

**AGREEMENT ON PASTORAL ASSISTANT MINISTRY**  
**GUIDLINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE**

Cecil B. De Mille is reputed to have quipped, “A verbal contract is not worth the paper it’s written on!” And while not suggesting for one moment that Pastoral Assistants and Clergy are anything less than men and women of their word, having an agreed framework for ministry offers a practical and pastorally sensitive way of exploring expectations and defining areas of responsibility for both the Pastoral Assistant and the Incumbent. While having to prepare a written agreement has the added advantage of focusing the mind and opening up a ‘safe space’ for subjects to be aired before they get to be ‘issues’!

The drawing up a Ministry Agreement between the Incumbent and Pastoral Assistant should be a joint exercise between the parties, successful partnerships need to be supported by collaborative ministry practices; and although the Pastoral Assistant is under the authority of the Incumbent, the Ministry Agreement is just that, an agreed document developed to address the local needs of the parish, the Pastoral Assistant and the Parish Priest. It is important that it should also be realistic regarding how much time the Pastoral Assistant will be able to offer, and her/his ministry gifts, as well as the needs of the parish, and also include the support offered to the Pastoral Assistant by her/his Incumbent, PCC and parish. While the Ministry Agreement remains a confidential document it is good practice to also share it with the Churchwardens, who can in turn, inform the PCC about the agreed Pastoral Assistant’s ministry areas and any financial contributions towards the Pastoral Assistant’s ministry, (for example any travel expenses incurred visiting parishioners in hospital) and continuing ministerial development, (for example contributing towards travel expenses to PA training days). As Pastoral Assistants are sponsored and supported by their parish, the PCC should include any potential financial contributions paid towards supporting the Pastoral Assistant’s ministry in the Annual Parish Budget; this not only enables the parish to be clear about finances but also serves as a strong affirmation and appreciation of the Pastoral Assistant’s ministry in her/his parish. The Ministry Agreement also provides the opportunity to discuss pastoral support for the Pastoral Assistant her/himself. It is expected that support for the Pastoral Assistant will include the consideration of her/his own spiritual development and prayer life, to this end Pastoral Assistants should be encouraged to seek a Spiritual Director or Soul Friend, that is a wise counsellor, who should not have a direct connection with either the parish or incumbent (the Board of Ministry or the Warden of Readers and Pastoral Assistants may be able to suggest possible names of Spiritual Directors for the Pastoral Assistant to contact).

The process of drawing up a Ministry Agreement is of as much value as the document itself, and far from being a ‘tablet of stone,’ the Agreement should be considered as a working document rather than a polished final product. Consequently the Ministry Agreement must be prepared and submitted to the Warden of Readers and Pastoral Assistants before a Pastoral Assistant can be commissioned and then reviewed after the first six months of ministry. It should then be regularly reviewed at least every twelve months after that. The Ministry Agreements for all Pastoral Assistants should be *reviewed as a matter of course* not later than six months after the induction of a new Incumbent. In order to help with the discussion of the Ministry Agreement, attached to these guidelines is a sample Ministry Agreement and there is pro-forma Ministry Agreement available from Church House and online at [www.blackburn.anglican.org](http://www.blackburn.anglican.org), and the Warden of Readers and Pastoral Assistants is happy to offer guidance and advice.

(WORKED EXAMPLE)

**DIOCESE OF BLACKBURN**  
**AGREEMENT ON PASTORAL ASSISTANT MINISTRY**  
*(this agreement must be completed before Commissioning)*

**Between:** Mrs. Nymphadora Tonks

**And:** Revd. Albus Dumbledore

**In the Parish of:** St. Harry, Hogsmead

**The Pastoral Assistant's ministry:**

**How much time with the PA give to pastoral ministry in the parish?**

Mrs. Tonks will offer a total of five hours per week to PA ministry

**What is the particular ministry that the PA will undertake?**

Mrs. Tonks will visit Baptism families before the Baptism Service and will arrange for Baptism Anniversary cards to be delivered each year for three years to the children who have been baptised.

Mrs. Tonks will help lead the 'Hogsmead Tots' - the weekly under 5's group

Mrs. Tonks will regularly visit parishioners who are residents at the Gryffindor Residential Home

**What general pastoral ministry role will the PA undertake?**

Along with the other PA at St. Harry's, Mrs. Tonks will make first contact with new comers at Church who have filled in "Welcome Cards" after the service.

**Is there a ministry team in the parish, and if so will the Pastoral Assistant belong to it?**

No

**How often do they meet and will the Pastoral Assistant be expected to attend all meetings?**

N/A

**If there is no ministry team in the parish what opportunities are there for regular meetings with the Incumbent to share areas of mutual concern?**

Mrs. Tonks and Mr. Weasley (St. Harry's other PA) will meet with Revd. Dumbledore once a month for prayer and to share pastoral matters

**Support for the Pastoral Assistant:**

**Is there opportunity for the Pastoral Assistant to join the Incumbent for Daily Office or other regular prayer?**

Morning Office takes place daily in church and Mrs. Tonks and Mr. Weasley are welcome to join Revd. Dumbledore when work and family commitments permit. Both Mrs. Tonks and Mr. Weasley are actively encouraged by Revd. Dumbledore to maintain a regular pattern of personal prayer.

**Does the PA have a Spiritual Director or Guide with whom she/he meets regularly?**

Yes, Mrs. Tonks has regular meetings with her Spiritual Director.

**If not, what arrangements are in place to assist her/him to identify a Spiritual Director?**

N/A

**What pastoral arrangements are in place to support the Pastoral Assistant?**

Mrs. Tonks has a number of supportive friends at St. Harry's and Revd. Dumbledore is in regular contact with her and Mr. Weasley.

**What arrangements are there for contributions toward the Pastoral Assistants continuing ministerial development?**

Mrs. Tonks is encouraged to attend the Diocesan PA Training Days.

The PCC have agreed to contribute towards Mrs. Tonks' and Mr. Weasley's travelling expenses to PA training days

**What arrangements are there for the Pastoral Assistants expenses to be reimbursed by the PCC?**

As Mrs. Tonks' pastoral ministry is within the parish it is not envisaged that she will have any expenses, however, should the exceptional need arise she is strongly encouraged to claim these from the PCC Treasurer.

**What other, if any, Pastoral Assistant activities or responsibilities should be included in this agreement? (PLEASE NOTE PASTORAL ASSISTANTS ARE NOT AUTHORISED TO REGULARLY LEAD WORSHIP OR ADMINISTER THE SACRAMENT IN, OR OUTSIDE OF, THE PARISH AND WILL REQUIRE SEPARATE BISHOP'S AUTHORISATION TO DO SO).**

None.

*Copies of this ministry agreement should be kept by the incumbent and the pastoral assistant, and a copy sent to the Warden of Readers and Pastoral Assistants. This ministry agreement must be reviewed after the first six months of ministry, and at least twelve monthly intervals after that.*

Signed:..... (Parish Priest)

Signed:..... (Pastoral Assistant)

Date:.....

First Review date:.....

Following Review date:.....