

Guidance Notes on Applying for Parochial Appointments

Introduction

Applying for a new post is about discerning what God is calling you to do and the parish or benefice profile, role description and person specification are some of the tools that help you explore this prayerfully. Role descriptions and person specifications help all parties to be clear about what qualities and experience are being sought and on what basis the decision to appoint will be made. It is important to keep this information in mind throughout the process and consider what might make me the right person for this role as well as what might make this church the right place for me. Under God, the discernment process should be two-way, and in order for both you and the parish to flourish it must be the right fit.

The application form is a tool to enable you to communicate to those responsible for selection how you think your skills, experience and qualities match the needs of the post and why you feel that you are called to that particular ministry. It allows those making appointments to demonstrate their discernment of the successful candidate by assessing candidates against selection criteria in a structured way, avoiding bias.

The Application Form

Considerations in advance of filling in the form

Prior to filling in an application form it is helpful prayerfully to consider your skills and experience in a spirit of self-examination. It is worth even making a note of these so that you can then use them to undertake an audit or brainstorm about your skills and experience. This should help you write the best application based on your skills, gifts and talents as well as be useful later on for the interview and selection process.

Think in the last six months:

- What have you enjoyed doing?
- What has been most rewarding?
- What have you been good at – and how do you know?

Add to this list things you have enjoyed or been good at in previous roles. This might include examples outside of ordained ministry, either in a previous career, voluntary capacity or your home life. Consider from these lists what trends emerge and what gifts and talents you could bring to the new role. Think about how these talents or experience might meet the needs of the parish.

Filling in the form

You are normally encouraged to complete the form electronically. This eases administration and allows interviewers to concentrate on the facts you are presenting rather than having first to read your handwriting. You should complete each section fully - 'see CV attached' for example, is not sufficient. Follow the date order for listing previous posts and employment given in the rubric (ie whether you begin or end with the most recent)

Be specific when talking about skills you have. For example saying you have good communication skills is vague. Instead consider what it is that you are good at communicating and how you know that you are good at communicating.

Once you have undertaken this audit you need to discern what to include which best expresses who you are. Think about the length and volume of information you provide through the application form – not so little that you don't answer the question but not so much information that you overwhelm the panel. Go back to the information provided and focus on what the parish is looking for compared to your skills and talents.

Section 6 – the Personal Statement

This allows you to explain why you are applying for the post and, using examples from your previous work and experience, why you are suited to it. Pull together the relevant information from other parts of the form but don't duplicate information you have provided elsewhere. Don't forget to include information about things you have done in your career before ordained ministry or relevant interests. Concentrate on facts (things your interests have caused you to do) rather than mentioning a general interest in a particular subject. Two pages of personal statement is enough, the interview gives the opportunity to explore these areas further.

Any specific requirements given in the person specification should be addressed here or elsewhere in the application form.

Personal Information

Personal information is confined to the confidential part of the form. This means only the Archdeacon administering the process and the Bishop will have access to it. It means those interviewing you are not influenced by factors that are not relevant in making the appointment.

Your Bishop or Archdeacon may ask you questions about the confidential information at a private interview because s/he has to assure him/herself that your lifestyle is commensurate with a) priestly ministry and b) the person specification for the post.

If you are appointed you will need to provide information about you and your family (perhaps by updating your Register of Ministers form) so the Bishop has the information he needs to provide you with pastoral care.

Once you have completed the form read it through and check you have shown how you meet each of the criteria.

The Interview

The interview is an opportunity for you to offer evidence of what you have done previously, how you did it and what you might do in the new parish in the future.

Prior to the interview it is helpful to prepare some examples or evidence that you can tailor to specific questions that might be asked. Go back to your audit, your completed application form and the person specification and review this information. Think about what is important to the new church you wish to be part of. Remember where possible that practical rather than theoretical examples are best.

- The most important thing is to answer the question you have been asked. Be prepared to ask for clarification of a question if you are unsure what is being asked and give yourself a chance to consider the question before you answer.
- Be yourself
- Answer from the position of being in the new post rather than the one you are currently in

For those who are nervous at interviews it is sometimes helpful to practice answering interview questions with someone prior to the formal interview. This will give you more confidence and more fluency in your answers.

At the end of the interview it is common for the interview panel to ask you if you have any questions. The interview should be a two-way process and it is just as important for you to discern whether the role is right for you as it is for the panel to discern whether they believe you to be right for it. It therefore might be helpful to reflect both prior to the interview and during the selection process on any areas about which you might wish to gain more information or insight. However, don't feel that you have to ask questions if you genuinely feel that all of your questions have been answered.

If you would like to discuss application forms and interviews further or work on your application form and interview technique contact your Archdeacon or the Director of Clergy Development.

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