

IM Focus: February 2019 Interim Ministry in the Diocese in 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 chaplaincies 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, 8 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.

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