

## **DIOCESE OF CANTERBURY**

### **WRITING A WORKING AGREEMENT BEFORE THE START OF A CURACY**

A working agreement is exactly what its name implies - an agreement between the curate and their training incumbent about how you will work together and what you can expect from each other. A working agreement is not a contract of employment, though it will cover similar areas to a job description and set out the expectations of both the curate and training incumbent.

The working agreement will describe the areas of ministry which will be a particular focus for the curate and how their work will address their specific developmental needs. Over the course of a three-year curacy, the agreement should be regularly reviewed to ensure that the curate experiences a full range of ministerial tasks.

Conversation about the areas covered in the working agreement will be a natural part of the appointment process, and the meeting which the Head of Vocations will facilitate between curate and training incumbent will provide an opportunity to explore some of these in detail. The Head of Vocations is subsequently available to help as you formalise the working agreement, especially if there are areas where you are finding it difficult to match your expectations.

Once you have written a draft working agreement, please e-mail it to [ddo@diocant.org](mailto:ddo@diocant.org) in Word or PDF format. If there are any suggestions for changes, these will be sent back to both the curate and training incumbent for you to discuss together. Once all parties have agreed a final version, you will be asked to sign a copy as a record of what you have agreed. **This is a requirement of ordination.**

### **REVISING A WORKING AGREEMENT**

The Working Agreement is a record of your shared expectations about the role, so should not be changed unless both parties are in agreement with the changes. It is good practice to look through the agreement after a few months to reflect on how the Curate's emerging ministerial practice compares to the patterns of ministry agreed before ordination. At that point it is simply worth noting any divergence unless the Curate or TI feel that there is (or could be) a problem.

At the start of the second year of curacy it will be necessary to revisit the working agreement more formally. This is especially important where the curate has recently been ordained as a priest. This process should take place in a supervision session and should include the feedback from the first year Assessment of Curacy report.

**Any changes to the Working Agreement must be agreed between the curate and training incumbent and the new document sent to the Head of Vocations at [jmarlow@diocant.org](mailto:jmarlow@diocant.org)**

## **WORKING AGREEMENT PROFORMA**

The working agreement should seek to lay down shared expectations about the following areas:

### **a) Time given to the role**

Ordained ministers are called to different contexts and different patterns of working. As such, it is important to understand how much time a curate is expecting to give to the role and how this compares with the expectations of the parish and training incumbent. Please see Appendix A for a planner which might help clarify your working pattern.

Full-time stipendiary clergy work five and a half days per week. When thinking about the number of hours worked in a day, it can be helpful to divide the day into three sessions, (morning, afternoon, evening) and then normally work two of those sessions each day, up to maximum of eleven sessions per week. In practice there will be some times during the year when you are working much more than this and some which will be more relaxed.

Part-time stipendiary clergy will agree the proportion of the week they are expected to work before being offered the role. Half-time might be expected to be no more than seven sessions during a normal week.

Self-supporting ordained ministers (SSOMs) are volunteers and so agreement about how much time you are able to give to your new role is particularly important, especially where you have paid employment, other voluntary work or family commitments. The minimum time for a curacy is one day per week plus Sundays, which is a four sessions per week. SSOMs should not work more than full-time clergy and should take a full day away from parish commitments each week.

### **b) Praying together**

The church is rooted in Scripture and is sustained through commitment to daily prayer. The training incumbent and curate need to share in corporate prayer, not only with the congregation but also with each other, and regularly with the Local Ministry Team where there is one. There needs to be agreement about the times and occasions for this prayer time together and whether this will take place in person or online.

The canons of the Church of England assume that ordained ministers will say Morning and Evening Prayer daily, whether corporately or privately. Although this will be subject to local practice, it is expected that the incumbent and curate will meet for daily prayer whenever possible.

### **c) Public worship**

The curate should have regular opportunities to share in the planning, preparation and leading of worship, and in preaching. Agreement should be reached about how often it is expected the curate will:

- Be present (and how this will be divided across congregations and churches)
- Be in an up-front supporting role such as deaconing, leading intercessions or reading the gospel (and whether they will be robed).
- Lead the service
- Preach

#### **d) Team meetings and supervision**

It is good when Christian ministers, working together, can be friends. However, it is important to maintain clarity of purpose and task between business meetings, supervision sessions and social meetings. These may be defined in the following way:

- Business meetings, staff meetings and ministry team meetings. These will typically involve both ordained and other ministers and church officers. Business meetings are for information sharing and planning and might include weekly or monthly meetings, away-days and residential meetings.
- Supervision sessions where the purpose is to enable the Curate to reflect with the Incumbent on the curate's experience of ministry and their role as an ordained person. **Two hours per fortnight should be the minimum time allocated to such supervision.**
- Social and friendship meetings.

#### **e) Professional behaviour**

There should be specific agreement that the curate and training incumbent will model mutual respect and trust in each other's leadership, will operate openly together and be transparent around any difficulties or misunderstandings in their working together. You should be familiar with the Church of England publication, [Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy](#).

In particular, there needs to be agreement as to what is confidential to the individual minister, and what needs to be shared between the curate and incumbent for reflection, information and safeguarding.

#### **f) Balance of work and of possible areas of special responsibility**

It is important that from the beginning the curate has a balance of experience and is not expected to concentrate on one area of work to the exclusion of all others. At the same time full recognition should be given to special gifts the curate will bring to the parish.

By the end of IME2 there should have been at least one project that the curate has been responsible for leading, from the planning stage to implementation and review.

The delegation of tasks and areas of responsibility to the curate needs to be communicated clearly both to the curate themselves and to other leaders and participants. This will include an indication of the scope and limits of the task or project, the timescale, and whether any specific outcomes are expected.

Distinctive Deacons have a particular calling to ministry which takes the church out of the building and engages with the local community. The projects which they are responsible for should take this vocation into consideration.

#### **g) Role in the wider community and church**

It is important that curates have an opportunity both to use their gifts and to learn in the community, the diocese, and the wider church. Activities such as being a school governor, being a member of Diocesan Synod or supporting other churches and ecumenical projects need to be agreed in advance with the training incumbent and a realistic estimation made of the time this will take the curate out of the parish.

## **h) Communication in the parish**

It is important that both training incumbent and curate are clear about how information is shared in both written and spoken form. This should take into account the medium and technologies which will be used and the expected frequency and style of regular communication. The aim is that communication between the curate, training incumbent and the parish as a whole is effective and does not risk misunderstandings and communication breakdown.

The use of social media should also be considered under this heading. If either the incumbent or curate is active on social media, there needs to be agreement about the extent to which personal accounts will be used to discuss parish life.

## **i) Time for study**

As well as time allocated for preparation of worship, preaching and teaching it is necessary, for maintaining the quality of our ministry, that time is also taken for study which may not be immediately and directly related to the work in hand. Training incumbents need to be aware that in the early months following ordination the curate is likely to need more time for preparation than when they become more experienced.

Regular time each week should be allowed for personal study and preparation, including the work required by the IME2 modules and the assessment of curacy (AoC) process. The IME2 programme includes one residential weekend and three Saturdays per year. You will also be part of an action learning set (ALS) which meets six times each year. These are all requirements for completion of your title post and need to be put in the calendar as a higher priority than activities in the parish.

**Curates and training incumbents will be given as much notice as possible of the requirements of IME2 and dates of sessions and it is expected that the training incumbent will arrange cover in order to release the curate from all parish commitments that clash with IME2.**

Full-time stipendiary curates should be allowed one full day per week for study and for IME2 activities. In an eleven-session week this would be two or three sessions. This is emphatically a study day, not a second day off. There is no reason why a curate should not (for example) attend Morning and Evening Prayer on a study day, and the curate may need to be flexible about when the study day is taken. During weekend residentials, it would normally be expected that the Saturday is taken as the study day and the Sunday is free from parish commitments.

Part-time stipendiary curates would normally be expected to devote one day per week to study and preparation. In a seven-session week, this would take up two sessions for as long as they are undertaking IME2.

Self-supporting ordained curates will need to decide whether the time they give to study will be counted as parish hours or undertaken in their own time. This will impact on the amount of time agreed in section a) of this document so that a minimum of four sessions are available for ministry.

## **j) Safeguarding training**

Before ordination, all ordinands are required to have undertaken the Basic, Foundation and Leadership Safeguarding Training Modules, along with the Domestic Abuse Module, Safer

Recruitment and People Management Module and Modern Slavery. These last for three years and need to be kept up to date. Study time should be used to keep safeguarding training current.

#### **k) Time off**

Ordained ministry is not a job to be done but a vocation to a way of life. It is possible to see two extreme reactions to this. First - the workaholic where 'All of life, every moment, is to be worked in God's name with no time for rest'. This is contrary to the creation ordinance and God's valuation of rest upon the seventh day. Conversely it is not enough to simply 'be for God'. Ministry includes many tasks which must be done. However, it is important that due balance is given between the vocation to ordained ministry and other vocations such as family life, self-care and paid employment.

The amount of time free from parish duties, IME2 and public duties should be:

- One and a half days per week, including one complete 24-hour period.
- The equivalent of six weeks holiday per year, including six Sundays. (For full-time clergy this would be 36 days per year, six of which would be days you are working a half-day. Holiday is calculated pro-rata for part-time.)
- Clergy are also encouraged to take an additional rest day per month, giving a 48-hour period with no work responsibilities.

#### **l) Personal and spiritual development (The Canterbury Diet)**

In addition to participating in the corporate life and worship of the parish, both training incumbent and curate will be committed to developing their own Christian discipleship and life of prayer. It is expected that both training incumbent and curate will have regular access to a spiritual director/accompanier and will go on retreat at least once per year. If a week-long residential retreat is not compatible with the curate's family situation or work commitments, a quiet day could be taken once every 6/8 weeks. It is inadvisable for the training incumbent and curate to have the same spiritual director/accompanier or to use someone from within the parish.

#### **m) Diocesan training**

The Diocese of Canterbury is committed to providing resources for training and development of clergy and lay people.

Agreement to be a training incumbent or to serve a first curacy in the Diocese of Canterbury involves the formal commitment to take part fully in the relevant training programmes.

#### **n) Commitment to the diocese and wider church**

Collaborative ministry is an essential feature of the life and mission of the Church of England. This finds its expression in sharing of ministry between clergy and lay people within the parish, in the fellowship of the Deanery, and in ecumenical activities with other Christian churches.

It is expected that both training incumbents and curates will participate fully in diocesan life, through regular attendance at the Maundy Thursday Chrism Eucharist, Bishop's Study Days and residentials, Deanery Chapters, Deanery Synods and any Churches Together local groups.

#### **o) Expenses and Fees**

All working expenses of the curate will be met by the parish, including telephone/broadband, postage and travel at the recommended diocesan rate, *including* travel to and from all IME2 events (including the final residential, which may take place in Belgium or France). Many clergy find it easiest for the parish to supply a mobile phone which is exclusively used for work.

Misunderstandings in this area can undermine trust in the relationship between incumbent, curate and the parish. It is important therefore that the recommended procedures are followed with regard to what counts as expenses. Please refer to your PCC expenses policy for details. Please be aware that there are some expenses which will need to be declared on your self-assessment tax return, and there are some additional allowances on this form for things that are not reimbursed by the parish. Self-Supporting Ministers with a Bishop's licence do not receive fees for conducting divine worship or occasional offices.

Where it has been agreed that a curate lives outside the benefice where they are serving, and this distance is more than three miles, the Diocesan Board of Finance will pay the cost of mileage from the curate's home to the boundary of the benefice. This will be paid at HMRC's recommended mileage rate and needs to be reclaimed through a monthly form. Claims over three months old will not be reimbursed. Use of a bicycle will not be covered by the diocese, but this can be included on your self-assessment tax return.

Updated July 2025

## Appendix A

### Weekly Planner

The following planner can be used as the basis for discussion in sections A, I and K of the Working Agreement. Please follow the steps below in order to ensure that you plan time for study and time off.

1. **Be clear about how much time you are giving to the role.** This planner divides each day into three 'sessions' separated by lunch and an evening meal. The length of these sessions will need to be flexible, although these will not normally be no more than 4½ hours each, with a complete working day being no more than 8 hours. Evening sessions are usually shorter than daytime ones and meals may sometime be included in the working session.

In an average week, A full-time stipendiary curate would be expected to work no more than 11 sessions per week out of the possible 21. A half-time stipendiary curate would be expected not to exceed 7 sessions in a normal week. A self-supporting curate would need to decide how much time there were able to give to the role, with a minimum of 4 sessions per week needed to complete a curacy. Put the number of sessions in the box at the top left of the table below.

2. **Fill in two sessions on Sundays.** If there are multiple services on a Sunday, the sessions you need to work will be restricted by these and may need to change from week to week. Even in contexts where there are only morning services, Sundays are an opportunity for ministry, and it is advisable to have time allocated to respond to this.
3. **Decide on a day off.** Clergy are required to have one complete 24-hour period free from ministry commitments. This is usually a full day but could also run from (for example) the evening of one day to the evening of the next. Curates will need to discuss this with their Training Incumbent so that the day off is not regularly interrupted by meetings or other commitments. Many curates choose to have their day off on the same day as their incumbent. Where clergy have school-age children, Saturday is often allocated as a day off. When doing this it is advisable to have a back-up day during the week which can be taken as a day off when the Saturday is needed for weddings, IME2 or other commitments. Clergy also need to be realistic about the pressure of returning to the study on a Saturday evening to do last-minute preparation for Sunday, so may find it more sustainable to take Friday evening to Saturday evening as a day off.
4. **Put in the fixed points in a normal week.** This will include team meetings, supervisions, school collective worship, morning and evening prayer, midweek services and evening meetings. Where these are not weekly, it may be necessary to plan on a fortnightly basis rather than weekly.
5. **Allocate Time for Study.** Full-time stipendiary curates should allocate two sessions per week for IME2 work and related study. Part-time curates should also allocate two sessions, but this will include preparation for services as well as study for IME2. Self-supporting Curates will need to have an honest conversation with their Training Incumbent about how much time they will be able to give to study in addition to more active aspects of ministry.

6. **Fill in the rest of your sessions, up to the number decided in step one.** How you manage this final step will depend how you and your Training Incumbent prefer to manage your diaries. For some people it can be helpful to know in advance which sessions you are working week to week, for others this can be decided at the start of the week. Crucial for both approaches is flexibility, both in terms of responding to needs that come up at short-notice and also recognising that the church year has periods of intense activity (such as Advent/Christmas and Holy Week/Easter) and relatively quiet times of year (after major festivals and in the Summer). A session planner such as this will be a guide to an average week and you should expect it to be added to in busy periods and relaxed in slower times of the year.

Session Allocated: <div></div>	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Morning Session 1							
Lunch							
Afternoon Session 2							
Dinner							
Evening Session 3							
Working Day (YES/NO)	YES						

**A note about holidays.** Section K of your working agreement should stipulate how much holiday you are entitled to during the year. This should be calculated by multiplying the number of days per week you are working (from the planner above) by six. For full-time clergy this will be 36 days plus bank holidays (with time in lieu for Good Friday and Christmas Day). For part-time and self-supporting curates, it will be the number of 'yesses' in the bottom row multiplied by six, plus bank holidays that you would otherwise be working.