

The aims of these guidelines are as follows:

- To give the Church every opportunity to benefit from couples in ordained ministry.
- To ensure both partners in a clergy couple are treated with justice and equity.
 - To encourage creative ways of appointing couples in ordained ministry.

The diocese recognises and honours the special contribution that can be made by a married couple of ministers. We are aware of the variety of circumstances that can lead to there being a couple in ministry. Sometimes couples meet as ordinands at College. Sometimes they meet prior to that time; and sometimes the spouse of an already ordained minister finds a vocation to ministry themselves. Whatever the circumstances and history of the couple, questions about vocation and deployment need to be addressed by all parties in an atmosphere of realistic honesty, recognising both the special contribution that can be made, and the special joy that can result from that; and recognising also potential difficulties to be overcome and possible compromises faced.

Good practice, in our view, demands that:

- Each partner is treated as an equal individual in terms of vocation and selection, regardless of marital status or spouse's employment.
- There is a realisation that the vocation of a couple is significant in itself
- Support and encouragement be offered from the beginning, and throughout, by vocational advisors and senior staff, based on the special circumstances of the couple

Appointments

Where couples are preparing for ordained ministry it will be made clear to them from the outset that the Diocese whilst endeavouring to find two full time stipendiary curacies for them within a given geographical area cannot guarantee to do so.

Couples may need to give early consideration to the implications of this, in terms of willingness to travel or endure periods of separation. Alternatively they may need to

explore the possibilities of periods of non-stipendiary or part time stipendiary ministry, at this, and indeed all stages.

What is important is that good communication is maintained between couples in ministry and senior staff so that the latter may have the kind of up to date information that will enable them to plan future deployment. We recommend that meetings take place between couples and their archdeacon at least annually.

At later stages of deployment, it may be that appointments to adjacent posts will mean that the normal residence requirement for a parish priest will not be met. The diocese considers it important that married couples live together. The travelling involved to the non-resident post will need to be considered as something that can sap both time and finance.

The number of couples in ordained ministry is increasing. Dioceses have chosen to deploy them in a number of ways. Some partners have both been appointed as incumbents of neighbouring parishes. Some couples share one post (although, at present, only one of them can be designated as the incumbent.) There are other couples where one partner has a parochial appointment and the other a sector ministry post or are NSM.

The application of the principles of equal opportunity in appointments will normally mean that each vacant post will be treated as a separate appointment, and advertised as such. However were this principle to be followed slavishly, couples in ministry would actually be disadvantaged, since in many cases the ability to accept a post by one partner will be dependant on the other's finding suitable employment. In the event of two adjacent posts becoming vacant together, the Churches and Pastoral committee may recommend that the posts be advertised as "suitable for a couple in ministry." However this would not circumvent the normal process of parochial and diocesan discernment with regard to the suitability of each candidate for each post. Communication, and review-related conversation between couples and senior staff will be crucial in identifying and making these appointments. Normal guidelines on privacy and confidentiality may have to be compromised as partners are considered for adjacent posts. The diocese is committed to giving special attention to the deployment of curates who have trained in the diocese and who are seeking first livings.

Where a couple feel that they are being called to minister together in a parish the diocese will look at whether this is possible but cannot guarantee such posts. Some couples in ordained ministry may participate in a 'job-share'. Some assumptions that can be made by a secular employer about job sharing cannot be applied to couples in ministry. There will be some overlap of duties as, for example, at the main Sunday service. Couples should not automatically be expected to cover holidays and days off for their partners. It may be that describing both posts as part-time would be less

misleading than the term 'job-share'. It is essential that a working agreement which sets out clearly, expectations, be formulated prior to taking up any such post (see below).

It is not advisable for a curate to serve his/her title under the direct supervision of his/her spouse except in some rare circumstances, usually dictated by geography or mobility. The curate/incumbent relationship could distort the marriage relationship, making rigorous training, supervision and evaluations difficult and preventing the curate from experiencing new and different ways of doing things as she/he is already very familiar with the work of the spouse.

Care should be taken to ensure that full and unambiguous working agreements are prepared and understood before any appointment of a couple in ordained ministry is made. These should cover details of the following:

- i) the stipend to be paid to each partner
- ii) the payment of working expenses
- iii) the terms under which the house is to be occupied, stating, for example, who is responsible for decoration and repairs
- iv) office facilities for the person not residing in their parish
- v) holiday provision
- vi) when time off is to be taken

If the couple find themselves working within the same parish then the following also need to be considered:

- vii) how duties are to be shared in the parish
- viii) the meetings that both partners are expected to attend
- ix) regular review of the arrangements

Remuneration

The appropriate stipend should be paid to each individual in relation to their appointment, whether for full-time or part-time appointments.

Benefits under the pension scheme are related to the basis of determining the stipend, so, for example, receipt of a stipend or half a full stipend gives rise to accrual of pension and other benefits at one half the full rate. A non-stipendiary post is not pensionable.

Note should be taken of each person's independent entitlement to statutory payments such as sick pay, maternity/paternity leave and parental leave.

Where a person is appointed to a part-time post, there should be the opportunity for other employment during the remainder of the week.

Appropriate arrangements must be made to pay the expenses of the spouse travelling to their own parish from the vicarage of another parish. This will form part of the working agreement. Likewise, appropriate arrangements should be made for the 'travelling' spouse to meet with parishioners and others in a suitable place within their own parish.

Support

A couple working in the same parish should be able to have the same regular day off if they so choose. They will also need to have holidays at the same time.

Ministerial review should take particular account of the special factors and situations relating to couples in ordained ministry.

February 2007