

Don't talk about me without me: Broken Rites commentary on the Covenant for the care and well-being of clergy and their households.

Broken Rites is support group for divorced and separated clergy spouses and partners (www.brokenrites.org). The clergy covenant for wellbeing (Appendix 1) was passed by act of Synod in February 2020. (GS2133) In it the Church of England commits "to promote the welfare of our clergy and their households" . This covenant is therefore not just for the clergy and the wider church but for their households as well. The sections of GS2133 relating to clergy households can be found in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3. Broken Rites fully supports this initiative as it believes that attending to the well being of clergy and clergy households is one way of reducing relationship breakdown. However the Big Conversation that the church has now initiated does not include members of the household.

Broken Rites considers that members of clergy households should have the opportunity to engage in the conversation in their own right, should they wish to do so. We have therefore adapted some of the questions addressed to members of the clergy and invite members of clergy households to reflect on them and, if you choose, to share those reflections either with your household, with members of other clergy households or with other members of the church, including church leaders such as bishops or those responsible for training ordinands. We hope that by doing this it will help to create a greater awareness and understanding of the care and wellbeing of clergy households across the whole church. We have also created a Facebook page and group called "Wellbeing of clergy households" if you would like to share your thoughts with others in that way.

The Big Conversation has four sections and four sets of questions to reflect on. Here are our modified versions of them for members of clergy households.

1. Reflecting on our baptismal calling

As a member of the priesthood of all believers we are called by God to our own individual vocation, to work with and respect others in their calling and to build up the body of Christ. To do this faithfully we believe that each individual is well-advised to:

*Attend to their own care and well being and to set aside time for rest and recreation, retreat and study/activities for their own and others' flourishing and growth.

*Understand how their role as a member of a clergy household is perceived and experienced within the church

Questions to reflect on

How does your life reflect that of Christ?

What resources are offered to you by the diocese to promote care and well-being?

Are you "hard to reach" when care is offered or wellbeing is promoted? Or are senior clergy and wellbeing services hard to access in your area?

2. Reflecting on looking after yourself and others.

Given the strong association between physical and psychological health and wellbeing, the Christian attends to their own health and fitness to promote resilience, thus linking care and self-care.

To do this faithfully we believe that each individual is advised to

- *Practise good stewardship of their own health and wellbeing in support of their call
- *Establish and observe appropriate personal boundaries between home and parish
- *Grow in awareness of their limits and vulnerability, monitoring their own needs and health in times when they are providing demanding levels of care to others.

Questions to reflect on.

With whom do you regularly reflect on how you are nurturing your own calling?

To what extent are you enjoying good physical and mental health?

What boundaries of time, space and demands on you, both physical and psychological do you aspire to? How are you doing?

What are the warning signs of stress and burnout for you? What signs of resilience do you recognise in yourself? How can you build on your qualities?

Do you know where to find help, whether for diagnostic stress tests or other self- help tools or support, from within or beyond your diocese?

3. Reflecting on being a public figure

By the nature of your household you are to some extent in the public eye.

To do this faithfully, we believe that each person is well-advised to

*Understand the character, shape and boundaries of this public service in conversation with others.

*Be aware of the way in which their own life and story affects them when in the public eye.

Questions to ponder

How much do you find yourself in the public eye?

How does your personality affect you when in the public eye?

When you are vulnerable as a public figure are you able to manage this in a creative way?

How are you perceived by others to respond to feedback or complaints?

4. Reflecting on you and your household

The support and encouragement of those who share their lives with ordained ministers is a significant contribution to their care and wellbeing. It is therefore part of the responsibility of the whole church to provide for the minister's household

To do this faithfully we believe that each minister is well-advised to

*Ensure their approach to ministerial work takes into account the needs of those with whom they share their lives

*Work with the local church to ensure that boundaries in relation to their household are respected and where necessary are enforced.

Questions to ponder

What are the pressure points, if any, for your intimate family relationships and the ordained person's ministry? How are these addressed or mitigated?

Can you have an appropriate conversation with your church about the boundaries between the ordained person's ministry and the household's needs? If not, is there someone who could help you?

Appendix 1.

The clergy covenant for wellbeing

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 Scriptures 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 may flourish in their service of the mission of God within and beyond the Church.

Appendix 2

D. The Minister's Household.

Scriptural Insights: Titus 1:5-9; 2 Timothy 1:3-7; Romans 12:9-13
Guidelines for the Professional Conduct References: Public Ministry, Wellbeing, Ministry at the time of Deepest Need, Care for the Carers

Given the public nature of elements of the work of the ordained minister, the support and encouragement of those who share their intimate lives with ordained ministers is a significant contribution to their care and wellbeing. This is particularly true when ordained ministers inhabit a home associated with a cure or ministerial post. It is therefore part of the responsibility of the whole church to provide for the minister's household.

The minister commits:

- to ensure that their own approach to ministerial work gives due regard to the needs of those with whom they share their lives as part of their ministerial vocation;
- to working with the local church to ensure that boundaries in relation to the minister's household are respected and, where necessary, enforced.

The local church commits:

- to work with the minister to ensure that boundaries in relation to the minister's household are respected and, where necessary, enforced;
- to take account of the care and wellbeing of a minister's household when any initiative, project or other aspect of ministerial work is being considered.

The wider church, exercised through the office of the Bishop, commits:

- to the extent that it is welcomed or required, to offer pastoral care to the minister's household;

- to ensure that the arrangements for the provision and the standard of maintenance of any property for a minister and their household are regularly monitored and, where necessary, improved.

Appendix 3

D. The minister's Household

Questions for the minister

Where are the pressure points, if any, in the relationship between your intimate family relationships and your wider ministry> how are these addressed or mitigated?

Can you have an appropriate conversation with your local church about the boundaries between your wider ministry and your household's needs? If not, is there anyone who can assist you?

Questions for the local church

How can you most helpfully take part in a conversation with your ordained minister(s) about the pressure points referred to above and the ways that the local church can support those in intimate relationship with them?

Where an ordained minister has children who are members of your local church what steps can you take to protect them from being singled out or judged by different standards to other children?

Questions for the wider church and the bishop

What support do you offer to clergy spouses, partners, children and others with whom they share their household lives? How do you know that you are offering what they need?

What support and training do you offer to retired clergy, to the spouses and partners of deceased ordained ministers and to those who experience marital breakdown where one or both members of the couple are ordained ministers?