

**IN THE MATTER OF A COMPLAINT UNDER THE CLERGY DISCIPLINE MEASURE 2003
BEFORE THE BISHOP'S DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL FOR THE DIOCESE OF SOUTHWELL AND
NOTTINGHAM**

Complainant: The Venerable Phil Williams

Respondent: The Reverend Henry Curran

Constitution of the Tribunal: David Pittaway KC (Chair)
The Reverend Amos Kasibante
The Venerable Irene Cowell
Canon Linda Jones
Dr John Mason

Appearances: Mr Henry Gordon, Counsel for the the Designated Officer
Mr Mark Hill KC, Counsel for the Respondent

DETERMINATION OF THE TRIBUNAL

1. By a decision dated 2 February 2024 the President of Tribunals referred the following allegation to a tribunal:

“The conduct of the Respondent THE REVEREND HENRY CURRAN was unbecoming or inappropriate to the office and work of a clerk in Holy Orders within Section 8(1)(d) of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 in that on divers occasions he:

- (1) exhibited coercive and controlling behaviour, in particular, by threatening to withdraw friendships;
- (2) showed an unacceptable lack of self-control in failing to control his anger towards parishioners including during a PCC meeting;
- (3) failed to put in place and/or maintain appropriate professional and pastoral boundaries by allowing incidences of inappropriate nudity to take place; and
- (4) on an occasion caused distress and upset by sending a text message to ██████████ using the words or words similar to “Because of everything you have done I can see no other option but to kill myself. I have a ladder and a rope in the car. Don’t tell ██████████”

2. The complaint was laid by the Archdeacon of Nottingham in April 2022, following which it was investigated by the Designated Officer. There was a delay whilst investigations were made as to whether the matter could be dealt with by an agreed penalty, which were unsuccessful. Following the President's referral of the matter to a Tribunal, the Respondent made specific admissions on 27 March 2024. Having consulted with the formal Complainant and the underlying Lay Complainants, the Designated Officer proceeded on the basis of the Respondent's admissions. Attached to this decision at Appendix A is the Agreed Statement of Facts before the Tribunal.
3. The Tribunal has reminded itself that, in considering sanction, it should only consider the matters which are set out in the Agreed Statement of Facts and not the allegations in the charge which have not been admitted. In particular the word 'coercive' in the allegation should be disregarded.
4. The Tribunal has given detailed consideration to the Case Summary, Designated Officer's Submissions on Penalty, Respondent's Submissions on Penalty, Victim Impact Statements, Respondent's Character References, Respondent's Medical Records and submissions made by Counsel. The Tribunal has not heard evidence from the Respondent, however, his Counsel has stated that the Respondent has shown remorse for his behaviour.
5. The Tribunal has taken into account the Respondent's personal circumstances, particularly his mental health, as set out in the detailed Medical Records from September 2009 to September 2010. The Tribunal accepts that he was suffering from depression related to stress at work and family illness in 2009. The concerns regarding the Respondent's risk of suicide at that time are well documented and included a section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 referral to hospital. Accompanying the GP records is a detailed letter from a Specialist Registrar in psychiatry who examined the Respondent following his admission.
6. In reaching its decision the Tribunal has paid particular attention to the Clergy Discipline Commission's Guidance on Penalties (March 2023), both aggravating and mitigating factors, and the level of sanction proportionate to the circumstances of this case. In particular:

"Section 3: Misconduct in public ministry (page 9)

3.1 By virtue of their office, great trust is placed in the clergy by members of the Church and by the wider community. Clergy are expected to be worthy of this trust, and are

required to uphold Christian values in their pastoral ministry and in performing other duties.

*3.2 **Misconduct such as persistent rudeness to parishioners, lateness without good reason, or a failure to comply with formal requirements such as keeping the register book of services may all merit a rebuke, with or without an injunction to ensure that there is no repetition.** Where the cleric has no previous findings of misconduct and the failure is time limited, or where it takes place in the context of other unusual pressures on the respondent, conditional deferment or discharge could be appropriate. If the misconduct were to be repeated in defiance of an injunction, removal from office would be likely to follow.*

*3.3 Clergy are expected to play a full part in parish life. Failure to conduct parish affairs, which includes **the chairing or conduct of PCC meetings, in accordance with the professional standards** expected may result in a rebuke and injunction. **Persistent and deliberate misconduct may, exceptionally, result in removal from office and a limited prohibition.***

Section 4: Personal Misconduct

*4.1 Given the nature of ordained ministry there is no separation between the public and home life of clergy. **At all times and in all places clergy must manifest a lifestyle which is based on that of Jesus Christ.** Conduct that, in other professions would be inherently private and would not lead to professional disciplinary action, can lead to disciplinary proceedings against clergy*

4.2 Failing to maintain professional boundaries can cause serious pastoral harm...

*4.3 Physically aggressive violent behaviour and all other forms of abusive conduct have no place in society and must be dealt with firmly. Likewise, any violence (physical or verbal) in the home is destructive of family life and damaging to the victims and should be dealt with firmly. Removal from office and prohibition for a specific period of time or for life should normally follow. **Controlling and coercive behaviour that falls short of violence, whether taking place inside or outside of the home, should not necessarily attract a lesser penalty, particularly where it takes place over a prolonged period of time.***

7. The Respondent was made a deacon in 2002 and ordained priest in 2003. In 2007 he became the priest in charge of St Mary's Wollaton Park in the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham and became vicar in 2011. The admitted misconduct relates to his time in that parish. In 2021 he moved to become the priest in charge at Moreton-in-Marsh in the Diocese of Gloucester. He was asked by the Bishop of Gloucester to stand back from his ministry in December 2022 pending the outcome of this complaint. He continues to live with his wife in the benefice.
8. The Tribunal has concluded that the Respondent's conduct whilst at St Mary's Wollaton Park inflicted harm on eight parishioners in the period 2009 to 2021, some of whom had

close personal relationships with him. There has been no suggestion that any of persons involved should be considered, as vulnerable.

9. There are eight incidents relied upon in support of the allegations (1) to (4) of the Complaint of varying gravity. The most serious being the breakdown in his relationship with [REDACTED] in 2009 leading to the text he sent threatening suicide, and the least serious being the argument with [REDACTED] over flower arrangements in the church in 2019. The other instances in 2016, 2018 and 2021 referred to in the Agreed Statement of Facts are somewhere in between. It should be added that the Tribunal has not heard evidence from the Lay Complainants and assessed the impact of the Respondent's behaviour in person. Nonetheless, the effect of the Respondent's periodic outbursts on the parishioners involved is set out in the impact statements, which include references to differing levels of anxiety and the undermining of their faith.
10. The conclusion that the Tribunal has reached is that the Respondent failed to put in place appropriate professional boundaries in his relationships with his parishioners, whether as lodgers, on holiday, at PCC meetings or as key members of his team. His own concerns about the breakdown of his relationship with [REDACTED] are well-documented in the Medical Records. There are examples set out in the Agreed Statement of Facts of a failure on his part, whether it was his behaviour at meetings or in relation to expressing his views on nudity which demonstrate his failure to understand the nature of the professional relationship required between an incumbent and parishioners. Partly as a consequence of his failure to maintain an appropriate professional relationships, and partly the Tribunal considers his own immaturity, he was unable to control his anger when faced with a breakdown in those relationships and his perceived view of the effect on his mission. It is clearly demonstrated by his reaction to key members indicating they were leaving the parish in 2021. The Tribunal finds that there should have been greater sensitivity to these issues particularly where the persons involved were at university or had recently been at university. Whilst Tribunal recognises that the Respondent did apologise after each outburst, it has concluded that on the occasions relied upon he did not learn from experience to moderate his behaviour. To that extent the Tribunal finds that he is culpable.
11. Turning to aggravating and mitigating factors, the Tribunal is not satisfied, as Mr Gordon submitted on behalf of the Designated Officer, that there was a repeated pattern of misconduct over the whole period. There were eight incidents spread throughout the period between 2009 and 2021, of varying degrees of gravity. The Tribunal considers that it is highly likely that his behaviour in 2009 was affected by his mental illness at that

time. It is also a relevant factor that the allegations relating to the breakdown of his relationship with [REDACTED] was subject to an investigation by the Bishop in 2009, much closer to the time, and no further action was taken. The Tribunal also rejects the submission made that he was an experienced parish priest at that time. He had been in Holy Orders for some seven years and was only 32 years old. The Tribunal's view is that he struggled to cope with the responsibilities in his parish, the university chaplaincy, as well as later the responsibility for training a curate. In 2009 he sought both medical assistance from his GP to cope with his depression and risk of suicide, as well as assistance from the Bishop, as a result of which he stood back from his ministry for a period of time. There is no evidence before the Tribunal as to whether he sought or received pastoral support or training during the period when the other instances of misconduct occurred.

12. After careful consideration the Tribunal does not consider that the threshold for prohibition has been crossed. It does, however, have concerns as to the whether the Respondent should exercise public ministry in his current role as priest in charge of a parish in Moreton-in-the-Marsh without further pastoral support and training.
13. The Tribunal has read the report from Professor Dryden which indicates that during the course of 2023 the Respondent undertook five Anger Management sessions of therapy. It notes that Professor Dryden does not consider that he requires further assistance on this issue. The Tribunal observes that, as the Respondent was asked by the Bishop to step back from his ministry in December 2022, the success or otherwise of the therapy remains untested. The character references produced, relate to a relatively short period between July 2021 and December 2022, and are universally supportive including one from a retired Archdeacon, however, they may reflect that he was not under the same level of stress as he had experienced at St Mary's, Wollaton Park.
14. On the basis of the information made available to the Tribunal, it is satisfied that with the appropriate pastoral support, training and oversight, the Respondent can resume public ministry. It considers that a package of measures focussing on the ethics of ministry, in particular on Anger Management, on setting professional boundaries with parishioners and on the high standard of behaviour expected of clergy, are required.
15. In these circumstance the Tribunal concluded that the minimum sanction that it could impose on the Respondent is one of a rebuke and an injunction regarding pastoral support and training for a period of two years. It invited the parties to agree an appropriate package of measures which has now been submitted to the Tribunal and approved. It is satisfied that the measures proposed are sufficiently rigorous to give the

Respondent the best opportunity of pursuing a successful public ministry. Attached to this decision at Appendix B are the Agreed Terms of the Injunction.

13 DECEMBER 2024

IN THE MATTER OF A COMPLAINT DATED 19.02.2023

UNDER THE CLERGY DISCIPLINE MEASURE 2003

Re: THE REVEREND HENRY CURRAN

CASE SUMMARY FOR HEARING ON PENALTY

1. By a decision dated the 2 February 2024 the President of Tribunals referred the following allegation to a tribunal:

“The conduct of the Respondent THE REVEREND HENRY CURRAN was unbecoming or inappropriate to the office and work of a clerk in Holy Orders within Section 8(1)(d) of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 in that on divers occasions he:

- (1) exhibited coercive and controlling behaviour, in particular, by threatening to withdraw friendships;**
- (2) showed an unacceptable lack of self-control in failing to control his anger towards parishioners including during a PCC meeting;**
- (3) failed to put in place and/or maintain appropriate professional and pastoral boundaries by allowing incidences of inappropriate nudity to take place; and**
- (4) on an occasion caused distress and upset by sending a text message to ██████████ using the words or words similar to “Because of everything you have done I can see no other option but to kill myself. I have a ladder and a rope in the car. Don’t tell ██████.”**

2. On the 27 March 2024 the Respondent, via his solicitors, confirmed that he entered specific admissions against the above allegations. Having consulted with the formal Complainant Archdeacon and the underlying lay complainants, the DO has agreed to proceed on the basis of the below admissions.

3. The following are the agreed set of facts between the parties for the purposes of the imposition of penalty. This document does not set out the aggravating or mitigating factors to the misconduct which will be dealt with by the parties in their submissions.

10. The Respondent then said that for the time being he did not want any further contact from those who had indicated that they were leaving, other than that which was required for church business as he needed some space given the situation had become extremely stressful. The Respondent did take steps in the following days to try to apologise and to seek reconciliation and has met all of them since. He cancelled a meeting the next day due to take place with [REDACTED]

‘showed an unacceptable lack of self-control in failing to control his anger towards parishioners including during a PCC meeting’

11. The Respondent admits three instances of failing to control his anger.

28 July 2016 - [REDACTED]

12. [REDACTED] arrived at St Mary’s in July 2015, for [REDACTED] serve his title as assistant Curate in the Parish. The Respondent was his training incumbent.

13. In early June 2016 [REDACTED] was coming up to his one year review the Respondent met with [REDACTED] during which the Respondent expressed some concerns about [REDACTED]. It was agreed that a meeting would later place at a later date.

14. On or around the 28 July a meeting took place between [REDACTED] and the Respondent. [REDACTED] had initially arranged childcare but at the last minute the babysitter had a personal emergency and so she attended with their baby.

15. At the meeting the Respondent became visibly upset and raised concerns around the involvement of [REDACTED] in the life of the Church. In particular the Respondent mentioned that [REDACTED] had not replied to an email sent by [REDACTED]. The Respondent became angry and shouted at [REDACTED] ‘...she was upset [REDACTED], she was upset’.

16. [REDACTED] stood up at this point and told the Respondent that he was shouting at [REDACTED]. They both left shortly afterwards.

17. Not long after the event the Respondent apologised to [REDACTED] for what he had said to [REDACTED]

7 December 2019 - [REDACTED]

18. [REDACTED] is a member of the congregation at St Mary’s. On the 7 December 2019 she arrived to work on the church flowers and assist with the Christmas decorations. Upon

arriving by car she saw that the car park was almost full as there was an event booked in the church hall.

19. During the day the Respondent arrived to thank those helping with the flowers. [REDACTED] asked the Respondent why she had not been told about the event in the church hall, as it made working on the church flowers more difficult. [REDACTED] statement sets out that:-

"Henry turned to me and snapped "why would you (be told)?" I replied that it had been difficult for the decorating team to part and unload. Henry's answer was that the hall booking people were entitled to use the car park (this was said in an angry tone of voice). Henry then said (in an even louder voice) "[REDACTED], if that's your attitude, I don't want you doing church flowers!" I was very surprised and upset by his tone of what he said. I replied (firmly but not shouting) "Henry, I've come to do this job and I will do this job".

Henry then pulled out his phone and said, in a very aggressive tone of voice "I'm going to make a formal complaint to the churchwardens". He looked very, very angry. He then went out of the church shouting "I may hand in my resignation", slamming the door behind him."

20. [REDACTED] describes that she began to shake and was very upset and in tears. Later that same day the Respondent apologised to [REDACTED] and again in January 2020.

PCC meeting late 2018

21. At some point in mid to late 2018 a PCC meeting was held. On the agenda was a look ahead to the Christmas services. A discussion took place about discontinuing a community service that took place each year on Farndon Green. The Respondent was in favour of not conducting the service that year, whilst others were in favour of keeping it. Several members of the PCC give evidence that the Respondent raised his voice, losing his temper and hit his hand on the table. The Respondent told the PCC that they were not supporting him and that they had to find a way to reduce his workload.

22. [REDACTED], who joined St Mary's as a student in 2010 was at the PCC meeting and gives evidence that he was particularly affected by the Respondent's behaviour. In his statement he writes that "I left the PCC meeting and had a long cry outside." It is understood that the Respondent did apologise to several PCC members after the event.

'failed to put in place and/or maintain appropriate professional and pastoral boundaries by allowing incidences of inappropriate nudity to take place'

23. In April 2016 the Respondent went on holiday to the lake district with his family. [REDACTED] (not a family member, but part of the Respondent's congregation) was also present on the holiday. At some point during the holiday the Respondent entered the bathroom,

remembering that he needed to pick up an item from there that he has previously forgotten. Prior to entering the bathroom the Respondent knocked on the door and ██████ said, 'come in'. The Respondent entered to find ██████ in the shower but did not leave.

24. ██████ was a member of the Respondent's congregation and ██████
██
██

██████████ Notwithstanding that it was fully consensual, the Respondent failed to maintain appropriate boundaries between himself and a ██████ by permitting occasions of nudity in the home.

25. In a witness statement submitted by ██████ she writes:

I remember having conversations with Henry and ██████ about nudity, and that nudity isn't necessarily always sexual, and I found this very helpful because it has helped me to feel far less anxious or afraid in situations such as changing rooms and intimate medical examinations. It has also helped me to have a healthier and more positive view of my own body because I know that my body is normal even though I'm not exactly like what the media portrays as normal. Henry did not insist on nudity at ██████; he made it clear that it was my choice, and that neither he nor ██████ would appear naked in front of me until or unless I was comfortable with it, and that I wasn't expected to be naked in front of him or ██████. It was about having a more relaxed - and less sexualised - approach to nudity and not feeling the need to cover up e.g. if sleeping naked and going to the bathroom in the middle of the night, or being relaxed about getting changed in front of someone else or brushing your teeth in the bathroom sink or getting something from the bathroom while someone else was in the shower if it didn't bother either party. I was never pressured to go along with this, it was not expected of me, and Henry assumed that I wasn't comfortable with it unless or until I made it clear that I was - he put it in my control and was not imposing it.

**'on an occasion caused distress and upset by sending a text message to ██████
██████████ using the words or words similar to "Because of everything you have done I
can see no other option but to kill myself. I have a ladder and a rope in the car. Don't
tell ██████.'**

26. Following on the events as details in paragraphs 7 and 8 above, ██████ ceased all contact with the Respondent. In or around the first week of September 2009 she then received an unsolicited text message from the Respondent in which he indicated that he was about to kill himself as a result of ██████ actions. The message used the words, or words similar to -

Because of everything you have done I can see no other option but to kill myself. I have a ladder and a rope in the car. Don't tell ██████.'

27. Receiving the text message caused [REDACTED] distress and upset. Upon receipt she called her parents who then called [REDACTED] and told her the contents of the message. [REDACTED] then telephoned the police. It subsequently came to [REDACTED] attention that the Respondent had driven a two-hour journey and had parked a few minutes' walk away from where she was.

28. [REDACTED] experiences led her to seek professional counselling. The Archdeacon of Nottingham and Acting Diocesan Bishop were involved in the incident, concluded at the time that it wasn't a disciplinary offence but that the Respondent needed professional medical help. They encouraged the Respondent not to resign.

September 2024

DESIGNATED OFFICER
Legal Office
Church House, Westminster

Appendix B

Injunction

1. The Respondent must undertake and complete, within a period of six months of the date of this decision, a course of counselling for anger management as shall be approved by the Diocesan Bishop;
2. The Respondent must undertake and complete, within a period of two years of the date of this decision, such training on ethics in pastoral ministry and the maintenance of appropriate pastoral and professional boundaries, as shall be directed by the Diocesan Bishop in her discretion, taking into account the findings of this Tribunal; and
3. The Respondent must co-operate with the supervision and oversight of his ministry from a senior cleric appointed by the Diocesan Bishop for a period of two years, and to meet regularly with that or another appointed cleric to review his learning and reflect on his pastoral and professional boundaries, to ensure the Respondent is appropriately supported in his ministry and to enable, at the end of that period of two years, a written report to be submitted to the Diocesan Bishop setting out the Respondent's learning.

2 JANUARY 2025