

**ST ALBANS DIOCESAN SYNOD**

**13 MARCH 2021**

**DIOCESAN RESPONSE TO**  
**'A COVENANT FOR CLERGY CARE AND WELLBEING'**

**1) Introduction**

**Background**

At its October meeting, Diocesan Synod instructed the Board for Mission and Ministry to consider what further steps might be taken to promote clergy wellbeing and to report back to Synod in March 2021 on how 'A Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing' can be adopted and implemented.

**Overview**

The General Synod paper 2133 'A Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing' is a corporate and mutual commitment to promote the welfare of our clergy and their households. This involves undertaking, nationally, and within dioceses, parishes and sectors, 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.

**Purpose of this Paper**

This paper is a response to 'A Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing' which emphasises the need for a change of culture in the whole church if we are to influence wellbeing positively. The paper highlights our current approaches to promote the care and wellbeing of all ministers, lay and ordained, and identifies areas for development in response to the specific recommendations contained within the 'Covenant'. The proposals of this paper are intended to build on all that has been developed within this aspect of diocesan life over many years. The aim is to encourage participation in the excellent resources already offered and to develop provision, not to start afresh, and so influence the necessary change of culture that the Covenant has highlighted. It is also intended that this paper further enhances the shared responsibility for the care and wellbeing of ministers between diocese, parishes and ministers.

**2) What is Already in Place within our Diocese to Promote the Care and Wellbeing of Clergy?**

**Wellbeing Group/Forum**

A group, drawn together by Tim Bull as Director of Ministry has been working well together for more than 18 months in the area of wellbeing. The group has been made up by Clergy Counselling representative Suzanne Clackson, Support in Ministry rep Chris Swain, Lay Ministry rep Christian Cole (Youth Mission Enabler), Archdeacon Dave Middlebrook, Richard Allen (NHS rep and has since stood down), Guy Edwards (Rector of Bushey), and Kate Peacock (Dean of Women's Ministry). The focus has been all areas of public ministry, lay and ordained. An outcome of this group is the high-quality booklet 'Flourishing in Ministry' produced in the summer of 2020 and sent out to all Clergy, Readers, Youth Ministers and Children's Ministers (<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/ministry/ministry-flourishing/>).

**Current Diocesan Approaches to the Care and Wellbeing of Ministers and their Households**

There are a variety of approaches already in place to support the wellbeing and care of ministers. What follows is not exhaustive but identifies key areas of work and personnel:

Areas of work with a focus on wellbeing:

- Continuing Ministry Development (CMD)
- CMD Grants
- Initial Ministerial Education Phase 2 (IME 2) Officer
- Lay Ministry Development
- Vocations
- Mission and Ministry Development Review (MMDR)
- Support in your Ministry (SIM)
- Minority Ethnic Awareness
- Unconscious Bias Training
- Women's Ministry
- Self Supporting Ministry Development
- Retired Clergy Support
- Clergy Widows and Widowers Support
- Clergy Counselling
- Deanery Chapters
- Disability Matters
- Stipends and Housing
- Mental Health Awareness
- Career Counselling
- Dispute Advisory Service
- Coaching
- Spiritual Direction
- Extended Study Leave
- St Luke's Healthcare (not diocesan but nevertheless a key resource)

The above provision is supported by the following staff / advisors:

- Bishops
- Archdeacons
- Diocesan Secretary
- Director of Mission and Ministry
- Deputy Director of Mission and Ministry
- Director of Vocations
- Bishop's Advisor for Ethnic Minority Ministry
- Dean of Women's Ministry
- IME 2 Officer
- Lay Development Officer
- Deanery Reader Advisors
- Warden of Readers
- Self Supporting Ministry Advisors
- Retired Clergy Advisors
- Clergy Widows / Widowers Advisors
- Support in your Ministry Advisors
- Clergy Counselling Service
- Dispute Advisory Management Group
- Disability Matters Group (Chair: the Archdeacon of Hertford)
- Mental Health Awareness Group
- Diocesan Finance Team
- Diocesan Estates Team
- Diocesan Safeguarding Team

In addition, provision is offered by volunteers in a range of support roles sometimes ongoing, sometimes one-off and temporary. This includes: roles with new ministers (reviewers and formation group conveners) and colleague support – mentoring, coaching etc. These areas of work are resourced and held to account by:

Guidelines for the professional conduct of the clergy  
Dignity at Work  
Access to Work (govt website)  
Statements of Particulars  
Statements of Arrangements  
Learning and Training Agreements  
Diocesan policies <https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/policies/>

### **3) Addressing Specific Recommendations of the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing (GS2133 page 24 onwards)**

The information above illustrates the range of ways this diocese seeks to support the wellbeing of all public ministers. Reflection on and development of that provision for all must remain an ongoing task. The General Synod paper 'A Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing' asks us to respond to some specific recommendations within our provision, as outlined below.

#### **a) Pastoral Supervision & Reflective Practice.**

The text of the 'Covenant' discusses the value of effective and habitual reflective practice in supporting wellbeing, and makes the following proposal:

36. 'We therefore would like to propose to the Church of England that we take the first steps towards establishing a culture where some form of non- managerial pastoral supervision becomes accepted practice rather than an exception.'

In light of the above we propose that we address this in the following ways:

#### **Reflective Practice**

We note that clergy have a range of practices and opportunities for ongoing supervision and reflective practice, including (but not exclusively): Spiritual Direction or equivalent, SIM, work coaching, mentoring, cell group or similar. These, and additional resources such as the Clergy Counselling Service, also provide extra or emergency support.

The emphasis of the 'Covenant' is on prevention and habits that support wellbeing.

#### **Proposal:**

**That diocesan senior staff and officers ask all clergy and ministers who fulfil a supervisory role to regularly encourage clergy / ministers to be engaged with a method of regular and habitual reflection.**

**That a question be added to all MMDRs – which asks: 'what is your method of pastoral and professional reflection?' 'How do you know that it is effective?' 'Do you need/want help to find a new opportunity for pastoral supervision or reflection?' 'Is there an intervention you would benefit from now?' 'Do you know where to go to for supervision/reflection in an urgent or unusual situation?'**

**That regular opportunities for theological reflection be provided through the Continuing Ministry Development programme.**

**b) Resources Running in Parallel to Pastoral Supervision and Reflective Practice**

Because of difficulties that are inevitably encountered through parish ministry, there will be times when resources running parallel to pastoral supervision and reflective practice will be required. This most notably involves conflict and the resolution of disputes.

**Conflict Management**

Pastoral supervision and reflective practice will undoubtedly feature situations of conflict. Things don't always go well in parish ministry and conflict is a normal and yet immensely difficult part of ministry. Our diocesan vision for flourishing churches and the corresponding priorities drawn up in local Mission Action Planning increase the need for change. This in turn can create issues of conflict within PCCs, congregations and local communities. This conflict can be deeply challenging for ministers and can adversely affect wellbeing. Increasingly the need to adapt and change will mean that issues such as finance and sustainability will need to be grappled with. The provision of training in conflict management will continue to be a crucial aspect of our Continuing Ministerial Development resources.

**Proposal - that the Director and Deputy Director of Mission and Ministry enhance the provision of training in conflict management and the management of change.**

**Dispute Advisory Service**

An offshoot of conflict management is the need to provide support to help resolve disputes. Experienced practitioners in the field of care and wellbeing have recently formed this valuable service. The aim is to provide a safe place to bring conflicts and problems that occur in a church / parish setting. It offers an accessible, voluntary and confidential process that helps to resolve disputes in a broad range of situations and at all levels in the church community. It is supported by the Diocese but is independent to it.

**Proposal - that this service be promoted through all our various approaches to wellbeing and care in order to maximise impact, and that senior staff consider the role it can take in the Clergy Discipline Measure.**

**c) IME 1&2: Expectations and Formation in Wellbeing**

The 'Covenant' states that one of the best contributions to preventative care for clergy is to ensure that training prepares both ordinands and the newly ordained for the life of a 21st century minister. Therefore, it recommends that work be done in IME 2 to facilitate the exploration of the nature of expectation – of self, church and God, promote a healthy lifestyle based on holy habits, encourage collaborative working and openness to feedback. The programme and content of IME 2 has developed substantially in recent years in order to ensure that we prepare the newly ordained / licensed to thrive in ministry. However, as we emerge into a new and challenging context for ministry post lockdown/pandemic it will be useful to review how we build preventative care into training and learning opportunities.

**Proposal - that the IME 2 Officer reviews the way that expectations, holy habits and collaborative working are addressed in training contexts, with Training Incumbents and through the IME 2 programme.**

**d) Appointments to Posts, Licensing Services and Role Descriptions**

The 'Covenant' makes it clear that 'Parish Profiles and Role/Job Descriptions often reveal an over-challenging set of expectations, ranging from large numbers of churches to serve, unrealistic and

competing sets of tasks, and the absence in them of any evidence of commitment to clergy care and wellbeing.’ The covenant recommends that simple steps be taken to address this:

- Sufficient clarity and realism in the content and scope of Parish Profiles and Role/Job Descriptions.
- Ongoing reviews of Parish Profiles and Role/Job Descriptions through clergy Mission and Ministry Development Reviews
- Care and wellbeing of the clergy should be acknowledged in the context of Licensing and Induction Services.

**Proposal - that these recommendations be considered and addressed in the MMDR process, parish profiles and role descriptions, licensing services, and the training of Church Wardens - by the Director and Deputy Director of Mission and Ministry and Archdeacons and Rural Deans.**

### **Boundaries and Expectations**

The wellbeing of ministers is directly impacted by the environment within which they serve. So, in addition to addressing appointments, profiles and role descriptions, it is important that we continue to give attention to the boundaries and expectations within which ministers operate. Much of the covenant draws heavily on the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy (found [here](#)) and in particular the need to provide safe and effective boundaries for clerical ministry and to manage expectations of clergy and those of others about the clergy. These issues are covered well in Liz Graveling’s book ‘How Clergy Thrive’.

**Proposal - that the ‘How Clergy Thrive’ book be made available to all clergy and those newly appointed to the diocese and that its implications be woven into the work of all the approaches listed in Section 2.**

### **e) Mission and Ministry Development Reviews**

The ‘Covenant’ asks dioceses to ensure that within the MMDR process clergy are enabled to reflect on their own care and wellbeing.

#### **Proposal:**

**That the Director of Mission and Ministry ensures that all clergy are given the opportunity to reflect effectively on their own care and wellbeing within MMDR.**

**That all clergy, whether employed or on Common Tenure, be included in MMDRs.**

## **4) Summary**

There is a substantial amount of high-quality provision already in place to contribute to the care and wellbeing of ministers within our diocese - something we can be thankful for. The Covenant helpfully calls us to reaffirm our corporate and mutual commitment to promote the welfare of our clergy and their households. We seek to do so by continuing our current provision and building on it through the specific proposals identified in this paper concerning reflective practice; conflict management; The Dispute Advisory Service; Initial Ministerial Education Phase 2 expectations; appointments, licensing services and role descriptions; boundaries; and Mission and Ministry Development Reviews. We also acknowledge that whilst it is important to address the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing, this is set within the broader context of the care and wellbeing of all public ministers and officer holders within our churches.

**5) Proposed Next Steps**

**That the Wellbeing Group be put on a formal footing within diocesan structures with a clear constitution and remit.**

Even though there is much in place already, the proposals contained within this paper highlight how there is much also to be done to promote the care and wellbeing of ministers. Therefore the Board proposes that a Wellbeing Committee be established to oversee and pull together the strands of this work of addressing the identified areas of 'A Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing' and also to make these developments for all public ministers lay or ordained.

This committee will operate under the governance of the Board for Mission and Ministry and will include members with suitable skills and experience appointed by Bishop's Council.

That the initial focus of the committee be to oversee and pull together the strands of work identified in the proposals above, bearing in mind any amendments and additions made by Diocesan Synod.

The new Wellbeing Committee should report progress to each meeting of the Board for Mission and Ministry.

**Discussion in Groups**

**In the light of the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing and its recommendations, what is the Diocesan Synod's view on:**

- i) our current approaches**
- ii) the proposed developments set out above**
- iii) any further gaps that exist within our provision and potential developments to address these.**