

National Covenant of Clergy Wellbeing.

1. Life and Conduct.

When looking at the Life and Conduct of Christian Leaders one starting place from the Bible can be 1Timothy 3.

This, by the very nature of all that is being discussed within the Church of England to do with Human Sexuality, provides a very difficult and painful dialogue. However, there are certain themes from the Timothy passage that clearly show the requirements of a Spiritual Leader in the Church of Christ today.

- 1) Above reproach. This implies that the leader is required to be a person who models to others the way of Jesus Christ. Verse 2.
- 2) Respected. A person of integrity and control. Philippians 2:1-18 describes someone who has the mind of Christ.
- 3) Hospitable and able to manage their family affairs appropriately. Verse 4. When considering well-being of Clergy, the whole family needs to be part of this discussion. Those who live in Vicarages/tithe homes must not be forgotten. They can feel they live in a goldfish bowl, and feel the focus of the parish and congregation. This can produce enormous stress and strain on clergy as well as the family. Verse 3 and 4.

The process for those seeking to train as Ordinands can seem very long and unnecessary to many. However, there is even greater need in this day and culture for a person to be examined in every area of their life. For they will be exposed to scrutiny on every side by;

- a) An often more spiritually and generally intelligent congregation
- b) Apathy in the market place
- c) A media alert to pick up on any (or a Christian's) peccadillos.
- d) A world that has no time for the trumpet call of God in a world dominated by materialism and consumerism.

There are 9 criteria used at the Selection Conferences. These are aimed to test out first whether a person has a real and genuine call by God and others to be ordained. Secondly it is important to also know if that person fully understands what it means to be ordained in the Church of England. It is important thirdly that they know who and what they believe, and that their faith is grounded in

a daily rule of life. It is important fourthly that they understand the work of the ordained in Mission and Evangelism, as well as having the quality of mind that can interpret the Gospel and make it relevant in our present culture. All these requirements above are key. However, it is within the three criteria that examines a person's personality and character, their relationships and their style of leadership, that needs to be carefully explored when thinking about the Life and Conduct of the Clergy. For it is often in these areas that someone can really fall apart once they are in a parish.

Everyone brings emotional baggage from the past. Because ministry is primarily relational with a) God, b) the people of God, c) family, d) Bishops and others in the community, that how someone reacts in all sort of situations is very important. It can often happen that someone in their curacy struggles because of their relationship with the Training Incumbent. Or it may be that a member of the laity causes real problems which the clergy person finds overwhelming.

Nowadays people come to test their vocation with so many issues, from broken homes, bullying at school, abuse and /or addictions of one kind or another, that it is really vital for anyone seeking ordination that they are fully cognisant of their own vulnerability and how to manage and address it. If it has not be properly addressed then it can have devastating affect not only on themselves but on others as well.

In the Covenant of Care we need to be particularly aware of the emotional needs of the clergy person and their families and the parishes and jobs they serve. The Life and Conduct of clergy needs to be written into the Covenant of Care within a frame work of a person's ongoing emotional welfare and needs. This has implications for the provision of therapeutic intervention as well as ongoing pastoral care.

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