



How to ...

Move from curacy to a first incumbency

This guide is for curates who have been discerned and assessed from incumbent-level responsibility.

The move from being a curate to being an incumbent for the first time is a very challenging one. For most clergy, it is the most stretching transition they make in the whole of their ministry. Recent research from the National Ministry Team (*Moving in Power: transitions in ordained ministry* (2021)) suggest that this is the only transition at which a drop in wellbeing is consistently observable. They also report that this transition leads to an increased sense of vocational fulfilment. This guide is to help that transition happen as smoothly as possible.

Completing curacy

Before moving on, it is essential that your curacy is completed and that you have a letter from Bishop Lee (as sponsoring bishop) to confirm this. There are three elements to completing your curacy:

1. Portfolio. This needs to be completed and submitted to the Ministry Development Team by end of March in the third year of your curacy. Your portfolio will be read by an external reader who will write a report to Bishop Lee.
2. Training Incumbent's Report. This is a report on a pro-forma sheet. Your training incumbent needs to submit this to Ministry Development by the end of March in the third year of your curacy. You need to sign this report, and have the chance to make any additions that you think are necessary.
3. Bishop Lee will read both the report on your portfolio and the TI's Report. On the basis of these he will decide whether he can write to formally conclude your curacy.

Once you have received your letter from Bishop Lee, you remain a curate in the setting you are already serving. However, you are now able to be deployed elsewhere.

Finding an incumbency

You are responsible for finding your next post. There is support in doing this, but the responsibility remains yours. Curacies in the Diocese of Bristol normally last up to four years. So you have time to do this.

You may normally begin looking for posts once you have submitted your portfolio; that is from Easter in your third year of curacy. If you want to look at a role before you have received your letter formally concluding your curacy from Bishop Lee, you must inform the sponsoring bishop and adviser for curacy. This will allow Bishop Lee and Rod to support and help you. It will also mean that the Bishop of Bristol's Office are prepared for a request for a clergy current status letter.

For all applications please let the Bishop of Bristol know why you are looking at a particular post, and send a copy of your application form to the Bishop's Office.

It is always helpful for the adviser for curacy to know which roles you are looking at. This enables the bishops to support you in your application.

Support in finding an incumbency

- As part of the IME 2 programme, there is a day about 'moving on' which sets out some of the parameters.
- A lunch with the archdeacons is normally organised shortly before Easter to enable them to speak about the application process in the Diocese of Bristol, and to enable them to get to know you.
- Advice is available from Bishop Lee (by appointment).
- A vocational conversation can be arranged with the DDO (Sue Gent).
- Interview coaching can be arranged through the Director of Ministry Development (Simon Taylor).

Things to consider as you move to first incumbency

- Your support structures: what do you want to continue? (e.g. peers from IME 1 & 2, spiritual direction); what new support do you need to find? (e.g. new colleagues, networks, mentoring, coaching, diocesan groups); what do you need to protect and nurture? (e.g. time with family and friends); what do you want to let go?
- Take time to prepare with your family, emotionally as well as practically, for the move
- How will you access your preferred styles of worship (especially if these differ from your new ministry context)?
- What conversations do you need to have about how your spouse and family will relate to the new parish or setting?
- Ask the diocese you are moving into about their support for first incumbents
- Pace yourself, especially in the first year, instead of trying to address every issue immediately

Support for a first incumbency in the Diocese of Bristol

Dioceses vary in their provision. This is what the Diocese of Bristol offers to new incumbents:

- Induction day, for those who have not served their curacy in the Diocese of Bristol
- Mentoring/coaching – a set of six sessions, renewable as you transition into your new role
- Meeting with area dean, to welcome you into the deanery and provide ongoing support
- Meeting with the archdeacon, after six months to check you are doing well
- Regional consultation for those in positions of first responsibility. A course based at Sarum College over three days.
- First Incumbents Learning Community – a gathering of 3–6 first incumbents to share joys and challenges, and offer mutual support. Facilitated by the Director of Ministry Development, and with occasional input from others as required. The members set the agenda of this group. It may take time after your incumbency begins to set up this group, as we need a number of people to make this viable.

Further information

The [Clergy Transitions Service](#) provides free, confidential, personal support for clergy who are at a vocational crossroad, or who are looking for a fresh opportunity.

The [Society of Mary and Martha](#) at Sheldon is a community founded to support clergy in all stages of ministry.