

Healthy Parish Relationships Guidelines

(as approved by the Synod 15 October 2018)

1. Preamble

Church leadership is an indispensable part of Christ's body. Men and women are gifts to the church to "prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the son of God" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

When the church's leadership and people work together, under the authority of Christ, the church flourishes and provides the best environment for gospel growth.

On the one hand, the people are to "respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you" (1 Thessalonians 5:12). On the other hand, leaders are not to lord it over them and, "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mark 10:43). Servant leadership is the way of the Son of Man who "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

In all our relationships, grace and love must prevail but particularly when it comes to ministers' relationships with each other and the church.

A proper understanding of expectations goes a long way toward healthy parish relationships. This document is designed to assist churches and ministers to work together. It focuses on the relationships of a) the Rector to the church and b) the Rector to staff members.

The Parish Council of each parish could consider moving something like the following motion at the beginning of each ministry appointment.

'The Rector, wardens and Parish Council –

- (a) give thanks for God's gifts to the church and strive to live at peace for the sake of the gospel;
- (b) agree to the Diocesan, "Healthy Parish Relationship Guidelines" and;
- (c) agree to pray for those whom the Lord has given to provide leadership, teaching and pastoral care.'

2. Other relevant documentation

We strive to relate to each other by grace and not by law. That said, the law is often based on good principles and knowing the law can actually lead to mutual understanding and hence better relationships.

These guidelines act as an omnibus document to help church workers through the maze of diocesan legislation. It is intended to work alongside existing legislation.

Listed here are some of the relevant documents that govern the way we relate in the church.

2.1. Anglican Diocese of Sydney, Employment Relations Guidelines for Parishes

A very useful document which provides guidelines for all parish workers including employees, independent contractors, voluntary workers and Assistant Ministers. While Assistant Ministers are not technically 'employees' these guidelines provide some broad principles for healthy work place relationships.

2.2 Remuneration guidelines

Remuneration Guidelines for Parish Ministry Staff are published by SDS on the SDS website on an annual basis.

2.3 Ordinances & Acts of Parliament

2.3.1 Anglican Church of Australia Constitutions Act 1902, Clause 3(4) of the Schedule

An Act of the New South Wales Parliament which allows the Synod of each diocese in NSW to determine by ordinance the circumstances in which a clergy licence may be suspended or revoked.

2.3.2 Parish Administration Ordinance 2008

This Ordinance requires any person who preaches and conducts services to be licensed or authorised by the Archbishop or Regional Bishop respectively.

2.3.3 Nomination Ordinance 2006

This Ordinance outlines the procedure for forming a nomination board and making recommendations to the Archbishop.

2.3.4 Parental Leave Ordinance 2016

This Ordinance outlines parental leave entitlements for clergy.

2.3.5 Assistant Ministers Ordinance 2017

This Ordinance outlines the procedures for appointing an Assistant Minister and how that arrangement may be terminated.

2.3.6 Parish Disputes Ordinance 1999

This Ordinance can be used by Parish Council in cases of dispute involving a church worker, which may involve mediation.

2.3.7 Parish Relationships Ordinance 2001

If a 65% majority of a Parish General Meeting determines that there is a relationship breakdown between the Rector and parishioners, in certain circumstances, a licence review process may be invoked.

2.4 Statutory law

Stipendiary lay workers will be subject to various Commonwealth and New South Wales employment laws. Although these do not usually directly apply to licensed clergy, they provide helpful information for reference.

2.5 The Ordinal and Solemn Promises Ordinance 2011

Clergy make important promises at their ordination. Anglicans take these very seriously and in some jurisdictions may even be legally binding.

3. Church relationship with staff

3.1 Rector

3.1.1 Employment status

The Rector is considered an officeholder, not an employee. He is licensed to a parish by the Archbishop of Sydney.

This is an unusual “employment” status and doesn’t directly correspond with other secular employment arrangements. Clergy licensing is governed by the Constitution and various ordinances of the Synod.

Since the ordained ministers (Rectors and Assistant Ministers) are regarded as officeholders, the Sydney Diocese Employment Relations Guidelines recommends that care be taken not to enter into an employment contract.

3.1.2 Nomination process

The nomination process is governed by the *Nomination Ordinance 2006*. The process can be onerous for the parish representatives and can take many months, but it is an essential exercise to find the right candidate for nomination to the Archbishop.

Once a Rector is nominated and appointed by Archbishop, there is no going back. It can be difficult to remove a Rector, therefore choose wisely.

The parish elects five nominators at the annual general meeting. These people should be godly, prayerful, mature Christians, well known and committed to act in the parish's interest to see the gospel advance in the parish and beyond. In most years the nominators will be inactive however, careful thought and prayer should be applied every year as though they will become active.

Nominators should have a clear idea of the type of Rector that the parish needs. They should have ongoing discussions with the wardens. They should prepare a parish profile, in consultation with the Parish Council, and leaders across the church, outlining the ethos of the parish. The wardens prepare a parish vacancy form covering property and finances.

An important question is whether the parish needs a culture change for the sake of the gospel or ongoing improvement to the current culture. Nominators should seek a candidate who will lead such change or improvement.

Before the first meeting of the Nomination Board the regional bishop meets with the nominators to explain the process and offer advice as he will chair the Nomination Board (though does not have a vote). Parish nominators in consultation with the other members of the Nomination Board will commonly filter all available clergy to come up with a preferred list.

Narrowing down the preferred list of candidates will involve speaking to referees, relevant people (like their regional bishop) listening to recorded sermons and attending the candidate's current church (bearing in mind the sensitivity involved for that church).

The nominators must interview short listed candidates more than once. They should work hard to explain the uniqueness of their church and understand the candidates' strengths, weaknesses and characteristics, to determine a good fit. It is important to get beyond initial niceties. The nominators should consider the candidates they are pursuing and imagine any potential areas of conflict. This may direct their discussion with the candidates.

The candidates should make a careful study of the parish profile along with other research. They should communicate clearly to the nominators any significant cultural change that they believe may need to take place. It is disingenuous to surprise the nominators once in the position, as it is disingenuous to surprise the candidate as to the true nature of the health of the parish.

Seeking God's wisdom in prayer should undergird the nomination process at every step and the parish likewise should be encouraged to be regularly in prayer for an outcome that will honour God. Resources to assist nominators are available through the regional bishop, Ministry Training & Development and the diocesan Nomination Board members.

3.1.3 Rector's responsibilities

Rather than a "job description" it would be appropriate to come to an advance agreement of the expectations the nominators (and parish) have for the Rector. The various responsibilities and expectations of the Rector are set out in the Ordinal. These should be phrased in terms of ministry outcomes, rather than specific duties. For example, it is better to state, "The Rector will be responsible for training volunteers for SRE ministry" rather than "The Rector will visit each SRE class on a frequent basis".

The Schedules to the *Parish Administration Ordinance 2008* state, "The minister has general responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the parish and each church in the parish and for this purpose has powers, rights and duties in accordance with his licence and authority from the Archbishop."

The agreement should not contradict or repeat that already stated in the *Parish Administration Ordinance 2008*. However, it may include agreement as to how this is practised within the uniqueness of a particular parish.

According to the Schedules to the *Parish Administration Ordinance 2008*, the main financial function of the wardens are, “to ensure the proper management, security and financial administration of all money and other property of the church (except money or other property for which the wardens are excluded from exercising this function by the trusts on which such money or other property is held)”. They may also appoint certain paid workers, with the concurrence of the Rector and the parish council. While the Rector determines the duties performed by ministry staff, the wisdom of the wardens and other lay leaders will invariably be helpful in setting out responsibilities and duties of staff as they serve the congregations.

Wardens are also responsible to keep order in each church property and its grounds.

Put simply, the Rector is responsible for the “spiritual welfare” of the parish and the wardens and parish council for “temporal matters”. In reality it is not quite that simple. The temporal matters can be managed in a way that facilitates the spiritual welfare of the church, so it is important for the Rector and wardens to work closely together. The Rector should consult the wardens and parish council on matters regarding spiritual welfare and vice versa. If the two do not work well together, disagreement and discord can easily result. The Rector should meet with wardens at least monthly, in addition to a monthly parish council meeting.

3.1.4 Rector’s entitlements

A Rector should have access to normal entitlements, however, given the uniqueness of his position, flexibility is required. For example, a Rector may need to perform ministry duties during public holidays. He is responsible for his own time management, ensuring that he has sufficient rest with minimal disruption to the parish. It is not appropriate for a Rector to accrue leave in lieu of unused public holidays.

A parish should encourage professional development by budgeting for it. Such a budget may include locum payments during study leave.

A Rector should give ample notice for leave. He may negotiate with the wardens additional study leave when it is considered to benefit the ministry of Rector to the parish.

Any arrangements made between the Rector and wardens should be documented for the sake of clarity (e.g., minutes of wardens’ or parish council meetings, email confirmation, etc). It is important that current wardens understand and respect agreements made between the Rector and previous wardens. Wardens often change and it can be frustrating for the Rector to have to remind, educate and sometimes renegotiate agreements made in the past. If conditions have changed, wardens may want to renegotiate an agreement with the Rector. It is not acceptable simply to ignore a previous agreement. For example, 10 years ago the Rector negotiated with wardens that a housing allowance would be indexed in line with rental prices in the local area. This agreement was ignored by subsequent wardens and parish councils who failed to budget for an increase in his housing allowance.

Where possible, the wardens should ensure that benefits and entitlements are provided so that the Rector can personally flourish and grow, for the sake of the gospel. In cases of uncertainty, it is better to err on the side of reasonable generosity.

3.1.5 Professional Development

It is important for the Rector to be involved in ongoing Professional Development (PD). Ministry Training & Development administer a program to help ministers in the types of PD they should undertake and gives accreditation.

The Lifelong Ministry Development (LMD) guidelines requires (a) A ministry development plan, (b) A minimum of 30 hours LMD activities per year and (c) Journal entry for each hour of LMD activity. The LMD approved PD activities allow much scope for the Rector to develop a PD plan suited to his and the parish’s needs.

3.1.6 Regular review

It is recommended that a review be conducted with the wardens on a regular basis. This should include an open and honest discussion about the things the Rector is doing well and the areas in which he could improve, preferably based on a previously agreed set of objectives.

It should be two way and the Rector may make certain requests of the wardens in order to facilitate and encourage the ministry.

Resources are available through the Centre for Ministry Development and Ministry Training & Development to assist with such reviews.

3.1.7 Disagreements

It is expected that most disagreements will be dealt with personally and directly within the church following biblical principles. The Schedules to the *Parish Administration Ordinance 2008* state, 'The policy of the Anglican Church of Australia in the Diocese is that any dispute between the Rector and any of the members of this Church should be solved in a prayerful and pastoral manner, having regard to the rights and duties of those persons, rather than by legal decision.'

Occasionally a disagreement may escalate to a formal dispute requiring the Bishop or action pursuant to an ordinance. If this is the case the parties should refer to the *Ministry Standards Ordinance 2017*. In the case of personal disputes, it may be necessary to use a mediator that both parties approve.

Conflict resolution can be time consuming and sometimes feels like a distraction to ministry. Conflict resolution requires careful communication and patience. If done properly, it may consume much time but will ensure that ministry flourishes. Many disputes escalate because they were not addressed early and bitterness, misunderstandings and hurt take root. Application of the biblical virtues of courage, humility, repentance, forgiveness and forbearance must constantly be practiced by all leaders and members.

The *Diocesan policy for dealing with allegations of unacceptable behaviour* provides helpful guidelines when a disagreement involves a church worker.

3.2 Rector and Staff

3.2.1 Purpose

Paul writes to the Philippians *"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* Phil 1.3-6

This section of the guidelines is designed to help staff teams of paid and voluntary workers serve together in a healthy gospel partnership that brings joy to each other and advances the work that God is doing in each parish of our Diocese.

They should be discussed in each parish and applied to the circumstances of each staff team and the context where they serve. Resources are available through the Centre for Ministry Development and Ministry Training & Development to assist staff teams work well together.

3.2.2 Appointment

The appointment of any staff member is a long and complex matter and needs considerable care to ensure that there is real clarity on the ministry partnership that is being entered into. It is important to understand the fundamental difference between a lay staff member (who will be an employee and therefore subject to certain provisions of the Fair Work legislation) and an Assistant Minister (who will be an office holder licensed to the parish). The Employment Relations Guidelines available on the secure SDS website is designed to assist in this process and cover many important areas for the Rector (with the wardens and parish council) and staff member to discuss, agree on and document.

3.2.3 Clear role description

A written role description outlining the primary and secondary responsibilities of each team member brings clarity for each member of the team. It allows each member to be focused in their work, avoids confusion and potential conflict, and provides a basis for being able to assess how each member is performing. It is also a good place to document expectations around flexible working arrangements, location, hours and any special conditions. This role description should be negotiated and agreed on before a position is offered and accepted. It is helpful for a discussion to take place every year in the review process (below) about how the role description matches the reality of what is being done.

Changes in the functioning of the staff member or the role description can be discussed and agreed on at this point. (See Appendix A for a pro-forma).

3.2.4 Regular review

It is expected that the Rector should meet regularly one-on-one with all staff to coach, disciple and review.

It is also recommended that a more significant annual review for each staff member involving their “review team” be used to set goals for each year and then assess how they are going in achieving those goals, what additional resources or help might be needed or what changes need to be made to the goals. A review team could consist of the team member (and their spouse where appropriate), the Rector, a warden and one or two members of the church selected by the staff member.

Ministry Training and Development offer a workshop explaining a Pastoral Review Process. The Centre for Ministry Development also offer a workshop on People Management

3.2.5 Termination

The formal procedures that need to be followed in the termination of a clergy person is the *Assistant Minister Ordinance 2017*, and in the case of a layperson, the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

There may be a whole range of factors that lead a Rector to decide to terminate a staff member's appointment or employment in the parish. Sometimes the role may become redundant due to the changing financial situation or needs of the parish. In the case of a redundancy the Rector needs to be mindful of the minimum community expectations applicable to employees (particularly to the Fair Work calculator). At other times the need for a termination may be performance related or result from the unsuitability of the staff member to carry out the ministry needed. With a performance related termination the Rector should be aware of wider community expectations relating to reviews, goal setting, warnings and the importance of proper process, including the opportunity for appeal. Whether the proposed termination is a redundancy or performance related it would be wise for the Rector to seek legal advice from the SDS legal team to ensure that all the appropriate steps have been taken and the action planned satisfies both secular law and diocesan ordinances.

All our relationships as Christian co-workers should be marked by love, openness and honesty. A regular review process should provide the mechanism for open discussion on how a staff member is fulfilling their role in the parish. If a Rector is not happy with a staff member's conduct, performance or capacity in the ministry it is essential that this is discussed openly with a view to addressing those concerns. This is best formally documented and confirmed by both Rector and staff member so there is an objective record of what reviews and discussions have occurred. It should not come as a “surprise” to the assistant minister if the Rector has issues with their performance and a termination is discussed. The staff member needs to understand the Rector's concerns and be able to share their perspective with a view to agreeing on a way forward.

Under clause 7 of the *Assistant Ministers Ordinance 2017* the Archbishop-in-Council may issue guidelines with respect to the termination of appointments made under that ordinance. It is anticipated that for this purpose, Synod may request the Archbishop-in-Council to consider approving guidelines which accompany the report, *22/17 Appointment of Assistant Ministers and Stipendiary lay Workers*, promoted to Synod this year.

3.2.6 Task and relationships

Ministry is not done in isolation - there are many tasks to be done. However, as we see in the passage above, ministry is also a partnership. Care must be taken to develop loving relationships within the staff team. This takes time and will involve opportunities to share, pray and read the Scriptures together.

3.2.7 Regular meetings

1. Staff team – Organised parish ministry requires weekly team meetings to coordinate and plan. These meetings also provide an opportunity to develop relationships within the staff team as you meet over a meal, read Scripture, share and pray for each other.
2. Days away – Sometimes the pressing matters of each week can dominate the weekly staff meeting and there is little time to discuss new ideas. Going away once or twice a year, as a

staff team, for two or three days allows opportunity for a more extended time to discuss the 'big picture', new ideas of how ministry might be done as well as providing time to relax together.

3. One to one with Rector – a regular meeting (monthly – six weekly) one to one, between the Rector and each staff member, provides an opportunity to discuss matters in the team member's areas of responsibility and to provide feedback on how they are going personally and in their role.

3.2.8 Team covenant (how we work together)

Developing a team covenant or agreement on how the team functions together can contribute significantly to team harmony. An agreement can cover things like how the staff team meet, how they function when members' responsibilities overlap, how to respond to other staff members' children or spouse if they serve in another staff member's ministry area, how to appoint leaders and how to resolve conflicts. Regarding team communication, it helps to clarify what things can be communicated via email and what would be better discussed in face to face conversations. An example of the sort of questions to be considered is attached as Appendix B. Further, if there is a church office which provides working space, clarify expectations for the proportion of time spent working in that space and time spent working at home.

3.2.9 Professional development

Each staff member needs to continue to develop their convictions, character and competencies to enable them to continue to be fruitful in their ministry. The Rector and parish council need to agree on how much time each staff team member can devote to professional development and what financial support is available. This would cover conferences, courses of study, books and fees for mentors/courses and pastoral supervision.

Ministry Training & Development has established a professional development process called Lifelong Ministry Development (LMD) to provide an intentional, self-directed and accountable approach to help ministers maintain their zeal and fervour in serving the Lord (Rom 12:11). This provides a very helpful structure for professional development and provides accreditation. More details are available on the Ministry Training & Development website.

3.2.10 Outside ministry

Each staff member needs to be committed to serve in ministry in their local church and is also encouraged to make a contribution to the wider church, through participation in diocesan boards and committees, beach missions, camps or missions. Staff members may have much to contribute here and in turn find encouragement and source new ideas from serving in other places. Furthermore, they may be able to take and train church members. The Rector and parish council need to agree on a policy.

3.2.11 Holidays, days off and time in lieu

Annual leave is an entitlement to both lay-workers and clergy but public holidays are for lay workers only. Rectors with parish councils need to determine their own policy around public holidays for clergy staff. It is also important to agree on what the expectations are on days off for each staff member and how many nights are staff expected to be doing parish ministry. Also, following particularly busy periods provision should be made for time-off in lieu.

3.2.12 Stipend, allowances and other benefits

The Guidelines for the Remuneration of Parish Ministry Staff are produced annually and are available on the SDS website. These guidelines provide detailed information on many different areas, however many of the provisions are guidelines only and need to be negotiated between the Rector (with the approval of the parish council) and staff member. This needs to be negotiated before an appointment is made, included in the letter of appointment and discussed in the annual review each year.

3.2.13 Socials

Some opportunities for staff team members to socialise together, as well as with their spouse and children, can contribute significantly to building healthy relationships and team harmony.

4. Concluding Remarks

The guidelines outlined in this document do not have legal force and cannot contravene State or Commonwealth legislation or diocesan ordinances.

It is expected that in most situations there will be gospel unity and peace involving church workers.

“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” Hebrews 12:14

CAPABILITY PROFILE	
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AUTHORISATION – Position Description			
Minister and Wardens	[insert names]		
Signature		Date:	
Employee	[insert name]		
Signature		Date:	

A Ministry Team Covenant – How we serve together

Having clarity on how a team functions together can help reduce misunderstandings and promote good working relationships. Below are some areas to talk about and document in a 'Team Covenant'.

Meetings

- When do we meet?
- What is the purpose of our meetings?
- What is the format?

What types of meetings do we have?

- Weekly staff?
- One to one?
- Quarterly / vision / planning?
- Staff retreats?
- Socials?

Responsibility to make changes

- What authority does each staff member have to make changes in their ministry area?
- Who needs to be consulted? How?

Appointing ministry leaders

- What is the process of appointing ministry leaders?
- Who is consulted?

Leading other staff members spouse or children

- How do team members relate to other staff member's family members who serve in their area of ministry?
- What is there is a difficult conversation needed?

Difficult conversations and conflicts

- How are differences on the staff team to be resolved?
- Who needs to be consulted?
- When is the rector to be involved?
- What if the issue is with the rector?

Communication

- What is the agreed way to communicate with each other?
- With other ministry leaders?