

The Rule of Simplicity



Registered Charity no: 1117867

The Province and Jurisdiction for On Call Ministry.
©2008 All rights reserved. Version 8.05

The Rule of Simplicity. Contents

Page	Chapter Title
3	Introduction
4	Work
7	Being part of the One Church
8	Working in the community: the sacred harvest
10	Liturgy: the sacraments and worship
11	Prayer
13	The Bible
15	The place of 'the traditions of the church'.
16	Language usage
17	Authority within the Order
20	Vestments
22	Continued formation
23	Holy Orders
24	Membership of the Order
25	Overseas Provinces
26	Resignation from the Order
28	Principles and Guidelines
30	Governance within the Province and Jurisdiction
32	The requirements and role of On Call Priests within the Province and Jurisdiction:

The Rule of Simplicity.

A religious order can be defined as a group of Christians called by vocation to a shared task, the sharing of a common vision and the following of 'a rule', an expression of belief and practice which makes the order distinct in its ministry and service.

A religious order is a part of the church (in this case the worldwide church, the body of Christ, as defined in 1 Corinthians 12), but is not a church in itself and cannot exist in isolation.

What follows is an attempt to put into words the spirit of our own Order's rule, 'the Rule of Simplicity', something which is more to do with attitude and spirituality rather than a restrictive code of behaviour.

It must always be remembered that any religious order's rule (our own included) is of lesser importance than obedience to the will of God. A good 'rule' should be both practical and help focus the mind of both the individual and the common mind of the Order in this task and be of benefit to this obedience. The rules, laws and regulations made by human kind, whether civil or religious, must not hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in any way and this is what is hopefully embodied in this document.

The rule should be read in conjunction with the Principles and Guidelines (page 20 onwards) governing both the Order and the Province and Jurisdiction for On Call Ministry for this was the first formal attempt to define what the vision of the Order was in terms of individual and corporate practice.

Introduction.

- 1) St James clearly states that faith without works is dead. The principle that faith is pro-active rather than passive runs through the whole of his epistle. This is certainly the central theme in the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' and the closing words of Jesus, 'Go then and do likewise,' are more than an invitation, even a command.
- 2) Faith, founded in the love of God, is therefore the stimulus and response to both the physical and spiritual need each one of us encounters in our daily paths.
- 3) This principle of 'if you see the need, you must deal with it' is in essence the focus of the Order's outward ministry.
- 4) The equipping of each individual member to be able to respond effectively by discerning, developing and responsibly using their own unique God given gifts and talents is the Order's inward collective ministry.

Work.

- 1) The outward work of the Order is four fold:
 - i. to faithfully and effectively plant and/or bring to fruition the Gospel of Christ, wherever it is needed,
 - ii. to be 'on call' to minister to the need of any person in need, regardless of their faith background or social circumstances,
 - iii. to be 'on call' to work supportively with individuals, churches, Christian group and the local community, where ever needed and when ever needed,
 - iv. to be 'on call' to attend accidents and be present at emergencies and scenes of disaster when ever possible.

This is fairly straight forward and needs little further explanation.

- 2) As part of the enabling process within its own community, the work of the Order is to help discover and fulfil whatever ministry God has laid upon each individual member. Every person has a unique purpose, ministry and gifting given in trust by God for the benefit of all. This individual journey of discovery is not a journey to be made in solitude but is a shared and supported journey. It is therefore a community obligation, or if you like, a duty of loving, prayerful discernment and supportive care by the community towards each member.
- 3) Individual ministry is not just a matter for the individual. If ministry fails it damages the whole body of Christ and everyone suffers in some respect for this. Therefore each individual has an obligation to every member of the community, and likewise, the community has an equal obligation to each individual member. The Order is only as strong as its weakest member, but in the true irony of the Holy Spirit, it is in the weakest, youngest or least experienced member that the Order's strength may often be found.
- 4) This duty of care towards the community and each member is not an easy or optional burden.
- 5) There is a simple legal maxim – either one upholds the law or one breaks it, there is no middle ground. This principle of 'no middle ground' can be applied in many other contexts but one especially within the Order. Each action, word or thought towards another is either an act of love or it is an act of division and exclusion. There is no middle ground or room for being passive and we shall be judged accordingly.
- 6) As the Order has an obligation of care for each individual member, so it has an obligation of care for its members as a whole.

- 7) The Order is a single body and each member within has both a common purpose and an individual and unique ministry. Both are interrelated and the spiritual health of the Order and that of each member is closely linked. One affects the other.
- 8) It is important that each member keeps in mind the common purpose of the Order for there is strength and security in this unity. This common purpose is to serve Christ and His people in the community, wherever, whenever and in whatever manner Christ calls, for in serving Christ, we serve others and in serving others we serve Christ.
- 9) Our attitude should be to serve each person as if that person was Christ himself. We should look for Christ in everyone we meet. It is also our hope by the grace of God that when people see us they should see Christ in all we do, in every action, in word and thought. This is the real Gospel we preach, a gospel which truly has the life and power of Christ threaded through it and is found in every breath we breathe.
- 10) Our attitude in all things should be one of humility for we are redeemed by the grace of God. Our thoughts, actions and words to others should be as if they were to God himself.
- 11) We should remember our place, put others before our selves, listen rather than speak and do all willingly and unconditionally, whatever the personal cost to ourselves in the service of God.
- 12) God gave of Himself that we who were destined to be eternally separated from his love through sin may stand without fear in his presence and call him 'Father'. That very same grace and undeserved favour shall be extended to others freely and without condition or judgement. If we judge others, we usurp the power of God and we in turn shall be judged doubly.
- 13) For each member of the Order, faith and action go hand in hand. Faith without action is worthless for faith calls each of us to action, however small or great that action might seem. We will do well to remember that it is often the case that the least or smallest of actions can have greatest importance and significance.
- 14) The examples given in the parable of the Good Samaritan and the washing of the disciples' feet by Our Lord are in essence the scriptural basis on which the Order was founded – principles of service and humility. Following the pattern of ministry exemplified by our Lord, where need is perceived, members should deal with it quickly lest the opportunity (or at worst a soul) be lost.
- 15) All members of the Order are expected to support or make provision for them selves financially so they are not a burden to others. God is faithful to meet all of our needs providing we are faithful in serving Him in all things and in discerning His will for us as individuals.

- 16) Just as God is both generous and gracious to us, so we ought to be charitable to others in freely giving of our time, gifts and resources.
- 17) We need to remember that all we have and are come from God, our Father, and all these things are given to us in trust and loving obedience to glorify Him. They are not solely for our own personal enjoyment and we shall be called to give an account of the way we have administered God's gifts to God Himself as well as the poor and needy.
- 18) As part of this grace, every member of the Order has an obligation of love to meet the needs of all who ask for help in whatever form it may take, whether a word or gesture of kindness or encouragement, the giving of their time, expertise, friendship, financial support, advocacy, presence, but mostly in the bringing of the presence of God to wherever it is needed.

Being part of the one church.

- 1) The Order's view and understanding of scripture is that there is one body which has Christ as its head, and the Order is but a very small part of that body, the world wide church.
- 2) Even though there may be substantial differences in practice and theology between the churches and groups within that body, members of the Order should not make adverse or negative comments regarding individuals, other groups, churches or their work. There is a sense in which when any part of the body of Christ is judged, then Christ, its head, is judged too. We should remember our place within the body of Christ - we are simply called to serve and have no authority to judge the work of others.
- 3) In respect of the work of those outside the Order, differences regarding current or historical practices and theology should be respected at all times, but not necessarily accepted or followed. To show respect for these things does not constitute or imply agreement, particularly where conflicting issues regarding actual ministry exist. Since we are bound to serve under God's commandments of love, we are already committed to dealing with need regardless of any 'man made' obstacles or objections.
- 4) When working with those outside the Order, members should try to confirm and build upon areas of agreement rather than build upon areas of disagreement. This principle is 'unity in essentials, liberty in non-essentials and charity in all things' (Rupert Meldenius*). It is the responsibility of all members of the Order to build up the body of Christ and bring it unity wherever possible.
- 5) As has already been stated, members of the Order are obliged to 'work supportively with individuals, churches, Christian group and the local community, where ever needed and when ever needed'. Members may not find this easy in practice, particularly where there are very strong disagreements regarding the application of canon, current or historical practices and theology. Members' attitude in this circumstance should be (in as much as they can) to look beyond their disagreement and treat this as a matter of obedience, trust and service to Christ.
- 6) The Order and its members are part of the whole body of Christ. The Order on the basis of Holy Scripture therefore considers itself to be 'in communion' with all the other parts of the body. Whether this is reciprocated, in as far as the Order is concerned, is a matter for others to decide – it is not within the Order's jurisdiction.
- 7) In summary, members should give due respect to others but only be bound out of love to do those things that are required by God.

** During the 1620's Lutheran pastor and theologian Peter Meiderlin, disturbed by the division caused by the doctrinal disputes following the Protestant Reformation, wrote under the pen name of Rupert Meldenius. 'A Prayerful Admonition for Peace to the Theologians of the Augsburg Confession', from which the words come, was almost forgotten until republished in 1850 by Friedrich Luecke.*

Working in the community, the sacred harvest:

- 1) Most denominational priests are responsible for a church (usually based around a building or other premises) and a parish (as a defined geographical area of ministry). This is not the case in the Order.
- 2) Members of the Order have spiritual and pastoral responsibility for all people they come into contact with and for as long as any need exists.
- 3) These people form the church community to which the member of the Order is priest regardless of denomination or other consideration or constraint.
- 4) There is therefore no geographical boundary of priestly responsibility or service. It would on this basis be quite reasonable to reply to anyone asking which parish a member works in to simply state, 'This is my parish (and these are the members of the church Christ has called me to serve).'
- 5) Members of the Order may still wish to have their own chapels or churches or premises which may be usefully be used as 'centres of ministry', but it is neither obligatory nor should constrain, restrict or put any limit on ministry. Neither should they be a financial burden or need undue management.
- 6) Whether members have chapels etc or not, each member shall be responsible for finding and maintaining their own personal sacred space(s) in terms of the practice of the presence of God.
- 7) The effective use of personal sacred space is a key element in being both fit for and prepared for effective service in the community.
- 8) This personal sacred space shall also include places and times of retreat, reconciliation, personal healing and spiritual development and shall be as free as possible from unnecessary distraction or interruption.
- 9) The spiritual health (and to some extent physical health) of the minister directly affects the quality of the work they do and this shall not be taken lightly or ignored. Similarly, the spiritual health (and physical wellbeing) of the community will also have a direct impact on the spiritual (and physical) health of each individual member. They are very much inter-related.
- 10) It is therefore important that the Holy Spirit is allowed to bring into being and develop a support network which is appropriate to the needs of each priest and each community.
- 11) Priests must realise that they cannot do everything and need to delegate in order that others may learn and grow into effective ministry. This is particularly important in discerning, encouraging and developing both this and the next generation of workers for Christ's harvest.

- 12) Although it is not always possible, members should search within the community they serve for those who will take their place if they are called to serve elsewhere.
- 13) Any ministry or service is gifted by God and is entrusted in faith to each member for the building up of others as God sees fit; members of the Order should remember that ministry and service do not come under individual ownership but find their origination and creation in God, the Father, are empowered by God in the form of the Holy Spirit and are for the benefit of both God and all His people through Christ, God the Son.
- 14) Members should also remember in humility that even though they are called by God for service in both the Order and the community at large, God may direct and use others in that same service as is His will.
- 15) Every member of the Order shall be in as far as is possible part of a worshipping community so that they may minister to, receive ministry from and share in ministry however led by God.
- 16) It is important in that each member should be part of a prayer support network for the work of a priest is not one that can be carried out without the care, support, encouragement and guidance of others. An effective priest simply will not remain effective without the support of others.

Liturgy, the sacraments and worship.

- 1) Regrettably, denominations have caused and still cause divisions and barriers within the body of Christ. This is not compatible with the example and ministry of Christ as outlined in the Gospels or the words of St Paul regarding the one-ness of the body of Christ (the one true and unified church) as found in 1 Corinthians 12 for example.
- 2) The Order and its members will continue to ignore and break through the barriers the denominational churches have created by taking the unconditional love of God to wherever it is needed. This will be done in a way which brings glory to God, strengthens and makes whole the body and is done within the bonds of Christian love and in obedience to the will of God.
- 3) Every effort should be made by all members to meet the discerned needs of all those they come into contact with, whatever their personal denominational affiliations.
- 4) A member's own personal preferences are to be regarded as of no account when it comes to ministry. Christ met our needs unconditionally and all members will reflect that grace in their dealings with others. Members may however pass work on to other members of the Order if they feel that they cannot give 100% support to any requests made.
- 5) Since the Order is not bound by denominational traditions, its members are free to access and use whatever forms of sacramental or other liturgies that are appropriate to the needs of the people they serve.
- 6) The exclusive promotion of any one denominational form of liturgy or practice within the Order is contrary to the founding principles of the Order and is expressly forbidden.
- 7) Similarly, the Order will not be bound by any traditions or canons of 'the church' that deny access to the sacraments or liturgy to any person who approaches them with respect and in faith, however limited. If these two conditions are met, all are free to receive any of the sacraments of the church and shall not be denied them.
- 8) Because of the servant nature of Christ as exemplified by the washing of the disciples' feet, members may out of humility adopt the practice of taking their communion of both kinds after all others have received.

Prayer.

- 1) Prayer is an integral part of both the faith and life in the Order. Prayer is a spontaneous response and expression of love rather than a duty or obligation.
- 2) Because our lives are frequently busy, it is helpful to begin the day with prayer and ask God for the opportunity to serve, for wisdom and discernment, for the necessary gifts to meet each encountered need and for the needs of those whose lives impact on our own.
- 3) We should also pray for the work and ministry of the Order and its members, that each shall be faithful to the will of God in all things.
- 4) Our prayer should also be that our actions, thoughts and words shall not cause another person to turn away from God but that the light of God's love shall shine through us unhindered and may draw all and welcome all we meet into His presence.
- 5) It is also helpful to prayerfully review each day at its closing and offer God our own failings and the successes He has wrought through us. Our attitude should be one of thankfulness and humility as we look for the many different ways God has touched us and others in each passing moment. If we find fault in our words, thoughts and actions, we may also need the forgiveness of God and should ask without fear, trusting in His infinite grace and love for us.
- 6) Because prayer is not a matter of duty but of love, the traditions of the cloistered monastic Orders regarding prayer need not be applied corporately unless agreed by those able to meet together and then only for a season unless otherwise discerned 'lest it dulls the spirit'.
- 7) It is the rule of life within closed Orders that prayers are offered to God in faith and love at morning, noon, and night. As On Call is a dispersed Order, there is no insistence for compliance with this tradition. Nevertheless, it is a good discipline, and is helpful for spiritual growth. For this reason it is recommended to the individual member.
- 8) No one form of liturgy is prescribed as all have some benefit in being explored. What one finds useful, another may not and it shows wisdom to accept what is good and remain silent on the remainder lest the seeds of doubt and uncertainty are sown in another's mind.
- 9) Concerning both public and personal prayer, a few thoughtful and loving words in prayer are of greater benefit than an undisciplined outpouring – an example may be found in God's creation that the gentle rain is sufficient to encourage fruitfulness from the ground rather than the great flood which washes everything away.
- 10) Silence in prayer is a virtue in that still small voice of God may be heard. It is only when we are silent that we begin to listen with both heart and mind.

11) In public worship and prayer, the needs of others shall take precedence over our own personal preference. We are called to minister to the needs of others, not to fulfil our own personal needs.

The Bible.

1. The Bible contains the Word of God. Although written by man and translated into many languages, it is both inspired and interpreted by the Holy Spirit according to the Will of God and can be relied upon.
2. The Bible is more than the printed word. It becomes the Living Word of God when it is read in humility and with open heart and mind. It convicts, challenges, encourages and empowers through a renewed and awakened understanding of God's Word and leads us into the very presence of God.
3. The Holy Spirit is the primary source of inspiration and interpretation as Holy Scripture is read. Without the presence of the Holy Spirit, the words of Holy Scripture, however noble, are powerless and without life.
4. We should be open-minded and follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit when reading Holy Scripture but we would be unwise to ignore the understanding found in traditional interpretations of the Word of God.
5. However, the understanding or interpretation of God's Word we have been given may seem to challenge or be in conflict with what has gone before. It does not mean that either is in error, just that they are different answers to different needs in different times.
6. Every care in interpreting the Word of God should therefore be made that it is both consistent with the Will of God and follows the leading of the Holy Spirit.
7. Prayer for proper understanding and interpretation before reading the Bible and the giving of thanks for the Living Word after reading are appropriate.
8. We should always approach Holy Scripture without any preconceived ideas. The principle is to come empty before God, ready to be filled spiritually. There is a sense in which 'theology' can get in the way in this respect if care is not taken – theology is simply man's way of trying to understand, explain, order and rationalise what is truly beyond his comprehension. It can sometimes present great difficulty for the Holy Spirit as it tries to lead, encourage and prompt us. Theological training importantly has its place, but it shouldn't get in the way of God.
9. A closed mind is not the Servant of God where understanding Holy Scripture is concerned, but neither is 'the open mind' which is deaf to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, perverts the truth to its own ends and essentially only hears the desires of a self-seeking heart.
10. The Bible, whilst containing the Word of God and being important benchmark sources of spiritual wisdom, understanding and knowledge, is no substitute for spending time with God (in just the same way that reading a biography is no substitute for spending quality time with the real person).

11. The Bible should be treated reverently and with due respect.
12. The Bible should never be or become an object of worship in itself. It is 'of God', but it is not God.
13. The Bible is not the only source of spiritual wisdom, understanding and knowledge – God speaks to us in many different ways. Holy Scripture does not therefore have a monopoly on the Word of God but it remains the trusted primary source of spiritual agreement in all things.
14. In all matters of discernment, there should be prayerful collective consensus in properly interpreting the Word of God.

The place of 'the traditions of the church'.

- 1) There are many traditions that have come into being for good reason although it must be recognised that some have caused the church to stray from the first principles of love and have become a source of division and exclusion.
- 2) Therefore, as a general rule in matters of tradition, canon and practice, only that which glorifies God and brings unity to the church universal shall be upheld as of use within the Order.
- 3) In matters of theological or liturgical debate or interpretation, only that which is necessary for salvation or is found in Holy Scripture shall be held as absolute.
- 4) All else shall remain personal opinion and shall be shared with others sparingly and carefully lest their faith is shaken

Language usage.

- 1) Considering forms of language used in worship, the sacraments and general liturgy, a simple, uncomplicated and direct form is by far the most productive.
- 2) Jesus spoke in simple, understandable terms in his dealings with other people and when preaching. We should aim to do the same lest we inadvertently hide the good news from them and bring God's judgement on ourselves.
- 3) Formal ceremonial language may be required in some circumstances but should be minimised if at all possible. If it cannot be avoided, it should always be appropriate, subdued and not dominate the proceedings or be theatrical.
- 4) Technical, theological and unnecessarily complicated or little used phrases or words should be avoided lest they hide the Word of God, unwittingly make the listener feel uneducated or make more of the supposed importance of the person speaking.
- 5) When preaching, it is good to use humour and parable in the same way that Our Lord did, and let our own God given personalities add colour and texture to our words. However, we should take care that we do not let these things claim equality or take precedence over the words we have been entrusted with by God.
- 6) Preaching the Gospel is a responsibility that should not be taken lightly. It needs to be carefully discerned, prepared and delivered. It should also be short and demand the full attention of the listener.
- 7) A worthwhile saying regarding preaching is, 'all sermons should have a good beginning, a good ending, and the shortest distance between them...'
- 8) A sermon should make only one or two points, have a small number of relevant and uncomplicated illustrations from life, be totally accessible, and leave the listener both challenged and encouraged.
- 9) The teaching style of Our Lord is the very best example to be found and is worthy of repeated study. He did not speak endlessly in theological terms or quote the written opinions of great theologians. He spoke in simple, direct terms. It was challenging but not condemning, supportive but never patronising, and pointed the way forward rather than being prescriptive. Each person could apply Jesus' teaching at their own level and respond in their own way. They were given the responsibility of making the next decision, taking the next step and choosing the way forward.

Authority within the Order.

- 1) In all things, God is the ultimate authority. It is to God that we as both individuals and a community are obedient and serve.
- 2) The Order is an independent organisation within the universal or world wide church but it is not 'a church'.
- 3) The Order is a community of people who share the On Call vision of Godly service and are prepared to break out of the denominational limitations that most organisations within the universal church are restricted by.
- 4) The Order is a catholic (meaning 'universal – for all') community without denominational attachment and the importance of this cannot be underestimated.
- 5) The Order is a family and within the family everyone has their own place, function and ministry. These are not fixed and flexibility is one of the requirements of being a member of the Order.
- 6) As each person grows in faith and spirituality, they leave their childhood behind them and grow towards maturity. With knowledge comes understanding and they both, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, lead to Godly wisdom. It is right and good that we follow the will of God and allow Him to direct our ministries and use our God given gifts and talents as and when He desires.
- 7) Just as all are equal before God, all members are given equal recognition within the Order, particularly regarding their spiritual gifting. St Paul states that 'to each person has been a gift granted, one this gift and another that' (1 Corinthians 7v7) and each person within the Order has the right to fully exercise their God given ministry once recognised or discerned. All ministry is important. Any that is lost, ignored, denied or discouraged impoverishes the body of Christ.
- 8) Within the Order, members therefore fulfil roles according to spiritual gifting and discernment and not by title, right, education or qualification.
- 9) To give some one an official title is to set them apart from others and can lead to petty jealousies, envy and pride. These are not things the Order wishes to encourage and they are certainly not fruits of the Spirit. Therefore, all roles within the Order carry no official titles other than that of the Executive Bishop.
- 10) In practical terms, it also means that structural changes can be made quite quickly within the Order when the need arises. It enables easy transitions to be made if needs are discerned or if events or situations become quite fluid and need responding to quickly.

- 11) If members do have ranks or titles by virtue of their sponsoring denomination, it is certainly not a requirement that these are used within the Order as they carry no weight or authority within the Order.
- 12) To give someone a title is to give them some kind of supposed authority but it also limits what they can do in terms of ministry by default. This limiting of ministry is not something that is generally encouraged within the Order. However, all members may be respectfully addressed as Reverend, Father, Pastor, Brother, Sister or some other allowed at the discretion of the Executive Bishop.
- 13) The Order needs a simple management structure as an organisation and ultimately one person as head of the Order has to accept overall responsibility to ensure that the Order functions as a caring, prayerful and discerning community and is able to carry out its varied and God given ministries faithfully.
- 14) Therefore, the Executive Bishop is the acknowledged authority within the Order and is the Order's official representative in both private and public matters.
- 15) The Executive Bishop is responsible for the good running of the Order based on the Order's Principles and Guidelines and has complete authority over all matters regarding the Order.
- 16) The Executive Bishop ultimately must give account before God for all decisions and actions. This is a great and challenging responsibility and one that needs the continuous prayerful support of all members lest they fail to meet their obligations before God.
- 17) The Executive Bishop may appoint assistant bishops (of which there may be no more than two) to help in the work of the running of the Order. This will also ensure that there is continuity of an independent line of apostolic succession held within the Order.
- 18) Unlike diocesan bishops, assistant bishops are not independent authorities and do not have a titular see or additional privileges – their role is simply to serve both the Executive Bishop and the Order.
- 19) The assistant bishop/bishops shall deputise for the Executive Bishop when required and will remain under his/her direct authority.
- 20) In the event of the Executive Bishop unexpectedly being unable to carry out their duties, an assistant bishop (the longest serving if there is more than one) will act on the Executive Bishop's and Order's behalf.
- 21) All members (including the assistant bishops) are subject to the authority of the Executive Bishop in all matters relating to the Order.

- 22) Whilst the Executive Bishop is the acknowledged head of the Order, he or she must act with all humility and take pastoral and spiritual responsibility for all members. The Executive Bishop shall be like a father to his children and teach, encourage, support, discipline and lead as each needs towards spiritual maturity.
- 23) Should it be necessary and if sufficient cause is proved, a member who brings either the faith or the Order into disrepute, or is the source of frequent dissent or murmuring, shall be without the right of appeal released from the Order by the Executive Bishop.

Vestments.

- 1) The most appropriate garments to wear at all times are those of faith, hope and charity. These should be kept in good order and be worn with humility for they are the garments our Lord has provided for us.
- 2) We are called to serve as priests and vestments can be a very useful and functional part of the outward form of our ministry if used thoughtfully and with discernment
- 3) Vestments, where used, should be appropriate to their purpose and intended function within a liturgy.
- 4) They should be simply decorated and not draw attention away from the liturgy.
- 5) They should always be clean and well presented.
- 6) The basic liturgical/sacramental vestment for all members is the alb, tied at the waist with a plain white rope cincture. It should not be decorated in any way as it is symbolic of the humility those serving in ordained ministry should have before God and those they serve.
- 7) The alb can be worn over ordinary clothes quite easily and for all practical purposes, little else is needed other than a stole and a cincture to satisfy sacramental and liturgical requirements.
- 8) A stole should be worn over an alb during the celebration of any sacrament or liturgy. A stole is the symbol of the authority the wearer has been given to serve as an ordained minister or priest.
- 9) To avoid un-necessary expense, white is accepted within the Order as a suitable liturgical colour for all occasions and seasons.
- 10) The traditional form of usage of seasonal vestment colours may be individually retained but is unnecessary and is not a requirement of the Order.
- 11) A stole may be worn over or under a chasuble according to which ever tradition each member follows.
- 12) Although not a formal requirement of the Order, a chasuble worn over the alb with a stole is an appropriate vestment for a priest celebrating the sacraments.
- 13) Members of the Order may wear a plain black or white scapular and stole over an alb or cassock as the general working vestments of the Order. (A scapular has the same origins and functions as a chasuble, but is much simpler and can be made quite easily.)
- 14) It is also acceptable to wear a plain surplice and stole over a cassock if required.

- 15) The cassock is traditionally the normal working clothes of priests. It is a very practical piece of clothing and will keep members warm, especially in cold churches. An alb and other vestments can easily be worn over a cassock.
- 16) Although not a hard and fast rule, black is generally the traditionally accepted colour for cassocks, although purple (and also green within On Call) is reserved for bishops if they so wish.
- 17) In the matter of colours for clerical shirts, plain black, blue or clerical grey are preferred above other colours. White clerical shirts may be worn during the summer months. Purple however is traditionally reserved for bishops.
- 18) Members of the Order should wear a clerical collar when in public places to identify that they are priests and be ready (on call) at all times to serve both God and any individuals as required.

Continued formation.

- 1) Continued formation is an integral part of the life of any priest or minister.
- 2) Training and preparation for ministry never stops and it can take many forms.
- 3) It is an obligation of the Order to provide resources, encouragement and opportunities for training for any of its members who so wish to receive and benefit by them.
- 4) It is also an obligation on the part of each member to continue to develop their own spirituality and understanding of the faith that they may be effective in both their ministry and service. This is not optional.
- 5) Members should understand that continued formation is a joint responsibility which is shared collectively by the Order and themselves personally.
- 6) Members may ask for advice and/or for further training and support. It is the responsibility of the Order to endeavour to meet that discerned need in as far as it can.
- 7) Resources and study packs are available from within the Order but as the Order's financial resources are kept to a working minimum to benefit its charitable works, any additional costs for material may need to be carried by the individual member making the request.
- 8) This should not be regarded as a failure of the Order to meet its obligations but as a personal test of commitment and faith, not a burden, as God will meet all needs that fall within His perfect and divine will.

Holy Orders.

- 1) The Order is an Apostolic Order and has the right by virtue of its Executive Bishop and assistant bishops to grant the receiving of Holy Orders if discerned.
- 2) The Order's bishops maintain a line of Apostolic Succession and if it is discerned as being right, appropriate and within the will of God that a person's call to a priestly vocation is true, then they may be ordained priest but without denomination. Those ordained in this manner will come under the direct supervision and jurisdiction of the Order's bishops.
- 3) Being granted Holy Orders is not a right and neither is it dependent on educational qualification but rather on calling, evidence of existing ministry and a genuine faith and love of the Lord.
- 4) Some words of wisdom for those seeking Holy Orders: our Lord chose fishermen for his first disciples. Fishermen are intuitive, committed, hard workers who are used to working as a team to get the job done and used to working in sometimes difficult or dangerous conditions. These qualities are principally the same ones the Order is looking for.

Membership of the Order.

- 1) Being an active part of the Order should be viewed as a life long commitment and should also be considered as vocational, something to which a person is specifically called by God.
- 2) For this reason, membership of the Order is not made easy or automatic. The Order needs members who are both dedicated and committed to serving both Christ and community in this very open and demanding form of ministry. For this reason, the applications process is very detailed and searching.
- 3) The decision as to who shall be admitted as a member of the Order rests solely with the Executive Bishop and there is no appeals procedure, although an applicant may be given leave to re-apply.
- 4) The need to maintain a shared vision of the Order's particular form of ministry is a very important part of the development of the Order and key element in its success. It requires every member's full participation and contribution for without this vision, the Order will become just another organisation within an increasingly fragmented church.
- 5) Members are expected to take a fully supportive and contributory part in both the running of the Order and its overall ministry. Its success is dependent on every single member being fully involved.
- 6) Because the Order is a dispersed community, members should make every effort to stay in regular contact or meet with other members.
- 7) The Order is still growing and finding new directions and roles within the world it serves. It is not static and neither is its rule. Therefore the rule may be revised and amended from time to time as the Holy Spirit directs and as confirmed in Holy Scripture.
- 8) The Annual General Meeting is an important gathering of the Order and members have the opportunity to share fellowship, worship as a community, to raise matters of concern and as a family share their thoughts. Members are asked to make every effort to attend this important meeting.
- 9) Members and associate members have the right to vote at the Annual General Meeting where a vote is called by the Executive Bishop.
- 10) Supporter members (the Third Order) may be invited to participate in any voting procedure at the discretion of the Executive Bishop

Overseas Provinces.

- 1) An overseas province may be authorised by the Executive Bishop providing the following criteria are met:
 - (a) that there are at least 12 active members of the Order in that country,
 - (b) that one amongst their number is either elected as their representative, intermediary and advocate by those members and receives the approval of or is wholly appointed by the Executive Bishop,
 - (c) that the members will continue to submit to the authority of the Executive Bishop in all matters relating to the Order or another appointed by him/her,
 - (d) that there is continued evidence of active ministry,
 - (e) that the Rule is the accepted basis of all ministry carried out in the name of both the Order and the new Province,
 - (f) that the Executive Bishop is kept fully informed of the activities of members, meetings and ministries within the Province at all times,
 - (g) that in the event of any disputes or matters of unresolved discernment, the Executive Bishop, or one appointed by him/her, shall have the final decision,
 - (h) that the Province shall hold an annual general meeting and shall notify the Executive Bishop of the agenda in two weeks in advance and shall send him/her a copy of the minutes for general publication,
 - (i) if it is deemed necessary or appropriate, and there is reasonable opportunity, a bishop may under the discretion of the Executive Bishop be elected and consecrated to act as pastor and shepherd on the Executive Bishop's behalf. The tradition of three bishops being present at such a consecration may be waived if circumstances make such impossible and if a mandate of agreement is signed by all the members of that province,
 - (j) the province will have a measure of agreed autonomy in matters of the outworking of ministry,
 - (k) if the number of active priests fall below twelve active members then the Executive Bishop may reasonably opt to suspend the province and bring it under the direct supervision of the mother province (UK).

Resignation from the Order.

- 1) Resignation is a last resort and is not something to take lightly. The Order is both a community and family which shares a common vision and bond of unity through Christ
- 2) A period of time before a resignation comes into effect may be requested at the discretion of the Executive Bishop.
- 3) A resignation unless for reason of a long term change in family circumstances, incapacity, age or infirmity may only be accepted after all avenues have been explored and there is no further possibility of reconciliation.
- 4) A resignation of this kind is a mark of failure on both the Order's part and that of the individual member. The Executive Bishop shall endeavour to make a full enquiry (or appoint another to do so on his/her behalf) and respond appropriately.
- 5) Those who have resigned their membership of the Order and wish to re-apply will be treated as a new applicant and shall undergo the full membership applications procedure as part of a discerning and healing process. This is not meant to be threatening or retributive in any way but is meant to provide a simple mechanism for open and frank discussion by both the Order and the re-applicant.
- 6) An advocate may be chosen to represent a re-applicant if they wish to have the support of another member of the Order. This is appropriate as a reflection of our faith just as Christ is our advocate before God.
- 7) Acceptance or re-acceptance, as with any application, is by no means a foregone conclusion but it will be subject to the seeking of the will of God and be undertaken in a spirit of Christian love and forgiveness.
- 8) A second or further resignation may however be considered as irrevocable unless there are special or extenuating circumstances. No general ruling can be given as to how this shall be applied other than any resignation, whether tendered or accepted, should be carefully considered and measured against the discerned will of God, and not made or accepted in haste or anger.
- 9) A sabbatical may be offered or requested (or at the discretion of the Executive Bishop be instructed in a spirit of Christian love) as an appropriate alternative to resignation to allow time for proper consideration and reflection.
- 9) The Executive Bishop may assume a resignation has been tendered by a member by implication if they have not reasonably responded to communication, cannot provide evidence of continued ministry or have not contributed to or participated in the Order's affairs over a continuous period of time.

- 10) Members affected by clause 9 will be informed and will have reasonable time to respond to protect their continued membership of the Order. However, the Executive Bishop retains the right in such circumstances to terminate, re-assign or request re-application for membership in the best interests of the Order and its ministry.

- 11) In all things, forgiveness must be pre-eminent in the actions of all involved but it must be remembered that even after forgiveness has taken place we all have to live with the consequences of our own actions and the responses of others to those actions, whatever they are. We have collective responsibility for all that happens within the Order, whether we have been directly involved or not, and our responses should fulfil the words, 'Love never fails'. (1 Corinthians 13).

Principles and Guidelines

These are the principles and guidelines under which both the Order and the Province and Jurisdiction for On Call Ministry (which provides independent oversight to the Order) have agreed jointly. The principles and guidelines similarly apply to both the Province and Jurisdiction and the Order.

As members,

We acknowledge our faith in One God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

We believe and trust in God the Father who made all things good.

We believe and trust in His Son, Jesus, the Christ, who brought forgiveness to all who accept him as saviour.

We believe and trust in the Holy Spirit who empowers the people of God.

We believe and trust in the transforming power of prayer and faith.

We believe and trust that God welcomes all who seek Him, without exception.

We believe Holy Scripture contains the Word of God.

We recognise and acknowledge that there is only One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and although it is expressed in great diversity and form, Christ is its one head, who we serve as called by the Holy Spirit.

We believe that God calls each one of us to serve Him in some unique way.

We believe that none should be denied their ministry, but freely receive support, help and encouragement where ministry is discerned.

We believe that all ministries are essential, however small or great they may seem, and carry equal importance.

We believe that all people are equal before God. We actively seek to end all forms and expressions of injustice, intolerance and prejudice that are contrary to scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit.

We acknowledge our responsibilities to those who express their faith in a different way.

We rejoice in our shared experiences and our differences, accepting both equally and wholeheartedly, sharing what is just and good because of our genuine and Godly love for one another, always giving support and encouragement without favour and upholding what is good and true without prejudice.

We accept that what is right for some may not be right for others. Our journeys with God take us in different directions, along different paths and in different ways. We shall not pass judgement on others for they are in God's hands as we are. God unconditionally accepts us as we are, and we will accept others likewise.

We believe it is our duty as Christians to learn to accept to the love that God bestows upon us,

to learn to love ourselves as God loves us, accepting what we are, just as God accepts us.

to learn to love others as we ourselves are loved,

to become the people God created us to be through learning to love God,

We believe it is also our joy to learn to live in the fullness of life which

God gave us, to find God in all things and to do His bidding. We will seek to do those things God asks of us and to faithfully serve in whatever capacity we are called, each according to the gifts and ministries they have been given.

We will always keep in mind that no person or circumstance can take

God's love away from us, whatever we have done, and we can rest assured, knowing God's love for us is firm and unshakeable, that we cannot ever be separated from His love.

We seek to minister to all those who need help in a truly non-

denominational way, regardless of the barriers that society (and sometimes the church) erects. We do not seek to compromise the teachings of Christ in any way but to put them into effect.

We seek to follow the pattern of servant leadership modelled by Christ

as the pattern for all ministry. Our focus is on ministry where it is needed, not in maintaining buildings or organisational structures.

The Province and Jurisdiction has the power to ordain and to

consecrate within the traditions of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Governance within the Province and Jurisdiction

1. The Province and Jurisdiction for On Call Ministry is not a church or denomination, but is an independent Province and Jurisdiction whose members are specifically called to work non-denominationally wherever they are needed, particularly with those people and groups who have been disenfranchised, excluded or rejected
2. The Province and Jurisdiction is subject to the overall Episcopal oversight of its bishop who is advised by an Ecclesiastical Executive made up of members of the Province and Jurisdiction. Other than this, no further organisational structure is felt to be necessary and individual roles within the Province and Jurisdiction are delegated according to gifts and without title, rank or privilege.
3. The Province and Jurisdiction may, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and at such times as are necessary, maintain the right to canonically consecrate (a small number of assistant) Bishops within the Province and Jurisdiction whose purpose will be to continue independent Episcopal oversight of the Province and Jurisdiction and to maintain the line of apostolic succession already held within the Province and Jurisdiction so that the ordination of priests may continue within the canons of the catholic traditions of the world wide church if so desired. Such bishops will have no special privileges or rights over or above any other member of the Province and Jurisdiction by virtue of their title or office.
4. Members of the Province and Jurisdiction can be drawn from any tradition within the world wide church but accept that within the Province and Jurisdiction all are considered equal in Christ and that entitlement to special privilege by virtue of office or title is forgone.
5. Members remain wholly under the jurisdiction and authority of their particular tradition at all times and should act at all times and in all circumstances in a way which neither compromises their conscience or obligations to either their tradition or the Order.
6. The Province and Jurisdiction has the power to ordain where ministry is recognised and vocation is discerned. Evidence of vocation, a working knowledge of scripture, a practical faith based on sound theology and existing ministry are primary requirements and are considered of more value than formal educational qualifications.
7. Members who have been ordained by the Province and Jurisdiction for On Call Ministry fall wholly under the jurisdiction and authority of the Province and Jurisdiction and remain subject to it at all times.
8. All members of the Province and Jurisdiction are encouraged to discover and develop their own ministries as God calls.

9. There is great wealth of experience and spirituality within the Province and Jurisdiction and members are encouraged to share this with one another as part of their stewardship of the gifts they have received from God
10. As the Province and Jurisdiction's financial resources are limited, members are encouraged under guidance to take substantial responsibility for their own continued formation and spiritual development. However, some courses and material will be made available by On Call from time to time.
11. All members of Province and Jurisdiction will be financially self supporting
12. New members of the Province and Jurisdiction will be required to produce a recent CRB check. An enhanced CRB is required if working with children and young adults.
13. The Province and Jurisdiction's Child Protection policy applies to all its members except where adequate child protection policies already exist and apply within the incorporated and associated organisations.
14. As in any profession, breach of trust or any form of professional misconduct may/will result in suspension or release from the Province and Jurisdiction.

The requirements and role of On Call Priests within the Province and Jurisdiction:

Requirements:

Being led by the Holy Spirit, On Call priests are required to be faithful in daily prayer and be mindful of their priestly calling, continued formation, duties and responsibilities at all times.

In the outworking of priestly vocation, two principles shall continuously apply:-

1. treat all as if they were Christ himself and respond accordingly,
2. respond to need as Christ himself would respond.

In these two principles, all remaining requirements are fulfilled.

Role:

Within the Province and Jurisdiction for On Call Ministry, the role of On Call priests is to:-

1. minister to the needs of anyone who is unable to receive or is excluded from any of the sacraments, services or support of main stream churches or groups,
2. work with groups who are often ignored by the main stream churches who have little time or resources to work with them,
3. work supportively with other churches, organisations, groups and individuals wherever possible,
4. be 'on call' to any one in need regardless of faith background, personal history or social circumstances.

The over-riding principle is to take Christ out into the community and meet the people's needs.