



## Church Commissioners

### Mission and Pastoral Measure - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

#### What is the Mission and Pastoral Measure?

The Mission and Pastoral Measure (MPM or the Measure) is a regulatory framework which enables the Church to support the provision of local worship, mission and ministry, and to adapt that provision as circumstances change. We talk about three kinds of change:

- Pastoral change – which relates to the administrative geography of worship, mission and ministry,
- Ministry provision change – which relates to the people resource that is needed for local worship, mission and ministry.
- Buildings provision change – which relates to the buildings which are needed to provide a home for local worship, mission and ministry. (The Measure allows churches which are no longer needed for regular public worship to be closed and for them to be sold for a new use).

The current legislation is the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011.

#### How does the MPM work?

Draft proposals for pastoral, ministry or building change are developed by diocesan teams and parishes. The draft is then published in the form of a legal instrument (a scheme or order) for consultation in the relevant area. People can then send written submissions (representations) to the Commissioners on the proposals. If there are no objections, then the relevant change goes ahead, but if there are objections the Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral & Church Property Committee (MPCPC), which is chaired by the Third Church Estates Commissioner, reach a decision on the case. For some matters, there is also a right of appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (which is part of the Supreme Court). The MPCPC is made up of clergy and lay people across the church, from different parts of England, and they are asked to decide if a proposal will further the mission of the church and make provision for the cure of souls<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [Mission, Pastoral & Church Property Committee | The Church of England](#)

## **What is being tabled at General Synod in February and why?**

In 2020, the Archbishops' Council asked the Church Commissioners to review the Measure as part of a wider process of legal reform. The proposals for a new Measure were tabled at Synod in July 2023 and were overwhelmingly approved. The draft legislation is now ready for the first consideration stage. Synod will debate the draft and decide if they want to refer the draft legislation to the Revision Committee for review and amendment. If that happens an amended version of the legislation would eventually return to Synod for the final approval processes after the Revision Committee completed its work.

## **What are the issues the new Measure seeks to address?**

The overwhelming finding of the Commissioners review into the 2011 Measure was that **how** the process of change happens is as important, or perhaps more important, than **what** is being changed. There were four main concerns:

- A lack of trust in the MPM processes;
- An inequality in the process because diocesan teams had a better knowledge of the MPM systems than the parishes (i.e. giving them an advantage in the process)
- A lack of agency for the parishes in terms of decision making.
- A consensus that the system needed to be much more pastorally focussed and move more quickly, as prolonged uncertainty was not helpful for local church communities and all those involved.

The new Measure puts a pastoral approach at the centre of the processes and promotes a consensual approach and good disagreement where consensus is difficult to achieve.

## **How has the Measure addressed those concerns?**

The Commissioners have addressed those concerns by making changes to governance and processes, which are fully set out in GS2394P:

- The MPM governance would be strengthened nationally through the development of new statutory guidance and a Learning, outcome, risk and evaluation framework. The diocesan teams would be asked to produce **Mission & Pastoral Collaboration Frameworks** which would set out their policy approach to the delivery of MPM processes. These frameworks would significantly increase transparency and trust.
- The new Measure gives much greater agency to the parishes (clergy and PCCs) by making it explicit that parishes can request change from the relevant diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (MPC) and the MPC would either publish the relevant legal instrument for consultation or provide a refusal and reasons in writing.
- The new Measure also allows certain changes to happen through the simpler/shorter order process where the initiative comes from the parish, rather than the longer, more complex, scheme process. This could include changes to parish boundaries for example, or the closure of a church building. (The guidance would require conversations with local communities about the change before the request was sent to the MPC).

- In future, there would be one formal stage of consultation (rather than two as it is now) in advance of the publication of proposals. There would be informal conversations ahead of the formal consultation, and the guidance would set out what is required for those conversations. This change has been made in response to feedback from parishes where people did not like being consulted more than once on the same proposals.

### **Does the new Measure address the ‘fallow’ concept for church buildings?**

Yes. It is important to note that the ‘fallow’ concept is not a status – i.e. a church is fallow – but rather it is about providing legal tools and options to help church communities keep their buildings open and re-stabilise when there are local issues on the ground, e.g. with a lack of PCC officers or volunteers.

The new Measure includes:

- The ability for PCCs to transfer their maintenance responsibility for the church building to an authorised third party (which is defined) for up to 5 years under Bishop’s Directions. This could be useful when it’s proving difficult to find enough volunteers to fill PCC roles.
- The ability for diocesan teams to establish new charitable church trusts to help look after church buildings either during the period when a new use needs to be found for them, or permanently (for example for highly listed buildings). They would remain in the CoE legal structures and could be returned easily to worship use if needed again.
- More generally, the new Measure would help church communities to find a home more quickly for highly listed church buildings when they are closed by allowing vesting by order into the CCT and other preservation trusts, including any diocesan trusts.

If you have any queries about these FAQs please email [mpm2011review@churchofengland.org](mailto:mpm2011review@churchofengland.org).

**Mission & Pastoral Services**  
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