

COVENANT FOR CLERGY CARE AND WELL BEING

The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scripture and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in every generation.

In its formularies, the Church of England recognises that God calls men and women to serve as deacons, priests and bishops to build up and equip the whole People of God.

Conscious that such a calling is both a privilege and a demand, we as the Church of England commit together to promote the welfare of our clergy and their households in terms expressed in the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing.

We undertake to work together to seek to coordinate and improve our approach to clergy care and wellbeing that ordained ministers flourish in their service of the mission of God within and beyond the Church.

In July 2017, General Synod considered how best to promote the wellbeing of all clergy and endorsed proposals that some form of aspirational national ‘benchmark’ would be the most effective way of encouraging a change of culture and the mutual affirmation and accountability that is the foundation of a Christian approach to wellbeing.

A Working Party was duly established to firm up proposals and report back by July 2019 on its work. After an extensive process of consultation with individuals, organisations and General Synod members, the Covenant was duly adopted by the General Synod in February 2020.

It was then sent to every Diocesan Synod for discussion and debate. The hope and expectation was that Diocesan Synods, Deanery Synods and PCCs would engage in a Big Conversation about the issues and then adopt the Covenant formally. In order to facilitate this conversation, a number of supporting documents were produced in a way that enables their practical use by clergy, parishes, deaneries and dioceses:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/clergy-resources/national-clergy-hr/supporting-clergy-health-and-wellbeing/covenant-clergy#na>

The clergy, the local church and the wider church through the office of Bishop are asked to make a series of mutual commitments which together serve to emphasise that this shared ministry is mutually-dependent for the benefit of all and promotes the health of the whole body of Christ.

Accordingly, in November 2020, Liverpool Diocesan Synod passed the following motion: this Synod

- i) welcomes the Clergy Covenant proposals
- ii) over the course of the next 12 months asks all PCCs to discuss how the Covenant may best inform parish life and practice;
- iii) agrees to hold a substantive debate on the Clergy Covenant in October 2021

The idea behind it was to ensure that there was wide debate and so that when it came back to Diocesan Synod, members would be well informed of the issues and could then adopt the Covenant understanding its implications.

Although Diocesan Synod met in November 2021, it was the beginning of a new triennium and so there was significant other business to be transacted. The pandemic also disrupted church life and finally many churches have given time to exploring what Living in Love and Faith means. Fit for Mission 2 also required a lot of time to develop in 2021. For all these reasons, it is doubtful whether there has been meaningful discussion at deanery and parish level. So the substantive debate at Synod has been postponed until now.