

HOUSE OF CLERGY

DRAFT CLERGY COVENANT FOR CARE AND WELLBEING

Summary

The Working Group on Clergy Wellbeing is very pleased to bring the draft report on the Covenant for Clergy Wellbeing back to the House of Clergy and to introduce the work in greater detail for consultation with the House of Laity.

Consultations to date on the Draft Covenant paper

1. The Working Group has been delighted to receive 29 institutional contributions and 64 contributions from individuals, both clergy and lay, in response to the circulation of the draft Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing¹ [attached as ANNEX 1]. In addition, members of the group have met with 4 regional groups of the College of Bishops to consult with them, and more are planned. Postings on the Sheldon Hub had also encouraged many confidential comments. A flurry of comments arrived close to the 31 December 2018 deadline, and a further response is awaited from the Archbishops' Council (considering its response on 23 January 2019). The group also hoped for a response from the Methodist Church.
2. At its meeting on 18 December 2018, the Group considered the comments received up to that date. That meeting agreed that, as not all comments had yet been received, and as the presentations to the meetings of the Houses of Clergy and Laity at February's General Synod were themselves a valuable contribution to the consultation, what would be presented at the meetings around the February 2019 Group of Sessions would be the **original draft circulated**, so that all comments were based on the same text, and all comments were taken into account in the same context. The Group is intent on revising the document before bringing it to General Synod for formal debate in July 2019. The main phase for revision will therefore follow the February General Synod and end in June 2019. In introducing the 'Take Note' debates at the meetings of both Houses, the proposers will provide some further reflection on the feedback received to date and how the Working Group intends to fold some of that feedback and wisdom into the final document. Subject to the agreement of Synod, the Group anticipates that the approved Covenant will be made an Act of Synod in the same Group of Sessions and will be liaising with the Presidents as to the shape and content of the Act.
3. Much of the feedback thus far related to the shape and style of the report (which had been drafted for a General Synod audience), and on which the Group has already agreed some changes. The Working Group is giving

¹ On web at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/A%20Covenant%20for%20Clergy%20Care%20and%20Wellbeing%20Consultation.pdf>

further thought, and will seek advice from the Communications Department, as to how best the Covenant, once adopted, should be published. The Group recognise that the format needs to be user-friendly rather than 'Synod facing', and easily-digestible by the various audiences and readerships it seeks to address.

4. The feedback was generally very encouraging, and some excellent diocesan practice had been revealed.
5. Particular issues in the comments included:
 - appropriate clergy time off;
 - lay expectations and how PCCs were best engaged;
 - anxiety and stress relating to the language of measurable growth targets, etc;
 - unrealistic expectations in advertisements (parish profiles and role descriptions);
 - care for spouses/partners;
 - covenant language;
 - liturgical recognition of wellbeing;
 - retired clergy;
 - better biblical references;
 - defining "unwellness";
 - better understanding of the nature and purpose of "supervision";
 - key role of the bishops.
6. The Working Group on Clergy Care and Wellbeing commends the draft document for comment and discussion to the House of Clergy/House of Laity, recognising that it is a work in progress, and by no means a finished article. It welcomes the contributions from members of the House(s) to the consultation, which it will take into account in producing the final draft for General Synod.

THE REVD CANON SIMON BUTLER – Chair
 MRS JACQUELINE STAMPER – Vice Chair
 On behalf of the Working Group on Clergy Wellbeing

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