



Church of Ireland – Parish Handbook

VACANCIES IN THE POSITION OF CLERGY

When a vacancy in the position of clergy occurs in a parish, a number of steps must take place which involve both the parish and the diocese. The vacant parish is represented by parochial nominators and the diocese is represented by the diocesan committee of patronage, which together form a board of nomination. The bishop convenes a meeting of the board of nomination at the time of a vacancy to nominate a new member of the clergy.

Chapters III and IV of the *Constitution of the Church of Ireland* deal with appointment and proceedings of parochial nominators, diocesan committees of patronage and boards of nomination. Reference should be made to the *Constitution* by anyone involved in a nomination process.

At the time of a vacancy, and in accordance with the *Constitution (Chapter IV, section 14)*, archbishops or bishops and diocesan councils may together decide that it is desirable that the diocesan synod should have the opportunity to exercise its right to group together, unite or divide parishes (*Chapter III, section 27*). Parochial nominators and churchwardens are to be informed of any such decision.

PAROCHIAL NOMINATORS

Parochial nominators are the parish representatives in the nomination and appointment process. To be eligible to be a parochial nominator, a person must be at least 18 years old, a member of the Church of Ireland and a communicant. There is no residential qualification, and a nominator need not be a registered member of the parish.

Parochial nominators are elected every three years by members of the general vestry at the Easter vestry. The number of parochial nominators elected is usually four, although exceptions are set out in the *Constitution*.

It is important that the diocesan nominators have a clear understanding of the life and witness of the parish, its challenges and opportunities. They should give consideration to the key matters, such as:

- Significant achievements within the parish and important factors which influenced success
- Developments within wider community or with ecumenical partners
- Concerns and responsibilities around youth and children's ministry
- Level of support and cooperation offered to the incoming rector
- Hopes and expectations for the next period of ministry in the parish

DIOCESAN COMMITTEE OF PATRONAGE

Each diocese has a committee of patronage, elected every three years by the diocesan synod from diocesan synod members. The diocesan committee of patronage consists of:

- Bishop
- Four members of the clergy from the diocese
- One layperson from the diocese

BOARD OF NOMINATION

The parochial nominators and the diocesan committee of patronage combine to form the board of nomination which is chaired by the bishop.

TERM OF NOMINATION

The board of nomination has three months from the date of their first meeting in which to make a nomination. After that, the right of appointment lapses to the bishop.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUMMONING A BOARD OF NOMINATION

The board of nomination is summoned by the bishop once the bishop has received confirmation from the diocesan council (or a sub-committee appointed by the diocesan council) that the vacant cure is able to provide the following for the person nominated:

- Approved stipend
- Expenses of office allowance
- Locomotory expenses allowance
- Free residence

The bishop must also be satisfied that this provision has been made in full in the two years preceding the vacancy. It is recommended that the select vestry passes a resolution confirming these requirements have been met and forwards the same to the diocesan council.

The board of nomination should be summoned by the bishop within a reasonable time of receiving the report from the diocesan council that the requirements have been met. This is usually within around two months, depending on the circumstances in the parish.

PROFILE OF THE CURE

By way of preparation for the first meeting of the board of nominators, the parish should write a profile of the cure. This profile is to be provided to any clergy expressing an interest in filling the vacancy. The profile will be unique to the specific parish, group or union, however, it should include outline information on:

- Parish population
- Church(es)
- Current arrangements for services and worship
- Rectory and parish buildings
- National school (if applicable)
- Parish organisations and activities
- Relevant distances (e.g. between churches in a group, or from the rectory to local school and town)
- Public transport availability

The profile should aim to cover all relevant information and to do so concisely, in two to three pages. As the parochial nominators will be discussing aspects of the profile in their work, it is advisable that they are invited to review and contribute to it before it is finalised.

CONFIDENTIALITY & DECLARATION OF BOARD OF NOMINATION MEMBERS

Confidentiality is very important throughout the entire nomination and appointment process. All individuals involved in the must treat all information with the strictest confidence. It must be remembered that clergy who may be considering a move but choose not to do so, or are unsuccessful, still have to exercise a valid ministry within their current situation, which can be difficult if there are rumours they are thinking about moving. Confidentiality must be maintained to protect prospective candidates.

Before performing any of their duties, all members of the board of nominators must sign a declaration (below). The declaration includes a promise to keep confidential all information about potential candidates. It should be noted that even after the process is completed, it is not appropriate to disclose what names may have been considered.

FORM OF DECLARATION

A declaration in the following format (as set out in the schedule to Chapter IV of the *Constitution*) must be signed by all members of the board of nomination before they carry out any duties:

I, [INSERT NAME], do solemnly declare that I am a member of the Church of Ireland, and a communicant of the said Church, and being fully sensible how important it is that the cure of souls should be committed only to those well fitted and qualified to undertake the same, do further solemnly declare that I will nominate such person only as I believe in my conscience to be of such virtuous and godly character as to be fitted for admission to the cure of souls in the parish of [INSERT PARISH], and that I am not acting herein through favour

or affection, but in singleness of heart, for the glory of God, the good of his Church, and the welfare of his people.

And I further declare that I will not disclose to any person whatsoever any information regarding the proceedings of the Board of Nomination other than that which may be agreed upon by the Board for publication.

Signed: [INSERT NAME]

Dated: [INSERT DATE]

AT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE BOARD OF NOMINATION

At the first meeting of the board or nomination, the following steps may be taken:

- Members make their declarations
- Profile of the cure is circulated
- Specific needs of the cure are discussed
- The bishop gives the names of those who have expressed interest in the vacant cure
- Names are put forward by parochial nominators and diocesan committee for consideration
- A list of names is agreed for the parochial nominators to further consider
- A date for the next meeting of the board may be arranged

AFTER THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF NOMINATION

After the first meeting of the board of nomination, the parochial nominators should meet with the individuals whose names were agreed at the meeting of the board of nomination to discern their suitability and 'fit' with the needs of the cure. It may be a good idea to arrange to attend a service led by each candidate to observe them preaching and conducting a service.

All those with whom the parochial nominators meet should be treated as equally as possible to ensure the discernment process is fair.

PROCESS AT SUBSEQUENT MEETING(S) OF THE BOARD OF NOMINATION

- Specific duties of, and work undertaken by, the parochial nominators and diocesan committees of patronage may vary between dioceses. Generally, a report will be made to the board of nomination on the individuals who have been considered for the cure.
- If there is no agreement on the suitability of any one individual, then further names should be put forward for consideration.
- If there is agreement on the suitability of an individual, then this individual is discussed by the board of nomination.
- If there is a consensus, the bishop may put the candidate's name to the board of nomination to be voted upon.

VOTING

- Any nomination must be supported by two thirds of the members of the board of nomination.
- A successful candidate requires the affirmative votes of six or more members of the board (if the person chairing the board is not voting) or of seven or more members of the board (if the person chairing the board is voting).
- The person chairing the board shall have an ordinary, but not a casting, vote.
- When the name of more than one person has been proposed, the voting shall be by secret ballot.
- If, on the first vote, no one has received the required number of affirmative votes, a second vote should be taken.
- If, on such second vote, no one had received the required number of affirmative votes, a third vote should be taken.
- If, on such third vote, no one had received the required number of affirmative votes, the right of appointment lapses to the bishop (even though the three month period may not have elapsed).
- The proceedings of the board of nomination may be adjourned at stage prior to the taking of the third vote.

APPOINTMENT

- If the candidate receives the required number of affirmative votes, and if the bishop accepts the nomination, the bishop contacts the nominated individual to ascertain their willingness to accept the nomination.
- Upon receiving such acceptance, the board of nomination is deemed to have completed their work.
- The bishop makes the appointment and institutes the new member of the clergy to the position within the parish.

BUDGETING FOR A VACANCY

It is advisable that the select vestry contacts the diocesan office to seek advice on what costs are likely to arise as a result of the vacancy and new appointment and how these costs should be dealt with. Costs may include allowances and expenses relating to:

- Advertisement of the vacancy
- Pastoral care of the parish by another member of the clergy
- Leading of services and other duties
- Travel expenses
- Removal expenses
- Repair/maintenance of rectory; it is advisable that the state of repair of the rectory and extent of any work which may be required is made known as early as possible.

WORKING WITH DIOCESAN COUNCIL

Each diocese will have their own guidelines and systems in place to deal with each step of the nomination and appointment process. Select vestries are advised to work closely with the diocesan council throughout.