

Interim Ministry Source Book

Working with Interim Ministry

Vocation, models and case studies



SECTION FOUR

Working with Interim Ministry

‘What is this other world in which there is no transition happening?

I certainly don’t live in it. Everyone who leads a worshipping community is actually a transition manager to some extent...Interim Ministry is going to be of growing importance. We are going to need you as a church, not just for the work that you do, but also to help and equip and enable other people to lead through those transitions.’

Bp Chris Goldsmith, Director of Church of England
MinistryTeam, December 2020.



The Church of England is still in the process of developing its understanding of the vocation, appointment and management of Interim Ministers and of resourcing those called to this ministry. This section explores the vocation, skills and attributes of Interim Ministers and offers some models for support systems and appointment scenarios. It shares some of the testimonies of Interim Ministers and the experiences and perspectives from dioceses and senior staff.

Over a decade ago, one of the Newcastle Durham pioneers, Hazel Ditchburn shared a vision of growing ‘a pool of trained Interim Ministers emerging from a number of different situations’ both lay and ordained. We are some way off this vision, even five years after formalising IM appointments. This is because while IM posts have been enabled by legislation we have not yet followed through with resourcing and training to make it a viable option for many people lay or ordained to choose a career in intentional – or dedicated – interim ministry.

The result, as Natasha Woodward notes, is that: ‘There is not yet an economy of interim posts which would give a dedicated interim minister confidence that a suitable post would be available when required, similarly there is no pool of interim ministers available that would give a diocese confidence that it would be able to appoint such ministers quickly when they are needed.’

IM posts are, by their very nature, insecure, which means that unless salaries reflect the risk, stress and insecurity of these appointments and offer some ongoing security and development, these posts are difficult to fill. Many dioceses have found it hard to recruit and retain IMs.

There have been some well-funded IM posts but many have been associated with external funding which is not sustainable for diocese to retain this knowledge and experience. There has also been a generous offering into IM by retired clergy and by licenced lay ministers who have been willing to offer their time and expertise, but this is not a reliable long-term strategy for resourcing IM or for the more intensive and demanding posts. Other strategies can be found, such as appointing IMs to serve on an area or diocesan basis using existing posts and housing allocations, and this has proved a successful model in some dioceses.

Training and resourcing the next generation of IMs and extending our knowledge base is not only a priority for the future but, as Woodward suggests, becoming an ethical challenge to the church, if the pool of talent is limited to those with independent income and resources to buffer the insecurity of IM appointments, Woodward notes, ‘Entering Interim ministry should be a response to calling by God. For the church to – however unintentionally – effectively limit the ability to respond to that calling to the wealthy would be a subversion of gospel values.’

The Vocation of Interim Ministry

'Intentional interim ministry is a challenging vocation that requires experienced pastors with particular gifts and abilities. The pastor who chooses interim ministry as a career has a particular set of leadership assets, skills that have been honed in the emotional field of congregations which have experienced grief and loss. Their leadership skills and abilities enable some pastors to be uniquely effective leaders in times of pastoral transition. These leadership gifts, combined with basic pastoral experience, have led to the recognition of this ministry as a particular calling.'

Paul Svingen³

Intentional Interim Ministry is a distinct calling to difficult places and tough challenges, to be alongside parishes during times of transition. It is hard to define why some have this vocation but it is perhaps akin to why some people might choose sailing into a stiff wind and unpredictable seas in preference to

a nice round of golf! Interim ministry is dynamic and creative, drawing on a wide range of skills, as well as spiritually and emotionally demanding. To those with a call, it feels like an invitation to an exhilarating walk on the wild side with God.

Early explorations of Interim Ministry in the USA discovered that there was a cadre of ministers which interim ministry particularly suited: 'Such people tended to be problem-solvers with gifts for congregational and community analysis... They are people who think systemically and pose the right questions.'⁴ They also found that those who find the focused, short-term nature of Interim Ministry a good fit for their gifts and temperament – they are naturally missionaries not maintainers.

This early work identified six characteristics of intentional Interim Ministry adapted as follows

- Intentionally facing conflict or addressing transition
- Problem identification and solving
- Contracted to achieve specific objectives
- Requires a broad interim skill-set
- Adopts a consultancy model
- Has a planned termination and closure.⁵

Because it is often involves working in situations with intense and conflicting human emotions, it also requires particular coping mechanisms: An IM must be able to: 'demonstrate a healthy balance as an emotional, social, psychological, rational and spiritual being. She must function as a wise steward of self in the midst of a whirling mix of human behaviours... an intentional interim pastor will bring calmness, thoughtfulness, objectivity, trustworthiness, care and mature leadership into this context of change,' says Svingen.⁶

It is important to recognise that nothing in these skills and giftings specifically limits Interim Ministry to the priesthood. It is a model of ministry which fulfils traditional models of priesthood – IMs need to be compassionate servants or *diakonoi*; inspiring leaders of word and sacrament - presbyters; sharing in *episcopate*, IMs have a particular responsibility to unify and gather the people of God towards a collective purpose. But gifts for IM can be found among many collaborative leaders and change-makers. Indeed there have been experiments in using lay people to lead IM roles: their challenges were not with bringing change but understanding the structures and systems of church leadership.

Some would suggest that it is important that IMs carry priestly authority, especially in challenging posts and that IMs share more closely in episcopal ministry than other clergy⁷. Priestly sacramental ministry can be important to healing and reconciliation in parishes which have experienced breakdown and conflict. But equally some have found that lay people can bring a positive dynamic: 'There is an amazing benefit in managing change from their level. It is not as if another member of the clergy is coming in and telling them what to do. We are coming alongside, listening and helping them from a lay perspective', says Julian Briscoe, Head of Church Growth and Development in Truro.⁸

A recent national survey of *Interim Ministry, IM5+ England*, which was launched at the conference, found IM an effective and beneficial way of bringing about transformation. 43 people from 17 dioceses responded, and identified 14 benefits. Those involved with IM described it as ‘a joy’ and ‘a privilege’, ‘exciting and rewarding’, which enabled them to learn and use their skills well. One person said IM had changed ‘my inner core sense of ordained priestly ministry.’ IM was considered to be ‘an essential part of the Church of England’s toolkit’ which ‘enables’ lay leaders and ‘empowers the church’. One person asked to what extent Interim Minister was ‘increasingly needed for any meaningful ministry in the CofE today?’

So it would seem that Interim Ministers have a distinct sense of vocation which is an important attractor. They are not simply called to cover vacancies or implement top-down change on behalf of a diocese. When reduced to ‘simply plugging a gap,’ Elizabeth Jordan noted that she felt: ‘more like a hireling than a true shepherd.’⁹ IMs are drawn to the more uncomfortable places, which seem challenging, insecure and troubled, to regather and tend the flock and seek out new pasture. Drawing on a wide variety of metaphors which have been applied: they are called to be ‘midwives of change’, healers of past hurts, ‘nourishers of possibility’, story-gatherers and story-shapers, sentinels of hope and new life-giving in God. That is what makes IMs tick and thrive. The challenge to the Church of England is to recognise, understand and affirm their gifts and this distinct vocation.

Required Skills and Attributes for Interim Ministry

Interim ministers need the following skills and attributes, though the degree to which they are essential or desirable will depend on the context in which they will be working.

To consider

- Does the post require an ordained minister or can it be fulfilled by a licensed lay leader?
- What level of experience of leading Interim Ministry does the post require?
- Will it be sufficient to have an understanding of the purpose and processes of IM, and if so will training be provided?

Experience

- Ordained leadership in the Church of England to include e.g. five years parochial experience post-training in a variety of contexts.
- Experience of church development and transition in an IM or similar context.
- Listening and supporting healing and pastoral care.
- Conflict resolution.
- Management of change.
- Organisational development.
- Facilitation of groups and meetings.
- Monitoring and evaluation of objectives.
- Team building.
- Fluent verbal and written communication.

Personal Attributes

- Spiritually mature and grounded in God.
- Clear about their own identity and vocation to facilitate mission and transformation.
- Committed to change and transition in church communities.
- Collaborative and able to work effectively both alone and with others.
- Capable of remaining a non-anxious presence in the midst of transition, grief and conflict.
- Able to establish positive and affirming relationships and join congregational systems quickly.
- Able to diagnose a situation and develop appropriate responses.
- Able to provide honest and accurate feedback.
- Able to support healthy behaviour in church communities and challenge behaviour which undermines relationships and the process of transition.
- Able to communicate clearly and effectively.
- Capable of leading people towards a common understanding and approach.
- Self-motivated and reflective learner.
- Able to honour and affirm the work of others, past and present.
- Willing to prepare the way for the next ministry.
- Capable of giving and receiving leadership and working positively with colleagues.

Support Systems for Interim Roles

Interim Ministry requires effective systems of support to enable the IM to work with confidence in the process they are leading, with affirmation, support and accountability to both those who have appointed them and to the church community which they are leading.

Appointment processes

It is important to be clear at the outset of the role what the contractual nature of the role is:

What are the terms and conditions, working hours, benefits and holidays, housing, travel and other expenses and professional development that will be provided. Broad objectives for the role should be agreed at an early stage even if, as is normal, these are adjusted once the IM gains a clearer understanding of the priorities once they are in post. If the role is working across a number of parishes, where will the appointee worship and find spiritual nourishment for themselves and their family? It is important that IMs feel spiritually grounded somewhere where their work is prayed for and supported by other colleagues.

Supervision

The most effective source of supervision is the archdeacon. They are usually the ones who have recruited and appointed the IM, they have drafted the terms of the appointment and its objectives, and will have a clear understanding both of what the diocese hopes to achieve, and what the issues are on the ground. Regular supervision meetings with an IM will also keep them in touch with progress with more detail and insight than they would otherwise receive. They also have the necessary episcopal authority to go into a parish and either reinforce or affirm the process which the IM is leading, if required to do so. Supervision has been offered from other places, such as area/rural deans and this may be what works best in some circumstances.

Coaching and Mentoring

Interim Ministry is demanding and stressful, especially in the most intensive posts. It can also be quite a lonely and uncomfortable experience, since the IM is carrying both a detailed understanding of the situation on the ground and of the expectations and thinking of diocesan senior staff. This is not information which can sometimes be readily shared or discussed as part of collegial networks within deanery or diocese, and nor sometimes can the experience of leading IM be fully shared with senior staff. This makes it necessary to find a safe space to share and discuss how their post is proceeding openly and without concern. Some dioceses make provision for one to one

coaching or mentoring. It is important that the coach or mentor has experience or understanding of IM situations and can enable the IM to reflect and learn from their experience and plan positive next steps. In general a coach will be more performance driven and help the IM to be more effective in their role. A mentor will focus more on individual development and growth.

Peer networks

Learning and sharing experience of IM with others is an important source of learning, mutual support and professional development. Elizabeth Jordan's research¹⁰ into The Practice of Interim Ministry found that one of most impressive models of this was the Church of Scotland which enabled its Interim and transition ministers to meet and work as a team, supporting one another and learning together. Different team members developed reporting structures on tools and approaches to IM and they mentored and learned together reflectively.

The Interim Ministry Network (<https://imnedu.org/>) in the USA describes itself as 'a learning community of transitional ministry practitioners' and runs ongoing programmes of training, seminars, networking, accreditation and support for its 1,200 members including an annual 3-day conference. There is an emerging network in the Church of England which is seeking to provide resources and training for IMs.

Training

Specialist Interim Ministry training may be available in future via Training.

LINK <https://www.interimministry.org.uk>

Some IM webinars and training from the Interim Ministry Network (IMN) USA are available at times accessible to UK participants.

LINK <https://www.imnedu.org>

Core training in Conflict and Family systems are provided by Bridge Builders Ministries

LINK <https://www.bbministries.org.uk>.

Training in facilitating participatory group meetings can be found at ICA UK

LINK <https://www.ica-uk.org.uk>

And also TalkAction

LINK [https://www.talkaction.org/training\[1\]courses/facilitation-training/](https://www.talkaction.org/training[1]courses/facilitation-training/)

Training and coaching/mentoring is available from 3D Coaching

LINK <https://www.3dcoaching.com/for-churches/>

Emerging Models of Interim Ministry

Several models of Interim Ministry have evolved over the past 40 years and it is clear there is a mixed pattern of use emerging in the Church of England. These models have been identified by Norman Bendroth¹¹ and others:

Classic Interim Ministry

The traditional model of IM where an Interim Priest is appointed for periods of between 6 months to 3 years at a time, to lead a parish through a process using the five tasks or focus points.

Interim Supply

A basic holding operation, leading worship, preaching and providing pastoral care with no work on transition, usually on a part-time or house for duty basis. This may be appropriate as part of a wider pastoral reorganisation when the future of a parish is uncertain or more time is needed to work out ministry and resourcing strategies. This low intensity and possibly limited duration work may be best suited to those who are looking for a less demanding and shorter IM involvement. There are examples of this model emerging in the Church of England.

Sustaining/Bridging Interim

A full-time short-duration, low intensity appointment which is focused on maintaining continuity while exploring some aspects of transition in a focused and strategic way. This model has been used successfully in some dioceses using an area/archdeaconry IM role to resource appointments in multiple locations, enabling low level transition and improving governance, finance, safeguarding and stewardship in several different parishes.

Interim Consultancy/Associates

An IM may be brought in to a parish, sometimes to work alongside an incumbent as an associate priest, to support and advise on a process of transition. This has been appropriate in places where an incumbent may be incapacitated or may lack skills for this transition process. There have been a number of examples of this working well in dioceses but it requires great clarity and sensitivity in making appointments and in managing the relationship with the incumbent.

Two-tiered Interim Ministry

This is a 'double act' in which an Interim Priest leads worship, provides pastoral care, preaching and teaching, and supports ministry and leadership, while an Interim

Consultant leads the congregation through the process of reflection on history and identity, and discerning the vision and mission for the future.

Something close to this model has been successfully used in the Church of England using a retired priest and their non-retired spouse. In another example, an Assistant Curate provided the liturgical and pastoral support, while the Training Incumbent led the strategic process. Another version reversed these responsibilities with a Licensed Lay Ministry team providing strategic development and pastoral care, teaching, preaching and missional outreach while associate clergy from a neighbouring team provided the liturgical support.

Intensive Interim/Transitional Ministry

The Church of Scotland describes its longer term, high intensity posts of 3 or more years as Transitional Minister posts because they are focused on achieving transformation – Bendroth¹² described them as 'Repositioning' roles because they are leading a congregation towards 'revitalisation and renewal' over a longer period.

A short-term version of this role – a 'Crossroads pastor' – is described in Bendroth as one who works with a congregation in survival mode (i.e. is at a crossroads) to establish whether it is viable or should close, after which they may stay on and complete the transitional work.

There have been examples of this working well in the Church of England and some interesting models of pairing this with church planning and grafting – see Personal Perspectives on Interim Ministry (below). Other models of transitional ministry have included a Turnaround Area Dean who coordinated a number of interim posts across a deanery as part of a wider deanery strategy of pastoral reorganisation and transition – this was akin to the Two-Tiered model.

Is it ever acceptable for the IM to become the settled priest?

The traditional norm is that the Interim Priest is never the candidate for the long-term appointment. There are some important principles behind this, to maintain a level playing field for appointments, and to ensure that appointees can be free and unbiased in discerning the will of God for their next appointment.

However, it is important to be pragmatic, and there have been reasonable exceptions to the rule in the Church of England where the appointment of the IM to the settled role appeared a sound strategy to allow a longer period

of stability, where there were limited candidates for the permanent role, or where the IM role was conducted alongside other local posts which embraced the interim parish at the conclusion of the appointment.

The key to such decision is transparency, good communication and following proper procedures. Where it emerges as a possible scenario during the IM appointment it is important that the parish and candidate are given an opportunity to reflect and consider whether this is the right way forward. In an ideal scenario, there should be a proper appointment procedure with a Statement of Needs, role description and person specification and the candidate should be interviewed and selected in the traditional fashion. Further guidance is provided on this in the Church of England's Supplementary Advice on Interim Posts.¹³

Should the IM become the permanent appointee, there needs to be a clear end point between the Interim Ministry and a new period of settled ministry, with a break which allows the IM to stop, reflect and refresh, with a liturgy to mark the end of IM ministry; followed by the traditional licensing service to mark the inauguration of a new settled ministry in the parish.

Where this is a possible scenario from the outset it is important that both parish and candidate are made aware of this option before the appointment, and give both an opportunity to reflect on whether it is a good match prior to a permanent appointment. Bendroth described this as 'Candidacy' Interim Ministry.

What core values are important for IM? A word cloud created by IMs January 2021.



Mentimeter

Clergy Experiences of Interim Ministry

Revd Canon Keith Wassall
Retired Interim Priest
Diocese of Durham (2004-2009)

For several years
I was fortunate
enough to exercise
a priestly ministry

in the Diocese of Bermuda, a remote island in the Atlantic ocean with the nearest land contact being the United States and Canada. It was this proximity that first alerted me to the possibility of an alternate form of ministry. When I returned home we relocated to Durham and the Archdeacon of Sunderland Stuart Bain who invited me to consider the role of an Interim priest in a group of parishes facing a very difficult situation.

Interim ministry was a new initiative in the diocese and as such a period of training was offered indeed compulsory for any who wished to take up this new opportunity, led by Canon Hazel Ditchburn (Durham) and Canon Richard Bryant (Newcastle). The model of IM gave people structure in a time when we were all unsure. Part of that model was a beginning and end of Interim Ministry and adhering to timing was helpful. Both my IM's were around 2.5 years. Each group of parishes had an Interim working group of 10 people consisting of some PCC and or Churchwardens and some non PCC.

IMs need to understand that if the Church fellowship is to move forwards, they must be willing to grasp the changes that emerge and that the whole congregation must own the decision making. This is very different from anything I exercised in the past where often I led and people followed. Empowering people to think, to share opinions, past failures as a church, even anger, hurts and disappointments was about freeing the people to take ownership.

The role required

Listening: this was the congregation's Church and fellowship not mine. I was there to serve. Patience: none of us move at the same pace, and with openness and time trust grew. Visiting: crucial in listening

IM requires discernment, particularly recognising people who were on the edge of decision making structures, yet saw the opportunities for this new ministry; Similarly to understand those who doubted the worth of IM but tended to be more vocal.

A self-limiting characteristic which was hard but helpful was that I did not chair PCC meetings; I didn't vote; I reported under an agenda item and would comment or offer clarity on other items if asked.

It was very difficult to begin but the crucial way forward was the training, the mentor and following the model. I sent a regular report to the Archdeacon and he invited

me to meet and share both positives and negatives. It would have been impossible for me to contribute anything to congregations without the initial training and mentor. I also invited one of the trainers to meet with the Interim working group to listen to their journey and observations about their experience of IM.

Throughout this document it can be seen that the insight of others from trainers, mentors, Archdeacon, IM working groups and PCC's and congregation meetings all enabled the IM to be accountable both in listening, sharing and changing directions to enable preparation for a new priest and equip the Church to help grow both spiritually and numerically.

IM taught me a great deal about ministry. I would hope that IM gave to the people a model that could actually enrich congregations and fellowships in future parish life. Development of the parish profile came towards the end of IM and this process enabled people to see that they wanted any new priestly ministry to include their experience and their participation.



Revd Louise Vincer
Interim Priest
Dioceses of Lincoln and Canterbury

embedding diocesan strategy; and for congregations to grow through courageous reflection, engagement and risk taking.

John the Baptist is an obvious model for this ministry as one who passes through communities, points towards our Lord and challengingly renews focus on God's transforming work.

Living in a clergy house I have been able to explore IM in a variety of appointments. This has given me the flexibility and security to try both short term posts working with core groups for example in establishing a cohesive group of Churchwardens managing long term vacancy, and longer term (up to three years) "transitional" posts working with whole congregations towards a substantive appointment, and in the process

Interim Ministry
is a timely ministry
as we respond
to the impact of
Covid 19 on
church and
community life.
Living in the
present with an
eye to the future,
IM offers
opportunities both
for dioceses as a
lever for change at
local level
and as a way of

In my experience IMs have abilities in

- reflecting theologically;
- acting strategically;
- building trusting working relationships whilst not getting hooked into past patterns of behaving;
- nurturing functioning teams;
- grasping opportunities and leaving well; recognising openly what can't be achieved, but still needs to be addressed.
- bridging between diocesan structure and congregations in telling the diocesan/congregational story and celebrating signs of God's transformation.

Necessary experience includes

- mature, unpartisan understanding of parish ministry
 - leading change with groups
 - discerning congregational vocation and unique gifts
- Training and support needs include:
- Personal supervision
 - Specific training eg coaching conversations and family systems
 - Terms of reference agreed with parish, diocese and IM before appointment
 - Accountability and regular reporting to appropriate senior staff

Romans 8.12-25 has been one helpful passage this year in my IM. We hope for what we do not see. If that is true then being hopeful is hugely courageous because it means we are open to things that we cannot imagine. And hope is a gift the church holds out to the world – a longer view, a bigger perspective, a trust that God holds us firmly through the uncertainties and complexities of our lives, COVID and in the turbulence brought about by IM.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8:12-25



Revd Chris Jones

Retired Interim Minister
Diocese of Liverpool 2015–2019

appointment to be made under common tenure. Our bishop said I had created a road map for the diocese that all could now travel on.

The idea was that I would spend 12 months in each 3 churches and also be involved in introducing the concept to the diocese. For this purpose the North American experience was invaluable. For part of it I stayed with Revd Jennifer McKenzie who I had got to know in 2008 and then she was appointed as an archdeacon in our diocese. Her experience of IM and the input of Revd Steve Pierce and a group of other interims in the diocese was invaluable.

I had felt a call to this ministry. I had served 2 long incumbencies in the diocese and aged 64 was not keen to take on another one but was not yet ready for retirement. In this context my calling to IM was refreshing for me. Having had a long and fulfilling ministry in two incumbencies I wanted to use my skills and experience for the specifically missional purpose of helping churches to discover their future vision and if necessary turn away from the rut they are in.

To be an IM you need flexibility, being thick skinned but caring. Only change things when change is essential. Take the PCC and the leaders with you. Sometimes a stealthy approach is best. Be ready and able to let go at the end of your interim period. In terms of the requirements for the role, it would be desirable to have faced challenging situations in ministry and found a way through them. It would be essential to have had at least five years in a leadership role in ministry

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In December 2015, having studied interim or transitional ministry in the USA and Canada that summer, I was appointed by the Diocese of Liverpool on a 3-year licence to trial interim ministry at three churches in the diocese. That year the General Synod had approved the concept which had enabled such an

appointment to be made under common tenure. Our bishop said I had created a road map for the diocese that all could now travel on.

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was a block to change. However one church I served in were pleased that I pointed them to a future in a team of churches. Their previous long term vicar had held them back from joining a new team and got the PCC to vote against women's ministry being exercised in the parish. I was able to help them get a new perspective and to update their worship and they are now part of a thriving team.

An IM post must be an evolving one as the congregation are encouraged to look forward to a viable future so the licence for the IM needs to be flexible.

In terms of training, support and supervision it is important to read and learn from the experience of practitioners, particularly in the fields of family systems theory, appreciative enquiry and conflict resolution. In my posts the archdeacons were in charge of my supervision and job description. I found my spiritual director helpful too in a less formal way.



Revd Penny Cuthbert
Transition Minister
Diocese of Oxford

I was appointed

Transition Minister in June 2016, with a brief to bring change: to nurture, disciple and grow the congregation, and to help them engage more confidently with the surrounding community. The post was for three years, with a possible extension to four.

The parish had been in decline, with an ageing and 'stuck' congregation, a building in need of repairs, and financial difficulties. Prior to ordination, I had worshipped in a large local town centre church. So I began to talk about the possibilities of a graft team from this church joining the IM parish. The PCC and our bishop all agreed. A team of 8 adults and 7 children joined the IM parish, commissioned by the Bishop we were led on foot by him across the river to a welcome service at the IM parish.

The IM congregation and the newcomers worked extremely hard at building relationships. The two church traditions were different but both groups showed real humility and a determination to worship together and see where God led. A part-time Children and Families Outreach Worker was appointed, regular outreach events were held, and a Café Church launched on Sunday afternoons. Over the next 18 months numbers on Sundays grew from approx. 35 adults and 4 children to around 55 adults and 20 children, with over 30 children

on the register. The congregation, and the atmosphere in the building on Sundays, have been transformed. The IM parish is becoming known as a lively church that cares for its community.

It was key that the IM congregation were involved in the decision to invite the grafting team, and that the team who came all sensed a clear call from God, and came in humility and with a desire to serve. There was no sense of takeover. They also brought their tithes. It hasn't been easy holding the two traditions together, and the graft team have struggled with liturgy and a more sacramental theology. The illness and death of my husband in 2019 was a huge challenge for all of us, and the pace of change has slowed. But with the parish having clearly turned the corner, I was licenced in as Associate Vicar.



Revd Alex Summers
Interim Minister
Diocese of Chelmsford

Since ordination,

I have served in several different ministries: curate, vicar, area dean, and training adviser. Interim ministry wasn't on my radar until I was asked by my area bishop to serve for a two-year period at a church which had a troubled past.

Personally, there were several things that were immediately appealing – a short-term appointment with a clear structure and framework constructed around IM objectives and a consultancy role which enabled me to be both embedded as parish priest but also have an overview of a particular situation with a clear set of objectives in mind.

Interim ministry is a ministry in the in-between: in-between appointments and in-between the past and potential future. Ministering in-between is both a challenge and inspiration – to be caught in-between, but not be stuck there – using that 'space' as a creative place to explore past, present, and future, and do so alongside those who are also on this journey and have a desire to travel safely.

In a sense all ministry is (or at least should be) interim and transitional, but many structures in the Church of England are still modelled on a permanence which may be unhelpful in some cases. Interim ministry is intentionally a ministry of the in-between, seeking to explore and understand past, discern a possible future direction, and celebrate the present.



Revd Natasha Woodward
Interim Minister
Diocese of London

I like doing new things, and I enjoy the challenge of dealing with problems. As a priest in the Church of England the fact that I really enjoy learning about new contexts has felt like a guilty secret because it means I quite like moving on, when we have a long and important tradition of valuing stability in ministry. So when

I heard of the US tradition of Interim Ministry it scratched a personal itch. But it also addressed a problem in church life that I had been puzzling over: when an appointment of a minister to a parish doesn't work out well. I wondered if IM might be a way of addressing difficult situations that make appointments challenging, in the long run saving pain and expense for everyone concerned. After researching the topic in the context of MA study alongside being a vicar, I took the plunge and approached my bishop.

Just 1 month into my new appointment as an interim minister I am discovering what it means for the parish to know that I have a mandate to address specific areas in a short space of time. Reminding myself of this has already meant that I am doing different things than I would if I were expecting to be here longer. I am preparing the way for something different, and while I have a role in helping discern what that will be, it is not for me to choose it.

Each ministry context creates different support needs for the minister. What is unique about interim ministry is the short time scale and the need to access resources to support the ministry 'just in time'. I am greatly helped by knowing I can call on resources I have already gathered, but more importantly that I have many supportive colleagues at the end of the phone.



Revd Julie Bacon
Interim Vicar
Diocese of Leeds

I was licensed as interim priest-in-charge (now interim vicar) of two parishes (now one) in Leeds diocese in November 2017, having completed my curacy earlier that summer. I started training for ordained ministry in 2011, following a career as a solicitor.

During my curacy, I carried out a placement in a rural multi-parish benefice which was struggling with numerous issues.

As I observed and reflected on the context, I found myself automatically diagnosing the situation and thinking about how I might set about tackling the most pressing of the problems. At that stage, I had no idea that interim ministry existed! It was later, in discussion with the Archdeacon about possible future posts after curacy that he invited me to consider the vacancy for an Interim Minister – the post I'm now in.

In this role, I have five clear objectives set out in the role description. I've met quarterly with the Archdeacon to discuss and monitor progress against each objective. These supervisory meetings have been essential to maintaining focus and monitoring progress. They also provided a forum for discussing problems and exploring possible solutions, as well as a welcome element of pastoral support. Having a strong, positive relationship with a skilled and supportive Archdeacon who is fully aware of the challenges of the role has been crucial.

In my view, interim ministry still has a very low profile and is not yet well understood in the wider church. Yet it is a potentially powerful and valuable tool for the church to have at its disposal, and can be transformative. I have not received any specific training, and have drawn instead on my past experience and existing skills. My hope and prayer is that we will see a greater awareness of interim ministry developing (starting with the training institutions and embracing parishes, clergy colleagues and senior church leaders) that will lead to its better resourcing.

Revd Canon Dr Tudor Griffiths
Retired Interim Minister
Diocese of Gloucester

**Two modes
of IM: The
Mirror and
the Sling**

Interim Ministry is at a very creative and interesting point in the Church of England, because we see a number of different currents coming together. The resulting pattern is not yet fully resolved and certainly not neat. All of which is absolutely fine. If we were bold enough we could say that it is even a little reminiscent of the swirling nascent church of New Testament times.

Into this I would like to contribute a reflection from my own experience of three years as Senior Interim Minister in Gloucester Diocese. During this time I have worked in an ‘inner city’ parish, a rural 9-church Benefice, across two rural Benefices including a new housing development, and a couple of small town parishes linked with adjoining rural parishes. The shortest period of engagement was three months, the longest nearly a year. Incidentally but not insignificantly all but the first location are on the boundaries of the diocese. For the three years I have been living in Gloucester and travelling out from home. It has helped to have some measure of physical distance to underline that the IM is not the parish priest.

The *Mirror* and the *Sling* represent two different modes of operating as an Interim Minister, and they are entirely context- and mission-dependent. The *Sling* mode has nothing to do with David and Goliath and everything to do with holding secure a broken arm or sprained wrist to allow reconciliation of broken bones and healing to happen. When operating in *Sling* mode, the following points are significant:

- Fundamentally the processes and systems in place in the Benefice are all right. They are not perfect; adjustments and developments are needed but nothing more than is considered ‘normal’ in any Benefice.
- The IM brings ministerial competence and concentrates on building confidence of and in the existing leadership.

- The IM enables, encourages and leads mission conversation in the Benefice.
- The relationship between the IM and the Benefice is largely warm and tensions are minimal.
- The temptation for the IM is to become too comfortable and domesticated.

The *Mirror* mode can remind us of James 1: 22-25, and it is definitely the more challenging mode of operating

- Fundamentally there needs to be change in the processes and systems of the Benefice, although there has to be some flexibility and openness about the precise nature of this change. It is not helpful for there to be the perception that the IM is there to force a pre-conceived plan from the diocese. This perception will almost certainly be the default understanding at least among some of the local leadership.
- The IM brings ministerial competence and looks to invest in a confident and spiritually mature local leadership. This new leadership may have some overlap but is unlikely to be identical with the previous leadership.
- The IM works at changing the conversation from maintenance to mission thinking, and developing a vision for growth and not a strategy for survival.
- The IM accepts that there will inevitably be tensions in the relationship with some as well as acceptance and warmth from others.
- The temptation for the IM is to become too confrontational and to feel isolated and unsupported.

Of course these are not absolute distinctions and in practice the boundaries between these modes become blurred. But in my experience it is essential that there is clear understanding of which mode is dominant, and this has to be agreed with the senior leadership of the diocese, the Area Dean and the Benefices.

Diocesan Experiences of Interim Ministry

Interim Ministry in the Diocese of Chelmsford

Interim Ministry offers ‘transformational change’ in parishes.

In 2015, Chelmsford secured support from the Strategic Development Fund for the Turnaround Project. This aimed to support parishes where there had been leadership issues and pastoral breakdown, a failure in governance, lack of resources, building issues, and ‘a sense of tiredness’. One of the five turnaround intervention strategies proposed was Interim Ministry (IM), which was sanctioned by changes in the Clergy Terms of Service in the Church of England in July 2015. The Turnaround project enabled a programme of testing and trialling Interim Ministry and other transitional appointments. An end-of-project review in 2018 considered IM to be: ‘the biggest success, offering transformational change in a significant number of parishes.’

The initial proposal aimed to fund three full-time roles for five years. Potential parishes were identified by Archdeacons, Area Deans and Mission and Ministry Advisors from a list of around 38 parishes which had been identified as being most in need of intervention. Eight were initially identified for IM. However, as the scope of the work increased, so too did the range of opportunities for IM.

Between 2015 and 2018 different forms of Interim and ‘transitional’ ministry were tested by around 16 appointees (some used multiple times) in 46 different settings, from single parishes to multi-parish benefices, to teams, ministry units and also testing a deanery-wide and episcopal area-wide approach:

- A half-time IM was deployed to support two additional parishes in a neighbouring benefice for 18 months.
- An incumbent in a half-time post took an additional half-time IM appointment in a neighbouring parish.
- An SSM became an IM Consultant working alongside an incumbent to support transition.
- A curate took an 18-month IM appointment with support from their training incumbent.
- An experienced retiring clergy couple shared an IM role.
- Two lay leaders became Interim Pastors with the support of a neighbouring ministry unit.
- A ‘Turnaround Area Dean’ was appointed to coordinate change across five parishes.
- An Episcopal Area appointed a ‘Turnaround Minister’ to support several parishes in vacancy

The Diocesan Director of Lay Ministry, Revd Dr Elizabeth Jordan, led an evaluation process with lay leaders of churches which had experienced IM between 2015 and 2017. Her report noted that: *‘the provision of interim ministry has clearly made a substantial difference to the lives of churches which have benefitted from the process’*.

But it also noted that there was ‘no clear process’ for appointments; ‘considerable difference in understanding and practice of IM’ across the diocese, the ‘great variety of expressions’ and ‘different patterns of accountability and supervision’, all of which had made it more difficult to establish a coherent and consistent approach and good practice. Many IMs had no formal training and ‘were using skills, tools and materials they had acquired in life before ordination’.

Her report recommended a collegiate approach, focused on sharing skills and experience within the diocesan IM group. The evaluation observed that even where there were shortfalls in the appointments process and the parish was not well prepared for an IM appointment, a good process could make up for this. Conversely, a poor handover at the conclusion of an IM appointment can undermine a good process and leave parishes with a sense of frustration and lost opportunity.

The evaluation highlighted the value of engaging with the parish ‘network of relationships’ – the archdeacon, bishop, deanery (particularly area deans and lay chairs), mission unit and diocese – as part of a systematic approach to interim ministry. The evaluation noted IM was challenging conventions, such as the idea that nothing changed during vacancy, and that there should be no handover between clergy leaving and joining the parish. It recommended that IMs prepare a handover file, contribute to the job description and parish profile, and met the new post-holder.

This process of experimentation and the evaluation led to a more consistent process of appointment and reporting across the diocese after 2018, resulting in greater clarity and decision making, improved engagement and buy-in from parishes; IMs were better understood and supported, leading to better outcomes.

Best practice in the diocese now includes:

- A common appointment framework for IMs across the diocese;
- Effective consultation and communication with PCCs about the rationale for IM;
- Clear objectives, support systems and supervision for the IM.
- Supervision by Archdeacons, embedding senior staff in ongoing IM review and evaluation.

- Evaluation of IM using a log frame to record progress, outcomes and impacts.
- Overlap/handover between the IM and incoming incumbent.
- A diocesan IM networking group offering mutual support and learning.

A review of the impact of IM across the project in 2019 indicated quantitative changes in parishes were not always a reliable barometer of change: a decline in both attendance and share performance was commonly visible in parishes requiring IM and transitional ministry. Where there were positive changes – a flurry of new attendance or giving – these were not always sustainable. In many cases the pattern of decline was not reversed in the lifetime of these short appointments, but that did not mean that positive progress had not been made.

Qualitative changes indicating renewed confidence, energy and engagement were often visible and appeared to be a foundation for future turnaround. The following twelve positive outcomes from IM were commonly identified from evaluation and handover reports.

- 1 Interim Ministers listen and engage neutrally with the issues of the parish.
- 2 IM encourages transparency and better communication
- 3 IM builds engagement/re-engagement by parishioners.
- 4 IM generates a sense of confidence and energy.
- 5 IM promotes the development of a shared vision for the future
- 6 IM encourages better governance
- 7 IM encourages a more positive approach to financial stewardship
- 8 IM generates a sense of progress and ownership of church fabric.
- 9 IM offers an opportunity to experiment and try out new patterns and forms of worship.
- 10 IM offers fresh engagement with core spiritual disciplines such as bible study and prayer
- 11 IM encourages a parish to identify mission priorities, new opportunities and partnerships
- 12 IM helps parishes to prepare for the future

Through this project the diocese has learned how best to appoint and deploy Interim Ministers, and to support them so that they remain stable and non-anxious leaders of transformation; it has helped them to understand and lead effective IM processes, and it has started to develop a body of expertise and materials which can be used to train and develop others.

Chelmsford is now mainstreaming IM into our leadership training, ministry practice and appointments process. We have built better awareness of IM within the diocese – and nationally through our networking activities – and there is a growing understanding and consistency in this work across the diocese. It is clear that there is a growing interest in using Interim Ministry but, in common with the rest of the country, we do not have enough trained and equipped ministers. There is more scope to train Pioneers and Licensed Lay Ministers with relevant background skills, and enable skilled lay leaders to use some these tools in vacancy, so that the process of transformation need not wait for ‘an expert’ to turn up, but can be led from the grassroots with support.

The Turnaround Project has also offered a great opportunity for partnership and learning with other dioceses. Chelmsford has used SDF resources to stimulate national learning and networking: it hosted the first national conference on IM in February 2017, and has developed a network and initiated regional IM gatherings and training. We hope this foundation will offer a springboard for the further development of Interim Ministry nationally.

Interim Ministry in the Diocese of Gloucester

Interim Ministry should be considered in the wider context of our diocesan culture. This was established in 2017 as LIFE from John 10: 10 – *Life in all its fullness*. The ‘L’ of Life refers to Leadership, and Interim Ministry relates to two of the sub-themes:

- Piloting liberating models of leadership and ministry
- Developing learning networks for lay and ordained leaders.

The roots of Interim Ministry were found in the use of retired clergy with PTO being given a holding ministry in certain parishes during vacancies. In 2017 Canon Dr Tudor Griffiths was appointed as the Senior Interim Minister (SIM), which is a full-time post based in Gloucester. This appointment was made with a specific placement in mind in West Cheltenham. Prior to his appointment as SIM Tudor had been Area Dean in Cheltenham and Acting Rector in West Cheltenham for a few months. Since completion of this placement he has worked in a number of other Benefices in the diocese for periods ranging from three months to a year. Additionally he has worked in more of a consultancy role in other Benefices. It is significant that this role has developed and continues to develop in consultation with senior staff in the diocese.

There are a number of key words in thinking about Interim Ministry in Gloucester Diocese

Pragmatic it was set up as a pragmatic response to a real need in Cheltenham and a willingness to see where it developed from there.

Learning a crucial part of the role is learning, reflecting and recording. Regular feedback is given to the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Group. It has become clear that Interim Ministry operates in different modes. For instance, there is the ‘Sling mode’ – holding a Benefice through a difficult time. This is about healing and reconciliation. Or there is the ‘Mirror mode’ where the IM role is to hold up a mirror to the Benefice and enable people to reflect on where God is shaping them and where they have to change. We have found that it is important that if these modes are to operate successfully, then the relationship between the IM and the Benefice needs to have a ‘distance’ that is neither desirable nor possible for a static ministry. It is helpful in our context that the SIM lives in Gloucester and has to commute to the Benefice. There is thus both ‘belonging’ and ‘not belonging’.

Communication it is essential for there to be good communication between the SIM and the senior diocesan staff, especially the relevant Archdeacon.

Rooted the SIM is rooted spiritually in a praying community; in the current case at the Cathedral. In terms of being rooted in a ministry community the SIM is a member of the Department of Mission and Ministry and meets regularly with the Director of Mission and Ministry.

Facilitating the idea is to share the Learning with others, especially early retired clerics with PTO who are engaged in more traditional Interim ministry. This has been disrupted in 2020 along with so much else.

Networking the SIM has the diocesan brief to network with others in different dioceses, recognising that the learning takes place in community.

It will be very apparent that we are in the early stages of developing Interim Ministry in Gloucester Diocese and at this point we are reliant for this ministry on one priest who is nearing retirement. Currently the Archdeacons are formulating a job description for a successor; the senior staff and the DMPG have affirmed the trajectory of this ministry as part of the flexible ministry patterns that are emerging across the dioceses.

Interim Ministry in the Diocese of Europe

The Diocese in Europe has been an early and enthusiastic supporter of Interim Ministry in the Church of England. In October 2015 the diocese explored the possibility of introducing Interim Ministry, to support

chaplains facing particular circumstances common to other interim appointments: after a long incumbency or interregnum; when a chaplaincy has been facing serious difficulties, conflict or underperformance; and/or when a need for a change of direction has been identified. Bishop’s Council allocated funds for recruitment and training for IMs, and agreed that their strategy would be to appoint IMs where:

- there was a clear understanding and articulation of the reasons and particular benefits that will be conferred by making the appointment interim rather than permanent;
- and that a chaplaincy would be consulted at an early stage to secure its understanding and acceptance of the purpose of the interim appointment and to help it be properly prepared.

In 2017 the diocese launched its recruitment and training programme for IMs. They specifically sought experienced priests who were looking for a challenge to encourage and equip churches in transition who would benefit from experienced leadership, for short-term appointments lasting about 1-2 years and they may be part or full-time.

The diocese worked in partnership with the Transitional (Interim) Ministry Network of The Episcopal Church (TEC) – which has more than 30 years in providing training and professional development in IM in the USA. It offered training in Fundamentals of Interim Ministry for 10 participants in 2017 in Woking, eight of which had expressed an interest in accepting IM posts in the Diocese.

But, like many dioceses, it has found recruiting IMs to posts the most challenging aspect of the project. ‘We remain very excited about IM, and our senior staff team have huge interest in recruiting them. We trained a really high calibre group of people, and it was an excellent training course, but we are still finding it difficult to appoint. Our bishops and archdeacons are actively looking for IMs, but there simply do not seem to be enough around, although we refuse to be discouraged,’ reports the Revd Canon Ulla Monberg, Diocesan Director of Ministerial Development.

A key strategy for the future, Revd Canon Monberg notes, is to look at recruitment for IMs, including active retired clergy or those nearing retirement who would be willing to take on IM posts. Supervision and gathering the European IMs so that they do not feel isolated is another important aspect of IM in the Diocese of Europe.

The Genesis of Interim Ministry in the Diocese of Liverpool

The Diocese of Liverpool is among those pioneering interim ministry and it is already proving advantageous as the church faces increasing challenges of low numbers in attendance, funding, and available clergy.

In 2014, the Revd Chris Jones was coming towards the end of a 16-year incumbency in Ormskirk, a market town in the north of the Diocese of Liverpool. He was not ready to retire but could not see himself taking on another incumbency before retirement, so he started exploring with senior colleagues the possibility of a shorter ministry helping a church experiencing problems. A sabbatical followed in the USA where Chris visited the Diocese of Virginia – one of Liverpool's link dioceses – and other places, investigating the well-tried US model of Interim Ministry. This model used the 'five tasks' approach to IM: exploring heritage and history, lay leadership development, connections with the diocese and community, mission and identity, and future vision. He reported back to Liverpool on the how the model could be adapted.

Liverpool's Director of Learning and Stewardship, Steve Pierce, gathered a small 'task group' who were undertaking short-term posts in the Diocese and they considered how the model had the potential to address:

- Turnaround situations
- Pastoral disruption or breakdown, significant conflict or pastoral trauma
- Significant change on the horizon
- Following long incumbencies
- Helping a church to die with dignity

In 2015, The Ven Jennifer McKenzie then joined the diocese as Archdeacon of Wigan and West Lancashire, from the Diocese of Virginia. She had experience in the Episcopal Church both studying and serving in interim ministry roles, and became the diocesan lead for interim ministry, working with the task group to explore the circumstances in which IMs could be appointed, and they generated the defining characteristics of interim ministry in Liverpool, as follows:

- Time scale: typically for 12-18 months.
- Focus: while attending to the liturgical and pastoral duties of parish ministry the primary focus is the transition, the neutral zone of a church in vacancy.
- Shared ownership: successful interim ministry depends on shared ownership between congregation, interim priest and the diocese.
- Process: interim clergy lead the church through a five stage process of 'holy conversations' which explore, typically: Heritage; Leadership; Connections; Mission; Future.

- Outcomes: the interim minister thinks and works backwards, his or her ministry being informed by some established outcomes and working to realise those goals.

As the model has developed there have been longer-term appointments with a more transitional focus, and also shorter term, high-impact appointments, and the development and application of IM in different situations continues.

Liverpool has observed some emerging benefits from IM to be:

- Assisting churches in vacancy by undertaking the core liturgical and pastoral tasks of parish ministry
- Maximising the potential of a vacancy to be a time of growth, creative thinking and planning.
- Addressing difficult issues where they are identified: money, governance, pastoral breakdown, personality clashes.
- Facilitating creative reflection and forward planning by parishes in transition to the appointment of a new priest.

There is an ongoing programme of IM appointments. Three interims are now licensed in the diocese and are available where needed. Chris himself has been involved with four churches operating with a three-year license from the bishop as an Intentional Interim Minister. Other interims have been used for periods of six months to five years across all four archdeaconries. Interim Ministry has also been a feature of the deanery transition project, Transforming Wigan.

The diocese has found IM to be a creative and effective model of parish ministry which richly compliments the ministry of the 'settled' pastor. Serving for a limited period of time under a Bishop's letter of appointment which captures clear goals, the interim minister blends the central tasks of parish ministry with a focused attention on the established goals, and leading the church through a structured process of review and forward thinking which is recognised by the congregation. But the greatest challenge in making interim appointments is a lack of available trained interim clergy: a challenge Liverpool are addressing by exploring training and seeking out potential candidates. Liverpool believes this is not a stopgap but a vital important ministry that helps churches and parishes discern the right future for them under God.

The Diocese of Bristol – Vacancy Development and Interim Ministry

The Diocese of Bristol has extended its response to vacancies through a programme of Interim Ministry. Bristol first started developing its approach to vacancy leadership in 2009, and developed its vacancy strategy in 2012 with a view to harnessing vacancies as a *‘a fruitful time for examining assumptions, creating a context for change and developing lay leadership’*. The aim of the strategy was to stimulate collaborative leadership during a vacancy; the objectives, to:

- help with transition management
- address underlying dysfunctions in a parish.
- challenge any inappropriate dependency on stipendiary clergy
- help ensure that better appointments are made on the basis of a clearer understanding of the local context.

The strategy allowed for a ‘deliberate pause’ in the clergy appointments process, during which a ‘stage 1’ vacancy preview was undertaken by an external reviewer, involving a data gathering, a clergy exit interview and interviews with lay leaders to establish what approach to take. At stage 2, well-ordered benefices were offered a six-month leadership initiative to discern and develop lay gifts; those benefices with difficulties were offered a vacancy leadership process to explore options for the future, led by a team of experienced lay and ordained people.

Six years’ on the process today has been adapted but has similar aims.

- The Stage 1 review has become even more extensive and engages the parish to a greater degree.
- At Stage 2, greater emphasis has been placed on the development of the parish and the creation of the Role Description for the new priest. Bristol’s Transition Manager works over 6 months with the new incumbent and PCC in the implementation of the plans outlined in the parish profile.
- A grid has been developed for Area Deans to support Deanery Leadership teams in the process, which shows how all the parties interact during a vacancy.
- Additionally, Bristol started drawing on Interim Ministry in 2017 as a means of helping parishes in transition.

Former Transition Manager, George Rendell wrote of the evolution of IM: ‘Having advertised unsuccessfully early in 2017 for two short-term stipendiary appointments in parishes which needed transitioning, we have not tried this again. However we have used a range of alternative

ways of providing temporary priestly leadership in parishes (due to vacancy or long term uncertainty).’

These included

- 1 A multi-parish (10) benefice which had been vacant for 6 months when the SSM Associate Minister moved on leaving a part time OLM curate as the only ordained minister: A Vacancy Support Group was formed consisting of the OLM, the Area Dean, Assistant Area Dean and two third year curates from neighbouring parishes, one full time and one two days a week. The full time curate was made the lead of the group. An appointment was made in Feb this year.
- 2 A three church parish which had been in vacancy for two years and the Pioneer Minister was about to move on leaving a part time SSM Associate Minister who had finished her curacy in the parish one year previously. The Associate became half time stipendiary Priest in Charge on the understanding that it would be for one year. An appointment has just been made. The Associate was allocated a retired Archdeacon who acted as her Mentor.
- 3 A large parish church became vacant following a difficult 6 month period and the curate came to the end of his time shortly afterwards. Several Associates were left in the parish but they were a dysfunctional team. A retired Archdeacon (not the one in 2) was appointed to provide oversight to the team for six months. An appointment has just been made.
- 4 A retired SSM is just about to be licensed as Associate Minister of one church and deanery Interim Minister. This SSM has carried out an interim role during two vacancies over the past five years. In the first he stayed on after his curacy to perform the role. In the second he was an Associate who stayed on after the Vicar left.
- 5 In a single parish the curate in her third year stepped up into a leadership role in the small team of clergy and LLMs until an appointment was made. She has now moved to her own parish.
- 6 We have a further three parishes where the SSM Priests in Charge are over 70 and therefore on a renewable licence. The Diocese recognised that each, for different reasons, is performing a holding position. Each parish is likely to undergo major change within the near future.

The Diocese of Truro – Lay leaders supporting Transitions in Truro

The Diocese of Truro established the *Transitions* programme in 2016 as a positive means of supporting vacancies as ‘a season of change and opportunity’. The inspiration came from seeing Interim Ministry at work in Canada, and the idea emerged in 2015 from *Accompanied Ministry Development* – part of the diocese’s learning strategy to encourage discipleship and enable mission.

Since 2016 the diocese has invested resources in supporting parishes through a team of lay Transitions Advisors. An information booklet has been produced to support parish officers, offering signposts to resources and tasks lists, and a timetable for the vacancy process. Transitions advisors provide guidance and support, calling in additional input from clergy and senior staff as required. They gather a transition team of 6-8 people drawn from the parish or across the benefice to support the process through planning and prayer over a period of six months or more, as necessary.

The intention of *Transitions* is to empower lay leaders ‘with a profound sense of Christian calling’. It encourages parishes to use the time of transition as a chance to ‘cast a vision for the future of your church and benefice, and think carefully about what you are, and what you are becoming.’ It encourages parishes to consider it ‘an opportunity for growth, during which you can build a joyful and flourishing church that lives the good news and celebrates the great excitement of life in Christ.’

Julian Briscoe, Head of Church Growth and Development and their Director of Transforming Mission for Truro, has served as one of the team of three Transitions Advisors, two of which are volunteers. Mr Briscoe, a former BBC executive with experience in change management, has led change in 12 or 13 churches.

‘It is both a challenging and immensely rewarding process, and the relationships stay with you. It is a wonderful experience to connect with parishes at such a critical time and help them. More and more transitions are about parishes working together. We are part of that vision-making process, helping people see where God is leading them.’

Briscoe explained that the diocese has purposefully sought out and recognised lay people as transitions advisors, seeking those who has gifts of discernment and listening, and who could facilitate discussion. They had found the lay dynamic important to the support process:

‘There is an amazing benefit in managing change from their level. It is not as if another member of the clergy is coming in and telling them what to do. We are coming alongside, listening and helping them from a lay perspective. While we do not always have the authority required in more challenging circumstances, we do seek the support of clergy and bishops as necessary.’

‘Dioceses, inevitably, always attract negative perceptions as ‘them’, but this is one aspect of Diocesan support which parishes have really appreciated and which has built fruitful conversations and renewed partnerships’.



Helen Gheorghiu Gould: Participants gathering with Bp Peter Hill at the first national conference on Interim Ministry in 2017.

Perspectives on Interim Ministry from Senior Clergy

Rt Revd Robert Springett
Bishop of Tewkesbury
Diocese of Gloucester,
October 2018.

One of the reasons I am encouraged by Scripture is that God's people are generally so inept! It was true of the disciples arguing over who was the greatest, it was true of Peter at the last supper, it was true of God's chosen people of Israel, especially in the wilderness. Once Egypt had been their salvation. It had saved them from starvation, but over time things had gone bad and the Israelites became slaves only to be rescued by Moses, led through the Red Sea and into the Sinai on their way to the promised land. It did not go well and soon the people were complaining in the desert.

The manna God had sent was not good enough. The rabble had a strong craving:

"If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions the garlic but now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."

Numbers 11 4 – 7

The situation became no better as they got closer to the promised land and camped just on the border at Paran. From there Moses sent out men to spy on the land for forty days to go and see if the land was good or bad and whether the towns were un-walled or fortified and if the land was rich or poor, noting that it was the season of the *first ripe grapes* (Numbers 13: 20)

The spies returned with their reports and they told Moses:

"We came to the land to which you sent us and it flows with milk; honey... yet the people in the land are strong and the towns are fortified and large."

Numbers 13: 27

The future looked good, but they were scared

Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we." 'So they brought to the Israelites an unfavourable report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land that we have gone through as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are of great size... and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, ...

Numbers 13: 32-33

And the people rebelled:

"Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become booty; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?"

Numbers 14: 2 – 4

They formed a 'Let's Get Back to Egypt Committee', and we have been forming them ever since!

Now I certainly do not want to imply that Interim Ministers are to be spies. Indeed to be effective I think it is essential that IMs work within an agreed framework and in an open and transparent way even though some aspects of their work may be confidential. However there is a sense that they are operating in the wilderness with memories of an (alleged) golden past in Egypt behind and a promised land before and are therefore sent to search out the new landscape that the church is called to inhabit.

It is significant to note that IMs are sent out. IMs are by their nature connected; they explore the place to which they are sent coming back to report and recommend to those who send. In our context that is to the Bishop and to the Diocesan Mission Committee who hold the oversight of the mission and ministry of the Church pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical to which it must always 'have regard'. (Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011).

IMs working with the Bishops as part of the Diocesan Leadership will be those who have a clear understanding of the missional challenge facing the church today at a time when much of our traditional ministry is becoming unsustainable. They will have confidence to recognise and speak hard truths but they will also be confident in God and God's faithfulness as we seek to reimagine ministry and proclaim the Gospel afresh in this generation.

With this in mind I want to propose a framework by which IMs might carry out their task and report back as together we seek to enable the people of God to look forward rather than back. This framework is: Theological, Pastoral, Practical and Spiritual.

It is perhaps obvious to say, but we need to begin our exploration with a confidence that we are ‘doing **theology**’, not as an isolated academic discipline but as essential to ensuring our journey is authentically that to which God calls. Such an approach needs to be thus Christological, with a focus on the Kingdom and an Anglican Ecclesiology. It is Christological in that it is rooted in the person of Jesus Christ who comes to dwell with his people with the offer of life in all its fullness, whose life the church is called to show forth in the world. It has a focus on the Kingdom since this is what Jesus came to proclaim, a church confident in singing the Magnificat with Mary, with the proud scattered, the mighty put down, the humble and meek exalted and fed and God’s mercy made known. Lastly our theology must have an Anglican ecclesiology recognising the vocation of the Church of England to serve the nation and all its people, to exercise the ‘cure of souls’ and not to descend into congregationalism, but remain engaged with the communities in which we are set.

Such a theological approach is bound therefore by definition to be also **pastoral**, connected to and understanding of the needs of those in our care, even of those who might want ‘to go back to Egypt’. This is not to say that the IM colludes, we are not going back to Egypt, but to understand, however hard it may be, that each person is made in the image of God and loved. A pastoral approach will seek to embody the teaching of Augustine of Hippo that we come not to God ‘by navigation but by love’.

Pastoral but also **practical**. The experience of the wilderness for the people of Israel was that of managing their resources as they collected their daily manna. The IM will be acutely aware of the resources available to the church and the necessity of managing and stewarding these. This will be both of those of the community in which they are ministering and of the wider church. IM will have a highly developed sense of the ministry of the whole people of God, and of the need for the church’s ordained ministers to lead and to collaborate. They will be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of physical plant and of the nature of money as profoundly spiritual in enabling ministry. They will be both realistic and ambitious and not afraid to challenge. The reports with which they return must be sustainable and deliverable as well as theological and pastoral!

Lastly the IM must have a profound and deep **spirituality**. IMs will need this first for themselves. The ministry in which they engage is often in arid places in which deep roots are needed to find the living water in Jesus Christ. With a deep faith themselves they will be passionate in enabling others to develop a similar thirst. An IM will want, often with limited resources, to offer the best of worship giving sometimes demoralised congregations a ‘foretaste of the heavenly banquet’, provide opportunity for a new exploration of prayer, that the people may be renewed and, with Christ in their hearts, they may glimpse afresh how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ to be filled with the measure of all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3: 18-19)

Returning to the book of Numbers, the people were afraid. Many wanted to go back; even among those who had spied out the land there were those who hesitated. We should be under no illusion that the work of the IM is anything but challenging, but a sufficient number of the people were tenacious, excited about the promised land flowing with milk and the honey that they wanted it for their children and their children’s children.

IMs will be those who will provide that enthusiasm and courage and in reporting back and working with the Bishop and the Diocesan Mission and Partnership Committee and working with Archdeacons and Area Deans, building partnership and forging alliances, renewing hope building ambition, and in so doing they will help the people not look back but forward to the place God is calling.

As a postscript Moses of course did not enter the promised land and such is the nature of IM that more often than not this will be the case for such ministries – not that IMs should expect to die! Rather the ministry they exercise will cease as the new commences, that has been brought to birth as the waters of the Jordan are crossed which is why as a Church this is a ministry is something for which we must be thankful and encourage, walking with God’s people to the promised land.

The Ven Dr Andy Jolley
Archdeacon of Bradford.
Diocese of Leeds.

The Guidance under Regulation 29 (7D) of the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009 stipulates that: “An interim post should primarily be a response to a particular pastoral need or mission opportunity.”

Which raises the question: was John the Baptist, then, an Interim Minister? IM is a short ministry which is preparing the way. It is about encouraging people to “Think differently!” It about unsettling the status quo, setting a new vision, addressing powerful groups, and looking to one who will come after.

Interim Ministry is also about coming to terms with the past, losing old fears and find new hopes, and perhaps discovering a fresh identity. It is a time of opportunity to explore possible future arrangements with other parishes and whether pastoral reorganisation is viable. It is a time to consider future witness, mission and ministry; reassess resources, needs and priorities; and to see where and how change is needed, and work through the inevitable transition. It is a time to make plans for the future and prepare for the next chapter of the church’s life.

Interim Ministry is an option to consider when the future is unclear; when pastoral reorganisation is being considered; or when the past has been difficult. It is an opportunity to enable the parish to equip itself more effectively for mission, and to determine what kind of minister is required in the longer term.

Some of the differences between Interim Ministry and Usual Ministry are that IM is

- A fixed duration;
- Has specific objectives;
- Is future focussed;
- It involves ongoing review;
- It has a focus on pastoral care;

Some Typical Objectives for Interim Ministry might include

- To revitalise ministry and mission in the parish;
- To identify and build up a core leadership team with whom to provide leadership to the congregation and grow their capacity and numbers;
- To re-engage with the local community and community organisations ;
- To establish whether the congregation can grow to a viable level;
- To establish robust financial governance of the PCC and determine whether the parish's finances can be rebuilt to a viable level;
- To agree with the PCC changes needed to enhance the church’s prospects of flourishing, and to implement them (e.g. worship patterns)
- To develop and agree proposals for future pastoral organisation;
- To strengthen relationships with the rest of the Deanery and Diocese;
- To help the parish develop and articulate its identity clearly, setting it up to know the skills and experience to seek in the next Vicar.

An example of an Interim Ministry post might therefore be, to

- Establish a coherent, attractive and workable pattern of worship across the churches.
- Develop, agree and implement a pastoral scheme.
- Develop and start to implement a sustainable strategy for new ministry and styles of worship to reach out to children, young people and families.
- Evaluate the needs, opportunities and challenges of the church buildings and develop and agree viable plans for their future.
- Help the parishes develop and articulate their identity, so they know the skills and experience they will seek in a new incumbent.

**This is an edited presentation to an IM Regional networking meeting,
hosted by the Diocese of Leeds in May 2019.**

Bp Peter Hill

Bishop of Barking

Diocese of Chelmsford

**I Interim ministry is a tool
for transformation**

Interim Ministry brings transformation through the creation of a liminal space inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Picture this: Two rooms at either end of a corridor.



The door of the first room is generally shut, and visitors are not particularly welcome. On some days, that first room is warm and easily sends the family to sleep; but on other days it gets so hot that temper and conflict breaks out.

The door of the second room is almost always open. The room itself is light and airy with a variety of activities. Visitors are always welcome, the hospitality is warm and there are many doors off in to other rooms and creative spaces.

The corridor between the two is at times cold and can be disturbing, it certainly is not entirely comfortable. There are many mirrors and nooks and crannies for one to one conversations.

You will be familiar with the idea of the liminal in rites of passage theory. Liminal actually means 'threshold'. It's about taking a group of people creatively from one old room to the threshold of another exciting space. The journey along the corridor is demanding but transformational. It is liminal times that people are most open to change, especially through the Holy Spirit.

The Interim Minister is charged with taking a congregation out into that at times chilly transformative corridor.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.’

Matthew 13: 52

That means taking them out of their old story but preserving the old treasures accompanying them along the corridor to the threshold of the new story with anticipation of new treasures from the Lord.

- The transformation begins in the first room where the church story is told, shared, and acknowledged, warts and all.
- The major transformation begins in that corridor
Some people have termed it the ZOUD – the zone of uncomfortable debate. You see the Jesus do this with the disciples again and again as he takes them out of their comfort zones into liminal places of vulnerability and learning.
- It is in effect a sacred space of transformation. William Booth said you cannot change the future without disturbing the present.

2 Interim ministry is about matching a particular individual to a particular parish situation

That interim minister needs to be a particular gifted individual:

- an initiator
- an envisioner rather than a sustainer;
- a listener with an open mind, not a fixer with a pre plan;
- a conflict manager with broad shoulders;
- an encourager - a Barnabas;
- have some understanding of change management and face down the opposition – the 16%
- they will not be afraid to bring in other experts for specific issues
- travelling with people guided by the Holy Spirit. It's all about 'with' in Sam Wells terms;

In the words of our diocesan strapline they must be a **transforming presence for Jesus**.

Identifying parishes

The situations for interim ministry are various

- a stale parish
- a troubled parish in crisis
- a long vacant parish
- a disappointed parish

There must be a contract between the individual and a parish which is about exploring the past – the parish story and being open to a different future. It's about recognising individual and corporate identity in Christ. It is about true calling and identity, the Who do you say I am? of Jesus and the disciples in Mark 8.

The PCC must be open to change and agree to interim ministry. They may not know entirely what it means but they must agree. No parish profiles. The re-envisioning of the parish is the job of IM – to produce that vision document/profile for the next leader to take forward.

3 There is not particular methodology to Interim Ministry

But will involve four particular actions for transformation:

- Reflection on what was – the story of the parish.
- Correction of what hasn't worked or is plainly wrong before God.
- Protection of what is good - the old treasure from the past.
- Resurrection - bringing new life, not from outside but from within, by the inspiration of the Spirit the new treasure.

4 Interim ministers are not one shape, but they must embody transformation

They may be an Area Dean, stipendiary, lay missionaries, retired clergy, SSM

But they must listen and respond! 'Strategy is conversation'

I learnt that at a very expensive Change Management conference once! The best conversations for transformation are usually one-to-one – the methodology of **community organising**.

5 The final outcome is that new vision

In a simple stepped way.

An overlap with the new minister may be necessary and needful, which is not our usual practice!

Notes

- 1 Natasha Woodward, *Complex Changes: Interim Ministry and the Church of England*, MA in Christian Approaches to Leadership, Sarum College, August 2017, pp. 65-66.
- 2 Ibid., p. 66.
- 3 Paul N Svingen, *The Interim Minister: A Special Calling*, in Roger Nicholson (Ed.), *Temporary Shepherds: A congregational handbook for Interim Ministry*, (1998) The Alban Institute, p. 53.
- 4 Anthony B Robinson, *Rethinking Interim Ministry*, *Congregations Magazine* 2012, Issue 4, January 9 2013, Alban at Duke Divinity School, <https://alban.org/archive/rethinking-interim-ministry/>
- 5 Svingen, *op cit.*, p. 54.
- 6 Ibid., p.56.
- 7 Woodward, *op cit.*, p.66
- 8 Julian Briscoe, *IM Viewpoint*, *IM Bulletin*, Chelmsford Diocese, Autumn 2020.
- 9 Elizabeth Jordan, *Monarch, Shepherd or Parent? Interim Ministry in the Church of England*, *Practical Theology* (2012), Equinox Publishing Ltd, p. 72
- 10 Elizabeth Jordan, *The Practice of Interim Ministry – research into the tools and resources presently used by Interim Ministers in order to identify areas for development*, Common Awards Seedcorn Fund, (2017), p. 5.
- 11 Norman B Bendroth, *What next?*, in Norman B Bendroth (Ed.) *Transitional Ministry Today*, (2015) The Alban Institute, p189.
- 12 Ibid., p.189-191.
- 13 Supplementary advice issued by the Archbishops' Council in December 2017. Interim Posts made under regulation 29 (7C) of the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009, paras 11.7-11.10, p.19-20.