

PARISH PRESENTATION BOARDS: INFORMATION ABOUT PROCESS

How long does all this take?

It depends on lots of things. There is a general shortage of clergy in Australia at the moment and our diocese is no exception. People are not “waiting in the wings” for a new appointment. It can take time to find names and then to discern who of these is the person God is calling to the particular vacant parish.

Typically, clergy will need to give about 3 month’s notice of resignation from their current appointment and may well wish to take leave before commencing in their new appointment.

In all, an interregnum of about 6 to 9 months should be anticipated, although it can be longer.

What happens in the meantime?

The Regional Bishop will ask a priest, often someone who is retired, to undertake the main tasks of the parish priest. Such an arrangement is known as a “locum”. Depending on how long the interregnum, there may be more than one locum. Most locums are part-time so it is usually necessary for people in the parish to help out in extra ways. This offers an excellent opportunity for people to explore other ministries in their parish.

How can parishioners be involved?

1. Parishioners are urged to pray:
 - using the prayer for choosing a new incumbent (*APBA*, p 212, prayer 36) at all services.
 - In some parishes, a prayer circle prays when their Presentation Board is meeting.

The process of finding each next priest must be undergirded by prayer by all involved. Only by prayer are we able to discern God’s will.

2. Parishioners in the vacant parish are invited to give any names of clergy they feel should be considered to their Parish Nominators to take to the Presentation Board.
3. Parishioners in the vacant parish are also asked to support their Parish Nominators by assuring them of their prayers and by **not** asking for updates. The process will take as long as it takes and it is critical that all deliberations of the Presentation Board remain completely confidential. Do keep praying.

Where can I get further information?

More detail about how parish vacancies are filled is set out in the references listed at the beginning of this information sheet; both references are available on the diocesan web site.

References:

Parishes Regulation Canon, sections 14-25

Diocesan Handbook, section C.5

Purpose

The purpose of this is to provide an overview of the role and operation of Parish Presentation Boards in this diocese.

What is a “Presentation Board”?

A Presentation Board is a group of people who have the responsibility of presenting to the Archbishop the name of the priest that they would like the Archbishop to invite to be the next Rector/Priest-in-Charge of the Parish.

Who is on the Presentation Board for our Parish?

Each year at the Parish Annual Meeting, the Electors of the Parish elect three Parish Nominators. These people, together with the three people elected by diocesan Synod (two clergy, one lay – Diocesan Nominators) and the Regional Bishop (acting on behalf of the Archbishop) comprise the Presentation Board.

Note 1. If a Presentation Board is in operation at the time of Annual Meeting elections, the references above state that the nominators who commenced on that Board would normally continue until the end of that process, even if different nominators have been elected.

Note 2. If the Archdeacon is not an elected member of the Presentation Board, s/he may attend the first meeting of the Board and may be invited to assist the Board at subsequent meetings. The Archdeacon will usually be the person who carries out the parish review (see *Parishes Regulation Canon*, section 17).

Who are the Diocesan Nominators?

The current Diocesan Nominators are The Very Rev’d Dr Peter Catt, Dean of Brisbane, The Rev’d Mike Uptin, Regional Officer QLD/NNSW, Bush Church Aid, and Mr Alan Gallimore. Synod has also elected Reserve Nominators (both clergy and lay) in the event that any of the above three are unavailable for a particular board.

How does the Presentation Board work?

The first step a Parish Presentation Board takes is to understand the parish. Each parish produces a Parish Profile (you can view parish profiles on the diocesan web site under Parish Vacancies). The purpose of a parish is tell people what the parish is like, how it is going (in a general sense) and their hopes and aspirations for the future. Using this as a basis, the Parish Nominators tell the story of the parish to the other members of the Board.

How does the Presentation Board work? (continued)

The next step is to compile a list of names the Presentation Board think should be considered for the vacancy. Names can be suggested by anyone and parishioners are encouraged to give any names they think should be considered to their Parish Nominators, who will take them to a meeting of the Presentation Board. In response to the parish profile being on the diocesan web site, clergy who are seeking further information and/or would like to be considered for the vacancy will contact the Regional Bishop to express their interest.

All names are considered by all members of the Presentation Board.

Meetings of the Presentation Board are held face-to-face where distance makes this possible. Otherwise, meetings are by conference calls (video/phone). Even where face-to-face meetings are possible, once a board has commenced, some short, updating meetings will often be held electronically.

How are names considered?

In the first instance, the priest's entry in the diocesan or national clergy list is considered. The person may be known by one or more members of the Presentation Board. Often information can be gathered from web sites where the person has been involved (for example, parish web sites).

The Presentation Board will task one or more nominators to make enquiries about one or more of the names. This is done confidentially.

Why is everything so confidential?

There are many reasons for this. It is to protect people from rumours and from hearing the wrong thing at the wrong time. It is to prevent people and parishes from being hurt. It is to prevent speculation and gossip.

Presentation Board members recognise that the issue of confidentiality being held can be very difficult for a parish, especially when the process lengthens in time. However, if we can grasp that sense of "God's time" and that we are all working towards *right* person - the person God is calling - then hopefully this will help.

Presentation Board members can make NO comment on any part of the process;- this protects names and protects truth.

So parishes need to accept that they will only hear the exciting news of their next priest when the public announcement is made.

Does the Presentation Board ever talk with priests they are considering?

Yes. The whole process is a *discernment* process. The Presentation Board is discerning whose name they should present to the Archbishop; the priest being considered is discerning if continuing their ministry in your parish is what God is calling them to do.

Having discerned from initial enquiries that a particular priest might be the person God is calling, the Regional Bishop invites the priest to consider the parish and to come to a conversation with the Presentation Board.

Does the Presentation Board ever talk with more than one priest?

Because it is a *discernment* process, it is possible that, after a priest who is invited to have a conversation with the Presentation Board, the priest and/or the Board feels that God is not calling this person.

So the process of identifying who God might be calling continues and another priest is invited to come to a conversation with the Presentation Board.

Are parish vacancies ever advertised?

Yes. The list of vacant parishes is published in each edition of the diocesan newsletter, *Wednesday Weekly* (available on the diocesan web site), and parish profiles are on the diocesan web site (under Vacancies / Parish Vacancies).

Experience over several years has been that advertising in other dioceses typically does not lead to applications being submitted. Clergy interested in parishes in our diocese tend to talk with the regional bishops or to respond to vacancies listed on the diocesan web site.

What happens when the person has been "found"?

When the Presentation Board believes that they have discerned the person God is calling to the parish, a resolution to ask the Archbishop to invite the person to be the next Rector/Priest-in-Charge of the parish is put and voted on by the whole Board.

The Regional Bishop then formally presents the name to the Archbishop, who, it should be noted, has been kept up to date with the progress of the Presentation Board. Upon the Archbishop's agreement, at this point, the priest is so invited.

When do parish members find out about it?

After the priest has formally accepted the Archbishop's invitation, arrangements are made to announce the appointment on the same day in the vacant parish and in the priest's current parish. Until formal acceptance has been received, there is no certainty that the priest has agreed to come.