

# CONVOCATIONS OF CANTERBURY AND YORK

## REVISED GUIDELINES FOR THE PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT OF THE CLERGY:

### A BACKGROUND NOTE

**The Convocations are invited to consider the text of the Revised Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy, with a view to commending them to the General Synod; and requesting the Working Party to prepare a final version of the revised *Guidelines* for approval by the Convocations following their consideration by the General Synod, taking account of comments made in the course of their consideration by the Convocations and the General Synod.**

1. As members of the Convocations may be aware there is already a version of the *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy* that has been in existence since 2003 and is currently on the Church of England website<sup>1</sup>. The guidelines are grounded in the Ordinal and were drafted by clergy for clergy, to promote best practice in the conduct of ministry. Although drafted with legal advice, they are guidelines, not a legal code. It was realised eleven years ago that they would ‘...need to respond to change while holding fast to the basic principles which underlie them.’<sup>2</sup> A Joint Convocations Working Party has been charged with revising and updating them and the fruit of their labours is circulated separately for consideration by the Convocations at our meetings in York on 11 July.
2. The text has been extensively revised in liaison with the Legal Office and other interested parties to take account of significant changes since 2003, namely
  - The new Ordinal published in 2007;
  - The Terms of Service legislation;
  - The Clergy Discipline legislation;
  - The introduction of more robust procedures in respect of the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults;
  - Revised procedures with respect to the ministry of exorcism and deliverance;
  - The increased usage of electronic and social media.

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<sup>1</sup>See

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1168846/guidelines%20for%20the%20professional%20conduct%20of%20the%20clergy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Foreword to the 2003 version by the Chair of the Working Party, para. 5.

3. The 2003 text included a theological reflection by Dr Francis Bridger. Dr Bridger has refreshed his earlier piece to go with the revised guidelines and this is included as an Appendix to the Guidelines.
4. Given episcopal interest in the guidelines an earlier draft was shared with the College of Bishops (comprising all diocesans and suffragans) at its meeting in September 2013, and comments from its discussion have been reflected in the current version.
5. It is recognised that standards of behaviour among the clergy are of significance for the laity as much as the clergy themselves, and that it would consequently be desirable to share the revised document with the General Synod. The first version was the subject of a ‘take note’ debate in July 2003, and a further such debate is planned (in the light of any redrafting work that may be needed), possibly to take place at the Synod’s group of sessions in either November 2014 or February 2015. It would subsequently go back to the Convocations for final approval.
6. The Convocations are accordingly invited to:
  - (a) express their gratitude to the Joint Working Party for its work in producing a revision of the *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy*;
  - (b) commend the revised *Guidelines* to the General Synod for its consideration; and;
  - (c) request the Working Party to prepare a final version of the revised *Guidelines* for approval by the Convocations following their consideration by the General Synod, taking account of comments made in the course of their consideration by the Convocations and the General Synod.

Church House,  
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18 June 2014

(signed)  
The Ven Christine Hardman  
The Ven Cherry Vann  
(on behalf of the Convocations)