

## Accompanying Note to the Clergy Covenant Act of Synod

The Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing was made an Act of Synod at the February 2020 Group of Sessions of the General Synod. The accompanying documentation for the Legal Office gives information about how this should be proclaimed in the Diocesan Synods in the coming months.

The Covenant is the expressed view of the mind of the Church of England on issues relating to clergy care and wellbeing, of the Church of England's representatives gather in prayerful Synod. We hope that the work of supporting clergy in their ministry will thus become an integral part of the life of the Church of England at all levels, something that is part of the DNA of every aspect of our mission and ministry

With that in mind, this note offers some brief resources and requests from the General Synod concerning the Covenant and its implementation.

### Adopting the Covenant at Local Level

- We ask you to consider holding a debate in your Diocesan Synod on matters of Clergy Care and Wellbeing when the Act of Synod is proclaimed there, and would like to invite each diocesan synod to adopt the Covenant for itself.
- We ask dioceses/TEIs to signpost the resources available for *The Big Conversation* (see below) to ordinands, clergy, deaneries and PCCs (or their equivalent), in the hope that many of them will have a conversation, about clergy care and wellbeing. In the case of local churches, we encourage this conversation to include clergy themselves and we invite you to invite local churches and deaneries to consider adopting the Covenant themselves. We think it will be an attractive thing for potential applicants for posts to see that local churches have adopted the Covenant.
- We ask Archdeacons to consider adding a question about Clergy Care and Wellbeing, and the Covenant, to their forthcoming Articles of Enquiry.
- We ask Diocesan Bishops to sponsor (if they have not done so already) a Clergy Study Day on Clergy Care and Wellbeing within the next eighteen months.

### The Big Conversation

The hope of General Synod is that a 'Big Conversation' on clergy care and wellbeing will follow the Act of Synod. The original report on the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing (GS 2133)<sup>1</sup> is a detailed and lengthy document, ideally suited to those with senior responsibility for pastoral care in dioceses, TEIs and elsewhere. However, the Working Group have taken the key elements from that report and make them available in a more attractive form, aimed at three audiences:

- Clergy themselves
- Local congregations
- The Wider Church

These resources are available on the Church of England website: [churchofengland.org/ministry-development](https://www.churchofengland.org/ministry-development).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/GS%202133%20A%20Covenant%20for%20Clergy%20Care%20and%20Wellbeing.pdf>

The most important thing that emerges from the Covenant is a recommendation for a Big Conversation to take place around the Covenant, the Shared Commitments and the Questions for Consideration that these shorter leaflets resource. We ask that you signpost these documents to the clergy in your dioceses/institutions, and to the local congregations or organisations which they serve. We also ask that Bishop's Staff Meetings take time to consider the leaflet provided for the wider church, focusing as it does on the way in which care and wellbeing are offered *through the Office of the Bishop*.

## **Specific Recommendations**

GS 2133 made several specific recommendations which we are asking the whole church to consider. They are as follows (full details can be found in the document):

1. The Working Group proposes to the Church that we take the first steps towards establishing a culture where some form of non-managerial pastoral supervision becomes accepted practice rather than an exception. How can you begin to address this vital area in your context?
2. The Working Group proposes that the good practices outlined in its report be embedded in the life of the ordinand and newly-ordained minister in IME Phase 1 & 2.
3. The Working Group proposes that Parish Profiles and Role/Job Descriptions include comments from the local congregation and the bishop about clergy care and wellbeing; the Group also proposes that these documents be used more widely in MDR as a basis for reflection on ministry.
4. The Working Group proposes to the House of Bishops that resources be provided for use and Licensing and Induction services that highlight the commitment of bishop and people to the ordained minister being welcomed alongside the more familiar commitments of minister to serve church and community.
5. The Working Group makes some recommendations about how MDR is conducted and approached.

## **Sharing Good Practice**

The Working Group, along with many other groups who are approaching other issues in the life of the Church, have become very aware of the risk of silo-working in the Church of England. The General Synod, in accepting the Covenant, has agreed to set up a Clergy Care and Wellbeing Facilitation Group to encourage and foster the sharing of good practice in the Church of England in the coming years, likely to be enabled through online resources. With that in mind, the General Synod is asking all Dioceses, TEIs, the National Church Institutions and (if they wish) those working in the Church's "Third Sector", to report back on developments and learning in the field of clergy care and wellbeing within the next two to three years, so that the General Synod can be updated on progress in this area within the lifetime of the next General Synod. We hope this will encourage and embed these matters in the life of the Church. The Facilitation Group stands ready to assist in any way it can with the development of work in the coming years.

Canon Simon Butler  
Chair of the Clergy Covenant Working Group  
on behalf of the General Synod