



Pastrow Family

Churches sharing the love, grace and truth of Jesus Christ

'So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.'

Galatians 6: 9-10

Introduction

1. As we enter into a new year, we pray for renewal of our way of life, so changed by the events of 2020. And yet, we must be realistic in knowing that recovery is going to take a long time and the church needs to be ready to respond in its work, living out the call from Galatians to 'work for the good of all'. In order for us to do this, we need a robust and strong benefice and so it is perhaps right for us to look now at what the future of our benefice needs to look like in a post-pandemic world. The purpose of this paper is therefore to explore the re-imagining of our governance structures, the way we 'do' church, and how we live out our purpose to '*Share the Love, Grace and Truth of Jesus Christ*' with those we live amongst.

2. The calling of Jesus Christ on our lives is to learn to live with one another, building each other up in love and faith. Every church has this at the heart of its mission, it binds us together in a fundamental truth and a common purpose. In order to achieve this, we perhaps need to think about the idea of 'one church' – a singular membership that reflects the kingdom values of 'the body of Christ'. We may meet and exist in different parishes and buildings, but we share the same core beliefs of the mission of Jesus and our structures need to imitate this idea to the maximum potential for mission.

The general need for change

3. Across all Church of England dioceses clergy numbers are falling. As a result many parishes are being grouped into even larger benefices, particularly in rural areas.

4. The consequence of this is that clergy are more and more stretched, which directly affects the mission and administration of the benefices adversely.

5. Coupled with this trend, an increasing number of parishes are struggling to cover all their financial costs, particularly their Common Mission Fund contributions to their dioceses. At the same time many parishes are finding it difficult to attract volunteers to stand for church warden, treasurer or secretary, and often also for PCC membership.

6. The combination of these general, but common, factors inescapably point to the conclusion that the current Church of England legal, governance and organisational model, based historically on small or singular parishes, is no longer fit for purpose. Annex C shows the new vision for the 2020's adopted by the Church of England and this proposal seeks to respond to that vision.

7. Many benefices, including some in our diocese, have recognised and accepted this trend and have restructured with positive benefits. Many others, facing the same problems, are now actively looking to restructure.

Pastrow Benefice

8. Pastrow is currently made up of eight parishes, with a total of eleven churches. In the light of present discussions at diocese level, it is highly likely that this will increase in the foreseeable future. The Pastrow Family currently has a population of around 6,300 and four schools with 325 pupils. At least thirty-two services are held each month across the whole benefice.

9. The general problems facing the Church of England, as mentioned above, are already affecting the mission, ministry and administration of Pastrow as currently structured. As an even larger benefice we will struggle more to remain effective as an organisation. Parishes will continue to be encumbered by bureaucracy, as the only Church of England legal bodies in the benefice. The already existing level of duplication and time spent on administration through all the individual PCC meetings will get worse. Our clergy will be more and more stretched. It will be a real challenge to sustain what should be our top priority – mission and ministry.

Pastrow Family Council

10. In general recognition that change would be needed, in 2020 the Pastrow Family Council (PFC) was set up as a one-year pilot project. Although it has no formal legal powers, as a new central group in the benefice it has generally been seen to have brought benefits in three general areas: providing a new strategic overview of the benefice; improving communications throughout the benefice; and developing the channels to provide more support and encouragement to parishes.

11. Although the PFC trial has not directly affected our PCCs, the combined PCC meetings trialled at the same time have also proved to be a success, particularly in saving much clergy time and duplication.

12. We now have a real opportunity – almost an imperative – to build on our first step of creating the PFC.

What are our five key objectives now?

13. To ensure that Pastrow grows and flourishes in the future, we now need to build a new structure that achieves five key objectives:

- Strengthening the overall mission and outreach of Pastrow as a top priority.
- Minimising duplication and saving clergy time spent on administration.
- Allowing our PCCs to shed many of the irksome legal tasks that bog them down and have more time and freedom to focus on the role of their church in their local community.
- Improving the support and encouragement given to parishes from the centre, particularly in areas such as mission, outreach, pastoral work, safeguarding, GDPR, etc.
- Running the benefice finances and accounts centrally across the whole benefice and achieving economies of scale in contracts and purchasing throughout the benefice.

Proposal

14. It is proposed that:

- Pastrow restructures to become a single parish benefice.
- All our existing PCCs restructure to become Local Church Councils (LCC).

What will this involve?

15. Implementing this proposal will involve significant change and, we pray, long-term benefits. The changes can be highlighted as follows:

- There will be only one body legally responsible for the whole benefice – the new PCC.
- Accordingly, there will be only one team of formal church officers (church wardens, treasurer, secretary, etc).
- Existing PCCs will therefore no longer be under the constraints imposed by their current legal obligations. They will all be converted to LCCs, with well-defined terms of reference established and agreed with the new central PCC.
- The proposed division of responsibilities between the single PCC and all the LCCs is in Annex A.

Benefits of this change

16. Based on the well-documented results of restructuring by benefices that have gone down this road, there will be significant benefits.

- Our five key objectives (see above) are most likely to be achieved.
- LCCs will be free to enhance the role and use of the church in the local community.
- LCCs also able to give more focus on local mission and outreach with PCC support and encouragement.

Financial implications of the change

17. Creating a centralised financial structure for the whole new single parish benefice will be the most complex and initially the most contentious area of our restructuring. However, based on the case studies of other benefices that have successfully made this transition, the end result has always been successful and welcomed.

18. It is proposed that our transition to a centralised benefice financial structure should be in stages, with open discussion at each stage:

- Stage 1: Setting up the centralised benefice accounting system. See Annex B for details of what this will involve.
- Stage 2: Dealing with the fabric of all our churches centrally.
- Stage 3: Bedding in the new structure and making it work effectively.

Programme for consultation

19. It is proposed that the schedule for consultation on the proposal to convert to a single parish benefice should be as follows:

- This discussion paper circulated to the PFC ahead of its meeting on 27 January.
- PFC discussion on the proposal at its meeting.
- Proposal updated (if necessary) following PFC consultation.
- Proposal circulated to PCCs by 15 February and also posted on the Pastrow web site.
- Discussed initially at the Combined PCC meeting on 24 February, with follow up discussions within all parishes.
- Opportunities during March and the first half of April for central meetings for further consultation and discussions, if felt necessary.

Final decision on converting to a Pastrow single parish benefice

20. To be taken by the PCCs at their combined meeting on 22 April.

Summary

21. Pastrow and all its churches are one Church and one large village. Many parishioners of the Benefice commute to work and we all go to central shops – worshipping and being within one large Parish will be no different. Together will be greater than the sum of the parts.

22. The structural simplification of the Pastrow Family creates a huge opportunity for individual churches to additionally flourish with the help of the single PCC and its sub committees. The resources will be there to grow the mission – Sharing the love, grace and truth of Jesus Christ – and to provide an enhanced focus on the delivery of the mission and ministry right across Pastrow. The single PCC will be in a strong position to provide stronger strategic direction and encouragement to our diverse Pastrow Family.

23. Our population will always need their local church, particularly for baptisms, weddings and funerals, so there will be no change in that respect. Hopefully there will be significant new opportunities for the church membership to be enlarged as our churches thrive under their LCCs.

24. The benefits of the proposed integration will allow efficient administration, use of resources, use of volunteer's time and available skills. By centralising the burden of regulatory, legal and compliance requirements our churches and congregations will be able to spend more time on the church, in its local context, and its local mission.

25. Combining the talents and experience of our parishioners with the strength of the PCC sub committees will become the strength of Pastrow.

26. The simplification of finances and the management of cost efficiencies will directly contribute to the challenges of meeting our Common Mission Fund annual targets.

27. We are part of the way there. Now it is about making a bold decision, formalising it, taking a major step forward in faith, and...living and breathing it.

Future Organisation & Governance working party
19 January 2021

'Don't lose sight of common sense and discernment. Hang on to them.'
Proverbs 3: 21

ANNEX A TO SINGLE PASTROW PARISH PAPER

PROPOSED RELATIONSHIP AND DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN LOCAL CHURCH COMMITTEES (LCC) AND THE SINGLE PASTROW PCC

FORMAL RELATIONSHIP

1. Each LCC will be a sub-committee of the PCC.
2. The PCC is ultimately responsible for the ministry and mission of each local church, is the only legal trust body in the benefice and therefore cannot delegate financial responsibility, safeguarding responsibility or overall responsibility for church buildings and property.
3. Each LCC will exist to assist the PCC in its mission and ministry at a local level. It will have no authority or legal status of its own but will act under delegation from the PCC.
4. There will be terms of reference for each LCC drawn up by the PCC.

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

LCC responsibilities, as agreed in LCC Terms of Reference:

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|------------------------|--|
| LCC structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Forming a LCC (following PCC guidelines).- Appointing a LCC Chairperson.- Running LCC meetings with summary minutes to PCC.- Drawing up a church membership list. |
| Mission & Outreach | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Nominating one or two Mission Representatives to pray, plan and carry out mission initiatives in the village(s), working closely with the Pastrow Ministry & Outreach Group. |
| Running the church | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Routine maintenance of church building(s) and graveyard(s).- Taking action on quinquennial report recommendations.- Health and safety in and around the church.- Rosters for sidespersons, readers, intercessors, etc.- Providing lay contacts and help to all outside participants in baptisms, weddings and funerals.- Maintaining the normal registers (regular services, baptisms, weddings, funerals) with PCC help and advice.- Counting, recording and banking all collections and donations. |
| Role in the village(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Welcoming newcomers to the community.- Running occasional 'Village services' and special seasonal services.- Pastoral care to villagers, working closely with the Pastrow Pastoral Group.- Organising local fundraising events. |

PCC responsibilities, on behalf of all LCCs

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| Mission & Ministry | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Benefice strategic mission plan.- Mission and outreach initiatives and encouragement.- Co-ordinating pastoral help to those in need.- Patterns of worship.- Encouraging and co-ordinating house groups.- Clergy rotas. |
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Finance &
Administration

- Finances and accounts.
- Common Mission Fund.
- Insurances.
- Central purchasing of all church commodities.
- Faculty applications.
- GDPR.
- Safeguarding policy and best practice.
- Electoral roll.
- Arranging quinquennial inspections on behalf of LCCs.
- Advice on burials and grave plots.
- Co-ordinating all maintenance contract work in churches.
- Help with completing registers, particularly wedding registers.

ANNEX B TO SINGLE PASTROW PARISH PAPER

OVERVIEW OF STAGE I OF PASTROW FINANCIAL INTEGRATION

- Common accounting process of monthly/quarterly Balances, Income & Expenditure for each Church (column items) recorded centrally thus providing the complete balance sheet for the Benefice.
- The recording of each and every Endowment and Restricted fund existing in the Benefice in the balance sheet.
- The identification and recording of any Designated funds existing in the Benefice in the balance sheet.
- The pooling of all forms of collections and giving in the main unrestricted Benefice account.
- The elimination and subsequent centralisation of all duplication of effort in the services and procurement process.
- The migration of Bank accounts to one supplier.
- Providing an annual report and accounts for the whole Benefice.
- Engaging with the Charities Commission processes.
- The engagement of a voluntary (hopefully) book keeper.

ANNEX C TO SINGLE PASTROW PARISH PAPER

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND'S PAPER ON A NEW VISION FOR THE CHURCH

The following extract comes from the Church of England's vision document:

'At the end of 2019, the Archbishop of York was asked by the House of Bishops to lead a process to create a vision and strategy for the Church of England for the next ten years. This vision and strategy aims for a reappraisal of how we live and bear the light of Christ to the world through the church. It is part of the wider Emerging Church of England body of work.

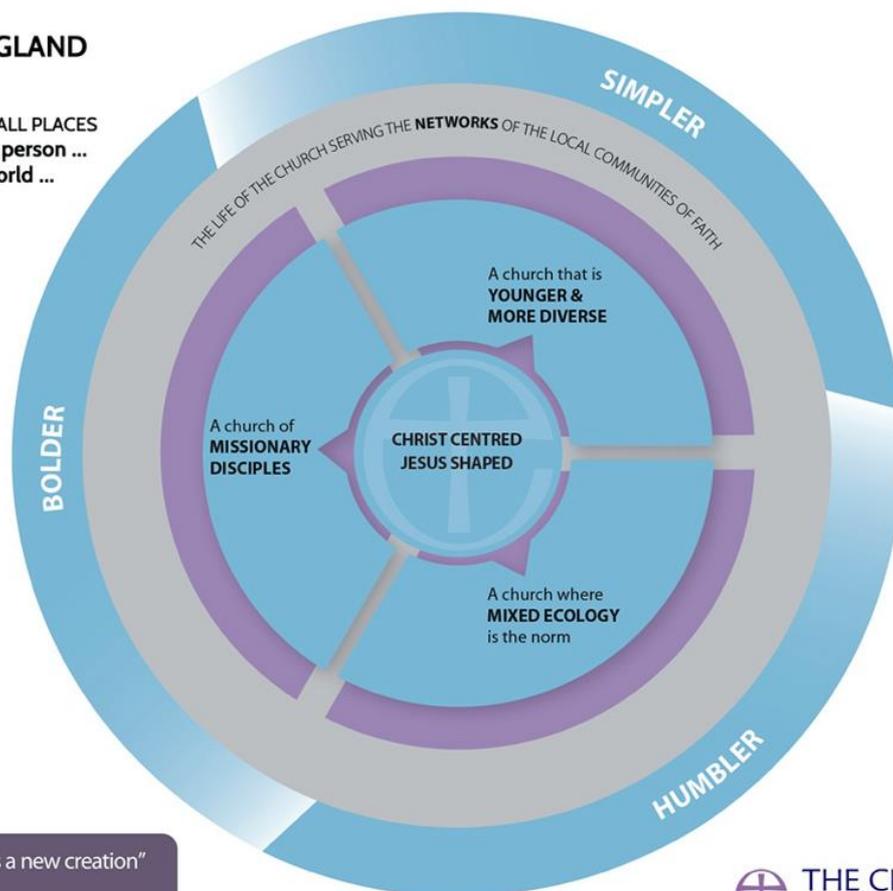
The vision emerged through consultations with hundreds of people who reflect the breadth and diversity of the Church of England. This included a listening exercise with 170 children and young people.

The picture below illustrates the shape of the vision and its strategic priorities from the period of consultation. The vision encapsulates the Church of England's calling to be a Christ-centred and Jesus-shaped church that is simpler, humbler, and bolder. It identifies three strategic priorities for the Church around being a church of missionary disciples, a church where the mixed ecology of many forms of church are the norm, and a church which is younger and more diverse.'

The full text can be obtained from [here](#).

A VISION FOR THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN THE 2020s

A CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLE IN ALL PLACES
... a Christian vision for every person ...
... a Christian vision for the world ...



"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation"
(2 Corinthians 5:17)