall.

You may need to remind people that they are specifically talking about the whole group of churches, not just their own.



CLARIFY

10 MINUTES

Explain that well over 70 per cent of all Church of England churches are now in teams or groups. The 'one-vicar-one-church' model is very much in the minority. Nor is this just true of rural churches, as some people believe, but of suburban and urban ones too.

There is a myth around that there was once a golden age of the Church of England when every church had its own vicar – but history tells us that was never the case. There have always been churches sharing clergy. What is different now is the scale of that pattern. MPBs of some type or other are now the norm. We can, therefore, take heart that we are in good company as we tackle the joys and challenges of belonging to a group of churches that shares its clergy.

Look together at your lists. With a show of hands for each one, vote on which joys people delight in most, and which are the most pressing challenges. Take the top three or four. Write each at the head of a fresh piece of paper.

“
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”





CONNECT 15 MINUTES

Divide everyone into groups of three or four – with different people from the opening exercise. Give each group one of the top joys and one of the top challenges.

Their task is to take five minutes talking about the joy they have in front of them and writing down on the paper any way that this good thing could be:

- Celebrated across the whole group.
- Publicised more widely.
- Developed for greater impact or duplicated in other places across the group.

When five minutes is up, ask them to discuss for another five minutes the challenge they have and write down:

- Three ways in which the situation could be eased by this PCC or group council.
- Plans to make these happen.

Come back together as a whole group, get some brief feedback from each group then choose together one joy and one challenge to work on as suggested, and who of those present will make those things happen.



PCC Prayer Suggestions



Put a bowl or basket of oranges, and another of rough stones, in the centre of the group as a focus for your praying. Choose one or more of the following suggestions for prayer, or devise your own way of praying that will both capture people's imagination and work well for that group of people.

- Pray together. Provide copies of this prayer for all to say together, project it on to a screen or wall, or post it in the chat if you are online.

Loving God,
We thank you for every church in our group,
each with its own story and witness.
We bring to you the joys and challenges
across our group of churches.
As we start addressing some of these matters,
help us to delight with you in the joys
and trust you to help us with the challenges,
in the name of Jesus Christ,
Amen.

- Start a prayer with the words, 'Almighty God, we thank you for,' then invite the group to take turns to read out the joys on your flipchart paper list, online whiteboard or Padlet list. Then say, 'Almighty God, we pray for,' and invite everyone to read out, one by one, the challenges.
- Invite everyone to take an orange and a stone. Ask them, in a few minutes of silence, to pray about the joys and challenges you have identified this evening. They may want to take home their orange and stone as a prompt to prayer in the next few days.
- End by reading out these verses from Psalm 65:
 - ¹Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion; to you our vows will be fulfilled.
 - ²You who answer prayer, to you all people will come.
 - ³When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions.
 - ⁴Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts!
We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple.
 - ⁵You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds, God our Saviour,
the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.

Help us to delight with
you in the joys
and trust you to help us
with the challenges.

