

## **IM Focus: July 2020** Interim Ministry in the Diocese of Gloucester

### **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, 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 3 months to a year. Additionally he has worked in a 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.

#### **For further information contact:**

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