

GUIDELINES FOR THE DRAWING UP OF A WORKING AGREEMENT BETWEEN TRAINING INCUMBENT AND CURATE

It is essential that the relationship between incumbent and curate is understood in terms of a working agreement. It is recommended that an agreement be constructed under the following headings. Each paragraph gives guidelines on the areas which need to be considered.

MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS

The relationship between incumbent and curate is both personal and professional and each will have expectations of the other. It is important that those mutual expectations are declared openly as early as possible in the relationship so as not to cause frustration later.

Although pastoral authority at a parish level rests with the incumbent and PCC, there is a degree to which authority is delegated to a curate. In relation to any given task, the extent of this delegation needs to be made clear.

With respect to confidentiality, the curate needs to know what material is to be treated as confidential, not to be shared with the incumbent, and what is not confidential and should be shared with the incumbent. Experience has shown this to be a major area of potential misunderstanding.

USE OF TIME

A basic understanding concerning the extent of the working day and working week needs to be reached. Agreement on this matter will enable assumptions to be tested before they become a problem.

WORSHIP

A curate needs to share in corporate prayer and worship, not only with the congregation, but also with the incumbent and other colleagues. Times and occasions for this daily/weekly prayer time together need to be clearly stated.

There should be regular opportunity to share in the design and leading of worship and in preaching. Agreement needs to be reached regarding the frequency of preaching (it is recommended once a month in the first year) and it is desirable that the curate's sermons should be reviewed with the incumbent, and with other colleagues and lay people where appropriate.

PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

In addition to participating in corporate prayer and worship the curate should be encouraged to develop a personal prayer life which can be sustained when alone. To this end acquisition of a spiritual director/soul friend is deemed to be essential, as is a quiet time/retreat at least once a year. Encouragement should also be given to enable personal, as distinct from professional, reading.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

If a prospective curate is engaged in a formal course of academic study leading to an additional qualification, e.g. diploma, degree or further degree, prior to leaving college or course, this fact must be declared to the incumbent and its likely implications examined.

The curate should be given the opportunity to take part in the parish's ministry of teaching and evangelism. Bearing in mind the time spent outside the parish on CME, there may, however, be other learning programmes, training events, conferences etc. that the curate wishes to attend or that the incumbent considers necessary.

Agreement on attendance at such events will need to be negotiated and not simply assumed. Other extra-parochial interest and commitments (other than those that coincide with time off) will need to be declared by the curate and agreed by the incumbent.

STAFF SUPPORT

There should be a regular staff meeting for purposes of communication and planning.

A curate should be expected to attend and contribute to staff meetings, chapters, synods and fraternal meetings. Incumbents and curates should meet on pre determined occasions for supervision and review.

In addition, there should be an annual review of the curate's work and relationship with the incumbent, other colleagues, the congregation and parish. A time of review also provides opportunity for the re-setting of specific training goals which will, to some extent, differ from year to year. Regarding assessment, the curate needs to know what criteria for assessment is used. In the final year of the curacy the curate will join the Ministerial Review Scheme.

Appendix 1 provides a scheme which may be used for reviewing a curate's development.

PARISH RESPONSIBILITIES

There must be agreement on the allocation of time and parish administration and responsibilities in parish management will need to be clearly outlined. The curate by definition is an assistant to the incumbent but this says little about the relationship with the PCC and other groups. It is essential that these lines of responsibility are also clearly spelt out.

STIPEND AND EXPENSES

Parochial expenses and any other grants or remunerations must be agreed in advance.

REVIEW OF WORKING AGREEMENT

The working agreement is to be completed by the future curate and incumbent before the curate's arrival in post.

In year one, the review will be part of the process conducted by the bishop to discern whether the curate should be ordained a priest. The bishop will contact the curate with the relevant review information before meeting for review.