

A GUIDE TO GROWING & NURTURING A HEALTHY
& CONTEMPLATIVE CHURCH AS A MEMBER OF THE PCC

What am I doing?



A quick overview
of the PCC

PCC Background Reading

*Adapted from: An ABC to the PCC
by Bishop John Pritchard*

PARISH POLICY

There is a saying,

'If you fail to plan - then you plan to fail'.

It is so easy for the PCC to muddle along without having any definite policy. It is helpful to work out and write down a parish policy. It is desirable to invite and encourage all members of the electoral roll and anyone else to take part in forming the parish policy. There are at least two basic questions which need to be considered.

What is the Church?

What is the Church trying to achieve in this parish?

It is useful to take plenty of time to do this. The policy should later be written down and a copy given to every member of the church. Once the aims have been worked out, then it is necessary to consider how to achieve these aims. Targets - or objectives to be achieved - can be worked out by the PCC, and presented to the APCM (by the Churchwarden). Obviously it is desirable to have as many as possible working to try to achieve the aims of the parish policy.

THE PCC

What is a PCC?

The PCC is a complicated body - even before you take into account the personalities of PCC members. It is unlike any other committee because it has to carry out a mixture of functions - spiritual, legal, financial and missionary. The Church is not a democracy, but a theocracy. (*Government in the name of God*).

The Bishop is successor to the Apostles, and he exercises guardianship of the Church. To a lesser extent, this guardianship of the Church is one of the functions of the Parish Priest. The PCC shares the privileges and the responsibilities of making certain decisions with the priest. In return, the PCC is asked to

“co-operate with the priest in the whole mission of the Church.”

This quotation from the Synodical Government Measure is an attempt to channel the teaching of the Bible into the life of the parishes.

What is the official job description of the PCC?

The answer is clearly given in the Synodical Government Measure 1969, (which amended the purposes of a PCC in the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1956) as follows:

1. It shall be the duty of the incumbent and the parochial church council to consult together on matters of general concern and importance to the parish.
2. The functions of parochial church councils shall include—
 - (a) co-operation with the incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical;
 - (b) the consideration and discussions 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;
 - (c) making known and putting into effect any provision made by the diocesan synod or the deanery synod, but without prejudice to the powers of the council on any particular matter;
 - (d) giving advice to the diocesan synod and the deanery synod on any matter referred to the council;
 - (e) raising such matters as the council consider appropriate with the diocesan synod or deanery synod.
3. In the exercise of its functions the parochial church council shall take into consideration any expression of opinion by any parochial church meeting.

The Incumbent and the PCC are to ‘consult’ together

The word ‘*consult*’ is a legal process whereby the priest is required by law to discover the views of the PCC on all matters of importance. This is done without prejudice to the priest’s own rights as the incumbent of the parish. It does not necessarily mean that the wishes of the PCC have to be carried out as a result of the consultation.

The priest is not the Chief Executive Officer who puts into practice the decisions made by a company’s Board of Directors. The priest has responsibility in sharing with the Bishop in the *guardianship* of the Church.

In a similar way, the PCC has to know the views of the priest. The PCC does not necessarily have to put into effect the plans of the Incumbent. Most priests do not put forward a plan of action for the parish without much thought, prayer and discussion. Consultation and discussion are needed to make progress.

Co-operation is important.

“The truth will set you free.”

Rights and responsibilities

Managing the boundaries between the rights of the priest and the PCC is not an easy area. Rules protect the Church from powerful individuals - whether ordained or lay - from misusing authority. Rules exist to help the Church to do its work more effectively.

There will be occasions when the priest has to be firm and occasions when the PCC will prevent something from happening. Hopefully, those occasions will be rare. It is so easy for the priest

and for the PCC to overreach their lawful authority. For this reason, everyone - especially the PCC secretary and wardens - should know and understand the rules. This prevents minor irritations, or perhaps worse. Those who created the rules have made a careful and wise balance of power between priest and PCC, and when the system is used rightly, exciting horizons are opened up in every parish.

What are the Rights and Responsibilities of PCC members?

1. The right to be consulted on all matters of importance in the parish. We need to be aware that the final decision on some matters may be made by others - for example, the Diocesan Bishop, the Diocesan Pastoral Committee, the Diocesan Synod, the Church Commissioners, and sometimes the parish priest.
2. The PCC is responsible for repairing and maintaining all Church buildings, and raising the money for this purpose. In the case of the vicarage, the PCC is usually asked to make a contribution to repairs and decoration.
3. The PCC has a right to receive the Church Architect's 'Quinquennial Report' made every five years about Church buildings. It is the PCC's responsibility to carry out the recommendations in the Report.
4. The PCC is responsible for providing proper insurance cover for all aspects of parish life, including outings outside the parish boundaries. The current Certificate of Insurance must be placed on the Church Notice Board.
5. The PCC has the right to be consulted about the sale, demolition or purchase of a new parsonage house, or the building of a new one.
6. The PCC has the right to be consulted about the appointment of a new incumbent. The PCC appoints two representatives, and they have a right not to accept the candidate put forward by the Patron. Obviously there has to be a good reason for using their veto in this way.
7. The PCC is an 'interested party' when a Group or Team Ministry is being considered, and it will be consulted by the appropriate body.
8. The PCC can buy property, but the Diocesan Board of Finance as Holding Trustee.
9. The PCC has responsibility under the Health and Safety Acts, the Data Protection Acts, the Food Acts, Copyright Acts and Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Acts.
10. The PCC cannot make any structural changes in the Church, nor introduce new items without a Faculty. This involves having the official opinion of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC).
11. It is obviously not a legal duty, but surely every PCC member has a spiritual responsibility to be in Church every Sunday, not only for her or his own spiritual formation, and the spiritual health of the Church. It is good to set an example to other people. It is important to receive the Body of Christ in the Sacrament in order to become the Body of Christ in the parish.
12. Every PCC member has a legal responsibility as a Trustee under the Charities Acts. [PCC members are ultimately responsible for the financial affairs of the parish - for ensuring it is solvent and well run - and that it complies with Charity Law - and the reports are prepared as required. Under normal circumstances, the Chairman, Treasurer (and possibly the Standing Committee) make sure that all is done properly.]

The Rights and Responsibilities of the Priest

1. The priest has a “*duty to consult the PCC on all matters of general concern and importance in the parish.*” In some matters, the priest alone will be responsible for making the final decision. Obviously, a wise priest will attach much weight to the views of the PCC.
2. The priest is an “*interested party*” when a pastoral re-organisation scheme has been proposed. The priest is consulted separately about any proposed changes which may affect the parish or the living - such as a scheme to unite the parish with a neighboring parish.
3. The priest controls the assistant clergy, and with the bishop determines how many curates will be employed in the parish. The priest is Chairperson of the PCC and Annual Parochial Church Meetings. As chairperson, he has to give “*due heed to his own rights as incumbent.*”
4. The chairperson is the person authorised to make decisions about “points of order” at meetings. When a decision about points of order has been made, it should be accepted by the meeting.
5. The Incumbent has the freehold of the vicarage, Church and Church buildings, and the Churchyard, which technically means the priest is legal owner of the Church, and has control and use of the buildings and their contents, and also “*custody of the key.*”
6. The priest cannot make any structural changes to the church or its furnishings without the agreement of the PCC and the Diocesan Advisory Committee. For example, a Faculty is needed to install or remove a stained glass window.
7. Subject to what is duly authorised, the priest is responsible for the control and performance of divine services.
8. The priest controls the music, taking into account the views and opinions of the organist.
9. The Registers belong to the Churchwardens, but their custody belongs to the priest.
10. The priest has a duty to call at least four PCC meetings per year, in addition to the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, and the Meeting of Parishioners.
11. The priest decides which notices may, or may not, be placed on the Church Notice Board. (Local Government official notices must be placed there by law.)
12. The priest controls the bells of the Church.
13. The priest must reside in the parsonage house of the benefice, and in the parish (unless the Bishop has given a dispensation).
14. The priest is ex-officio a member of all Sub-committees in the parish.
15. The PCC is a charity and the priest - as Chairperson of the PCC - has special responsibility under Charity law.

Church laws are sometimes complicated. The most important thing about being on the PCC is to work out what is for the good of the Church in the parish. A good PCC is not concerned with Rights and Responsibilities. It should be more about getting on with the work - and there is much to be done.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE PCC

Some thoughts about the meaning of the Synodical Government Measure 1969.

“co-operation with the incumbent in promoting the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.”

CO-OPERATION

The Church Lawyers did not include this as some kind of joke! We assume that the priest has learned, among many other things, the necessary skills of a chairperson, and that he or she has a certain understanding of human nature and how people function in a group situation.

PCC Teams

The Church as been involved in groups ever since Jesus called twelve men to follow him. Groups exist to carry out specific tasks and also to meet certain needs. Meeting as a group can create problems and personality clashes but it can also release energy for good, and give support and encouragement.

Those involved in leading groups are well advised to learn fully about the subject.

For the smooth running of PCC teams there are three subjects which require careful attention.

1. The task of the team

When people meet together for a specific purpose, the task is obviously clear. But in the some circumstances, it is not clear - such as for a particular item of the PCC agenda. It is vital that people understand the task and that all agree with it.

2. The needs of the individuals

- i. Some people are anxious, embarrassed or afraid to speak in a group situation, in case they appear foolish. For this reason, they sit and listen, while others have a field day and say far too much! a good leader can help people to feel at ease, and the members of the group can help to do the same.
- ii. The individuals who make up a group often have questions for which they are subconsciously searching for answers. These questions may include such thoughts as:
 - How safe do I feel in this group?
 - How close will I be able to get to others in it?
 - How important am I?
 - Who is the most important person here?
 - What is actually going on here?
 - Where do I fit into this situation?
 - Who am I?

The individual 'needs' of each person do in fact play a large part in determining how well the meeting will go. Thus it is important that people should feel at ease, and a short time at the beginning for people to relax and have a chat is time well spent.

Questions to ponder

1. How can PCC members help with the whole question of motivation?
2. In what ways can PCC members accept some responsibility for the motivation and morale of the local church?
3. Is the love of God the best source of motivation for the PCC?

3. *Maintaining the life of the group*

People come together, but what keeps them there? Is it enough to say that they are there to do God's work, and hope that this will keep them together? More than this is needed, and people's efforts need harmonising, encouraging, correcting and guiding. The situation in a group needs careful and constant observation. The situation reached sometimes needs to be clarified, and a consensus of opinion needs testing from time to time.

The task of the team, the needs of the individuals, and the maintenance of the life of the group are not three separate compartments. Each area overlaps the other two, and a breakdown in any one will affect the working of the group and prevent the task being carried out effectively

Motivation and Morale

The whole question of motivation is very important for the life of the local church, but motivation is not an easy matter to grasp and put into action.

Certain basic factors are needed to motivate people and encourage them to share in the work and mission of the Church. These include a friendly and caring atmosphere, and the feeling that it is good to belong to the Church. Lines of communication are always important, and the actual worship of the Church must be good and meaningful. But these things in themselves will not motivate people.

A great deal depends on the vision and quality of leadership of the priest. However, the wardens and PCC members all have their part to motivate and encourage the congregation to do this work.

What motivates the priest?

It is easy to say that the priest has a vocation (all Christians have a vocation) - but more than that is needed.

As individuals, PCC members (and the priest) need to be secure in their daily lives and work, and to have sufficient money for a reasonable standard of living. People need to belong to a group (which can be fulfilled by belonging to the PCC). People like to make progress as a group, and this can include bringing new people into the Church community.

How do PCC members as individuals fit into the work of the Church?

There needs to be an element of challenge, and a clear idea about what the PCC is trying to achieve. Daily work is not very fulfilling for some people, and the PCC can provide an exciting

vision for them. The Church also provides opportunities for individuals to grow in a personal way and as a group, and to find fulfillment. One person said, *'I've done a great deal for the Church, but in return, I've had a great deal out of doing it'*.

Truth be known, the actual content of the PCC agenda can have an important role in motivating people. In addition, we must remember the work of the Holy Spirit, who inspires and motivates PCC members in their work. The extent to which all PCC members are open to the Holy Spirit is a vital factor.

The whole question of motivation is not an easy one, but it does need careful consideration in every parish.

People sometimes act completely out of character when in a group situation. It is vital that priest and PCC can work together, and that the PCC does co-operate with the priest. This co-operation can release much power and energy for God's work in the parish. Priest and PCC do co-operate and work together well and happily in many parishes.

What is needed to enable this process of co-operation to happen?

Unfortunately, some people seem to change when they are with other people in any group, just as some individuals change and become aggressive when behind the wheel of a car.

What people say, and how they vote at PCC meetings can be a clear indication of how far they have advanced in their spiritual life. Someone who is difficult and always making trouble at meetings has obviously not grown very much in the knowledge and love God. We also remember that Jesus Christ came among us as one who serves, and one who always looks for the will of his Heavenly Father.

"Not my will but thine, O Lord, be done."

So on a PCC, individuals are there to seek and do the will of God.

What, then, is the secret of co-operation?

Part of the answer lies in each PCC member having a healthy spiritual life. Personal prayer is important. Co-operation involves a willingness to listen to the views of others. It involves a sense of humour - imagination - sometimes humility - and always loyalty to the Church and its priest. A willingness to take responsibility, and a love and respect for all people.

The Church is community with a message for the parish. Those who allow their names to go forward for election to the PCC need to be aware of the work they are undertaking for the Lord in their area.

CO-OPERATING 'in the whole Mission of the Church'

Some may be worried about this clause when they allow their names to be put forward for election to the PCC. Others may be aware of the great potential which exists - because two can achieve much more than one on his own. When (say) twelve or fifteen PCC members are

involved, and all working together, the potential is enormous. Many priests no longer have a curate, but they are not alone if they have a good partnership with the PCC.

The mission of the Church

The Christian faith is passed on in many different ways in the ongoing mission of the Church - through worship, prayer, reading of Scriptures, singing of hymns, fellowship, discussion groups, confirmation classes, the parish magazine.

PCC members need to be constantly aware of the mission of the Church and their part in it. Mission is, of course the work of the Holy Spirit.

CO-OPERATING in Pastoral Care

All Christians are called on, to 'love your neighbour as yourself.' Pastoral Care involves having a concern for the sick, the dying, the bereaved, the lonely, the sad, the outcast, the homeless, the hungry, etc. For some, it will involve more action than for others. It is important that PCC members are aware of the needs of others in this way.

Suggestions for PCC members

1. Study the agenda before coming to the meeting. Try to put God's will before your own likes and dislikes, especially when speaking or voting at the meeting.
2. In your prayers, ask God to bless and guide all members of the PCC and your priest.
3. Arrive in plenty of time, so that you can relax and chat to others before the meeting begins.
4. Keep to the point in a discussion, and address your remarks to the chairperson.
5. The priest gives thought and prays about the business of the meeting. If he/she makes suggestions, it is because he/she believes that will be best for the parish. They will not always be right, but will probably have a good idea of what is needed in the situation. Support their suggestions, unless there is a better alternative.
6. After the meeting, support the decisions made by the PCC and help to put them into effect (even if you voted against them).

CO-OPERATING in Evangelism

All will surely agree there is an urgent need to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in the parish. Belief in the existence of God is increasingly attacked, and many are indifferent to God's love in Jesus.

When the the PCC undertakes a mission e.g. Emmaus, Alpha, Fan the Flame, Church Pastoral Aid Society mission etc. PCC members will probably take a leading part in it. There is also a need for the PCC and for each individual to be constantly on the look out for bringing people to faith in Christ.

For some, it may be a simple matter of saying to a friend: '*We're doing this at Church next week - would you like to come along with me?*' For others, it may be by delivering letters or magazines in the parish. While you push something through the letter box, you can say a prayer at each house: "*O Lord, bless the people who live at this house. May they become more aware of your love in Jesus Christ. Amen.*"

Individuals (and a parish missionary group) praying regularly for the mission of the Church in the parish is important. We need to be aware of God, not only when we read the Bible and say our prayers each day. We need to be aware of God in our worship and in our PCC meetings, and in our daily lives.

CO-OPERATING in Social Activity

This does not mean Cocktail Parties.! But being aware of social issues and social action.

Questions to ponder

1. What are the six most important things done by the PCC (as distinct from the priest)?
2. How can the PCC achieve a greater sense of dedication and urgency in its work?
3. How far do PCC meetings remind you of St Paul's words about being a 'new creation in Christ'?
4. How can the PCC help to make the truths about God more real in the parish?
5. Does the PCC rely too much on human methods, rather than on the power of the Holy Spirit?
6. One of the responsibilities of the bishop is the pastoral care of the clergy. Is it possible for the PCC to help?
7. Does the PCC try to do too many things at the same time? Would it be better to concentrate more effort on one matter of years?
8. Are there any geographical/network areas of the parish which are neglected by the PCC?
9. To whom is the PCC responsible?
10. Would it be hopeful to co-opt two young people to the PCC, and with full voting rights?
11. Is being a PCC member a call from God to grow in holiness?
12. To what extent is your PCC and church living off the financial and spiritual 'capital' created by Christians in the past?

OPERATING in Ecumenical

This is sometimes a difficult area, especially when there are deep divisions in the Anglican Communion. However, we should never forget the division is a sin, and that Jesus prayed that we may all be one. Your parish is probably involved in 'Church Together' in your area.

Passengers become members of the crew

Think of the Church building turned upside down to become a ship. We come aboard by the waters of Baptism, and this ship takes us to our eternal destination. All Christians are called to change their status from being a passenger, into being a member of the crew.

But what about the Captain?

The priest is the one who has been chosen and trained to guide the ship to its destination. The crew needs to co-operate, or the ship will get nowhere. But it is Jesus Christ who is the real Captain of the ship. It is all about seeking what God wants for his Kingdom in our area. The difficulty in every PCC is to balance its legal and maintenance work on the one hand, and on the other, to co-operate in the whole mission of the Church.

Resolutions - opinions and actions

Action is only required if a resolution on the agenda is formally passed by the PCC. Action does not have to be taken simply because someone has expressed an opinion at a meeting. It is only necessary to record the wording of the resolution, the proposer and seconder, and the voting in the minutes. Views 'for' and 'against' should not be recorded.

After the vote is taken, the PCC should then spend time deciding who will take the necessary action, and by what date (and record both in the minutes).

PCC members are responsible for the decisions made by the PCC, and for carrying out any action needed as a result of their vote.

[If the PCC has designed a structure of teams that will organise aspects of Church-Life then members delegated responsibility for oversight of teams will ensure resolutions are carried out. Or if there are no teams, then for example, the PCC decides to have a concert members (and not the priest alone) are responsible for organising the event, supporting it themselves and actively encouraging others, organising the selling and printing of tickets, etc.

Corporate responsibility involves much more than sitting in a chair and voting 'for' or 'against' a resolution.

Sense of urgency

Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses have a great zeal for winning converts to their faith. Sadly, neither of them are Christian. The Communists worked hard to achieve their objectives.

Why is it that some people are fired with a strong zeal for their cars?

How do PCC members get a similar zeal for God's work?

The PCC often gets stuck in the rut of the past, ignoring business issues of the day which are their proper concern.

When the PCC wastes time on irrelevant and unimportant issues, then we should not be surprised if the Church is ignored by the rest of the world.

Time is precious, and surely each PCC is a team with an urgent job to do in the parish. Is this reflected not the agenda, and is mission given priority.

PASTORAL CARE

Difficulties and personal problems arise from time to time in any community. Friends and neighbours often provide care and support but sometimes a talk with a responsible person outside the immediate circle of friends is helpful. A wide variety of problems arise, including family and marital problems, depression and anxiety, guilt, bereavement and loneliness.

Is there an awareness among PCC members of the pastoral needs of the congregation?

And by who are these needs met?

Pastoral care of the congregation

Traditionally, people through the centuries have brought their problems to their parish priest, in confidence that whatever they say to him will not be repeated to anyone without their express permission.

The pastoral care of the congregation and of the PCC is still an important part of the priest's work, but he/she surely needs help. For example, he/she may not have noticed that the little old man who sits near the back of the church has not come for four or five weeks. A PCC member could ask the vicar "Do you know how Mr [Name] is - he hasn't been to church recently?"

Quite often, the only help that is required is for someone to call and have a friendly chat. A pastoral care group in the parish can *keep an eye open* for people who are ill, lonely or who have a problem. They can visit as appropriate, and call in the priest when necessary.

Pastoral care of the people in the parish

The Church of England is in a unique position to help in many ways, perhaps through a street warden system. This provides a communication link between the people in need and the church. The simple act of calling at a lonely person's home is important in itself. Often the street warden can deal with many problems, but if not, other help can be found.

Pastoral care of the priest and their family

Who looks after the shepherd?

Traditionally, this is the work of the bishop, but most bishops have many other problems to deal with, and it is not always possible for the bishop to know when a priest is under extra pressure and stress.

Today, far too many clergy have breakdowns, heart attacks or marital problems, all largely due to long working hours every week, and pressures and problems in their work. Apart from prayer and an awareness of the problem - what what ways can the PCC help?

Is there an effective pastoral care system in the parish?

SPIRITUAL LIFE OF PCC MEMBERS

To be of help to the Church in the parish, each PCC member needs to ask the question:

What is happening in terms of my own spiritual formation and development, my nurture and growth?

The following thoughts are offered for consideration:

Holy Communion

Whatever name is used to describe it, it is important for a PCC member to receive communion every Sunday.

'The Lord's service in the Lord's house on the Lord's day.'

Some would add - and on major Feast Days and Holy Days. The Church is called the Body of Christ, and each member needs to receive the Body of Christ so that the local Church can be the Body of Christ in the parish.

Preparation for Holy Communion

The General Notes in Common Worship state

'Careful devotional preparation before the service is recommended for every communicant.'

The Bible

Surely all Christians need to read the Bible regularly, and especially the Gospel for the day. It is good to study the Scripture readings either at home or in Church before the service begins.

Daily Prayer

Prayer is the

'lifting of the heart and mind to God.'

Another saying:

'All activity compared with prayer is as nothing.'

The priest has Daily Worship from Common Prayer, or Morning and Evening Prayer in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and some use the Morning and Evening Prayer from the Roman Catholic Divine Office.

We all need help with our prayers, and it is good if you can use one of these books to help you to share in the daily prayer of the Church. There are a number of other good daily prayer and scripture readings books that can be used each day.

Regular giving of money, time and skills to support God's work

This is important for the Church, and also for the spiritual life of the individual.

The Kingdom of God (The Reign of God)

We pray each day: *'The Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.'* All our work is ultimately about the Kingdom of God and his peace and justice in the world.

The forgiveness of sins (Those times we have turned our backs on God's reign)

The 1662 Book of Common Prayer states: When a person's *'conscience is troubled with any weighty matter'* he or she is to make a private confession to a priest, who will absolve them in the name and with the authority of Christ.

There is a saying: *'None must, all may and some do.'* For those who do now want sacramental confession in this way, it is important to be aware of your sins. St Paul reminds us *'all have sinned, and all fall short of the glory of God.'*

Being aware of our sins - and realising our need of repentance and forgiveness - is one of the first steps in the spiritual life.

Difficulties in Prayer

One way to deal with wandering thoughts is to turn them into prayer. Another way is to talk to your priest, or some other suitable person about your spiritual life. Some people find prayer difficult, and some have spiritual blockages. A Spiritual Director or Soul Friend - or whatever name you use - can be helpful.

Husband and Wife

It is sometimes not easy for husband and wife to pray together. It can be very good if it is possible. Perhaps reading a passage from the Bible each night, and saying the Lord's Prayer together.

A Parish Library

What a grand name, but it can be helpful if the PCC buys a small number of appropriate books, which are available for all parishioners to use.

A Parish Retreat or Quiet Day?

Many today are rediscovering the benefits of a time of quiet and prayer and reflection.

The Sign of the Cross

The Cross is the standard of Christ, and those who make the sign of the Cross do so to show their loyalty to Christ. It is a prayer in action. It is a reminder of God's saving work of the Cross. It is made with the right hand, making the letter 'I' from the top to the bottom of your chest, and the crossing it out, from left to right.

Arrow Prayers

These are short prayers - just a sentence offered to God at any time of the day and on the spur of the moment. They can help us to be aware of God's presence with us always. Here are a few examples of Arrow Prayers - all offered in silence:

- O Lord, bless this person with me now.
- O Lord, bless all who are traveling in this train/plane/ship/bus
- Father, forgive me for my unkind words (or thoughts)
- Lord, help this person
- Lord, bless all who are connected with this emergency. (This can be used when you hear a police - ambulance - or fire engine siren).
- Lord, help us to see what you want in this situation (useful at a PCC meeting?!)

Praying with a mantra

This is a word or phrase which can be repeated a few times when appropriate during the day or night. A Mantra can be helpful to make us aware of God's presence.

Choose one carefully and make it your own - here are a selection:

- Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on us (The Jesus Prayer).
- Jesus Christ is risen indeed.
- My God, I love you. Help me to love you more and more.
- Lord Jesus Christ, I love you.
- I am loved by God more than I can either conceive or understand

Having a Cross or Crucifix

Is there one in your home?

Has it been blessed?

Disturbing noises in Church before the worship begins

How people love to chatter!

Noise before the worship is a serious problem in some parishes. It can distract people who are trying to prepare themselves for the worship.

One wonders - how important is the worship to some people?

Noise before the service could drive some Christians away from the Church.

Does it show disrespect for God?

It is good to say Hello, but very quietly. There is a saying:

*‘Before the Worship, talk to God.
During the Worship, Listen to God.
After the Worship, talk to each other.*

Questions to ponder

1. Does the Church make proper preparations before the worship begins?
2. What can the PCC do to help?
3. Do you read the Bible regularly?
4. Do you work out how it is relevant to you?
5. Are you satisfied with the progress you are making in your own spiritual formation?
6. Have you ever considered talking to someone about your spiritual life (Soul Friend or Spiritual Director)?

FINANCE

It is helpful if every PCC member does have some understand of Church finances.

The Hon PCC Treasurer will look after the money, to report to the PCC on the financial situation, and will advise the PCC on the financial implications of any decision it is to make. When the Treasurer gives advice, not only the liabilities and resources must be taken into account but also the order of priority which the PCC attaches to the expenditure of its money.

INSURANCE PCC members have legal responsibilities as Trustees under the Charities Acts to provide proper insurance cover for all aspects of church life and church buildings. ... The PCC policy needs to cover buildings, their replacement in the event of a fires, and contents. In addition, there is Employers Liability (a Certificate has to be placed on the Church Notice Board about this), Public Liability, and Consequential Loss.”

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP: Time, Talent, Money

Parishes differ enormously, but most PCCs have been involved in Christian stewardship, either to find the money to pay the diocesan quota, or as part of a deliberate policy about stewardship. The principles of Christian stewardship are firmly based on the Bible, and they are a sound basis for the life of every parish. They can also help to identify a vision about the needs and opportunities of the Church.

What is meant by stewardship?

The definition given by the Lambeth Conference (1958) is as follows:

“There can be no forward steps without a full acceptance of Christian Stewardship. By Stewardship, we mean the regarding of ourselves, our time, our talents and our money - as a trust from God to be utilized in his service. This teaching is an urgent need in every congregation; a parish without a sense of Stewardship has with it the seeds of decay.”

The Church needs both this traditional view of Christian stewardship and also a vision for the parish, which is based on the Gospel.

The fundamental principle of Christianity is ‘*giving*’. God created us, and he gave us life. His gift of life is under our own control, and we can do what we like with our lives.

Sadly, most people ignore God and forget his ways. Because of this rebellion against God, he gave his only Son, so that we may not perish but have life. Thus, there are two parts of God’s giving (creation and redemption). First of all, he gives us the gift of our lives. Secondly, he gave us himself in his Son on the Cross at Calvary. It takes time for most of us to realise the full extent of God’s love and total self-giving to us.

How can a Christian give thanks to God in practical ways for what he has done for us on the Cross?

We can respond to God’s love for us by giving back to God a proportion of our money, our time and our talents.

Or maybe Christians only believe that time and talents are worth giving back? Money is non-negotiable!?

Self-giving is perhaps one of the main aspects of the Christian life, both God’s total giving to us, and our learning to give back to God what he has first given to us. It involves a certain amount of self-surrender to God.

Christian stewardship invites us - and perhaps challenges us - to think about the following three areas:

- our time;
- our skills and talents;
- our money -

and to make a definite decision about each of them.

Stewardship is about our personal response and commitment. We ourselves are stewards (not owners) of our time, our money and our skills, and we are responsible for how we use them at each stage of our lives.

Stewardship of time

People today have much more spare time than in former generations. Modern technology makes our daily work-load easier. We are stewards of the time which God has given to us here on earth, and we alone are responsible to God for how we use our time. Our time is a gift from God, and it really belongs to God. We can acknowledge this by offering back a proportion of our time to God each week.

How do you work out what is a responsible amount of time to give for God's work each week?

It is important to work out something specific - rather than waiting for a job to turn up in the parish.

Stewardship of skills and abilities (talents)

Perhaps no one in your parish is a true genius, but virtually everyone has been given some natural skill or ability by God, and this can be offered back to God. We are expected to make something of the different skills, resources and energies which we've been given, and to develop them to the best of our abilities. It is so easy for our abilities to be unused or eroded by laziness, selfishness, lack of thought and courage.

In a similar way, we have received a rich spiritual heritage, and it is easy to be self-satisfied simply by being a part of this spiritual heritage today.

But are not all these blessings from God given to us on trust, which we can use for the work of his Church - not our Church?

One approach is to produce a list of jobs which need doing in the parish. Perhaps a better approach is to identify the various talents and skills which exist among members of the congregation. Then try to work out how these talents and skills could be used.

Which comes first - the vacancy, or the individual with the talent?

For example, you may discover three musicians in the congregation - how could their musical skills be used?

Stewardship of money

Stewardship is not a new idea to solve the financial problems of the Church. It goes right back to the Hebrew Scripture (Old Testament) and Christian Scripture (New Testament).

It is interesting to note that the Bible has more references to money than to any other subject. The standard of giving set for the people of God in the Hebrew Scripture is one tenth (the 'tithe').

- Genesis 14.20b *'Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.'*
- Deuteronomy 14.22 *Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field.'*
- Deuteronomy 16.16b-17 *'... They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed; all shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you.'*

The tithe is not put forward in the Christian Scripture, but emphasis is given to sacrificial and thankful giving. It also stresses the blessings which will come to the giver as well as to the recipient.

- Luke 6.38 *'give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.'*
- 2 Corinthians 9.6-8 *'The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.'*

Not everyone can give a tenth of their income, but a tithe is perhaps a good standard to have before us, and one which some people use to work out their giving to the Church today. Other people aim to work towards giving 5% of their net income - which was the standard which General Synod recommended for giving to and through the Church.

Christian stewardship invites us to be responsible stewards of our money.

What, then, is a realistic and responsible proportion of your income to give back to God through his Church?

You cannot make a responsible decision without taking the trouble to work out the facts about your income. One way (after deduction of income tax) is to calculate what is 2%, 3%, 4%, 5% and 10% of your weekly income. Then work out what is the right '*proportion*' of your income to give back to God through the Church. It is a good idea to think about it for at least 24 hours after you have worked out the figures. Then pray about it.

What does God want you to do about it?

Some people try to strike a balance between the amount which they spend on themselves and the amount they give back to God. Stewardship of money is learning how to give according to your means. Whatever method you decide to use, it should be realistic and responsible. Pray about it, and make a deliberate decision (each year).

A vision for the pilgrim people of God

It is so easy to think of Christian stewardship mainly in terms of money. But the Church is much more than money. In the PCC annual accounts, it is better to have a heading '**stewardship of money**' rather than '**stewardship income**'. The Church of God is a pilgrim people and we need a Christian approach not just for our money, but for the whole of our lives. Our Christians' commitment should pervade all aspects of our daily lives.

The stewardship committee and the annual renewal

A Christian stewardship programme is a defined opportunity. But it is only the beginning. The important part of stewardship is the challenge to maintain the teaching and impetus about giving, and stewardship principles year after year. An efficient stewardship committee is needed to maintain and raise the level of giving, and to bring new people into the scheme when it is appropriate to do so. In this way, there should be no need to have separate, one-off campaigns, providing the stewardship committee does its job properly throughout the year. It is wise to keep in contact with the diocesan stewardship adviser each year, to see what new programmes are available for the parishes.

A job specification for the stewardship committee

1. To maintain and increase regular giving and to bring new members into the scheme when appropriate.
2. To communicate regularly with those in the scheme, and also to thank them.
3. To organise the annual renewal, and to recommend to the PCC when the committee would like to have another diocesan directed programme.
4. To organise the time and talents side of stewardship in the parish.
5. To develop the teaching of Christian stewardship principles, and to create a vision for the growth of the Church and its service to the community.
6. To keep the stewardship records (and electoral roll) up to date, and to remove the names of those who have died.

A recommendation and a challenge from general synod:

1. This Synod encourages the parishes to seek out and to own the vision which God has for them in their communities, in order to inspire and to unite them in purpose.
2. Thankful to God for His generosity to us, and noting the continued pressure on the finances of the Church, and the call to growth, challenge Church people to give in proportion to their income, and recommend 5% of take-home pay as an initial target to aim for giving to the Church.

A vision of the church in the parish:

'We continue to seek and to develop our vision of what God has been going, and longs to do through us. As we catch the vision for a confident, outward-looking Church, seeking to grow, to spread the Gospel, and to serve this country better, we also need to see how we will recourse that vision. A part of that vision is that I give my money, so that others can minister where I cannot be.'

'Working for growth is a mark of a faithful Church. now is the time to affirm this, as we seek to recourse the Church from that which God has already given us.'

[Quotes: 'First to the Lord' Report]

Questions to ponder

1. What vision does the PCC (and the parish) have for the growth of the Church and its service to the local community in the coming years? Will the financial commitment of the PCC match this vision?
2. What policy does the PCC have to develop its teaching about Christian stewardship? Is this policy regularly reviewed?
3. Does the PCC have a system for reviewing the levels of giving each year? Is this policy clear to the PCC members and to the congregation?
4. Does the parish have a policy for teaching Christian stewardship as part of Christian formation, e.g. in its Emmaus course, in its preparation for Confirmation?
5. How can people be inspired with a vision of the Church's mission and ministry? How can they be inspired to make the work of the Church a high priority for their giving?
6. Does your PCC work out the cost of its mission to the parish each year, review progress, and initiate new plans?
7. How does Christian stewardship measure the extent of your trust in Christ?
8. To what extent is stewardship a barometer of the spiritual health of the parish?
9. In what direction should the stewardship committee now be concentrating its efforts?
10. Do the PCC and the stewardship committee know what help and support is available from the diocese? Does the parish make use of these resources?

The report - 'working as one body'

Three points to consider:

1. It is important to see money as one of the many gifts of God, and not simply as an unfortunate necessity.
2. The 'theology' of Stewardship is not simply a way of getting people to give, but it is essential to the Church's teaching about grace and generosity.

3. Without a dynamic and positive attitude to money, the Church will fail provide enough to make proper use of this essential resource.

The love of God

'The first question to ask is not: *"What do I need to give?"* - but - *"How can giving reflect something of God's love for me?"*

'Action points'

Recommended to every PCC by the Finance Committee of the Archbishops Council.

1. How has your total parish voluntary giving [transformed] over the last five years?
2. How has your average giving per donor [transformed] in the same time?
3. Is all possible giving made by Gift Aid? If not, why not? [Is this how we wish it to remain?]
4. When were money and stewardship last preached about on at Sunday - and what happened?
5. Has your parish used the service of your Diocesan Stewardship Adviser? Has the advise been put into action?
6. How often does your PCC consider finance and giving, rather than just the Budget?
7. Does your Parish Priest teach about money?
8. Who is responsible for following up those who default on their planned giving?
9. How do you help those in the Church community to make or to renew their financial commitment?

Finance on the PCC Agenda

The Finance Committee also recommends the following questions are put as the 'first item' on your PCC Agenda for each of the next five meetings:

1. *'Each person gives according to their means'* (St Paul writing to the Corinthians). Discuss how this applies in today's world.
2. *'If we love God half as much as we love our grandchildren, money would be coming out of the Church's ears!'* Discuss.
3. *'The level of giving is a reasonable barometer of the spiritual health of the parish.'* Discuss.
4. *'Our giving as Christians should be in response to the love of God rather than the demands of the parish budget.'* Discuss.
5. *'Every Church should give away 10% of its general fund income to other missionary or charitable purposes before anything else.'* Discuss.

NEVER GIVE UP

God in his mercy does not always allow us to see what he is doing through us at a particular time. God sometimes calls individuals, priest and lay people, and also groups of people such as the PCC, to do a job which seems difficult at the time.

It is also strange how people will sometimes only hear just what they want to hear. In one sense, God is *'putting us to the time of trial'*. Once you have put your hand to the plough, do not give up. God will provide the necessary strength and courage to finish the task.

Life can be difficult for a Christian at work, especially when the majority of people there do not belong to the Church. The same is true of home life and leisure activities. The Christian may meet mockery, hostility, or he may be ignored. Even in Church circles, Christians sometimes speak with malice and without considering the effect of their words on others.

Do not give up, whatever the problems and remember that Christ and other Christians have suffered before you, and finally triumphed in the power of Christ . . .

*'Do not fear what you are about to suffer ...
Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.'*

[Revelation 2.10]

Our Lord met strong opposition, which eventually put him on the cross. When the Church is active and alive, opposition must be expected.

'No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.'

[Romans 8.37]

TRANSFORMATION IN THE PARISH

God created the Church to bring the gospel to the world. IN some ways, the Church has to transform, but in other ways the gospel and the cross, the discipline of prayer, and many other things are just the same as always. The PCC is usually dealing with the things which can and do transform, without affecting those things which are eternal and unchanging.

To transform or not to transform is often a problem in a parish. It is natural to try to preserve those things which were successful in the past, but some things can outlive their usefulness, and now serve only to hinder the work of the Church. A job may have been done in the same way for many years, because not one has worked out a better way. The PCC - or the priest - may be in a rut with parochial blinkers. People often see transformation from their own point of view, rather than ask the question:

What is best for God's Church?

What would our Lord want in this situation?

No one in their right mind would want to transform for transformation's sake. However, it is very desirable to transform if that transformation will help God's work in the parish.

Some PCC members can cope quite well with transformation, and see it as an opportunity for growth. PCC members are elected *'to co-operate with the incumbent in the whole mission of the Church'* and this requires them to be forward-looking, and sometimes to take calculated risks.

Did not God take an enormous risk by entrusting the gospel of eternal salvation into the hands of the local church?

How often do people say, *'But we have never done it that way before!'*?

Why not give it a try, upheld by prayer and careful planning?

Christianity is a process of listening to what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, and what he is doing today. We need to listen carefully, and then to respond.

The PCC has to work out how to apply Christian beliefs and insights to each item on the agenda at the PCC meeting. It involves sharing thoughts, reflecting on them, making decisions and then acting on them.

Sometimes, the first thing that the PCC has to do is to become aware of the need for transformation. For example, if the PCC is satisfied with the number of people in the parish who belong to the Church, then there will be no need for transformation. Every PCC needs a vision, and this gives us a sense of purpose and encouragement.

Transformation sometimes lead to discontent and problems, but transformation can also lead to growth. How much better when transformation and new ideas are welcomed and encouraged with helpful and constructive comments. In all the transformations in the Church, remember that the toughest and precise commodity is love.

Cardinal Newman said *'To live is to change'*. or *To live is to transform*.

Whatever the situation in the parish, it is helpful to remember that we all belong to the same Body of Christ, even though some will want to move on, and others will prefer to remain where they are at present. Tension and hurt are often involved when decisions have to be made, but PCC members are elected to make decisions. Careful communication and explanations by PCC members can do much to help forwards God's work in the parish.

Questions to ponder

1. Are any transformations needed in your own life? Should any of your priorities be transformed?
2. Should any of the weekly activities of the church be transformed?