

Diocese of York Post of Adviser and Co-ordinator of Pastoral Care

Theological Context

‘Ministers of the Gospel share a common humanity with their neighbours and, through baptism, a common discipleship with their fellow Christians. They are not superior human being or special Christians but frail and fallible people always dependant on the renewing grace of God.’ (Church of Scotland Report 2000)

The Incarnation, through which God entered the human condition, holds both the vulnerability of human beings but also their dignity in a creative tension. The God of agape love freely given in the person of Christ Jesus offers all men and women an invitation to grow to their full potential – a life where who you are and what you do is fully integrated.

The Church has given great responsibility for the nurture of God’s children to the episcopate. Ministry in the New Testaments and throughout the history of the church is collaborative in nature, reflecting something of the collaborative nature of God the Holy Trinity. All priests share in the episcopate of the bishop. For the parish priest this is expressed liturgically at their induction through the bishop’s declaration – “Receive the cure of souls which is both yours and mine”. The priest shares in the bishop’s oversight of the Body of Christ in a particular place. This oversight includes both pastoral care and discipline. The bishop exercises these two elements of oversight over the Christian community in his diocese or area, but in a particular way over his clergy. There is a necessary tension in these two things and, in order that both aspects are discharged appropriately, the bishop may share one or other aspect of this ministry with others. This sharing does not take away the ministry of the bishop but exists in order that the people of God may be more lovingly pastored.

Whilst ministry of the ordained is rooted both theologically and pastorally within the whole people of God, it is a distinctive ministry offered so that all may be nurtured and grow into their full potential as children of God. The pastoral integrity of the priest requires a mature and growing integration between person and practice. The nature of ordained ministry is such that this growing integration needs careful nurture and discipline. The Church has responsibility to nurture this process whilst not stifling the individual charisms given by the Holy Spirit for the good of the whole People of God.