

What if a single parish wants to join a Larger Single Parish (LSP)?

Almost all PCC's have now voted about whether to work through Fit for Mission to be part of a Larger Single Parish. At the time of their vote each PCC made their decision in the best interests of their church and community according to their current circumstances and the information and understanding at that specific time.

Some of the churches which chose not to be part of a LSP at that time are now asking "what if we change our mind, or if our circumstances change?" For example:

- clergy vacancy
- significant changes to PCC membership
- Deanery conversations/situations move on

Whether it is possible to join a Larger Single Parish (LSP) and how to go about it will depend on various factors. This paper intends to provide guidance on what to do if your PCC is now considering the benefits of being in a LSP.

Ideally a church will be part of the LSP from the beginning and will actively help shape the LSP from the early days. However, change is constant, and LSPs will adapt to opportunities and the changing needs of their communities.

We are confident that the collaborative nature and lighter governance structure of LSPs benefit all churches, placing them in a stronger more sustainable place... to be *Fit for Mission*.

PCC process for joining during acting "as if"

There isn't a standard procedure for churches to join into a currently forming larger single parish. Whether this is possible and what needs to happen will depend on factors such as timing, the geographical feasibility, and ability to integrate into clergy leadership, change teams, and subcommittees. As a general rule if both the church PCC and the LSP decide the new church should join then it will be possible, and the practicalities will be worked out together with the support of the Fit for Mission team.

The intention of this process is to facilitate the exploration that will enable the defining of the steps needed for a church to join a larger single parish during the acting as if period of Fit for Mission.

Stage 1: Initial sharing of desire to explore joining a LSP

Set the discussion as an item on a PCC agenda and allow time for an exploratory conversation. As you discuss the possibility it would be helpful to capture the rationale, with these suggested questions to aid your exploration:

- What do we hope for in joining the larger single parish?
- What are our concerns/worries about joining the larger single parish?
- What has changed for us since we voted?
- What else have we discovered about Fit for Mission since we voted?

After the discussion you need to decide what to do next. Possible outcomes are:

- Invite someone to meet the PCC to discuss specific concerns that you want to address before moving forward. [Contact Fit for Mission team for help finding the person you need.]

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- Or move to stage 2 by inviting the Change Lead and Change Facilitator for the larger single parish for a discussion with your PCC or PCC representatives.
- Or agree not to pursue the possibilities of joining a larger single parish

Stage 2: Conversation with Change Lead and Change Facilitator

The Change Lead and Change Facilitator will discuss with the PCC or PCC representatives the rationale for joining the larger single parish. This is an opportunity for clarification of concerns and where the larger single parish is up to in the change process.

Stage 3: PCC vote of intention to join

The PCC is now in a position to vote on an intention to join the larger single parish. We recommend that you use the same voting mechanism as the initial vote with the A, B, C, D options. This means if you voted A-C with (intention to join an LSP) you will have clarity on your concerns and the Navigation Team can ensure these are addressed.

Stage 4: Actions and timings agreed with Navigation Team

Representative(s) from the PCC meet with the Navigation Team to work through the possibility of the church joining the PCC. This is not guaranteed and will depend on many factors including timing, geographical feasibility, and ability to integrate into clergy leadership, change teams, and subcommittees.

Actions required and the timing will vary and support will be provided to discern the path forwards. The Bishop's Planning Officer (BPO) team will advise on the pastoral reorganisation options, but the main focus is on building relationships and the practical readiness such as accounting system support.

A plan of actions for next steps will come from this meeting.

PCC process for joining an existing LSP

As a general rule if there is mutual agreement by the church PCC and the LSP's PCC then it should be possible. The intention of this process is to facilitate the exploration and identifying the steps needed.

Stage 1: Initial sharing of desire to explore joining a LSP

Set the discussion as an item on a PCC agenda and allow time for an exploratory conversation. As you discuss the possibility it would be helpful to capture the rationale with these suggested questions to aid your exploration:

- What do we hope for in joining the larger single parish?
- What are our concerns/worries about joining the larger single parish?
- What has changed for us since we voted?
- What else have we discovered about Fit for Mission since we voted?

After the discussion you need to decide what to do next. Likely outcomes are:

- Decide you want to explore the possibility of joining an LSP and contact your Archdeacon to discuss next steps
- Agree not to pursue the possibilities for joining a larger single parish

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Stage 2: Exploration

The Archdeacon will discuss with the PCC or PCC representatives your rationale for joining a larger single parish. This is an opportunity for clarification and to discuss any concerns and expectations. You will then agree with the Archdeacon further exploration necessary to find out more about remaining concerns.

Stage 3: LSP discussion

The Archdeacon will arrange for informal meetings with the LSP(s) that are potentially feasible for you to join.

Stage 4: Church PCC vote of intention to join

The PCC is now in a position to vote on an intention to join the larger single parish. We recommend that you use the same voting mechanism as the initial vote with the A, B, C, D options. This means if you voted A-C with (intention to join an LSP) you will have clarity on your concerns and the Navigation Team can ensure these are addressed. Please inform your Archdeacon of the result of this vote.

Stage 5: LSP's PCC vote on intention to welcome a new church

The PCC of the LSP should discuss the pros and cons of the request of a new church to join the LSP. Detailed actions required will be identified, but this decision will be the trigger for the BPO process. Please inform your Archdeacon of the result of this vote.

Stage 6: BPO process, practical alignment, and relationships

Following the decisions of both PCCs, under the guidance of the Archdeacon, the BPOs will draft a Pastoral Reorganisation process which will outline the formal actions required. The relational and practical actions required will be primarily led and supported by the LSP Support Services Manager and the Team Rector. Note: If the decision is made during the period of Fit for Mission funding (until approximately Dec 2027) then specialist support will be available to support the PCC and Officers to integrate into the LSP.
