DIOCESE IN EUROPE INTERIM (TRANSITIONAL) MINISTRY HANDBOOK 2026

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Introduction: What is Interim (Transitional) Ministry?

Interim Ministry is about transformation

Interim Ministry (IM) supports the process of revitalising chaplaincies as they adapt to changing circumstances and explore how best to respond in positive, realistic and fruitful ways.

An Interim Minister is a fixed-term strategic appointment to a chaplaincy to lead it through a collaborative process of review and reflection on their current circumstances, history, identity and mission, and help discern a vision for the future.

Internationally, IM has become an established discipline. IM has been evolving in the Church of England for about 25 years, but particularly since a legal change formalised short-term posts in 2015, under certain circumstances.

Interim (Transitional) Ministry as a model

Purpose

The stated aims of IM are to enable a local church to:

1. Acknowledge the past before moving forward
2. Use the period of vacancy constructively, addressing unresolved issues (eg trauma, conflict or fragile finances) and maintaining appropriate pastoral and liturgical ministry and governance
3. Prepare well for the appointment and induction of a permanent chaplain

1. **Acknowledging the past before moving forward**

The church needs to acknowledge and address the range of feelings there are at their chaplain's departure: there may be deep regret, evidence of dependency, fears for the future, senses of relief and even gladness. In these respects, there are similarities between the farewell process and experiences of bereavement: in both, recognition of the reality is integral to the attempt to embrace the future with hope.

2. **Using the period of vacancy constructively**

A vacancy can degenerate into fruitless polarisation, as groups of opposing views clash, or it can be seized as an opportunity to rethink the local church's role in God's mission. IM is clearly an attempt at facilitating the latter, but it does so by helping people locally to recognise important truths, however unpalatable, about their relationship with their previous priest, with one another and with God, and to locate ways of addressing hurts and issues. Some of these issues will be capable of solutions, because their nature is structural, organisational or technical, e.g. ensuring that Sunday services and occasional offices are conducted, arranging rotas, maintaining the fabric of church buildings. Others will be rather in the form of dilemmas to be lived with, especially those bound up with personalities and the dynamics of power.

There are also different understandings of what changes, if any, are permissible and to be encouraged, and by whom. IM assumes that in vacancy the local church is free to develop its ministry, within a canonical framework, and that there need not to be as great a reluctance to introduce changes of policy and direction, as long as due process is observed, as churchwardens sometimes confess. Of course, there are limits, and again IM is about helping a local church to move forward organically, ie through consultation with all relevant parties and agreed protocols. In this respect IM is one tool among several in offering local churches ways of becoming and continuing as "healthy congregations".

3. **Preparing well for the appointment and induction of a permanent Chaplain**

The Chaplaincy Council's submission of the chaplaincy profile to the Bishop is a key moment in the process of making a new appointment, and with IM this process takes longer than is usual, but with the resultant advantage of a wider ownership and a more focused attention to both what is happening already and how local people see their part in God's mission. In certain circumstances it will also be important for the Interim Minister to facilitate the creation of a new financial plan for the longer term sustainability of the chaplaincy. The Interim Minister does not write the profile but helps the Chaplaincy Council to provide as full a picture of hopes and fears, as well as of chaplaincy and congregation(s), as possible for the benefit of a prospective new priest. Hopefully, the greater care taken in the production of the profile will issue in fewer complaints by prospective clergy that the profile bears little resemblance to the reality.

Usually, the Interim Minister leaves the chaplaincy once an appointment has been made, so that the local church can make its own arrangements to welcome the new priest. Before leaving, the IM would help the church consider not only the formal welcome service but also how best to enable the incoming priest to become acquainted with local ethos and issues.

This outline of the purpose of IM has two concerns at its heart, one practical and one theological. On the practical front, IM seeks to enable a wholesome and orderly transition from the ministry

of the previous chaplain to that of the next.. It is important that we minister to one another as well as possible.

The theology underpinning IM is the Trinitarian nature of God as a community of persons themselves in relationship with communities of their making and loving. IM recognises various communities of interest in the vacancy and appointment processes, all of them interrelated and focused on participation in God's mission in the world. These communities are vested in persons, such as the Chaplaincy Representatives, Area Dean, Archdeacon, Bishop. Each of them also has its own identity and purpose, which it can exercise only in cooperation with the others. As the Trinity's focus is on the world, so the local church's focus needs to be located there also, and the Interim Minister is appointed to help the local church honour this commitment, always, as with the Trinity, conscious of its own internal bonds of love.

Process and Contract

Interim Ministry — Appointment Process

1. The initiative for the placement of an Interim Minister begins with the Archdeacon and /or Bishop, both of whom will know the chaplaincy and its needs. It will be made clear to the Chaplaincy that the Interim Minister is not a temporary or locum priest, but a licensed priest who has all the authority and responsibilities of an appointed chaplain with the additional skills required for accompanying the chaplaincy during the interim period.
   (The authority for the appointment of a minister as a chaplain or assistant chaplain on an interim basis is contained in the Diocesan Constitution, paragraphs 17B(1)(h) and 17B (8).)

   a) Normally a Chaplaincy Council passes a resolution asking for the appointment of an Interim Minister. This resolution is sent to the Archdeacon who should be consulted in each case, giving reasons why the request is being made.

   b) Interim Ministry Committee

      Aim of the Committee: To meet as and when required to consider all applications from chaplaincies for Interim Ministry and to ensure that they meet the requirements for this ministry* and that they are supported by the relevant Archdeacon.

      **See Appendix 4 below and para 17B(8)(a)(ii) of the Diocesan Constitution*

2. If recruitment paperwork has not been prepared recently, then the Archdeacon visits the chaplaincy for a vacancy meeting.

   a) At the Vacancy Meeting, it should be clear that the choice of an Interim Minister is in relation to the direction of travel and long-term strategy of the community. Where long-term financial support for the Chaplaincy is in question, this will be one of the grounds for considering what long-term strategy is appropriate. This will allow for the specific nature of the job to be done to be decided and then the Person Specification completed. Where long-term financial support for the Chaplaincy is in question, this will be one of the grounds for considering what long-term strategy is appropriate.
   b) It is advisable to consult with the Lay Chair of the relevant archdeaconry to ensure that all relevant information is shared with them.

c) The Financial Questionnaire is filled in. An Interim Minister will be remunerated at the level of a full stipend for the chaplaincy plus pension contributions or on a part-time basis pro-rata. Funding shall come from the chaplaincy.
d) The Interim Minister will be accommodated in a house/ apartment provided by the chaplaincy. All expenses of office will be paid by the chaplaincy.
e) The tenure of the post: There could be many circumstances in which the best mode of ministry for a time might be different from that exercised in the chaplaincy immediately beforehand.
f) Agree length of the Interim Ministry between six months and three years, renewable once for up to another three years. It may not then be designated as an interim post on the next appointment.
g) The specific tasks over and above the normal Chaplain's duties which relate to it being an Interim Ministry Post must be detailed.
h) Only in exceptional circumstances may the Interim Minister apply for the permanent post.

3. Following the Vacancy Meeting the Chaplaincy Council should discuss all these matters including the preparation or revision of the Chaplaincy Profile. A resolution must be passed supporting this application and the Archdeacon sent a copy of the resolution.

4. The Archdeacon approves the recruitment information and considers the list of available trained Interim Ministry priests to find one who matches the skills, experience and attributes required to undertake the post.

5. The Archdeacon and Bishop discuss the Interim Minister identified and if both agree to proceed, then the Archdeacon contacts the Interim Minister about the post.

6. If the Interim Minister is available and interested in the post, the Archdeacon sends a draft Interim Ministry Statement of Particulars together with the Interim Ministry Letter of Agreement which details the specific tasks of this post.

7. If the priest expresses a desire to pursue this appointment further, then the Archdeacon arranges a visit for the priest to the chaplaincy to meet the Council, see the church, accommodation etc and to discuss the post and expectations of all concerned in more detail. This is similar to a Formal Visit in the normal process and the chaplaincy is responsible for the costs of the visit by the priest.

8. In particular, the length of the term for this Interim Ministry is decided and both priest and chaplaincy commit themselves to this. The Interim Ministry Statement of Particulars and Letter of Agreement are finalised and signed by the priest, the Churchwardens and Archdeacon. The form is sent to the Diocesan Secretary and, as applicable, the Bishop Suffragan to sign.

9. Arrangements are made for the Licensing in the usual way. (All those on the list of Interim Ministry priests have already completed the safeguarding clearances, though other formalities may need to be completed).

10. A Working Group constituted with members of the chaplaincy may be appointed to work with the Interim Minister to facilitate the continued life of the chaplaincy during the transitional process.

11. Before the end of the appointment, the Archdeacon will work with the Interim Minister and the Chaplaincy Council to recruit a permanent priest who can be in post as soon as possible after the end of the Interim Ministry period.

11. The Interim Minister will meet on a regular basis with a mentor with experience in Interim ministry as well as with an archdeacon or area dean. They will also be an active member of the IM network in the CofE.

12. As this is a recent initiative in our Diocese, it is recognised that the initial Interim Ministry appointments will be subject to a continuous review of the posts and the learning that results.

NB

Interim Ministry Formation should be in a national or international programme of Interim ministry training, giving the priest the opportunity to collaborate with other clergy and to benefit from the extensive experience of the trainers.

Appendix 1 - Terms of Service

Use the normal diocesan template for the Terms of Service, and amend where appropriate.

Appendix 2 - Statement of Particulars of Office

Use the normal diocesan template for the Statement of Particulars, and amend where appropriate. For example in these sections:

Section One: Job title: [Chaplain] [Assistant Chaplain]

Section Two:
Duration and termination of appointment

1. Your licence may be terminated only in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. The principal provisions are set out in Paragraphs 17A, 17B and 17C of the Constitution.

2. The Bishop has designated the office as an interim post and has signed this written designation. In doing so, the Bishop has had regard to the guidance issued by the Archbishops' Council; and is acting with your consent and with that of the interim ministry committee of the Diocese.

3. *[If the appointment is at the Cathedral or a Pro-Cathedral, also include:* The Bishop is acting with the consent of the [Dean of the Cathedral][Chancellor of the Pro-Cathedral]

4. Pursuant to Paragraph 17B(1)(h), your licence is for a fixed term.

5. The fixed term is a term of [*state the period being not more than 3 years*].

6. [*Where applicable*: The office may be designated as an interim post for one further period of up to 3 years.]

7. You are required to give at least 3 months' notice before resigning your office. This period may be waived by agreement (in writing) between you and the Bishop.

Appendix 3 - Interim Ministry Letter of Agreement

Between

The Chaplaincy of ……..

Archdeaconry of ……

and

The Reverend ……..

Who has been appointed [Chaplain][Assistant Chaplain] on an interim basis with the understanding that this appointment shall continue for… (between 6 and 36 months - enter time period agreed), unless terminated earlier. See Statement of Particulars Section 2

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF THE INTERIM PERIOD

The Interim Minister has the task of pastoral leadership and full responsibilities of Chaplain in the Diocese in Europe. Where appointed as Chaplain, the Interim Minister will be the chair of the Chaplaincy Council and it is the duty of the Minister and the Chaplaincy Council to consult together on matters of general concern and importance to the chaplaincy. The Chaplaincy Council and the Interim Minister commit themselves to working constructively together to address the specific tasks identified by the Council and listed below.

Specific tasks during this Interim Ministry will be: (for example:)

1. To identify the strengths and weaknesses in the chaplaincy

2. To determine a strategy that will overcome the weaknesses and build on the strengths

3. To help develop a new vision, a sense of direction and new purpose

4. To provide leadership to improve the number of people that attend our church.

5. To encourage new feasible ways of financial fund raising.

6. To motivate more people to become actively involved in the life of the Church

7. To build a strong commitment to the leadership of a new permanent Chaplain in order to be prepared to move into the future with openness to new possibilities.

Appendix 4 - Terms of Reference for Interim Ministry Committee in the Diocese in Europe

Aim of the Committee

To consider all applications from chaplaincies for Interim Ministry and to ensure that they meet the requirements for this ministry* and that they are supported by the relevant Archdeacon.

The Committee

1. will consist of the Bishop, the Archdeacon, the Director of Ministerial Development, the Diocesan Secretary and the Chair of the House of Clergy. The Committee will meet as and when there are applications to consider.

2. will receive information on the reasons and particular benefits that will be conferred by making the appointment an Interim Appointment rather than a permanent one.

3. will ensure that the chaplaincy has been consulted to secure its acceptance of the purpose of the interim appointment and the need for shifts in understanding.

*A Chaplain or Assistant Chaplain can be appointed on an interim basis
(a) after a long incumbency
(b) when a chaplaincy has been facing serious difficulties, conflict or underperformance
(c) when a need for a change of direction has been identified

A Chaplain or Assistant Chaplain appointed on an interim basis will normally be remunerated at the level of a full stipend for the chaplaincy plus pension contributions or on a part-time basis pro-rata. Funding shall come from the chaplaincy.

The Interim Minister will be accommodated in a house/ apartment provided by the chaplaincy. All expenses of office will be paid by the chaplaincy.

Only in exceptional circumstances may an Interim Minister be a candidate when the permanent post becomes available. The intention should be that next priest appointed on a permanent basis must be licensed by the Sunday after the final day of the Interim Ministry.

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