

Interim Ministry Networking Meeting

St John Stratford, 27 September 2016

Facilitated by Helen Gheorghiu Gould and Elizabeth Jordan

Note-taker: Natasha Woodward

1. *Sharing the journey*

Participants shared information on their background and current role in IM.

Further details appear in the annex.

2. *Reconnoitering the Landscape – Elizabeth Jordan*

Lay development advisor, Chelmsford. Doctorate in lay-clergy relationships

Elizabeth has some recent history of IM in this country, working in Lichfield on an interim post to 'tide over' a parish in vacancy. She discovered resources were available from US, Church of Scotland, and a few other dioceses. John Lee, clergy appointments advisor, noticed a lot of Bishops asking for IM but the introduction of Common Tenure led to uncertainty as to how to make short term appointments.

Questions for the day:

- What is the situation which means that we think interim ministry is the answer?
- Are these situations in common across the country, or are they different situations?
- Is the same language being used about different things?
- Is 'interim' the same as 'turnaround' ministry. What about 'transitional' ministry? Transitional conveys more of the sense of change.

'Transitional Ministry Today' by Norman B. Bendroth, challenged the assumption that we should be learning from the US, as they are also saying that the situation is changing there too; they are looking to C of E regarding new shape of church.

What are we hoping to achieve? Is it about maintenance of our structures? Something different? What are the tasks of Interim Ministry nowadays considering the nature of congregations and church is changing?

Do we need to look at equipping people for change in general, without predicting a particular future. (cf Teaching – used to be about preparing people for a particular career – now it is about helping people to have a sense of their own identity, help them to work in teams, to network, to spot the market, to change profession. When the future is unknown, preparing people for it is not impossible, but different.)

So – is there enough commonality amongst us to work together? What will the network look like? What means of communication etc.

The Language of Interim Ministry

- Interim Ministry existed in Liverpool before it was designated as such, under language of 'how do we make a limited term appointment in common tenure'
- How does language feed into cultural change? The words we use show our values. 'Interim' has been used as a pejorative. This could change as people see value in it, but it is not there yet. Interims can help to take genuinely new paths.
- There is a challenge for IMs in finding the language to describe what they are doing at the same time as learning what it is. Whether talking to colleagues of congregations. This is not easily explained when it is in the process of being discovered.
- Is ministry proper if it is interim / temporary? Title of book 'Temporary Shepherds'. Is it possible to be temporary and a shepherd.
- One experience – primary concern of IM is change management. In the world we hear it called 'consultancy', 'super-head', also interim CEO. The concept of interim is better understood outside the church.

- This language can lead to misunderstanding – a parish thinks it’s in ‘special measures’ – BUT in some diocese it *is* in special measures, and the bishop wants that to be clear to the parish.
- Another way of thinking about it is: ‘What’s the problem we are trying to solve?’ In the context of a shortage of clergy, the way we do church now will not be sustainable in the future. Liverpool – lots of different lengths of appointments for interim ministry – 6 months – 3 years. Particularly in context of pastoral reorganisation. (E.g. Transition Team Wigan – 7 parishes are operating as a mission partnership)
- IM is about managing change, clergy shortage and especially anxiety in an uncertain time: takes the burden off churchwardens. Lowers anxiety in system, to allow the system to shift. Avoiding fight/flight/freeze mechanism. Guidance says this should not be the norm, but as long as serious change is on the agenda it may need to be the norm.
- Sheffield – there is a policy that a receiving church should know it is in ‘special measures’
- In the US, IM is predicated on a belief you always need a break to transition. Maybe it is not always true.

How different does IM have to be from other ministry?

- Ecclesiological, we have a model of IM in the Bible (Paul & growth of early church): perhaps in changing times all ministers should be transition ministers.
- Training needs. Training for interim ministers would be relevant for any minister.
- Pilgrim ministry (like pioneer ministry) in contrast with settled view of ministry.
- Raises question what it is to be a priest? Absolve, bless & consecrate to equip the people – interim ministry requires dispensing of things that have accreted to that definition.
- Not chairing PCC in interim period can be liberating.
- Change management – ecclesiological, eschatological – secular material has many connections with scripture, theology. Pilgrimage. Fear of secular language unjustified.
- Diocesan perspective – need to turn round parishes, esp to address ‘share shortfall’ – interventionist view that interim minister will sort out the parish. An alternative Diocesan perspective is seeing interregnum as time of opportunity, a strategic move.
- If a church knows how bad the situation is, it is more likely to make the changes it needs. It stresses that it is not all down to the interim minister.

The patterns in our language and thinking suggest that there are three distinct features of Interim Ministry – the role, task and timeframe of IM, which have particular characteristics :

<i>Role</i> <i>of Interim Minister</i>	<i>Task</i> <i>of interim Ministry</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
<i>Responsibility of individual IM/IM Team:</i> Re-understanding priestly ministry; Modelling good ministry; Intentional Interim ministry; Pilgrim ministry; Management of change; Vacancy management; Change leader/consultant; Transition team; Transitional ministry; Danger of ‘solo hero’ language – ‘superhead’, special measures.	<i>Shared responsibility of Diocese, Parish and IM:</i> Addressing spiritual challenge/turnaround; Making and growing disciples; Dismantling the status quo; Permission to ask questions: Reality check; Developing confident questioners – being ‘lost with questions’. Vision-creating/development Reimagining Change management Leadership challenge Taking the opportunity Shepherding change	<i>IM is always time limited:</i> Stop gap; Temporary shepherds; Short-term Interim; Long-term Interim-PIC; Legislative issues to support time limited nature of IM.

Patrick Shorrock – Human resources Department, Church House

- The Interim Ministry policy from Church House developed from archdeacons saying that common tenure wasn't working. There were concerns that IM would offer no security for priests who could have their licenses withdrawn. They wanted more flexibility (although they had rarely used the powers they had under the previous regime). In many cases, it didn't actually need a legal change but having the label helped give permission.
- CH developed guidance to which bishops are legally required to have regard. They can ignore it if there is a good reason for it. Then supplementary information. CH is currently working on developing that guidance in response to experience. The objective is to make IM more effective. Issues which appeared settled are not – we are in a time of change.
- Many of the issues in IM apply to all ministry, e.g. are you there for the bishop's agenda? Guidance says IM is up to a maximum of 6 years, which is not so interim when you think that incumbencies of 7 years are now considered normal.

The Ven Jennifer McKenzie – An Archdeacon's perspective

- Church House has been very responsive. IM shouldn't be that different from a normal post, but the advantage is that it makes it clear that this is not business as usual. But where it differs:
 1. It helps to set a direction of travel with accountability built in for the priest who is leading it, as this can be written into offer letter, etc, which are then at least assented to by the PCC, which gives the priest some back-up if facing conflict over the tasks to be performed. Accountability to the priest and for the priest.
 2. It requires forethought by diocese, so the diocese has responsibility to support the minister in the unique work that they are doing, because expectations can be extremely high that certain things will be accomplished. Encourages the diocese to be supportive for the particular tasks required. In Liverpool archdeacon is line manager to try to accomplish this.
 3. It provides for different paths for clergy. Some not so suited for long-term settled ministry – but really fit the needs of interim ministry. IM honours and affirms and uses the gifts and call of those clergy without making the parish feel there is something wrong because their priest has moved on. It is affirming a way of being a priest, and the different ways that they are called.

2. What and why now?

What are the circumstances which mean we are looking at this?

- Team ministries with clergy who were trained to work on their own. Challenge of collaborative ministry. Teams collapsing has made diocese think about how to address this.
- Decline & ageing congregations of C of E. We have to do things differently. Out of mission-shaped ministry report. Reimagining and refreshing inherited church. [Burning platform]
- Shortening incumbencies. Now 7-10 years is more normal, no longer a lifetime. But parishes haven't necessarily moved on to that – can feel betrayed. Shift in practice of priesthood. There is still a prevailing view that if you leave incumbency 'early' (e.g. after 3 years) it means something has gone wrong.
- Clergy are seeing value for the parish and themselves in staying shorter periods in post (although structures can make this hard).

Challenges:

- Practicalities of making short appointments.
- Those with view one priest one parish. Team v. solo
- Leadership discourse of 'every successful church has successful leader' works against developing congregation. Assumption that the congregation doesn't know anything.
- Some of our challenges are not new: even in 1537, parishes were complaining about state of buildings, vandalism and not having a vicar. There is a cycle of decline and rebirth. A parish where everything is going

well also has a problem, as the cycle will change. Therefore it might be sensible for someone to learn skills as an interim, and in a subsequent appointment to stay, in the right circumstances (if the place is at the right point in the cycle).

- Interims can help with any of the options facing us – close buildings, merge parishes, reimagine buildings, get more people in.
- Interims need to have thick skin, will be scapegoated (usually around year or year and a half), and therefore will need to leave in order not to be part of sustaining the pattern. Also needs to be about developing team.

How many are living in the parish as an interim? Do we need to become less geographically focused (parish/diocesan boundaries)?

- One priest lives in parish and it is important to her – a more incarnational approach to the IM.
- 40 minutes from parish but feels more incarnational because in an ordinary house, not a vicarage, commute in common with others.
- We can't move house every 18 months/2 years
- Commuting makes the point that it isn't permanent – it marks the difference
- 35 minutes away, love it - Living away makes relationship with congregational less parental/dependent.
- In a role with a lot of civic responsibilities, it would be helpful to live closer.
- 40 mins commute, fine
- As an IM in the US – lived outside parish for years. It worked but it all depends on expectations being clarified, and the nature of the call to ministry.
- Congregations feel they haven't really got a vicar if their vicar lives elsewhere.
- There are examples of congregations which have become more self-sufficient and are more likely to have well-functioning local ministry teams.

US context: Short term interim vs 'priest-in-charge'. 'interim' isn't mentioned in the law. Intentional interims – 12-18 months. Priest-in-charge – is used in situations that are harder to shift, low insight in congregation, for longer periods under certain circumstances. See new supplementary guidance from Church House.

Is ordination necessary? Interim Consultancy could be done by a lay person. Different perspectives – priestly ministry may be important for some parishes and not others. The problem can be that the people only recognise those who are ordained. Legally, there is no problem with lay people. It may also be connected with issue of residing in the parish, which is associated with priestliness.

What about Licensing? There is a danger of mixed signals. If you pull out all the stops can be too much for someone who is only going to be there for a year; but don't do it in a dark corner somewhere. 'Temporary Shepherds' book – liturgy for beginning and ending.

Reviewing the Conference Structure:

A draft structure was shared and commented on. Additional ideas for inclusion:

- Get the message across that IM is important and valued, and offer ways of doing it.
- A learning environment for sharing skills.
- Stories we can relate to and learn from.
- Distinctive strands for practitioners
- For practitioners to be encouraged.
- For senior clergy to hear from practitioners.
- Legalities and strategy for senior leaders.
- Practitioners to share skills etc.
- Parishioners – what their experience is.
- Will senior clergy really come? Maybe help if a bishop and archdeacon are doing a special section.
- Shorter? A day and a half – end with dinner.
- Start earlier on the first day with option of staying over night before.
- Consider using High Leigh's associated conference centre at Swanwick.

- Make lunch light and standing – networkable – so save time.
- Training – ‘boot camp’ – may be useful for senior clergy as well as practitioners – releases CMD funding
- Video link with someone from N. America
- Case studies – ideally real so can see what came next
- Within case study discussions have resource people who can be called on by the groups (hold up coloured piece of paper)
- Within case study – aspect of role play, thinking through different roles – HR person, archdeacon, priest etc etc
- Theological input
- Note ‘resourcing the future’ down twice on programme
- To make it valuable for senior clergy – give a policy they can walk away with – could be at same time as a bit of training directed at practitioners
- Ways of feeding back during the conference what’s helpful, what’s not – to feed into open sessions

What training materials/online materials should be developed?

Elizabeth Jordan hoping to look into this with funding from Durham common awards via St Mellitus. This will need partners in practice for this – is anyone interested?

- Tools (e.g. congregation systems inventory is not very user-friendly) – could do with more tools
- Conflict resolution, Bridge Builders
- Family systems – Steinke, Friedman etc
- Influencing and changing culture
- Project management
- People management – line management
- Participatory processes – institute for cultural affairs ICA UK
- Relationship with pastoral reorganisation
- Appreciative enquiry
- Growing disciples, how to develop vision – material for congregations in preparation for having an interim minister
- Leadership – collaborative leadership models
- Conducting mutual ministry reviews
- 5 tasks of an interim – tools could be developed for each of the stages (NB 5 tasks not necessarily linear) – e.g. coming to terms with history
- How to do a genogram (family systems theory)
- Note that these are relevant to any clergy person –offer it to everyone (including unintentional interim ministers)
- Qn re sharing training across dioceses; produce videos etc