

Alternative Oversight Ministers: Role Description and Person Specification

Purpose of the Role

To provide spiritual oversight and pastoral care to clergy, lay leaders, PCCs and congregations who find themselves in impaired fellowship with their bishop(s) because of the House of Bishops' commendation of the Prayers of Love and Faith and their stated intention to provide authorised liturgy to ask for God's blessing for same sex couples on their "journey of love and faith". This obviously applies specifically to our relationship with those bishops who have voted for the proposals, and not to that with those who dissented from them.

Background

The proposals outlined in GS2328 as the next stage in the Living in Love and Faith process represent a watershed for many in the Church of England. The blessing of same sex partnerships (however much hedged around with disclaimers), potential proposals to allow clergy to enter into same sex marriages, and further possible provision for same sex marriage (including allowing clergy to enter a same sex marriage) and for a change in the Church's teaching and pastoral practice on sex outside the parameters set out in Canon B30 mean that there are clergy and congregations who will now regard themselves as in impaired fellowship with those bishops who have voted for these innovations.

The House of Bishops has indicated that it considers that it is working within the framework of making no change to the doctrine of marriage, and no change "contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England." We regret that neither the doctrinal and ethical changes which are presaged in GS2328, nor the liturgical provisions (which, on the basis of the *lex orandi, lex credendi* principle should be expressions of our Anglican biblical and theological heritage) give us any confidence that the House is adhering to that framework and indicate that it has indeed already crossed a line into heterodoxy.

Spiritual Oversight

This document sets out a role description and person specification for the appointment of a number of people to provide temporary oversight for clergy and parishes who find that they can no longer relate fully to their bishop(s) because fellowship with that bishop is impaired by virtue of their adoption of the PLF/LLF proposals.

This does not prejudge our response to whatever may emerge from the House of Bishops' deliberations on "formal structural pastoral provision." This would be an interim arrangement as we await developments in relation to our request for appropriate differentiation to be put in place. Because we continue to remain faithful to the received historic teaching of the Church of England, the reformed catholic church of this realm, there is nothing in this document that seeks to split us from that inheritance of faith, nor to repudiate the temporal jurisdiction of its bishops.

Role Description

This is first and foremost a relational role. The oversight minister is to be a friend to clergy, lay leaders, PCCs and congregation.

- To be available at the request of an incumbent or other clergy office holder to give counsel, prayerful support, encouragement, advice and friendship in person and, as necessary, by phone, WhatsApp or other media. This would be a regular commitment, and it is expected that there should be at least a monthly check-in between the oversight minister and the clergy concerned.
- To meet with PCCs and congregations at their request
- To attend worship on occasion in the parishes in which they exercise oversight and to preach and/or lead as requested (all within the parameters and provisions of Canon C8)
- To meet with clergy on an annual basis to enable them to review their ministry
- To be prepared to advocate on behalf of a member of the clergy and/or their church and PCC as requested
- To advise a parish during vacancy and to work with patrons and others as requested

Person Specification

- To be a person of prayer, spiritual discernment, and maturity and to take a lead in praying for clergy, their family (where applicable), and congregations
- To be a person with a history of engagement in apostolic mission and of training and releasing others in mission and church leadership
- To be a proven pastor-teacher who handles scripture faithfully with a track record of maintaining sound church doctrine and practice by teaching truth and rebuking error
- To be a person who can demonstrate evidence of relational leadership ability and collaborative ministry practice, a team player, whose leadership and integrity are well respected across the church
- To be ready to assist clergy and parishes in the work of teaching and training on sexual and gender ethics and promoting unity in the Body of Christ through our identity in Jesus Christ.
- To be a person of Christian character and emotional intelligence
- To have an understanding and empathy for the demands of leadership in a parish/chaplaincy/ecclesial community
- To be committed to the Church of England's Five Guiding Principles, recognising that among our constituency there are those who variously hold complementarian and egalitarian convictions, and to be willing to work within that framework
- To be committed to working within the Church of England's safeguarding framework, observing all safeguarding standards
- To be an external adviser and sounding-board for church leaders, lay and ordained, who need wise counsel, to assist in the mediation and resolution of disputes, and to assist in the resolution of pastoral breakdown between leaders, staff and members.

Requirements

- To fulfil the Biblical expectations of an elder as set out in the Pastoral Epistles and the Ordinal.
- In episcopal orders, or at least 10 years in priest's orders
- Commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ and a desire that people may come to know him as the Son of God, humanity's only Saviour from sin
- Commitment to the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness, and to the vows they took at their ordination

- To be able wholeheartedly to subscribe to and affirm the CEEC statement of faith and declarations
- Commitment to work with our partners in the GSFA
- Demonstrable commitment to the Five Guiding Principles
- Up to date DBS check and safeguarding training
- Observance of proper confidentiality
- Evidence that they are themselves accountable to others and are themselves committed to continuous learning and growth in discipleship, including being accountable to a bishop who has, on theological grounds, dissented from these proposals, and being committed to work with such bishops