



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

Navigating
times of
transition well
within the
Diocese of Ely



Times of change and transition affect people in different ways. For some it is a time of excitement where they feel re-energised and focused, for some there is a growing sense of anxiety due to the 'unknown', for other it is a mixture of both – and in reality most people move backwards and forwards between all three places at different times.

And of course in ministry, times of transition do not just affect one individual, but also affects those we are close to - our family and the parishes/communities we serve among. Ministry is a highly relational vocation and so it is no surprise that the transitions we face also affect those closest to us. We also recognise that times of transition can also open some of our own vulnerabilities. We want to do all that we can to support you during this time so that the transition you are facing can be navigated well.

This booklet does not provide all the 'answers', but rather highlights a number of different areas that would benefit from further thought and reflection. It has been developed through the lived experience of others and is a collection of 'lessons learned' – often through mistakes that have been made. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution for navigating transition well.

Please don't hesitate to contact the Mission and Ministry Department for further information and support:
missionandministry@elydiocese.org

At the end of this short guide, we have included some information leaflets that have been developed by the National team to support those who are facing a moment of transition at key times within the ministerial journey.



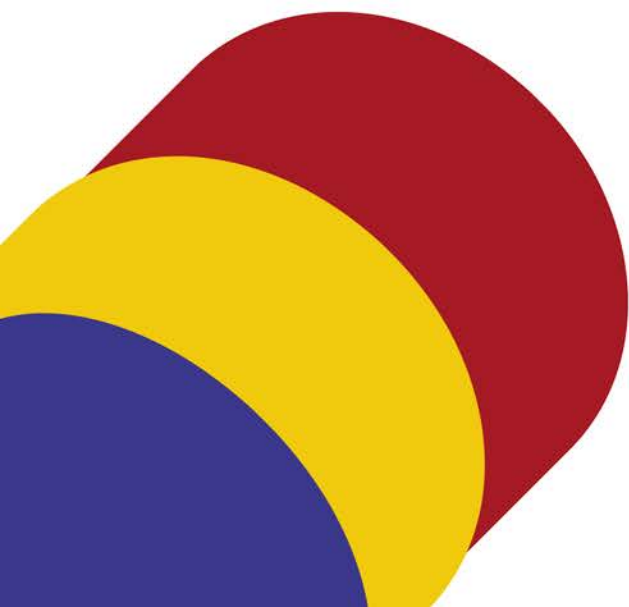
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Be kind to yourself and consider in advance what you need

Living through transition can be tiring and at times uncomfortable. People often feel under pressure: pressure to handover in an existing context (if applicable) and a pressure to star in the new context. And in amongst it all, there can a sense of losing yourself because the transition becomes all consuming. So be kind to yourself. Find those moments of relaxation and refreshment. Try to plan in advance to ensure that you will be able to continue to access those things that nourish you. Also, be aware that sometimes you have to allow for the unexpected - ensure you have capacity to do that.





Involve the family

Those who are close to you will sense when change is on its way. Don't forget to involve the family and talk with them early on about the changes that are about to occur – and what it may mean for them. Sometimes, particularly if there is no house or school move, we can think that children and young people are shielded from feeling the effects of transition. Transitions that affect us will often also affect our whole family. Be aware of changes in routines, leaving friendship groups and schools, moving further away from extended family etc. Be aware of the loss that the transition will involve, but also speak of the opportunities that it may create. Be sure to also highlight the 'anchors' that will remain constant.

Involve the children/young people in planning the future. Can they be involved in making decisions about decorating their new room or what furniture is needed? This creates a sense of joint story and ownership of the future.





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Involve the family

Include them in visiting the new context – the new local area, not just the places associated with your new role. Investigate opportunities to continue clubs and activities that children may already be involved in or new opportunities that may exist (local groups on social media can be very helpful for this). You may find it useful to get a map (or explore online maps) and highlight the local areas or places you may want to visit/investigate together when you move.

Start talking early about the transitions that are about to happen and this will help to normalise the changes.

Encourage questions and honesty – and be prepared for the questions to come at inconvenient times!





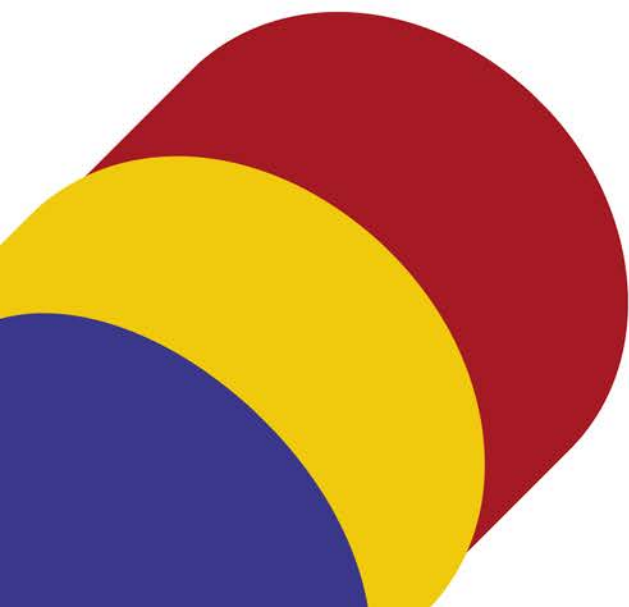
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Involve the family

Pray together: be prepared to appropriately share some of your own concerns and the things you are finding hard about the transition as well as things you are looking forward to and the new opportunities that lie ahead. Make time, even in the busyness, to pray about these things together. You could use a jar and some pebbles to help encourage each other to share and to offer these things to God as you place the pebbles in the jar.

Share information about what you are moving to as it becomes available. Create a 'mood board' with photos and add to it in the build-up to the move.

Make memories: create a memory jar or scrapbook together. As you work together, encourage the conversation and memories to flow.





Involve the family

Facilitate trusted people for them to talk to outside the immediate family, particularly if they feel unable to share their feelings with you. Also, inform the current school as soon as possible and let them know how you are handling such a move. They may see changes in the child/young person due to an increase in anxiety.

In times of transition, particularly where a move is involved, you and your family may feel under the spotlight as you join a new community. You may feel the pressure of congregational expectations or perceived congregational expectations on you and your family. Rachel Turner's book, 'Parenting as a Church Leader: Helping your family thrive' is a great resource to help you navigate some of these things.

Take time to say 'goodbye' well - find ways where 'good farewells' can be made.

For young people who are at University, or who have left home, be aware of the impact that any transition may have on them too.



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Find the ‘people of peace’

Identify those people who are able to support you as you navigate times of transition. People who can help you see things from different perspectives. Perhaps a ‘coach’ or ‘journey partner’ may help you navigate the time of transition well.

End well and remember to grieve

Acknowledging the loss you are experiencing is important. It is also important for you to ‘end well’ in a place, and that will take time, discipline and planning. What will you need to enable you to end well? What are the jobs that need to be completed? What needs to be handed-on? Who else will need to be involved so that you can ‘end well’? What ‘ending liturgy’ could be included in your final service? (Contact the Mission and Ministry department for some examples.)

Be honest: to yourself and with others

Whilst you may be looking forward to the move, journeying through a time of transition won’t always be easy and will be hard work. Be honest about how you are feeling and the impact that may have on your ability to journey well.



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Know your limitations and be realistic

We are often overly ambitious in terms of what we are able to achieve before we leave somewhere. Sometimes we will try and complete all those things that have been on our 'to do' lists for years. Be honest about how much you will be able to do in the timescale available. This may need negotiating with those who are remaining: 'What do I need to get completed that will help you the most?'

Help to manage the expectations of the place you are moving to. Agree with them how to manage information and how much you are wanting to be involved in decision making before your official start date. Agree regularity of contact and how contact should be made. Share with them what will help you and the family start-well.

Build in a review

If your time of transition is a long one, build in a review to take-stock and re-evaluate. It is also a good idea to build in a review 6 months into the new role - how are things going? What can we celebrate? What would be better if...?





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Find new rhythms

Whenever there is a time of transition, it also means finding new 'life rhythms' – spiritual rhythms as well as daily routines. Take time to experiment in order to find new rhythms that work for you. Be prepared for rhythms to change a number of times as you journey through a time of transition.

Identify those things that will sustain you

Think about your own wellbeing during this time. Plan in opportunity to engage in those things that sustain and restore you. You may find planning in a small break after you finish in one place and before you start in another will enable you to physically, emotionally and psychologically 'put down' before you 'take up'.



Living Ministry Research Briefings

Full report: *Moving in Power: Transitions in Ordained Ministry* www.churchofengland.org/living-ministry

Ordinand to Curacy

The early period of curacy, following the profound milestone of ordination, brings new working patterns, relationships and rhythms of prayer and the loss of some support networks, which can be difficult for families as well as curates themselves. However, this transition also often brings greater financial stability and vocational fulfilment.

Wellbeing challenges

- Moving to a new role and a new location poses **temporary challenges to energy levels**, from the physical requirements of the move and familiarisation with people, places, systems and tasks.
- **Housing** varies enormously, from high quality refurbishments to dirty, neglected properties. It contributes to the tone of welcome to the parish and impacts anxiety levels and initial relationships.
- While **finances** generally improve for stipendiary clergy on the move from ordinand to curate, some struggle between their last training grant (paid in advance) and their first stipend (paid in arrears).
- Curacy involves **new levels of demand**, varying according to previous experience. 25% of the 24 curates discussed workload and time management as a major issue occupying their mind.
- Some people **struggle to find curacies** for a range of reasons, leading to anxiety and sometimes feelings of rejection and disorientation.
- The **relationship between curate and training incumbent** is crucial and, in the early stages, can pose challenges relating to personality, working styles, expectations and power dynamics.
- Moving from a TEI environment to curacy involves **loss of established support structures**, including for many the close community of a college, sometimes resulting in a sense of isolation.
- **Families** also lose support structures and face the challenges of relocation. The transition to curacy may involve sacrifices both for and by families.
- Challenges to **spiritual wellbeing** include: loss of spiritual support, changes in working patterns, different traditions, increased workload, and facilitating rather than receiving ministry.
- While **vocational fulfilment** may increase, curates may also feel restricted in their new role. Some struggle to reconcile different aspects of identity or to constantly switch between roles.

Suggestions

For the ordinand/curate

- Consider changes and continuities in support structures: which to continue (e.g. contact with IME 1 peers; links with a TEI; spiritual direction; support from family, friends and colleagues); which new ones to start (e.g. new colleagues; community groups; local church networks; mentoring; coaching; diocesan groups); and which to protect and nurture (e.g. time with family and friends).
- Take time to prepare families emotionally as well as practically for a move.
- Consider how to access preferred ways of worshipping if these differ from the curacy context.



For TEIs during IME 1

- Provide: a solid grounding in spiritual habits and practices; theological and practical reflection on ordained ministry and leadership; and time-management training where appropriate, e.g. for those already juggling multiple roles.
- Consider how best to support, practically and emotionally, ordinands struggling to find curacies.
- Consider how best to support and care for those involved in formal processes.
- Consider the feasibility of continuing relationships with alumni where appropriate.

For the diocese

- Ensure diocesan-owned housing is adequate and ready in time for moving day.
- Address cashflow difficulties between the end of training grants and the start of curacy stipends, especially if curacies are delayed.
- Offer practice-based time-management support for new curates, including mentoring.
- Consider how best to support those struggling to find their curacy or next post.
- Facilitate or encourage personality profiling and discussion of working relationships between curate and training incumbent (and the wider team where appropriate) from the start of curacy.
- Consider what support the person moving may need and how to provide this, e.g. facilitated groups; buddying; mentoring; coaching; counselling; and ongoing accompanied vocational discernment.
- Consider the situations and needs of families during transition periods, including schooling, family time and support for clergy spouses as appropriate.
- Invite clergy to connect and participate in the diocese early on following a move, e.g. through clergy conferences, bishops' social or study invitations and wellbeing officers, as well as IME 2.

For parishes

- Ensure parish-owned housing is adequate and ready in time for moving day.
- Consider the situations and needs of families during transition periods, including regarding privacy, expectations and family time.

Resources

- **TEIs** and **dioceses** (often through training incumbents and IME 2 officers) offer support, advice and resources.
- The National Ministry Team's **How Clergy Thrive** resources are available online at <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/ministry/ministry-development/living-ministry/living-ministry>.
- **Facebook** support groups: 'Curates in Training,' 'Clergy Family Network' and 'Clergy Mummies.'
- The **Ordinands' Association** supports and represents those training for ordination.
- Matthew Caminer with Martyn Percy & Beaumont Stevenson (2015), **Curacies and How to Survive Them**, SPCK.
- Jon Marlow (2020), **Thriving in Curacy: Overcoming Problems in the Placement and Training of Curates**, Grove Books.



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Curacy to Next Post

The move from curacy to their first position of responsibility is, for many clergy, one of the most challenging steps they take in ordained ministry. Statistical analysis of the experiences of Living Ministry participants compared between the first two waves of the research tell us that the transition into first incumbency is the only moment at which a consistent change – a statistically significant drop – in wellbeing is observable.¹ Wellbeing can be supported through structures, practices and training that allow personal agency and provide experience; support with managing workload; connection with peers; and a sense of belonging within the diocese.

Wellbeing challenges

- Because curacies are fixed term, for stipendiary clergy, the **pressure to find a post** before their job and tied accommodation end can be extremely stressful.
- Those who remain in their own home (often self-supporting clergy) and have difficulties finding a suitable post risk being **left in limbo** for months or years.
- Relocation brings with it **temporary demands on energy levels** of familiarisation with a new role, new relationships and the local area, along with the physical challenges of moving house.
- **Families** also face the loss of established support structures and networks and the challenges of relocating to a new place.
- A sharp increase in levels of responsibility can lead to:
 - **Heightened workload** (both quantity and range of work), sometimes with a sense of urgency to address issues immediately on arrival, and impacting on spiritual, physical, mental, relational and participation wellbeing.
 - **Isolation** stemming from: a sense of responsibility for outcomes; loss of support structures; relational boundaries with parishioners; and workload limiting capacity for further diocesan participation.
 - **Increased vocational fulfilment** through occupying a leadership role; an increased sense of agency; growing confidence; job security; and sometimes supplementary roles. This may mitigate stress to some extent but can also intensify workload and isolation.

Suggestions

For the curate/ new incumbent

- Consider changes and continuities in support structures: which to continue (e.g. contact with IME 1 or 2 peers; spiritual direction; support from family, friends and colleagues); which new ones to start

¹ See 'Ministerial Effectiveness and Wellbeing: Exploring the Flourishing of Clergy and Ordinands,' Living Ministry Wave 2 Panel Survey Report (2019). <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-12/Living%20Ministry%20Panel%20survey%20sm.pdf>



(e.g. new colleagues; community groups; local church networks; mentoring; coaching; diocesan groups); which to protect and nurture (e.g. time with family and friends); and which to let go of.

- Take time to prepare families emotionally as well as practically for a move.
- Consider how to access preferred ways of worshipping if these differ from the new ministry context.
- Pace yourself during the first year instead of trying to address every issue immediately.

For the diocese

- Consider what kinds of support the person moving is likely to need and how this can be provided, e.g. facilitated groups, buddying, mentoring, coaching, counselling and ongoing accompanied vocational discernment. Increased workload and responsibility both impact strongly on wellbeing, so structures such as mentoring that support in these areas without aggravating them are key.
- Ensure clergy receive pro-active, periodic contact to check how they are doing, especially during the first weeks and months of their post.
- Consider the situations and needs of families during transition periods, including regarding schooling, encouraging family time and connecting clergy spouses as appropriate.
- Invite clergy to connect and participate in the diocese early on following a move, e.g. through clergy conferences, bishops' social or study invitations, and discussions with CMD or wellbeing officers.
- Consider wellbeing issues during recruitment processes.

For parishes and patrons

- Consider wellbeing issues during recruitment processes.
- Ensure housing is adequate and ready in time for moving day.
- Consider the situations and needs of families during transition periods, including regarding privacy, expectations and family time.

Resources

- **Dioceses** offer support, advice and resources, including specific support for first incumbents.
- The National Ministry Team's **How Clergy Thrive** resources are available online at <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/ministry/ministry-development/living-ministry/living-ministry>
- The **Sheldon Hub** offers an independent online community for those in ministry and a bank of resources on wellbeing, including a section on 'changing roles.'
- **Facebook** groups for peer support: 'Newbie Vicars,' 'Clergy Family Network' and 'Clergy Mummies.'
- **St Luke's** works with dioceses to provide reflective practice groups and other wellbeing support.
- **Clergy Support Trust** offers financial support (including health and wellbeing grants) and other initiatives to promote clergy wellbeing.
- Claire Pedrick & Su Blanch (2011), **How to Make Great Appointments in the Church: Calling, Competence and Chemistry**, SPCK.



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Transitions Between Posts

Movement between posts beyond curacy often results in improved wellbeing and less stress than the other transitions considered in the research. Although the challenges of relocating still exist, the move (and its timing) is usually a choice and, unless the new role is bigger in scope or seniority, there is little change in level of responsibility. However, the factors that initiate the transition may be stressful: several participants moved in order to exit a difficult situation. A key contributor to wellbeing and often a factor in deciding to change job, is authenticity in one's role: the ability 'to be me.'

Wellbeing challenges

- Before the move itself, the **situation triggering the transition** may be detrimental to wellbeing for a range of reasons including vocational, interpersonal and health-related. Clergy may feel trapped in a job or have difficulty finding a more suitable role.
- Relocation brings with it **temporary demands on energy levels** of familiarisation with a new role, new relationships and the local area, along with the physical challenges of moving house.
- **Workload** may increase, especially if moving to a bigger role, potentially impacting on spiritual, physical, mental, relational and participation wellbeing.
- Clergy may feel **isolated** in a new role, especially if they have also moved diocese.

Suggestions

For the person in transition

- Pay attention to continued and new support structures and networks, including which to continue from the previous situation (e.g. contact with IME 1 or 2 peers; spiritual direction; support from family, friends and previous colleagues); how to develop new sources of support relevant to the new role and context (e.g. new colleagues; local community groups; local church networks; mentoring; coaching); and which to protect and nurture (e.g. time with family and friends).
- Take time to prepare families emotionally as well as practically for a move.
- Develop a range of sources of support and feedback, considering what your needs are for different aspects of wellbeing, what is beneficial, and what each source provides, e.g. spiritual direction, mentoring (formal and informal), buddies, informal peer groups, facilitated groups, coaching, family and friends.
- Consider using personality or team profiling tools to facilitate team relationships.



For the diocese

- Consider what kinds of support the person moving is likely to need and what can be offered to provide this, e.g. facilitated groups; buddying; mentoring; coaching; counselling; and ongoing accompanied vocational discernment.
- Ensure clergy receive pro-active, periodic contact to check how they are doing, especially during the first weeks and months of a new post.
- Consider the situation and needs of families during transition periods, including regarding schooling, encouraging family time and connecting clergy spouses as appropriate.
- Invite clergy to connect and participate in the diocese early on following a move, e.g. through clergy conferences, bishops' social or study invitations, and/or discussions with CMD or wellbeing officers.
- Consider wellbeing issues during recruitment processes.
- Take time to understand why clergy have moved from their previous role (if they are willing to share) and how this might affect their wellbeing.
- Ensure housing is adequate and ready in time for moving day.

For parishes and patrons

- Consider wellbeing issues during recruitment processes.
- Be considerate with demands placed on clergy, especially during early days in a new role.
- Consider the situation and needs of families during transition periods, including regarding privacy, expectations and family time.
- Ensure housing is adequate and ready in time for moving day.

Resources

- **Dioceses** offer support, advice and resources on most issues. Some have dedicated wellbeing officers.
- The National Ministry Team's **How Clergy Thrive** resources are available online at <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/ministry/ministry-development/living-ministry/living-ministry>
- **Bridge Builders** offers people in Christian leadership roles training, coaching and consultancy in the interpersonal relationships and handling conflict.
- **Clergy Support Trust** offers financial support (including health and wellbeing grants) and other initiatives to promote clergy wellbeing.
- The **Sheldon Hub** offers an independent online community for those in ministry and a bank of resources on wellbeing, including a section on 'changing roles.'
- **St Luke's** works with dioceses to provide reflective practice groups and other wellbeing support.
- **Facebook** groups for peer support: 'Clergy Family Network' and 'Clergy Mummies.'
- Claire Pedrick & Su Blanch (2011), **How to Make Great Appointments in the Church: Calling, Competence and Chemistry**, SPCK.



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Approaching Retirement

The transition into retirement begins several years before, as clergy start to think about their plans. The clergy in our study were mostly still approaching retirement from ordained ministry, with the exception of some self-supporting ministers for whom retirement can be more fluid, so the research focusses on the time prior to retirement rather than experiences afterwards, which will bring challenges of their own.

Wellbeing challenges

Stipendiary clergy

- The issue of **when to retire** can start to unsettle some clergy several years before they reach the age of retirement, particularly as they wrestle with the practical and vocational dilemma of **what to do with their last years** of stipendiary ministry.
- Clergy may also face **financial concerns**, especially if they do not own a house.

Self-supporting clergy

- Some clergy have already retired from other employment before retiring from (or even beginning) ordained ministry, meaning **retirement can feel ambiguous**.
- Some clergy, particularly those who expect to remain in the same parish, face the question of **how to retire** as they grapple with distinguishing between work and non-work, friendship and pastoral relationship, and loyalty to the needs of colleagues and the parish.
- If clergy have been ordained later in life they may experience a **lack of vocational fulfilment**, having not had time to accomplish all they wished to.

Whether stipendiary or self-supporting, **energy levels** may fade with age while the workload remains the same.

Suggestions

For those approaching retirement

- Start thinking through and discussing retirement plans early: dates, finances, vocational hopes and how to manage the transition.
- Talk to your diocese, the Pensions Board and/or an independent financial adviser about your situation and options for retirement.
- If you are self-supporting, consider leaving your church at least temporarily on retirement to facilitate withdrawing from ordained ministry.
- Consider changes and continuities in support structures: which to continue (e.g. contact with peers, spiritual direction; support from family, friends and colleagues); which new ones to start (e.g. within



a new church or local community); which to protect and nurture (e.g. time with family and friends); and which to let go of.

For dioceses

- Starting eight to ten years before their retirement age, keep in touch with clergy to check how they are doing as they approach and transition into retirement, with regards to energy levels, hopes, finances, vocation etc.
- Offer practical, emotional and vocational support to stipendiary and self-supporting ministers approaching and transitioning into retirement.
- Consider arranging mentoring for self-supporting ministers approaching retirement.
- Consider encouraging self-supporting ministers to leave their church temporarily on retirement.

Resources

- **Dioceses** offer support, advice and resources relating to pensions and moving into retirement.
- The **Retired Clergy Association** supports retired clergy providing information, support and advice; facilitating connections for mutual support; and representing their interests nationally. Its website (<https://rcacoe.org/>) includes a 'useful information' page with links to a wealth of resources.
- The **Pensions Board** website (<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/pensions/clergy-pensions>) has information about how clergy pensions work and how to get further advice. There is a Pensions Helpline, on 020 788 1802 or pensions@churchofengland.org, and you can also ask to speak to an Engagement Officer for information on support provided by your diocese.
- The National Ministry Team's **How Clergy Thrive** resources are available online at <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/diocesan-resources/ministry/ministry-development/living-ministry/living-ministry>
- The **Sheldon Hub** offers an independent online community for those in ministry and a bank of resources on wellbeing.
- **Clergy Support Trust** provides financial support (including health and wellbeing grants) and other initiatives for serving and retired clergy.
- The **State Pension Entitlement** website will help you to calculate your state pension entitlement at retirement.
- Tony Neal & Leslie Francis (2020), **A New Lease of Life? Anglican Clergy Reflect on Retirement**, Sacristy Press.

