

The Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing – A Guide

Introduction

- ❖ There is concern about the pressures on clergy.
- ❖ Ensuring that clergy are supported and cared for, enables the ministry of the whole church and the care of others.
- ❖ The nature of Christian pastoral care is ‘encouragement’ rather than ‘demand.’
- ❖ The Covenant aims to encourage conversation and learning in order to gain and offer trust afresh. Ministerial effectiveness depends upon healthy relationships; without trust, such relationships cannot thrive.

Five goals:

1. **Prevention** (better than cure)
2. **Mutual responsibility** (Church as a caring community and partnership between laity, clergy, local Church, diocese and national church)
3. **Co-ordinated response** (from beginnings – active ministry - retirement)
4. **Culture change** (affecting and transforming the whole)
5. **Achievable** (practical, pragmatic, useful)

Four Shared Commitments (*with examples; see the full text for more*)

1. **Baptismal & Ministerial Vocation**

The minister commits • to set aside time for rest, recreation, retreat, training and study for their own and others’ flourishing and growth.

The local church commits • to ensure that the ordained minister has, and takes, opportunities for rest, recreation, training, retreat and study.

The wider church commits • to provide opportunities that will enable and encourage others apart from the ordained minister to work in partnership with them.

2. The Call to Care and Self-Care

The minister commits: • to engage with others in regular reflection to develop insight, wisdom and relational skills in support of their ministry of pastoral care;

The local church commits: • to do what it can to safeguard the minister's availability for pastoral ministry, especially at times of deepest need, by relieving them of tasks that can be undertaken by others.

The wider church, commits • to equip the minister for the ministry of care and to providing opportunities to reflect upon their practice of pastoral care.

3. The Minister as Public Figure

The minister commits: • to participate in the wider life of the church, respect the office of lay leaders, and exercise care in all forms of communication, inc social media.

The local church commits: • to recognise that the calling of the minister is to both church and community, and to work with the minister in a mutually accountable way.

The wider church commits: • to support ministers in their public service through clear role descriptions, parish education, appropriate CMD, MDR, and wise counsel.

4. The Minister's Household

The minister commits: • to ensure that their approach to ministry gives due regard to the needs of those with whom they share their lives as part of their vocation.

The local church commits: • to work with the minister to ensure that boundaries in relation to the minister's household are respected and, where necessary, enforced.

The wider church commits • to ensure that the arrangements for the provision and the standard of maintenance of any property for a minister and their household are regularly monitored and, where necessary, improved.

Big Conversation on Clergy Care & Wellbeing

Conversation is invited on issues of clergy care & wellbeing for laity, clergy and Bishop's senior team/wider church, within the three groups and between all three.

3 booklets have been published with questions to assist this - details

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/national-clergy-hr/supporting-clergy-health-and-wellbeing/covenant>

The diocese of Norwich clergy wellbeing group has adapted these and suggest the following questions:

Laity to laity conversation

1. How do our clergy know we care for them ?
2. What do we appreciate about our clergy? What leaves us puzzled ?
3. What is the shape of their day and week ?
4. What are the particular demands they experience ?
...and what do they find rewarding ?
5. What 'boundaries' do clergy need to help them work and rest ?
6. How can we support these ?
7. Do they take time for rest and renewal ?
e.g. Day off each week (and 2 days off together once a month) ?
Holiday ? Retreat/Study/Learning ? How can we help these to happen?
8. What support might their partner/family need from us ?
9. If we were preparing a parish profile, what do we need to include to show we're committed to the wellbeing of our clergy?

Laity to clergy

1. What is the shape of your day and week?
2. What are you finding rewarding/life-giving at the moment ?
3. What are you finding challenging?
4. What would you like to do more of ?
5. What expectations are you experiencing – from us – from others ?
6. What tasks could others do, that would free up your time ?
7. How does your ministry impact on those closest to you ?
8. What could we do to help ?
9. How can we help you take the time you need for rest and renewal ?

Clergy to clergy

1. What is the shape of your day and week ?
2. What are you finding rewarding/life-giving at the moment ?
3. What are you finding challenging?
4. What would you like to do more of ?
5. What expectations are you experiencing from others ?
6. How does your ministry impact on those closest to you ?
7. How do you take the time you need for rest – friends + family – renewal ?
8. What do you need for greater wellbeing from
9. The local church ? Wider church ? Community ? ...from yourself ?

Specific Recommendations

1. **Establish** a culture where pastoral supervision & reflective practice is the norm.
2. **Training in IME 1 and 2** needs to prepare clergy for 21st century ministerial life – embed ‘holy habits’; work collaboratively; develop receptivity to feedback.
3. **Appointment and Licensing Services**
Ensure clarity and realism in Parish Profiles and Role Descriptions and using these for on-going review (including in MDR).
Licensing and induction services to include commitment of Bishop and people towards clergy wellbeing.
4. **Ministerial Development Review (MDR)**
 - make the most of its potential to deepen and embed clergy wellbeing.
 - effective signposting and follow-up so that the minister has been heard.Ensure opportunities for ministers to attend to their own care and wellbeing.
5. **Sharing good practice & consistency** across dioceses and nationally.
6. **PCCs and Deanery Synods consider and adopt** the Covenant *and* to engage in the Big Conversation.
7. **Diocesan Bishop sponsors a clergy study day on care and wellbeing.**
8. **In 3 years’ time** each diocese, to report to a new Clergy Care and Wellbeing Facilitation Group on developments and learning.

The Covenant for clergy care and wellbeing was made an Act of Synod at the February 2020 meeting of General Synod. The text is as follows:

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.

The full text here <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/GS%202133%20A%20Covenant%20for%20Clergy%20Care%20and%20Wellbeing.pdf>

The clergy wellbeing group in the Diocese of Norwich are:

The Bishop of Thetford, Revd. Canon Keith James, Revd. Tracy Jessop, Revd. Patrick Richmond, Ms. Jane Keeton, Mrs. Ruth Thorp, Revd. Canon Julie Boyd, Revd. Colin Reed, Revd. Carol Pritchard.