

## GENERAL SYNOD

## Rest Periods for Officeholders

**Summary**

The following motion was brought to the Winchester Diocesan Synod in March 2023 and was approved overwhelmingly:

*Winchester Deanery Synod calls on the Diocesan Synod to call, in turn, on General Synod to consider amending the regulation for weekly rest periods for office holders in the [Ecclesiastical Offices \(Terms of Service\) Regulations 2009](#) regulation 21 (1) to be amended to say: “An office holder shall be entitled to **not less than 36 hours (a day and a half) of rest in any period of seven days and** to include an uninterrupted rest period of not less than 24 hours in any period of seven days, but the statement of particulars of office issued under regulation 3 above may specify that any rest period may not be taken on or include a Sunday or any or all of the principal Feasts of the Church of England or Ash Wednesday or Good Friday.”*

It is the hope of the Winchester Diocesan Synod that this simple amendment to the Regulations will permit, encourage and challenge clergy to take an appropriate and, we would argue, a necessary amount of time-off each week.

This proposal is offered to General Synod in the context of the ever-increasing pressures on clergy colleagues across the country, the significant challenges in promoting and managing clergy wellbeing, and the clear negative impact on parishes, congregations and communities that occur when clergy struggle.

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**Background**

1. This motion began its life at a PCC meeting in the parish of Winchester, St Barnabas. From there it progressed to the Winchester Deanery Synod before coming to Diocesan Synod.
2. It arose out of a realisation that very few clergy and parishioners really understood, or were ever aware of, the regulations regarding time off for clergy under Common Tenure. For example, it is our belief that most people (including clergy) are unaware that 1 day off a week is actually the minimum clergy should take, not the maximum.

**Legal Context**

3. Most clergy are ecclesiastical office holders. They have certain duties and must discharge certain functions as required by the Canons of the Church of England and by other law. However, it is entirely a matter for them how they choose to discharge their functions including, if they choose, arranging for another suitably qualified person to perform them.
4. In 2010, the Common Tenure regime was introduced with the aim of defining with greater clarity the terms of service of the clergy. It introduced, for the first time, a minimum entitlement to an uninterrupted rest period of not less than 24 hours in any 7 day period. However, clergy are still office holders, and they are still entitled to

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perform their duties in whatever way they think fit. They can, therefore, perform their duties (or arrange for their duties to be performed) in such a way as to allow for longer periods of rest without any further permission or authority.

**Pastoral Context**

5. Clergy wellbeing continues to be a significant priority and challenge across the whole Church of England. We do not intend to rehearse the well-known challenges here in any great detail.
6. We recognise fully, that the current Regulations already give clergy permission to take more than 24 hours a week. Anecdotally however, we know that many clergy struggle to consistently take this minimum amount of time, and find discussing such matters with their PCCs or Churchwardens a challenge. It is our hope that this motion will contribute to a change in culture and expectations across the Church, enabling, encouraging and challenging clergy to take sufficient rest periods each week, supported by clear Regulations.

**Conclusion**

7. This motion is offered to General Synod for the following 3 reasons:
  - a) First, to highlight what the regulation actually says.
  - b) Second, to encourage a wider discussion about what is a realistic amount of time off that clergy need to have.
  - c) Third to deliver a relatively simple amendment, which we hope will help change the culture and expectations around Clergy's working practices.

On behalf of Winchester Diocesan Synod  
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