



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Covenant for the Care and Well-being of Clergy

A Document for Reflection and Action for Local Congregations

Our Shared Commitments and Questions for Reflection and Action

We are inviting local congregations to give some thought to the care and wellbeing of the clergy who serve you. Not all the questions below will be directly relevant in your context: 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 you and the congregation and community you are part of. It is up to you what action you take as a result of these conversations. We encourage you to undertake this as part of a conversation with your local clergy, while respecting the boundaries that they may wish to put on the exercise. Don't be afraid to show your support and concern, but do so sensitively. We hope you have a useful conversation about how best to care for those who serve your congregation and neighbourhood.

Reflecting on Our Shared Baptismal and Ministerial Calling

Scriptural Insights:

Matthew 28:1-20

John 10:1-18

John 21:15-19

2 Timothy 4:1-5

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. Ordained ministers are disciples and teachers, who follow Christ in prayer, reflection and study, and grow in faith themselves and thus in resilience. Learning and teaching are part of shared discipleship, empowering and encouraging the people of God. Ordained ministry is about relationship, partnership, professionalism and accountability.

To help clergy fulfil this calling, we ask the local church to:

- Support clergy in prayer and action in their calling to serve, and so to help their ministry thrive
- Review its expectations of its clergy in the context of new projects or initiatives and within its own vision and strategy
 - Ensure that the clergy both have and take opportunities for rest, recreation, training, retreat and study
 - Understand how the life of the local church is perceived and experienced by the ordained minister. (Try to imagine what it would feel like if you were in their shoes!)

Some Questions You Might Like to Ponder:

- How do your clergy know you care and are concerned for them? Do you know how this is received?
- When you set local aims and plans (e.g. your Mission/Vision Action Plan), what will you include about the care and well-being of your clergy?
- Do you know when your clergy have their Ministerial Development Review (a regular guided discussion reflecting on their ministry) and what is involved? Is there an opportunity for you to feed into this process or for your ordained ministers to share what has come out of it with you? (This needs to be tactful and not intrusive!)
- How confident are you about talking with your clergy about matters relating to their personal wellbeing? In cases of significant concern, how confident are you about raising such matters with the bishop?



Reflecting on The Way your Clergy Look after Themselves and Others

Scriptural Insights:

Galatians 6:1-10

Hebrews 13:17

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

Ordained ministers are called to offer pastoral care and guidance to others. They are also asked to receive these. There is a strong association between physical and psychological health and wellbeing, which means the ordained minister is asked to give attention to their own health and fitness to promote resilience, so their care for others is as good as it can be.

To help clergy fulfil this calling, we ask the local church to:

- Be active in offering care for the wellbeing and development of the minister
- Do what it can to safeguard the minister's availability for pastoral ministry, especially at times of deepest need (e.g. when they are called on to care for people who are dying or grieving, especially for a child, young person, or suicide). The local church can help at such times by taking on tasks that it doesn't need a minister to do. It also means arranging for help for those with disabilities (when such help is welcomed).
- Express its concern for the health and wellbeing of the minister directly to the minister, and where appropriate, to those with pastoral oversight of the minister (Bishops, Archdeacons, Area/Rural Deans, etc.).

Some Questions You Might Like to Ponder:

- What do you expect of your ordained ministers? How realistic and reasonable are these expectations, and have you discussed them with your ministers?
- How do you encourage your ordained ministers to give the best of themselves in their care of others?
- How can you help ordained ministers to spot or avoid developing unhealthy patterns of work and ministry (e.g. overworking and not taking time off!)
- How do you support the ministry of your ordained minister and or their families/households if disability and/or health problems limit what they are able to do, or at times when extra help might be welcomed?

Ordained Ministers as Public Figures

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.

Recognising this, we ask the local church to:

- Appreciate that the calling of the minister is to both church and community, and to work with the minister to help maintain a healthy balance between the two

- Be aware of the vulnerability that clergy face as public figures and to support them in times of difficulty
- Respect the boundaries that the minister and their family/household need quite rightly to place around their home life, and to ensure that people respect the necessary space associated with the minister being a public figure and, where necessary, help to protect it.

Some Questions You Might Like to Ponder:

- Do you think you have the right balance between the amount of time you expect your ordained ministers to spend with church members and with those who do not yet go to church? Don't forget the importance of their responsibilities in the community and beyond the church.
- Have you talked with your ordained ministers about appropriate boundaries around their time and space, including when they are in their homes?
- Are you aware that your ordained minister(s) can be very vulnerable as people mostly in public view? What might these be in your context (e.g. social media, being constantly watched)?
- If you are preparing and reviewing parish profiles and role descriptions to appoint a new minister, what do you think needs to be included to demonstrate that you are committed to the care and wellbeing of the post holder you're looking for?

The Minister's Household/Family

Scriptural Insights:

Titus 1:5-9

2 Timothy 1:3-7

Romans 12:9-13

Those who share their private lives with ordained ministers give them support and encouragement which makes a real difference to their care and wellbeing, especially as much of their work is very public. It is therefore part of the responsibility of the whole church to provide for the minister's family/household.

Recognising this, we ask the local church to:

- Work with the minister to ensure that people respect the boundaries around the minister's household and family, and, take action to enforce them, where necessary
- Think about the care and wellbeing of a minister's household and family when considering any initiative, project or other aspect of ministerial work

Some Questions You Might Like to Ponder:

- How can you be most helpful in taking part in a conversation with your ordained ministers about any pressure points there might be in relation to their family/household and their wider ministry, and the ways in which you as the local church can support them?
- Where an ordained minister has children who are members of your local church, what steps can you take to protect them from being 'singled out' or judged by different standards to other children?

