

Interim Ministry

If you are reading this, it is likely that you have been invited to, or have offered interim ministry in the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf. These notes are designed to answer some of the frequently asked questions that arise for people in your situation.

Interim ministers, generally, are very experienced people, able to function effectively within a range of worship styles and church understandings, whilst maintaining their own integrity.

Interim ministry is a particular form of ministry. It normally lasts between six weeks and six months, though it can sometimes be longer. It is characterised in these three ways.

First it represents **continuity and stability**. What that means may depend on the particular circumstances. You may be following a hugely popular and charismatic figure, and the bishop may have decided that it would be good to allow time, to draw a line under that ministry before moving on. Perhaps people need to see that other styles and different people can be equally effective. Or you may arrive at a parish that has been in recent turmoil with a ministry that has effectively failed, and where people need reassurance. In both cases, an interim minister should simply represent best practice in ministry, because nothing reassures more than that. Continuity means that it is unlikely that an interim ministry will be innovative, or that it will seek to impose a style of churchmanship.

Second, interim ministry is **preparatory**. It is a John the Baptist ministry. It may be that the period of interim ministry will coincide with the preparation of a parish profile, setting out a vision for the future, and an interim minister can be a valuable facilitator in that process alongside the Council and archdeacon. It may be that a new Minister has already been appointed. Leading prayers for the next stage of ministry and giving those prayers effect in the whole tenor of ministry will be important.

Third, interim ministry is **responsive**. Interim ministers are not there to do pioneering work, but to maintain pastoral care and lead worship. Visiting the sick, preparing people for baptism, caring for the bereaved, contributing to parish occasions in an appropriate way will be the bedrock of this ministry. If the Council requests it, it will be appropriate for the Interim Minister to chair meetings, but only so as to enable the others present to express their points of view in a structured way. To that extent, this is primarily a diaconal ministry, concentrating on serving.

Given the above, the amount of time spent in ministry will vary enormously and no definite guidelines will be helpful. Clearly the Interim Minister should not exhaust him or herself, and Councils need to be careful about the demands they make, and

be realistic about what is possible. Initial conversations with the wardens and archdeacon will normally produce a workable template.

Interim Ministers do not sign a contract. However they must be aware of the Professional Ministerial Guidelines of the diocese, as published on the website, and be able to subscribe to them. They must also be aware of the diocesan policies for the protection of vulnerable people, and be able to produce a recent CRB or ISA statement. They should, of course, make clear any acute health problems or previous convictions. They should be happy for the bishop to make enquiries about their suitability from their previous bishop.

Remuneration packages will normally be agreed with the archdeacon, whose responsibility it is, normally, to identify suitable Interim Ministers. They will normally include the provision of house and car and all working expenses, together with a living allowance. This will vary from country to country depending on the various costs of living in each place. Health care provision also varies, and if this might be an issue, you should check specifically on this. Return air fares are normally paid for minister and spouse.

During his or her time as an Interim Minister, the cleric will be regarded as a full member of the clerical fellowship, and will often be invited to be a part of any meetings or events that a stipendiary cleric would be invited to. If this includes a Meeting of the Diocesan Synod, an interim minister may be present and sit with parish representatives, but not vote.

He or she will be accountable to the bishop through the archdeacon. In parishes where there is a senior colleague in place, the accountability relationship will be negotiated by the archdeacon and agreed in advance.

Interim Ministers are particularly important in a diocese where it can take some time to effect clerical change-overs, and you will be making a very valuable and valued contribution. If you have not experienced life in the diocese in the past you may like to read through the publication about our context: *Venturing in Mission in the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf*, which can be downloaded from the website or on request from the Diocesan Office.

The archdeacons are always available to give further help or advice.