



The 2nd National Interim Ministry England Conference Interim Ministry – The Way Ahead. Zoom Conference Report, 2nd December 2020

Interim Ministry will be increasingly needed within the *'mixed ecology'* envisaged by the Archbishop of York. Director of the National Ministry Team, Rt Revd Chris Goldsmith told a national conference on Interim Ministry in the Church of England: 'We are going to need you as a church, and not just for the work you can do, but how you can equip and enable other people to lead through these transitions in the way you have been doing.'

Rt Revd Peter Hill, Bishop of Barking, noted that IM brought transformation by taking congregations into liminal space where they were open to change. Jesus was the best model of Interim Ministry, walking 'alongside us in transition – he is the ultimate change manager.'

The conference, sponsored by the Diocese of Chelmsford, considered a more strategic approach to IM nationally, 5 years after IM was enabled by legislation.

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?'*

The conference gathered practicing Interim Ministers with senior staff from dioceses across the Church of England. Practitioners and trainers from the Interim Ministry Network in the USA shared with the conference their learnings on 40 years of Interim Ministry in North America. Molly Dale Smith noted that Interim Ministry was about enabling congregations to come to terms with change. 'Congregations are not sick, they are simply in a new environment. IM is there to help them learn how to respond to that change...to take advantage of the opportunities in times of transition.' Practitioner Susan Eibner said: 'Never has there been a moment when the skills of IM were more needed in our world...we need to seek out the energy of our faith communities in difficult times.'

Rt Revd Peter Hill, Bishop of Barking, who has overseen the IM programme in the Diocese of Chelmsford, said Interim Ministry brought transformation by creating liminal space, likened to a threshold or corridor between two spaces. It was a cold and disturbing place – a 'zone of uncomfortable debate' – but in that corridor people are open to change. 'Jesus does this again and again, taking people into that liminal corridor, it is a sacred space...Jesus is and always has been an Interim Minister. You see it in everything he does. Jesus walks alongside us in transition – he is the ultimate change manager.'

The full report on IM5+ England can be found on the Chelmsford website:
<https://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/ordained-ministry/interim-ministry>.

The Zoom Conference proceedings can be followed on *YouTube Interim Ministry England* here:
<https://youtu.be/Fbhul7faBq0>

A suite of IM Resource materials to support training and learning in IM are being launched by Chelmsford shortly. A draft will be available for comment until 31st January 2021 here <https://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/ordained-ministry/interim-ministry>.

Chelmsford is also running a pilot IM training programme in January 2021 for all those involved or interested in IM.
Sign up here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/interim-ministry-online-modular-training-programme-tickets-128244347295>