

Commissioning of overseers

For alternative spiritual oversight within the Church of England

Background to this service

The proposals outlined 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), 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 now regard themselves as in impaired fellowship with those bishops who have supported these innovations.

Many clergy and congregations have as a result lost confidence in the spiritual ministry of their bishop, believing them to be in error on this issue. The reality of this impaired relationship has for some expressed itself in an inability to participate in Holy Communion. The Church of England Evangelical Council's (CEEC) facilitation of Alternative Spiritual Oversight (ASO) is designed to enable such clergy and congregations to stay in the Church of England at this time. This is a provision which is temporary, pending the structural differentiation that CEEC has for some time argued will be necessary if a change in doctrine and practice is pursued.

In this service, bishops and priests are being commissioned to offer alternative spiritual oversight. This liturgy makes no

pretence to be a service of ordination or consecration. Those being commissioned are clergy who have been interviewed for the role on the basis of recommendations and references. All have indicated that they are committed to the Church of England's Five Guiding Principles and to working within the Church of England's safeguarding framework, properly observing all safeguarding standards. Together, they will be commissioned by the congregation here present on behalf of CEEC and its partners to provide spiritual care and counsel to those who are now bereft of the oversight that should properly be offered by their bishop.

The role requires each of them:

- 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
- 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

Welcome, introductions

The Gathering

We gather in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All: **Amen.**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. (Ephesians 1:3–8)

Brothers and sisters, we have come together to worship God, to hear his word, to pray for the Church of England and the Church worldwide in these testing times, and to commission these persons with prayer and acclamation for the task of alternative spiritual oversight.

Psalm 96

Hymn: Crown Him with many Crowns

Confession

God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ
to save us from our sins,
to be our advocate in heaven,
and to bring us to eternal life.

As we stand together before God,
and trusting in his grace alone,
let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God's commandments
and to live in love and peace with all.

**All: Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.**

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Collect

Merciful God,
you have prepared for those who love you
such good things as pass our understanding:
pour into our hearts such love toward you that we,
loving you in all things and above all things,
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Interviews: with ASO panel members

Bible reading: John 21:15-25

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?'

'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'

¹⁶ Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

¹⁷ The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.' ¹⁹ Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, 'Follow me!'

²⁰ Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against

Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is going to betray you?') ²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?'

²² Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.' ²³ Because of this, the rumour spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?'

²⁴ This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

²⁵ Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

This is the word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Sermon

Hymn: Yet not I but Christ in me

Videos: From three who have requested ASO

The Commissioning

At your ordination, you made the declarations that are required of a presbyter in the Church of God. You are asked to reaffirm those declarations in the presence of those gathered here today.

The overseers are asked these questions by a variety of people and respond in unison.

Do you accept the holy Scriptures as revealing all things necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?

I do so accept them.

Will you be diligent in prayer, in reading holy Scripture, and in all studies that will deepen your faith and help you to bear witness to the truth of the Gospel?

By the help of God, I will.

Will you lead Christ's people in proclaiming His glorious Gospel, so the good news of salvation may be heard in every place?

By the help of God, I will.

Will you faithfully minister the doctrine and sacraments of Christ as the Church of England has received them, so that the people committed to your charge may be defended against error and flourish in the faith?

By the help of God, I will.

Will you, knowing yourself to be reconciled to God in Christ, strive to be an instrument of God's peace in the Church and in the world?

By the help of God, I will.

Will you endeavour to fashion your own life and that of your household according to the way of Christ, that you may be a pattern and example to Christ's people?

By the help of God, I will.

Will you work with your fellow servants in the Gospel for the sake of the kingdom of God?

By the help of God, I will.

Will you accept and minister the discipline of this Church, and respect authority duly exercised within it?

By the help of God, I will.

Will you then, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, continually stir up the gift of God that is in you, to make Christ known among all whom you serve?

By the help of God, I will.

To be a Spiritual Overseer in these times will require faithfulness to scripture and the faith as the Church of England has received it, prayerful engagement, loving service, relational leadership, and strong character to face the challenges of the day.

Peter exhorts the elders to tend the flock of God that is in their charge, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have them do it. (1 Peter 5:2)

Are you willing to take up this additional calling of alternative spiritual oversight?

I am, the Lord being my helper.

Paul admonishes Timothy to hold to the standard of sound teaching that he has heard, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus, and to guard the good deposit entrusted to him, with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Are you determined to hold to the faith revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and to teach it faithfully in the face of all distortions and error?

I am, the Lord being my helper.

Luke records St Paul's parting injunction to the elders of the church in Ephesus to "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."

Are you ready, in the power of the Spirit, to minister to those committed to your care with love and pastoral attentiveness?

I am, the Lord being my helper.

Those present here today have heard these overseers' reiteration of their ordination declarations and their willingness to take up this role. Is it your wish that we should commission them as Spiritual Overseers?

It is.

Will you uphold them with your prayers?

We will.

The congregation stretch out their hands towards them as a sign of prayer and commissioning and say together:

We have heard your willingness to take up the role of Alternative Spiritual Oversight. We now ask that, according to the riches of his glory, God may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

And so we commission you for this task, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intercessions

Hymn: He will hold me fast

Blessing

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever and the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and remain with us always.

*All: **Amen***

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

All: In the name of Christ, Amen

We are grateful to All Souls, Langham Place for their welcome and the use of their building for this special occasion today.

Material included in this service is taken from Common Worship, Archbishops Council, 2006

NIV 2011, Biblical Inc

CCLI No: 1797

Overseers being commissioned today:

Christabel Ager

David Banting

Pete Broadbent

Kieran Bush

John Coles

Paul Darlington

Ian Dowsett

Paul Harcourt

David Heath-Whyte

Julian Henderson

Angus MacLeay

Jane Morris

Rob Munro

Paul Perkin

Mark Pickles

Vaughan Roberts

Henry Scriven

Keith Sinclair

Mike Smith

Rod Thomas

To be commissioned at a later date:

Anita Colpus

Mike Hill

Paul Jump

William Taylor