

# CLERGY WELLBEING

Diocesan Synod March 2022

## Introduction

1. In the November 2020 Synod I introduced the *Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing* which was made an Act of Synod at the February 2020 Group of Sessions of the General Synod. The recommendation at the time was that following some exploration at our November 2020 Synod, the Covenant would come back to a Synod in 2021 for formal adoption. Events overtook us.
2. The intention of this paper is to update our current Synod on what has moved forward in our diocese since Synod last looked at this subject and to ask for any suggestions for building upon the work in this vital area of our shared mutual care.

## Current context

3. In January this year we ran the second of our Clergy Wellbeing Reviews. 96 responses were received, a response rate of 49%. [*There will be a brief PowerPoint presentation to Synod of some of the main findings.*] A Review Group of Paul Gelman (Deputy Head of HR), Rachel Noel (Priest in Charge of Pennington), Simon Clift (Gen Synod member and Occupational Health Physician) and myself, are looking into the survey results for areas where we might be able to improve care and wellbeing.

## Developments since Synod of November 2020

- 4 **Health Assured.** Around the time of last Synod we introduced a new Welfare Assistance Programme using Health Assured. To provide a sense of take up: from September 2020 – August 2021, 35 calls were made to HA, 7 of these were for online counselling, with 34 sessions provided. (NB This provision is for clergy, DBF staff, Churchwardens and Safeguarding Officers).
- 5 **CMD.** In December 2020 a CMD Wellbeing event was held. Following on from this, Chris Hill, who now leads CMD for the School of Mission, has been putting together a variety of days and events to support Wellbeing. In particular, he provided a much appreciated full day, in partnership with The Clergy Support Trust, in February, where significant feedback was provided.
- 6 **Living Ministry.** We have regularly shared the findings of Living Ministry, the longitudinal, mixed-methods programme of research conducted by the National Ministry Team. <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/ministry/ministry-development/living-ministry> There have been other surveys through the pandemic (such as those taking the general temperature through Area Deans), though none of the depth and degree of Living Ministry's work.

- 7 **The Archbishop of Canterbury.** In his letter to our diocese of 10<sup>th</sup> January, Archbishop Justin emphasised 'promoting clergy morale and wellbeing' in his list of priorities for the next eighteen months. Bishop Debbie and Bishop David were present for all of the February Wellbeing Day and continue to seek ways to attend to this priority.
- 8 The Archbishop's emphases also included a role for Bishop Richard to work closely with Bishops Debbie and David, 'in helping the diocese to move forward from the sad events of the recent past, to enable a process of reconciliation and healing and to recover confidence and joy in the service of Christ'. We are most grateful to Bishop Richard as he continues to engage in this work.
- 9 The Bishop's Staff Team is aiming to ensure that over the next eighteen months **no new central programmes or initiatives** are expected of parishes and clergy, though resources will continue to be provided. (e.g. Generous June and Thy Kingdom Come)
- 10 **Second Clergy Wellbeing Survey**, with a review group looking for responding to lessons learned, as referenced above.

#### Other considerations

- 11 The paper that came to Synod in November 2020 suggested ways in which various parts of our diocese might engage in the nationally proposed 'Big Conversation' on the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing. With the restrictions of Covid and internal diocesan matters, these proposals were not followed through. There is a rich amount of material provided through the work associated with Covenant and it remains an avenue for further responses at diocesan, local and personal levels.  
<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/clergy-resources/national-clergy-hr/supporting-clergy-health-and-wellbeing/covenant>.
- 12 The feedback from clergy on the February CMD Wellbeing Day provided encouragement that the culture being experienced is beginning to change but needs to continue to grow.

Richard Brand 8.3.22