

SSiNews Easter 2018

Dear Friends and colleagues,

Welcome to my Easter update - a lot has been happening in a short time:

SSMs in the press: You might have seen Jenny Page's article in the Church Times headed "God's gift, not 'priest-like' cherry pickers" (2 March 2018, page 14). She covered the concerns felt by many SSMs, especially

- the lack of SSM representation in general synod policy-making
- encouragement of SSMs in deanery chapters
- the misunderstanding that we are full-time priests who happen not to be paid
- the way many dioceses choose to put SSM ordinands with stipendiary mentors
- the use of transferrable skills, etc.

It caused some interest and was the most downloaded article for two weeks!

Diocesan Questionnaire

outcomes: I presented the outcomes of the questionnaire to the Bishop's Senior Staff at the beginning of March, to a warm reception. There were gasps in the room when I pointed out that 74% of licenced clergy in this diocese do **not** receive a stipend (if you include those with PTO). I am hoping that my PowerPoint presentation can be downloaded from the website soon. If you would like a copy of it meanwhile, email me. Bishop Martin has asked me to present the outcomes and decide what is achievable to his ministry forum later this month. He is very sympathetic to all the suggested outcomes. These were the main action points:

- Use deployable SSMs as mission pioneer ministers to turn round failing parishes, as house for duty priests where appropriate.
- Encourage SSMs to offer their transferable skills for the benefit of the wider church as part of their discipleship and commitment.
- Ensure that the normal training and formation for SSMs is of equal rigour to that of stipendiary ministers, and appropriate to their calling.
- Change the ministry culture to ensure that SSMs (including Locally Ordained Ministers), no matter how trained, are regarded as equal members of teams and not subject to the ministry of incoming stipendiary ministers.
- Give SSMs equal opportunities to work as team vicars, subject to demonstration of appropriate leadership skills.
- Encourage all, in any form of licensed ministry, to encourage others to consider vocations, rather than making this the prerogative of incumbents.
- Give equality to SSMs with PTO - as for SMs with PTO - when it comes to payment of fees for undertaking occasional services.
- Substitute the term "interregnum" (=space between rulers) with the term "vacancy".
- Ensure that the generous work and commitment of self-supporting ministers is appropriately recognised.
- Encourage the support, development of SSMs and encourage that future provision of national standards for wellbeing of "the clergy" includes SSMs and all clergy with PTO.
- Ensure appropriate marking of "end of service" when an SSM receives PTO.

Representation in policy

making: After our General Synod reps managed to table a question at Synod back in February, several bishops in other dioceses have chimed in, and Lambeth has now agreed in principle to appoint a Bishop to represent SSM views. I have been asked to write a job description and a person description for Bishop Martin to take forward.

Fees for PTOs taking

occasional services: I have had a long discussion with Bishop Martin, who is sympathetic, and shorter ones with Anna Clark, who is trying to work out how to make it happen, and with David Finch the Diocesan Retired Clergy Officer. The end of this month will bring to an end the first year of the new way of collecting fees, and enable the diocese to work out whether or not we can afford to extend the concession to SSMs with PTO, enjoyed by our formerly stipendiary colleagues.

Ordinations: Do please pray for the 18 on the Auxiliary Ministry and Reader Ordination Pathways who will be ordained in June as locally ordained SSMs. It is a steep learning curve for them, and for all of us, but a welcome addition to the ministry in this diocese.

Web site presence: I am trying to get a better presence on the diocesan website for things of interest to SSMs. It is a bit of a struggle at the moment, as Leonie is trying to revamp the whole thing without a realistic budget.

Transferrable skills: Many of you gave me a list of some of your transferrable skills. The Bishop has asked if he could have a list of who could help with what, and I will be writing to you individually to ask you for permission to divulge this information.

Data Processing: I expect to have to write to you again shortly asking for your permission to send you relevant

things, including SSiNews, so watch this space.

Diocesan Synod Elections:

elections to Diocesan Synod will occur later on this summer. DO please think about putting your name forward. The chair of the House of Clergy position will also be vacant, and so do prayerfully seek guidance as to whether you might be able to put your name forward in the election.

A listening ear: Do please remember that I am available to help anyone who wants to have a listening ear or a shout at someone who is not in their benefice. All my access details are in the diocesan directory. I am more than willing to do what I can for you, and to travel to meet you wherever you are in the diocese. Remember also the other members of the wellbeing team are there to help you in your ministry.

And finally... a date for your diary:

Saturday 6 October 2018: a half day diocesan conference on SSM issues.

St Nicholas Centre, Ipswich

9.30am - 2.00pm (times subject to verification)

Led by Bishop Mike.

We will cover safeguarding, ministerial development, and any other issues which come up between now and then.

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