

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND COVENANT  
FOR THE CARE AND WELL-BEING OF CLERGY

A DOCUMENT FOR  
REFLECTION  
AND ACTION  
FOR THE CLERGY

Approved by General Synod February 2019



# Introduction

You may have heard that the General Synod of the Church of England voted overwhelmingly in 2019 to support a new way of improving the approach to the care and well-being of clergy across the Church. *The Covenant for Clergy Care and Well-Being* invites parishes, dioceses and the wider church, as well as individual clergy, to share responsibility for the welfare of ordained ministers and their households.

On behalf of the whole Synod – bishops, clergy and laity expressing a common mind – we now invite you to join us in that conversation. What we are seeking to do is to create greater awareness of issues of clergy care and wellbeing across the whole church. We believe that, when we care for and are accountable to one another, when the clergy take some time to reflect on their own situation and needs, and when clergy are able to enter openly into dialogue with both the local and wider church about their well-being, this is a blessing for the whole church, and not just to the clergy themselves. Those of us who are clergy are no more important than any other part of the People of God, but all the evidence shows that when clergy are healthy and well-supported, they are able to focus on others as they address their own needs with realism and resilience. The whole church is thus blessed and enriched.

You can read the simple text of the *Covenant* below, alongside a set of guiding principles. Following each of those are some questions you may wish to take some time to reflect upon alone, and then (if you wish) use them to discuss your own care and wellbeing with those in your local setting and/or with those in the wider church you think it might be helpful were included too. A separate set of questions for

consideration by the local church and by the bishops and wider church has also been prepared.

Through this work, we hope clergy may find more sources of support, encouragement, challenge and love.

Thank you for your ministry in our Church.

+Justin Cantuar:

+ Sentamu Eboracensis

Reverend Canon Simon Butler, Prolocutor of the Province  
of Canterbury

Reverend Canon Chris Newlands, Prolocutor of the Province of York

Canon Dr Jamie Harrison, Chair of the House of Laity

Canon Elizabeth Paver, Vice-Chair of the House of Laity

# The Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing



The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scripture and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in every generation

In its formularies, the Church of England recognises that God calls some to serve as deacons, priests and bishops to build up and equip the whole People of God.

Conscious that such a calling is both a privilege and a demand, we commit together to promote the welfare of our clergy and their households.

We undertake to work together to coordinate and improve our approach to clergy care and wellbeing so that the whole Church may flourish in the service of the mission of God.



## Our Shared Commitments and Questions for Reflection and Action

Not all the questions below will be directly relevant, such is the variety of life in ordained ministry within the Church of England. Use them or ignore them as you see fit, but we encourage you to take them seriously and to adapt them to what is appropriate for your own ministry context. It is up to you what action you take as a result of these conversations. We encourage you to share with others what you discover but stress to everyone involved that the focus should be on allowing you as the minister to share with whom you choose and to the extent you feel at ease.

Some of us may initially find the thought of sharing with our local church (and possibly our wider church context) very challenging. The questions to the local church emphasise the requirement not to be intrusive. We are all fellow-disciples, working to support one another in our diverse vocations. Choose people you trust, and trust those you choose.



# Reflecting on Our Baptismal and Ministerial Calling



Scriptural Insights: Matthew 28:1-20; John 10:1-18;  
John 21:15-19; 2 Timothy 4:1-5



Ordained ministry is relational, collegial, professional and accountable to others. Ordained ministers are called to discern and foster the gifts of all God's people and to be willing to work with and respect others. Disciple and teacher, the ordained minister follows Christ in prayer, reflection and study, growing in faith and resilience. Learning and teaching are part of shared discipleship, empowering and encouraging the people of God.

*To do this faithfully, we believe that each minister is well-advised to:*

- Attend to their own care and well-being and to set aside time for rest, recreation, retreat and study for their own and others' flourishing and growth.
- Hold regular conversations about baptismal and ministerial vocation with others.
- Understand how their conduct of ministry is perceived and experienced within and beyond the church.

## Some Questions You Might Like to Ponder...

- How do you cultivate Christ-like habits?
- To what extent are you actively and enthusiastically engaged in ministry? Is there anything you should you stop doing?
- How many conversations about vocation have you had with others in the past year?
- What resources are offered to you by your diocese to promote care and well-being?
- Are you 'hard to reach' in terms of offering care and promoting well-being? Or are senior clergy and wellbeing services 'hard to access' in your diocese?

# Reflecting on Looking after Yourself and Others



Scriptural Insights: Galatians 6:1-10; Hebrews 13:17; 1  
Thessalonians 5:12-13



The ordained minister provides and receives guidance and pastoral care. Given the strong association between physical and psychological health and well-being, the ordained minister attends to their own health and fitness to promote resilience, thus linking care and self-care.

*To do this faithfully, we believe that each minister is well-advised to:*

- Good stewardship of their own health and well-being in support of their call
- Engage with others in regular reflection to develop insight, wisdom and relational skills in support of their ministry of pastoral care.
- Establish and observe appropriate personal and professional boundaries in pastoral care and safeguarding.
- Grow in awareness of the limits of their pastoral ability, their vulnerability and the need for them to signpost those in their care to others, monitoring their own needs and health during periods when they are providing demanding levels of care to others.

## Some Questions You Might Like to Ponder...

- With whom do you regularly reflect on the practice of your ministry?
- How can you develop your skills in reflective practice?
- To what extent are you enjoying good physical and mental health?
- What boundaries of time, space, skill and competency, both physical and psychological, do you aspire to? How are you doing?
- What are the warning signs of stress and burnout for you? What signs of resilience do you recognise in yourself? How can you build on your qualities?
- Do you know where to go to find help, whether for diagnostic stress tests or other self-help tools, or support from within or beyond your diocese?

# Reflecting on Being a Public Figure



Scriptural Insights: Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 4:11-16; Acts 6:1-7



Ordained ministers are public servants of Christ called to represent the Gospel to all in their cure. By the nature of their calling, they are always in the public eye, as to some extent, are members of the minister's household.

*To do this faithfully, we believe that each minister is well-advised to:*

- Understand the character, shape and boundaries of this public service in conversation with the local and wider church.
- Be aware of the way in which their own life and history affect their conduct
- To participate in the wider life of the church, in respecting the office of lay leaders, and in exercising care in all forms of communication, including social media.

## Some Questions You Might Like to Ponder...

- How much of your ministry is spent with those within and those not yet in the church? What do you think about a balance of 50/50?
- What opportunities do you have to enter public debate?
- How does your personality type, particularly whether you see yourself as extroverted or introverted, affect your ability to carry out the public nature of your role?
- Do you feel you are making the best use of the skills of the congregation and community to help you?
- Where are you vulnerable as a public figure – are you able to manage this in a creative way?
- How are you perceived by others to respond to feedback and complaints?

# Reflecting on You and Your Household



Scriptural Insights: Titus 1:5-9; 2  
Timothy 1:3-7; Romans 12:9-13



The support and encouragement of those who share their private lives with ordained ministers is a significant contribution to their care and well-being, given the public nature of elements of their work. It is therefore part of the responsibility of the whole church to provide for the minister's household.

*To do this faithfully, we believe that each minister is well-advised to:*

- Ensure their own approach to ministerial work takes into consideration the needs of those with whom they share their lives
- Work with the local church to ensure that boundaries in relation to their household are respected, and, where necessary, enforced.

## Some Questions You Might Like to Ponder...

- What are the pressure points, if any, for your intimate, family relationships and your wider ministry? How are these addressed or mitigated?
- Can you have an appropriate conversation with your local church about the boundaries between your wider ministry and your household's needs? If not, is there someone who could help you?

# Taking It Further...

## Going Deeper

We are inviting each diocese to reflect on how it might best address some of the issues raised at a local level. Feel free to enquire of your senior colleagues about what they are doing. We are also asking the local congregations to undertake a similar exercise. Might it be worth finding a way to have a conversation between some local lay leaders (e.g. the PCC or the Church Wardens) and yourself about the issues this exercise has raised?

You can read the full report – including a very helpful and rich theological essay [here](#). There is also a short bibliography.

The report contained a number of specific recommendations, which you may find interesting to read, especially if you have responsibilities in these areas.

Finally, the General Synod has appointed a small group to *encourage and evaluate* progress in the field of clergy care and wellbeing across the Church of England. That group will be keen to receive feedback and ideas in due course.