

## **SIMPLIFICATION SUMMARY**

*A Precip of the Simplification Documents, prepared at the request of Hyde PCC, and now shared with everyone.*



### **SUMMARY OF THE RATIONALE PAPERS**

The full document begins with a list of the members of the Simplification Working Group, and details of the initial process of consultation – please have a look at that, so that your views can be heard.

In recent years, our four Parishes, which share one Ministry Team, and one Church Office have grown closer together, with many people worshipping and serving in more than one Parish. We are inter-dependent communities of worship, mission and service.

It seems a natural next step that we should look at our relationships across the AVC, and have a body which can hold an overall vision for our shared life and ministry.

But alongside that, we recognise that the Church is rooted in its local area – the town and villages of the AVC. We have an incarnational view of the Church, that it is God's gift to each place where it exists, and that the Holy Spirit works in the many different expression of the Church that we have here. So we also all want strong local leadership in each place, and the distinctive ministries to which each of our current Parishes are called.

The question is, 'Would the Churches in each place flourish better under the coordinating guidance of a single PCC, which represents each place?'

Thus the agenda and time of these Church Councils would concentrate on what Gary has called 'The Three Cs':

- a) Congregation - pastoral care, growth, vocations & discipleship.
- b) Community - spreading our service to the wider community; its spiritual, physical, mental & social needs.
- c) Church Facilities - our Church & Centre, plus all that is in it and around it. Promoting local engagement and loyalty. Raising funds.

The new central coordinating body would be the single PCC. It would have duties:

- a) To promote the Mission of the Church - pastoral, evangelistic (to promote the 'good news'), social, and ecumenical (all that is belonging to the church) and the unity of the church. Thus it is concerned with the vision and growth of our Church, including outreach, service, worship, safeguarding, finance and governance.
- b) Concerns with the Church of England and its public relationship.
- c) Concerns with the Diocese of Winchester and the Deanery of Christchurch.

In practice, it would look after the burden of the paperwork, policies, returns, accounts, and so on. It would seek efficiencies and financial prudence. Also it would concentrate on matters that would help the Church to grow and thrive.

It is recognised that change makes us fearful. To some extent we have to trust in God and God's love. Local communities and Churches will not lose their ethos. Any proposed changes will be discussed both locally and centrally. The agreed aim is that God's Church should flourish throughout our Benefice.

Just as the Holy Trinity is united as God and yet each aspect has its own identity, so too our Benefice can be united as a single Parish, yet each Local Church Area will have its own identity.

As St Paul reminds us (1 Cor. 12:12ff.), the one body is made up of different parts, all of which enable it to do many different things. This is so with us – we all want to achieve the same aim, spreading the good news, reaching out to those who don't know Jesus, supporting our communities, but we all do that differently, including our wide range of service traditions and the different ways each Church community supports its local wider community. The simplification proposals aim to keep what makes each place unique but pursue our vision in unity as one.

Our main reason for considering this is to enable us, across the AVC, better to promote '*in the Parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical*' (PCC Measure, 1956). Our prayer is that having one PCC will enable us better to serve God and love our neighbour in the whole AVC which God has given us the privilege of caring for.

Overall we seek the following:

- a) To love God and love our neighbour.
- b) To promote across our present Benefice, the best possible service to God and his people.
- c) To care for and use money and staff to best possible advantage.
- d) To use the Rector's time to best advantage (Later this year, he may be our only paid Minister).
- e) To divide responsibilities so that the proposed PCC covers the essential working of the whole Parish, and the Local Church Councils are thus freed to concentrate on God's calling to the Church in that area, spreading the 'Good News', reaching out to those who don't yet recognise Jesus in their lives, and supporting their communities.
- f) To make ourselves attractive for future staff appointments. Experience has shown that clergy are more likely to apply for posts where there are fewer PCCs, and when they can see that there is an overall mission aim for the whole Benefice.

If these proposals meet with general support and it is the will of the present four Parishes, then this theme of progress can proceed. The seven papers in full, or as outlined below in this 'Simplification Summary' set out how this might be progressed into action. All documents concerning this matter are provided for this initial consultation, trying to discern what is good, what needs improvement, and what the Working Group has missed.

## **SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN TOPIC PAPERS**

1. The Avon Valley Churches (AVC) Benefice comprises the Parishes of Breamore, Fordingbridge, Hale & Woodgreen and Hyde. At an open meeting between the four PCCs and the Archdeacon of Winchester it was suggested that mission and effective governance of the AVC Benefice could be simplified by converting from four Parishes to a single Parish. A Working Group (WG) was set up to study the potential structure and processes of a single Parish (which would still be a Benefice, but that word would not need to be used).
2. Despite sharing clergy, the Parishes of a Benefice are independent legal entities managed by individual PCCs. The key features of converting a Benefice to a single Parish are:
  - The current Parishes would no longer be independent legal entities.
  - All the Churches would be come under the governance of a single PCC on which all the former Parishes would be equally represented as indicated in para 4.
3. This precis by the Hyde members of the WG aims to summarise the key points of the 7 WG topic papers in the Simplification Booklet. For ease of reference the current parishes are referred to as Local Church Areas (LCA) when absorbed into the new AVC Parish.
4. The new AVC PCC, would comprise about 16 members:

- One Churchwarden for each LCA, elected by the LCA members under current procedures.
  - One lay member (to be termed Assistant Warden) for each LCA, elected by the LCA members under current procedures.
  - 4 Deanery Synod representatives elected by the whole new parish with, as far as possible, one from each LCA.
  - Clergy and lay readers.
5. Any AVC PCC Committees, e.g., Standing Committee, Finance Committee, would include representatives from each LCA.
  6. The new AVC PCC's responsibilities would be the same as all the current PCCs put together, in particular:
    - Setting policy, e.g., safeguarding.
    - Legal responsibilities, e.g., Diocesan returns, quinquennial inspections, faculties, entering contracts.
    - Financial responsibility including Annual Report and Accounts.
    - The overall mission aims of the Parish
  7. The AVC PCC would establish a Sub-committee for each LCA, to be termed the Local Church Committee (LCC). The LCC would be established at a local meeting following the Annual Meeting of the AVC PCC. The Local Church Committee would comprise the members of the AVC PCC from that area, at least one member of the clergy, and (approximately) 6 lay members to be elected at the local meeting.
  8. The responsibilities of each LCC would be set by the AVC PCC and cover 3 main areas:
    - The day to day running of their Church and churchyard.
    - Fundraising.
    - Advancing the mission of the Church locally.

It is intended that the transfer of some responsibilities from the old PCCs to the new will free up time and energy for greater efforts in the LCAs for promoting the mission of the church.

9. The current arrangements for baptisms, weddings and funerals would be unchanged.
10. Church of England rules would require the style and frequency of services in all the churches to be decided by the incumbent and AVC PCC.
11. There are 2 key financial points. The AVC PCC will be legally responsible for all financial aspects of the new parish. There is no suggestion that funds of all 4 existing parishes will be pooled.
12. For those interested in further information on how the finances would work:
  - a. On establishment of the new Parish, the existing funds of each LCA will be ring fenced in a separate 'pot' within the overall control of the AVC PCC.
  - b. All LCA giving and fundraising will be added to the LCA 'pot'. Gift Aid will have to be collected centrally and then distributed to the LCA pots. Parish Giving Scheme donations will be received centrally with the relevant LCA identified and distributed to LCA pots.
  - c. Parish expenses such as clergy expenses, parish office costs, etc., will be taken from LCA pots in the ratio of the size of their worshipping communities.

- d. The Common Mission Fund (CMF) (Parish Share / Quota) will be taken from LCA pots in the ratio of the size of their worshipping communities. In 2020 the new parish CMF would probably have been less than the sum of the 4 independent parishes, though we don't know by how much. No-one yet knows what impact Covid-19 will have on CMF for 2021.
  - e. The AVC PCC will establish an annual budget. The operation of each LCA budget will then be delegated to its LCC. Transactions above a certain limit, or outside the budget, will require AVC PCC authorisation.
  - f. Fundraising for projects or charities will need prior authorisation from the AVC PCC.
  - g. Each LCA will require an Assistant Treasurer. After an initial transition period the workload should reduce to collections and general paperwork exchange with the AVC PCC Treasurer/Bookkeeper.
  - h. There is little doubt that the task of the AVC PCC Treasurer will be particularly challenging and the workload and cost of the Bookkeeper will increase.
13. Timescales for this project are complicated by Covid-19 restrictions. It is felt that the current PCCs must meet face to face to make the decision whether to proceed after the present consultation is completed. If agreed by the PCCs, the legal paperwork could take 6 months, so the 2021 annual meeting would be the earliest possible implementation date.
14. This precis suggests how a possible single AVC parish structure might work. It is deliberately neutral as to the merits or otherwise of forming a single AVC PCC. It is for the members of the PCCs and Congregations to choose the way ahead in the light of their assessment of what may happen in the years ahead and of what is important to further the mission of the Churches and Parishes of the AVC. All opinions and concerns are welcomed at this point to inform the next phase of the consideration process.