

Guide to preparing for and running Annual Meetings

This guide covers:

- What the annual meetings are (p1)
- The rules on giving advance notice of these meetings (p1)
- The elections which need to take place (p2)
- The written reports which need to be prepared in advance (p3)
- Where to look for more information (p3)
- A sample agenda (p4)

What are the annual meetings?

Before 30 April every year, Church of England parishes must hold their annual meetings. While each parish will usually only hold one physical meeting technically two meetings take place within that, with different business and rules:

- A meeting of the parishioners, where the main business is to elect churchwardens. This is sometimes known as the Annual Vestry Meeting.
- The Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), where the main business is to receive and discuss a report from the minister and PCC on the last year, to receive the PCC's annual accounts, and to elect people to the PCC and Deanery Synod.

After the annual meetings, the Diocesan Office will contact you to ask for details of the people elected to be Churchwardens or Deanery Synod members, for the number of people on your electoral roll, and for copies of the PCC's annual report and financial statements.

Giving notice

You can download forms for the notices mentioned from www.parishresources.org.uk/pccs/apcms

Meeting of the parishioners

Notice of a meeting of the parishioners must be convened by the minister, or if that is not possible, the churchwardens. To do this, a notice signed by the minister or a churchwarden must be displayed on or near the main doors of the parish church and every other building licensed for public worship, for at least the two Sundays before the meeting.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

A notice signed by the minister (or if that is not possible, the vice-chair of the PCC, the PCC secretary, or someone else appointed by the PCC) must be displayed on or near the main door of every church in the parish and every building licensed for public worship. The notice must be displayed for at least the two Sundays before the day of the meeting.

Also relevant: giving notice that you will be revising or renewing the parish Electoral Roll

Before this, you will also need to give notice of revising or renewing the Electoral Roll of the parish. Notice of revising the roll must be displayed for at least fourteen days, ending between fifteen and twenty eight days before the APCM, while notice of renewing the roll must be displayed from at least two months before the APCM.

Elections and appointments

You can download nomination forms from <https://www.parishresources.org.uk/pccs/apcms/>. The results of elections at the APCM must be published on or near the main door of every church in the parish, and a form for that is also available on that webpage.

Election of Churchwardens

Electing churchwardens is the main business of the meeting of parishioners. Any lay person who is either on the Electoral Roll of the parish, or who lives in the parish and is on the local government register of electors, can propose or second candidates and can vote.

To be eligible, candidates must be baptised and must be on the Electoral Roll of the parish, twenty-one years old or older and actual communicants (have received communion three times in the last year and are confirmed or “ready and desirous” of being confirmed). There are also several disqualifying criteria, which are explained on the nomination form linked to above. Normally no one is allowed to be a churchwarden in more than one parish or for more than six years consecutively.

Nomination forms must be given to the minister before the start of the meeting. If there are not more candidates than there are places, (e.g. one or two people stand for two places) the candidates are declared to be elected without a vote. If there are more candidates than places, a vote must take place, either using ballot papers or by a show of hands. If two candidates get an equal number of votes, the result should be decided by casting lots. Alternatively, in certain circumstances the minister can appoint one Churchwarden using a special procedure. The other is then elected as normal.

Churchwardens are elected for a year at a time. Newly elected churchwardens do not begin their term until they are admitted to the office by the Bishop or an Archdeacon. Outgoing churchwardens continue until their replacement is admitted, or if no one is elected in their place, until 31 July.

Election of Deanery Synod and PCC members

These elections happen at the APCM. Deanery Synod members are elected in every parish in the same year every third year for the next Deanery Synod triennium, while PCC members are elected every year. Normally PCC members are elected for three years and one third of the elected members are elected each year, however they can also be elected for one year terms. If casual vacancies have left places open part way through a term, the APCM can elect someone to fill the place for the remainder of the original person’s term. If the APCM will not be within two months’ time the PCC can fill casual vacancies instead.

To be eligible, candidates must be at least 16 years old, have been on the Electoral Roll for at least 6 months (unless they are under 18 years old) and be an actual communicant. They must be proposed and seconded by people on the Electoral Roll, before or during the APCM.

If there are not more candidates than places they are declared to be elected without a vote. Otherwise, voting can either be done using ballot papers or by a show of hands. Anyone on the Electoral Roll can attend and vote for as many candidates as there are places, but cannot vote more than once for any candidate. Draws are decided by casting lots. Parishes have some options for changing this (see Church Representation Rule 12), which take effect a year after the decision is made.

The results of elections should be published. A form for this can be found on the website above.

Appointment of Sidespersons, independent examiners and auditors

Sidespersons and independent examiners/auditors are appointed, rather than elected. Usually the minister and PCC propose appointments for the APCM to approve.

Sidespersons assist the churchwardens and must be on the Electoral Roll. Independent examiners or auditors must be appointed. They must not be members of the PCC, and should be competent to do the work. More on the role of an independent examiner is online here: www.parishresources.org.uk.

Written Reports

There are a number of reports that need to be written for the meeting. These can be combined into a single document or presented separately.

Annual report of the PCC

This report should be “on the proceedings of the parochial church council and the activities of the parish generally”. One requirement is that the report must state whether the PCC has complied with its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops’ guidance on safeguarding vulnerable children and adults (under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016).

Financial Statements

Producing the financial statements of the PCC each year and arranging for them to be independently examined (or audited) is one of the major responsibilities of the PCC treasurer. Once the PCC has approved the financial statements, they should be signed by the PCC’s chair and copies must be displayed on a noticeboard inside or outside the church for at least seven days before the APCM, including at least one Sunday when the church is used for worship.

Electoral Roll

The annual meeting must receive a report on changes in the Electoral Roll. Usually this is simply the numbers of people added and removed, and the total number of people on the Roll.

Fabric report

Under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018, the churchwardens are responsible for producing this report which should cover any actions taken or proposed to protect or maintain the church building or articles, particularly anything recommended after a Quinquennial Inspection. The report must be approved by the PCC, who can amend it, before the APCM.

Deanery Synod report

This report summarises the work of the Deanery Synod during the year.

For more information

The rules for the meetings, reports and elections summarised above are:

- The Churchwardens Measure 2001 contains the rules for a meeting of the parishioners and the election of churchwardens. See: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/2001/1/contents>
- The Church Representation Rules contain the rules for APCMs, as well as parish Electoral Rolls and the membership of and elections to PCCs and Synods. See: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/church-representation-rules>

Sample agenda for a parish's annual meetings

St Mary's Church: Agenda for the meeting of the parishioners to elect churchwardens and the Annual Parochial Church Meeting

To be held in St Mary's Church at 3pm on Sunday 21 April 2019.

Meeting to elect churchwardens

- 1) **Opening prayers and welcome from the Vicar**
Revd Lara
- 2) **Minutes of the last meeting**
To approve the minutes of the meeting on 22 April 2018
- 3) **Churchwardens' report**
To receive a report on the last year from the Churchwardens
- 4) **Election of Churchwardens**
To elect two churchwardens.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

- 1) **Minutes of the last meeting**
To approve the minutes of the meeting on 22 April 2018
- 2) **Reports**
The person giving the report will either present it, or simply take questions if appropriate.
 - a. **Vicar's report: 2018 and looking forwards**
Revd Lara, Vicar
 - b. **St Mary's Church and PCC in 2018**
Courtney Walsh, Vice Chair of the PCC
 - c. **Electoral Roll changes**
Viv Richards, Electoral Roll Officer
 - d. **Fabric Report**
Clive Lloyd, Churchwarden
 - e. **Deanery Synod in 2018**
Chris Gayle, Deanery Synod member
 - f. **Finance report**
Garfield Sobers, PCC Treasurer
- 3) **Elections and appointments**
 - a. Election of 1 Deanery Synod member (to fill the casual vacancy)*
 - b. Election of 3 PCC members
 - c. Appointment of Sidespersons*
 - d. Appointment of the Independent Examiner

* These items may not be required. *Items in italics are optional and can be moved as appropriate.*