



Original photo by Keith Blundy

Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing declared Act of Synod

Measures to promote awareness of the dangers of stress and burnout amongst clergy are to be debated by the 42 Church of England dioceses following a landmark vote by the General Synod.

Churches and dioceses across the country will be invited to adopt the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing, committing all parts of the church, as well as individual clergy, to sharing responsibility for the welfare of ministers and their households.

The Covenant – backed overwhelmingly last year by the General Synod – was proclaimed an Act of Synod by members, paving the way for adoption and debate by the Church of England's parishes and dioceses.

Under plans voted through by the Synod, clergy, parishes and dioceses are being invited to contribute their responses to the Covenant as part of a 'Big Conversation', inspired by a series of questions and shared commitments.

Revd Canon Simon Butler, who headed the Working Group which drew up the Covenant, said the proclamation was a vital reminder to the whole Church of England – from the 'tiniest parish' to the national church institutions – of the shared responsibility to consider clergy care and well-being in all aspects of church life.

"What we are proposing this Synod does today in making an Act of Synod, is to make clear and unequivocal the mind of the church on a simple statement of commitment to one another, in our different roles, callings and responsibilities," he told the General Synod.

"From such a statement, we believe that the potential for much good and much good fruit can emerge."

In his presidential address ahead of the proclamation, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said:

"When the clergy are supported, nourished and able to flourish, the whole church can flourish."

Recommendations from the Working Group published last year included promoting access to pastoral supervision for clergy including coaching, consultancy or mentoring, in line with support provided to other caring professions.

The report also backed plans to promote awareness of stress and the dangers of burnout as part of training for ordained ministry and new resources for licensing and induction services highlighting the care and well-being of clergy.

The Working Group further recommended that Parish Profiles – the description of a parish and its mission - and job descriptions for clergy undergo regular reviews to ensure they are realistic and that ministers have a clear idea of the role they are being asked to undertake.