



In-depth, sustained support for clergy seeking to make a successful job move.

Dr Christine Blackie, Career Counsellor

For some clergy, moving on in ministry can be a complex transition as they try to reconcile a sense of being called to a new role with managing the realities of their working lives.

If you are feeling 'stuck' or undecided about how, when or why you might move on in your ministry then Career Counselling may offer a way forward.

Career Counselling is a process that can offer one-to-one, sustained support over a period of time. Many career related issues are closely linked to the past, present and future, to working conditions, family life and wider relationships. Consequently, the focus in my practice is on the personal and professional circumstances of each individual. Typically, each meeting will give you the space and time to reflect in-depth upon your work related needs and aspirations. In a safe, independent setting you can talk, be heard and through the sensitive use of home assignments begin to explore those barriers and opportunities to making confident career-related decisions and manage career-related tasks.

Due to its association with status, achievement and reward, the term 'career' can feel at odds with a sense of calling and vocation and those qualities associated with ordained ministry such as service and humility. In my work, calling is acknowledged as an important dimension of how clergy might anticipate and prepare for different types of career related transition.

Which job?

Lucy had applied for several different posts but was unsuccessful at interview. Following an initial discussion with a Career Counsellor, it emerged that she was unclear about the kind of role to apply for and was coming across at interview as unfocussed. After doing some career assignments, Lucy realised that most of the parish roles she had applied for required strong people skills and that she was more interested in using her talents for planning, problem solving and managing budgets. Consequently, Lucy began to apply with confidence for parish and diocesan roles which were more suited to her skills and abilities.

Is this it?

James felt disheartened and isolated after many years in the same parish which was less well-resourced than when he first arrived. He was reluctant to look for a new post as his wife had a fulfilling job and he still felt a strong desire to lead his congregation. Following some career exploration James realised how deeply he was missing the intellectual stimulation of his early education. With encouragement, James applied for a course of postgraduate study to meet his personal needs. At the same time, he signed up to be a vocations supporter within his Diocese as a means of opening up his network and feeling connected to the wider Church.

Listening for God?

David was frustrated with the lack of opportunities in the Church for someone with his particular Churchmanship. He had made a few applications and had one interview but he felt that no-one in the recruitment process fully appreciated the importance of listening for how God might be guiding him to a new role. With the support of a Career Counsellor, David was able to think about making applications for posts which he had researched in-depth and where he felt he would be able to explore and test out God's call as part of the recruitment process.

To move or not to move?

Hannah was considering moving on to a new post after only two years because her relationship with the PCC was becoming strained. In talking things through with a Career Counsellor, Hannah realised that she had a strong desire for autonomy in her ministry and how this was being enacted in the workplace. With support, Hannah recognised that her skills and talents were actually well suited to her current post and that as part of her professional development she would enquire about some leadership training.

Christine Blackie is an independent and fully qualified career counsellor with considerable experience of helping clergy make role transitions or job moves within the Church of England. She can be contacted at www.christineblackie.com.

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