

New diocesan website coming soon!

Q: IT is difficult for parishes to find what we need on our diocesan website. Can it be revamped?

A: A revamp of our diocesan website is being planned now, and the new version should be live within the next few months.

Our current website was originally created back in 2004 and given a new look in 2009. We were already aware of a number of deficiencies with it before the subject was brought up at last year's Archdeaconry consultations.

Among them was the obvious one: it doesn't display well on mobiles and tablets. By next year, 87 per cent of all website views will be via those devices. So it makes sense for it to be 'responsive' – in other words, to automatically re-size to look best on those devices. That's the advice we give our parishes, so we should heed that ourselves!

Secondly, our website currently serves two entirely separate audiences – the casual, non-churchgoing internet user, who might have a query about

frequently asked questions

Our Archdeaconry consultations gave you a chance to ask staff from our four central diocesan sections questions about their work. Those questions were noted down and are the basis of this Pompey Chimes feature – in which we try to answer questions you're asking.

faith, or want to find their nearest church; and the committed churchgoer from our diocese, who is looking for some specific information or document to help parish life run smoothly.

When our website was initially created in 2004, we prioritised the former, using the website as a tool for mission. We included extracts from the Bible, explanations about Jesus's life, stories of individuals' faith and the answers to frequently-asked questions about Christianity.

But over the past 12 years, there has been an increasing demand from parish officers and other churchgoers in our diocese for the vital information they need. The result has been a

website that has sometimes felt cluttered or over-complex.

A related problem is that expectations of what we think we should find and do online have gone through the roof over the past 10-12 years. We would, quite reasonably, now expect to find job application forms, safeguarding policies, significant sermons, details of how to apply for faculties and much more on our website. As we keep adding more information to the site, of course, it makes it harder for us to find what we need.

One of the things we hope to do in future is to cater for these two audiences in two different ways. We want to have a simple, well-designed public website

which gives casual visitors the information they need about faith, local churches and the big picture of what our C of E parishes and church schools do.

We also hope to have a separate site – or a password-protected part of the main website – for clergy, parish officers, staff and volunteers. They'll be able to find the documents they need, sign up for training courses, download liturgies for special services, find resources for Sunday School and perhaps even interact with those from other parishes.

We're working with the web developer Blanc to do this. They are the company behind the national Church of England's Just Pray website, which was intended to be launched via cinema adverts during the trailers for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. They have a proven track record in Christian websites and we're confident that you'll like what they come up with.

Because we all expect to do so much more online these days, we've also signed up for several other digital innovations.

One is a new system to show the progress of faculty applications

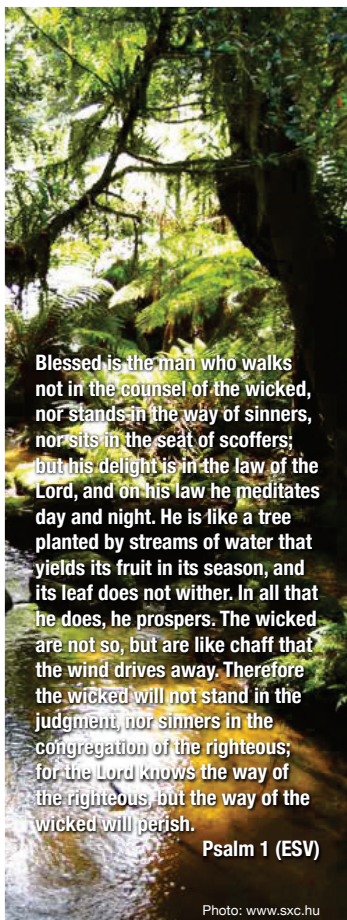
online. The idea is that you can upload your application and all the related documentation to a national Church of England website (<https://facultyonline.churchofengland.org>), and then watch the progress of your application through the system.

This should help you to know what stage your application has reached.

Secondly, there is a new national Church of England database system being developed. It will ultimately replace our online diocesan directory, which you have been accessing via www.parishinfo.org over the past few years.

This system, called the Contact Management System Portal, has already been trialled in other dioceses successfully. We are due to go live with the system in June.

It should mean your parish officers have just one place they go to online to look up contact details of clergy and parish officers, submit parish returns and Statistics for Mission, and even to find out which of their volunteers have been DBS-checked. We will keep you informed of progress.



Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1 (ESV)

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