The Clergy Wellbeing Covenant is gaining traction as a way of ensuring resilience and self-care among the clergy. It is increasingly evident that clergy households (spouses, children, other dependents) would benefit from a similar covenant, both to ensure wellbeing and to set expectations. In discernment as you consider what life might be like if you are ordained, here are some questions to discuss and reflect on with your household and with your peers. They are written for clergy but with imagination could be adapted for candidates for ordination.

1. Reflecting on our baptismal calling

As a member of the priesthood of all believers we are called by God to our own individual vocation, to work with and respect others in their calling and to build up the body of Christ.

To do this faithfully we believe that each individual is well-advised to:

\*Attend to their own care and wellbeing and to set aside time for rest and recreation, retreat and study/activities for their own and others’ flourishing and growth.

\*Understand how their role as a member of a clergy household is perceived and experienced within the church

Questions to reflect on

How does your life reflect that of Christ?

What resources are offered to you by the diocese to promote care and well-being?

Are you “hard to reach” when care is offered, or wellbeing is promoted? Or are senior clergy and wellbeing services hard to access in your area?

2. Reflecting on looking after yourself and others.

Given the strong association between physical and psychological health and wellbeing, the Christian attends to their own health and fitness to promote resilience, thus linking care and self-care.

To do this faithfully we believe that each individual is advised to

\*Practise good stewardship of their own health and wellbeing in support of their call

\*Establish and observe appropriate personal boundaries between home and parish

\*Grow in awareness of their limits and vulnerability, monitoring their own needs and health in times when they are providing demanding levels of care to others.

Questions to reflect on.

With whom do you regularly reflect on how you are nurturing your own calling?

To what extent are you enjoying good physical and mental health?

What boundaries of time, space and demands on you, both physical and psychological do you aspire to? How are you doing?

What are the warning signs of stress and burnout for you? What signs of resilience do you recognise in yourself? How can you build on your qualities?

Do you know where to find help, whether for diagnostic stress tests or other self- help tools or support, from within or beyond your diocese?

3. Reflecting on being a public figure

By the nature of your household you are to some extent in the public eye.

To do this faithfully, we believe that each person is well-advised to

\*Understand the character, shape and boundaries of this public service in conversation with others.

\*Be aware of the way in which their own life and story affects them when in the public eye.

Questions to ponder

How much do you find yourself in the public eye?

How does your personality affect you when in the public eye?

When you are vulnerable as a public figure are you able to manage this in a creative way?

How are you perceived by others to respond to feedback or complaints?

4. Reflecting on you and your household

The support and encouragement of those who share their lives with ordained ministers is a significant contribution to their care and wellbeing. It is therefore part of the responsibility of the whole church to provide for the minister’s household

To do this faithfully we believe that each minister is well-advised to

\*Ensure their approach to ministerial work takes into account the needs of those with whom they share their lives

\*Work with the local church to ensure that boundaries in relation to their household are respected and where necessary are enforced.

Questions to ponder

What are the pressure points, if any, for your intimate family relationships and the ordained person’s ministry? How are these addressed or mitigated?

Can you have an appropriate conversation with your church about the boundaries between the ordained person’s ministry and the household’s needs? If not, is there someone who could help you?

Margaret Wilkinson 4th August 2020