

Interregnum Update – December 2018

Our Vicar, Vernon, and his wife, Jenny, have retired, with a wonderful send-off at a service on 28 October. We wish them well in their retirement, and thank them for 17 years of dedicated service to this Parish.

So what happens now?

We enter a time of Interregnum. Literally, this means ‘the time between Kings’, but in Parish life, it means the period between one Vicar leaving and a new Vicar joining us. This period of time is likely to be around 8 months to a year, as a lot of things need to happen:

- The Bishop needs to give us formal approval to appoint a new Vicar
- We need to decide what qualities we are looking for in our new Vicar, and what opportunities and challenges our Parish can offer prospective candidates
- We need to advertise the post and interview candidates
- Once we have appointed the Vicar, he/she will probably need to give their current Parish 3 months notice before joining us.

What do we do during the Interregnum?

An interregnum is a time of **waiting**, **reflection** and looking forward with **hope**.

Waiting...

- On God, for a deepening of our relationship with Him
- On the Bishop, Archdeacon and Area Dean, as they make decisions about the appointment of the new Vicar, and steer us through the legal processes
- On our future Vicar, for his/her recognition of a call to this Parish
- In our lives, to draw breath, to strengthen our sense of inner peace
- In patience with those around us, as people take on new responsibilities, struggle with a sense of loss or express anxiety for the future

Reflection...

- Where are we on our spiritual journeys – individually and collectively?
- What are our strengths and weaknesses as individuals, as congregations, as a Parish?
- What challenges is God calling us to embrace in the future?
- What new (or renewed) opportunities for witnessing to God’s love and renewing power do we see?
- What support and encouragement do we need from our new Vicar to meet these challenges and opportunities?

Hope...

- Above all, an Interregnum is a time of hope!
- We can look back in thankfulness, recognising God’s presence with us through our journey so far
- We can look forward in confidence that God will be active in our midst, guiding, strengthening, nurturing, challenging
- We can rest in Him now, in full assurance that we are infinitely precious to Him, and that He is already preparing our new Vicar to be equipped to join us

We need to elect two **Parish Representatives** to assist the Archdeacon and Area Dean with the recruitment of our new Vicar. The Parish Representatives are elected from the PCC. Please pray for the PCC as we make this selection.

It is also a time when we prepare a **Parish Profile** that describes the Parish, our aspirations for the future and the qualities we are looking for in our new Vicar. The PCC is appointing a small team to oversee preparation of the Parish Profile. Members of this team are not restricted to the PCC. Please prayerfully consider whether you, or someone you know, would be suitable to join this team. Please discuss your

thoughts with the clergy, or contact the PCC Secretary, Mary Morrey (mary.morrey@outlook.com). We are also planning an Away Day for PCC and Leadership & Ministry Team members, to explore and agree the content of the Parish Profile.

Once we have elected the Parish Representatives and developed the Parish Profile, we work with the Area Dean and Archdeacon to plan the recruitment of a new Vicar. Once these arrangements are agreed, we will share them on this website.

Who is in charge during an Interregnum?

Legally, it is the Churchwardens and the Area Dean who have responsibility for the Parish during an Interregnum. However, in practice, the remaining clergy also play a big part in maintaining services and keeping the Parish running smoothly. We are particularly blessed because we have our Senior Associate Minister, Leon Collyer, and three other clergy, still serving in our Parish. However, it is important to recognise that Leon is not the new Vicar, nor can four clergy suddenly gain the capacity to do the work of five! An Interregnum is a time when the laity are both given the opportunity, and challenged, to take more responsibility for the Parish.

Each of us should consider what extra we can do to share in the life and responsibility of the church. In an Interregnum, we are called both to 'do' more and to pray more. This is a time for taking responsibility for our own Christian growth, our own witness, and our own service to others inside and outside the church family.

Appointing a new Vicar – initial steps

There is a useful booklet setting out advice on the practical and legal aspects of managing a vacancy: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Berkshire-Vacancy-Guidelines.pdf> Note, though, that this is designed to be printed out as a booklet, so when reading it online, be careful to follow the page numbers (they jump all over the place!).

Legally, our interregnum didn't start until 1 December. This is because the Diocese agreed to pay Vernon Orr until the end of November, in order to allow him to prepare to move out of the Vicarage after he had retired as vicar. Now we are legally in interregnum, the Bishop can begin to consider whether to replace Vernon as an *incumbent* or a *priest-in-charge*. In essence, an incumbent is a permanent post, whereas a priest in charge is appointed for a specified number of years, which may be extended.

Once the Bishop has made a decision, we will be informed *informally*. This is important, because once we are informed *formally*, all sorts of things need to happen on fairly short timescales. We have been assured by the Diocese that we can plan the key things we need to do, and, in particular, schedule the meetings that are needed, before we receive formal notification of the Bishop's decision.

Once we receive *formal* notification, we need to convene a meeting within 4 weeks, to elect two **Parish Representatives**. These representatives will be involved in the selection process and have a right of veto over any candidate.

At the same meeting, we need to:

- decide whether we want the post advertised (we would have to pay for the adverts) or whether we are content for the patron or Diocese to look for suitable candidates on our behalf without public advertisements
- formally record our arrangements for developing a **Parish Profile** (it will be rather late to wait for that meeting before starting the process of developing a parish profile at that meeting)
- request a 'vacancy meeting' with the Bishop or Archdeacon to be held within 6 weeks
- request a written statement from the Area Bishop describing the needs of the Diocese and wider church (to be included in the Parish Profile).

At the 'vacancy meeting', the Bishop or Archdeacon will develop with us a realistic timetable for the appointment process. When this is agreed, it will be shared on this website.

Parish Representatives

Taken from Diocesan guidelines <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Berkshire-Vacancy-Guidelines.pdf>, page 14:

'Normally there are two representatives who are chosen by the PCC. They will be involved in the selection process, acting on the basis of their own judgement on the views of the church. Individually at the interviews, they have a right of veto over any candidate. Anyone on the PCC can be a Parish Representative. In practice they are often, but by no means always, the Churchwardens. It is good to think about having two people who are in touch with different areas of the church's life, and it can often be good to have one male and one female representative.'

The Parish Profile

Taken from Diocesan guidelines <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Berkshire-Vacancy-Guidelines.pdf>, pages 15-16:

'This is a very important document – effectively the “shop window” of your parish/benefice. If well drawn up, it will greatly help potential candidates discern whether or not to apply for the post. A good profile will be descriptive of your church, congregation, community, area, activities, services and so on. It will be analytical of your strengths and weaknesses. It will capture your hopes, aspirations, and vision for the future. And it will be clear about the qualities and characteristics you would like to see in your ideal new incumbent. It will also contain an outline Role Description for the new incumbent, which can be re-examined during the first 6-9 months of their tenure before it is signed off by the Archdeacon. The Area Dean/Lay Chair will also add a short section outlining the deanery perspective, and there may be a foreword or statement from the Bishop about the Diocesan context. The process of drawing up the profile, role description and person specification can begin soon after your incumbent announces that they are leaving, and will enable you as a congregation to think really hard about who you are, what God is calling you to be, and who you might need as a new incumbent to help you to move towards this calling. It is helpful to identify a small group who will work on this together, and an individual within that group who can be a key point of contact with the Parish Development Adviser. There is a document available on the diocesan website called *Guidelines for drawing up your parish profile* which will help you as you think this through (<https://www.oxford.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Guidelines-for-drawing-up-a-Benefice-Profile-August-2017-2.pdf>).