

In 2003 the Convocations of the Provinces of Canterbury and York, representing the bishops and clergy of the Church of England, published a wholly new document, a set of Guidelines describing what is desirable in the professional conduct of ordained ministry. These Guidelines are not a legal code; they are the fruit of shared experience and wisdom offered by clergy to clergy, and to all who share in their ministry, and they are set within an expectation that all the clergy will be familiar with the principles of canon and ecclesiastical law by which their public ministry is governed.

Those who compiled the first Guidelines recognized that a time would come for their revision in response to changes or developments in either the Church or the law of the land. We have welcomed a new Clergy Discipline Measure in 2003; the publication of a new Ordinal in 2007; and in 2009 the new Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure and Regulations brought reform to many aspects of the ways in which the clergy are deployed and supported. Since 2003 there have also been vitally important changes to the law to ensure the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

The starting point for the Guidelines, both now and originally, is quite rightly the Ordinal, which sets out formally and liturgically the Church's spiritual expectations of its new ministers as they are presented for ordination. The Guidelines are framed, not as a set of detailed regulations, but as an elaboration of the text of the Ordinal. The quotations with which the Guidelines begin, and which appear at the beginning of each section, offer a spiritual and pastoral framework for a lifetime's vocation and ministry as servants of Jesus Christ, deacons, priests and bishops ordained for service and mission in his Church.

The authority which we are given for our ministry is the Holy Spirit, who calls us to consider our vocation and ministry. Through the Church which Jesus Christ founded, this ministry as deacons, priests and bishops is handed on in each generation for his mission in the service of God and his kingdom. Although laws and regulations inevitably play a part in the life of the Church, which must both order its own life and engage with state and society, our calling is primarily spiritual, and we must be guided by the scriptures, by the long experience of the Church which we call tradition, and by the best insights and knowledge available to us in the present age to which our ministry is addressed.

Accordingly a working party was appointed by the House of Clergy of the General Synod, from among the membership of the two Convocations, to revise and update the Guidelines so that they remain available to every ordained minister, and to the Church as a whole, as a valuable resource for reflecting upon our vocation and its exercise in the many spheres of ministry in which clergy are engaged.

The Guidelines are not intended to be a complete compendium covering every aspect of our life and ministry but contain pointers to wider knowledge of other subjects, spiritual, pastoral and legal with which we ought to engage. They are not the last word on any subject, and indeed will be revised at regular intervals in order to keep pace with changes in church and society.

We are very grateful to the Dean of Brechin, the Very Revd Dr Francis Bridger, who has updated for this edition his theological reflection which was originally written for the first edition of the Guidelines in 2003.

Serving in ordained ministry can be a difficult and challenging way of life, with many demands made upon themselves by conscientious clergy as well as by those to whom they minister. We have sought in these revised Guidelines to draw some reasonable boundaries between the sacrificial perceptions of ordained ministry, and the proper need for rest, reflection and care of self and family on the part of those from whom much is asked.

Protection of others forms part of our calling, and it must be applied also to the clergy who serve in a society which is less and less familiar with the Christian tradition of ordained ministry. It is our hope that these Guidelines will also provide useful insights into our training, appointment and deployment for all of those concerned with the ministry of the Church of England.

These Guidelines were approved on 10 July 2015 and declared as an Act of Convocation by the Convocations of Canterbury and York.

The Reverend Stephen Trott

Synodical Secretary of the Convocation of Canterbury

MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT CONVOCATIONS WORKING PARTY

The Reverend Canon Moira Astin

The Right Reverend Pete Broadbent

The Reverend Canon David Felix

The Reverend Dr Meg Gilley

The Right Reverend Peter Hill

The Reverend Prebendary David Houlding (Chair)

Mrs Mary Johnston

The Reverend Canon Simon Killwick

The Reverend Stephen Trott (Secretary)

[Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy](#)

Image not found or type unknown

Buy the Book

Available as a book & ebook from Church House Publishing

Image not found or type unknown

Available for Kindle

A Kindle edition is also available

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/guidelines-professional-conduct-clergy/preface>