



PCC members: how to do a good job and enjoy it

If your gift is encouraging, encourage; if leading, lead diligently, if showing mercy, do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:8)

This is a guide for PCC members. The first part aims to help you understand the responsibilities you have taken on, and the second part talks about how to enjoy and be effective on PCC.

If you have any unanswered questions, please contact Matt Jermyn in the Diocesan Office on matt.jermyn@coventry.anglican.org.

Part 1: Responsibilities

This part is based on the Charity Commission's six main duties of trustees.

What are PCCs for?

The key purpose of a PCC is defined as to **"co-operate with the minister in promoting the whole mission of the church in the parish (Pastoral, Evangelistic, Social and Ecumenical)"**. They also have a duty to consult together, with the minister, on matters of general concern and importance in the parish.

PCCs have a lot of freedom to decide what 'promoting the whole mission of the church' looks like in their area, but you need to make sure you do not lose sight of this purpose, and the PCC should be able to explain how it is fulfilling it.

What are the rules and what do they say?

PCC members have to obey the law, as well as particular rules which apply to PCCs. PCCs have two 'governing documents', which define what they can or must do and how they should work. They are:

- *The Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956*, which focusses on what PCCs can, should and must do (the purpose above is from this)
- *The Church Representation Rules*, which cover who the members are, elections, and how PCCs should go about their work.

PCCs are legal entities that can own money and enter into contracts in their own name. Each PCC is also an independent charity, whether or not it is a registered charity, and all PCC members are charity trustees.

As part of promoting the whole mission of the church in the parish, PCCs are responsible for caring for church buildings, for the parish's finances and for safeguarding, among other things. While a churchwarden or treasurer might take the lead, the PCC members all share the responsibility.

Is it a big commitment?

Exactly how much work is involved depends on your parish and any particular responsibilities you take on, and will vary depending on what needs doing at the time. You have to use reasonable care and skill while making decisions and carrying them out, and take advice if necessary. Keep an eye on who volunteers to carry out decisions and try to make sure it's not always the same few people.

Can we take risks?

Yes, as long as they are reasonable and well thought through. Try to combine faith and wisdom in decision making, so that you don't take inappropriate risks with the PCC's assets or reputation. PCCs need to be responsible, reasonable and honest with the resources given to them. In particular, there's strong encouragement to take advice if you are talking about decisions such as investing or borrowing money.

Are there any benefits?

You have a duty to act solely in the best interests of the PCC, making informed decisions that balance short and long-term concerns. 'Conflict of Interest' rules apply if you, someone close to you, or an organisation you are loyal to could benefit from a PCC decision. Sometimes you may have to step out of a particular decision, if you could have or be seen to have a conflict of interest.

Do we have to talk about PCC to anyone else?

Yes! PCCs serve their churches and the church has a right to know what they do. People on the electoral roll can see PCC minutes (apart from anything the PCC considers confidential), and working on communicating decisions and issues well is important. Keeping the details of 'who said what' confidential is good practice however, so that members can speak freely about sensitive business.

Part 2: How to enjoy being on PCC

PCC meetings should be productive and worthwhile and you should expect to leave feeling glad you were there. A happy PCC will also be much more effective, and it is worth thinking about how this can be achieved.

Good relationships are vital

Trust is essential for any group to work together. PCC members need to trust that they will be listened to and taken seriously; that the meeting will be honest; and that nothing said in the meeting will be repeated. Getting to know one another better helps hugely. Not only will it mean you understand each other better, it will also make meetings more enjoyable.

Key points:

- *Take opportunities to get to know other PCC members better, such as drinking coffee before meetings or by organising social events.*
- *Practice good listening, especially when you disagree; be supportive, encouraging and respectful.*
- *Consider agreeing a confidentiality policy. For people to be honest and speak freely, it's important that they know nothing will be repeated inappropriately.*
- *Try to respond well even if you don't feel you've been treated well.*

Meetings are for business

PCCs meet to talk about business, not just to enjoy each other's company. You should aim to make the best decisions possible and spend time on what's important. Differences of opinion can be very positive, as they can lead to better understanding of the issues and better solutions.

Key points:

- *Prepare well. If papers are sent out before meetings, read them. It will save time on the day if you have thought questions through in advance.*
- *Use time well in the meetings. Part of the Chair's job is to plan the timing of meetings to make sure important topics get enough time; if there's something you want to discuss, be aware it may need to wait.*
- *Avoid side conversations. They are surprisingly distracting!*

See it as a position of Christian leadership

While most PCC members aren't ordained, it is a position of responsibility and authority in church. It might be helpful to think over what the bible teaches on handling authority and relationships.

Key point: *Prayer is an important part of Christian decision-making. Think about the place of prayer, both in meetings and in your preparation for them.*

Work at disagreeing well

Many people find disagreement hard, and will avoid it. Other people are far more comfortable being confrontational. Because of this, even minor disagreements in PCC meetings can feel like very hard work. On the other hand, if everyone always agreed, there would be little point in meeting. So how should PCCs handle disagreement?

Key points:

- *Be open and honest (and respectful!) when you disagree. If you're thinking something, other people may be as well.*
- *Be careful not to over-commit to your viewpoint. When we argue for something we invest in it emotionally, and sometimes need to take a step back to regain perspective. No one is always right.*
- *Accept decisions when they are made and don't revisit old disagreements before the time the PCC has agreed to review them.*
- *Consider agreeing a policy of 'collective responsibility': when the PCC makes a decision, every member publicly supports it whether or not they agreed in the meeting. This needs to be done in a way which respects members' integrity and can be hard when you are the one who disagreed, but it is a powerful tool for the unity of the PCC.*

Celebrate

Celebrate and be thankful when people do a good job or things go well.

Key point: *Encouraging each other and celebrating success is simple, but can make an enormous difference. Being a PCC member means you can play a significant part in the life of your church. Well done for taking it on!*