

Living Ministry



Negotiating Wellbeing: Experiences of Ordinands
and Clergy in the Church of England

Panel Study

Wave I

September 2018



THE LIVING MINISTRY RESEARCH PROJECT

Background

The work of the Church of England's Ministry Council, 'Renewing Discipleship and Ministry', included in 2015 the aim of increasing the number, range and quality of ordinands, along with effective resource allocation in ministerial education. Fundamental to this was recognition that '[t]he Church of England needs to reflect deeply on the provision, formation and support of lay and ordained ministry in dioceses and parishes.'¹ This was in the context of recent changes to initial ministerial education (IME), including the introduction of the context-based mode of training in addition to the residential and non-residential modes, and diocesan requirements for, among other things:

- A new emphasis on mission, collaboration and adaptability to changing needs, and
- More ministers suited for new forms of church and non-traditional settings.

Aim

The aim of Living Ministry is to build on previous research to explore how different modes of training influence ordained ministers' future ministries. It intends to provide ongoing, consistent information to inform diocesan officers, TEI staff, Ministry Division and other stakeholders regarding decisions about: candidates for ordained ministry, training pathways, continuing development and deployment, and policy relating to the work of the Ministry Council (which directs the work of the Ministry Division).

The overarching question addressed by the research is: 'What enables ordained ministers to flourish in ministry?'. 'Flourishing in ministry' is understood to consist of the two interrelated aspects of:

- Wellbeing (flourishing of the person) and
- Ministerial outcomes (flourishing of ministry).

Objectives

- To gain a better understanding of the factors that enable ordained ministers to flourish in ministry;
- To understand how these factors relate to ministerial education and continuing development;
- To understand how these factors vary according to person, background, training pathway, type of ministry, context etc.;
- To understand how ministerial flourishing changes and develops over time and at different stages of ministry.

Methods

- A longitudinal panel study comprising a large-scale quantitative survey and smaller-scale qualitative research between 2016 and 2026;
- Focussed qualitative studies reporting on specific topics or perspectives.

¹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/renewal-reform/renewing-discipleship-ministry/resourcing-ministerial-education.aspx>



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FOREWORD

There are 20,000 clergy actively ministering within the Church of England today. It is a role that is both extremely rewarding and intensely demanding amid the pressures of modern life.

The Church of England's *Living Ministry* research represents an investment by the Archbishops' Council into understanding the experiences of those in ordained ministry. Its unique approach, mixing quantitative and qualitative methods to follow cohorts of clergy through their ministry over a decade, provides profound and rigorously documented insight into the struggles and joys of clerical life. It will form an invaluable resource to those in dioceses and theological education institutions who have responsibility for the formation, training, support and care of ordinands and clergy.

This latest report is a strikingly honest account of the everyday experiences of 85 ordinands and clergy in diverse situations. Rather than attempting sweeping recommendations, it paints a picture of wellbeing that is negotiated, fluid and contextual. Transition points, especially into and out of curacy, emerge as particular moments of vulnerability. Undefined work boundaries both increase stress and enable the rich depth of ministry that many clergy value immensely.

Nurturing wellbeing is partly about helping clergy to develop resilience, but this is not the whole story. Responsibility for wellbeing is shared and requires the Church to be constantly aware of the implications of its structures and practices for its ordained ministers, and to strive to develop a culture that enables them to flourish.



Bishop Martin Seeley

Chair, Church of England Ministry Council



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and method

This report presents the first qualitative findings of the Church of England's ten-year *Living Ministry* research project, directed by the Ministry Council and informing the national programme of Renewal and Reform by exploring how ordained ministers can flourish in ministry. The focus of this study is on clergy wellbeing.

Living Ministry takes a quality of life approach to wellbeing, recognising that it is both subjective and relational. Wellbeing is explored within and across each of the following domains: financial & material wellbeing; physical & mental wellbeing; relationships; vocational & spiritual wellbeing; participation in the life of the Church. Experiences of 85 people from four cohorts of clergy and ordinands were gathered through interviews and focus groups and analysed using a framework matrix approach. While in qualitative research individual experiences are not generalisable, deeper patterns and dynamics may be more widely applied.

Findings

Findings should be read in the context of the 2017 quantitative *Living Ministry* report, *Mapping the Wellbeing of Church of England Clergy and Ordinands*, which found overall levels of reported wellbeing in each domain to be positive amongst the majority of respondents.

Financial and material wellbeing

- Financial and material wellbeing is subjective and strongly influenced by the extent and expectations of change experienced on entering training and then ordained ministry.
- Ordinands report some organisational difficulties, including lack of clarity (especially for ordinand couples), inconsistencies, late notice, payment delays, and cash-flow problems.
- The experience of ordained ministers varies enormously: some have no financial or material concerns while others struggle to make ends meet.
- While self-supporting ministers generally report higher levels of wellbeing, financial reward is also understood to some extent as symbolic of value attributed by the Church, leading to tensions especially for those not intending to be self-supporting.
- Among stipendiary ministers, paradoxically, women may be better off financially at the cost of wider gendered societal workplace inequalities.
- The end of curacy is a time of particular financial and material vulnerability and anxiety because of pressure to vacate housing and uncertain future income.
- Clergy draw on a wide range of resources to manage current and future finances, including additional private income, diocesan assistance, government benefits, commercial services and charitable grants. Strategies for future retirement include property ownership, CHARM and house-for-duty roles, and the need to plan is held in tension with trust in God's provision.
- Participants report a range of experiences of tied housing, with size, value and potential to rent out privately owned property set against high utility bills, lack of control or a sense of home, and blurred public/private boundaries.
- Role and ministry context both affect clergy financial wellbeing, with incumbents in particular feeling responsible for parish finances and therefore perhaps less likely to claim expenses.

Physical and mental wellbeing

- Ordinands training in different ways face different health challenges, notably a sedentary lifestyle with institutional food for residential ordinands, tiring juggling of activities for context-based and non-residential ordinands, and deep formational questions for all. Most participants report supportive pastoral care structures within theological education institutions; however, non-residential ordinands in full-time employment appear particularly vulnerable to mental and physical ill-health.
- Ordained ministry is mentally and emotionally demanding, which can also have implications for physical health. Healthy patterns of living are important for both ordinands and clergy.
- Many clergy struggle to establish temporal, spatial, mental and role boundaries around work, while appreciating its flexibility. Curates may experience less flexibility, while incumbents feel the pressure of greater responsibility. Permission-giving, whether through healthy modelling by senior clergy or effective ministerial development reviews, is important in helping clergy rest.
- There is a clear two-way dynamic between physical and mental wellbeing and close relationships, where the state of one affects the other for better and/or for worse. Family is a key source of support, and single clergy rely on a wider network of family and friends.
- Transitions into and out of curacy are moments of particular vulnerability to physical and mental illbeing, largely because of loss of support structures and unexpected or overwhelming demands and working conditions.
- Within one's immediate ministry context, physical and mental wellbeing can be affected by vocational fit, working conditions, pressures of finances and attendance figures, parishioners and colleagues, the latter two of which can both contribute to and alleviate stress.
- Clergy often manage ill-health themselves without recourse to their diocese, sometimes because they fear negative consequences should they seek assistance (especially for mental health issues). Those who do seek help (mostly for physical issues) generally report being met with care and support.

Relationships

- Relationships within the TEI learning environment are extremely important to ordinands' support and formation, especially as they may feel dislocated in various ways from existing relationships and patterns of living.
- Initial Ministerial Education Phase I places strain on family relationships through time pressure and separation, experienced in different ways by ordinands across all modes of training.
- Ordained ministry both affects and is negotiated (especially by women) within the family, while clergy find relationships with wider family and friends both a vital support and difficult to maintain.
- For self-supporting ministers, integration of ministry and wider life may be difficult to manage but can also be experienced as deeply rewarding.
- Managing relationships with parishioners can be challenging, with clergy taking different approaches to relational boundaries in friendship and pastoral care. Honest conversations about limitations can be helpful in developing a supportive environment.
- Relationships with clergy colleagues are often but not always supportive, and clergy draw on a range of groups and networks to find practical, emotional and spiritual support. Safe spaces to talk and understanding of ministerial life are important elements of support.
- Relationships between curate and training incumbent vary, tensions often relating to differing expectations of role, tradition and approach to ministry. Where TIs hold a diocesan role, curates may feel unable to turn to the diocese for support in a difficult relationship.

Vocational and spiritual wellbeing

- As an inherently transitional phase, ordinands often experience deep questioning regarding their calling and theology. For the most part this is held within a supportive TEI environment.
- Clergy discuss calling and vocation at multiple levels: to ordained ministry, to ministry within the CofE, to a specific type of ministry, to a specific post or place, and to tasks within a role. Frustration is experienced when they feel restricted by structures and unable to use gifts and skills, while accompanied ongoing vocational discernment is valued and vocational fulfilment may be found in unexpected directions or where existing skills are drawn on.
- Strategies helpful for spiritual wellbeing include: rhythms of prayer (assigned time and/or built into existing routines); individual or group peer relationships; 'off-duty' worship; spiritual direction, mentoring and counselling; and pastoral care and understanding from senior clergy.

Participation

- Some ordinands, especially those training in a distant location, feel disconnected from their diocese and appreciate contact from DDOs, senior clergy and other ordinands in the diocese.
- TEIs are often extremely flexible in tailoring training to individual requirements; however, some minority groups (e.g. non-residential ordinands with full-time jobs) feel disadvantaged.
- Clergy may experience pressure regarding attendance figures and parish finances, combined with awareness of significant financial investment elsewhere, which can lead to feelings of demoralisation and vocational and resource marginalisation.
- Bishops and senior clergy play an important role in the extent to which clergy feel part of their diocese and the wider Church, through the provision (or lack) of pastoral care, practical assistance and personal contact.
- Certain groups of ordained ministers report experiencing particular challenges to participation, including: self-supporting ministers; chaplains; same-sex attracted clergy; those not identifying as middle class or highly educated; women; and people of colour. The latter group is notable for its near absence among participants.
- Differences in tradition may open up new experiences and areas of the Church, and may isolate, either structurally or within personal (e.g. curate – training incumbent) relationships.

Crosscutting themes

- Periods of transition are particularly challenging in multiple areas of wellbeing, including causing physical and mental stress, isolation, financial and material concern, vocational questions and a sense of dislocation within the Church.
- Effective management of expectations of all parties (e.g. congregations, colleagues, curates and TIs) is important to all aspects of wellbeing, especially at times of transition into new roles.
- The wellbeing of the ordained minister and that of his/her family are intrinsically linked and affect each other both positively and negatively across all domains of wellbeing.
- Clergy, particularly in parochial ministry, may struggle to establish boundaries around their work in terms of time, space, thought, activity, relationships and finances. While blurred boundaries may be helpful in some respects for some people, often a lack of capacity to manage them challenges wellbeing across multiple domains.
- It is important for clergy to feel valued by the Church, particularly in the context of financial and attendance pressures combined with high profile national growth investment. Value may be symbolised in different ways, and personal interest from senior clergy contributes much to ordained ministers feeling known, understood, supported and valued.
- Wellbeing is fluid and contextual, continually negotiated by ordinands and clergy in relation to other people and multiple social, economic, political, ecclesial and theological structures. It is therefore important to view clergy lives holistically. Responsibility for wellbeing is shared between multiple parties, including the individual and the various faces of the Church, in providing and developing care, resilience and structures that encourage and enable flourishing.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BAP	Bishops' Advisory Panel
CHARM	Church's Housing Assistance for the Retired Ministry
CMD	Continuing Ministerial Development
DDO	Diocesan Director of Ordinands
IME	Initial Ministerial Education
MDR	Ministerial Development Review
NSM	Non-stipendiary Minister
OLM	Ordained Local Minister
PTO	Permission to Officiate
SM	Stipendiary Minister
SSM	Self-Supporting Minister
TEI	Theological Education Institution
TI	Training Incumbent

1. Introduction

This document reports the first qualitative findings of the Church of England's ten-year Living Ministry research project, directed by the Ministry Council. At the time of writing, the Church continues its programme for Renewal and Reform, which builds on General Synod's 2010 goals to (a) contribute as the national church to the common good; (b) facilitate the growth of the Church in numbers and depth of discipleship; and (c) re-imagine the Church's ministry. *Living Ministry* seeks to inform this work by understanding how one of the key set of actors within the Church, its clergy, can flourish in ministry. Following the quantitative panel survey published in 2017,¹ in this qualitative study we focus on flourishing in the sense of wellbeing, in other words the flourishing of the person, before widening our scope in future waves to include the flourishing of the ministry, recognising that these two aspects of clergy flourishing are clearly interrelated.

2. Theoretical framework

Flourishing in ordained ministry incorporates two aspects: the flourishing of the person (wellbeing) and the flourishing of the ministry (ministerial outcomes). The two are inextricably intertwined and the relationship between them will be explored over the course of the research. We take as our starting point the flourishing of the person, therefore the first wave of the panel study has been designed to explore clergy and ordinand wellbeing.

The concept of wellbeing has developed along several lines. The basic measure of *subjective wellbeing* is happiness, understanding wellbeing through the psycho-sociological concepts of hedonism and life satisfaction. *Psychological wellbeing* adds eudaemonic aspects of wellbeing, such as a sense of meaning, purpose and value, and relates this to the field of mental health. A wider strand of studies in wellbeing is often known as *quality of life*, which conceptualises wellbeing as multi-faceted, including but extending beyond psychological domains.

Various studies have examined factors contributing to wellbeing at work. Specific to clergy, *Bloom et al.'s US Flourishing in Ministry Project* bases its theoretical framework around 'hedonic wellbeing' (daily happiness) and 'eudaemonic wellbeing' (thriving) and points to factors relating to the two categories of relationships and role.² The Church of England *Experiences of Ministry Project*³ has assessed clergy wellbeing in four ways: emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (two measures of burnout); general physical health; and psychological detachment. A range of factors contribute to these aspects of wellbeing, including type of role, age, gender, collegial support and calling clarity (2013 Respondent Report).

Living Ministry takes a quality of life approach to wellbeing, which it seeks to understand in different domains of life as well as exploring how those domains interrelate. Developing a framework for assessing clergy wellbeing requires understanding the specific context of clergy lives while drawing on

¹ Graveling, L. & O. Cara (2017), *Mapping the Wellbeing of Church of England Clergy and Ordinands*, Panel Survey Wave 1 Report, Ministry Division, Archbishops' Council.

² Bloom, M. et al., (2013), *Flourishing in Ministry: Emerging Research Insights on the Well-Being of Pastors*, Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame.

³ <https://www.churchofengland.org/ministry-development>

existing learning. Wider knowledge about wellbeing combined with analysis of qualitative data from interviews with ordained ministers revealed the following domains:

- Health (physical, mental and emotional);
- Relationships (including family, congregations, parishioners, colleagues and friends);
- Material and financial resources (including housing and household income);
- Agency and structures (the capacity to participate in the life of the wider Church);
- Vocation (including vocational clarity, authenticity and spiritual and professional growth).

From this analysis emerged a broader and in some ways more complex narrative of wellbeing than those presented in non-clergy wellbeing-at-work approaches. For clergy, the boundaries of work (ministry) are not clearly defined in time, space, activity or relationship. Moreover, as expected, spirituality is clearly prominent in the ministers' narratives, with theological discourses around concepts such as sacrifice and failure influencing their understandings of wellbeing. The above categories formed the basis of the first wave of quantitative and qualitative data collection. As part of the analysis they have been reviewed and adapted to reflect more closely the narratives of the participants: 'agency and structures' is more clearly articulated as 'participation,' and the fifth domain has been extended to 'vocational and spiritual wellbeing.'

3. Methodology

Sample

Living Ministry is a mixed-methods research project, comprising a longitudinal panel study involving four cohorts of clergy and ordinands: those ordained in 2006, 2011 and 2015, and those who entered training in 2016. The first quantitative survey took place in 2017, with a response rate of approximately 50% (761 respondents).⁴ These respondents formed the sample frame for the qualitative study, in which participants were selected randomly. The sample was stratified by cohort, by geography (using a rough north/south divide⁵), and by mode of Initial Ministerial Education (IME) Phase I, which is a key interest of the Ministry Council. A total of 85 ordinands and clergy spanning 35 dioceses took part in the qualitative project, key characteristics of whom are shown below.

Table 1.1 Participants by cohort and gender

	Male	Female	Total
2006 (ordained)	5	9	14
2011 (ordained)	10	8	18
2015 (ordained)	11	15	26
2016 (started training)	10	17	27
Total	36	49	85

⁴ Findings are reported in L. Graveling & O. Cara (2017), *Mapping the Wellbeing of Church of England Clergy and Ordinands*, Panel Survey Wave 1 Report, Ministry Division, Archbishops' Council.

⁵ York and Canterbury provinces were not used as the basis for the north/south stratification because of their different sizes. North/South stratification ensured geographical representation rather than being used as a category of analysis.

Table 1.2 Participants by cohort and mode of training

	Residential	Part-time non-residential	Full-time non-residential	Total
2006 (ordained)	7	7	-	14
2011 (ordained)	8	9	1	18
2015 (ordained)	8	9	9	26
2016 (started training)	9	9	9	27
Total	33	34	18	85

Note: Very few full-time non-residential (previously known as context-based) ordinands entered training before 2011, therefore this category is mostly relevant for the two most recent cohorts.

The 27 ordinands taking part in the study are evenly spread between residential, part-time non-residential and full-time non-residential (henceforth in this report context-based or contextual) modes of training. This split conceals a variety of situations, illustrating the diversity of students found within theological education institutions (TEIs).⁶

Method

The primary method of data collection was focus groups. To avoid bias towards those in urban areas or working similar hours, individual interviews were offered to participants unable to attend groups, resulting in a total of 20 groups of between two and five participants and 22 face-to-face or telephone interviews, conducted between October and December 2017. The data collection was shared by two researchers⁷ and arranged to suit the diaries and locations of the participants.

The research drew on participatory techniques, where participants were invited to map on concentric circles each aspect of their current wellbeing, along axes ranging from excellent (in the centre) to very poor (on the outer edge) (see Fig. 1.1). The resulting conversation in each group and interview was recorded and transcribed for analysis.⁸ Transcripts were anonymised and then coded and analysed using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. A framework analysis was employed to allow a person-by-person comparison between the different domains of wellbeing.

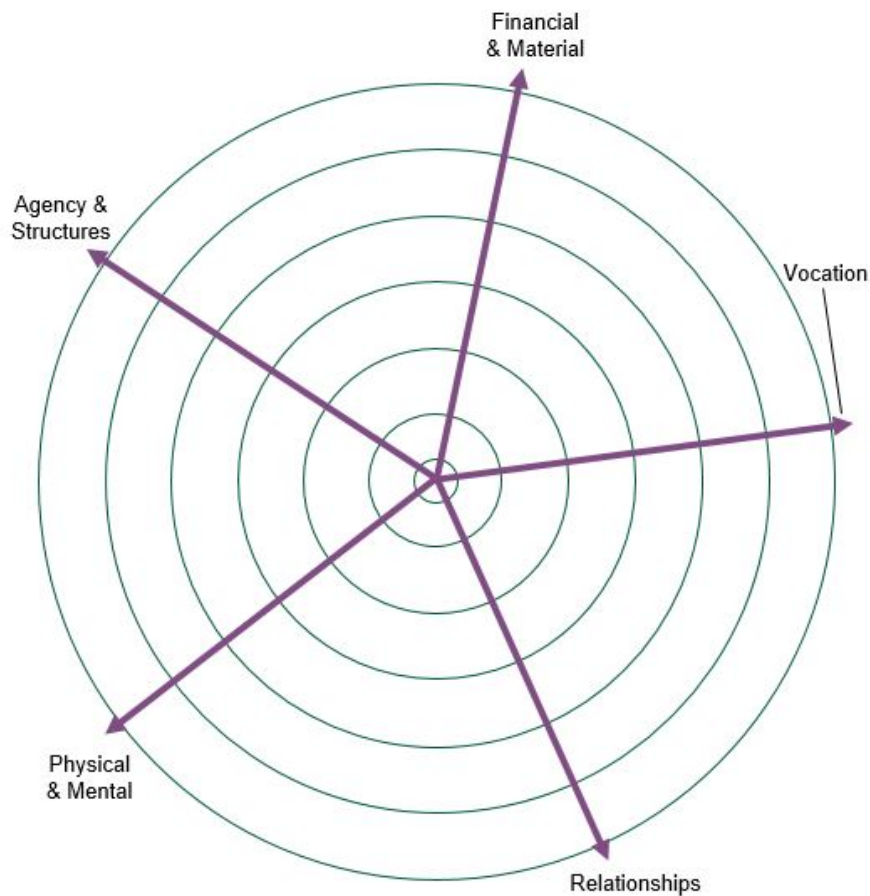
The four cohorts in the *Living Ministry* research were selected to include people at different stages of their journeys through ordained ministry. The most recent cohort, those who entered IME Phase I in 2016, were all ordinands at the time of this study. Because ordinands' circumstances are vastly different from ordained ministers, we have presented their experiences separately in this report. The ordained cohorts include some who are currently curates (ordained in 2015), some in their first post after curacy (most of those ordained in 2011), and some who have a few more years' clerical experience and may have moved on to further posts (those ordained in 2006). Differences between the cohorts are indicated in the analysis.

⁶ See Graveling, L. (2016), *Vocational Pathways: Perspectives from Initial Ministerial Education Phase I*, Ministry Division, Archbishops' Council.

⁷ Thanks to Dr Naomi Maynard, who conducted half of the interviews and focus groups.

⁸ Given their subjective nature, the completed wellbeing maps themselves were not used for comparative analysis.

Figure 1.1 Living Ministry wellbeing map



Limitations

Discussions of wellbeing inevitably involve personal and, in some cases, highly sensitive information. We are deeply grateful to all the participants in this study who were willing to share their stories and we recognise the trust implicit in so doing. While the data themselves have been anonymised, with names and information such as names of places, churches, dioceses and institutions removed, some of the accounts themselves are unique enough in a world as small as the Church of England potentially to identify participants. For this reason, great care has been taken to maintain the confidentiality of those who have taken part in the research, including refraining from telling any individual's story as a coherent whole. Specific incidents or characteristics that may allow a participant to be identified have been omitted unless express permission of the participant to include them has been received. Where individuals are referred to in quotations by initials, these bear no relation to the person's name.

Throughout this study conversations have been extremely wide-ranging, covering the full breadth of issues relating to personal flourishing. For the purposes of this report it has not been possible to include every experience or perspective expressed: analysis has been limited to experiences of the participants themselves (rather than including references to stories of other people). The experiences portrayed here are necessarily self-reported and represent the perspectives of the participants: other people, such as spouses, colleagues and parishioners, will have different perspectives which we are unable to present in this report. Some of these have been represented elsewhere; however, due to limits of time and space this reports restricts itself to the empirical *Living Ministry* data and does not attempt to make connections with wider literature.

We are also aware that 85 participants, while a large number for a study of this nature, cannot be representative of the current population of 20,000 active clergy (particularly as they are drawn from

four relatively recent cohorts). There is inevitably a focus on parish clergy, given that these roles make up the vast majority of our participants. No one was obliged to take part in the research, therefore there is an element of self-selection within the sample frame which could bias towards clergy who have more time to spare and/or towards clergy who feel they have a particular issue to raise. The findings should therefore be read in the context of the Wave I survey report, which finds that across all domains the majority of clergy report positive levels of wellbeing. The value of qualitative research lies in contextualising rather than generalising experience, and the following analysis seeks to understand better the complexity of the processes, dynamics and relationships that shape the wellbeing of clergy and ordinands. Individual experiences and sentiments expressed or referred to in the report should not, therefore, be understood as representing all or even the majority of clergy, although deeper patterns and dynamics identified may be more widely applied. As part of the first wave of a longitudinal study, this report represents the current or recent experience of the participants: developments over time will be explored as the project progresses through future waves. Similar to the Wave I survey, the broad aim of this report is to map out the range of experiences of clergy in relation to wellbeing and to point to areas worthy of further attention. Each domain is addressed in turn, considering first the accounts of the ordinands and then those of the ordained ministers.

4. Financial & material wellbeing

Ordinands

The 27 ordinands taking part in this study have diverse personal circumstances. Most participants report managing well financially; however, discussions reveal a number of pressures and tensions. All the ordinands in this study entered training before the introduction of the Resourcing Ministerial Education (RME) funding measures, which particularly affects the context-based students, whose funding from 2017 is being brought into line with full-time residential training.

Tensions around financial and material wellbeing fall into two related categories: the struggle, for some, to manage financially on their income; and the negotiation of structures and processes shaping funding. Not all ordinands struggle financially: only two of the 27 in this sample describe severe concerns regarding their finances. Of these two, the reasons for financial difficulty differ but both resonate to varying degrees with experiences of other participants in similar situations.

Change and continuity

Financial wellbeing is a subjective concept, constructed not only by absolute levels of income in relation to expenditure, but also by experiences, attitudes and expectations. For most ordinands, entering training entails a change in financial circumstance, usually a drop in income. Some stop work altogether to become full-time students, while others reduce their working hours in order to study part-time. In most cases the drop in income has been calculated and accepted in advance, with ordinands acknowledging that IME I is a transitional phase normally entailing a reduction in living standards:

It was never going to be amazing, you know, coming here I didn't come in thinking I was going to be able to keep up my same sort of lifestyle as before. (Male, residential)

The least impact on financial wellbeing is experienced by those who are able to maintain some continuity in their living standards on entering training, regardless of their income in absolute terms. This includes (usually non-residential) participants who started training in retirement, maintaining their pension drawings (one female participant reported an increase in household income, having stopped work several years earlier and only recently begun to draw her pension); those (non-residential students) who retain an adequate salary even after a reduction in working hours; those who were already on a low income before starting their training; and those whose main household income is their partner's.

Problems arise where expectations are not met, changes in lifestyle are not fully anticipated, or unexpected changes occur or costs are incurred. For example, when income remains constant, rent may increase or household changes may affect living standards: sometimes for the better, as for a residential ordinand who appreciated the move out of college halls and into a house on getting married, and sometimes for the worse, expressed by a context-based ordinand whose family has outgrown their house faster than she expected. Several participants describe using up savings and having little for contingencies such as car break-downs:

I think actually [the Church has] probably got it bang on that that is what you need to live on, because I can live on that, but it is so tight that anything extra that comes up, you've got no way of doing anything. (Male, context-based)

Non-residential ordinands juggling study and work may be faced with enormous tensions between money, time and health. They are particularly affected by training-related changes, as in the case of one who switched course, resulting in training taking up more of her time and obliging her to give up one of her jobs; or another who regularly struggles to rearrange clients following short notice of training arrangements.

Families

Partners and families both affect and are affected by ordinands' financial and material wellbeing. In some cases a move to theological college may entail uprooting the whole family, although none of the ordinands in this study are in this position (the only residential participant with children at home commutes weekly to college). On the other hand, a move across the country to college (particularly for single students) can mean expensive travel to visit friends and family. Where there is a drop in income the impact is on the entire household, potentially affecting children's as well as parents' lifestyles. One non-residential participant took on a part-time job in order to maintain her family's standard of living:

You don't have money to go out for meals. You don't have money to take your children to the cinema. ... So, you know the fact that I can say 'yes, you can still do [extra-curricular activities],' you know, was really important for me.

All but two of the ordinands in this study are married or in a civil partnership. While none of the participants is fully supported by their partner with no personal income or maintenance grant, about two thirds are reliant to some extent on income from their partner. Some of the participants mention the burden this represents: in the words of one (contextual) ordinand who has drastically reduced her own working hours, 'I'm fortunate he's working, but then it is the strain that is put on him then to say okay, I'm supporting you through this.' Ordinands who receive a maintenance grant are aware that any increases in their partner's salary will result in a corresponding decrease in their grant:

the assessment made against your wife's or husband's income does kind of cause some issues both personally and in relationships in the sense that if my wife gets a pay-rise for working hard ... I will just get less money from the diocese and we will see no benefit at all. (Residential)

While neither of the participants married to ordained ministers (in both cases women whose husbands are retired or about to retire) report financial problems, ordinands whose partners are also training for ordination face particular complications regarding their funding. Two of the participants (one residential and one contextual) are in this situation and both describe difficulties in establishing their funding allowance:

we found it quite stressful knowing, when we were trying to plan for finance, because there is no sort of – this is what you do when you have two ordinands who are in a partnership or who are married, there's no sort of national or diocesan like plan for that situation. (Female, residential)

Both participants report sharing a single maintenance grant with their partner, with implications not only for their finances but also for their sense of security within the Church of England, including concerns regarding future stipends and family policies. In the words of one, 'I think the sense I get from that is, you're not really valued'.

Organisation

Funding for ordinand couples is a specific and numerically relatively small (although probably increasing) issue about which there appears to be some confusion, leading to anxiety and potential financial hardship on the part of the ordinands concerned. Participants mention other, more widespread, structural issues which also cause stress regarding finances, including confusing funding application forms (especially for married ordinands), lack of clarity over what can and cannot be claimed, and variation between dioceses in levels of financial support provided. The latter is particularly noted by residential and context-based ordinands studying among students from a range of dioceses, for example:

So, you ring them up ... and I go, 'car's broken.' 'No can't help you.' And then a friend from [a different diocese], her car breaks, 'have £1,000.' You just, it's not right. Why because she's

in [diocese] does she get help? We're in [diocese], we don't. ...[A]nd when you're living together that is made so obvious. (Female, residential)

For the contextual students in this study, inconsistency is apparent on an individual as well as a diocesan level, given that, up until 2017, funding and/or accommodation were partly dependent on the context church. 2017 marks the beginning of a transition period to bringing full-time non-residential training into line with full-time residential training.

Some ordinands have experienced delays in grant payments or short notice of funding decisions, causing anxiety and budgeting problems. Ordinands with low incomes and little in the way of savings also report cash-flow difficulties at moments of outlay for regular (usually travel) or contingency expenses for which they know they will be reimbursed. One context-based student described having

to pay it with money you haven't got and then claim it back, which then takes five, six weeks, so you are living really, really exceptionally tight for six weeks, from borrowing money off family to survive. (Male)

Ordained ministers

In the panel survey from which this sample is drawn, 80% of ordained ministers reported that financially they were doing all right or living comfortably, while 7% reported finding it very or quite difficult.⁹ As with ordinands, ordained participants in the qualitative study present a mixed picture of financial wellbeing, ranging from those who continually struggle to make ends meet through to those who never have to think about money. Multiple factors influence financial wellbeing, including age, previous financial situation, present post and remuneration, marital/family status and household income. Clergy are affected not only by national and diocesan church policies regarding remuneration, retirement and accommodation, but also, along with the rest of the population, by government policies in areas such as pensions, savings and tax credits. Consequently, participants in this study describe being financially and materially hindered by both church and secular structures, but also drawing on both for strategies to enable their own survival and flourishing, and that of their ministries.

Self-supporting and stipendiary ministers

Participants in the study have variable access to a range of income streams, including remuneration for their ministry (usually a stipend but for some a salary); earnings from other employment (recognising that the line between ministry and 'other' employment may be blurred or non-existent); pensions; income from a partner; rent from property; tax credits; and lodgers. They may also be able to draw on other financial resources such as savings, loans and credit cards. Regarding remuneration, clergy can be divided into two groups: those who receive a stipend to enable their ministry and those whose ministry is supported by other means, often paid employment, a pension or the income of a partner. We will follow convention and refer to 'stipendiary ministers' (SMs) and 'self-supporting ministers' (SSMs), while recognising that, for the latter, the support may in reality be from another person. This category generally also includes 'House for Duty' priests and ordained local ministers (OLMs). Some participants straddle both categories, for example those who are paid as chaplains while also performing self-supporting ministry in a parish.

The terms 'stipendiary' and 'self-supporting' technically only refer to a priest's remuneration. They are, however, often incorrectly conflated with the categories of 'Assistant' and 'Incumbent,' which refer to the office inhabited by a priest. While the majority of self-supporting priests are in assistant roles and the majority of stipendiary priests have incumbent status, this is not always the case. Two of the self-supporting priests in this study occupy incumbent (or priest-in-charge) roles and both

⁹ Graveling, L. & O. Cara (2017), *Mapping the Wellbeing of Church of England Clergy and Ordinands*, Living Ministry Panel Survey Wave 1 Report, Ministry Division, Archbishops' Council, p.42.

describe the label of self-supporting as problematic insofar as it shapes their treatment by the diocese and other clergy (see the sections below on relationships and participation).

While there is variation among as well as between these two groups of stipendiary and self-supporting ministers, evidence from this study supports earlier quantitative findings that SSMs are more likely than SMs to report high levels of financial wellbeing.¹⁰ All our SSM participants entered ordained ministry in their mid-forties or later, most having already established some level of financial security, whether through current employment, savings from previous employment, completing mortgage repayments, pension savings or the support of a partner, although the level of this varies enormously and some talk about 'managing' rather than living in comfort. Some SSMs, however, do struggle financially, one, for example, explaining that her salary is not enough to pay off previous debt accumulated following redundancy as well as to run a car: 'I did ask about expenses when I was walking because I was getting through shoes basically. And they said no, there's no, you can't claim for shoe leather' (female, 2015 cohort).

The SSMs who report financial difficulties tend to be those who had originally hoped to be in stipendiary ministry and had either taken a self-supporting role because of personal circumstances or difficulties finding a job, or describe being recommended for self-supporting ministry against their wishes. Even where a move to self-supporting ministry does not cause financial hardship, conflation with assistant ministry and diocesan structures treating stipendiary and self-supporting ministers differently can provoke tensions, as expressed by a priest-in-charge who took a self-supporting role due to family circumstances: 'I thought I was offering myself to lead a church, not to be put in a box that says volunteer' (female, 2011 cohort). On the other hand, for those who chose it from the beginning, self-supporting ministry can be liberating rather than constraining:

I quite like the fact that I'm not paid, probably because I am a retired person and I have an income which pays our bills and gives us enough to have some fun with. Because I feel that gives me the autonomy to say I'm not doing that. Not that I often say I'm not doing that, but I can. So, yes, it was my choice as well. It was my choice to do this. This is my service and yes, I like the fact that I'm not paid. (Female OLM, 2015 cohort)

Money (and its absence) therefore carries symbolic as well as transactional value, for both stipendiary and self-supporting ministers. The purpose of a stipend is to enable one to carry out one's ministry rather than to assign monetary value to a role, and few participants make direct comparisons between clergy stipend rates and salaries of other professions. However, this does not preclude clergy from understanding how much they are valued and cared for partly in terms of financial remuneration, whether in the form of a stipend or reimbursement of expenses. Several participants express a sense of being exploited in relation to time and workload pressures: in the words of an SSM, 'there has to be a balance and a give somewhere, rather than just taking and taking and taking' (male, 2006 cohort), or an OLM experiencing mounting demands from her church and diocese: 'Don't get me wrong, of course I'm not in it for the money. It is just this being asked to do more and more' (female, 2015 cohort). Likewise, a stipendiary curate argues,

[W]e all use our own computers and use our own things... We are the ones who provide everything. ... [T]he church may well sit there and say well that's a good wage, however if you are realistic, the amount of hours that you actually do per week, ... we're paid well below minimum wage. ... [I]t is about understanding that it's a vocation as opposed to a job, but it's also, from other people who are looking at money, understanding the pressures it puts on those who are receiving. (Male, 2015 cohort)

Whether or not the claim regarding the minimum wage is realistic (others argue that the clergy remuneration package including stipend, housing and other elements such as council tax and water rates is very reasonable), the issue here is the sense of a lack of concern by the Church for the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

pressures placed on and sacrifices made by its clergy. This is not the perspective of all the participants, as will emerge later; however, where such a feeling exists, it is often evident at least in part in discourses around money.

Living costs

As noted when discussing the experiences of ordinands, entering ordained ministry before drawing a pension often entails a change in income, both for stipendiary ministers who (or whose partners) have left previous jobs or study and for self-supporting ministers who are working reduced hours in their paid employment. This change is acknowledged by participants in each of the cohorts but mentioned especially by the curates, for whom it is more recent. While several participants have experienced a cut in income, this is most often described in positive or neutral terms: either their income remained high enough to live comfortably or their previous income had provided financial security in their current circumstances. Two participants described their cut in income as beneficial to their household:

we've gone from sort of a healthy six figure salary down to stipend, and actually I think we're better now than we were then ... I think because what we've realised as a family is we don't need to have the same level of lifestyle. You know, having lots and lots of money to spend, we wasted lots of money and actually we don't need it. (Female, 2015 cohort)

Others, however, find a cut in income difficult. One participant explains how her 'vast' working hours as a full-time stipendiary curate oblige her husband to limit his number of working hours and mean that as a family with two children 'we are just skint all the time ... it was so much easier when we both worked [in secular jobs]' (2015 cohort). In contrast, particularly for those who trained straight from university or previously worked in church or Church Army roles, entering stipendiary ministry represented an increase or continuity in income level, although they are also less likely to have financial reserves.

Financial wellbeing is experienced as relative not only to one's own previous circumstances, but also to other people. Clergy in this study occasionally compare themselves with friends and peers who are not ordained: 'I met up with a friend in the summer and he was talking about how much money he earned' (male SM curate, first job after university). A more common comparison is with other clergy:

as a single person, and I own a property from which I get a rent, I'm, by clergy standards anyway, exceptionally well off. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

I feel for clergy that struggle from day to day, I really do. And actually I feel guilty to be honest with you. (Male SSM with comfortable income, 2006 cohort)

A lot of people who work in our clergy team had [well-paid] careers ... beforehand and have a certain level of comfort. ... I was [in my early twenties] when I was ordained and so like no savings, no back-up plan, nothing. (Male SM curate)

Most day-to-day contact, however, is with people in their congregations and parishes, and many clergy are aware of their relative income status, especially in areas of extreme deprivation ('we live in a parish where my stipend is higher than most people's income' (male, 2011 cohort)) or wealth:

We are quite aware of finances in ways that – we live in a very affluent parish – other people who live in the parish wouldn't think twice about. Some of them go on skiing holidays together and they all drive Range Rovers and have lots of cars and things like that. In one sense that puts us outside of some of the social things that they might do and they might look down on us in certain ways because we just don't have the things that other people might have. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Location also, of course, contributes to the cost and therefore standard of living. Participants mention a range of factors in relation to this, including childcare, car insurance (an example of higher costs in

less wealthy areas), bills and the cost of employing cleaners and gardeners. House and rental prices are relevant to SMs who own property or, in the case of one chaplain, who top up their housing allowance to afford accommodation suitable for the needs of their family, as well as for SSMs who provide their own housing (although the cost of housing is not mentioned by any SSM participants).

Other common reference points used by participants to measure their financial wellbeing include the ability to have meals out, take holidays (see the section on physical and mental wellbeing for discussion of the importance of time away from the parish) and pay for children's extra-curricular activities, along with the capacity to save money, invest in property and pay into a pension fund. Saving can be understood as the inverse of spending (i.e. where not spending money is counted as a saving), and *vice versa*, so there are clear trade-offs between some of these costs. Clergy, like other people, have varying demands on their finances and employ a range of strategies to meet their financial and material needs and preferences. While some participants recall college seminars on specific issues such as tax, others describe feeling unprepared to handle the financial implications of ministry, one commenting that he only knew what to expect from 'a handful of friends who'd started ministry already who were absolutely broke' (male SM, 2011 cohort), and another remarking,

nobody told us when we were in college, you know, out of your stipend ... if you are to survive in a busy parish you will have to pay for other people to do things that, to be frank, you do not have the time or energy to do. (Male SM 2006; see section on physical and mental wellbeing for discussion of clergy workload.)

For stipendiary ministers, one of the key factors determining pressure on the stipend is their family situation. Single stipendiary clergy describe a range of experiences relating to financial wellbeing. While most, with no dependants, are able to manage fairly well on their stipend on a day-to-day basis, some express concern regarding retirement provision (see below). Those who struggle financially in the short term refer to unforeseen expenses, for example nursing home fees for elderly parents or costs of employing cleaners, gardeners and administrators.

As with ordinands, immediate families of clergy both affect and are affected by the finances of ordained ministry. While clergy with families may incur costs relating to children (older children of university age and beyond as well as younger children living at home), where a household is able to combine a full-time stipend with a full-time salary (normally from a partner), finances are likely to be healthy. Because of persisting gendered working patterns and pay gaps both within and without the Church which disadvantage women (for example, the privileging of men's careers over women's), married female clergy are more likely than their male counterparts to be in this situation,¹¹ which may increase overall household income while reducing women's relative power within the household. However, the presence of an additional income does not necessarily indicate financial and material comfort. Where the cost (or standard) of living is high, or where the second income is low, clergy may still report low levels of financial wellbeing, as in the case of the female SM referred to above, whose husband reduced his working hours to accommodate her ministerial role. On the other hand, while some clergy (mostly men) with partners who are not in paid employment do report living comfortably, all these are able to draw on some other resource such as rental income or financial reserves. Participants also mention applying to charities for specific expenses, whether one-off, such as a holiday, or longer-term, such as school fees.

Two SMs (both male) have partners who are unable to work because of disability, causing both pressure on day-to-day finances ('because actually being disabled is quite expensive' (2011 cohort)) and concern for the future ('there isn't the money I could ever put by from my wage to set something up for the future. ...I'm hoping and praying that I die in service because [my partner] will get some money then.' (2015 cohort)). One of these participants notes that changes to government disability

¹¹ In this study, 15 stipendiary women mention income from husbands, two of whom work part-time, while 10 men mention income from wives, three described as very low. Six stipendiary men have spouses who are not in paid employment, compared with only one woman.

benefits mean they are likely to lose their car, a concern about recent welfare reforms that is shared by clergy with dependent children. At least two of our ordained participants mention relying on tax credits to supplement their stipend, one noting, 'that is a second source of income for us as a family' (male SM, 2011 cohort). Another describes losing about £200 per month following a reduction to the threshold on child tax credit: 'by reducing the threshold, our income is okay as a stipend, but as soon as you put the income from the rented property into it, that has taken us over the threshold' (male SM, 2006).

While financial strain can add stress to family relationships, few stipendiary participants discuss this, although one describes the devastating financial impact of a difficult divorce. More frequently mentioned is the need on the part of SSMs (usually women) to manage the expectations of their partners, who support them financially. Three comment that their husbands are uncomfortable with them working unremunerated, either out of principle or because of the impact on family finances.

Future financial and material wellbeing

Future financial security is a common cause of anxiety among certain groups of ordained ministers. Concerns fall into three broad categories: job security; retirement; and short-term cash flow and contingencies.

Few stipendiary participants express concern about job security ('It's really hard to get rid of a vicar, really hard, you have to be spectacularly rubbish' (female, 2011 cohort)), even those ordained in 2015, whose roles as curates are time-limited. Only one curate mentions anxiety in this area from a financial or material perspective, describing being informed by his diocesan Director of Ministry, "if you've not found a job by June we will stop paying you and we will evict you from your house." You know, as blunt as that.' The curates in this study were, at the point of data collection, just over two years into role, so perhaps not quite yet feeling pressure to find their next job. Some of the 2011 cohort, however, recall the transition between curacy and their next role as feeling like, in the words of one, 'looking over a cliff' (female, 2011 cohort). One describes being unemployed for several months following late advice from his diocese to start looking for a post, whilst another, also with young children, felt entirely unsupported by his diocese: 'at the end of that curacy, the minute it ended, I was actually left, I felt really abandoned, and we were just, I was told to leave the diocese, we were evicted.' The transition from curacy into incumbency is, as we shall see later, a moment of extreme vulnerability, given that stipendiary curates are not only dependent on their diocese for income and housing, but also rely on senior clergy for deployment advice and permission to move on.

Concern regarding long-term financial security is widespread. For stipendiary clergy, the main cause for concern as they look towards retirement is housing, given that most live in tied accommodation throughout their ordained ministry. Participants who already own a house recognise this as a blessing, both for short-term rental income (if it provides any) and for retirement provision: 'Long-term future ... we do have a property so I think we're lucky in that sense' (female SM, 2011 cohort). Property ownership, along with pensions and life insurance, is also explicitly recognised as providing security for family members: 'My wife needs [the house]. If I should fall under a bus tomorrow, she needs that to move into because she would be kicked out of the vicarage' (male SM, 2006 cohort). However, in this case, rental income from the house pushes the family over the recently reduced threshold for child tax credits (see above), thereby diminishing household income. Long-term security may therefore come at a cost in the short and medium term.

Those who do not own property, whether because they have never bought a house or because they sold property on entering ordained ministry, articulate a range of stances when discussing their situation, from considerable anxiety ('I am concerned about where I'm going to live and how I'm going to live and, you know, I think probably hitting 60 has sharpened that focus for me a bit' (female, 2006 cohort)) to insouciance ('I don't own a house either, don't worry about that' (female, 2015 cohort)). Age clearly plays a role here, with retirement a long way off for some participants although, given the

wider social discourses of insecurity surrounding younger generations, youth does not necessarily ease anxiety in this regard:

If I continue to work for the Church of England for the next 45 years, which is what I potentially could do, I would never, I don't think, really be able to afford a house until the very end. ... and I know that the whole country is in this state and it's basically a millennial thing that they won't be able to own their own home, but ... I feel a bit more pressure at the moment. (Female, 2015 cohort)

On the other hand, some older participants, especially those who were ordained later in life, acknowledge the relative financial security of their generation: 'I'm a baby-boomer. Final salary pension. Yes, we're fine, it's not a problem.' (Female OLM, 2015 cohort)

Clergy who do not have (or anticipate having) adequate financial or material resources of their own to support themselves and their families in the long term draw on a variety of strategies to build future provision. These include seeking independent financial advice (although, as one participant found, many advisors are not familiar with clergy finances), arranging private pensions and taking out life insurance. Some mention the possibility of taking a house-for-duty post as a last resort to ensure a home in retirement: 'your biggest fear is that you don't want to get to retirement and end up having to do a house for duty just so you've got somewhere to live, because that's not the right posture to be going into working within a parish' (female, 2015 cohort). Others anticipate relying on the Church's Housing Assistance for the Retired Ministry (CHARM) scheme, administered by the Church of England Pensions Board: 'I was a lot happier when I met a friend who has just retired and saw what the Church Commissioners did for him, because he didn't have a deposit for a house and that sort of thing and they sorted him out a little bungalow and so it did put my mind at rest a little bit' (male, 2011 cohort, mid-fifties).

One of the key tensions evident in discussions of long-term finances is the need for planning and security held alongside trust in God's provision. Emphasis on the latter is most evident in those more recently ordained:

We have no plan for afterwards and no financial security, and that's something that I think about from time to time and then I think God will provide, it's fine. (Male SM, mid-twenties, 2015 cohort)

I'll do what I can to sensibly plan but we have committed our lives to serving, so my hope is there'll be a back-up plan somewhere. (Female SM, mid-forties, 2015 cohort)

The tension is articulated by a priest-in-charge ordained in 2011:

That's difficult, because you want to trust God that he will look after you and your family in whatever the circumstances, but you have also got to be practical and think, is there something we can do, like pensions or other things that will help if and when it is needed? (Male SM)

Regarding short- and medium-term savings, participants in this study display a range of attitudes and strategies. Those with additional income streams or fewer outgoings may be able to save on a regular basis, and some assign a specific source of income to be saved, either for contingencies or as a longer-term investment such as towards a deposit for a house. Savings may of course be depleted by unexpected costs:

We do own a house and we get a small amount of money in rent which we've basically tried to save in case something goes wrong in the house. And then I've had to use what was there to put towards the car. (Female, 2015 curate)

Some participants choose not to save even when they can afford it ('we probably could save a bit but we're not' (female SM, 2011 cohort)), and there are trade-offs between savings and living standards:

I can't save much, because actually the cost of living in [city] is quite high ... I have a fairly good quality of life, it's not just surviving, like I go on holiday and you know I eat out and see friends. (Female, 2015 cohort)

Similar to ordinands, several stipendiary clergy describe living at the limits of their financial capacity and having little, if anything, left to save for contingencies ('it's a challenge to save for the future and to be adequately prepared for crises and emergencies' (male, 2011 cohort)). Some of these have financial reserves in place from previous careers or other sources such as inheritances, and rely on these in times of crisis. Others seek emergency funds from other sources, including charities such as Sons & Friends of the Clergy, credit cards and diocesan discretionary funds. Most worrying are those whose monthly or annual expenditure exceeds their income, and who therefore find themselves dipping into savings on a regular basis to top up their living costs:

If it wasn't for the fact that my mum died and left us some money, we would be struggling without any doubt whatsoever, because the heating bills alone are huge. ... Yeah, every month, yeah. It tops it up all the time. (Female, 2011 cohort)

Those in this situation who do not have access to savings may find themselves in debt. While there is little evidence of this among the participants in this study, with just two ordained ministers mentioning relying regularly on credit cards, no extensive research has been undertaken in this area since the 2001 report *Generosity and Sacrifice* which found that nearly a third of clergy were in debt.¹²

Housing

More than half of our participants, including almost all the stipendiary clergy in parish ministry, live in housing tied to their post (three stipendiary curates live in their own homes and two in their partner's vicarage). Experiences of this vary enormously. Most commonly, clergy appreciate the size and relative value of their home, but bemoan the high costs of heating and maintaining it: 'I live in a lovely house, in a lovely village so you know, that's lovely, but it's enormous and it costs me an arm and a leg to keep to a temperature' (female SM, 2006 cohort). For at least one participant, the cost of heating her house is prohibitive. She describes 'sit[ting] in my office with my coat on and my gloves on and I've got a hot water bottle on my lap because I don't want to put the heating on just for me' (female SM, 2015 cohort).

In most cases general maintenance of tied housing is the responsibility of the diocese, which varies in quality and efficiency ('everything's done as cheap as possible' (female, 2006 cohort); 'the diocese look after the property well and do a good job' (male, 2015 cohort)). Curates are sometimes housed in accommodation rented by either the diocese or the local church, which may vary in quality and is less likely to conform to 'Green Book' guidelines. Depending on budgets this may work in the interests of the curate, but can also leave her/him vulnerable to substandard or inappropriate accommodation and to evictions by landlords when houses are sold. Several participants describe experiencing this during curacy, one having to move his family four times.

As well as heating costs, housing can affect finances in other ways. Some participants employ cleaners in order to ease the pressure on their time and energy, while those with a housing allowance rather than a tied house may choose to top up the rent from their own pocket to allow them to live in a slightly bigger home or more convenient location. On the other hand, living in tied accommodation provides clergy in possession of property with the opportunity to rent out their own home, which in most cases provides a small net income.

Tied housing has implications beyond the financial. Vicarages are public as well as private spaces in more than one way. Firstly, houses are only in the possession of the ordained minister for as long as

¹² Church of England (2001), *Generosity and Sacrifice: The Results of the Clergy Stipends Survey*, Church House Publishing.

they remain in post (and, for curates, not technically in their possession at all), contributing to a sense of dislocation and rootlessness: 'you make your home in the place that you live in, which is not the same as living in your own home' (female, 2011 cohort). This may manifest itself in frustration with lack of control over housing decisions ('I would not put up with that quality of work if it was my house' (female, 2006 cohort), but clergy may also find their expectations and values change, as expressed by a female participant:

I think I've come from, well when I was much younger, kind of really caring about my house and my environment and wanting it to be just so. So now I live in a place that is covered in dirty woodchip ... And then you think, does it really matter? There's a sort of freedom there now, that ... it would have mattered to me 15 years ago, but now I just think, hey, there are people come in for other things, not to see how beautifully I plump my cushions.

Secondly, and as a consequence of this alongside the public nature of the ordained minister's role (whereby both the house and the person themselves are, in a sense, 'owned' by the church), vicarages are often partly used and occupied by parishioners, variously as meeting, office or pastoral space. This will be discussed further later in the report; however, it is important to note here the implications of this for finances ('the administrator ... works in my house ... so the heating is on most of the day' (female, 2006 cohort)); for privacy ('having to say to [my husband] there's somebody in the house today' (female, 2006 cohort)); and for security ('this guy would keep arriving on my doorstep' (female, 2006 cohort)).

Ministry context

As well as spatial boundaries, ordained ministers, and particularly those in parochial roles, have to negotiate financial boundaries with their parish. The relationship between the minister's finances and the local church has two key interrelated aspects: claiming expenses and giving to the church. First, several participants comment on the extent to which the church provides for their ministry expenses, including travel, retreats, worship materials and church events. The distinction between personal and ministry expense is blurred and, where expenses are not covered, ministry can be directly affected, as in the example of the curate we met previously who is unable to afford a car: 'It's a bit difficult - when I was doing a pastoral visit and they came to pick me up and at the end they took me home again, that was a bit awkward really' (female SSM).

The way participants position themselves in discussions about expenses decisions varies by cohort, reflecting perceptions of power and responsibility. Thus, most of the curates discuss expenses in terms of what the church will allow them to claim for:

The parish says, 'go to your spiritual director, go on retreat' and I say, 'well are you going to help with the funding of that?' 'No.' I get the Church Times, ... they're not going to contribute towards that. (Female SSM, 2015 cohort)

I've got ... parishes that pay my expenses without asking questions. (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

On the other hand, incumbents are more likely to frame discussions about claiming expenses in terms of their own decision-making:

The other thing is that our parish is in deficit by £20,000 every year. Some of the things that I ought to claim as expenses I don't necessarily claim, because we give financially to the church but I also see that as part of my giving. ... I always make sure I tell everyone else to make sure they put their expenses in, but it is different when you feel responsible and are trying to cut corners in every place you can to make sure things work. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

This example illustrates the interrelatedness of, firstly, giving and expenses, where not claiming expenses is a form of giving to the church, and, secondly, the minister's finances and those of the church. Whereas the curates quoted above, who have relatively low levels of power within the church,

frame their discussion in a discourse of rights (what the church should/does provide), this incumbent expresses his position in terms of responsibilities and sacrifice (what he should/does provide for the church). Several participants echo the feeling of personal responsibility towards their church's financial situation, actively expressed through decisions not to claim expenses and to give financially to the church. Personal funding of church-related costs such as administrators' wages to ease workload is also mentioned in relation to limited parish budgets. Awareness that the stipend is funded at least in part through congregational contributions to parish share can heighten the sense of responsibility, as articulated by an incumbent shortly to move post:

I'm very conscious, because I'm moving on, ... that small church is expected to find the equivalent of a stipend. ... Now I'm also aware that when I move they will lose my planned giving which, you know, I am the biggest giver in the church ... And that's going to have a drastic effect on them, and it's a real sort of like difficult dilemma, you know. ... [P]articularly when you are the incumbent in a stipendiary position you are always aware, you know, of the burden that it is upon the churches. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

Role (e.g. curate or incumbent) is not the only contributing factor to levels of agency and understandings of rights and responsibilities. The two curates who mention choosing not to claim expenses both have full-time jobs alongside their (self-supporting) ministry, which they describe as well-paid. They therefore have greater agency in making decisions about their giving and expenses than those who are in financial need. It may also be the case that their sense of identity is less focussed on the church than clergy who are in full-time ministry or who work part-time in order to self-support their vocation, allowing them greater independence.

Summary: financial & material wellbeing

While the majority of clergy and ordinands in the *Living Ministry* panel survey report high or adequate levels of financial and material wellbeing, a detailed investigation of the meanings and dynamics in this area reveals a more complex picture. Financial and material wellbeing does not simply consist in achieving a certain absolute level of income or living standard, but is bound up in questions of identity and power and negotiated across multiple domains. It is determined by diverse interrelating factors, such as socio-economic background, age, gender, family composition, household income, stage of ministry, role, remuneration, diocese, mode of training, context of ministry, housing costs, theology, government policy, lifestyle choices and personal circumstance. To maximise their wellbeing, ordinands and clergy combine a range of resources and strategies, including budgeting, savings, inheritance money, property, lodgers, charities, family assistance, additional household income, diocesan funds, credit cards, government benefits, insurance, expenses claims, dual roles, additional work or business, pensions and, of course, the stipend or salary.

Expectations are crucial. Levels of reported financial and material wellbeing for ordinands and clergy alike are partly determined not only by the extent to which their finances change on entering training or ordained ministry, but also by the extent to which they expect them to change and are reconciled to this. While those who maintain continuity with previous living standards experience the least impact on this aspect of wellbeing, even a drop in income can be experienced as positive change. Unforeseen events and circumstances, on the other hand, can have serious financial implications.

Ordinands and clergy negotiate their financial and material wellbeing simultaneously across multiple domains, each representing different interests and requiring different interpretive frameworks. As well as their own interests, they negotiate and hold those of their families (nuclear and extended), involving both responsibility in providing and graciousness in receiving, in the context of close emotional relationships. Along with the rest of the population, ordinands and clergy navigate market and government politico-economic structures, including property, pensions, insurance, tax credits and benefits. The many faces of the Church (national, diocesan, TEI and local) entail administrative engagement for matters such as funding, expenses claims and housing issues; professional and

vocational responsibility; and the negotiation of boundaries between public and private as well as between person and institution. Cutting across all of these are moral and theological frameworks which inform each dilemma and decision.

The financial and material situations in which clergy and ordinands find themselves, and the ways in which they understand these situations, are shaped by levels of power and agency in the face of structures such as those listed above. Curacy, and especially the ending of curacy, emerges as a moment of particular vulnerability as the curate is extremely dependent on his or her diocese. Those in roles with little power, such as curates, are likely to interpret their position in terms of rights and may exercise agency by fixing boundaries around their duties, while those with greater levels of responsibility may draw more on discourses of sacrifice. For women, gendered social disadvantage (the privileging of men's careers) may paradoxically lead to better financial and material wellbeing, but at the cost of power within the household.

The symbolic value of money and the material is not to be underestimated. While money has practical use in covering living expenses and providing security, it also functions as a fundamental means through which we understand and assign value. The stipend is designed to avoid placing monetary value on ministerial labour; however, if value is not recognised and attributed in other ways, clergy – especially those who intended to be stipendiary but find themselves in self-supporting roles – are likely to fall back on monetary discourses, interpreting their lack of or insufficient remuneration to mean that they are not valued or cared for.

Strategies and approaches found helpful by Living Ministry participants

These are offered as an inexhaustive list with no comment on the value, wisdom or specific use of any item.

- Budgeting
- Saving
- Financial advice
- Life insurance
- Private pensions
- Claiming expenses
- Charities and trust funds
- Diocesan loans or gifts
- Support from family
- Lodgers
- Credit cards
- Government benefits and tax credits
- Wedding and funeral cover (SSMs)
- Extra paid work (ordinands)

5. Physical & mental wellbeing

Ordinands

In the area of physical and mental wellbeing, ordinands responding to the 2017 *Living Ministry* panel survey, from which the qualitative sample was drawn, reported high levels of general health: 92% indicated that, over the past 12 months, their health had on the whole been good or excellent. The qualitative findings are more mixed, which may reflect the passing of time between the two studies (from February in their first year of IME I to autumn in the second year), with the tiredness mentioned below increasing as ordinands progress further into their studies. It may also indicate a sample bias in the qualitative participants; however, more likely, it reflects participants thinking more deeply about the questions posed.

Mode of training

Ordinands mention distinctively different issues in relation to physical and mental wellbeing according to their mode of training. While time pressure and a high workload are common to all, the form they take varies. Residential students describe a lifestyle that is often physically inactive, especially when living on site, with heavy academic requirements, carbohydrate-rich food and little time for exercise: 'study is a sedentary lifestyle in many ways and not being able to control or have choices over your food, health-wise is a big issue as well' (female). Context-based students tend to be more physically active, constantly moving between college, church and home, although there is little mention of dedicated physical exercise. Insufficient time to spend on any of these areas is a common issue, and words like 'tired,' 'draining' and 'juggling' are frequently used, especially but not exclusively by women:

Mentally, yeah, I don't know, I'm tired, and it's tiring having to balance all those different and wear all those different hats, and sometimes I feel like I don't wear any of my hats particularly well, so, you know, church leader, ordinand, mother, wife, it's hard.

Boundaries are not always clear, and some contextual ordinands find the demands of their context church overwhelming or impinging on study time, either because they 'don't always like to say no' (female) or because they prioritise church issues:

this afternoon we were supposed to be in a lecture, and ... something pastoral cropped up, I got a text message so I went and made a phone call, and it's about a serious situation at church and so my mind was completely on something else. (Female)

Non-residential ordinands describe very different experiences of training depending on whether or not they hold employment alongside their ordination studies. Like the context-based ordinands, those who do find themselves juggling different elements of their lives, typically work, study and family: 'I've had to cut down on activities ... just to be able to cope with the combination of work, having a family—I have three children—and my studies' (female). This woman works half-time; others who maintain full-time jobs can find themselves pushed to, and sometimes beyond, their physical and/or mental limits. The potential implications of this are serious, including, among the seven participants with full- or part-time jobs: anxiety, depression, hospitalisation, burn-out, suspension of study and sick leave from work (in this case related mainly to the stresses of work rather than study). In the words of two ordinands at different colleges,

it's just constant work and study without rest and I have limited annual leave which virtually the entire lot had to go on study days so I've probably had, I don't know, five or six days off this year ... so I'm just drained, absolutely rinsed. (Male)

the workload is just frightening ... I [have been ill twice] which is very, very unlike me and all I can assume is that it's just workload and, you know, it's just such a range of expectations. You

want to do well in your essays, but there's a formation side of it as well and then there's the church side and managing various people's expectations back in your home church and then your family and your friends. (Female)

Non-residential ordinands without jobs may also struggle with time pressure from study combined with family commitments, especially if travel is involved:

I don't finish here until officially 5 but it's 4:30, but I'm going to have to say look I really need to leave at 4:10 because the cut off for after-school club, back over in [county] is 6pm and with traffic in [city], it just doesn't work and that's stress every week, to the point where I find myself exhausted. (Female)¹³

Those studying during retirement (three participants, all female) report lower levels of stress, with physical and mental problems tending to come from other sources, such as family crises, bereavement and specific health issues (sometimes age-related).

Participants training in all three modes mention the formational process in relation to their physical and mental health. This may be in response to academic theological challenges:

letting go of particular interpretations and constructs to find that God is still there behind it after all, which is which is great and I'm so, so glad that I've had that opportunity, but it was stressful and that had a physical effect (female, non-residential);

personal identity formation:

just naturally in the process of what people give up, what people have to let go of just to enter this, there is some form often of deconstruction which can leave them reeling and it's who takes them through that mentally, emotionally, and even perhaps physically. (Female, residential)

or learning to manage time pressure and establish healthy working practices:

it's keeping those boundaries where at work you can just walk away and think, okay, I'm done for the day. With ministry you can't do that so much, so you have to keep yourself quite self-disciplined and I think getting into that model now and that practice now will be really helpful. (Female, context-based).

How this is understood and experienced in relation to different modes of training has been explored in more detail in a previous study¹⁴, so we turn now to the things ordinands find helpful in supporting their physical and mental wellbeing.

Healthy patterns of living

First, participants describe employing self-care strategies to maintain a healthy lifestyle. While these may be *ad hoc*, the most beneficial and sustainable appear to be those built into routines, whether intentional ('Physically, what I've done is I've taken up jogging again and that I find a tremendous help' (female, non-residential)) or incidental ('walking in and out of college gives me some regular exercise' (male, residential)). As well as physical activity, participants variously mention trying to eat well (we have seen above that this can be a challenge given the lack of control over food in institutions); set aside time for rest and relaxation ('there are lots of things I could do on a Wednesday with the church and I don't because it's my day off and I protect that' (female, context-based)); and establish rhythms of prayer ('I do morning prayer every morning and that keeps me centred' (female, context-based)).

¹³ There may be gender implications here: all three of the male non-residential ordinands have full-time jobs (two also with children at home), while the women hold a mixture of part-time jobs, childcare responsibilities and retirement status.

¹⁴ Graveling, L. (2016), *Vocational Pathways: Perspectives from Initial Ministerial Education Phase I*, Ministry Division, Archbishops' Council.

However, drawing boundaries around time is not an easy task, as illustrated by one context-based ordinand:

with it being quite full on the training, with you having study full-time and a family, I feel like I don't always have time to do any exercise, or if I want to go swimming I'll think, oh well it is a study day and I should really be doing study, or it is a placement day, or it is my day off and I should really be spending it with the family. So there's all that juggling to do. (Female)

Some participants across all modes of training comment that managing time boundaries and routines was hardest in their first year of training,¹⁵ (as noted above, some recognising that learning to manage the various competing demands is part of the formational process):

the first year of training really I had no time for myself at all ... so I think September was a time to go, oh I made it through my first year, brilliant, how am I going to address that? And so I have done and physically I'm much better. (Female, context-based)

Others, however, have found the opposite, especially those (mostly residential ordinands) on two-year courses; those who have opted for particularly challenging courses of study; and context-based students who have become more and more involved in their context church.

Sources of support

As well as establishing or maintaining healthy patterns of living, ordinands describe drawing on a range of sources of support with regard to their physical and mental wellbeing. TEIs provide care and assistance at various levels, including flexibility and care in times of crisis:

everybody was very supportive and very understanding and I caught up as quickly as I could. I had extensions for things that needed to be handed in and indeed some members of the faculty have been personally extremely kind. (Male, non-residential, following a period of ill-health)

As well as pastoral care from tutors, ordinands from each of the three modes of training refer to chaplains within their college (one residential student regretting that her TEI had reduced the chaplain's time on site):

the chaplains are absolutely superb and so they have really, really helped me. ... I've gone to the same chaplain as well, so they know what happened last year and we can talk things through. (Male, context-based, following a family bereavement)

Confidentiality and freedom to speak honestly with chaplains are clearly important in the context of a close TEI community, with some ordinands feeling more comfortable with this than others:

[it's] made very clear in the induction that [chaplain] is independent of the staff. ... [T]here are very good boundaries here so I think you know where you're safe and where you're not to speak completely openly. (Female, non-residential)

I'm not sure, if I'm entirely honest with you, whether I would go to the chaplain. It's a little bit kind of close to home ... I mean you have to have the trust in that person, but it's kind of going in sitting next to them at lunch after you may have told them something really kind of quite personal. (Male, residential)

Spiritual direction is more commonly discussed, with 14 of the 27 ordinands mentioning drawing on this, either as a requirement of the college or diocese or initiated independently, sometimes since before ordination studies. As an ongoing relationship (rather than focussed around crisis or difficulty) independent from the TEI, this allows space to reflect on processes of vocational discernment,

¹⁵ At the time of the research participants were in the first term of their second year.

formation and discipleship, which are discussed in the section on spiritual and vocational wellbeing below.

Beyond the TEI itself, non-residential and context-based ordinands refer to their placement or context supervisor (along with congregations) as a key source of support, often encouraging and modelling boundaries such as protecting rest days.¹⁶ While for (full-time) context-based students, context churches are places to become more involved in ministry and take on new roles, (part-time) non-residential students are usually advised to step back at least partially from previous ministerial roles in order not to over-burden themselves: 'I was told don't pick stuff up because we're going to load enough on you. And I think that turned out to be extremely good advice' (male, non-residential).

Other relationships and networks, such as family, friends and fellow ordinands, also provide important support. These are considered in more depth later in the report, so here we will restrict ourselves to noting the implications of such relationships for physical and mental health. While family (both immediate and wider family) and friends can be a vital support, stress on these relationships can also contribute to health challenges, particularly for ordinands whose studies leave them geographically separate from such support networks, and those whose new commitments conflict with family time and responsibilities. Peer groups form a new community into which the ordinand enters, often carefully fostered by the TEI as a crucial element of formation. Although some residential students struggle with the intensity of these relationships, participants across the different modes of training comment on the value of this as a support network: 'the support of these guys, kind of praying and talking and listening and asking me how I'm doing, that's also just great' (male, context-based).

Some ordinands enter training with pre-existing health conditions. Three of our participants describe living with long-term depression and/or anxiety, dating from before they were recommended for training. In each case the TEI is described as supportive and the condition is managed through self-care, including, for example, medication, counselling and regular time off. One participant notes that she has had to take extra care to cope with the demands of training: 'I've not suffered from depression again since being here but I've been very aware of trying hard not to suffer from depression, so I think, yeah, it's been quite stressful' (female, residential), while another states, 'it relies on me being quite assertive and saying well I'm going to do this because that comes first and actually, you know, saying no to things that are going to make me ill' (female, residential).

Organisational structures

Finally, as well as lifestyle choices and personal support, ordinands' physical and mental wellbeing is affected by the organisational structures (diocesan, TEI and national church) within which they operate. We have already mentioned some aspects of this, such as formal pastoral care structures, workload and limited choice of food. Participants also refer to communications and administrative practices that add or ease pressure and anxiety. With respect to TEIs, organisational structures are key. While flexibility is appreciated, several participants on non-residential training pathways describe the impact on their health of short notice of deadlines or teaching modules, for example a woman who had 'stay[ed] up all night to get these assignments in,' the next day received an email informing her of a three-day course scheduled for her only free days before the start of term: 'That is what tipped me over the edge ... I had the physiological features of being burnt out.' A male ordinand working full-time alongside his studies notes that a major health-scare had hit him following a peak work period coinciding with being 'given a bunch of assignments with one or two weeks' notice,' and suggests the course was structured primarily to meet the needs of ordinands with few other commitments. This is not the case for all TEIs, one non-residential participant mentioning receiving notification of all deadlines a year in advance. Dioceses are mentioned less often, one participant noting that he was

¹⁶ See the IME I *Vocational Pathways* report (*ibid.*) for more detailed discussion of this, including examples of placements where ordinands are pressured to work beyond agreed limits.

reluctant to contact his diocese when struggling with a health issue (echoing stories of ordained ministers that we will hear later), but found them supportive and responsive when he did.

National structures may also affect ordinands' physical and mental wellbeing. We have noted in the previous section the anxiety caused by complicated funding or delayed payments. In other respects, the national church (usually represented by the Ministry Division) may be constrained by government legislation. For example, the timing of medical assessments at the point of transition from IME 1 to curacy rather than during the selection process for training can cause anxiety to ordinands: 'are suddenly the Church of England going to swing round and go, actually, you're not fit for role?' (female, residential). The move to IME 2 is largely handled by dioceses, and at the point of the research only two participants had their curacies confirmed. Some others report anxiety largely related to uncertainty about process and, especially for residential students, a sense of disconnect from their diocese, to which we return when discussing participation later in the report.

Ordained ministers

Ordained ministers face different challenges from ordinands, although some of the health implications are similar. As well as financial and material concerns as described above, workload, relationships, transitions to new roles and ministry contexts all influence physical and mental wellbeing. Overall, participants in the 2017 quantitative survey reported fairly high levels of wellbeing in this area: 72% of the 2015 cohort, 85% of the 2011 cohort and 73% of the 2006 cohort stating that, on the whole, over the last 12 months their health had been good or excellent, with younger respondents generally reporting better health than older respondents.

Workload

Temporal boundaries of ordained ministry are notoriously difficult to establish. All the stipendiary and most of the self-supporting ministers in the study comment on the large workload required of them, and words like 'relentless,' 'overwhelming' and 'all-encompassing' are used frequently by SMs and SSMs alike. Some recognise a seasonal rhythm to the intensity of their work (for parish priests, Christmas and Easter are particularly busy; for school and higher education chaplains, term-times); however, a common experience is of a heavy workload all year round, heightened further during these periods: 'I go from being tired to being more tired and that's quite scary when you think, how do I ever stop being tired?' (female SM, 2006 cohort). Several clergy describe physical, mental, emotional and/or spiritual exhaustion, some referring to burn-out or physical illness resulting from workload and stress.

Several factors contribute to the difficulties in establishing boundaries around ministerial work. First, and most obviously, is the lack of defined working hours. This is the case for most parish clergy, but also relevant to some in sector ministry. Under Common Tenure, full-time stipendiary clergy should receive 36 days of annual leave per year, including six Sundays, and should take a rest period of 24 consecutive hours every week. However, there are no formal guidelines defining the number of hours to be worked. The words of one participant reflects the experiences of several:

the workload is just phenomenal. I don't know if there's any concept about how many hours. When I try to do an add-up I don't think I ever work less than 60 hours a week and most weeks it's probably more like 70 because all meetings take place in evenings. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

There are two related issues here: the quantity of hours worked and the times at which those hours are worked. Clergy tend to work among and alongside people who have other commitments during the daytime (and may themselves, if they are self-supporting), therefore, as in the case above, meetings and other activities often take place outside normal office hours. Common advice for full-time stipendiary clergy is to manage one's workload by restricting work to two periods (e.g. morning and

evening) per day; however, many find this difficult to implement: 'in theological college of course, they say yes, work only two sessions a day, sort of thing and, you know, that lovely idea. It's not realistic, is it?' (female HE chaplain, 2006 cohort). Some participants point to the unpredictable nature of ordained ministry as contributing to unmanageable workloads:

you kind of have this sense that there's a need to leave some gaps in the diary because of the unexpected stuff, however that's extraordinarily difficult to do, to leave the gaps, so when the unexpected happens you find you've just got more on top of more on top of more. (Female SM, 2011 cohort)

Awareness of this unpredictability can make it difficult to know when one is off duty: as more than one participant observes, 'you're never not ordained.' Several remark that it is difficult to 'switch off' and stop thinking about work. On the other hand, while undefined working hours can be difficult to manage, participants recognise that they also have the advantage of being extremely flexible, which can be especially helpful for those with families:

it is a privilege that most days I have at least two meals with my wife, so we have lunch together, often we'll sit down and watch Bargain Hunt and just chill, and then have tea together, which is just, it is a privilege. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

there's a huge amount of flexibility if you can, as you say, give yourself permission to do those things. The flexibility is there. Yeah, I couldn't work full-time in the job that I had before I was ordained if I wanted to see the children. (Female SM, 2011 cohort)

Not all ordained ministers have undefined or flexible working hours. Some participants in chaplaincy roles greatly appreciate the value of being able to leave work behind after a shift ('it has boundaries to it, so I know where I begin the working day and I end it, I know when I'm on call and when I'm not on call' (female SSM & hospital chaplain, 2011 cohort)). Self-supporting ministers in part-time ministerial roles often find their working hours extending beyond those formally agreed ('I thought I would do 20 hours; I am doing more than 40' (female OLM, 2015 cohort)); however, those in other employment alongside their formal ministerial role may have fixed hours for the former, which can necessitate stricter boundaries around the latter. Managing multiple roles can be exhausting: 'four days a week at work and two with ministry and one day off, it does place quite a lot of pressure on me ... frankly I'm starting to feel the wear-and-tear' (male SSM, 2006 cohort). Those in more than one ministerial role may negotiate between them in order to manage their hours, sometimes by reducing one to prioritise the other:

The levels of demand on me are very high at present. As we are approaching Christmas I have a number of additional services to prepare for the hospice on top of my normal duties. This increases the amount of stress I'm under. My parish work has reduced in order to facilitate this and allows me some down-time, which is imperative for anyone in ministry (female SSM hospice chaplain and parish priest, 2011 cohort)

and sometimes by leaving one of the roles:

I have found that I'm working seven days a week which is crazy because everybody wants a little bit more and a little bit more. So ... I resigned from the school. (Female SSM priest-in-charge and school chaplain, 2011 cohort).

None of the participants in this study calls for fixed working hours for parish ministry. High levels of flexibility are greatly valued in the challenge to meet the demands of this kind of work, and those who feel they have little control over their own diaries (particularly those curates who are training to be incumbents) can struggle. This may relate to timings of meetings and other activities, but also to approaches to ministry modelled by one's training incumbent (TI):

I do work for someone who is a workaholic. When that is the culture that you are around where comments like, talking about work life balance, there's no such thing – work and life should be the same ... I find myself trying to push myself a bit further. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

An incumbent ordained in 2006 reflects:

It is much easier being an incumbent than a curate, because I'm in charge of my diary. So I can decide that it is important for me to keep that night free, or to not be out more than three nights a week. Whereas, as a curate you can't do that. You can't structure things that way. You have to be there when the thing is happening. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

The capacity to exercise agency is clearly important and, for it to be healthy it must include the possibility of saying no. Clergy often feel pressured to meet excessive or unrealistic demands and drawing boundaries is something many find difficult. It is also a skill that can be learnt over time, through experience, which again leaves curates particularly vulnerable to this kind of stress. Some curates recognise this as a challenge:

Am I being unreasonable when [my training incumbent] said to me 'your diary is your own business and don't moan about being over-worked' – is it unreasonable for me to expect a bit of direction? ... So yes, I have a lot of autonomy. I literally manage my diary and my things, but sometimes I can put too much in. (Female OLM, 2015 cohort)

A learned ability to draw boundaries is most evident, however, in the accounts of those further on in ministry, several of whom describe developing strategies to establish boundaries. One incumbent, for example keeps track of the number of hours she works to avoid feelings of guilt and pressure:

at first I didn't know if I could go away on a Saturday, you know, particularly as a curate because Saturday is kind of a working day, but it isn't, and is it all right to go off to do something else on a Saturday? I would have been a bit nervous about that, or can I go and do something on a middle of a weekday? Now I'm much clearer about that. I know my hours. I know what I'm working. I know that I can take time out for things. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

Permission-giving is important here, whether one gives oneself permission to stop, as in this case or the incumbent quoted above regarding time to see her children, or permission is granted by another person, usually somebody in a senior role. One curate feels encouraged by a bishop attempting to model a fifty-hour working week ('this idea of someone who is going to say, you don't need to just keep going and going and going' (female SM)), while an incumbent describes the liberating effect of being instructed through his Ministerial Development Review to cycle regularly: 'at least now when I am cycling down the canal I can think to myself, this is in my remit, I'm allowed to do this' (male SM, 2011 cohort). Where permission is not understood to have been given, it can result in feelings of guilt if the time is taken anyway, or exhaustion if it is not. This is the case for an incumbent who 'believe[s] in canon law that says we should have the Eucharist in the parish every Sunday,' (male SM, 2011 cohort) and therefore does not take the permitted six Sundays' leave per year because the parish curate has not yet been priested and financial concerns deter him from arranging cover.

Closely related to temporal boundaries around working hours are spatial boundaries. In discussing the financial and material implications of tied housing we have noted that vicarages tend to be public as well as private spaces. As well as affecting the financial and material wellbeing of clergy and their families, this can affect their mental wellbeing by contributing to the blurred boundaries between work and rest. Home becomes work through the physical presence of other people in the form of meetings, church offices and unplanned visitors; through people's virtual presence via telephone calls, email and other media; and through other work-related activities that may be carried out at home, such as sermon-writing, service-planning and administration. In the words of one curate:

Where do I ever stop, because I work from home? I think that's the thing – I might go and pick the kids up from school and come home and the phone rings. When do the children ever get me fully? It is that blurring of what's work and what's home. I think that has an impact on mental health. (Female SM curate)

Even when there is no immediate intrusion, the lack of temporal and spatial boundaries can leave clergy struggling to switch off from work:

I'm never really off, I think that's the thing, you're never really on leave if you're in the vicarage, you try really hard, I have a separate phone line that goes into the office, but you're still never really, psychologically, emotionally, on leave if I'm in the vicarage. (Female SM, 2011 cohort)

Moreover, for the majority who reside in their parish, living in the vicarage can feel like a 'goldfish bowl' (in the words of two SMs, 2011 & 2006 cohorts). Relational boundaries are discussed further below; however, participants field comments from parishioners on diverse aspects of their lives, variously including the state of their garden, the time they switch their light out at night, the behaviour of their children and the number of bottles in their recycling bin. Several observe that the only way they can truly relax is to 'get out of the parish. On a day off I always get out of the parish if I can' (male SM, 2006 cohort).

As well as its time and place, the substance of ordained ministry can also be fluid and undefined. Participants in parish ministry describe their role as being immensely varied, particularly incumbents who, while holding more power than curates, also bear more responsibility. In the words of one, 'I am the ordained person, expected to do, you know, from the boiler to the finance, to the ministry, to the pastorals, to the hospitals, to-' (Female SM, 2006 cohort). Perceived ministry-related pressures (aside from other pressures such as family and finances) come from a range of sources, including parishioners within and without the church; other organisations such as schools, hospitals and funeral parlours; the diocese (including IME 2 training for curates); the national church; colleagues; God; and oneself, often resulting in a workload that risks being unmanageable:

I do continually recognise the impossibility of the job and have to keep saying, okay Lord, I can't do everything, what do you want me to focus on? Because if I try and do everything and I try and meet everybody's expectations then I will just not be able to cope mentally. And I think for me what's important is to actually recognise it's, to be honest it's an impossible job if you try and do everything that everybody expects. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

As with most jobs, participants report enjoying some aspects of their role more than others. While many acknowledge that this is inevitably the case, difficulties arise when the mundane or less agreeable tasks crowd out the more fulfilling aspects:

the paperwork and the sense of extra responsibility that is put on you ... makes the joy of the job, which is the personal encounters and seeing things happen, a relatively small part of what you do. (Male SM, 2006 cohort)

Excessive pressures can also lead to feelings of guilt regarding one's own performance:

I sometimes find myself completely knackered and absolutely worn out because I've been doing things that I shouldn't be doing, and then feeling like a failure because I haven't got anybody to do it. I haven't managed to collaborate with anyone in such a way that they could be doing stuff with me. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

There may be various reasons for low levels of participation by congregation members (those given by other participants include lack of time and skills in deprived areas, older congregations with little computer literacy, and younger congregations with little time); however, even though the minister may be aware of this, they can still experience the outcome as failure. We can see here two layers of guilt stemming from the pressures of a heavy workload and received messages about the correct way

to handle it. One comes from the perceived failure in ministry: in this case, to develop collaborative ministry; elsewhere we see clergy concerned that they are unable to devote sufficient time to, for example, preparing sermons or pastoral care. The second is guilt at being exhausted, at failing to take adequate care of oneself. Wellbeing itself can become a pressure: clergy may feel guilty both at imposing boundaries on ministry and at failing to do so.

The extent to which participants feel their initial ministerial education prepared them for the management and leadership aspects of ordained ministry varies. While some feel well-prepared ('I do feel like I have been, you know, trained for different scenarios and situations' (male SM, 2011 cohort)), others look back to previous or concurrent experience as equipping them better ('when you're going through ordination training, you are not given skills to work with people. I'd acquired it through business and through my previous work in the church' (male SSM, 2006 cohort)). Several assert that it is not possible fully to prepare someone for ordained ministry, and learning must be ongoing after curacy: 'there were some aspects it really didn't prepare me for at all ... but some of that you can only do by doing it' (female SM, 2006 cohort); 'perhaps when things arise that's the time sometimes is the best time to learn' (male SM, 2011 cohort).

Feelings of unfulfilment arising from the balance of ministerial tasks are augmented by the awareness that ordained ministry is a vocation to which one is called (see the section on spiritual and vocational wellbeing below). However, those aspects of ordained ministry which are integral to the priestly vocation can also challenge physical and mental wellbeing. The unpredictability referred to above consists partly in the pastoral element of ordained ministry, where priests may be called upon to assist with all kinds of human experience at a moment's notice. Both the situations themselves and switching between them can be mentally and emotionally draining:

they take their toll on you, you know spending six hours in a police station with somebody helping them report a rape is, you come home and you are on your knees listening to all of that. You can't, and then it's like, the next day you've got some kind of, I don't know, diocesan meeting about something ... it's the shifting gear, that's what's exhausting, it's the shifting gear, between that person who turns up on the doorstep because they desperately need to tell you how flat the earth is, and it's very urgent that they tell you all about it now ... and then shifting into oh I've got to go and do an assembly, and then shifting into I've got to go and do a funeral. (Female SM, 2011 cohort)

Several participants highlight the importance of self-care in the context of such intense pastoral demands, along with the challenges of prioritising this:

You spend all your time resourcing everybody else and you forget yourself ... I get into a mode of feeling actually I'm not the important one here, you know, other people are always more important. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

[T]he first couple of days of a holiday, it is not just tiredness, it is the sheer stuff of your personal life that you have pushed to one side because you are dealing with everyone else's stuff. It all bubbles up. I find if I'm going to have doubts about whether I'm capable of doing ministry, or if I'm going to be slapped round the face by my own sense of weakness and inadequacy, it will generally be either the first two days of quiet time, or when I've just gone on holiday and I slightly crumble at that point. ... The danger is that it is much easier not to stop. (Male SM, 2006 cohort)

Indeed, some participants describe completely stopping as extremely difficult, due to the combination of mobile technology and expectations that one will be contactable at all times. A heavy workload with blurred boundaries can make regular time for rest, exercise and self-care difficult to put in place; however, as with the ordinands, establishing healthy rhythms of living is one of the key coping strategies identified by ordained ministers. This may include rhythms of prayer (e.g. retreats, quiet days and the daily offices), rhythms of rest (e.g. holidays, days off and switching off the telephone in the evenings),

rhythms of physical exercise (e.g. walking around the parish, running, swimming and Pilates), and rhythms of relationship (e.g. regular time with family, friends and supportive peer groups). Some of these will be covered in more depth later in the report.

For self-supporting ministers, boundaries around ministerial activity can be extremely fluid. This is discussed later as we consider relationships and vocational wellbeing; however, we note here that, while recognising the challenges of juggling work, ministry and family, several SSM participants point to the extension of their ministry beyond formal church roles as a positive rather than negative aspect of their work:

I see my work as part of my ministry. I am employed as an SSM, I'm not a chaplain to [organisation], and neither does [organisation] sanction my role in any way, but I offer ministerial support to people. It is very, very much, I see it, as part of my ministry. (Male SSM, 2015 cohort)

Close relationships

While relationship wellbeing is discussed in detail in the next section, here we consider the connections between relationships and physical and mental wellbeing. Relationships can provide essential support to clergy; however, they can also contribute to demands on time and energy.

The discussion above of the demands of ordained ministry has deliberately steered clear of non-ministry-related pressures. However, clergy live in relationship with people both within and beyond their ministry, the most obvious and, for most people, significant of which are family members. Participants with partners and children describe the challenges of maintaining adequate family time given the heavy workload discussed above, which can put stress not only on relationships but also, separately and consequentially, on physical and mental health:

it gets cumulatively very costly and I do need to spend some time with my husband, so I've now said that Friday and Saturday I'm not in college and I'll come in earlier on a Sunday so again I'm working a very long day on a Sunday. (Female chaplain, 2006 cohort)

When talking about managing close relationships and ministry in the context of daily life, participants tend to describe ministry as intruding on time with family and friends, rather than the other way round (see above regarding the blurring of public and private boundaries): they therefore see their ministerial role, rather than their relationships, as negatively affecting their health. Where the latter is the case there is usually a specific cause, such as sleep deprivation from young children, bereavement, divorce or concern about children's physical or mental health:

I have a [teenage] daughter with mental health issues, so that obviously impacts my mental health and, depending on how things are, that impacts obviously how I am able to cope with other things in the parish. (Female SSM, 2015 cohort)

Support in situations such as these varies. Where participants find it lacking, the inflexibility of the diocese in recognising their responsibilities and emotional responses to issues beyond their ministry is viewed as part of the detrimental effect on their health, as in the case of a male participant unsupported at the end of curacy while negotiating marital breakdown and a female participant unable to care for a child in crisis at the time of her ordination to priesthood.

Curates in particular mention difficulties in managing ordained ministry along with family relationships, which may reflect the learning process and limited sense of agency discussed above. Some also point to the requirements of IME as an additional stress factor not always recognised by their TI. The final stages of curacy can be an especially stressful period as the ordained minister seeks a post suitable for the needs of his or her family, especially if, as in the case below, the curate has experienced difficult relationships with senior diocesan officers and levels of trust are low:

I've got lots of competing demands that I don't think is really appreciated or valued because it feels like the church says, well we come first and everything else just needs to slot in with that. So mental sort of wellbeing I think is quite bad, in fact, it is bad because I've never, ever been like this before, I've never been in a [unclear] where I've actually seriously thought I've made a really bad choice here, I've made a massive mistake. And I do, that's exactly how I feel at this point in time because there's just too much uncertainty and I just think that's not fair to, you know, have that amount of uncertainty for three people. (Male SM, 2015 cohort, with working spouse and young child)

The combination of ordained ministry and family life can cause stress not only for the minister, but also for family members. Several participants express concern regarding the effect of their ministry on the health of their family:

I think I'm fine, physically and mentally but I think there has been a stress on my wife and our children. And I kind of feel bad for them because they've had to kind of carry the can if you like. They've had to take all the grief and I've been having a whale of a time, you know, because it's, this has been doing what I feel that I've been called to do. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Sometimes strain on family members extends into clinically diagnosed conditions: for example, the curate quoted above regarding the impact of blurred boundaries between work and home on her own mental health also connects this with her husband's depression:

I think that impacts the family as well, and my husband suffers quite severely with depression and he's quite low at the moment. He had a week off work a couple of weeks ago and he's working now, but for him it is, again, it's that, 'I'm consumed by your job.' (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

In situations of stress, on either the part of the family or the ordained ministers, relationships can become strained:

When things were at their worst, when I was in my curacy with [a difficult training incumbent relationship], we had a big family occasion where I was very, very stressed and it ended up being a huge row which caused big problems for practically a year after in the family, which all added to what was going on (Female SSM, 2011 cohort)

There is therefore a clear dynamic between physical and mental wellbeing and close relationships, which involves the health of both the ordained minister and their family members, and where strain on either health or relationships can have a detrimental impact on the other, sometimes with a spiralling effect. However, the reverse is also true, where strong relationships can be beneficial to physical and mental wellbeing, and *vice versa*. The majority of married participants describe the support of their spouse as fundamental to their ability to function as a priest, even—perhaps especially—where stress levels are high. Family support extends beyond partners and children, to parents, siblings and wider relations:

We are blessed that our family are 100 percent behind us and that makes a big difference. When I was training and money was tight, family would support us because they believed in what I was trying to do and what my husband was doing to support me. They continue to be a source of support to us when we need them. That does make your mental wellbeing very different than if we didn't have them. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

Single clergy rely on this wider network of family and friends for support. Several participants mention the isolation that can accompany ordained ministry, which is discussed further in the next section. Difficulties in making friends faced by many clergy, both because of long and anti-social working hours and because of relational dynamics within the parish, tend not to be mitigated by immediate family for single ministers. Moreover, for those who live alone, the challenges described above of mentally detaching from work are greater ('it's very easy to work all hours and there's no one complaining')

(female SM, 2015 cohort)), and participants draw on a range of strategies to help them achieve this, including 'honest friends who ask good questions' (female SM, 2015 cohort), visiting friends and family outside the parish, and writing down preoccupying thoughts:

I think this is probably where there's a difference between us being single and having family in that it's quite easy to get in at night and to chew over things that have gone wrong endlessly with no one to talk to about them and I think that spiritually that's really quite important that you're able to draw a line, park it, you know, so I tend to write it and then it's kind of out of my system. (Female SM, 2006)

Transition points

Moments of transition between roles can be times of particular vulnerability to physical and mental illbeing. In the accounts of our participants, this is more evident in movement into and out of curacy rather than in shifts between posts beyond curacy. This is probably partly because the majority of those in our cohorts have not yet held more than one consecutive role after their title post, but may also relate to the fixed-term nature of IME Phases 1 and 2. We have already seen how failure to secure a post before the end of curacy can have severe implications for financial and material wellbeing (affecting both income and housing) and cause anxiety and ill-health, both in the event of being left without a job and during the job-hunting process. We have also seen that, once in post, higher levels of autonomy compared with curacy can be beneficial to one's physical and mental wellbeing. However, with greater autonomy comes greater responsibility, and several of our 2011 cohort describe the transition to incumbency as extremely challenging:

I always knew it would be different becoming an incumbent. I saw my training incumbent had a lot of health issues, partly self-inflicted because he was a workaholic. ... I can see the effect of stress on his health and I'm trying really hard not to repeat that, but it is very difficult when you are the incumbent I have found. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Compounding the increased levels of responsibility are the wide-ranging nature of parish ministry, as discussed above ('you can't choose what the challenges and issues are that face you as an incumbent' (male SM, 2011 cohort)), and the variable and sometimes remote support structures. Participants use words like 'lonely' and 'overwhelming' to describe the move from a (in most cases) directed and supported curacy into the far more independent incumbent role: 'all the support you get as a curate, rightly, just disappears overnight' (female SM, 2006 cohort). One first incumbent recalls 'being licensed and sat in the office on the first day and thinking what on earth do I do?' (Male SM, 2011 cohort), while another observes,

Now in the immediate context within the parish there is nobody that I could really speak to, especially about the issues of parish life. The people who are there are the people who are part of that issue. It's not always problems, but there are lots of things that you deal with. So I didn't really expect it to be the way that it is, because I didn't expect to be so overwhelmed by all of the issues. When you are a curate you can just hand things off. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

The transition from curacy was smoothed for some participants by their own realistic expectations and boundaries and diocesan support structures such as friendly archdeacons and the provision of mentors. New incumbents' courses are also mentioned, although as less significant:

In terms of first post, although there's a lovely course they send you on for three days, that usually tells you about what to do, and it's not going to be easy seems to be the sum of it, but what you need is some practical help and a mentor for the first six months, so you know who to ask about filling in marriage returns and what to do about all your PCCs. And very, very simple, practical stuff. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

While moving on from curacy can be challenging, so can entering it. Regarding the placement decision, our participants recount a variety of experiences, including some who claim to have had no input at all, some who were restricted by personal circumstance (e.g. not owning a car; needing a parish accepting of gay clergy; geographical limits of partner's work or own home), and others who were involved to varying degrees, whether that meant being given the option to refuse an offered place, being released from the diocese and left to fend for oneself, or actively discussing staying in one's IME I context church. Again, a sense of agency appears important here, with perceived lack of choice or support resulting in anxiety and, in some cases a stressful curacy.

Transition into curacy can be stressful for a range of reasons. Curates report a variety of experiences moving from a structured IME I environment to relating primarily (at least in theory) to the diocese. In some cases the perceived level of support is high:

I'm still quite close to the womb which is [Diocese] and all the kind of machinery that goes with that. I'm still under supervision for study. I've got my training incumbent ... and all the relationships that I had in place – spiritual director and a mentor and various things that I put in place myself beforehand. So yes, I'm very much supported I feel at the moment. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

Others describe a more distant relationship with their diocese:

I don't think our curacy structure is brilliant. We don't meet as much as previous years have done. It is twice a year we meet with our cohort. I would imagine the person looking after the curates has a million and one other things to do. So when you have approached for support you get a listening ear but not much action really. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

Some of the curates expressing the strongest feelings of isolation are those covering a vacancy following the departure of their training incumbent. Of the four participants in this situation, three describe a lack of support: in the words of one, 'within the sort of hierarchy of the church, no I don't feel there's anyone there who actually cares very much as long as things they don't go too badly wrong' (male SM, 2015 cohort). This is not necessarily the case: one participant who has been provided with a mentor in the shape of a retired bishop notes, 'when [my TI] was preparing to go I was very worried, but actually this last year has probably been more fulfilling than the year with him and that isn't any detriment to him' (male SM, 2015 cohort).

A major cause of stress (throughout curacy) attributed by some curates is the relationship with their training incumbent, which is examined in the next section. Beyond this, physical and mental wellbeing can suffer when the experience of curacy does not match what is expected. Several curates struggle with establishing boundaries, as discussed above, and some describe the demands of ordained ministry as exceeding their expectations ('I didn't see it as all encompassing, which it is ... I had no idea that it was going to be quite as demanding' (female OLM, 2015 cohort)). This can cause considerable stress to the physical and mental wellbeing of oneself and one's family, as in the case of a curate-in-charge whose training incumbent left a year into his curacy:

I put all my eggs in this basket. This is what I want to do. This is what I feel called to do, have done for many years, and suddenly I'm thinking actually this is really very difficult, I haven't got much to support me, it's taking a toll on my family ... and I feel quite unsupported in it and the stress levels are definitely much higher than they have been for a while and I've got nowhere to go to after this, you know ... so if this doesn't work it's very much like a kind of personal, you know, crash and burn failure scenario. So I think at the level of personal isolation, strain on some relationships, particularly my family, stress levels feel very high. Is it acceptable? I don't know. Is it sustainable? Almost certainly not. (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

For others, the dissonance is less about the quantity of work and more about its substance ('I was ordained as a stipendiary and within a week of my deaconing realised this is really not for me, as in

100% parish context in which I had been placed' (female SM, 2015 cohort)) or working conditions, as in the case of a female SSM placed in a parish over 20 miles from her home. Expectations of the training incumbent may also prove inaccurate ('I arrived there and he's completely different' (female SSM, 2015 cohort)). Some participants recognise that it may be the curate's role in relation to the TI's role, rather than the person, that causes stress, especially those who have previously held positions of responsibility:

nothing prepared me for the strange dynamic working for a training incumbent and the power dynamic of that where it was very clear from early on that my normal expectations about the way a kind of partnership as I expected to be in my work were not, you know, going to be reflected in practice. I think I had a very good and competent and actually very caring training incumbent, but I was very thrown by the pressure of not having any power in that relationship. (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

As we saw above regarding financial and material wellbeing, there is least stress where the expectations of the curate closely match his or her new reality, and where they have some experience of the kind of role and ministry context they are entering. There is some evidence supporting previous research findings that contextually-trained clergy experience a smoother transition into curacy than their residentially trained counterparts, being able to adapt more easily to the role of curate.¹⁷ Of the eight residentially-trained curates in our study, six describe significant problems with their training incumbent (the other two are both managing vacancies following their TI's departure),¹⁸ using words like 'controlling,' 'control-freak,' 'wrong-doing,' and describing TIs who dictate their own styles and methods, who impose excessive workloads, who show little pastoral care or support, and who patronise or demean the curate. Two participants have switched curacies largely as a result of this poor relationship, with another seeking to move. Conversely, only one of nine curates from context-based training describes a difficult relationship with her TI, although one changed curacies because of bullying, one reports limited difficulties managing her 'workaholic' TI, and another mentions feeling 'deskilled' during his first year, having previously run a business. Others describe feeling prepared for their curacy, whether it was similar to their IME I context¹⁹ ('actually I was not surprised when I moved to parish and it was exactly the same as during ordination training' (female SM, 2015 cohort)), or different from it:

I changed context 20 minutes down the road but the churches couldn't be more different. I moved from a charismatic, Evangelical city centre church ... to just down the road with seven churches and nine churchyards as well is our current context, but even though the context is nothing like each other ... I think we were helped to go in with our eyes open. (Female SM 2015)

Given that this is a qualitative study with relatively small numbers of curates, the differences between modes of training are not conclusive. In the quantitative panel survey, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the quality of their relationship with their TI, allowing a comparison between the wider set of respondents (190 in total; Fig. 5.1²⁰) with the subset of 25 who participated in the qualitative study (Fig. 5.2). The charts indicate that those who took part in the qualitative study had a lower quality relationship with their training incumbent than average, and that the disparity is particularly extreme for the residentially-trained curates, therefore exaggerating the differences between the training modes. While only 25% of the residentially-trained participants in the qualitative study agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of their relationship with their TI, this is much lower than the 74% of the wider set of respondents. The extreme differences apparent

¹⁷ Perrin, R. (2016), *Vocational Pathways: Perspectives from Curacy*, Ministry Division, Archbishops' Council.

¹⁸ Relationships with training incumbents are discussed further in the section on relationships, below.

¹⁹ One participant has continued his curacy in the same parish as his IME I context, thus experiencing high continuity.

²⁰ Note that the number of contextually-trained curates (14) is much lower than the non-residentially-trained (81) or residentially-trained ordinands (95).

in the qualitative findings are therefore not generalisable. However, Fig. 5.1 does show a pattern of residentially-trained curates being least satisfied and contextually-trained curates being most satisfied with their relationship with their TI, albeit less pronounced than the qualitative subset.

Figure 5.1: Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my relationship with my training incumbent. All panel survey respondents (n=190)

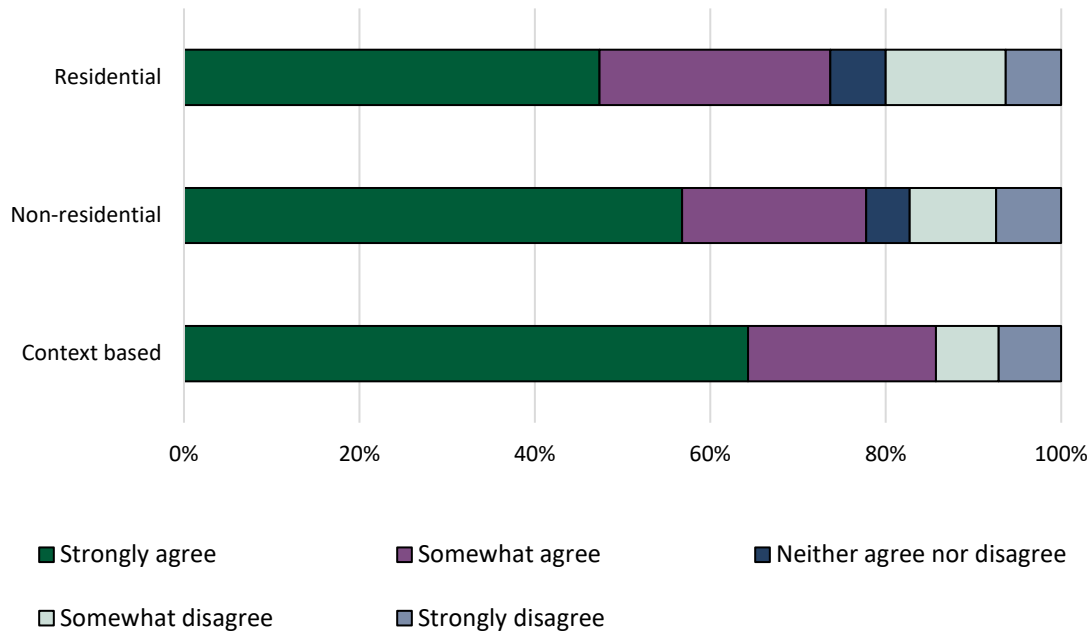
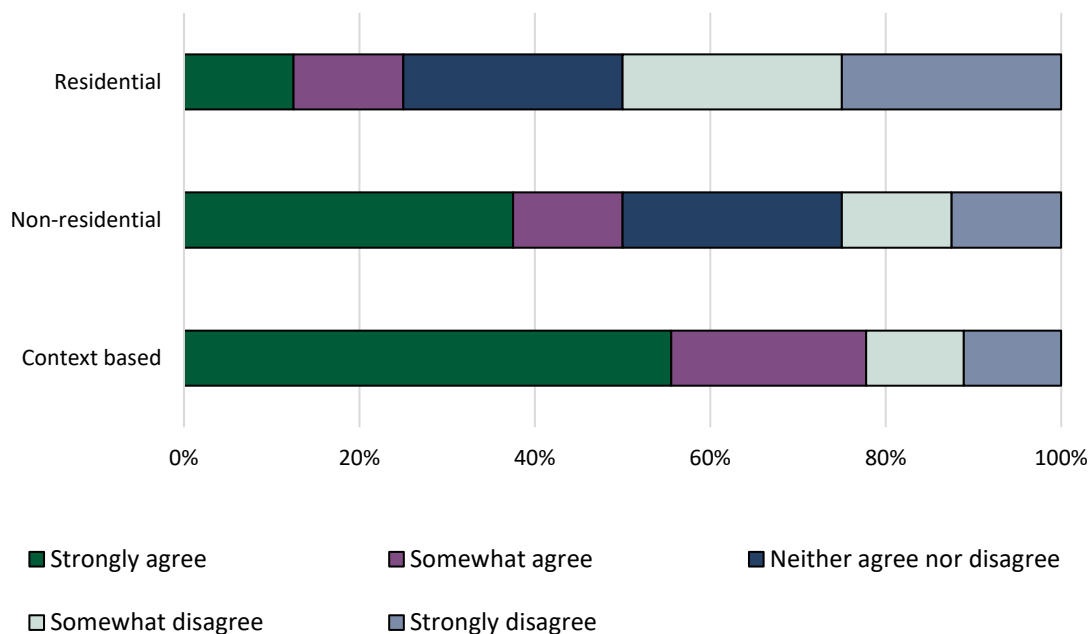


Figure 5.2: Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my relationship with my training incumbent. Qualitative study participants (n=27)



Stress is not absent from the accounts of the contextually-trained curates: stressors include family health problems, workload, difficult team situations, isolation from family, pre-existing mental health conditions, and bullying by a TI. However, aside from pre-existing conditions (discussed below), most of the contextually-trained curates describe their mental wellbeing in positive terms. In addition to the sense of being prepared discussed above, several mention the strategies they employ to protect their health, including taking vitamins, booking annual leave well in advance, taking time out when needed, working out healthy rhythms of living that suit one's family, personal reflection, retreats, physical exercise and maintaining open and honest friendships. Some specifically refer to their IME 1 training (both teaching and experience) as equipping them to handle stress:

[I]t was specifically looking at being a leader and looking after ourselves and the expectations that are put on us. It is only having left the college that I realise now how valuable those sessions were. At the time I didn't realise it, but now I'm in it I will quite often think back to some of those sessions. Just having advice from people who have been on that journey ahead of you really was really helpful. ... You can tend to feel that you are the only one. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

[I]t's drummed into you at [college] this is how it's going to be all the way through. This is an opportunity to learn how to float with the life jacket. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

All but one of the residentially-trained curates in our study report very high levels of stress, with two having experienced periods of sick leave as a consequence and a third taking medication for anxiety for the first time. While contributing factors include those experienced by their contextually-trained counterparts, one of the largest sources of stress reported by residentially-trained curates is their relationship with their TI. The TI-curate relationship is discussed in more depth in the next section; here, we note that, within the statistical limitations discussed above, residentially-trained curates appear to experience higher levels of stress than those trained contextually, which may be partly caused by a poorer quality relationship with their TI. It is also possible (although again not conclusive) that residentially-trained curates are less equipped at the beginning of their curacy to manage stress than their contextually-trained counterparts. While some refer to establishing work boundaries, this (as with other self-care strategies such as physical exercise and counselling) is often a reactive response, sometimes in the context of conflict, rather than an approach initiated from the start:

I then had to sit back and look at the whole thing and say, 'Now I've got a choice between two things. I either keep getting stressed, keep getting wound up and keep getting annoyed at things ... or I have a completely different perspective and look at [TI] and see what he's doing and see what I can learn from it, and see all the things that he does that I must never do myself.' (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

Most of the nine curates who trained non-residentially also report high levels of stress, although here we see a range of different factors at play. All but two are in self-supporting roles (including two ordained local ministers), and most of these combine their curacy with other employment, some full-time and some part-time. A frequent theme here is the constant need to manage work, ministry and family. This itself is not presented as excessively stressful, perhaps because most participants are used to this from IME 1. The stress tends to be caused by the combination of this with one or more additional factors, whether the extra demands of covering a vacancy (in one case alongside a full-time job); working in a parish some distance from one's home; physical ailments (age-related for some: ministers training this way are on average older than residential and context-based ordinands); stringent requirements of IME 2 training; family change and health issues; isolation and lack of support; or difficulties with one's TI (reported by three participants).

We have noted that physical and mental wellbeing can be strained when there is little choice of curacy, as is the case for many self-supporting ministers. Some, such as our two ordained local ministers, stay in their home church for their curacy which, while providing continuity, also brings its own challenges.

Changing role within the same context can make boundaries even more difficult, as noted by one participant:

I literally manage my diary and my things, but sometimes I can put too much in simply because of the dynamics of ministry with ordained local ministry, where you already have relationships, means that you are never not busy. I thought I would do twenty hours, I am doing more than forty. (Female OLM, 2015 cohort)

Ministry context

The context of ministry therefore plays an important role in contributing to a minister's physical and mental wellbeing. For curates, as we have seen, factors such as staying in the same parish, the relationship with one's TI and other colleagues, the extent to which expectations are met, and whether one is covering a vacancy all have an impact in different ways. So too do the sense of vocational fit with the parish and role, which is discussed later in the report, and the immediate working conditions, such as the distance of the parish from one's home and, especially in cases where a commute is necessary, provision of adequate working space:

I've just felt mentally and physically and spiritually exhausted at times, and there's not much support at the other end. There's no base for me to work in. ... So health-wise I've felt very tired, quite low at times. (Female SSM, 2015 cohort, with a 30 minute drive to her parish)

Considering all three ordained cohorts, participants describe a range of other context-related factors as affecting their physical and mental wellbeing. We have already discussed the sense of responsibility that parish priests can feel with regard to their church's financial situation and their own giving and expenses, which can not only be detrimental to financial wellbeing, but also cause mental stress and anxiety. Other quantifiable measures also add pressure, notably parish share and attendance figures (see also the section on participation). Parish share is not a problem for every church, but failure to pay or the awareness of being subsidised can contribute to feelings of guilt on the part of the minister: 'that sense of, well, the rest of the church wishes we weren't here because they are having to subsidise our existence' (male SM, 2006 cohort). Attendance figures and the pressure to grow as a church is mentioned by several participants, some understanding this as the basic performance indicator against which they are measured, set by the national church and filtered through the diocese:

That's part of the mood music that we get from the diocese. I don't want to say that the diocese has been terrible about that. I think we all understand the pressures under which bishops and archdeacons operate as well on a national level. It is something that flows down, leading your church into growth. It is everywhere. It is what we get. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Ministers of churches that are not currently growing express feelings of demoralisation at this perceived pressure, one interpreting national church messages about decline as, 'you are making a mess of it, you are making a mess of it, you are making a mess of it,' and another observing, 'there's a lot of clergy that I see that are feeling quite disillusioned because they feel that there's a big stick and there's no help' (male SM, 2011 cohort). One incumbent describes the trepidation with which she approaches her Statistics for Mission returns:

I tell you, I do it every year, when we do the annual stats I'll say, is it even half a person up on last year? And there is that sense that if it's not going vaguely upwards, there is that sense of oh, no, last year the average was down by two, and to me, I take it terribly personally, thinking, you know, what should I have done differently to have got people to turn up on those magic weeks that they were being counted? (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

The two key pressures of church growth and parish share may work in opposition to each other, with ministers having to make decisions about which to prioritise. One incumbent, having decided with her

PCC to spend legacy money on a mission initiative instead of meeting their parish share, was left feeling 'battered' after a meeting with her archdeacon:

So we're going for growth by investing the money, and we had a meeting on parish share and I got ripped apart by the archdeacon and I was very close to tears, and then I spent all of my day off, ... well I drove to see some friends and on the way there I was basically crying because I felt sort of battered and not understood (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

In the context of national church decline in a rapidly changing society, frustrations from the pressure to grow a church with an over-stretched budget at the same time as contributing to the parish share are further accentuated by the awareness that the same institution perceived to be applying the pressure is investing huge sums of money elsewhere, in developing 'resource churches'. This is a theme mentioned by several participants, mainly in the 2011 cohort. It is bound up with questions of vocation and tradition and is therefore discussed later in the report: here we note the effect expressed by some clergy of accentuating existing pressures and anxieties.

Besides, and to the backdrop of such pressures, the health of clergy is influenced by the people among and with whom they work. Participants in parish ministry find their physical and mental wellbeing affected by the make-up of their congregations and wider communities, as well as relationships with colleagues within their own church and more widely.

The predominant effect of congregations and parishes on the physical and mental wellbeing of their clergy relates to workload. Congregations both contribute to the workload of their clergy, as they make demands on the latter, who care for, lead and equip them, and share the burden of participating in mission and ministry. We have already discussed how factors such as age, lack of time and lack of skills can hinder congregational participation and therefore increase the burden on the ordained minister, while congregational demands combined with a lack of firm boundaries can lead to an unmanageable workload. Some participants also describe fielding criticism and unkindness from their parishioners, one commenting, 'people are quick to complain, or to challenge things, or to say what they don't really like. They are not that quick to say, "that was good," or "that's going well"' (male SM, 2011 cohort). Another reflects, 'I probably could have done with a much tougher skin when I was actually was an incumbent, to just throw off those horrible things that people say to you' (female SSM, 2006 cohort). This is not always the case, however. Several participants report extremely supportive congregations, both in providing encouragement and friendship and in alleviating workload (see the section on relationships).

Colleagues within the ministry context can both help and hinder physical and mental wellbeing in a range of ways. Difficult relationships can cause stress and anxiety, especially for those in assistant roles:

I moved because I couldn't stand the stress of working with the person that I was working with before. I worked [several] years with him and basically he shuffled everything on to me and the resulting stress was so much that I had to say well I need to move. Having moved, it's been a tremendous benefit. (Male SSM, 2006 cohort)

Good relationships can have a positive impact both by alleviating workload and by providing support and understanding. This can benefit both the assistant ('the vicar I'm working with in retirement is very supporting and encouraging and is absolutely great') and the incumbent, as with a stipendiary minister who a few months previously had accessed his diocesan counselling service due to stress:

We now have a full-time curate as of July. That's made a tremendous difference and actually having a full-time colleague has been fantastic. We are basically on the same page and she understands what clergy life is like because she's just getting used to it herself. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Collegial support and understanding is also important for those who work outside parish ministry. All the hospital or hospice chaplains in the study who discuss this area describe extremely supportive

colleagues, for example: 'I work with amazing staff and volunteers and we support each other, sometimes through some very traumatic and emotional times' (female SSM hospice chaplain and parish priest, 2011 cohort). The one HE chaplain finds her role to be less well understood, and gains her support from a mentor who is a parish priest with experience in a similar chaplaincy role: 'you know, he gets it, as it were' (female HE chaplain, 2006 cohort).

More widely, participants find collegial support (as well as tensions) in relationships with local church leaders, both deanery and ecumenical, and peer groups accessed through diocesan or other networks. Such groups may be more or less accessible depending on one's role and working hours, for example chaplains and SSMs in other employment may struggle to attend meetings organised during the day-time (see the later sections on relationships and participation).

Managing ill-health

Not all physical and mental ill-health is caused by work. All clergy at various points have to manage sickness or injury, whether or not related to their ministry, and some enter ordained ministry with long-term conditions that affect their lifestyle and working practices. Conditions currently experienced by participants include temporary injuries such as broken limbs, chronic physical and mental disorders, and age-related ill-health.

Several of our participants choose or feel obliged to manage ill-health themselves, usually in connection with their GP but without recourse to formal support from their church or diocese. Some, especially those with long-term physical conditions, frame their situation as something for which they have complete responsibility to manage, not mentioning any discussions with colleagues or diocesan officers, despite their condition causing difficulties within their ministerial role. One participant, for example, describes the arthritis that restricts her mobility as 'annoying,' and manages it with painkillers. Another, with a (partly stress-induced) chronic condition, mentions regularly not sleeping well the night before having to take an early service because the church does not have a toilet, which causes her practical difficulties and stress. A self-supporting minister manages her eyesight problems by producing her own large-print service materials, observing, 'it does impact a little bit on my confidence as far as celebrating in other churches as a PTO, particularly at short notice' (female, 2011 cohort). Shorter-term illnesses are also sometimes managed alone, such as in the case of an incumbent who describes having prepared a funeral while sick, anxious that 'nobody actually knows I'm ill' (female SM, 2006 cohort).

Two participants in our ordained cohorts report pre-existing, diagnosed long-term mental disorders. Both deliberately do not discuss their condition with their diocese out of concern about the potential reaction, one commenting, 'I wouldn't really trust my diocese to make them aware that I have a mental health issue,' and the other noting that without 'a strong enough link to know what they would offer to support me ... I've probably been reticent to talk to them about it because I think that it basically sets me back in getting through this process of training' (curate). Instead, they each manage their health through medical advice and learned coping strategies. The burden of this responsibility is evident, with one describing relying on 'good friends and a wider support network' to manage the loneliness and physical toll, and the other recognising that 'it's an ongoing challenge and every now and then I wonder, will that stop me from doing this job long term?' Barriers to diocesan services such as counselling, including discouragement on the grounds that it should not be needed, is discussed later in the report.

Clergy who do seek help, usually for emergent rather than pre-existing health conditions, generally report being met with care and support. While some participants describe what they perceive as inadequate or inappropriate responses from colleagues and dioceses (such as a curate on sick leave with depression who felt isolated when her TI instructed lay colleagues not to contact her; and a curate who, on the insistence of senior clergy but against her wishes, took extended leave following an incident, which resulted in loss of confidence and a move to a different parish), others report excellent support, as in this case of injury:

The diocese were unbelievably supportive. ... I just emailed everyone I know saying 'look I can't actually move anymore' and things were taken off my plate and things happened, it was good. I even got a get well note from the bishop the day after I emailed the diocese saying I was unwell, so that's quite affirming. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

The two elements highlighted by this minister are echoed by others and integral to participants' understandings of good support. First, it is important to have practical cover: several participants feel pressure to keep going through illness because 'the funerals and weddings and all that stuff are still sitting there' (female SM, 2006 cohort). Second, personal acknowledgement and care from the archdeacon and especially the bishop are highly valued:

Bishop [X], fantastic, absolutely wonderful, he even came to visit me in hospital. ... Didn't rush, spent an hour with me or whatever. He even visited us at home, totally unexpected on a Sunday afternoon, didn't expect it, wonderful pastoral care, very thoughtful, very caring. (Male chaplain, 2006 cohort)

Summary: physical & mental wellbeing

Physical and mental wellbeing among our participants varies according to a range of factors, including those related to ministry, such as role, context and stage of ministry, and socio-demographics such as age, marital status and personality. For ordinands, mode of training (non-residential, context-based or residential) affects physical and mental wellbeing in different ways, with those combining training with full-time work particularly impacted.

Workload is a key influence on this aspect of wellbeing. While chaplains tend to minister in more structured environments, for parish clergy the number of hours worked and their timing, location and substance are all variable and undefined, resulting in blurred temporal, spatial and mental boundaries, as well as (for some) great flexibility. Clergy feel the weight both of intense pastoral demands and tedious or complex administrative duties.

Relationships with family, friends, colleagues and parishioners can enhance physical and mental wellbeing by providing important care, understanding and assistance. However, the same people also (often unintentionally) contribute to the demands placed on clergy and ordinands, while relationship difficulties can add to stress. Conversely, physical and mental wellbeing tends to have an impact on relationships, either positively or negatively, and the wellbeing of the entire family may be affected by the work of the ordained minister.

The context of ministry is important to physical and mental wellbeing not just because of working hours and professional or pastoral relationships. Working conditions (such as commuting distance and office space) and vocational fit (including tradition) also influence wellbeing, along with expectations regarding finance and attendance figures. Transition into curacy and first incumbency are moments of particular stress.

In each of these areas, we see ordinands and clergy negotiating their physical and mental wellbeing within social and ecclesial structures that both support and demand. Expectations and pressures (perceived or real) regarding ministerial performance, church life, non-church responsibilities, personal relationships and even wellbeing itself can result in physical and mental stress, isolation, demoralisation and guilt. On the other hand, understanding, affirmation, practical care and careful management of expectations can help ministers feel valued, supported and secure. While individual ministers bear responsibility for putting in place healthy boundaries and rhythms of life, structures and relationships within the Church can and should enable, support and give them permission to do so, rather than burdening and restricting them.

Strategies and approaches found helpful by Living Ministry participants

These are offered as an inexhaustive list with no comment on the value, wisdom or specific use of any item.

- Support networks: groups or individuals; face-to-face or social media
- Healthy rhythms of prayer, work, rest and exercise (designated times and/or built into routine)
- Healthy nutrition
- Pastoral care: spiritual direction, counselling (especially diocesan-funded), chaplains (ordinands)
- Retreats
- Establishing boundaries: days off, annual leave (long enough to relax), time with family/friends, switching off the telephone, having two telephones, ringfencing time, leaving the parish, moving the parish office out of the vicarage, writing down issues to park them, recording hours
- Organisational flexibility (ordinands)
- Preparation in IME I for the demands of ordained ministry
- Switching curacy or moving post
- Sick leave or suspension
- Honest relationships and conversations regarding personal limits, e.g. among colleagues, between curate and TI, and between incumbent and congregation
- Role-specific changes
- Support from charities, e.g. Sheldon and Sons & Friends of the Clergy
- Permission-giving and healthy examples from senior clergy
- Self-help books or courses

6. Relationships

Ordinands

The range of possible IME I situations, including residential students who move with or without families to college and those who board weekly; context-based students who remain in their home churches and those who move; and non-residential students who manage employment alongside their training and those who do not, means that ordinands' experiences of relationship wellbeing are extremely varied. The accounts of our participants support the findings of a previous report,²¹ which demonstrate the different ways in which location and dislocation affect the experiences and the formation of ordinands. This may involve physical location, where ordinands leave their homes to study for extended periods, or shorter, regular blocks (e.g. weekly boarders and context-based or non-residential students attending residentials). For non-residential and context-based students it may also consist in constant movement between the social and professional environments of family, training, work and church. Whether ordinands experience location and dislocation in terms of uprooting and replanting into a different place, or managing different worlds while remaining in the same place, there are significant implications for relationships.

Learning environment

As found in the *Vocational Pathways* research, relationships within the learning environment of TEI staff, students and placement churches are considered hugely important for both formation and support by ordinands across all three modes of training. This is experienced most intensely in residential training, where students live and study closely together. The immense value placed on this by students in the *Vocational Pathways* research is less evident in this study, which may be partly because our cohort at the time of data collection was less far through their training (having just started their second year, rather than coming towards the end of their second or third year). Some residential ordinands in the present study also express an isolating sense of being different from the norm in some way, whether because they return home at weekends or are part of a minority demographic, as in the case of a young single student who has found himself among a year-group of mainly married ordinands:

I suppose being you know, living, kind of, eating, praying together, there is that kind of sense of being formed together whilst there is still a separation particularly with our cohort because, you know, lots of married and families.

Another ordinand at the same TEI, however, who lives with her husband and stays a few nights a week at college, describes how 'the quality of relationships here [has] blown me away,' despite having 'to distance myself sometimes from the community because ... I just have to do a lot of work when I'm here.' Apart from the dynamics related to demographics such as age and marital status, expectations make a difference here, with the former participant entering training with high hopes of community life and the latter with the opposite.

The non-residential and context-based participants largely echo those in the *Vocational Pathways* study who value their TEI community despite spending less time together. Some ordinands point to the formational benefits of time spent with other students and staff (although this is emphasised more by the 2015 cohort), one, for example, observing that the introduction of evening and night prayer before and after training sessions has meant that 'the sense of being a church family has grown, you know, not just a study family any more' (female, non-residential). Primarily, however, context-based and non-residential ordinands refer to the TEI community as a key source of support: 'we pray for each other, we support each other and, you know, I would imagine I would be with those women going forward'

²¹ Graveling, L. (2016), *Vocational Pathways: Perspectives from Initial Ministerial Education Phase I*, Ministry Division, Archbishops' Council.

(female, context-based). Beyond training days or evenings and residentials, much of this interaction takes place via private social media groups, which function as instantly accessible safe spaces for fellow ordinands to request prayer and advice and to build relationship:

if you're non-residential you have to find a way of being able to offer each other support because you only see each other [once a week] and two weekends a term and you need those groups of people because you go through such a different experience than any of your other friends are. You're not there residentially full time, so you don't get that, so you have to find a way of becoming a peer support to each other and we've all set it up through WhatsApp. (Female, non-residential)

Community within colleges is therefore shaped partly by the ordinands themselves and partly by the staff, working within the ethos of the institution. For many TEIs, fostering community is an intentional and crucial element of training. One ordinand who had moved to a different TEI part-way through her training observes the 'completely different feel' of her new college, citing pastoral care, daily offices, prayer groups, WhatsApp groups and shared meals as helpful things that were absent in her previous experience: 'where I am now they just foster community. ... [T]hat is just evident in everything they do' (female, non-residential).

Family and friends

Simultaneously managing relationships within and beyond the training environment is often extremely challenging. We have already seen that physical and mental wellbeing can be negatively affected when relationships that normally provide support or emotional ties are placed under strain. For some ordinands this occurs through separation from such relationships and networks. Although many find a new supportive community among the TEI staff and students, some find this separation, combined with the all-encompassing nature of college life, difficult, especially those who have uprooted and moved some distance away from friends and family:

as ... a single young vocation, you know, grown up in [city], went to university in [city], always lived in [city] and then, and kind of part of two church families there, and to kind of lose that and to be quite physically apart from that, quite difficult and quite disorientating actually. (Male, residential)

You don't really see any of your old friends who kind of keep you a bit grounded and remind you about what real life's like ... you never get to see sort of normal parish stuff. ... I find it quite a suffocating place actually at times and I have to try and remove myself a lot ... you know, you just feel completely detached from what everyone else is doing in the sort of normal world. (Male, residential)

While residential ordinands experience long blocks of separation in close relationships, many non-residential and context-based students regularly leave their family overnight to attend lectures and residentials. Those with young children find this especially difficult, one noting that during a series of monthly residential weekends he missed all three family (wife and children's) birthdays. Participants' concern is as much for their family as for themselves, aware of the sacrifices made by families and the toll it takes on them. A non-residential ordinand describes her emotional distress at leaving her children:

leaving [child] overnight was so hard and cuts right to the core of your identity as a mother and, am I a bad mum? ... They actually came and visited me here. ... But [child] said, 'Ah Mummy now I know where you come, I just thought you disappeared into the world.' And then I had to say goodbye and [child] saying, 'I want to stay with Mummy,' and then I [was] streaming with tears because I'm traumatising my baby. (Female, non-residential)

Physical distance at lectures and residential is one aspect of training taking place in a context of negotiation with family members. While the families of many ordinands are understanding of the pressures of training and act as a key source of support, the requirements of training inevitably have an impact on family life and must be negotiated, particularly with partners, as described by a female non-residential ordinand:

my husband really doesn't like me being away on my own and when I first retired I did go to see friends of mine three or four weekends a year and then I thought this is going to be a problem. We've got six weekends that I have to do now, the week away, and so I've given him this commitment that I won't go away without him other than that. And I have missed it hugely because those were the single friends of mine with whom I had really good relationship.

Another highlights the constant negotiation over time, even when she is not physically absent. She is expecting to enter self-supporting ministry which, in her own mind, puts her at a disadvantage in such negotiations:

it's a cost in the sense of, sort of negotiations with myself and with God and also with my husband and he doesn't think, he's not resentful of that side of it, but it makes it much harder to sort of justify to yourself or to everybody else, okay we can't spend some time together tonight because I've got to work. Because you know, well, you worked last night, but I've got to work, and I've got to work on Saturday too and I'm going to have to work on Sunday afternoon because that's the only way to get through this.

In addition, non-residential and context-based ordinands are often required to move church for their long-term training placement(s), obliging them to decide between uprooting as a family or worshipping separately. Either is challenging for both parties, one non-residential ordinand realising the sacrifice entailed by his daughters as he saw 'tears streaming down their cheeks' during their last service at their home church, while another recognises that her husband 'feels isolated without me.' We have already discussed the potential health implications for non-residential ordinands managing simultaneously work, training and family, and the strain this can place on family relationships. Even more than curates, ordinands across all three modes of training possess limited agency, required to adhere to fixed deadlines, timetables and locations. While this provides structure and support that is often missed by curates, it can also make it harder to establish boundaries that enable adequate prioritisation of relationships. On the other hand, a context-based student observes that the structure of his training means, 'actually I have more time with my family than I have ever had' and reflects that more time spent at home has 'brought me closer to [my wife] because I am now learning all of the housework that she does that I took for granted.'

Parochial and professional relationships

As well as affecting family relationships, moving into a new role (whether in the same church or, as in most cases, a different church) can be disorienting, as ordinands navigate an unfamiliar set of relational reference points. As they work out what it means to be a church leader, they both position themselves ('you have to detach yourself' (female, context-based)) and are positioned by others ('you're seen very differently' (female, non-residential)). The latter may be experienced as distancing, as in the case of a male context-based ordinand who has struggled to get to know people in his new church, or it may be an awareness of new pastoral expectations, as a female context-based ordinand comments, 'they're telling me things at a different level.' Either way, the resulting experience is often loneliness (which, as we see below, may be a foretaste of ordained ministry), especially when compounded with a weakening of previous friendships and support networks, either through this very process of changing roles, or through leaving one's home church. However, the assumption of the identity of ordinand can also be helpful. One non-residential ordinand describes how asking about your training 'gives [people] something to talk to you about.' She goes on to acknowledge that shifts in relationship do not just stem from expectations of a particular role, but also from her own formation, observing that even

among the people with whom she works in her self-employment, ‘who don’t know that I’m training for ministry, I seem to have a much more pastoral role.’ Others, who are aware of her ministerial vocation, ‘are really excited about my training. They always ask me about it and they want to come to my ordination and stuff like that.’

Ordained ministers

Once ordained, relationships continue to be both challenging and blessing. We look first at personal relationships with family and friends, and then relationships within ministry, especially those with clergy colleagues and between training incumbent and curate.

Family and friends

Like the ordinands, our ordained participants are situated in a wide range of relational structures. Few represent the ‘traditional’ model of an ordained minister with a non-working spouse who cares for children and assists with certain aspects of ministry. The participants in this study include clergy who are single, married, in civil partnerships, divorced or widowed, while their partners include retired people, people in full-time or part-time employment, people not in paid employment, ordained ministers, lay ministers, atheists, and people living with disabilities. Scholars in the field of gender and management have found that, for women, ‘career decisions were normally part of a larger and intricate web of interconnected issues, people and aspects that had to come together in a delicately balanced package.’²² Likewise, for clergy, because of the unbounded nature of their work and even more so since the introduction of women to their ranks, their ministry is inextricably interwoven with other aspects of life and with other people’s lives, both affecting and affected by the interests, activities, needs and preferences of people close to them. The relationships that hold these things together are not just instrumental, but in themselves a vital aspect of the wellbeing of ordained ministers.

We have seen above that physical and mental wellbeing and relationship wellbeing can influence each other in positive or negative spirals, and that both are affected by workload. Many clergy find themselves constantly negotiating the temporal, spatial, physical, mental and emotional boundaries between ministry and family life, sometimes in collaboration with their families and sometimes in tension with them. The lack of fixed working hours means that ministry often intrudes into family time; however, it also affords a high degree of flexibility which some clergy find beneficial to family relationships.

The requirements of ordained ministry affect clergy families in numerous ways, beyond the minister not having enough time to spend with their partner and children. As described in the previous section, both the quantity of working hours and the blurred boundaries between work and home can cause stress for families and family relationships. So too can geographical constraints: family needs and preferences can be difficult to reconcile with those of the church, especially when, as in most cases, ministerial roles are tied to specific locations, often including housing. Participants draw on a range of strategies to manage such tensions. Most, to varying extents, attempt to establish boundaries around their work whether, for example, by moving the church office out of the vicarage to avoid the stress of ‘having somebody in the house when [husband] is off sick’ (female SM, 2006 cohort); by unplugging or switching off the phone (‘best thing I’ve learnt in nine years of ministry to feel relaxed and rested. I have a landline now, I don’t have a mobile, and I unplug the damn thing at the end of my work day’ (male SM, 2011 cohort)); or by guarding days off and holidays:

I’ve become incredibly ruthless with my diary as a way of maintaining my family relationships. So my fixed day off is the day I visit my daughter. I take an extra half-day and I don’t apologise for that because I work really, really hard, and so I’ll see my parents. And the family holidays

²² L.A. Mainiero & S.E Sullivan (2005), ‘Kaleidoscope Careers: An Alternate Explanation for the Opt-Out Revolution’, *The Academy of Management Executive* 19 (1), p.111.

are fixed and non-negotiable. So it doesn't matter how many weddings they want me to do, I'm not doing them that weekend, someone else can do them. So I make sure that I've planned the year almost ... It's taken me now this many years to realise how incredibly important that is. Stake's in the ground, there are non-negotiables. (Female SM, 2011 cohort)

Ordained ministers and their families must also make decisions at a broader level regarding the shape of ministry as part of family life and in relation to other requirements and priorities. Some of these decisions are made during the discernment process before ordination, as potential clergy work with families and vocations advisers to envisage the kind of ministry they will enter, determined not only by their own sense of vocation and the needs of their family, but also the preferences and restrictions of the Church. The three most common distinctions are between assistant and incumbent ministry, self-supporting and stipendiary ministry, and full-time and part-time ministry. Each of these has implications for clergy families, whether regarding workload or finances, and none is set in stone at the point of selection for ordained ministry: ministers may (sometimes requiring formal diocesan or national approval) switch between each of these categories during the course of their ministry and several of our participants have done so.

Some forms of ministry, for example some self-supporting, assistant and part-time roles, provide greater continuity with previous or existing family life, allowing ministers to remain in their own homes, work fewer hours and, in some cases, continue to worship in the same church (although most serve their curacy elsewhere). This is not always the case and, even for ordained ministers who are self-supporting and part-time, tensions can occur where expectations do not match reality, as in the case of a female OLM 'doing an unpaid role, which [my husband] sees me doing far more than – it's causing more problems now than when I started down the route because he was very supportive' (2015 cohort).

Our participants reflect the wider clergy population in that disproportionately more women than men occupy self-supporting, assistant and part-time roles. This is partly because women tend to enter ordained ministry older than men,²³ but also because married women are more likely than men to have to organise their ministry around the employment of their partner.²⁴ Among our ordained participants, the majority of women (about four fifths of the married women and two thirds of the women in total) have a working partner, compared to about half the married men and two fifths of the men in total. Of the single women, five are in stipendiary roles (a quarter of the stipendiary women) and two are self-supporting (one sixth of the self-supporting women). Moreover, several of the male participants imply that their wife's income is supplementary or secondary to their own, using phrases like 'she basically has to work for us to break even' (male SM, 2015 cohort); '[she] can choose to do supply teaching' (male SM, 2011 cohort); and 'it doesn't really make much difference [to our income]' (male SM, 2011 cohort).

Stipendiary ministry usually involves a move of location and residence in tied accommodation, and ordained ministers and their families manage this in different ways. Some families, as in the three cases referred to immediately above, prioritise the clerical role, which has varying implications for partners and children depending on factors such as financial situation, proximity to wider family and desire to be involved in ministry (participants include those whose vocation entails leading a church alongside their partner as well as those whose partner does not attend church). Several participants express concern for their families in moving between posts, especially regarding relational discontinuity:

But then having immersed ourselves for nearly four years there and my husband had put roots down in men's ministry and 'who let the dads out?' and made some really good friends through that, we then uproot again to yet another location, where I throw myself in wholeheartedly

²³ See *Ministry Statistics 2016*, Research & Statistics, Church of England, p.8-9.

²⁴ See Graveling, L. (2016), *Vocational Pathways: Clergy Leading Large Churches*, Ministry Division, Archbishops' Council.

and I've noticed my husband has been more reserved this time. I think it's been quite painful to move on and move on. (Female SM, 2011 cohort)

Most decisions about ministerial life and jobs are to some extent negotiated. In some cases it is not possible or preferable for partners and children to uproot to a new location or to stop working to provide childcare. Strategies employed by participants in this study include looking for jobs within a specific geographic area, the partner commuting to work, the partner reducing hours and arranging shift work around the minister's working pattern, the minister living apart from her spouse on a weekly basis, and the partner and/or children worshipping in different churches. The extent to which these strategies enable flourishing is debatable and depends on individual circumstances. Some are enacted by curates who are working within the restrictions of their title post and hoping for more mutually suitable arrangements in their next position. One, whose husband works full-time and therefore lives apart, comments,

so we've realised that thinking about the next job, actually for me to be working in full-time ministry and for him to be doing what he is doing now, is just not sustainable. It won't work. Our marriage will fall apart because we just won't see each other. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

Future options under consideration include her husband leaving work to support her, or one or both of them working part-time, possibly combined with further study: 'we'll mix and match a bit more than we are doing at the moment. So it is a whole family thing.'

As we have seen in the previous section, while immediate family is cited by many participants as a key source of support, wider family and friends are also important, especially for single clergy. Just as the husband of the ordained minister cited above has struggled with moving on and leaving friends, most clergy find continuity in close relationships valuable, especially when they work in contexts where making friends is difficult or unadvisable (see below). Participants emphasise the importance of friends who understand their situation (usually other clergy or people from their college cohort), as well as those who are outside church leadership or the church itself and can facilitate disengagement from their work. Maintaining friendships is not always easy to achieve, however, largely because of physical distance for those who move away, time pressure and working patterns: in the words of a stipendiary incumbent, 'Quite simply, it is the disappearance of weekends' (male, 2011 cohort). Some participants also refer to the need for personal space, either on a regular basis at home ('At the end of the day you can ring someone but you are tired and ... I just want some time on my own quite a lot so I withdraw a little bit from my personal relationships' (female SM, 2006)), or when on leave:

Partly when we go back to stay with my parents or [my wife's] mum in holidays, I just go into full-on introvert mode. I'm so talked out that I don't want to- in one way I'd love to go out with my old friends from school who are still in [city], and I'd love to see them, but actually I just want to close the doors and recharge as it were. That's a matter of energy. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Clergy draw on varied and multiple strategies to maintain friendships. Some deliberately invest in a small number of close friends and allow other relationships to drop:

I had to make choices, I think. ... I deliberately asked my friends to be kind and considerate insofar as if my communication gets really bad to just persist with me ... And actually, I just sort of, I have a close sort of half dozen friends and I've managed to keep in regular contact with them and some I only see once or twice a year, others I make sure I see every six to eight weeks and I think that's been really key in keeping yourself sort of anchored and supported beyond the parish. (Married female SM, 2015 cohort)

The intentional regular contact mentioned here is present in the accounts of several participants, who describe yearly or more frequent arrangements with individuals or groups of friends. One (married male SM, 2011 cohort) notes that careful planning is required to enable even one-off encounters to

take place at weekends, while another (single female SM, 2006 cohort) emphasises the importance of taking 'every dot of your leave' in order to visit family and friends as well as taking holidays:

So I sort of have a double life really, or even a triple life: I have my amazing holidays that everybody gets jealous about; I have visits to the tiny bit of family I have and friends, where I sort of am me; and then the time here. So it's a strange existence.

As well as taking extended periods out to connect with friends, participants fit relationships around their daily lives. One comments, 'another thing about being a vicar is sometimes friends just drop by, which is great' (male SM, 2011 cohort), while a full-time stipendiary curate describes a dilemma over taking time out of her working day to spend time with a supportive friend. Investment in her mental and spiritual health through that relationship is here framed as conflicting with her ministerial role because of workload, time pressure and lack of clear boundaries (see previous section on physical and mental wellbeing). When her friend asks to meet,

you think, next week's diary! And you suddenly get, 'right, ok if you can get to me, then come for lunch, because I think, well, I can do that in a working day'. ... But then, if you're not careful, you then feel guilty that you are taking time out. But actually, this is part of who I am. She's been a spiritual support forever, since I was eighteen. And if I don't maintain those relationships as well, that's not then going to do my mental and spiritual health any good. I think again it all fits in with that sense of, what's a working day and where is space for [me] in it? (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

We have noted above that, as perhaps in this case, curates have less control over their time than incumbents and that permission to rest is empowering. The stipendiary incumbent previously mentioned who records her hours to allow herself to take time out without guilt extends this to relational as well as physical and mental wellbeing:

I find it much easier to give myself permission if I've recorded my hours, not because I'm working out what the church deserves, but I know if I'm going over a certain amount that I myself am not going to be very well. I need to have my relationships and health, and also to sleep at night. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

On a day-to-day basis, several clergy mention social media such as WhatsApp as a helpful tool for keeping in touch with friends amid a busy lifestyle:

my friends live all around the country and I find it really supportive being able to get in touch with people via social media privately. That's where I get a lot of support. It's very nourishing I find, social media. (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

Private groups such as this are mentioned more frequently than more open social media networks which, for at least one participant, contribute to as well as reduce isolation:

Sometimes when you see on Facebook that friends of yours that you used to be in a church with have all gone away for the weekend and of course you've not been part of it, it can be a little bit sad. Facebook has its moments, you know I love Facebook and hate Facebook. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Ministry context

Relationships within ministerial contexts, especially parish ministry, can be complex and difficult to navigate. Factors such as time and distance make a difference to a parish priest's capacity to spend time with people in their parish, with some SSM curates in particular commuting some distance from their home, given that curates are normally expected to serve their title post in a different parish from their sending church. One participant comments, 'it's hard to be a presence and relational with people

when you're not there' (male SM, sympathising with the experiences of a female SSM curate), and another explains:

the parish relationships probably aren't as close, but there is a parish priest, and I'm the curate. And I just don't have enough time to spend in the parish, because it's a 20 minute drive to get there, and that's an issue. But then again if I took a parish that was where I lived, that, I'm not too keen on that either because I like to have my own life, so some place within about a five minute drive would be nice. But my ministry is where my feet are, to a certain extent, and so if I spend time in a parish, that's where it is, the relationships get developed, and if I spend time in airport lounges, that's where my ministry is developed. (Male SSM curate)

The language used here demonstrates the integration of ministry and wider life that is particularly emphasised by several SSMs. While, as we have seen when discussing workload, boundaries of part-time ministerial roles can be difficult to manage, it is also the very fuzziness of the distinction between ministry and the rest of life that some SSMs highlight as one of the advantages and joys of their work. The curate quoted above, who has a demanding job alongside his curacy, states elsewhere that he has formally agreed to serve a fixed number of hours per week and only increases these occasionally if he is able and willing. However, in the last sentence quoted above he uses the terms 'relationships' and 'ministry' interchangeably, implying that his ministry takes place and is facilitated through his relationships in the entirety of his life, rather than being bounded by time and space. He goes on to describe examples of the 'interface between work and ministry,' such as performing baptisms and providing pastoral care for work colleagues and acquaintances. Thus, even where functional or parochial boundaries are strongly adhered to, the boundaries between ordained ministry and the rest of life may be blurred or non-existent. Another SSM (2006 cohort) who has run his business from his village for over 30 years and lived there for over 50 years in total describes 'a deep in-growing into the community.' He finds his ministry both in work relationships, for example conducting the funeral of a client whose son 'came to me and said, "look, can you take her funeral? Because you are the only clergyman she ever spoke to,"' and through local relationships, for example, a 'young lad [who] came up and asked me to conduct a wedding. He said, "after all, you have buried ten of my family, it'd be nice to do something, you know, a little bit more cheerful."'

Stipendiary ministers also describe forging deep, ongoing pastoral relationships with people in their local community, although this is more likely to occur through ministry rather than the other way round: 'my experience is that, as a parish priest, I think you are or at least you can be fully integrated into the whole kind of, you know, experience that somebody goes through' (female SM, 2006 cohort). This participant, currently working in an urban area, suggests that rural ministry may be more conducive to building relationship: 'one of the things I kind of miss about rural ministry is that ... when you've got sort of six small villages, you know, you are going to see that [bereaved] person again, you are going to bump into them at the barn dance or, you know, whatever.' She also describes staying in touch with people from past ministry contexts ('I still see her because she now runs a shop in [county]'), especially through social media: 'I have contact through social media with people that I ministered to when I was a curate ... and I think very often you can have that ongoing relationship with people that I think, you know, is incredibly valuable.' This is not the perspective of all SMs, some of whom deliberately avoid putting down roots in a community because 'you're just really conscious that actually I am not going to be here for huge amounts of time' (male SM, 2011 cohort).

The relationships discussed so far are largely pastoral, although we can see some possible overlap with friendship in continued relationships once an ordained minister has moved post. The extent to which participants establish friendships within the context of their ministry varies according to how they define friendship, how appropriate they consider such relationships to be and how able they are to build them.

Three key aspects of friendship can be identified in participants' discussions. First, some clergy talk about having friends in their parish in the sense of social activity: 'I have plenty of activities that I take

part in and really enjoy with people locally and I've friends there' (female SM, 2006 cohort). However, these friendships are often limited in depth: this participant adds, 'At the same time, what those are in terms of relationships is hard to say. ... I haven't got lifelong friends here and it's difficult for a clergy person to have friends in the benefice because you can't talk openly.' This sense of reserve in parish relationships is shared by many of our participants and echoed here by a curate who describes social interactions such as dinner as tiring 'because you do have to keep those boundaries up' (female SM, 2015 cohort). In her case, the boundaries stem from a felt need to 'constantly be on positive' towards people associated with the church: 'I don't want to be going to them and saying, "this week has been really hard." That is pretty much all they are seeing of the church anyway.' Parish friends 'definitely feel like work,' and do not provide 'a safe space of people you can just offload onto ... [or] someone who gets it,' and she recognises that such relationships are not equally balanced:

from their perspective they don't realise that they are work for me. If they want to do stuff and I've already worked four nights that week and they want to do something on a Friday night and I just want to say no, they don't understand that.

For many of our participants, then, parish friendships are intentionally limited in depth. Clergy may also be cautious of political dynamics within their congregation ('some people will want to be your friend and they want power' (female SM, 2006 cohort)), and they may not wish or may feel obliged not to share their personal lives with people for whom they are a public figure and feel responsibility:

You can have friends, but you have to be very careful about it. ... I've learnt it through experience. I've learnt that actually, (a) there are aspects of who I am that I would not share with people in the parish, just too personal for them to know about their vicar, and the other side of that is that when you are trying to contain and hold the personal lives of the people in your congregation, sometimes it is just not appropriate to have that kind of relationship with them. (Male SM, 2006 cohort)

Self-supporting ministers who remain in their sending parish often face an additional challenge, as their role changes in relation to people with whom they are already friends. Navigating multiple relational identities is challenging at a practical as well as an emotional level, as an OLM curate who has been part of her local church for several years explains:

I have a lot of difficulty determining what is work and what is friendship. That is quite a difficult thing for me to do. So, day off, somebody phones you, is that work or is that friendship if they are in trouble? You know, do I say, 'talk to me tomorrow,' or do I say, 'I'll drop everything and sort you out'?

Not all clergy feel the need to maintain strong relational boundaries. Some of those who describe friendships with parishioners refer to the second aspect of friendship: the need for support. This may be practical support: 'I mean it's not that we're in each other's houses all the time. ... But I know that if I've got a problem with such and such in the house I'll just ring so and so, I can say can you come and fix this for me or can I have a lift to so and so or-' (female SM, 2006 cohort), or it may be emotional support, as in the case of a curate who switched church due to bullying: 'I'm being supported by the new incumbent and friends, they're friends at church who know about it' (male SSM, 2015 cohort). Several participants mention having been advised during training or by bishops not to make friends in the parish, and some feel anxious about having contravened that advice:

I got that first message, 'don't make friends in the parish,' but without them I wouldn't survive. Places or people who would just let me go and talk at them for an evening out, I kind of think, 'Am I just using them? Is this a friendship or what have you?' and again this is part of my guilt thing about should I go and use somebody in the parish to go 'de de de de de' at them? (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

Some clergy seek friendship in certain aspects of their lives while retaining boundaries relating to their ministry. This is evident particularly in the stories of mothers:

I've also found a good few friends within our church that I can share the life of being a mum with, not necessarily ministry. I think that's really important to have. Other women that you can just relate to, particularly when your children are going through various milestones. ... That's been really important to me. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

She also echoes the experience of other participants in recognising the implications of ordained ministry for family members: 'our children have got to have friends. They've got to have people that they can be vulnerable with. My husband as well. He's needed that.' Another participant, however, describes the reserve in relationships beyond ministry to be more on the part of other people:

It's taken me a long time to get to that point where I am also a mum on the playground and not just the vicar, and that their nervousness about 'oh, the vicar's standing next to me on the playground'. No, no, no, at the moment I'm just [child 1] and [child 2]'s mum, and I'm going through the same, you know actually yes this is my child having an epic meltdown, won't go to school today; just because I'm stood here in a dog collar doesn't mean I'm any different from you, and my kids certainly are no different to yours, today he's having a meltdown. (Female SM, 2011 cohort)

The same woman explains how she uses her dog collar symbolically to switch between identities: 'even though I'm always ordained, if I've not got my collar on I'm just now being Mummy.' She notes that, while 'people don't take any notice, they know you're the vicar anyway,' it is a helpful boundary marker for herself: 'I'm more able to say, "can I give you a ring tomorrow" if I'm not wearing it.'

The third key theme discussed by participants in relation to friendship is intentional vulnerability. While, as we have seen above, some clergy allow themselves to become vulnerable in relationships as they seek support, others consciously recognise this as an essential characteristic of friendship and seek to cultivate it. One, who notes, 'Jesus calls us to be friends of sinners ... "friends of" actually is about risk and cost and vulnerability,' describes a minister who modelled this approach for him:

Every other minister I have ever met has always wanted to get close to me but had never wanted me to get close to them and made themselves vulnerable. And in that, within that Church Army captain I saw somebody who let his guard down ... and because [other ministers] never let their guard down I had, I guess, looking back on it, just a little bit of distrust and thinking to myself 'no I'm not, if you're not willing to let your guard down, why do you expect me to let my guard down?' (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Another comments that, in regard to relationships within the parish,

There's obviously stuff that you can't share, but I do find for flourishing the more vulnerable you are as a leader, and the more willing you are to share your life with people, then you see dramatic fruit from that. ... It is not an effort, and I'm just being me. People really appreciate that you are sharing your life with them. That's been probably a highlight really. I suppose I would have an air of caution on telling people have not to make friends. I know why they do it, and yes, you don't want to be telling your whole life story, but I think people can be sensible and have a bit of both really. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

For both these participants, the primary motivation in allowing oneself to be vulnerable within parish relationships is to be effective, authentic ministers. As is clear from the curate's account, boundaries are still maintained with regard to the extent and depth of sharing. Participants appear mindful of implications for safeguarding, even while they face dilemmas over the appropriate course of action in a given situation (for example whether to see people of the opposite sex alone, or to drive an unpredictable drugs user to appointments). Unlike those who emphasise the support aspect of friendship, this is an intentional vulnerability that does not arise from any personal need on the part

of the minister. There is also little evidence that the relationship works in the other direction, where ordained ministers share more of their lives in response to parishioners' vulnerability. Rather, clergy are likely to interpret such situations in a professional frame and tighten their relational reserve:

I'm quite strong on, you know, my boundaries because even people who are in our kind of closest friendship circle, I know the things that are happening in their lives and I know that at times they'll turn to me, not as just a friend but as someone who they kind of- they want like real pastoral support, and so I'm offering that, but it just means I feel like I can't loosen the boundary at all when it comes to my own things, things that are happening in my own life. (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

Given the difficulties with establishing deep friendships within their congregations, clergy often rely on the support of friendships from beyond their ministry context, as we have seen above. Some also form helpful relationships with people within the local community but outside their church who have an understanding of the issues they face, for example a headteacher or the wife of a local pastor. Others find friendship and support in lay ministers and churchwardens. Another important source of support is clergy colleagues and peers, which is examined below.

Before leaving congregational relationships, we should note that pastoral care and friendship are not the only ways in which clergy relate to people in their churches. As mentioned above when discussing workload, parish priests also, to varying degrees, seek from their congregations encouragement and collaboration in the tasks of ministry, and can experience criticism in return. There is evident tension in the role of incumbent, with participants feeling (sometimes simultaneously) personally responsible for the entire ministry of the church, frustrated in the lack of support from parishioners, and misunderstood regarding the nature and measure of their work:

it takes time to build teams ... And then it's that willingness to let go and allow others to do it, because there is that thing I think, of oh yeah I'm the vicar I need to be doing it. So it's kind of like how do I delegate without abdicating responsibility, so delegate the correct levels of authority and responsibility and letting people take on areas of mission and ministry but actually still overseeing it? (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

The difference between what people understand of your role, and the reality, are so stark that it is funny. They say, 'oh Sunday is your busy day, and Christmas is your busy time of the year,' as though you do nothing the rest of the time. You think, if only you had some idea of what ministry is like then you might realise. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Not all clergy feel misunderstood by their parishioners. A single female incumbent, for example, describes the people in her churches as her 'base of support,' commenting that they 'recognise that it's a tough thing and ... some of them will ask often how I am' as well as expressing support in other ways such as throwing her a birthday party.

Despite the blurred boundaries discussed above, some SSMs have been able to draw on the self-supporting nature of their role to manage congregational expectations and participation. One SSM incumbent in full-time employment beyond the parish worked with a parishioner skilled in change management to develop an effective lay team, following

an exercise which was to say to the parish, 'Right what do you want as a parish? Because I cannot-' The parish was growing numerically and in other ways and I felt I was unable to do it justice, so I said, 'Look, what do you want as a parish from me? And what I can't give, we need to grow and train people.' (Male SSM, 2006 cohort)

Another SSM, currently working full-time in ministry without an incumbent, explains,

[The parishioners] weren't aware that I didn't get paid, because somebody, when they said, 'oh you can give up the 8 o'clock service and do all the 10.15 services because you know you

get paid’ – this was the treasurer! And I said, ‘no, I was ordained non-stipendiary. ... Now they know and they are very supportive, and they are the ones that say, ‘don't let us push you too much, but we want you to do this, that and the other.’ (Female SSM, 2006 cohort)

Both these participants have had honest conversations with their parishioners about their limits and what can be expected from them. In both cases, the conversation drew on a practical (rather than theological) interpretive framework relating to financial remuneration and, for the first participant, clear external responsibilities. Stipendiary clergy may find such conversations harder because they are unable to draw on such logics which, if anything, work in reverse: stipendiary clergy are paid to minister. Part of this ministry, of course (for both SMs and SSMs), involves pastoral care for their parishioners so, given the disinclination to share their personal lives and cares with members of their congregation, clergy may feel reluctant to reveal the extent of their workload: ‘There is the sense that so much of what you do is not seen. You want people to have an idea, but at the same time you are there to care, and most of those around you have got issues and you don't want to burden them’ (male SM, 2011 cohort).

Clergy colleagues

A key set of relationships for ordained ministers is those with other clergy, whether immediate colleagues, local networks or more widespread. A wide range of factors contribute to the quality of such relationships, including the personalities of those involved, the context and purpose of the relationship, sociodemographic and role differences, and power dynamics.

Parochial clergy therefore experience varied relationships with other clergy within their parish or benefice regardless of church or benefice structure. Team ministries, for example, can be extremely positive contexts in which to work (‘being part of a team has been, you know, incredibly supportive’ (female SM, 2006 cohort)), or very stressful (‘it isn't a team at all, and it hasn't gelled, and it is a struggle, because you don't feel that you have that collegiate support’ (female SM, 2011 cohort)). Larger and greater churches can provide collegiality (‘you slot into the praying life of [the church], and so there's somebody to say morning prayer with, ... there's a lunchtime, there's an evening service’ (female chaplain & SSM, 2011 cohort)), but they can also isolate (‘because we're doing so many different things it's not as though we clergy work together as a team very often, so that's a challenging relationship’ (male SM, 2015 cohort)).

Several participants have one or two immediate ordained colleagues, such as an incumbent, an assistant minister or a curate. Again, these relationships vary in quality. The curate-training incumbent relationship, particularly important to wellbeing, is discussed in more detail below. Retired clergy are also sometimes mentioned as sources of practical support and advice (and, in one case, stress), as are workplace colleagues for chaplains. One participant points to the facilitated use of psychological profiling tools within a local team as enormously helpful to smooth collaboration between clergy.

Isolation is a particular problem for clergy who have little or no support from other ordained ministers within their parish, with single clergy, those in rural locations and those who have recently moved from a more collegial context especially vulnerable. The latter is evident in the experiences of some of the 2011 cohort, who describe the loneliness of moving into incumbency:

I've always had a colleague and never worked on my own before, so that was a real adjustment which was difficult. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

I think I'd echo what [name] was saying about loneliness being an issue. That is a significant thing. In my curacy I was in a small team, staff team, in the church and in my time before ordination training I was in a very large church, so we had about ten or twelve of us on the staff team. We used to meet every morning to pray together. ... Just that support and knowing that other people are there and you can talk to people about what is going on. Now in the

immediate context within the parish there is nobody that I could really speak to, especially about the issues of parish life. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

A single incumbent ordained in 2006 and in a rural benefice explains that she has learnt to adapt to isolation:

it's the nature of clergy life to be isolated, and particularly in this part of the world where we are physically isolated from each other as well as isolated in any other way. ... Yes, I feel isolated, but then I'm kind of used to it, so it is what it is. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

Most clergy are eventually able to mitigate isolation to some extent by investing in relationships beyond their own parish or benefice. The deanery chapter is an obvious potential source of mutual support and most participants find this to be so, to varying degrees. For some, Chapter is a space where they are able to share deeply and receive prayer and encouragement: 'if I had a colleague come and said, I'm having a really tough time, the agenda would be changed and we would just pray for them instead' (female SM 2015). Some participants describe finding this extremely helpful, including two curates covering vacancies ('they've been very sympathetic and very encouraging' (male SM)); 'I've got some very good, relatively new incumbent colleagues and they are great' (male SM)), and an incumbent in a deprived urban area where the number of priests is declining,

so in terms of collegiality, you are working on your own a huge amount, but my colleagues and my chapter, we are part of a very strong chapter, we meet down the pub about once every six weeks, and it's fantastic, and so I feel very supported locally by clergy. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

For others, Chapter provides a forum in which to share about their respective ministries, learn from speakers and/or strengthen their identity as part of the deanery and diocese, rather than a place of deep personal sharing. In the words of one curate,

You go along, you have a nice cup of tea and a lovely piece of cake served to you by somebody who's come to volunteer to look after all these things, and you chat about things. It's no huge movement or change that comes of it but it's good because it's unity, so it's worth doing for that alone, yeah, so that's nice. (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

Some participants do not find Chapter helpful, one describing it as 'a collection of lonely individuals who come together for a meeting or a lunch or something, don't connect and then disappear again' (female SM, 2006 cohort), and two specifically referring to tensions between colleagues of different traditions. Several self-supporting ministers mention difficulties with attending meetings because they take place at times they are working elsewhere: 'I went to my first chapter meeting in eight years, last month, because they moved it to a time when I could get to it: they moved it to a breakfast' (male SSM, 2006 cohort). This is indicative of strongly felt (by SSMs) divisions between self-supporting and stipendiary ministers, with some SSMs describing being made to feel like 'second-class' priests (see also the discussion of barriers to participation later in the report). One self-supporting incumbent comments,

I have a very slight feeling, and it is only a feeling, it's nothing tangible, because you're SSM, the brotherhood and sisterhood of stipendiary, and let's say in the chapter, look upon you as probably not at their level, like, you know, well, you're self-supporting so you don't know what it's like to run a parish. Well, I do. (Male SSM incumbent, 2006 cohort)

Self-supporting ministers are not the only group to experience differences in certain aspects of identity causing problems for their relationship wellbeing. Chaplains also describe feelings of marginalisation, while some participants point to class, sexuality, race and tradition as factors hindering them from fully participating in the life of the church (discussed in more detail in the section on participation).

Beyond the deanery, participants interact with other clergy in numerous ways, including local ecumenical groups; action learning sets; reflective practice groups (some facilitated through the diocese); training and development courses such as for spiritual direction; prayer partners, triplets or cells; Facebook groups; WhatsApp groups; online huddles; and role-specific communities such as for pioneers. Curates engage in IME groups and events, which vary between dioceses, and many participants across all cohorts describe intentional patterns of structured and unstructured contact with people with whom they trained (either in IME 1 or IME 2), such as regular retreats and frequent social media contact in private and/or open forums. As with Chapter, how each of these types of interaction is experienced varies from person to person. Unlike Chapter, which exists at least in principle for most ordained ministers, most other groups and support relationships must be actively sought:

when you're on your own actually, you know, nobody's going to do any sort of engagement for you and I found early on nobody's going to ring me to say 'how are you doing? Do you want a coffee? Do you want this?' So I went out and found other things. Now some of that are huge support mechanisms and actually is our ecumenical prayer meeting that happens weekly so I tap into that and I've got some really good ecumenical friends. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Whatever form they take, relationships with other clergy appear important in two key areas. Firstly, they can provide support—whether practical, emotional or spiritual—including, crucially, a shared understanding of life as an ordained person and, ideally, a safe space in which to speak openly without fear of being judged. This varies enormously with the diversity of the clergy population and ministers seek out others with whom they identify in some way, whether because of role, gender, family status, stage of ministry or any other aspect of identity, for support, prayer and advice:

there are three full-time chaplains at the hospital ... I know there is support there as well in our little group. ... [A]nd I think because we're all like chaplains and we understand about health a little bit and wellbeing, you know, and I know that I've been to some particularly difficult death or you know, a baby who's been stillborn, something like that, I can always- I know I could talk to one of the other chaplains about it. (Female SSM & chaplain, 2015 cohort)

I've actually been looking around for other self-supporting ministers that work full-time. I'm surrounded by retired self-supporting ministers, but I'm keen to find people who work full-time, not necessarily in the diocese. (Male SSM, 2015 cohort)

The thing that has been incredibly helpful for me is that I'm part of a Facebook support group ... set up recognising that ministry for women with families, you know, can have its own separate challenges - so it's called a Clergy Mummies group, which I don't think any of us particularly like the title but it kind of says what we are, you know, and for me that I think has been a life-saver on many occasions. (Female SM 2006)

Secondly, as we have noted above concerning deanery chapter, relationships with other clergy (whether individuals or groups) provide a way of locating oneself within the Church (both the Anglican church and beyond). This may function at a practical level, through networking and sharing information and good practice. At a deeper level, it can shape ministers' identities in relation to the Church and their own vocation, strengthening or weakening a sense of belonging and interconnectedness. Again, this operates through multiple dimensions of identity, including role, gender, social class, sexuality and theology (see the later discussion of this under 'participation'). For example, a stipendiary minister in a benefice with two parishes defines herself in relation to her colleagues on the basis of parish size and tradition:

Mine has 19,000 people in it. The other one has 2,500 people in it. How does that work? But the other church is very high, and we are low evangelical and of all the bizarre links I have is with that other church, but we're not- there is actually nothing that really links us apart from

the fact we're all in the same town together and so although I kind of hang around on the edge of their group, it's still a group which I think, 'Well, I'm not really part of this.' (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

Curates and training incumbents

One of the relationships discussed at length by participants is that between curate and training incumbent. Here we examine two key influencers of this relationship: the process by which a curacy is agreed and the expectations of each party.

When arranging curacies, dioceses (usually via DDOs) must attempt to match each curate with an appropriate parish and incumbent. This can happen in a variety of ways, with the initiative taken by either the diocese or the curate. Given the fixed times of ordinations, there is often an element of pressure to have the curacy arranged. Curates are well aware of this: 'theoretically you know it's meant to be a free and open choice and decision ... but actually there's quite a lot of, you know – maybe unintended pressure that's steering you to – and obviously it's time sensitive isn't it' (male SM). Adding to the pressure to accept the first curacy offered is a reluctance to appear difficult ('if you say no, the first time is, ooh, this is awkward. If they put you somewhere else it gets very awkward' (male SM, 2015 cohort)) and, especially in dioceses that have more curates than available curacies, a fear of being released to find a title post elsewhere. This is a concern particularly for those who are tied to a location because of, for example, family reasons or a partner's job:

in [diocese] if you turn down your first offer of curacy you're basically released into wherever. My wife ... is very attached to working [here] and so I couldn't run the risk of being released ... I'm from [city], I've grown up in [city], my family are in [city] ... I couldn't run the risk of being released out into another diocese. (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

This curate goes on to explain that this fear of being released prompted him to accept a post with a training incumbent whom he knew 'wasn't the right person for me to be working with': 'So I took the post, even though I knew when I met him that this was going to be a challenge and was going to be difficult.' The curacy eventually broke down and he moved to a different parish.

Some participants experiencing difficult relationships with their training incumbents suggest that the problems should have been foreseen by the diocese, questioning the basis on which title posts are assigned: 'this person should not have been given a curate because previous history told the diocese that this wasn't going to be a good thing really' (female SM); 'in practice [having a curate is] seen as a sort of badge' (male SM). Others comment that the 'blind date' process by which a decision is required based on two or three hours of time with the potential TI is inadequate. However, some curacies proposed by the curates themselves have also proved difficult, including one by a gay curate who suggested a church that would be accepting of his sexuality, and another by a curate who had turned down the first post offered to her and 'so they were scrabbling around for another curacy and I knew my mate and I thought well she's got a parish, she's part-time, that's all right, that'll work.' While the former has remained in post (although unhappily), the latter eventually moved to another curacy.

Once in post, several participants—both curates and TIs—describe finding expectations unmet. Where this is experienced, it relates largely to differing approaches to ministry, conflicting views on workload and the role of the curate, and/or the sense of agency of the curate or TI.

Curates may differ from their TIs both in what they prefer to do and how they prefer to do it. Although differences need not cause significant problems, some participants mention them as negatively

contributing to the relationship with their TI. One, for example, feels restricted by her TI from practising her preferred tradition:

he's a dictat- you must do this, no, no I don't want this, we're not doing morning prayer, I don't believe in morning prayer, I don't like the baptism service so I've changed it ... And I'm a liturgist, I love the liturgy. (Female SSM)

For others, their TI's approach to ministry feels like a backward step from their IME Phase I theological training, one describing training received from his TI as 'top-notch ... if I was being trained for doing one parish in 1986' (male SM, trained contextually), while another explains:

I felt fully immersed for a church that isn't here yet, and I think the gap between what it was I was experiencing, the transformational learning and environment that I was in, in some ways was the shock between that and what is happening on the shop floor, on the ground with many of our colleagues who trained maybe 20/30 years ago. (Female SM pioneer, trained non-residentially)

On a more practical level, several participants comment that they feel pressured to imitate the day-to-day working practices of their TI:

as a curate you are very much dictated to, and said, 'this is how you should do it,' and therefore, because that's the person you are learning from and he's training you, there's a sense of, okay I have to do this. But actually, all clergy don't work like my training incumbent. (Female SM)

These different approaches to ordained ministry inform expectations about the role of the curate and their workload. The curate describing his TI as 'top-notch for 1986' comments,

He's lovely and he's a very experienced priest that I learn so much from and he's the most dedicated man I've seen, but he's very much Father knows best, old-school, let's do the moving on in baby steps all the time which, and having been you know, previously had a boss that said 'go and run a department, here's a hundred thousand pounds to invest in something,' you kind of just go and get on with it. I'm used to that kind of world and it's a bit urch. (Male SM)

A similar frustration is expressed by another curate coming from a career in which he held significant responsibility:

what he really wanted was a curate who was 23, 24 whatever the earliest age you can be, who'd just been to university that would go 'yes Father, no Father, I'll do the photocopying and I'll polish the brass and I'll walk around the streets because I'm not allowed to do anything else and I'll be happy for three years doing that.' Of course what he got was a thirty-something ex-[role] who, you know, had managed staff, managed resources, who basically said I'm bored of polishing brass, I'm bored of just walking around, you know, I want stuff to stimulate me, I want to be able to take a more priestly role in the life of the church. (Male SM)

Age and professional background are therefore clearly factors shaping curates' and TIs' expectations and experiences of their role and therefore of their relationship. Other socio-demographic differences also contribute, including class ('he perceived me as being very working class and so he was very much upstairs-downstairs' (male SM)) and gender:

I would say [my TI] is very typical in that he is a male and his wife does the home and deals with – that kind of traditional way of being. So when I am struggling to juggle house, kids, Christmas present buying, all of that kind of thing in this season, he doesn't get that at all. ... I think sometimes he says, 'well, how are you going to cope?' It's like, well, women do, and I will and that's fine, but I won't necessarily be a workaholic in quite the same way as he is, because he works every day, morning, afternoon and evening I would say. (Female SM)

The workload of the TI him/herself is also an important factor influencing what they expect from their curate. We have already seen the relief with which a TI with no other ordained colleagues can welcome a new curate, partly for the collegiality and comradeship they bring, but also for the share they take of the burden of ministry: 'We now have a full-time curate as of July. That's made a tremendous difference and actually having a full-time colleague has been fantastic' (male SM, 2011 cohort). Some curates mention feeling like 'an extra pair of hands' (male SM), struggle to establish boundaries with a 'workaholic TI' (female SM), or describe how IME events and involvement in activities outside the parish can cause tension:

I have got involved in stuff because I've either been asked by an archdeacon, or it is my passion and I can't not do it, but my training incumbent isn't particularly happy with the fact that I'm doing stuff outside of parish ... I feel guilty because I'm not doing what she wants me to do and I'm feeling that I'm almost doing the parish out of time. ... And the bits that I'm doing out of the parish are the bits that are helping me to flourish, but I feel guilty doing them. (Female SM)

Training incumbents, on the other hand, can also find curates' approaches to ordained ministry difficult. One comments,

I get, 'Well, I'm not doing that because it is my day off, it is my time off, or it is my study day. I can't meet with you then because I've already done enough today and I'm too busy,' or just plain ignoring me for days on end when I send a message. And when I do get a response it is all problematic. (Male SM, 2006 cohort)

He attributes this approach to the curate's IME I training,

where, quite rightly, she was told to look after herself, but she is taking it to extremes. Whilst wellbeing is important, actually there is a reality to our ministry that we need to be careful that the younger generations that are being trained, aren't being trained to make barriers around themselves to the extent that they are not able to do the ministry that they are there to do.

Here, expectations of curacy clearly differ as the needs and preferences of the TI and church conflict with those of the curate. Likewise, another TI (female SM, 2006 cohort) describes how a placement was arranged for her curate at a key moment in the church calendar without consulting her, leaving her with the prospect of managing several churches single-handedly. She echoes some other TIs in describing having a curate as an extra burden rather than as a colleague with whom to share the load.

As well as by workload management, tensions between the needs of the church and the needs of the curate are informed by differing understandings of the role of the curate and the purpose of curacy. We have seen that curates can experience frustration when they feel under-challenged: indeed, one observes,

at the end of the day I'm always going to be a difficult curate because ... ultimately I want to be the person that is able to make some decisions and as a curate you're never in a position where you can make decisions. (Male SM)

The tension may be experienced at a vocational as well as practical level. The first phase of IME is often considered much more formational than the second phase, in the sense that it is more focussed on the individual and their vocation and spiritual development. Entry into curacy, and the context of 'someone else's' church within which one plays a junior role, can be disorienting, especially if, as for

many of our participants, during IME I they have been trained to be incumbents rather than assistants. One curate reflects,

Through all of the vocational processes and through training, there was a great sense of being formed and discovering who God is calling you to be, uniquely you to be. I feel that having gone into curacy, that's been lost. (Female SM)

This can be especially difficult for pioneer curates who are placed with non-pioneer training incumbents, which can lead to frustration and a deep feeling of being misunderstood vocationally and spiritually:

part of the thing that pioneering is ... looking at other ways, not better or worse but different ways of connecting with people, so there'll be 99 dumb ideas and one that could be absolutely brilliant. So if you're with someone who 'this is the way we do it', you literally pull the oxygen out and the spiritual oxygen more than anything. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

Such vocational disorientation can be deepened when a curate (pioneer or otherwise) is placed in a context with a tradition very different from their own, as was the case in one curacy that broke down: 'Me and my former training incumbent had like the absolute opposite ideas of what it means to be a priest' (female SM). However, another curate in a church different from their preferred tradition has a good relationship with her TI and chooses to embrace the position of assistant:

There's just something about curacy, isn't there, where you just have to... you are playing second fiddle, you are not in charge. You are there to be loyal and supportive to the person who is carrying the vision for the longer term. (Female SM)

The relationship between TI and curate is negotiated in the context of social structures, such as gender, age and professional background, and ecclesial structures, such as the threefold order of ordained ministry, the roles of curate and TI, local church organisational structures, diocesan and national roles and policies and IME Phases 1 and 2. Each of these informs not only the attitudes and expectations of the TI and curate, but also the extent to which they are or feel able to act in any given circumstance. Central to many of the tensions in the above discussion is the extent to which the curate and, in some cases, the TI, feels they have agency within their role and within the curate-TI relationship. Many of the curates expressing frustration, anxiety or anger in relation to their TI perceive themselves to have little power in decisions about where, when and how they minister. This is intensified where there are socio-demographic differences between the curate and the TI which may influence relational dynamics through prejudice or lack of understanding. It is also intensified where the curate has experience of or expects (possibly through training) high levels of power, or where the curate feels isolated and therefore unable to address the situation. Participants describing positive relationships with TIs tend to feel supported, understood and empowered: 'I have a good relationship with the training incumbent who is happy to let me try new stuff and go with it, and that kind of thing, and is generous about mistakes' (female SM). In the words of another participant,

I think my TI's brilliant, really supportive. He sort of encourages and enables me to do, you know, what I need to do and want to do and where my passions are and gives me space to do what I need to do in terms of training. And very much understands that this is a training role not an associate minister role. (Male SM)

When the curate-TI relationship is under stress, each party may exercise agency in order to resolve or manage the situation. In some cases they are able to work within existing structures, as with the TI who chose 'to talk to the bishop, talk to the team rector, talk to various people about how I tactfully address what has become a huge stress and a huge problem' (male SM, 2006 cohort), or the curate bullied by his TI who turned to his IME officer and was able to arrange a placement and eventually switch curacies. Sometimes clergy choose not to or do not feel able to draw on structural channels. This may be because they are not aware of them or do not have the confidence to contact the relevant

person; it may also be because the person with whom they are in conflict functions in some way as a gatekeeper to the potential support available. This is the case for several participants, including curates whose TI is also involved in their diocesan IME, 'which is pants, because it means everything I go to he's there and I don't feel as though I can say anything or express anything' (female SSM); a curate whose TI 'was elevated to bishop's staff, so he's now right up there as if he's a bishop, so you can't complain about him because he's so highly respected' (male SM); and a TI whose curate has personal connections meaning 'it's very difficult for me to get to the bishop' (female SM, 2006 cohort). More widely, curates may be reluctant to 'make waves and disrupt' because they are aware that, until the end of their curacy, they are under assessment (including by their TI): 'you know, someone has to write a report, you don't want to get a reputation out of it as someone who grumbles' (female SM).

Some curates who turn to their diocese describe their interests as coming second to those of the TI or wider church. Several note that they were asked to enter or continue a curacy despite diocesan awareness of problems: '[the diocesan officer] said that he cares about the curacy ending well and that's basically all he's interested in' (male SM). Others describe feeling that, although action was taken to resolve a difficult relational situation, their perspective as a curate was not fully heard or acknowledged, as one participant comments:

I think there's a sort of a bias towards the incumbent ... for a long time, who would I turn to? Well, when I did turn, it was also seen as, you know, a two way thing ... at no point has that been said that it should not have happened, you know, so I want people to say ... sorry, that should never have happened, it must not happen again and that would just make my life- that shows you've understood. (Male SSM)

Where a person is unable or unwilling to draw on diocesan resources to resolve the relationship (or does not see this as an appropriate course of action), they may exercise agency in other ways. Some curates understand tensions in their relationship with their TI in relation to their own practice and attitude, which they seek to change, for example:

I might have gripes about my training incumbent but that's only in terms of someone that you work with all the time who is a very different personality, but actually none of that is- it is only impacting on the fact that I can't say no, so then I work a little bit too much. (Female SM)

Others describe addressing difficult relationships by taking matters into their own hands to impose rigid boundaries and cooperate only on their own terms:

we have got that relationship where if he does something I just call him out on it, to his face, and if he doesn't like it tough. ... I'm in that position of not caring, so therefore if he does something, and says something and it's absolutely pathetic, I just sit there and say, 'no, that's really ridiculous.' (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

Other curates choose not to challenge the difficult relationship, either as a deliberate strategy ('I decided to try and play things differently [from my predecessor] and basically be flexible and go along but, yeah fine that actually can be quite stressful' (male SM)), or because they feel powerless to do so ('I'm thinking I'm in a public place here and am I going to argue with you and say look, get stuffed, because I know that's what I should have done' (female SSM)).

Good relationship management is clearly important, ideally on the part of both TI and curate: in the words of one participant,

the people that are having problems in that [TI-curate] relationship aren't particularly strong relationship managers in the first place, and they end up with TIs that are not particularly good relationship managers, and it's really a bit of a nightmare. (Male SSM)

Summary: relationship wellbeing

Looking across the four cohorts, we see ministers negotiating and renegotiating relationships in various ways as they move through different stages of training and ministry. Ordinands find themselves managing dislocation, either physically separated from loved ones or constantly moving between multiple relational spheres. While family relationships may face strain, relationships within the TEI learning environment (staff, peers and placement supervisors) become crucial for both support and formation. The transition into curacy involves, for many, stepping out of a secure, structured context where the focus has been largely on one's own vocation and formation, into an intense individual relationship with a training incumbent within a parish environment occupied with its own needs and priorities. Moving on into incumbency, for those who do so, represents a shift further into independence and, for some, loneliness, as IME support structures are removed and the realisation of responsibility dawns. Realistic management of expectations for all parties is important at moments of transition, as is the provision of appropriate, unconflicted systems of support.

Throughout, some relationships continue and must be managed with work boundaries (e.g. family and friends) or become integrated into ministry (e.g. work clients and local acquaintances, for some SSMs). Ministry both shapes and is shaped by close relationships, amid constant negotiation of the needs and preferences of others, especially for female clergy with families. Some relationships, such as with college or curacy peers, are intentionally maintained through regular patterns of engagement or instant access via social media, to provide mutual support in ministry, sometimes lasting many years. Others fall victim to pressures of time, distance and anti-social working patterns.

The pastoral nature of ordained ministry can be challenging, as clergy seek to manage relationships involving social, pastoral and professional aspects along with their own need for support and friendship. Most maintain an element of reserve *vis a vis* their parishioners, looking elsewhere for relationships in which they can be open about their personal lives. The search for authenticity and understanding often leads them to other clergy, whether individual relationships, local groups or far-flung networks, where they receive, to varying extents, practical, emotional and spiritual support. It is also partly in relation to other clergy that ordained ministers negotiate and define their identity within the wider Church, whether on the basis of commonality or of difference.

Strategies and approaches found helpful by Living Ministry participants

These are offered as an inexhaustive list with no comment on the value, wisdom or specific use of any item.

- Helpful relationships: spiritual direction, mentor, critical friend
- Support groups, e.g. OLMs, curates, college cohort, chapter, other clergy group, special interest groups
- Personal contact and support from bishops and senior diocesan staff
- Counselling
- Email and social media with peers, friends and family
- Involvement of (if desired) and support for families; moving church office out of vicarage
- Proactively building relationships within the diocese
- Establishing boundaries: switching off telephone, time with friends/family, time off (evenings, days, holidays), removing dog collar
- Parish colleagues: team facilitation and personality profiling, e.g. MBTI or Belbin; away days; develop lay team
- Selective friendships
- Online teaching (ordinands)

7. Vocational & spiritual wellbeing

To introduce the idea of vocational wellbeing, participants were asked to think about how far they felt they were currently in the place to which God had called, doing what God had called them to do. Spiritual wellbeing was referred to throughout discussions of other aspects of wellbeing (especially physical and mental as well as vocational), and participants were also asked to reflect on things they found helpful in this area.

Ordinands

IME Phase I is by definition a transitional stage, consisting in intentional spiritual formation and training to pursue a vocation, rather than a vocation in itself. Participants, who were at the time of the research in their first term of the second year of study, are aware of this and reflect on their spiritual and vocational wellbeing in this context. Most describe a process of intense scrutiny of both their calling and their spirituality, which several (across all modes of training) refer to as ‘deconstruction’ or, in the words of a female non-residential student, ‘college will tear you down and challenge things before it builds you back up.’ Ordinands experience this in multiple ways, including questioning and/or affirmation of their vocation to ordained ministry and various other aspects of their identity; uncertainty or confusion regarding the shape of their future ministry; and challenges to their theology and practice.

Calling and identity

Participants describe a range of experiences during the first 12-14 months of IME I in relation to their sense of calling to ordained ministry. While most still feel sure that they are called to ordination, several report having had strong doubts since beginning their studies. For some, these are about the calling itself: ‘the other day I was just like, “this is too hard. It shouldn't be this hard. Maybe I've got it wrong then. Maybe I'm not called”’ (female, non-residential); or a male non-residential student who wonders whether ‘people who have a sense of vocation often get funnelled into ordination ... whereas maybe there is something else.’ Others question their ability rather than their calling: ‘I don't doubt the calling, but I seriously wonder why on earth he called me and whether I'm going to be able to do it at the end of the day’ (female, non-residential). Doubts may also arise over the extent to which the person still wants to pursue their calling: ‘oh my goodness this is gonna be so costly ... Why would anyone want to be a vicar? This is horrendous’ (female, non-residential). Ordinands may experience any or all of these doubts, and they may be deep-seated and persistent (‘I'm still uncertain about whether I am going to end up being ordained or not’ (male, non-residential)), or short-lived and triggered by specific events or moods:

I have days where I wake up and I go just, ‘God why am I doing this, I'm not cut out for this, this is not, I just can't do it,’ and I have those wobbles, and then you have days where you think, ‘wow God, you've put me in the right place.’ (Female, context-based)

Not all ordinands have doubted their calling. One comments, for example, ‘it's the one thing I've never, ever questioned actually, even though I've questioned a lot last year other things, but I never once questioned my call’ (female, non-residential). Others have found their calling strengthened since they began training: ‘I think for me absolutely, it's confirmed it, time after time after time’ (female residential). A female context-based ordinand describes a strong sense of personal fulfilment despite the demands of training: ‘As challenging and as bonkers as the whole thing is, to feel like you're doing something that every single part of you feels like you should be doing is the most amazing thing.’

Those who have experienced doubts and questions point to a range of things that have helped reaffirm their calling, most of which involve support from other people. Some have found helpful spiritual direction: ‘he doesn't take me out of the confusion but he enables me to see that God is there in the

confusion' (male, non-residential), or talking through doubts with people who accompanied them through the discernment process: 'it's like she resets my calling, she reminds me of what I've felt called to in the first place, and that really lifts me' (female, context-based). A supportive training environment can also be important: 'particularly with our community here it's really easy to say to each other, "um I don't feel called to this today, I'm having a really bad day"' (female, context-based).

While some participants find the academic content of their training stimulating to their vocation ('part of my vocation is the study as well and I've just found that incredibly, just the whole mixture of it, fulfilling and enjoyable' (female, residential)), others (especially but not only residential students) struggle with being disconnected from the practice of ministry ('I feel that you're trying to make me into this academic person and that's not what I am and that's not what my heart is' (female, residential)). One female non-residential ordinand comments, 'generally, if you're not doing your placement and you're doing your assignments you kind of forget why you're doing it, you're just getting an assignment in,' adding, 'when I did my community placement in the hospital that kind of like reminded me, okay, this is why I'm doing it.' A male residential ordinand voices frustration with his placement as well as his studies: 'I didn't feel called to do chaplaincy work so the fact that I'm doing it now just in this situation is really frustrating because it's not what I want to do, and I also don't feel called to sit in a library for hours every day,' while another describes organising placements for himself so 'I then get the kind of spark that I know, this is where the bits of me come out that, you know, what I think is being called to ministry. But college life is a bit harder to do that' (male, residential). A context-based ordinand, on the other hand, describes feeling 'very called to the church we're in; there's a lot to do there,' while recognising that 'God might have other plans' for the future.

As well as (or as part of) questioning one's vocation, participants talk about other aspects of their identity being challenged during this intense period of formation:

God is deconstructing expectations perhaps, or working through things that I hadn't expected him to work on that I thought were sorted. So it's just very uncertain, it's that there's nothing solid to stand on I think, so probably vulnerable is the word I'd use. (Female, residential)

As mentioned earlier, such questioning can have implications for physical and mental wellbeing, which are closely related to spiritual wellbeing. In general, however, participants recognise that IME I is a transitional phase ('no one is called to be an ordinand' (male, residential)), and that the doubts and questioning are themselves formative:

I'm feeling a great state of confusion as to what, how my calling is to be lived out, but my sense is that is exactly where God wants me to be because I'm halfway through a process of formation and that process of formation hasn't formed me yet, and if I felt terribly certain about frankly, anything at this point, that there's a risk of that being something of my construction rather than God's construction if you see what I mean. So I'm happy in my confusion. (Male, non-residential)

Some see IME I as a 'necessary' stage and look forward to feeling more fulfilled as they enter curacy: 'I will be more fully myself, then I think everything else will improve' (male, residential). Others express more of a conflict within themselves. Some female ordinands describe struggling to hold in harmony their identity as an ordinand and their identity as a mother, challenged through very practical issues of time and distance. Others, particularly some of the older participants as they approach or have already begun retirement, articulate a strong sense of calling to ordained ministry overriding rational thought. The ordinand quoted above as doubting her ability to carry out her calling is in her late fifties and comments, 'no matter how much I sort of question it, I can't walk away.' Her experience is echoed by another of a similar age who explains, 'I am doing this very much in faith. Because in a sense it is absolutely ridiculous to be doing this at my time of life.' Her hope is that ordained ministry 'will actually make sense of' her varied previous careers, 'but it is very much a faith journey and ... where it's all leading to I do not know' (female, non-residential). A third participant, already of retirement age, talks of being 'driven:' 'I don't think I could live with myself if I weren't doing it because I would be so

conscious that I was going against God, so it's felt like I've been driven, but it's also felt right all the way along' (female, non-residential).

Shape of future ministry

While most participants are generally sure of their calling to ordained ministry despite questions and doubts, the future shape of their ministry is much less certain. For some this is not a problem: as one comments, 'I go with it and I don't try and plan ahead anymore because it's completely out of my hands' (female, context-based). She notes, however, that moving into curacy has practical implications that require planning, including finding schools for children. As well as practical matters, ordinands and their families may also have to navigate needs, preferences, careers and vocations of multiple family members (see the section on relationships for more discussion of how both training and ordained ministry affect families). In addition, some participants describe the challenge to their partners and children of negotiating a new identity as family of potential clergy. This varies enormously, with some remaining very detached from the church and their partner's training while others are intrinsically involved.

Some participants, as we have seen, do not have a fixed idea of what they will do, some have felt a specific call reaffirmed during IME I ('I have a very strong sense of vocation for rural ministry and actually training at college has only affirmed that' (female, non-residential)), and for some, training, their circumstances or their proposed curacy have led to confusion. Two female participants in different groups, for example, both in their fifties and therefore with less scope than younger participants to change direction, describe finding themselves in 'leafy, green, well-off, rural parishes,' despite thinking 'my call was to big housing estates' or 'came out of disadvantage.' Both have to some extent, although not entirely, reconciled themselves to the confusion, if not to the situation itself: 'now I'm in a place where I can just hold that in tension and know that God has it in his hands;' and

I have now got to the point where I'm not unhappy with that because it's actually going to mean that I'm actually going to do things like weddings, baptisms and funerals which don't happen in my visiting church and often may not happen in these sorts of city parishes that I think I might be called to.

Theology

One of the most demanding aspects of IME I as reported by participants is experiencing challenges to existing theological understandings and practices. This may occur in the classroom, in placements and/or within the TEI worshipping community, and is often a deliberate element of training for ordination, as ordinands are encouraged to broaden their understanding of and engagement with different perspectives. Participants across all modes of training describe being challenged and 'deconstructed' theologically:

there are things aren't there that we hear in lectures and you think – I mean I've come from a Christian background and you think you've got stuff relatively sorted ... but then someone throws something in and you think [gasps] 'I don't, I'm not sure what to think anymore.'
(Female, context-based)

Despite the frequent use of words such as 'terrifying,' 'traumatic' and 'vulnerable,' most portray this experience of 'wrestling with that stuff' (male, context-based) as ultimately beneficial to their faith development and formation. This may be through gaining a better understanding of perspectives that remain 'other' ('knowing that there are people out there who are using all the arts and sort of study and physicality and words in beautiful ways, I think that's something that I've really valued here' (female, non-residential)), or through deep personal reorientation:

all of a sudden feeling that all of your support has gone, just floating in space but then do you actually realise that what you are is being held incredibly securely, more securely, in the vast

greatness of God ... my faith has developed incredibly through that deconstruction of I think false props, if that makes sense, both in terms of my personal spirituality as well as my theology and doctrine. (Female non-residential)

As well as academic theology, ordinands are often faced with unfamiliar traditions and practices, as they simultaneously worship and seek spiritual nourishment themselves and learn how to facilitate this in others. While some find this enriching ('I've grown to value some things that I never would have in the past, so now even when I'm not at morning prayer at church I use morning prayer for myself' (female non-residential)), others feel spiritually depleted:

I really struggled with the amount of corporate prayer which meant that the time that I would normally spend in the mornings for example, in private devotion, was taken up with corporate morning prayer, and it was very hard to find any time in my day in a very busy week, to have personal, private time with God, and that is a really big part of my spiritual wellbeing. (Female, residential)

The contribution of church placements to ordinands' spiritual wellbeing also varies. The participant quoted immediately above comments that she receives little spiritual nourishment from her church placements, partly because she is 'in professional mode' while there as an ordinand, and partly because 'I've been in churches that are not, again, not remotely in my comfort zone,' adding, 'it's felt like a sort of deprivation of a really significant part of my spiritual life which is charismatic worship.' In contrast, an ordinand at a college where she experiences most people as 'much more Evangelical than I am' notes that her placement church has provided space for her to engage with her preferred tradition:

I come from an Anglo-Catholic tradition and that's where my heart is and where I feel nourished spiritually, so if it wasn't for my placement church that is in that tradition, I think spiritually I would feel a little bit undernourished through college. (Female, context-based)

She echoes several other participants, however, in understanding theological challenge as helpful to her priestly formation:

I've broadened my own personal views since being at college and I've embraced things that I really didn't think I would, and there are bits of it I would certainly take forward into future ministry ... you know, God-willing, I'm going to be a priest in the Church of England and that is a big thing and if I feel comfortable in lots of different settings, and kind of understand the accent of different things, then I think that's all for the good really.

As well as their own willingness to embrace and learn from theological challenges, participants draw on a range of sources to manage the intense exposure to unfamiliar doctrine, traditions and leadership roles that many experience. Where spiritual nourishment is not easily obtainable through college or church, some ordinands put in place their own strategies, including 'listening to my worship music in the car,' (female, context-based) and attending services and gatherings 'where I can join in with worship' (female, non-residential). Placement supervisors can help contextualise academic learning ('My supervisor, he's on the same page as me, so that really helps me with my theology and trying to understand' (male, context-based)), while friends outside the training environment can provide a safe space to talk things through: 'speaking to people, speaking to my Christian friends just brought me through' (female, non-residential). Participants also mention discussing difficulties and tensions with spiritual directors and, within the TEI, chaplains and teaching staff, as described by one context-based ordinand who experienced at the first residential a style of worship that 'absolutely scared me to bits':

But I sat down with [one of the tutors], and we went through it and talked about it. Since then, although not every worship has hit me, I've had some really profound experiences here that have actually changed how I can worship as well. Some of it I'm taking back to my parish.

Conversations with fellow students of different traditions can also be helpful when undertaken in a non-threatening environment, as an ordinand from a low Evangelical background at the same institution expresses:

I went for my retreat to Walsingham, and things of that I just didn't get. I was like, 'I don't get it, C.' But being alongside somebody, and I know that I can say, 'C, I don't get it,' and he won't take that as an offence. He'll say, 'well, this is how I see it.' Then [he] can do the same with me. (Female, context-based)

More generally, participants across all three modes of training describe the close TEI community discussed above in the section on relationships as supportive to their spiritual wellbeing:

I really think that the part-time training and residential weekends and residential weeks that we've had, even in a year, have been really fundamental to my spirituality. Something very affirming in worshipping as a group together over that period of time, even just six weekends in the year, has made a huge difference, it really cements the sensation of the presence of God in all of this. (Male, non-residential)

Within and alongside this, regular prayer is frequently mentioned as crucial to maintaining spiritual wellbeing and deepening faith. Retreats are mentioned by several, although time constraints mean that for some they are an aspiration more than a reality. Some participants, as we have seen, prefer personal to communal prayer and struggle with the corporate liturgy of the daily offices and Eucharist, whereas others find the latter helpful: 'I do morning prayer every morning and that keeps me centred' (female, context-based); 'just having to show up every day at the same time, sort of makes me feel whole somehow by that rhythm of prayer' (female, residential);

A healthy diet of daily office ... I also take Holy Communion in the week ... then also have a very good spiritual director, I think that provides me with the stability really which is healthy and I think if you can keep up that sort of pattern now, then it's ingrained in you. (Male, non-residential)

Ordained ministers

Clergy face issues related to vocational and spiritual wellbeing throughout their ministry. Here we look first at participants' accounts of their sense of vocation and calling, and then at how they talk about enacting that calling.

Calling to priesthood

None of the ordained participants in this study reports feeling that they made a fundamental mistake in discerning a vocation to ordained ministry, although several have doubts and questions about exactly what and where they are called to, and they extent to which they are able to fulfil this. For several, their original calling acts as an anchor providing security during difficult times, as explained by a female stipendiary minister:

initially the calling to do this was very, very strong and confirmed by various sources ... so that, when times get hard I can always go back to that story and recall the story and the people involved and go yes, I'm supposed to be doing this, you know, I'm not a rubbish vicar, I'm all right, I can do this, you know, God's called me to do this therefore he's going to help me, give me all I need to do. So there's the definite strong, you know, rock that I can stand on in terms of my calling to be a priest. (2006 cohort)

Some refer to what one describes as 'a sense of rightness about my ontological status' (female SM, 2015 cohort). However, as with ordinands, while the calling to priesthood may be secure, the shape

it takes is often much less clear. Participants also use the language of calling and vocation in relation to types of ministry (e.g. parochial or chaplaincy); types of role (e.g. incumbent, assistant, stipendiary or self-supporting); specific posts and places; tasks and approaches within a role (e.g. incarnational ministry, funerals or administration); and institutional identity (i.e. as part of the Church of England).

Institutional identity

Doubts relating to one's vocation within the Church of England are explicitly voiced by four ordained participants, three of which are currently curates and one in the 2006 cohort. For each of these, their concerns stem from a sense of injustice that has led them to question the extent to which they are or will be able fully to live out their vocation within the Church. The circumstances vary in each case and relate both to specific behaviour of individuals and to institutional culture and values. One curate speaks of his fears that his traditionalist theology will prevent him from finding an appropriate post, while class differences are mentioned twice, once regarding the prejudices of a training incumbent ('he perceived me as being very working-class and so he was very much upstairs-downstairs' (male SM, 2015 cohort)), and the other in relation to wider experiences of exclusion and bias:

If you are middle class like a lot of the church are, then you understand how things work. If you're not, then you don't get it. ... I came from a very ordinary background ... and when I went into the church I found it was just a completely different type of person. ... I don't have low self-esteem or other things that people would throw at me, but I think they look down at some people because they're not like them. (Female SSM, 2006 cohort)

For two curates, the uncertainty is about whether it will be possible for them to fulfil their calling to a particular kind of ministry within the Church of England. One comments, 'I still feel called to a certain thing but I just don't think the Church can provide that' (female SM), while the other, who has been obliged to move curacies and leave the very specific model of ordained ministry into which he felt called, questions, 'Should I leave the Church of England when my calling, if I'm not going to be allowed to flourish in this institution?' (male SSM).

Each of the participants questioning their place within the Church of England expresses disappointment with the care and understanding they have received from authority figures within their diocese. The way problems are addressed as well as the problems themselves affects an individual's sense of identity in relation to the institution and for at least one, this in itself casts doubt on the wisdom of tying himself too closely to the Church. While considering moving from self-supporting to stipendiary ministry (and being encouraged by his bishop to do so), he wonders,

why should I, you know, entrust myself to the authority of people who I feel have not looked after my wellbeing in this particular incident area, to then go from a relatively, you know, secure and a job where I've got a salary, and [move to] less of a salary but then in having these people looking after my wellbeing, I don't – I find it difficult to trust that. (Male SSM, 2015 cohort)

Similarly, a stipendiary curate who has experienced problems around inadequate housing comments,

I could have been an NSM and not dealt with any of this, you know. ... I could have stayed [in my job], I could have earned a lot more money than I earn as a priest, we could have lived in a house that we owned, that we didn't have to barter and negotiate with the diocese about, my family would have had stability, they would have known where they were going to be living next year and I could have still ministered as a priest in a non-stipendiary way. (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

Both these participants so far intend to remain in their current status within the church. Other participants handle their lack of vocational fulfilment in different ways. One curate intends to leave ordained ministry once her curacy is complete ('I'll probably end up doing something probably quite

secular in a job and doing ministry in some other way' (female SM)), while the SSM ordained in 2006 also looks outside the church to fulfil her calling through her vocation as a teacher:

I think I do it now by not being involved too much in the church and working out my own vocation outside the church. ... I mean I still take services and stuff, but, you know, so in a sense I haven't lost it, but I choose to serve outside the church because I think I can do that and then occasionally I put my dog collar on.

Shape of ministry

Other clergy who do not explicitly question their vocation within the Church also have concerns about the extent to which structures and senior figures enable them to fulfil their calling. Although, for many, curacy is a time of 'finding out what you do and what you don't' (female SM), it can be frustrating for those who do not feel called to parish ministry. The curate who expresses a sense of 'rightness' about her ontological status adds,

What I would say hasn't been listened to is my full vocation. Where in curacy I have been trained to be a parish priest, I don't feel I've ever been called to be a parish priest completely. I feel I've been called to be a priest, so I've been called to be ordained, and I've also been called to be a teacher and probably a learner, a student, as well. And it has been made very clear to me that I'm being trained to be a parish priest. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

Beyond curacy, some of those in sector ministry find the emphasis on the parish unsettling to their sense of vocation, particularly during times of transition. A priest who has withdrawn (at least temporarily) from parish ministry due to ill-health, while retaining her chaplaincy role, comments that she struggles with her sense of vocational wellbeing, partly

because some of the implicit messages which the church gives you which is around the church being about the church in the community and so my vocational journey, as far as the ordination journey goes, was very much about me being part of the church as manifest in its parish structures and systems. And so because, and finding myself not at the moment part of that, and potentially not in the future, feels quite strange although, you know, part of me says well maybe God called you to chaplaincy in the first place and maybe that's who you are and what you are and maybe that's okay. (Female)

Another chaplain recalls 'mourning' the parish for the first year or two after her curacy; however, she adds, 'It's become so clear that I am now in the right place doing the right thing' (female SM, 2006 cohort). For this participant, her role as an HE chaplain has brought together her vocation as a priest with her vocation within academia. Likewise, some others highlight a sense of fulfilment in being able to draw on previous experience or existing skills and passions, a hospice chaplain stating, 'I truly believe this is where God wants me to be. Everything I have done to date has been a forerunner to the ministry I now give' (female, 2011 cohort). While we have already seen the value placed by many SSMs on the capacity to bring their identity as a priest into the secular workplace, the reverse for SMs—bringing previously acquired skills and passions into ordained ministry—is less evident. A curate mentions finding satisfaction in drawing on a specific passion that he was unable to follow as a career earlier in life: 'I kind of thought that that was a calling that I'd missed but now I'm in ... a place where I can actually exercise that calling within the bigger calling of my life which is to be a priest,' (male SM) while an SM ordained in 2006 comments,

I definitely feel that I'm in the right place, the place that God has called me to at this particular moment in time. I think I've got the skills for the job I've got at the particular moment in time. I'm [doing things] I did twelve years before I became a vicar, and so I feel like the other half of my life has been preparing me for this half of my life. There's a sense of God's plan is in there, you didn't do this by accident, did you? (Male SM, 2006 cohort)

However, most discussion of bringing together previous experience and ordained stipendiary ministry is by curates and ordinands. We have seen above an ordinand expressing the hope that ordained ministry will somehow make sense of and bring together varied previous careers. Another comments, 'I would love to find something that combined my current work with my vocation, with ministry in some way' (male, non-residential). This ordinand is currently working in healthcare and two curates with a professional background in the same area articulate a similar desire, although neither as yet has a specific plan for this. Further waves of the *Living Ministry* research may reveal the extent to which these hopes are fulfilled.

Regarding priestly vocation, we have already discussed how clergy who find themselves in self-supporting ministry having expected to be stipendiary can feel their sense of value undermined. Participants also describe vocational frustration for other reasons, including lack of opportunity to exercise ministry and inadequate support from senior diocesan figures. A self-supporting minister describes herself as 'one very frustrated, retired priest,' having been ordained in her mid-sixties and entered a PTO role following a difficult curacy. Despite expecting during training that she would 'never have a parish of my own,' she notes, 'your confidence builds up and you think to yourself, "yes, I could do that, I could do that."' As a result, she says, 'I'm still looking for a way in which I feel I can fulfil my vocation.' Her frustration stems partly from feeling unable to exercise specific ministries, beyond the local church as well as within it:

I don't feel my gifts are used. I certainly don't feel my gifts are valued in the slightest by the bishop or by the archdeacon, or by anybody at the top. I don't think they think, 'ah yes, we've got somebody here who is trained in [this specific skill].'

Lack of diocesan support, recognition and resource is mentioned by several participants as a barrier to their ministry. Clergy approach this in different ways, influenced by factors relating to identity and circumstance as well as by personality. For example, the woman referred to above takes the initiative to contact her bishop to offer her skills but finds it difficult to take the matter further when she gets no response. In contrast, a participant who has felt completely unsupported by his diocese, where he has been unable to find a formal role, comments that he is able to fulfil his vocation despite diocesan barriers:

I love [what I'm doing], and that's why it energises me and I've seen already the transformation, I've been doing it two years and already things have been changing. But I'm going to have to move on because I'm not resourced, but that calling, that vocation just seems to happen to me wherever I go. (Male SSM, 2011 cohort)

Some participants describe finding fulfilment in roles very different from their original expectations. A group of three ministers ordained in 2006 share common ground in that none of them has ended up in the kind of ministry originally intended. One, hoping to enter stipendiary ministry but finding that direction barred because of his age, explains, 'I've come to realise that [self-supporting ministry] gives me a far richer ministry, far, far richer than I could ever have had as an incumbent.' Another man, whose hope of stipendiary ministry in a country parish was thwarted by the Candidates' Panel and who has gone on to become a hospital chaplain, recognises that he is gifted in his current role, observing, 'so I'm not where I thought I would be. Would I change it? Absolutely not.' The third has experienced her calling develop through the initial stages of ordained ministry, persuaded by her bishop to switch from self-supporting to stipendiary ministry and then by her training incumbent to try out parish ministry instead of moving into chaplaincy immediately after her curacy. 'Having done that,' she says, 'when I decided maybe the time was right to move I kind of figured out that actually chaplaincy work has moved on so much that I probably wouldn't get into it now anyway.' She eventually accepted that she would remain in parish ministry, which she now sees as 'a real privilege.'

Diocesan structures and officers therefore have a great deal of power and influence over the direction and discernment of an ordained minister's vocation, sometimes impeding it and sometimes facilitating it along anticipated or unexpected paths. Ongoing discernment of vocation is an expected role of the

diocese, and particularly bishops. Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) is mentioned very little by participants, although one woman describes taking part in the Leading Women programme designed to help women move into senior posts. Diocesan vocational support is often centred on the Ministry Development Review (MDR), which is a requirement for clergy under Common Tenure. MDR models vary between dioceses and some participants have found them extremely helpful. Much of the value of MDR is identified in facilitating the discernment and enabling of vocations, both as a helpful tool for the minister to think through their own vocation and as a structure to provide input from senior clergy. The SM quoted above regarding his ability to use partnership-building skills from previous work observes that formalising that role within the deanery ‘came out of an MDR review’ where he was able to explain the work he was doing and ask for support and accountability. Likewise, an incumbent ordained in 2011 was asked to join the diocesan vocations team following an expression of interest in that area as part of his MDR. Underlying the function of vocational discernment, and immensely important in its own right, the MDR is appreciated for the sense it can bring of being known, understood and valued. We have seen while considering physical and mental wellbeing how the MDR can be helpful in giving formal permission for clergy to rest. Another participant, in the face of perceived pressure to increase church attendance figures, describes feeling ‘a freedom’ to do ‘work in residential homes [that] doesn’t grow the church numerically at all,’ following a supportive meeting with his MDR reviewer: ‘he certainly didn’t feel [numerical growth] was the be-all and end-all’ (male SM, 2011 cohort). Where clergy question the helpfulness of MDR, it is largely because they do not experience it making any difference to their ministry. One describes it as ‘a nice conversation ... [but] the responsibility for my own growth has been mine, nobody has understood me well enough to say “oh I think you could really do with XYZ and it’ll be really good for you”’ (female SM, 2006 cohort). Another observes, ‘you do your MDR stuff, the summary sheet goes off into the ether and at some point you do get a letter back from the bishop saying “thank you for engaging with this process, I note your learning points, marvellous, love the bishop,”’ and questions ‘our vocation and how we’re fulfilling and growing into that, how is that held by those who have pastoral oversight of us as clergy? And I’m not entirely sure it is’ (female SM, 2011 cohort). When clergy feel misunderstood or ignored, the MDR can be damaging:

I had one review where it had all kicked off and I was just in floods of tears and nothing happened. That was awful. I don’t know how I managed to get so upset. And nothing happened from that. And then I had another one and by accident I sent the wrong review form and he got the one where I’d written my rough notes and so he thought I’d been not doing it properly, so he shouted at me for 40 minutes. (Female SSM, 2006 cohort)

As well as ecclesial structures, we discuss elsewhere in this report (see sections on financial and material wellbeing, relationships and participation) how social structures contribute to shaping participants’ vocations. Calling is negotiated particularly with close family members, who may have other jobs and responsibilities, may not be churchgoers, or may share in the ordained minister’s vocation: as a curate quotes her husband, ‘we’re a family and so we are all called to do this as well’ (female SM).

Places and posts

Several participants differentiate between being called to a ministerial role and being called to a particular place in which to exercise that role, as articulated by a stipendiary incumbent: ‘Ever since I started, my calling was to be a parish priest and that has not shifted and that is absolutely right. Whether being a parish priest in this particular place is right, I’m not sure’ (male, 2011 cohort). Unlike this person, most of those ordained in 2006 or 2011 express a sense of vocation to their specific context, either because they felt strongly called from the beginning or their sense of calling has developed over time. As we have seen above with the calling to priesthood, several participants

comment that feeling specifically called to a place or church provides powerful encouragement in difficult times:

I do feel that very strongly, that I'm the right person in the right place at the right time. It's not, you know, as D says, it's not without its frustrations and its difficulties, but what carries you through when you step back and you spend some time away ... I want to go back because I know that's where I'm meant to be at this moment in time. (Female SM chaplain, 2011 cohort)

An incumbent describes falling back on his calling during an extremely challenging period: 'if God had given me another option to step out of ministry at that point I probably would have taken it, but for the fact that I felt very strongly God had called me here' (male SM, 2006 cohort). Another explains how she intentionally reminds herself of 'the story of how I got here ... I have to revisit that because there are times ... where I think, "what am I doing?"' (female SM, 2006 cohort). This is not always straightforward, however. Some participants, such as the incumbent quoted above, express doubts about whether they are in the right place. Reasons for uncertainty vary. In the case below, the incumbent points to differences in tradition, noting that he is much more Catholic than his Evangelical ministry team and concerned that the ministry he offers is not acceptable to most of those around him:

a lot of my energy is spent negotiating and dealing with that kind of stuff, rather than actually on the ministry that I want to be involved with ... I am really conscious that I speak a different language sometimes, although I try really hard not to speak a different language. I find it very hard to be myself in the place where I am. For that reason, more than the physical location, I sort of feel slightly in exile at the moment. I spend a lot of time wondering where God is in all of this and what God is doing in it all. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Participants also describe challenges in the form of demoralisation through the insecurity of priest-in-charge roles, difficult church finance situations and unhelpful or uncaring congregations. An incumbent facing all these simultaneously observes, 'It is a very hard place to be really because we have this sense that God is calling us to be there, but you could look at every other factor and say, actually is he really? Do other people believe that? Do other people share that conviction?' (male SM, 2011 cohort). Others point to changes in responsibilities since their appointment, two noting that the number of churches in their care has increased:

I can look at my future and I can see an increasing flat, horizontal expanse of my duties over a wider and wider geographical area and that's what I can see the future of my ministry is and that concerns me. I love what I'm doing. I love when I was first here and I had two small parishes to look after of – oh small parishes, two small parishes of 10,000 people in each – and then two years later I was in charge of an area of 40,000 people, and nobody batted an eyelid or said well how are we going to adjust for this? (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

This incumbent feels under-resourced by his diocese for his current post, but also foresees his role coming to an end within a few years, with the introduction of a resource church plant in the area. He therefore finds his own vocation at odds with diocesan and national church strategy, leaving him 'demotivated:'

it concerns me that the incarnational, vocational, living with people priesthood, the day-to-day stuff which seems to work really well for me is not being equipped or resourced for in the future. ... I kind of feel that ... my ministry's kind of come to an end, not only just my ministry here but I feel the wind blowing where incarnational ministry in deprived urban areas isn't valued as a thing anymore.

For some participants, thoughts about leaving their current role have less to do with problems than with the length of time they have been in post. Some of those ordained in 2006 are now about seven years into their first post and considering moving on. One talks of 'fish[ing] with my congregation fairly

regularly' to ascertain whether she has stayed too long, and being reassured that they think she has more to do (female SM), while another describes her calling to the church as 'very strong to start with, but it's something I'm beginning to question' (female SM). To address this, she intends to 'start practically just exposing my mind to some ideas as to what's out there, but ... I will do whatever I'm asked to do, whether that's stay or move or whatever.' Some of the 2011 cohort, meanwhile, feel very much called to their current post but not yet 'realising [its] full potential' (male SM), whether because they are still laying groundwork or because, for one female team vicar, they have only just built up enough confidence to assert themselves in their specific vocation. Others, across both these cohorts, believe themselves to be in the right place, but also that that place is very hard. One, struggling with undesired self-supporting status, comments, 'in terms of where I think God wants me to be I think I'm right there but it's not easy. ... I think I'm where God has asked me to be. I do wish and pray that he could have made it a bit easier and more straightforward' (female, 2011 cohort). Another tries not to compare his calling to deprived areas with others working in more comfortable contexts:

I've always known ... that my call is to those tough areas and small churches and places that aren't well resourced. It is really hard work. There are days that I have a little twinge of envy about those priests who are working in well-resourced churches with lots of ministries and as much money as they need to do what they want to do. (Male SM 2011)

Tasks of ordained ministry

A further layer discussed by participants in terms of calling is the experience of and tasks within a particular ministerial role. Clergy may feel demoralised or disillusioned with their work: one incumbent, for example, watching people die and move out of the area, describes feeling like 'maybe it is hospice to a dying church' (female SM, 2006 cohort). Moreover, having already noted the varied and unbounded nature of clergy work as a challenge to physical and mental wellbeing, it also has implications for one's sense of vocational fulfilment. Clergy often find themselves engaged in tasks which they feel are outside their own personal calling, whether administrative (comments like 'I don't feel God's called me to deal with guttering and drainage' (female SM, 2011 cohort) are common) or ministerial, such as funerals or 'talking to old ladies' (female SM, 2015 cohort). While most participants recognise that less enjoyable elements of the job are inevitable and some frame them as part of their service and therefore calling, some clergy experience such tasks as preventing them from fulfilling their vocation. This can go beyond frustration regarding time and workload, to challenging one's spiritual wellbeing and identity as a priest. The incumbent struggling with guttering and drainage asks,

What brings life? What gives you energy? And leading worship, I love leading worship, and I think the thing that saddens me is when I haven't had the time or the energy to put into preparing for worship, or thinking about it, or my sermon's a bit shonky that week.

This sense of vocational dissonance is evident in all three ordained cohorts, but its implications vary according to three key factors. First, the extent to which the minister is obliged to engage in disagreeable tasks is obviously significant. This partly relates to preference: different people find different tasks enjoyable, and the helpfulness of being able to draw on existing skills and passions is discussed above. We have also seen throughout this study the impact of work boundaries and congregational (non-)participation on the shape of the ordained minister's role. Second, clergy may be able to find vocational fulfilment in part outside their primary ministerial context. Participants report a range of additional roles, including deanery, diocesan or cathedral roles, chaplaincy, and involvement with local community organisations. The incumbent quoted above who is concerned about playing hospice to a dying church finds excitement in a diocesan training role and a local chaplaincy role: 'I would think just now I might start to be getting a bit bored or thinking I want something different, but ... it is like connecting with something new, doing something new that I haven't done before. Quite excited about that, and pleased, scared but pleased' (female SM, 2006 cohort). Several participants in parish ministry also hold a chaplaincy post (whether paid or voluntary), and find this helpful at various levels, whether to fulfil a vocation that is not being met in the parish, to find support and structure

when going through difficult times in parish ministry, or simply to provide ‘a few hours every so often out of the parish’ (male SM, 2011 cohort). Third, perceived levels of agency, i.e. the capacity to affect the situation, are important. This does not necessarily correlate with seniority: while curates, to varying degrees, have limited power over the day-to-day shape of their ministry (see the section above on physical and mental wellbeing), they also usually have limited responsibility. Thus, while several curates struggle with not being able to carry out the ministry they feel called to do (see the section on relationships above), most are able to draw on strategies to address the issue (albeit sometimes at a cost), whether this means appealing to a diocesan authority (usually a bishop or IME 2 officer), negotiating or refusing to cooperate with their training incumbent, managing their expectations of curacy, focussing on its time-limited nature, or seeking to switch to a different parish. Incumbents, while having greater power within their parish, often have no one to whom to pass on responsibility. Depending on support available from the diocese, their agency tends to lie in delegating to or enabling parishioners or colleagues, managing their expectations of or approach to their ministerial role, establishing work boundaries, or leaving their post. While curates, then, can feel their vocational wellbeing hampered by restrictions imposed by another person, for incumbents the cause is often the nature of the work itself and the structures within which they minister. For assistant ministers, those working in team ministries and curates covering vacancies, the picture is more mixed, depending on the individual circumstances. Hence, one curate covering a vacancy comments, ‘in many ways the absence of a training incumbent has allowed me to be a priest, quite unhindered where I am and actually that’s what I’ve always been called to be and to do,’ (male SM), whereas another in a similar position expresses concerns about isolation and stress levels, explaining, ‘[I] then suddenly found myself and on paper having a lot of power, but in practice ... all the things that it seems to me I’m expected to do, I have very little actual control over’ (male SM). A team vicar who feels she is ‘where God called me to be ... but I’m not doing the job I think he called me there to do’ has recently exercised agency by declining to take the high number of funerals which have prevented her from carrying out her calling, saying to her team rector, ‘if you want me to do all of this, and you’re saying you do, then don’t keep giving me funerals’ (female SM, 2011 cohort).

Spiritual wellbeing

Vocational and spiritual wellbeing, as we have seen, interact with each of the other domains of wellbeing that we have so far considered, whether in the context of stipendiary and self-supporting ministers understanding their vocation within the framework of remuneration and questioning their faith that God will provide during their retirement; clergy feeling spiritually as well as physically and mentally drained through the nature and quantity of their work and drawing on theology to determine the boundaries they can establish as a priest; or clergy negotiating the shape of their ministry with family members and navigating vulnerability and boundaries in pastoral relationships. Ordained ministry is by nature spiritually demanding, and spiritual wellbeing is affected by a range of issues (including workload, concerns about outcomes and performance, time, health, finances, personal circumstance and tradition), people (including family, friends, colleagues and those amongst whom one ministers), and structures (including local church, deanery, diocese, national church and other networks). Not least is the exhausting impact of constant attention to others’ spiritual welfare, described above in relation to physical and mental wellbeing. Participants refer to a multitude of ways in which they attend to their spiritual wellbeing, which fall into three broad categories: strategies the minister employs personally; prayer and support from other people; and support or intervention through the structures of the church.

We have already seen some of the strategies undertaken by clergy to manage their physical and mental wellbeing, such as drawing boundaries around their work and establishing daily, weekly, monthly and yearly rhythms of rest. Some of these rhythms are intentionally designed to be spiritually restorative, including daily prayer (often using the daily offices), quiet days and retreats. Several participants observe that ordained ministry holds its own challenges in the area of spiritual wellbeing and discipline is required to stay spiritually healthy:

resourcing my spiritual life used to come down naturally to me and when I got into ministry it was less natural. You know it kind of feels like I have to concentrate on it because everything else is a distraction. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

Several ordained ministers describe planning times for spiritual refreshment well in advance, for example one incumbent ordained in 2006 explains how she books in and pays for an annual retreat and a quiet day every two months 'to have that sort of reflective time that is just out of parish work,' noting the importance of it being a regular event and expected by the parish, and that it is paid for in advance as motivation not to allow it to slip. Retreats may be employed at moments of crisis: 'the turning point was I did a 21-day retreat in July and that changed everything, that was amazing and I kind of found what it was I needed to let go of' (female SM, 2015 cohort); however, some participants describe a progression towards a regular pattern either to deepen their prayer life, as a curate described of his first retreat: 'it was amazing ... such a time of profoundly meeting with God and growing ... that needs to be in the diary for next year' (male SM), or as a preventative measure: 'For the first time ever I have booked a retreat before I need it ... that felt quite a step forward, to actually do it before I hit the point where I really felt I needed it' (female SM, 2011 cohort).

Not all clergy find it easy, or even possible, to take substantial time out for spiritual reflection. The woman quoted above notes that she is only able to plan retreats now that her children are older: 'when they're really, really tiny, you know, to go away for three nights, they just think Mummy's left.' As we have seen above in relation to claiming expenses, money can also be a barrier for clergy who have little influence over budgets or feel responsible for a church in financial difficulties: 'I do go on retreats as well ... but that costs money, you need to pay for that' (female OLM, 2015 cohort). A further group reporting struggling in this area on a daily basis is SSMs engaged in ministry alongside full-time employment. One describes it as

[i]mpossibly difficult. When do you get time to spend alone with God? ... For me, I spend time with God when I go for a run, or go for exercise in some way. It is the only time I get on my own. ... I get three hours a day, roughly, with my wife when I get home from work. In that three hours I've got to fit in any church duties, any hobbies that we have, any quiet time that I want with God. I have to cook because [my wife] works different hours to me, so I usually do the cooking. There's very little time left, I'm afraid, so it is difficult and you have to be creative. (Male SSM, 2015 cohort)

Another refers to his "M6 relationship" [with God] because ... I am on the M6 motorway quite a bit ... so that's my thinking time, that's my devotional time' (male SSM, 2006 cohort). As well as using exercise and driving time, other participants, both stipendiary and self-supporting, report building spiritual reflection into daily routines in a range of ways, including saying daily offices before getting out of bed or during walks to and from school (using a mobile phone as an aid), and drawing on Ignatian spiritual exercises while walking dogs. Some take on additional chaplaincy roles, either as regular brief time out (such as a visitors' chaplain slot at a cathedral: 'if it's quiet I sit in one of the chapels and read the Bible you know and I'm still there, so for me it's been really, really important' (male SM, 2011 cohort)), or in longer blocks: 'I do two week chaplaincy [abroad] ... I'm not being selfish, I'm building into my year that there are certain things that I will do for my own sanity. They become intense times of prayer' (male SM, 2006 cohort). Some describe combining dedicated spiritual input such as Christian books, sermon podcasts, music, poetry, arts and crafts with connecting with God throughout everyday life: 'being rooted, you know, so your theology's rooted in your everydayness,' (male SM 2011), from 'the beauty of the hills' (*ibid.*) to study: 'the day in the library is as much about me discovering more of God as it is about me writing' (female SM 2011).

An obstacle to spiritual wellbeing frequently mentioned by participants is the difficulty of leading worship and worshipping at the same time. Curates find this particularly challenging as they transition out of a learning environment incorporating structured group worship, 'where you had no responsibilities, you could actually worship, whereas in curacy like when do you worship in curacy?'

(male SM, 2015 cohort). This is especially the case for those curates who are placed in churches of a tradition different from their natural preference, as in the case of an Evangelical serving in an Anglo-Catholic church: 'I can lead services, I can see God in this context, but I don't necessarily feel the spiritual refreshment worshipping in that context' (female SM, 2015 cohort). Several participants (across all cohorts) mention Christian conferences and network events such as New Wine, Spring Harvest and Soul Survivor (with their children) as helpful in this regard. One participant, an Anglo-Catholic in a more Evangelical curacy, highlights her spiritual director as helpful:

Her kind of church tradition is very much my church tradition, so that's been really helpful. Good space to go and to be, and to take things and to do things that I can't do in parish, particularly around praying for the dead and things like that, is something that is not acceptable within our parishes, but is something that I feel I need to do as part of my own spirituality. So that's the space to take that and do that. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

More broadly, as we saw when discussing physical and mental wellbeing, the strongly pastoral nature of ordained ministry can make it difficult to attend to one's own needs: 'It can be an awful battle sustaining one's own spiritual relationship when so much of one's spirituality is concerned with other people's spirituality' (female SM, 2006 cohort).

Spiritual direction is one example of support from other people on which clergy draw to maintain and enhance their spiritual wellbeing. Most participants mention having a spiritual director, and some are themselves directors. They value spiritual direction as a safe, understanding space outside the diocese, and report various kinds of support gained, including prayer, challenging and 'growing' theology, providing a long-term perspective in difficult times (for example, reminding one of one's original calling to ordained ministry), suggesting areas to explore and ways to grow (e.g. involvement in chaplaincy), guiding through spiritual resources (such as the Ignatian spiritual exercises), and signposting to doctors. Mentors and critical friends are also frequently mentioned as invaluable sources of support, both spiritually and practically.

The other main source of spiritual support highlighted by participants is clergy peers and colleagues. A large number mention sharing and/or praying with colleagues within the same parish, with other local clergy, with groups established in college or curacy, with reflective practice and cell groups, with groups arranged through networks and organisations, and with chaplaincy colleagues. Sometimes such support is highly organised and structured, sometimes it is *ad hoc* and spontaneous, and several draw on more than one such source of support. Denomination and tradition are not always important factors in these relationships, which may also be based on organisational and geographical connections. Several participants mention local ecumenical groups, which in some cases are experienced as more conducive to honest sharing than deanery chapter (see the section on relationships above). One, for example, describes a small group of five church leaders of different, broadly Evangelical, denominations, who 'meet each week just for an hour for breakfast and prayer ... I find that a really helpful place where we can pray about things and chat about things and there's a confidentiality within it' (male SM, 2006 cohort), while another Evangelical participant prays each week with an Anglo-Catholic colleague: 'it has been really, really fruitful. He's about to retire and I've said to him, "I know you are about to retire, but please can we carry on because I value it"' (male SM, 2006 cohort). On a less frequent basis, several participants value longstanding relationships with small groups of clergy with whom they trained, during either IME 1 or IME 2, meeting yearly or more often to provide mutual support. One describes a group dating from curacy evolving over the years to give structured time to each member each time they meet, commenting,

there is that sense of intensity that actually we can't hold the amount of stuff that is going on in somebody's life without praying for them right then and there. Also, that privilege of being able to share for an hour or so just about you is very, very unusual amount of time that one gets. (Male SM, 2006 cohort)

Others recount developing a recognition of the need for such groups as they have journeyed through their ministry:

we're just about to start up, interestingly, a cell group from college which we had – for about five years we met twice a year and then it sort of, we all become incumbents and it all disappeared and we are just reviving it again because we all feel we need it. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

While deep sharing like this can take place relatively infrequently, some participants report using email, WhatsApp or Facebook as a method of providing instant mutual support. A curate describes meeting with a prayer triplet for 24 hours once a term, and keeping in touch in the meantime through WhatsApp: 'what would we do without WhatsApp? You've always got someone where if you need emergency prayer support, that you don't necessarily want to share with the wider group, that's a safe space and it is just the three of us' (female SM, 2015 cohort).

Other groups may be arranged or facilitated by the diocese or other organisations, sometimes meeting in person and sometimes remotely, as in the case of an incumbent who is part of an online huddle facilitated by a huddle leader and discussing 'serious issues of our own spiritual lives and discipleship and stuff and leadership' (female SM, 2006 cohort). Some participants also report exploring or being part of spiritual orders and networks: 'The other thing that I've been exploring is Franciscan spirituality. I'm at the very early stages of a journey there. So those are things that kind of keep me going when the going is tough' (female SM, 2015 cohort).

We have noted above that spiritual direction is valued partly because it is a confidential relationship outside diocesan structures. A safe, non-judgmental space in which to open up and speak honestly is a key benefit of most of the peer relationships described above, and many of them are arranged independently of the diocese. However, in several cases dioceses and TELs are instrumental in establishing peer support groups, either by encouraging ordinands and clergy (especially curates) to develop them, or by actively facilitating action learning sets and reflective practice groups. Provision varies between dioceses, with some participants commenting, 'you create your own networks' (female SM, 2011 cohort), or 'I've arranged all those [support networks] myself, no one has suggested any of that to me' (female SM, 2006 cohort), while others describe a more proactive diocesan approach:

She [diocesan officer] also facilitates the setting up of reflective practice groups which have several, four or six, people in them and are facilitated by somebody who is really good and that is all run by the diocese and paid for by them. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

Groups established through the diocese, TEL or other organisation for a fixed term, such as formation groups, IME 2 peer groups, spiritual direction training or leadership training, sometimes continue under their own steam, as in the case of an incumbent who took part in a diocesan leadership course followed by an action learning set:

that's been really helpful to do that, to hear what other people have been going through as well, and quite often what they're experiencing, you know, resonates with your experience as well, even though it may not be exactly the same issue, and so we've carried on meeting as a group. (Male SM, 2006 cohort)

Participants also describe receiving spiritual and pastoral support through church structures in other ways. We have noted when discussing relationships that greater churches can provide regular prayer rhythms for spiritual nourishment. Diocesan counselling services, accessed by several of the clergy in this study and mentioned in our discussion of physical and mental wellbeing, are highly valued by all who mention them, described by one participant as 'fantastic and really instrumental, not only in my wellbeing but I think keeping me in ministry for a few more years' (male SM, 2011 cohort). Some participants, however, point to barriers in access, including geographical distance (either too far to travel or too close to share openly), lack of knowledge about services such as pastoral supervision

(‘Yes! Everybody should have this! ... But I didn’t know about it’ (female SM, 2011 cohort)), or discouragement from the diocese:

there was very much the sense that if you needed help, you had failed. ... At the induction day I remember the person talking in general about the facilities of the diocese mentioned the counselling service, and it was, ‘oh but none of you will be needing that, will you?’ (Female SSM, 2011 cohort)

Clergy may also receive diocesan assistance with spiritual wellbeing in the shape of individuals providing pastoral support through their office, such as bishop, archdeacon or area dean (this is discussed in more detail in the next section). While some participants experience dioceses as distant or passive in their approach to clergy wellbeing, others point to proactive care, such as rural deans and bishops calling to ask how one is, or visiting in hospital or at home in times of crisis. More commonly, participants experience support to be there if they take the initiative to ask for it:

we now have just one suffragan and another about to be appointed, but they are incredibly supportive. I know if I needed something I could pick up the phone anytime day or night and they will be there and be helping. (Male SSM, 2006 cohort)

Evident in most accounts is the value placed on personal support from senior clergy, in particular bishops (see the next section), both because of their power to change a situation and because of the symbolism provided by their office. We have noted the importance of permission-giving to allow clergy to take time off to rest; this is also clear in the account of a curate who finds little support within his church for his spiritual development and is able to refer to the authority of his IME 2 officer:

the word ‘retreat’ and the word ‘sabbatical’ are like slightly dirty words in this parish. You know it’s like, oh, well, there’s a lot of stuff to do so, you know, don’t come asking for a retreat. And the benefit there is that further up the chain, there’s a constant pressure to be like are you taking your retreats? Like are you investing in your spiritual life? ... So I did, I took a two-day retreat. (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

Summary: vocational & spiritual wellbeing

For many participants in this study, vocation is the aspect of wellbeing expressed as most secure, and the one that provides reassurance and stability when other areas are being challenged. The language of vocation and calling is used to refer to different levels of ministry. Few ordained ministers question their calling to priesthood, perhaps partly because doubts are worked through during training as ordinands find their values, beliefs and identity challenged. Slightly more common are questions relating to whether or not one is called to ordained ministry within the Church of England. These tend to arise in connection with a sense of ‘othering’ within the dominant culture and/or dissatisfaction with the handling of a difficult incident, leading to discomfort in and distrust of the institution.

Certainty about the shape of the ministry to which one is called varies from those who perceive this very clearly and are either revelling in a sense of vocational fulfilment or frustrated because they cannot achieve that fulfilment, to those, mostly ordinands and curates, who are unsure of exactly what they are being called into. This aspect of vocation is not necessarily known in advance and often rather emerges as clergy move through ministry into different roles, sometimes in unexpected directions. It is continually negotiated in the context of ecclesial and social structures as clergy seek ongoing discernment while managing other responsibilities and relationships. Input from senior clergy and MDR processes can be helpful with this, especially when ministers feel they are known, understood and valued.

Many clergy also feel called to the specific place or post in which they find themselves. We see some questioning this vocation in the current moment, either because it is held in tension with difficult

circumstances or relationships, or because they sense it may be time to move on. Finally, participants discuss vocation in terms of the tasks of ordained ministry, expressing discouragement and unfulfilment in tasks they feel are outside their own personal calling. For some, this is overcome or mitigated by realigning their ministry to their passions, taking on additional roles which provide more fulfilment, or exercising agency in other ways, including appealing to diocesan officers or leaving one's post.

Ordinands and clergy sustain and enhance their spiritual wellbeing in a range of ways. Scheduled regular time out (e.g. daily, weekly, monthly and/or yearly) in the form of the daily offices, quiet days, retreats and conferences is a common approach, but challenging for those who manage full-time jobs and families alongside their formal ministry and have little time to spare. For these, and others, prayer is carefully built into daily routines such as driving and physical exercise, and God is sought as a constant presence in everyday life. Clergy and ordinands who lead worship or who serve or train in traditions different from their own must look for ways to enable their own worship and gain spiritual nourishment, either in the services they lead themselves or by attending elsewhere.

Spiritual and emotional support is also found in other people, including spiritual directors, mentors, counsellors, friends, peers, colleagues and senior clergy. Membership of large networks can be helpful. Small, private peer groups are valuable for many, sometimes facilitated or initiated by dioceses and often consisting in regular face-to-face sharing and prayer and/or instant support through social media. Diocesan structures are also of value in encouraging and validating time and resources spent on one's own spiritual wellbeing.

Strategies and approaches found helpful by Living Ministry participants

These are offered as an inexhaustive list with no comment on the value, wisdom or specific use of any item.

- Healthy rhythms of prayer (daily, weekly, monthly, yearly etc.)
- Retreats and breaks
- Spiritual direction
- Mentors
- Building prayer into routines, e.g. walking, driving, running, dog-walking
- Additional roles and identities, e.g. teaching, chaplaincy, religious communities or orders
- Ongoing discernment, especially through MDR and with bishops
- Revisiting initial call to ordained ministry
- Prayer and support groups, e.g. local ecumenical, online huddles, cohort groups, colleagues
- Additional spiritual input, e.g. books, sermon podcasts, conferences, off-duty worship
- Creative arts
- Switching curacy
- Intervention by bishop or diocese
- Accepting or embracing questions (ordinands)
- Chaplains (ordinands)

8. Participation (agency & structures)

The final domain of wellbeing to be considered was first conceptualised as ‘agency and structures.’ Over the course of listening to those taking part in the study discuss this aspect of wellbeing, the notion of ‘participation’ has been taken as more suitable, i.e. the extent to which ordinands and clergy feel and are able to participate in the life of the wider Church.

Ordinands

In the stories of the ordinands three key areas emerge, each relating to specific issues that we have met while considering other aspects of wellbeing. These include diocesan, national and TEI policies, structures and practices.

Connection with diocese

The experiences of ordinands in relation to their dioceses vary enormously, both in the extent to which they feel connected to their diocese and in the ways in which the diocese shapes and affects their lives. Regarding their sense of connection, participants speak variously of being ‘rooted,’ ‘connected’ and ‘grounded,’ or ‘detached,’ ‘forgotten’ and ‘pushed away.’ This relates partly to the kind of training they are doing, with most residential ordinands geographically removed from their diocese while non-residential and context-based students tend to stay living in the same area and commute to college. Several residential participants comment that they have very little contact with their sending diocese:

I would agree that the sense of sort of being forgotten and sort of pushed away to do the training and I don’t feel very connected to my diocese at all. I’m aware that I am at the complete opposite end of the country and I’m sure that makes a difference because, you know, I can’t nip back for any sort of – there’s a Christmas party for ordinands for example, there’s no way I could make that, that sort of thing. (Female, residential)

This is not necessarily experienced as a problem: as one puts it, ‘everything is so focused through the college that I’m not really aware of any other structures’ (male, residential). It becomes noticeable when ordinands observe fellow students enjoying a closer relationship with their diocese, primarily through communication and visits from their DDO or bishop: ‘Other DDOs I’ve seen have visited college, bishop hasn’t visited, so kind of very much aware that, yeah, bit kind of forgotten, it feels a bit like that’ (male, residential). Indeed, some residential students describe staying very much in touch with their diocese, whether because specific circumstances require it, because they do not move away, or because the diocese is proactive about contact:

So DDO will visit once a year ... You will get emails from the diocese just updating you on different things, training courses, what’s happening, and we will have a Christmas meet up where all ordinands are invited together for a big meal at [place] and then we will have a summer garden kind of party meet up with the bishop as well, so that’s two kind of key events that are for all ordinands regardless of whatever college ... Apart from that I wouldn’t I feel I knew what was going on but that does help you keep connected and rooted in, I think. That’s been helpful. (Female, residential)

From the ordinands’ perspective, one important advantage of maintaining a close relationship with one’s diocese is in order to secure a suitable curacy. Several residential and context-based students mention this explicitly, with residential students in particular expressing anxiety, one concerned about being relatively less visible as an ordinand than those studying at colleges geographically closer to the diocese, and others feeling uninformed about both the process and potential parishes:

I could, you know, land myself in any situation because I've just got no idea and I don't know anyone that I can speak to, to say, you know, give me some advice either of what do you think of, what do people say about this, you know, at diocesan level, is this a good parish to be in? Do you think it would be a good match? So, I'm relying literally on ... the form you fill out. (Male, residential)

Context-based ordinands also mention concerns about curacy placement, one describing investing in her relationship with her DDO partly because 'genuinely, I want to pray for her and I want her and her team to know that I'm grateful and that I'm supporting them and I'm praying for them, and equally I want a good relationship because I want a good curacy.' Another expresses frustration at receiving different advice from her college and her DDO regarding the timing of curacy discussions. However, these, and most other context-based participants, report good channels of communication with their diocese, including involvement in diocesan initiatives (e.g. the evangelism team), clergy training events and diocesan or deanery synod, as well as awareness of and opportunities to meet clergy, senior clergy and diocesan officers: 'I've got quite a good relationship with my bishop, so he's put me forward for a few bits of training and things ... and I'm sort of more aware of who's who and what's going on and keeping up with chapters and synods and things' (female, context-based). This is not the case for all contextual ordinands: two participants describe little or no contact with their diocese ('I have zero contacts with my diocese, you know, my contact is through my placement'), indicating that, while locally based training can provide a helpful sense of connectedness, this depends very much on the approach of the diocese and the placement supervisor.

Non-residential ordinands present a mixed picture depending on their diocese, with some reporting very little contact (one commenting, 'I think it's a really bad move because actually if you want your priests to stay [in the diocese], it helps that they are known and that you know them and that they know each other' (female)) while others feel very connected through occasional contact from their DDO and regular ordinand gatherings. Echoing the context-based student above, some mentioned that they were not invited to diocesan clergy conferences. The location of TELs also emerges as a factor: while some non-residential ordinands feel less connected because they travel out of their diocese to attend classes, others find themselves studying in or close to diocesan offices and cathedrals, where they meet senior clergy and diocesan officers either through 'bumping into them' or when they take part in training and worship.

Participants across all three modes of training mention the importance of feeling connected not only with diocesan structures and clergy, but also with fellow diocesan ordinands. Some dioceses, as we have seen, arrange gatherings for their ordinands which are generally appreciated, although some residential students find it difficult to attend due to cost and distance. Some ordinands are not offered this opportunity and only meet other ordinands from their diocese if they are studying at the same TEL:

What I would really like is contact with other ordinands from the diocese. There was only me last year from my diocese at [college]. There are now two more which is really great, and I know them reasonably well. That's actually a big help. It would just be nice to maybe, once a year, the DDO get us all together, or the bishop. ... So it would be nice to actually get to know, speak to people, know where things are, how their experiences are, try to understand all that. (Male, context-based)

Two ordinands mention membership of the Ordinands' Association helpful in this regard, one commenting,

that connectedness has been quite good to me, other ordinands from different colleges and you know shared their experiences and be like oh us too, yeah, we're going through that or experiencing this, so I suppose we're kind of sharing ideas and thoughts and reflections has been helpful in that sense. (Male, residential)

Throughout discussions about ordinands' relationships with their dioceses, the value placed on personal contact with DDOs and senior clergy is clear. Several participants mention being known (or not known) by their bishop ('Go to the bishop's clergy training day ... and the bishop sees you and knows who you are' (female, context-based)), while proactive contact from DDOs is greatly appreciated.

Structures and policies

Regarding national and diocesan structures and policies that help or hinder ordinands' participation in the life of the church, the most common topic of discussion among ordinands relates to financial support. This has already been examined in the section on financial and material wellbeing, above, and we note here that some students specifically praise the support they have received from individual diocesan finance staff, despite difficult funding policies and procedures ('the guy was absolutely fantastic about sorting it all out' (male, residential)). Concerns are also raised about diocesan restrictions on placement of deacons, for example an ordinand entering self-supporting ministry expresses frustration that, despite being willing to work full-time and to move into a clergy house, her diocese has informed her that, because she is too old to be stipendiary, it will not be possible for her to live and work in the same parish: 'I'm just too old and there's no argument about that, if you're above a certain age' (female, non-residential).

TEIs

We have seen in the sections on relationship wellbeing and vocational and spiritual wellbeing that the learning and worshipping community nurtured in most TEIs is extremely helpful to many ordinands, although it may be qualified by factors such as physical distance and family needs. The section on physical and mental wellbeing has noted high levels of pastoral support in some TEIs (including flexibility during difficult times), alongside the potentially damaging implications of inadequate organisational structures and processes. TEIs offer a wide range of different training possibilities, often within the same institution, such as options for weekday or weekend classes, full-time or part-time, and distance learning. Participants express appreciation of flexibility, both in the shape of the training itself ('one of the nice things about where we're studying is that there's an element of it which is really quite bespoke' (male, non-residential)), and in response to issues raised by ordinands, such as altering timings to allow students to catch trains.

This, however, is not the case for all participants or for all aspects of training. Ordinands may experience inflexibility in relation to diocesan decisions (sometimes influenced by national church policy and structures) about training pathways, for example in the case of a non-residential ordinand who needed to delay the start of his training in order to reduce his working hours to manageable levels, and was given the option of starting later at a TEI he was not comfortable with, or starting immediately with his preferred institution. Beyond the organisational issues such as short notice of modules and deadlines mentioned above, inflexibility may also relate to structures and processes within TEIs themselves that disadvantage specific groups of people. A gay ordinand, for example, mentions that 'it feels like a fight to have any sort of voice around that,' noting that no LGBT perspective was provided in lectures relating to sex and gender. Some residential ordinands describe 'snobbery' and 'reverse snobbery' expressed by peers in relation to certain programmes of study, with those enrolled on Common Awards programmes called 'Commoners' while those on Oxbridge programmes are labelled the 'Bullingdon Club.' Two part-time students note that they are routinely sent information (by both the TEI and the diocese) which they later discover is relevant only to their full-time colleagues. Non-residential ordinands with full-time jobs express frustration that their needs are not adequately considered in things such as class times, annual leave requirements and advance notice of deadlines, resulting in additional anxiety, stress and exhaustion:

the vast majority of our course are either ... in education or they are retired or semi-retired ... but you have to understand that there is a group of people who have full-on jobs and ... they have to be listened to. (Male, non-residential)

Similarly, some female participants assert that IME I training does not fully accommodate women's lives, particularly in relation to family responsibilities. We have seen when considering relationships that some women find negotiating family and training difficult, both relationally and emotionally:

keeping all those balls in the air, you know, you've got work, you've got family, you've got college. And you don't want to neglect any one of them at all. You really want to make sure you are giving all of them equal priority and that can be really challenging. (Female, non-residential)

While this also affects men, it tends to have a heavier impact on women, who are more likely to have to negotiate a partner's career and to bear the majority of the burden of childcare. In this study, 17 women use approximately 15,500 words to discuss family, while 10 men discuss the same topic in approximately 4,000 words. The main difficulties in this area relate to distance from family, time pressure and organisational shortcomings. No ordinands in this study have families with children living with them at residential college, although an ordained residentially-trained female participant who was 'the only person that had moved there as a family where it was the woman training,' remembers this being met with amazement. Many TEs are seeking to address these issues, which is noted by several participants, one for example expressing appreciation of inclusion of spouses and flexibility regarding childcare:

I like the fact that [spouses] are included and I like the fact that quite early on we were told if your spouse ever wants to come to any lectures or come up to college, bring them in, you know, it's fine. One occasion I was worried about childcare for my children and someone said, 'Well, just bring them in with you, you know. They're your children. They are part of this. So don't ever feel it's you and them.' We've always been told at college if your family life is suffering because of residential or because of work please tell us and we will try and work something out, so yes, very much so that they're part of the equation. (Female, context-based)

Finally, one participant mentions experiencing alienation through dominant political discourses within the church, expressed in BAP questions, lectures and social media:

there is something to do within the culture of the church where people in positions of, like a classroom teacher or a BAP or a diocesan officer tweeting, where if they are left-wing they feel they can tweet as if nobody reading this might be right-wing and feel alienated by it ... whereas people on the right might be more worried about the impact on the relationship of the person they're lecturing in the class or tweeting or whatever. (Male, non-residential)

Ordained ministers

For ordained ministers, the factors that influence their ability to participate as they would like in the life of the church are many and varied. Several have already been discussed in relation to other domains of wellbeing, so here they will be referred to but not examined again in depth.

National church

Few of our participants are directly involved in national church structures: one is a member of the General Synod and two others mention being involved in funding bids or attending meetings in London. Most discussion about the national church revolves around how clergy identify themselves in relation to perceived strategy and messages coming from the National Church Institutions (NCIs), sometimes mediated through their diocese.

Two participants ordained in 2006 express appreciation of resources produced or communicated by the national church, including church growth programmes and resources relevant to specific seasons ('I'm finding it really helpful that we can use the God With Us stuff in our parishes' (female SM)) or occasions such as baptisms and weddings (another incumbent mentions 'rewording' some of this material 'because it just felt too institutionalised' (female SM)). The same participants observe that the national church has 'become much more communicative' (male SSM incumbent): as one puts it, pointing to websites and other communications, 'I'm much more aware of the kind of operating of the national church than I have ever been' (female SM).

However, while communication and awareness maybe increasing, not all clergy are comfortable with what they hear. Two related themes reoccur frequently: a focus on raising attendance figures in the face of decline, and investment in resource churches. We have already noted that these messages, separately but especially when juxtaposed, can add pressure and demoralisation to clergy whose churches are not growing numerically and/or who find themselves in close proximity to a proposed resource church, affecting their vocational and spiritual, as well as their physical and mental wellbeing. This clearly has implications for the extent to which they feel able to participate in the life of a Church whose values and approach appear to be changing in conflict with their own sense of vocation. Some participants point to the measures of success, particularly Sunday attendance figures, as unreflective of current reality in their context, given the move towards mid-week activities and the need for community involvement and relationship-building: 'but that's not [seen as] mission, because they are not disciples, they are not there on a Sunday, they are not hearing the Gospel' (male SM, 2006 cohort). The vocational dilemma described in the previous section by the incumbent perceiving his own vocation to be outside current national and diocesan strategy leads him to feel that

I can no longer fully trust the diocese because the diocese do not have the wellbeing of my parishes as their highest agenda. Not because they are bad, but because there is now so much pressure being put on them by central London to accept schemes and to produce certain types of statistical figures about growth, that they've got no option but to try and do things to areas like me, which they have been informed, look bad. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

His experience is echoed in that of a curate covering a vacancy, who expresses a sense of 'disconnect' between his own priestly calling and the church's expectations of clergy as 'leaders who will turn around the church as an organisation' (male SM, 2015 cohort). His approach is to follow his vocation regardless of wider church strategy:

The only way I can reconcile it is by ignoring messages about what the church thinks of as success and a lot of the stuff that the Archbishop's Council seems to be trying to do and all that sort of thing, just put it behind me and get on with trying to be a priest where I am.

Context is important as well as personal vocation. An incumbent in a rural context explains that in her villages, 'what goes on outside the church building is actually more important than what goes on inside' and 'it really matters that you are seen in your dog collar at parish and social village events.' She comments that the emphasis on community life is 'very traditional, but it's also not what is happening in urban areas and it doesn't lend itself to targets and mission in the modern, more Evangelical sense' (female SM, 2006 cohort).

Other participants express frustration consisting less in a sense of vocational crisis and more in a feeling of marginalisation based on resources. While some assert that they are not against the work done by resource churches, most clergy are aware of both their own stretched budgets and the large sums of money being invested in that area. In a climate of felt pressure to demonstrate numerical church growth, this can result in feelings of injustice and perceived devaluation of their ministry. One incumbent interprets advertised vacancies in mission, pioneering and church growth as 'our clergy aren't doing this, they can't do it, so we must bring in the shiny, glittery people to do it,' arguing that the money should be invested in existing work instead of new people: 'when I arrived three years ago our congregation was 30 people and now it's 45 people, we're doing it, if you gave me the two million

quid that you've given the ... church plant I could have you 300 people no problem' (female SM, 2011 cohort). Leaders of resource churches are likely to be aware of these concerns: a participant who has been appointed to plant such a church plans to engage actively with the deanery and speaks of needing 'to love all of the other parish churches into liking us because I think they might feel a bit threatened' (male SM). However, the efforts of resource church leaders themselves may not address the fundamental issues underlying such tensions. The perspective articulated above is echoed by others, for whom resource churches symbolise a lack of value placed on their own ministry (and therefore for some, as we have seen, their vocation and identity as a priest) by their diocese and, more distantly, by the national church. In the words of a full-time stipendiary minister, 'this is where I feel it really hurts, where you've got people like us working day-in, day-out, long, long hours and actually there's no one to say-' (male SM, 2011 cohort). Such clergy perceive a lack of support for their work, one suggesting 'saying to vicars, to incumbents and their teams, "if you could have something that would make a difference, what would it be?"' (male SM, 2011 cohort), while another describes requesting the bishop to encourage her congregation by writing to them in recognition of their efforts and achieved growth.

Parish share

While awareness of money being invested elsewhere may accentuate parish financial difficulties, it does not cause them. We have already noted that an inability to pay one's parish share can lead to feelings of guilt and pressure. It can also be a barrier to participation by the parish in wider church life: 'it can mediate completely against mission and ministry because you have got congregations who are so obsessed with trying to raise money that they haven't got the time or energy to do anything' (male SM, 2006 cohort). This varies between dioceses, as noted by one participant who compares a previous diocese where 'the message from Church House was, if you don't pay your share we are not going to give you any help financially, you can't apply for any grants,' with his current diocese, which says 'we are here to support you in your ministry. If we can help you in your ministry in some way let us know' (male SM, 2011 cohort). Some participants describe giving and receiving considerable support through the parish share system, including an incumbent who describes 'an amazingly philanthropic model ... based on ability to pay' (male SM, 2006 cohort), which has allowed them to have a reduced share which they are able to pay in full. Another participant's parish, in an area of urban deprivation, is subsidised with Church Commissioners' money via the diocese, 'so the successful ministry that we are doing here, the work with ... school children, things I could list, only exists directly because Church House has decided that they are giving a lump sum' (male SM, 2006 cohort). He adds that, grateful for the support they receive, and finding themselves in a slightly better position, his PCC recently voted to give a financial gift to a struggling neighbouring parish. The impact of this cycle of grace on the minister's participatory wellbeing is two-fold. First, it allows him and his parish to contribute to the diocese: the diocesan finance officer commented, 'that's brilliant because ... you are demonstrating that you are part of the diocese.' Second, it affirms his ordained ministry: 'think about the amount of stress that that has saved me, the amount of validation of my vocation ... how the wider diocese has made it possible for me to carry on in ministry.'

Diocesan structures

Diocesan structures and processes enable and hinder clergy participation in the life of the church, in terms of both their own ministry and the diocese itself, in multiple ways. We have seen this throughout this report. Dioceses shape the financial and material context in which ordained ministers work, including housing, support (or lack of support) in crisis, transitions between roles and, to some extent, parish finances. Dioceses can be encouraging or isolating places to work, expressed in the extent of support provided for curates, for those covering vacancies, for first incumbents and for those in diverse ministry contexts. They can give practical assistance, much needed permission to rest and facilitation of ongoing vocational discernment, or contribute to pressure, exclusion, discouragement and loneliness. Structures and facilities such as ministerial development review, continuing ministerial

development, initial ministerial education phase 2, mentoring, counselling, pastoral supervision, reflective practice groups, deanery chapter and clergy conferences can all assist ordained ministers in their ministry as part of the Church although, depending on circumstance and implementation, some can also pose barriers to that ministry. The organisational structures and hierarchies of the diocese can be restrictive, frustrating and disempowering, or supportive, stabilising and enabling.

The ordained ministers in this study report a variety of ways in which they participate in deanery and diocesan structures beyond their benefice, including serving on diocesan and/or deanery synod; bishop's council; various diocesan teams, committees and trusts; and teaching and training (both within the diocese and elsewhere). They may also be involved in less formal networks within or outside the Church, based around special interests (e.g. the Christian Medical Fellowship) or traditions (e.g. New Wine). Clergy also occupy specific roles such as Rural/Area Dean, Young Vocations Champion, Cathedral Visitors' Chaplain and Deanery Synod Secretary. With the exception of elected positions, involvement usually comes about through personal contact from senior clergy or diocesan officers, sometimes, as we have seen, as a result of MDR. While this clearly places a great deal of weight on how well individual clergy are known by those in senior positions, and we have seen that some clergy feel frustrated that their skills are not employed, for others it works to their advantage. An incumbent describing how she became involved in diocesan training, for example, explains, 'I was asked to do it. It was very non-transparent. That was in my favour. I wouldn't have applied for the role because I wouldn't have thought I was qualified at all' (2006 cohort). Personal encouragement such as this can be particularly beneficial for women (assuming they are considered in the first place), who are less likely than men to apply 'cold' to job adverts.²⁵

The visibility of clergy to those in senior diocesan roles is therefore crucially important to their capacity to participate in the life of the wider Church. Some clergy intentionally make an effort to make themselves and their churches more visible, for example an incumbent who found that her church

had fallen off the edge of the diocese when I arrived, because my predecessor and my predecessor's predecessor didn't really do diocesan stuff so they were very out of the loop, so I was quite active in jumping up and down and saying we'll do that, we can do that, come and do that here, just to get us back into that, and it has paid off. ... [T]he flip side of it is then you get invited to be on things and elected onto things. (Female SM, 2011 cohort)

Similarly, another incumbent used the opportunity of arriving in a diocese to introduce himself to key officers and was then elected to diocesan synod and bishop's council:

I'm quite proactive, so when the diocese staff said to me ... when I first arrived and sort of did the tour around, 'oh come and have a chat if you think I can help', I'm going to take people up on that. So I've got to know quite a few of the team in the diocese ... So, within a few months of being here I found myself on bishop's council and actually that's opened up so much as well because it's meant that I've got to know, not just my own archdeacon, but also our other archdeacons and the bishop and the senior staff team in the diocese and I've been able to be involved in things. (Male SM, 2011 cohort)

Senior clergy

Not all clergy feel or are able to approach senior clergy and diocesan staff directly, and we have seen over the course of this study that personal attention from senior clergy and diocesan officers is enormously important to ordained ministers. Those most commonly mentioned are archdeacons and, especially, bishops, whose personal affirmation is highly valued by most participants. Experiences of and attitudes towards archdeacons and bishops vary enormously. Not all clergy find these relationships

²⁵ See Graveling, L. (2016), *Vocational Pathways: Clergy Leading Large Churches*, Ministry Division, Archbishops' Council.

easily accessible, either because they are aware 'they are busy people' (female SM, 2006 cohort), or they are unsure whom to turn to or whether it is appropriate: 'it's always a difficulty of knowing when to go to the diocese to say you've got problems' (male SSM, 2006 cohort).

For some, relationships with senior clergy are characterised by distrust based on other people's experiences, with the result that clergy 'stay out of [their bishop's] way as much as possible' (male SM, 2011 cohort). A female participant describes keeping 'my head down and hav[ing] as little to do with [a previous bishop] as possible,' aware that he was not in favour of the ordination of women and having 'heard some bad things' (SM, 2006 cohort). Another minister explains,

I wouldn't go and talk to a bishop about anything. Honestly, I wouldn't. You know, I've had too many friends who have just gone and bared their soul looking for support and just got thrown back at them really ... it leaves me with no confidence. (Female SM 2006)

Others describe frustration at not being listened to or themselves trusted: 'The bishop was just useless ... basically told me I was lying' (female SSM, 2011 cohort); 'the implication was that [the archdeacon] thought I was making it up. And I think that hurt most of all ... where was your trust in my judgment?' (female SM, 2011 cohort). Some, as we have already seen, feel pressure from senior clergy regarding finances or attendance figures.

Inaccessible and unsympathetic senior clergy are not in everyone's experience, however. In contrast, one incumbent describes enjoying a candid relationship with his archdeacon: 'we've been able to have sort of honest conversations, without that kind of, any sort of, oh I've got to be careful here' (male SM, 2011 cohort). Several participants express appreciation of direct contact with bishops and/or archdeacons, whether hypothetical ('all the curates had a direct dial phone number for the bishop. Never used it, but boy did it make you feel that he cared' (female SSM, 2011 cohort)), or actual: 'the thing that kept me sane [through a challenging ministry period] was that the bishop ... I had his number on speed dial and I could talk it through with him' (male SM, 2006 cohort).

The minister quoted immediately above highlights the importance of 'top cover, the sense of somebody externally saying, you know, "you are okay, you are doing okay, I approve of what you are up to and I support you."' The value placed on such affirmation, especially when going through personal or professional difficulties is echoed by several others, including one whose bishop telephoned him as soon as he heard he was experiencing exclusion by colleagues because of his sexuality ('he called me "Father" straight away to basically affirm me'), and another who spoke to his archdeacon 'every day for a week' about a challenging parish matter a few months into his first incumbency and feels the reality of his ministry context is understood by his archdeacon and bishop: 'they recognise it. They've had experience in parishes like this and I think they appreciate what it is about. I don't feel too much pressure about getting bums on seats' (male SM, 2011 cohort).

As mentioned when discussing other aspects of wellbeing, ordained ministers also value compassionate pastoral care and practical assistance from senior clergy during difficult times, including active resolution of relationship breakdown or matters such as inadequate housing, cover for ministerial duties, support during the first months of incumbency, hospital or home visits and telephone calls. Some mention receiving financial gifts, for example to cover the costs of a holiday cancelled due to family illness, to pay for a much-needed holiday, or in recognition of personal distress caused by a ministerial issue.

As much as care at moments of crisis, clergy attach great importance to proactive personal contact from senior clergy when not urgently required by circumstance. This happens much more in some dioceses than in others and may include 'little things like birthday cards and Christmas cards, they are quite nice to have, actually. It means you are sort of thought of' (female OLM, 2015 cohort). Participants also appreciate being visited by bishops in their home: 'there was no agenda to it other than it would be nice to meet you and know how things are going' (male SM, 2011 cohort). The underlying theme here is the importance of being known and cared for, as the OLM quoted above

says of her bishop, 'he always knows who you are and what your issues are.' In the words of a priest-in-charge,

You don't want people to burn out. You don't want people to be discouraged or to give up. You want people to realise their potential, and sometimes just having more attention helps – not actually direct help – it's knowing that you are noticed and supported and that it's there if you need it, often that's all it takes. (Female SSM, 2011 cohort)

The variation between dioceses is evident in the stories of those who have moved diocese or observe the experience of colleagues elsewhere:

there was a big cathedral service at Advent ... and I went last year with a friend who is a curate in [a different region]. At the end of the service I was just chatting to some people and he said, 'you're really known in this diocese. You were chatting to the archdeacon and you were chatting to an archdeacon in another area,' and you know, I think that's not that I'm really known, I think they've made a real effort to get to know all the curates. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

An extension of this personal knowledge and care is time taken to affirm and develop one's ministry. Participants describe being deeply encouraged by visits to their church by bishops and even archbishops, one recalling a bishop insisting on coming to conduct a confirmation of just one candidate, while another notes how much the congregation 'value their time and energy ... when they do come and visit it is remembered' (male SM, 2006 cohort). Beyond visiting, some participants point to the immense affirmation they receive from bishops taking an interest in their individual ministry and personal development:

What's particularly encouraging me ... is my diocesan bishop has been incredibly supportive of me, incredibly supportive. He's helped me immensely in my training and explored all sorts of things with me. Where I am now, I wouldn't be able to do it if there wasn't a willingness of the diocesan bishop to bend a few rules and let people ... use their skills and abilities to what they can do. (Male SM, 2006 cohort)

As noted in the previous section, it is the symbolic as well as practical import of the office of bishop that makes efforts like this so valuable. One incumbent comments that the funding of her Master's degree by the bishop was 'helpful not so much because I needed the money, but because it showed support, that the bishop paid my fees for my MA and so that just said to everybody in the parish in particular, this is important and she needs time off for it' (female SM, 2006 cohort). In a different area, a chaplain expresses encouragement by episcopal involvement in chaplaincy work: 'Support for chaplains in the diocese is growing and a support network/group has been developed and chaired by one of the bishops. This is a very positive step forward' (female chaplain, 2011 cohort).

Participants also recognise that levels of pastoral care and attention from bishops depend partly on personality and individual strengths, with some pointing to helpful combinations of diocesan and suffragan bishops: 'actually that's a nice balance between [Bishop X] and [Bishop Y], because I know if I want pastoral and fluffy, fluffy whatever I go to [X]' (male SSM & chaplain, 2006 cohort). The woman quoted above who mentions avoiding contact with her suffragan bishop who was not in favour of women's ordination comments that the option of turning elsewhere was extremely valuable:

I felt completely alone and if I'd had an issue had nowhere to go, until I realised I could go to the bishop who wasn't my local bishop and I did once, you know, when I was desperate about something I needed to talk it through and I went to see him. (Female SM, 2006 cohort)

Local structures

On a more local level, we have seen in the section on relationships that deanery chapter and other local networks can (but do not always) provide a helpful environment for clergy to participate in the

life of the Church, in terms of both support for their own ministry and through collaboration with others. The context of one's ministry is also a factor as we have noted in previous sections, including parish finances, the socio-demographics of the local community (and the minister's relative socio-economic status), benefice structure and the workload of the minister. Participants from both urban and rural contexts mention increasing workload and isolation as the number of parishes for which they have responsibility grows. For some, especially in rural locations, distance from diocesan offices make it difficult to attend meetings and participate in the life of the diocese: one comments that even a 30-minute meeting requires a nearly four-hour round trip and therefore takes most of a day. Another participant (in an urban location) describes 'rationing' meetings as one way of addressing her large workload, although recognising that this also has the effect of limiting interaction with other local and diocesan clergy.

Roles

We have also observed some of the ways in which specific roles have an impact on participation in the life of the wider Church, noting that curates have additional IME 2 responsibilities and often lower levels (or different forms) of agency than incumbents. Several chaplains and SSMs report feeling on the margins of deanery and diocesan life. From the perspective of one participant who, like many ordained ministers, occupies both these roles, the Church 'assumes everybody is a parish priest still, and paid parish priest' (female, 2011 cohort). She and others point out that it can be difficult for chaplains and SSMs to participate fully in deanery and diocesan structures, partly because their professional time is paid for by other organisations ('When you're paid by the NHS your time is theirs and I don't have the flexibility within that time to say, "oh yes, I'll go off and be secretary to the deanery," that wouldn't wash'), and partly because ordained ministers in such roles are 'never really seen as proper.' We have already come across in discussions of financial wellbeing and relationships the frustrations of SSMs who feel they are treated as a lower class of priest: this is experienced most clearly as a structural issue by an SSM priest-in-charge who finds herself in a diocese which 'talks about clergy and it talks about SSMs and LLMs ... so we're not even clergy now' (2011 cohort). In her experience these administrative categories hinder participation in church structures at both an emotional and a practical level, as she recounts missing relevant emails because they were sent only to stipendiary ministers, based on 'the admin [being] just too difficult' to send to all priests.

Some chaplains and SSMs make a deliberate effort to overcome these barriers and participate in deanery and diocesan life, for example a hospital chaplain who has decided to attend three deanery meetings a year against the wishes of his senior chaplain because 'it's an opportunity for us to link up with that area about vicars are welcome in, pop in ... to actually see them and link with them' (male SSM & chaplain, 2006 cohort). The female chaplain quoted above also comments, 'it's partly about chaplains as well making the effort to be involved,' although she also notes that people 'often end up in chaplaincy because that's the bit of church life they struggle with, those structures.'

Social and theological difference

Ministry roles and labels such as chaplaincy and self-supporting ministry are not the only aspects of identity relevant to barriers to participation in the life of the church. While considering the different domains of wellbeing we have noted that social and theological differences such as gender, class, sexuality, race and tradition can also lead to disadvantage or exclusion.

Of our ordained ministers, two discuss implications of being same-sex attracted. Both describe the practical and emotional stress of living and ministering within a Church that is not reconciled to one's sexual identity. One (supported by his bishop as described above) has met with barriers from other clergy, such as conservative Evangelical colleagues refusing to attend Eucharist in his presence, and restricted job options. The other, who describes himself as 'a celibate gay man that is living under the discipline of not wanting to be in a relationship with somebody because I believe it is not right,' observes that sexuality has become 'a raw issue in the deanery' and expresses fear of being 'squashed'

between two strongly voiced conflicting perspectives within the Church on sexuality: 'I believe personally that life is going to get very difficult for me.' Both participants articulate discomfort with the high level of attention given to this issue, whether by congregation members who urge them to provide teaching on it, or by people who foreground it as the primary aspect of one's identity:

whereas I originally had said, actually, this whole thing of my sexuality is just an area of my life and I just want to be C the priest and that's not a big thing for me, it's become and the church has forced it to become the major issue in my life now, so it is the guiding thing, so therefore as I look forward to what I'm doing in the future, that's where I'm going to have to look towards now.

Social class and education are mentioned by a few participants, some of whom attribute to this a sense of exclusion or 'not fitting in.' One, for example, frames his frustration with not being included in the local resource church strategy ('every other church in [town] was asked to be a resource church bar us, and we're the one that's growing') in the context of his educational background:

I hate to say it, and I guess we all do feel in our own way that we're the odd one out, and yeah, but I guess, I might, if anything I've got a chip on my shoulder about coming from more, you know, sort of secondary school education with no, not an O-level to my name, and just a City and Guilds ... then got a degree through Church Army ... just knowing that I'm not the sort of person who actually fits into a structure that well, you know, which is grammar school. (Male SM)

His frustration is echoed by an assistant minister who was posted to a wealthy parish against her wishes 'to go somewhere that was more ordinary because that was who I was' and her arguments that this did not mean she had low self-esteem (female SSM). Describing herself as 'from a very ordinary background,' and having attended grammar school and university, she relates church culture to social class:

I didn't have a church background and I didn't understand a lot of the things that go on in churches which I think are natural to people who are sort of church from birth. So I came into this just completely unaware of all the things that I perceive that you have to know and do in order to- what's the right word? Not survive, but thrive in the church. ... I think they look down at some people because they're not like them. ... When you've got a [dis]proportionately large amount or large number of higher social class ... than you would have in a lot of places that I've worked, so I think that that didn't help my transition into the church.

A third participant also articulates an experience of being 'looked down at' by clergy more senior to himself. In this case, he recounts being positioned to his own disadvantage in his training incumbent's social frame of reference, partly based on the latter's incorrect assumptions about his father's profession:

his perception was that we're just poor, working-class people ... And so that was the sort of relationship that we had, that you know, I was an employee who was there to just do some menial work because I'm common and not middle-class like you. (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

Race and ethnicity are mentioned by participants only twice, which is not surprising given the very low representation of minority ethnic clergy in the Church of England, reflected in our sample. Where they do appear, it is with regard to two quite different barriers to participation. One is an assertion of explicit racism: 'decisions were made, where, if I was going for jobs, they were based on my colour,' while the other relates to concerns about not being able to fulfil a calling to multi-ethnic ministry: 'I'm a bit concerned [that] the church isn't going to recognise that.'

Tradition can also be experienced as a barrier to participation in the life of the Church, sometimes through social differences such as sexuality and gender, and sometimes in itself. Most often, participants

talk about the difficulties of ministering in an environment where the majority of others (or those who are most dominant) are of a different tradition. This may be at diocesan level ('It feels like quite an Evangelical diocese. We have an Evangelical diocesan bishop and area bishop as well. That's kind of what the mood music is and it can feel quite uncomfortable really' (male SM, 2011 cohort)), at deanery or benefice level ('the other church is very high, and we are low Evangelical ... although I kind of hang around on the edge of their group, it's still a group which I think, "Well, I'm not really part of this.'" (female SM, 2006 cohort)), or within one's parish(es) ('I had come from a very sort of Evangelical, quite intense church where everybody was doing this and that and the other and I didn't know what was happening, really' (female SM, 2006 cohort)). Being part of a theological minority can also lead to perceived institutional exclusion, for example in the case of a curate who expresses concern about being restricted in his future ministry because of his traditionalist stance, both in the availability of posts beyond curacy and in the possibility of progression to senior roles:

as a traditionalist do I feel that I will fully participate in the life and structures of the Church of England? Absolutely not. ... [I]t would be nice to know that I could get a job on merit, merit alone, rather than all the other political baggage that comes with it. (Male SM, 2015 cohort)

Working within a different dominant tradition can therefore feel uncomfortable relationally, practically and vocationally as well as doctrinally and strategically. While we have observed above that clergy of different traditions can provide valuable, mutual support, it is clear that divergence in this area can cause problems. Some participants describe 'dysfunctional' deaneries with polarised theological perspectives, while one comments, 'We get on well as a deanery ... we are all broadly in the same churchmanship and we all broadly get on extremely well' (female SM, 2006 cohort).

We have already seen that curates placed in parishes of a different tradition from their own can struggle relationally (usually with their TI) and vocationally. Others, however, find experiencing contrasting perspectives and practices helpful in broadening their spirituality and understanding of unfamiliar traditions: 'I suppose with me I'm quite well supported in as much as I'm sort of spiritually curious' (female OLM, 2015 cohort). Some participants refer to the extent to which Phase I of IME prepared them for such a situation: for example, a group of curates trained contextually suggest that the diversity of ordinands at their college helped them to relate easily in curacy to clergy of different traditions:

even though the [IME I placement and curacy are] nothing like each other ... I think we were helped to go in with our eyes open. ... [W]e also train with so many different people in different places that have come from different places that you land in the middle of your deanery or your whatever collection of clergy and it's not a surprise. (Female SM, 2015 cohort)

A residentially-trained curate also describes her spirituality being broadened during her IME I formation, through attending a college of a different tradition from that with which she was familiar:

It has made me a much more rounded minister in the Church because I can understand the Evangelical and I can speak that language because that's how I came to faith and how I grew through the church, but now I have an appreciation of the breadth of the Church of England by being at an Anglo-Catholic college. And that was really wonderful.

In contrast, a curate who stayed within a familiar (Evangelical) tradition during IME I found herself unprepared for curacy in an Anglo-Catholic parish, describing her first experience of deaconing at Mass the same day she was ordained:

I had no idea at all what liturgically I was doing – at all. [College] had not prepared me in any shape or form for that. I went home and just cried. I just thought, Lord what on earth have you done?

She now views this as part of her continued formation: 'both elements are my training. An Anglo-Catholic context for curacy and an Evangelical college. ... [I]n some senses it didn't prepare me, but

in another sense it wasn't going to be completely rounded because curacy is part of your training as well.'

Gender differences have been discussed at various points in this study, including the dynamics of working families, where men's careers tend still to be privileged over women's and women tend still to bear the majority of the burden of childcare. Depending on their circumstances, women are therefore more likely than men (although not exclusively so) to encounter restrictions on their ministry options such as limited working hours, geographical location (or separation from family) and lack of understanding on the part of male colleagues, including training incumbents. Women also have to navigate to varying extents gendered social and theological perspectives, such as the incumbent quoted above whose bishop was not in favour of women's ordination. On the other hand, a divorced male participant also describes encountering regular assumptions about the nature of the marital breakdown ('there's always an assumption, people saying to me, "oh, what did you do and has she got the kids?"). For women, sometimes internalised messages about gendered identities have to be worked through, for example in the case of a participant who went through a challenging journey to recognise 'this perception of God and the Church as this patriarchal, male boss that I have to appease and how scary that was, and how disempowering that was' (female SM, 2015 cohort). At least one participant has taken part in a national programme to address some of these issues and encourage women into senior roles. Because women represent disproportionately high numbers of older and self-supporting clergy, they are also consequently disproportionately affected by the barriers (as well as the advantages) that relate to these groups. As with all aspects of social and theological difference mentioned here, the perspectives elicited in this study compose only a partial view of gender in ministry.

Summary: participation

Clergy participate in the life of the wider Church in diverse ways, at deanery, diocesan and national levels as well as through networks outside formal church structures. While some feel more connected to the national church in recent years through communication channels, there is also a sense among some of disconnect from the dominating values and strategies conveyed from the National Church Institutions and archbishops. Parish clergy feel pressure to demonstrate rising attendance figures and to meet their parish share in full, and demoralised when they do not achieve either of these. At the same time, they are aware of huge sums of money being invested in other growth strategies, notably resource churches. For some, this results in vocational alienation, where one's approach and identity as a priest in the Church of England is threatened. For others, ministering in places distant from the foci of investment, the alienation is contextual. Still others, who may be aligned with the general growth strategy and working hard to achieve it, feel devalued and marginalised in terms of resources.

Alongside this, we see significant value placed by both ordinands and clergy on personal recognition from senior clergy, in relation to both their ministry and their personal lives. Clergy greatly appreciate pastoral care, practical assistance and proactive contact from their bishop(s) in particular: underlying this is the importance of being and feeling known, understood, cared for, supported, affirmed and, above all, valued. Formal structures such as MDR and parish share assistance can also contribute to this.

Finally, certain groups of clergy and ordinands find it more difficult than others to participate in the life of the Church. Many women find their options more restricted than men because of social norms beyond and within the Church, as well as having to manage those within the Church who do not accept their ordained ministry. Same-sex attracted clergy also experience exclusion by some, as politics over their sexual identity dominates others' positioning of them. Lack of ethnic diversity is made clear by its near absence among participants, while some point to their working class identity as disadvantaging them in a predominantly middle-class church culture. Within the structures of the

Church itself, members of minority traditions can feel isolated and excluded, while self-supporting ministers and chaplains often find themselves on the margins of clergy networks. Cutting across all this are personal circumstance, personality and the extent to which individuals proactively increase their own visibility and engage with opportunities available to them.

Strategies and approaches found helpful by Living Ministry participants

These are offered as an inexhaustive list with no comment on the value, wisdom or specific use of any item.

- Proactive engagement with diocesan officers, synod, chapter etc.
- Flexible timing and location of meetings
- Restructuring of or flexible parish share system
- Personal contact, involvement and visits from archdeacons, bishops and archbishops
- Ration meetings
- Develop lay ministry team
- MDR follow-up
- Diocesan clergy events
- Ordinands' Association (ordinands)

9. Conclusion

The purpose of this report has been to map out the key issues relating to the wellbeing of ordinands and clergy in the Church of England, with a view to exploring how these change as participants move on through their ministry in the coming years. We have taken a quality of life approach to wellbeing, viewing it through the lens of five domains: financial and material; physical and mental; relationships; vocational and spiritual; and participation in the life of the wider Church. Wellbeing is understood as subjective, in that different people have different ideas of what it means to be well, and relational, in that wellbeing is continually negotiated with (often conflicting) people, institutions and social structures. Aspects of wellbeing are also highly interrelated and have symbolic value, for example, we have seen how financial remuneration can be interpreted to symbolise the value placed by the Church on an individual's vocation. Within this 'structure and agency' framework, wellbeing is influenced by multiple, interacting variables, including socio-demographic such as age, gender, family status and social class, and ministerial, such as role, remuneration, ministry context, diocese and tradition. Because of the strongly interrelated nature of the domains of wellbeing, we will use the next paragraphs to draw out crosscutting themes rather than attempting to consider them separately. We look first at some key moments of vulnerability for clergy wellbeing, and then turn our attention to perennial issues.

During periods of transition, clergy and ordinands tend to experience lower wellbeing in multiple areas, including physical and mental stress, isolation, financial and material concern, vocational questions and a sense of dislocation within the Church. For our cohorts (the most recent of which was ordained in 2006), the most significant moments of transition have been entry into training for ordination and the moves between IME I and curacy and between curacy and first post.

IME Phase I is by nature a transitional period, during which ordinands find their vocation, values, doctrine and practices challenged. Alongside this process of 'deconstruction,' which can place physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing under stress, they often have to manage temporally or spatially dislocated relationships, sometimes adding stress to their families as well as themselves. Different modes of training vary in the challenges to wellbeing they entail, whether intense relationships and sedentary lifestyle at residential college or juggling study, church, family and sometimes work, for context-based and non-residential ordinands. For the most part, these challenges and tensions are held pastorally by TEI staff within a supportive learning environment, and ordinands acquire new spiritual resources with which to sustain themselves. Some groups, however, especially those with heavy responsibilities outside their training, feel stretched to or beyond their limits, sometimes with serious health implications.

The extent to which ordinands remain in touch with their diocese varies, largely depending on the proximity of the ordinand and the efforts of diocesan officers. A sense of disconnect is a contributing factor to anxiety about the transition from IME I to curacy which tends to be, from the curate's perspective, an important decision over which they have little control. This sense of powerlessness often continues into curacy, as curates find themselves having to slot into a church with its own needs and priorities, under supervision of a training incumbent who may be of a different tradition and have very different expectations and working styles from their own. It is possible that contextually-trained curates may be better equipped to manage this than their residentially-trained counterparts, although other factors also play a role, such as previous professional experience of the curate, working conditions (e.g. commuting distance and office space) and the specific vocation of the curate (e.g. pioneer). Management of expectations on both sides is crucial to a smooth transition into curacy, but is not always evident. Leaving behind a structured TEI support system can also be unsettling and isolating and, while some curates manage to establish supportive networks and relationships, diocesan provision is variable. In particular, some curates covering vacancies describe feeling extremely isolated with little support from their diocese, while some other curates are unable to access diocesan support independent of their training incumbent.

The move out of curacy, and especially into first incumbency, is also challenging to wellbeing at multiple levels. First incumbents describe being overwhelmed by both level and scope of responsibility, and isolated with the further loss of IME 2 support structures. This is mitigated for some by mentors, proactive and approachable archdeacons, and training for new incumbents.

As well as these stages through which all ordained ministers pass, wellbeing is threatened at moments of personal or ministerial crisis, whether a health issue, family bereavement, financial difficulty or congregational problem. Diocesan support at such times varies, partly according to whether the priest trusts senior clergy and diocesan officers enough to ask for assistance. Support valued by those who do turn to their diocese comes in the form of, variously, financial assistance, counselling provision, professional cover, advice, guidance and pastoral care.

Through all these different moments in ordained ministry, and across all the domains of wellbeing, certain themes emerge. First is the temporally, spatially, relationally, professionally and sometimes even financially unbounded nature of ordained ministry. Clergy, especially those in parish ministry and even some SSMs who celebrate the integration of their life and ministry, struggle with work that impinges on family time, intrudes into private space, invades rest and sleep, complicates relationships, inhibits expense claims and expands into all the minutiae of running a church. Much of this is addressed by participants through personal strategies to maximise resilience and minimise stress, including healthy rhythms of work, rest, prayer, exercise and nutrition. Examples of specific resources and techniques include booking retreats and quiet days in advance, praying the daily offices, building prayer into daily routines, reading books, listening to sermons, attending courses and conferences, obtaining spiritual direction, recording working hours, switching off telephones, moving the parish office out of the vicarage, rationing meetings, taking control of thoughts by writing them down, being assertive with colleagues, having honest conversations with congregations about limits, developing lay ministry, and removing the clerical collar when not on formal duty. However, diocesan support in this is vital, in providing guidance, examples, validation and permission.

Partly because of the problems of relational boundaries in pastoral ministry, ordained ministers often have to look beyond their immediate context in the search for authenticity. Safe, honest and supportive relationships are typically (not always) found in other clergy, whether individuals, longstanding peer groups, diocesan-facilitated reflective practice groups or networks of people in similar circumstances. They may meet on a regular basis for deep sharing and prayer or communicate via social media for instant support, and often combine both. Groups built into ecclesial structure, such as deanery chapter, can be extremely supportive but may also be dysfunctional and exclusionary, often reflecting differences in tradition or inaccessibility to those not in full-time stipendiary parish ministry.

One of the most common themes in the narratives of participants in this study is the need to be recognised and valued at a human level as well as by God. In the context of a declining church and pressure to increase attendance and ensure financial viability, alongside awareness of huge financial investment in specific initiatives, clergy can feel unappreciated, devalued and demoralised. The implications of this cut across all aspects of wellbeing, from the perceived need to reduce personal expenditure to support a struggling church, to physical and mental stress, isolation, guilt, vocational doubt and a strong sense of marginalisation. Ordained ministers, whether in parish ministry or not, to some extent interpret the value placed on themselves and on their ministry in relation to national and diocesan strategy and expectations, and they interpret these expectations largely through their communications with the diocese. This can work both ways. Where clergy receive personal interest in and support of themselves and their ministry, especially by senior clergy, they feel less guilty and isolated, and more known, understood and valued. Awareness of the implications of dominant messages from the Church on individuals' and groups' sense of value is important. Moreover, where value is understood symbolically, whether the symbol is financial reward, personal recognition, structural flexibility to suit one's vocation, or a card through the post, it is vital that the Church (senior clergy and national church officers) is able to recognise and address the underlying dynamics.

Across all areas of analysis, we see ordained ministers in different roles and with diverse personal and ministerial characteristics constantly negotiating their wellbeing in relation to other people, institutions and multiple social, economic, political, ecclesial and theological structures. It is therefore important to view clergy lives holistically, understanding that changes in one area may have effects elsewhere, and that wellbeing is fluid and contextual. However, it is also cross-cut with patterns, notably certain moments of vulnerability; management of blurred boundaries; the need for safe, authentic relationships; and the importance of being and feeling valued. Neither the behaviours of the individual nor the structures with which they interact are fixed: to a certain extent, each shapes the other and can be adjusted to do so for better or for worse. Because wellbeing is negotiated simultaneously across multiple arenas, responsibility for addressing wellbeing is shared between multiple actors. These include, as well as those relating to family, government, market and broader civil society, both the clergy themselves and the Church in which they minister (primarily the diocese, but also the national church, deanery, local church and TElS), in providing and developing care for those who need it, resilience to handle the challenges of ordained ministry, and structures that help them to flourish.

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