



# Curacy Handbook

**Author: Revd Neil Patterson, DDVO**

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Welcome to the Curacy Handbook. This is intended as a guide for Curates and Training Incumbents (TIs)

## Welcome message to curates from the Bishop of Hereford

Dear Brother and Sisters,

I am delighted to welcome you to Hereford Diocese as you start your ordained ministry. We will work with you, laying down the basis for ministry, enabling you to exercise the gifts God has given you to fulfil the ministry into which God has called.

We hope and pray that as you begin this ministry of word and sacrament you will be blessed by God and a blessing to others. Your primary working relationship is, with your Training Incumbent, but you will also work closely with Neil Patterson, our Ministry Development Officer (MDO), and your year tutor. You will be alongside your fellow curates and develop relationships with other officers and clergy of the Diocese. I hope that you will enjoy the training programme provided for you. Above all, I hope and pray that you will continue to grow in love and service of God and the people among whom he has placed you.

Please do get in contact if you have any concerns or feedback. We are here to support you. I pray that together we will work together building on the worship, mission and ministry of God's people and seeing the Kingdom grow in our Diocese and work together to build up the worship, mission and ministry within the churches of this Diocese for the furthering of God's Kingdom.

Yours in Christ,

The Rt Revd Richard Jackson,  
Bishop of Hereford

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## 1. An Overview: A Threefold Structure of support for Curates

Our support for your curacy is based upon three pillars, however, support for your curacy does not only come from the Diocese. You will be drawing on others (some mentioned in the Advice section) and friends, family and other networks. Most importantly, the curacy is supported by your own relationship with God, which is it your responsibility to nurture and sustain.

### 1.1. A. Training incumbents and Benefice

The relationship with your TI is the most critical. It will define whether your curacy fulfils your expectations. It is an unusual relationship as it is both a training and personal relationship. You are colleagues. The key to successful oversight in training is maintaining deliberate spaces, especially planned supervision, to attend to curate development.

### 1.2. B. Diocesan Programme

Over the course of the year there will be four day IME2 events (two with TIs) and one Curate Residential, as explained in section four of this document. These training events are compulsory. You must seek formal permission from the MDO to miss one. An induction day for new curates in July provides orientation and introduction to the diocesan support structures. Diocesan expectations include a placement for stipendiary curates and SSMS during the third year.

### 1.3. C. Year Group and Year Tutor

Each ordination group forms a support group to help you progress through curacy. The group is a mutual support network for self-reflection. It does not form part of the accountability structure of the curacy. Each year group has an assigned Year Tutor with responsibility to convene the group.

### 1.4 Sharepoint

Information-sharing for curacy is on MS *Sharepoint*, the online file-sharing platform. Curates have access to a general folder which contains document templates (e.g. Learning Agreement, Feedback Forms) to download and edit as required. This Handbook is therefore supplemented by the documents in the common folder. For each curate there is also a personal folder, accessible only to them, their TI and the MDO, in which their Curate Learning Plan is kept, and where Portfolio items are uploaded.

### 1.5 National Policy

Note that this Handbook should be understood in conjunction with the national Formation Framework for IME2, which can be found at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/ministry/after-ordination> (under 'New Formation Frameworks'). NB the *Qualities* grid in these replaces the former Selection/Formation *Criteria*, which may have been used in your discernment for ordination and college/course training.

## 2. The TI-Curate Relationship

Whilst many people in the Church may see the arrival of a new curate as a straightforward delight, a fresh face who will bring new ideas for a few years, it also marks the start of a professional and spiritual relationship between curate and training incumbent. Like any relationship the details need to be worked through. The following are some general observations and considerations:

1. For you, the curate, everything is new. The change of lifestyle, status in the Church, maybe even the change in home are all factors that impact your new identity. Curacy is a time of formation which will need to be assessed, in part by your TI. This can place additional unconscious or conscious stress factors in the relationship
2. For your training incumbent (TI), even if they have trained curates before, you are a new person joining their team and church, which requires an adjustment of working relationships in the parish.
3. Completing IME1 means you may have fresh ideas, different theological insights and enthusiasm to share it all. Your theoretical skills and experience may need translation and integration into the practical parochial ministry of your benefice. Curacy is an unusually intense working relationship. You will be meeting your TI several times a week, sharing sensitive and emotive knowledge and information. Give yourself space to reflect and seek an alternative perspective.
4. We need to recognise that we are living in a challenging context for Christian ministry today, with the need for outreach in God's mission ever more prominent. This will affect existing and new clergy differently and you will need to notice this, whilst aspiring to come to share together in facing the challenge.

There is no perfect answer to this, books may offer some insights, sharing your experience with contemporaries can help but this is your own journey and comparison may rob you of the joy. Mutual respect is probably more important than friendship – the latter may be a happy accident of the experience and is often the case.

### 3. Four Partners

#### The Training Incumbent (TI)

- Passionate about enabling the development of ministry in themselves and others.
- Settled in their parish and committed to remaining for at least the majority of the curacy.
- Shows wisdom, maturity, and self-awareness, showing vulnerability and authenticity.
- Shows and models strategic leadership for mission.
- Recognises the gifts of others and is willing to make space for them.
- Has a personal, theological, and spiritual stance that is thought-through and secure, yet remaining creative, flexible, and able to work with differences of opinion and style.
- Wants to learn from others, including the prospective Curate.
- Committed to the demanding work of oversight and training of the curate
- Committed to the processes of reporting and accountability required for the curacy.

#### The Curate

- Expected to immerse fully into life in the benefice
- Recognises the authority of the TI as incumbent in overall charge of the benefice, and over their ministry as curate
- Expects and is open to learning and change during curacy
- Committed to the requirements of the diocesan training programme.
- Accepts and understands the responsibilities and expectations of public ministry

#### The Training Benefice (whether one or more parishes)

- Key officers (other ministers, wardens etc) recognise a responsibility to nurture and support the curate, and that they are not merely an extra pair of hands
- Is ready to offer a wide range of experience to the curate, including sharing ministry responsibilities
- Will be ready to offer critical and constructive feedback to the curate as requested
- Will pay the full working expenses of the curate
- Is open to change and formation by the curate

#### The Diocese

- Provides the appropriate training programme to support curacy
- Will monitor and advise on curacy training through review of the learning plan
- Will be available for pastoral support and advice to curates
- Holds both TI and curate accountable for their work during the curacy
- Maintains a clear record in the clergy files of the curacy for future reference.



## 4. Support for the Training Incumbent

As noted above, TIs are identified (by the Bishop's Staff) as having a range of important qualities that equip them for this particular role. We also make a conscious attempt to ensure a range of people (gender, age, experience) and theological tradition, and to make use of incumbents and benefices which are actively facing the challenges of mission in the current time. TIs are expected to be reliable participants in all the normal forms of clergy support provided by the Diocese: MDR, ongoing learning and formation through CMD and other events, fully engaged with Safeguarding and committed to their own learning and development.

In preparation for receiving a new Curate, all TIs attend a 48-hour Residential in May, providing training with a particular emphasis on supervision skills. This is organized jointly with Gloucester and Worcester Dioceses. As well as providing a larger cohort and sharing the delivery of the training material, TIs generally appreciate meeting and sharing with colleagues from across the region and comparing the different experiences. A follow-up Refresher Day is provided the following May for the TIs as they approach the end of their curate's deacon year to meet again and reflect on the past year.

TIs should anticipate that as well as the opportunity to support and develop new clergy for the mission and ministry of the Church, the curacy will challenge and change them in their ministry and as people. It will be important to take time to reflect on this with others including probably one's spiritual director or equivalent. On a more practical level, it is normal, especially during the first year, for a TI to have *less*, not more, time available due to the responsibility of supporting a curate, and so may need to plan other commitments accordingly.

## 5. The Learning Agreement

Every curate, TI and benefice, is different. Although there is a common framework, every curacy must include a learning agreement (also known as a working agreement) which sets out mutual expectations, including the pattern of supervision and commitments during a typical week. The pro-forma and guidance notes are available on *Sharepoint*. The task must be completed within three months of the curacy commencing, and a copy sent to the MDO. The LA should include rest days and annual leave. The expectations of the learning agreement are especially important for self-supporting curates. SSM curates will need to make a careful and realistic assessment of the time they are able to offer without compromising their health, relationships or finances. It is much easier to increase your commitment at review than reduce it. Whatever the context, the LA should be reviewed after six months, and again at 12 months, around ordination as a priest.

## 6. A Framework for Curacy Training – The Curate Learning Plan

The Curate Learning Plan is intended to form the central record of your development through curacy. It was based on the Formation Criteria of IME1 and is a structure used in the Selection Criteria at BAP. The Church of England is moving to the new Qualities and these will be used for a new version of the CLP from 2023. The blank versions of the CLP for your category of ministry (Stipendiary/SSM) are available on *Sharepoint* for you to download and:

- Establish an agreed “baseline” of experience, knowledge and understanding with your TI. The final report from college/course is a useful tool in setting this baseline.
- Don’t forget to record previous professional skills or other relevant experience.
- The MDO will meet with you to review this in the first three months and agree any immediate priorities for continuing professional development or training.
- Regularly review the document with your TI and update any “experience/expertise needed” and identify “how is this to be gained” switching to “experience/expertise gained” and listing “how it was gained” – in the same boxes, but indicated by a change of colour or formatting.

Both the Formation Criteria and new Qualities are general, and focus on personal attributes rather than particular skills or abilities to “do stuff.” This is deliberate, because they are intended to cover priests of all types, traditions and contexts. They point to the deeper aspects of ministerial formation. The CLP is intended to translate Criteria/Qualities to the local context. For example a stipendiary curate will need to show evidence of developing the traditional clergy skill of “taking a good funeral.” This fits the expectations of Criterion C2 about reflective practice in leading worship. A Pioneer minister might not have funeral ministry but can demonstrate similar skills by creating a monthly outdoor service based on reverence for Creation; a Minister in secular employment might show evidence of this skill by devising a memorial event in a workplace. You will note, however, that one distinct theme running throughout the Criteria is the need to be a person who enables and builds up others in their Christian life.

### 6.1 Evidence

The Curate Learning Plan provides a column for “Evidence” to be recorded in a portfolio. Each curate, in liaison with their TI and the MDO, will identify and produce evidence (typically written work, but other media including video will sometimes be useful if easily and securely recorded) to support their fulfilment of the Criteria. This will be a balance between the curate showing creativity and responsibility about how they evidence their development, and the push back that may say, “how could you make this a deeper engagement with the issue?” or even “sorry, this does need a bit more substance/evidence/external input to show what you want it to.” The Criteria often ask that a curate is someone who enables others in faith and ministry, which suggests a sort of ladder of value in your evidence, rising through three levels as follows:

Observation: I went to/watched X, and have thought about it in a Biblical/ theological/ personal context

and have these interesting thoughts about it.

Doing: I did X, and it felt like this to do it, and here is some feedback of people who said I did it quite well, but this person said perhaps I should have done this bit differently and I have thought about it and can see where they're coming from though it made me a bit cross at first.

Enabling: I organised X, and found out about how A is really good at doing P, which was great though I let him get a bit carried away, but B struggled with Q because it reminds her of F but I helped her to see how if we think about what Jesus said about G & H and she felt different.

You have probably done a lot of 1. in IME1, some 2. and less of 3. In the early stages of curacy there may still be a good deal of Observation, but it is important into the second and especially third year to seek out opportunities for responsibility and leadership.

You will notice that there are no prescribed word limits or outlines for Evidence, though these may have been suggested when the items were agreed in discussion with the MDO. This is deliberate – you have been in academic study for some years, and Hereford policy is that IME2 should not be in an academic framework but focussed on the practical work of mission and ministry. Part of the skill of independent work is making your own judgment on when something is too 'thin' and lacking content, or indigestibly long.

## 6.2 A Variety of Evidence

The Evidence uploaded for the Portfolio is expected to show a curate's development into public ministry in four related ways:

- **Depth and Openness of Character.** In other words, the ways in which the curate is developing in themselves to integrate the expectations of public ministry. This may be shown by personal reflection, but also how others (especially the TI) perceive them.
- **Ministerial Skills.** This is the 'doing' aspect, and will sometimes be shown by things done or produced like sermons, orders of service, but also by results, like the good outcome of a meeting or successful event. For those of Incumbent status this will include the important theological and leadership skills for a post of first responsibility.
- **Self-management.** The ability to manage tasks and time, and also to recognise personal weaknesses or vulnerabilities, and take appropriate steps to mitigate the effects of them on oneself and others. This also includes self-awareness, for which the 360° Review in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year provides important evidence.
- **Capacity to Grow.** This can be shown by a curate's self-aware looking back at how they have developed both before and since ordination, and on others' observations of them.

Clearly any individual Portfolio Evidence item may show mainly or only one of these, but there should be enough variety across the whole to show them all.

In a similar way, it is anticipated that the Evidence will come in a variety of forms, demonstrating different ways of engaging with aspects of formation and skills in doing so. There is no prescriptive list, but some good examples could include:

- **A Special Service.** The context is a particular day or local occasion requiring a special liturgy to be devised and delivered by the curate. The Evidence would include: the actual text of the service (and sermon if delivered), perhaps a video, feedback from participants/attendees including the TI, a narrative from the curate explaining their planning decisions and commenting on how it went. Here the major content is the service itself and the record of how successful it was – primarily a demonstration of skills. Though personal reflection from the curate might include some points of self-development, or the preparation might reveal particularly good theological engagement with the context.
- **A Difficult Situation.** The curate has been involved in a conflict situation, whether public (e.g. PCC row) or private (e.g. challenging visit). They have discussed it with their TI but it is probably impossible to obtain any other outside content due to the sensitivity. The Evidence is a personal reflection, including enough narrative to explain the situation clearly, but focussing mainly on the curate's personal growth through the experience, observing why they reacted as they did, what vulnerabilities may have been touched on, and what learning and growth they have discovered as a consequence.
- **A Mission Project.** The curate is asked to lead on planning a particular new project (whether a new service, outreach to a particular community, building reordering) with a group and report back to the PCC or equivalent with a plan. This is an opportunity to demonstrate theological leadership in mission. The Evidence would be the actual Plan, a record of the meetings to get there and other research, and a narrative by the curate explaining their role. The Plan could demonstrate their use of Scripture and theology (whether from IME1 or ongoing reading) in support of the proposals, and the meeting and narrative their leadership abilities in building a team and shaping the direction (including bringing others into the theological reflection).

## 6.3 Training

If you think you fully understand what is happening as the Holy Spirit forms a new minister in God's service, you may have underestimated what is going on! Some general thoughts: The most basic pattern of training, evident in Jesus' teaching of his disciples, is a progress through the following steps (not all will be necessary in every case):

- Incumbent does X, curate observes
- Incumbent does X, curate assists
- (sometimes) Incumbent & curate do X together
- Curate does X, incumbent assists
- Curate does X, incumbent observes
- Curate does X independently and reports back

Curates bring a certain level of critical awareness of ministry formed in training: it is very easy to fall into

evaluation of your incumbent (even if only subconsciously) which is based on an inadequate understanding of their underlying theology and praxis. It is inevitable, and normal, that curates will pick up on particular aspects of their TI's practice, whether details of how to preside at the Eucharist or where you stand at a funeral, or deeper attitudes to (say) "The Diocese" or churchyard management. So keep aware of this – much of what you learn will be wise and valuable, but try to stay aware that there are other ways of doing things.

### 6.3 Placements

In the third year of curacy, all stipendiary curates will, and SSM curates may, undertake a placement outside their training benefice to expand their experience and formation in ministry. The choice of placement is based on the particular circumstances and experience of each curate, and will need to be discussed and agreed with the CTO. Some possibilities are: "Filling in" an area of basic experience which has not been possible in the training benefice, e.g. in a secondary school if there was not one, or doing many occasional offices if there were few available.

"Trying out" a new and perhaps specialist area of ministry, as a possibility for the future, e.g. military or prison chaplaincy.

"Seeing different" by time in a benefice with a very different church tradition or approach to mission. There is also a choice as to whether a placement should be full or part-time – if the former, typically 4 weeks will be suitable, if the latter then probably a day/week for 3 months/an academic term. There are pros and cons of each – a major pro of full-time being the possibility of going further afield, even abroad. The normal time is the autumn of the third year but this is flexible. You undertook placements in IME1; the difference is that you will now be a priest with a bit of experience, and so should be much more independent and doing full ministry, which is a different perspective. Bear in mind that if you become an incumbent you may be several years almost never ministering outside your own parishes or closely observing anyone else's practice – relish the opportunity for a broader perspective whilst you have the chance!

TI and Training Benefice need to be prepared to give the curate the time required to invest in the placement by releasing from other duties. This is a reminder that the curacy will come to an end, and parish rotas and other structures should not be built on the permanent provision of curates.

### 6.4 Assessment and completion of curacy

Although curacy is a process of continual evaluation in which issues may be tackled at any stage, the formal process is annual, usually in May, and makes strong use of the CLP, as follows:

**Year 1** – TIs write a personal report on their curate to the Bishop, recommending that he should ordain them priest (unless sponsored as a Distinctive Deacon). Guidelines for this report are provided on

*Sharepoint.* The MDO updates the CLP to show the current state of the Portfolio and sends that to the Bishop. The Bishop meets with curate and TI, and normally agrees on ordination as priest. (If there is any doubt about ordination as priest this should have been raised as soon as it becomes evident). After priesting (typically in September) the MDO meets with curate and TI to review the CLP, sharing summative feedback and agreeing items for evidence in the Portfolio in the coming year.

**Year 2** – This is the most important year of review, and uses a 360° Review process (similar to those in clergy MDR) to gather feedback from around the curate and compare it with their own and TIs perceptions. This involves the following steps:

- MDO writes to the Curate, outlining the process, giving them their own feedback form and asking them to identify, in consultation with their TI, five people to report on them from varied perspectives, with deadlines.
- The Curate, having discussed with their TI, returns a nomination form with the agreed names, and both return their own feedback forms.
- MDO sends out forms to the named people and receives and collates answers.
- MDO compiles a Review Report, in which the survey scores are aggregated and compared to the Curate and TI scoring on the same areas. Comments are also aggregated anonymously.
- MDO meets with Curate and TI to discuss the Report. A summary comment from the meeting is added to the final version of the Report which is placed on file.
- The meeting also produces a list of proposed Portfolio evidence, and other actions/training as necessary to respond to the Report in order that the Curate will be ready for sign-off at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

**Year 3** – The completed CLP, together with a summary report by the MDO to explain any specific work since the 360° Review, is prepared for the Bishop who interviews the curate and agrees to sign them off as having completed IME2. (Again, if there is any doubt about sign-off this will have been discussed well before).

## 6.5 Leaving well

For those moving on to a ministry elsewhere after curacy, there is a particular and valuable skill of leaving well. Most curates will have become well-loved, and may have introduced new ideas and lifted spirits. Some initiatives may or may not be sustainable in the future. Whilst the curate moves, there can be a sense of TI and benefice being left behind. There may be awkward rearrangements to make to cover the “curate-shaped hole” in rotas and parish life. Letting go of pastoral relationships is a particular ministerial skill, and requires the discipline that they are not your responsibility any more. A session for 3rd Year curates will provide particular space to reflect on this.

## 7. The Diocesan IME2 Programme

The Diocesan Programme consists of three strands, the table on the next page outlines how they work to provide you with formal training during your curacy. The events and the Year Tutor's Checklist are loosely aligned with a half-yearly theme based on the Discernment Qualities. The events fall into three categories:

- The VISIT days are opportunities for fellowship and conversation with fellow curates. They provide an opportunity to engage with a specific theme or topic led by experts. They provide a space for structured reflection on what this may mean for your ministry.
- The sessions with TIs focus on key areas of everyday ministry. Each includes input, usually from a diocesan or outside speaker, opportunities for each TI-curate pair to reflect together, explore theology and provide an opportunity to share learning.
- The RESIDENTIALS offer a space to engage with the broad challenges of mission facing the Church today. Each event includes an opportunity for shared worship, feedback, prayer and discussion.

Some evening and day events will be open to Readers in the first three years since Admission, as part of the Diocesan Post-Admission Training (PAT) programme, as indicated under Attendees on the table. This is to further the Diocesan strategic priority of partnership between lay and ordained in ministry and to enable a wider sharing of experience by all.

The Year Tutor's Checklist is a guideline to Year Tutors to ensure that the areas mentioned are covered in your meetings together during that half-year. They may arise spontaneously from among the group, and many other matters may be discussed as well, but it helps to ensure that there is some reflection on all the issues during the course of each curacy.

Year	Date	Event	Attendees	Year Tutor's Checklist	Formation Quality
2023 - 2024	10 <sup>th</sup> October 2023	VISIT – <b>Prison Chaplaincy</b> at HMP Eastwood P	Curates	Critical engagement with Scripture: Church history (general, national and local); Theology in context; Living with diversity of theology & spirituality; Ethics including some practical current issues; Apologetics	Love for God
	15 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2023	<b>Funerals &amp; death.</b> Evening session	Curates, TIs, Readers		
	29 <sup>th</sup> Jan-1 <sup>st</sup> Feb 2024	<b>RESIDENTIAL Intergenerational</b>	Curates		
	14 <sup>th</sup> March 2024	The <b>Eucharist</b> – praxis, reflection	Curates, TIs	Leading worship as a minister; Spiritual perception of a congregation; The Church & Law; Buildings; Finance; Stewardship; Anglicanism; Ministry in the public sphere	Call to Ministry
	8 <sup>th</sup> May 2024	VISIT – <b>Church Buildings</b> led by Property team	Curates, Readers		
2024 - 2025	Autumn 2024	<b>Marriage</b> and relationships	Curates, TIs	Relationships to: TI, senior persons, colleagues, parishioners; Friendship as a minister; Marriage; Boundaries generally; Conflict; Safeguarding incl. responding to abuse.	Love for People
		VISIT – Youth Work	Curates, Readers		
	Early 2025	<b>RESIDENTIAL</b> Mission & Evangelisms	Curates		
	Spring- summer 2025	<b>Preaching</b> eve. praxis, reflection	Curates, TIs, Readers	Self-care; Pastoral care/counselling; Sick visiting; Mental health; Time management; Pastoral psychology; Resilience; “How I’ve changed”	Wisdom
		VISIT – <b>Schools</b> Education Team	Curates, Readers		
2025 - 2026	Autumn 2025	VISIT <b>Army Chaplaincy</b>	Curates	Mission in context; Working with the Media (print, social, broadcast); Enabling others in mission; schools; rural issues; baptism & confirmation	Fruitfulness
		<b>Prayer</b> Evening	Curates, TIs, Readers		
	Early 2026	<b>RESIDENTIAL</b> Leadership	Curates		
	Spring- summer 2026	<b>Baptism</b> & confirmation	Curates, TIs	Leadership styles; Collaboration; Change management; Enabling others; Training others; sources for Leadership; Critique of “leadership”.	Potential
		VISIT <b>3 Counties Show</b>	Curates, Readers		



## 8. Year Group and Year Tutor

Peer support is always helpful. Much of the support happens among friends or in social media groups such as Curate Caras, but within our small diocese there is a particular importance in both seeking and giving support to fellow curates. You are asked, under the leadership of your Year Tutor, to meet eight times a year as a Year Group (a neutral expression, but terms like Cell Group or Action Learning Set may convey something of the intention).

As noted above, these meetings are not part of the accountability structure, and do not report back to the MDO or Bishop. The Year Tutor is there to ensure the meetings happen, and to facilitate them to keep focus and prevent dwelling on particular issues or unbalanced participation by particular members. If a curate is wrestling with an issue which is not eased by sharing it in the group, the Tutor, and the Group, are encouraged to make them take responsibility for the situation by contacting the MDO themselves to discuss it.

Some pointers for the group times:

The focus for sharing is your own personal experience of life in ministry (or ministry in life). This might include:

- Joys and affirmations
- Encouraging developments, growings, insights
- Vocational developments or challenges
- Relationship issues
- Problems with ... people ... practicalities of ministry ... work
- Tricky questions – ethical issues you need help with
- Curacy issues
- Anything else you need or want to share with your group

Sharing at this level involves a degree of vulnerability that needs honouring and protecting. So some boundaries to make this a safe space for each other are appropriate:

**Confidentiality:** Nothing heard in the group is repeated outside the group (unless it raises a Safeguarding concern). Nothing heard in the group is raised with the person sharing. This gives the person sharing continued control as to where and with who their personal things are shared.

**Listening:** without interrupting, giving space for people to go where they want to go in their sharing  
- without judgment or criticism, seeking to hear the person beneath the words

**Responding:** with respect and acknowledgement of the trust given by sharing - without advising or

directing towards a particular course of action

- use open questions that enable people to look deeper or from other perspectives
- allow silences to enable further processing

**Timing:** Watch the time given to each person to ensure everyone is given space to share.

**Watch:** That the group doesn't turn into a gossip shop or whinge session.

If an issue is raised which cannot be resolved by the curate themselves after reflection in the group, they will be encouraged to tackle it directly with their TI and/or the MDO – the Year Tutor will not function as a messenger or advocate for them

## 9. Advice on Various Topics

### 9.1 A Variety of Ministries

The following list outlines the types of curate that can be found across the Church of England. There is a clear distinction between Stipendiary and Self-Supporting Minister, but note that this does not always match the distinction made at selection between future Incumbent and Assistant clergy – some SSMs will have been discerned at the outset as potential Incumbents but have chosen to begin their ministry as SSMs for personal reasons. Among SSMs personal circumstances mean that the amount of time given to ministry and the particular way it is organised, varies considerably.

- Stipendiary Curate (Incumbent): The “standard” sort of curate (because the most numerous) on whom national frameworks tend to be based (rightly or wrongly). Full-time and parish-based, learning the norms of ministry in a particular context to prepare you for future responsibility as a parish priest.
- Stipendiary Curate (Pioneer): With stipend and housing, but accepted (usually by a national Pioneer Panel) as having a particular calling as a Pioneer, to build new Christian communities and connections outside inherited Church. Pioneers vary – some are called most to breaking new ground in communities, others to building up and establishing new congregations . Probably be looking to move to a future role as a Pioneer within a particular mission project. Others should recognise the Pioneers inhabit a challenging in-between place, and have to bear the strain of being the one who is trying to do something different.
- SSM Curate (parish-deployable): Serving in ordained ministry in a gift of time and means, and ready to do so where needed within reach of home. The curacy may be a home parish, or a neighbouring one, and at the end of curacy they may move benefice depending on local need. Future ministry will normally be as an Assistant in a benefice alongside an Incumbent, though note the point above.
- SSM Curate (parish-local): Similar to the previous, but with vocation was distinctly rooted in your own local church where it will continue.
- SSM Curate (Minister in Secular Employment): Although any SSM may be in “secular employment” in the sense of having a job, MSE means those whose calling to ministry is mainly in their workplace. This normally means that their workplace has recognised them as a public minister (whether or not titled chaplain). MSE is a challenging calling, and often from the point of view of the Church a rather hidden vocation, as MSEs may play only a small part in local parish life. There is a particular task for TIs of MSEs in providing a different sort of support for their curate as they discover their ministry in the secular context.

- SSM Curate (Distinctive Deacon): Called to the particular ministry of the diaconate, and not to be ordained priest – serving and assisting. For some DDs this will overlap with the Pioneer or MSE vocations as you seek to bring the Gospel to new contexts; for others it is a ministry of supporting and building in the parish context.

Callings can evolve, and clergy, in curacy or later, may find that their definition changes. A move from Assistant to Incumbent, or into Pioneer ministry, is usually tested by a national panel.

Regardless of the particular definition(s) of ministry that applies, all curates must recognise that ordained ministry is by its nature the ministry of the Church, under authority – and in curacy, under the authority of your Training Incumbent. This means that even ministry exercised outside the parish (very obviously in the case of most MSEs, but may apply to any curate when they are asked to e.g. take a family wedding or christening) is part of the curacy and under that authority. Curates need to be open about such ministry and discuss with their TI when it is wise, as a curate still in training, to take on particular tasks. Outside the curacy benefice all ministry also needs to recognise the local church and clergy there.

Outside the Diocese curates need to obtain appropriate permission to officiate, which is done by liaison between the relevant Bishop's Offices

## 9.2 Public Ministry

Throughout training curates need to develop a self-aware understanding of themselves as a public minister. This is a particular challenge in the Church of England because as Anglican clergy operate in public spaces far wider than our own congregations, and have short-term contact with a wide range of people, especially through the occasional offices of baptisms, weddings and funerals. The Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy set out in some detail the expectations of ordained ministry. This is a lifelong journey of a particular sort of Christian discipleship, and involves continual growth and reflection. There is path of wisdom to be trodden between maintaining a professional high standard, and being on a pedestal by congregations who may think their clergy are perfect in a way they are not. Two principles may help to reflect on the nature of public ministry, including with a Spiritual Director:

- Integrity. In ministry there is an important skill of being “all things to all people” in the sense of adapting language and demeanour appropriately to a variety of spiritual and social settings. However, multiple personalities depending on context mean this has gone too far. This may happen in different ways: some clergy adopt a certain stiff formality and voice in leading worship; others are rather reserved and cautious in public places, but ostentatiously relaxed in private. Ultimately, the need is to be one person, who has been ordained, and though varied for circumstance, it should be the same honest personality which shows through openly at all times.

- **Morality:** Clergy can rightly be expected to be guided by the basic principles of Christian ethics, to love others and seek their good before one's own. This applies to all areas of life. Selfish decisions for personal gain are no more justifiable in relationships, or property purchasing, than in any other area of life. The particular challenge for many clergy will be in the decisions they make around family life, which are of course shared with a spouse and affect children who may have opinions but also need to be guided. The decisions may affect how clergy and the Church are perceived.

A particular challenge today is the wise use of social media. It is good to be extensively engaged online with this major means of communication for the Gospel today. Again, this is not really difficult. The minister is the same person on social media as in the pulpit or the street (except that, significantly, posts on social media are more easily passed on around the Church and the world, and maybe never lost). Behave the same way to seek to do good in all things, and be aware that posts may be read by diocesan staff as well as unknown parishioners who will derive their image of Christian life from it.

### **9.3 Public & Private Prayer**

At ordination, clergy take on an expectation to pray the Daily Office of Morning and Evening Prayer each day, and to receive Holy Communion every Sunday and Principal Feast. In theory this means exactly that, and the options available for the Office are The Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship Daily Prayer. However, in practice there are a range of other prayer books, and exactly what the daily pattern means will depend on what a curate agrees with their TI in your Learning Agreement, and the framework of your family life through the day and week. Some important points:

- The Church of England is a liturgical church: the regular framework of the office is a discipline that should become a support, and sustain a relationship with God in good times and, more importantly, in bad. Even when we not feel like praying, we can say the Office, and we are still praying.
- Much regular prayer depends very much on the tradition of the benefice, the geography of where the curate and TI live and respective family circumstances. If they only meet to pray together on certain days, use of the same book on the days they pray apart will build up a consistent pattern.
- It is important to use a Lectionary to feed prayer with consistent reading of a wide range of Scripture.

In addition to liturgical prayer, curates need to develop (with support from a Spiritual Director) patterns of private prayer and retreat. There is a distinctive skill of learning to pray in the act of leading worship, but for many clergy, ordination (at least after a few years) means that public worship (even if led by others) no longer feeds spiritually in the same way. Other places and times, maybe new ones, are important in refreshing the soul.

It is strongly recommended that all clergy should have a Spiritual Director (or Soul Friend, Spiritual Accompanier, Confessor) with whom they can share the travails of their spiritual and personal life in complete detachment from all the official structures. Nick Helm coordinates a diocesan network and is happy to help you seek a suitable person, with more information at <https://www.hereford.anglican.org/our-faith/spirituality-and-discipleship/spiritual-direction/>. Though the MDO does not need to know who a curate's Spiritual Director is, he may reasonably seek assurance that they have one.

## 9.4 Leisure Time and Privacy

One of the most threatened boundaries in ministry is that of leisure and work; privacy and public ministry. Many ministers have been heavily committed to the church prior to ordination. Serving as an ordained minister, whether Stipendiary or Self-Supporting, requires different disciplines and good personal awareness. The proper commitment of a minister can easily turn to being over-stretched, to guilt and burnout. Jesus took his disciples apart from time to time, to rest awhile; he himself made time to pray, spent quality time with friends developing relationships and enjoyed a party, (when he thought he was off duty, though his mother had other ideas!) Clergy need patterns and practices of recreation to sustain a lifetime of service to the Church.

Every Stipendiary member of staff should have a complete day off a week, with the evening before included in that time whenever possible. This should ideally be the same day each week, because that makes it easier for others to know that you will not be available then. Training Incumbents should model this way of working to their curates. Self-Supporting Ministers need to ensure that they are not giving every spare waking moment to the Church on top of their jobs. Training Incumbents should be understanding about this.

Diocesan training events are not leisure time - on the contrary, they are often quite demanding days. Nor are Retreats or courses that you may undertake of your own choice – these are also part of your ministry – which is why they need planning with TIs.

It is important to find time off for both self-care in managing your own household matters and relationships with family and friends. It is important that our use of time reflects our theology. A God of love requires that we love one another as much as we love ourselves. God, who rests after the act of creation, offers as the first experience of humankind, a day of rest prior to taking up the blessing of work.

The leave entitlement for Stipendiary clergy is detailed in your Statement of Particulars. You are entitled to Bank Holidays off – but not Christmas Day or Good Friday. Full details are in the documents you will be sent.

Self-Supporting Ministers should define holiday arrangements carefully within their Learning Agreements. These should take into account family responsibilities and the demands of working life, whatever form that takes for you. Remember what was said above about realistic Agreements.

## What to do when Things Go Wrong

- Don't suffer alone or in silence. Talk to someone. Do something before things get too bad.
- Your Year Tutor is there as support to listen and help you.
- The other curates can provide support. They are going through similar enough experiences to be able to say to some extent: "I will pray with you.."
- Talk to your Spiritual Director regularly and keep your Training Incumbent and Year Tutor informed of any on going difficulties. It is easier to sort things out at an early stage than to let them fester.
- When prayer seems to hit a glass ceiling, the Bible seems dry as dust and worship loses its savour, remember the truth is that God remains the same, whatever our feelings, and he is faithful.
- When you can't talk to your Training Incumbent, remember that you are not the first for whom this has happened, nor the last. Talk to your year Tutor about this.
- When relationships in the parish break down, keep talking. Each of you is made in the image of God, however hidden that is.
- For those in clergy housing, if something is wrong with the house, contact Sophie or Mike at the Diocesan Office (or your Archdeacon if they are not available) as soon as possible.

## Areas of difficulty can arise because:

- Both Training Incumbent and curate care deeply about their work, but may have different gifts and priorities, or competing gifts and abilities.
- Boundaries are unavoidably blurred in working relationships in the church - between work and leisure (what is a parish picnic??); between personal and professional issues; between home and church. This blurring is different for Stipendiary and Self- Supporting Ministers.
- Because of the deep commitment which you have given to this outworking of your life as a Christian, you are vulnerable and open (good, but potentially risky traits). The same is true for others in ministry. You will hurt and inflict hurt. Neither side will mean it. Maturity as a Christian minister means working out how to go on loving, how to forgive, how to be reconciled. Remember, you are a child of God and so is your Incumbent.
- Conflict is also normal, creative and a point of growth. It can lead to the most amazing resolutions when not avoided but faced up to in a mature way.

## 10. Resources

### 10.1 UKME heritage

Advice and support for clergy of UKME/GMH background is available from several sources:

- Within the Diocese of Hereford, the Revd Kina Robertshaw is our Racial Justice Officer
- CMEAC is the committee of the Archbishop's Council with specific responsibility for addressing BAME concerns in the Church, with more information [here](#).
- The [Ordained Vocations Mentor Directory](#) provides a range of people passionate about supporting those from disadvantaged groups.
- The [Anglican Minority Ethnic Network](#) is an independent group promoting the presence and participation of Minority Ethnic Anglicans in all structures of our church in the service of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

### 10.2 Disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties

Similarly there are several possible sources of help:

- [Access to Work](#) is the major Government benefit available to provide in-work assistance.
- National Church of England resources exist at [Barrier-Free Belonging](#)
- Christian organisations working with specific groups include [Go-Sign](#) for BSL users, the [Torch Trust](#) for sight loss, and [Through the Roof](#) and [Churches for All](#) for disability access to church.

### 10.3 Financial and practical help

We know that finances in curacy can be difficult. Please do speak to the MDO if you feel able. There are a range of trusts offering support to clergy, some independent (and limited to particular groups or needs) but others accessed through the Bishop which may be able to help. In addition, the [Clergy Support Trust](#) offers a range of financial and practical help and are well worth contacting in need.