



Focussed Study 3

‘If it Wasn’t for God’:
A Report on the
Wellbeing of Global
Majority Heritage Clergy
in the Church of England

October 2022



The Living Ministry Research Project

Aim

Living Ministry supports the work of the Church of England's Ministry Council and the wider church by providing ongoing, in-depth analysis to help those in dioceses, theological education institutions and the national church understand what helps ordained ministers flourish in ministry.

Objectives

- To understand 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 by sociodemographic and ministerial differences;
- To understand how ministerial flourishing changes and develops over time and at different stages of ministry.

Methods

- A ten-year, mixed-methods, longitudinal panel study, launched in 2017;
- Focussed qualitative studies reporting on specific topics or perspectives.

Reports and resources

Findings from Living Ministry are disseminated to dioceses, theological education institutions, the national church and associated organisations to inform understanding and good practice. In particular, as well as supporting the work of the Ministry Council and the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee, Living Ministry analysis has informed and continues to contribute to the General Synod initiative to promote and support clergy wellbeing through the 2020 Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing. Research reports and practical resources are available online at <https://www.churchofengland.org/living-ministry>.

Panel study reports

- *Mapping the Wellbeing of Church of England Clergy and Ordinands* (2017)
- *Negotiating Wellbeing: Experiences of Ordinands and Clergy in the Church of England* (2018)
- *Ministerial Effectiveness and Wellbeing: Exploring the Flourishing of Clergy and Ordinands* (2019)
- *Moving in Power: Transitions in Ordained Ministry* (2021)
- *'You don't really get it until you're in it.' Meeting the Challenges of Ordained Ministry* (2022)
- *Clergy in a Time of Covid: Autonomy, Accountability and Support* (2022)

Focussed studies

- *Collaborative Ministry and Transitions to First Incumbency* (2019)
- *The Mixed Ecologists: Experiences of Mixed Ecology Ministry in the Church of England* (2021)
- *'If it Wasn't for God': A Report on the Wellbeing of Global Majority Heritage Clergy in the Church of England* (2022). With accompanying podcast.

Resources

How Clergy Thrive: Insights from Living Ministry (2020) is available in print and online along with a range of accompanying resources.



‘If it Wasn’t for God’: A Report on the Wellbeing of Global Majority Heritage Clergy in the Church of England

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Living Ministry Focussed Study 3

October 2022



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Executive Summary

Background

This project contributes to the broader Living Ministry study by exploring the wellbeing experiences of Global Majority Heritage (GMH) clergy and what enables and might better enable them to flourish in the Church of England. It was commissioned by the Church of England's Ministry Development Team and funded by Clergy Support Trust. The analysis and views are those of the author and research team.

Objectives

To understand:

- the state of wellbeing for GMH clergy from different ethnic groups, at different stages of ministry and in various contexts;
- the factors which undermine GMH clergy wellbeing;
- what contributes to the flourishing of GMH clergy both as ministers and in ministry;
- the extent to which race and racism, ethnic or cultural differences and prejudices, impact upon GMH clergy wellbeing, as they serve in ministry in the church and wider community;
- how the church (its structures and leaders), congregations and clergy themselves might better enhance the wellbeing of GMH clergy now and in the future.

Methods

One-to-one interviews and focus groups with 18 GMH clergy at all stages of ministry and representing a range of ethnic groups

Frameworks for understanding GMH clergy wellbeing

- The problems associated with GMH clergy wellbeing often begin to emerge during theological training, and can peak at particular times in their journey, for example during curacy;
- There are shared experiences across GMH groups but perceived differences between the types of challenges faced, for example, by African/African Caribbean clergy when compared to Asian clergy;
- Clergy considered their wellbeing to be intrinsically linked to the matters of racial justice, and the theme of racism emerged as the core underlying cause of health and wellbeing issues for GMH clergy;



- Cultural factors, emotional wellbeing and psychological wellbeing – specifically trust and confidence – should feature more prominently in clergy wellbeing frameworks in future.

Exploring the wellbeing categories

Spiritual and vocational

- Clergy wellbeing is sustained by rich spirituality including prayer, corporate worship, spiritual direction or accompaniment, retreats and other activities;
- Clergy indicated some variation in how different traditions respond to global spiritualities, which impacts upon their own spirituality, relationships and ministry;
- The process of selecting a new post presents additional challenges for GMH clergy who can face (or fear facing) racism and discrimination in some contexts;
- Ministry can be rewarding even in unexpected places, or challenging due to hostile individuals and discriminatory systems;
- Cultural expectations regarding priestly ministry can add additional labour to GMH clergy, many of whom are made to feel that they must conform to English middle-class cultural norms in order to serve as priests;
- Wellbeing thrives when clergy are able to serve all of God’s people in the way and in the places they feel called to by God, without the barriers of prejudice or racism.
- Spiritual and vocational wellbeing then depends upon a range of factors for GMH clergy:
 - Personal rhythms of prayer, retreat, Bible study and spiritual direction which are culturally relevant;
 - Opportunities to express spirituality, theology and ministry in ways which are not bound by white European perspectives, for the benefit of all people;
 - A sense of purpose and growth for oneself and one’s ministry in the particular context where they are serving;
 - Spaces for open and kind conversation about difference where desired, without the expectation that diversity and inclusion work must be part of the priest’s role;
 - Sensitivity to the needs of GMH clergy and their families when discerning contexts for ministry.

Participation

- Healthy participation is marked by authenticity rather than assimilation;
- Clergy enjoy taking part in the wider life of their diocese when their contributions are welcomed but not pre-determined by others;
- For other clergy, the wider life of the area or diocese can feel hostile or unsafe, and so clergy avoid such spaces as a strategy for self-protection;



- GMH clergy can feel pigeon-holed when it is assumed they want to serve as racial justice advocates simply by being from a GMH group, or that they want to do so constantly while their wider skills and gifts are ignored;
- GMH clergy frequently resort to overperformance and overwork either subconsciously or consciously, due to the awareness of racism and prejudice, and anxiety about the future of their ministry in the church.
- Wellbeing in participation therefore depends overwhelmingly on authenticity, but authentic participation can only occur when the following are in place:
 - The church's commitment to challenging the dominance of white (specifically middle-class) English culture in the church and especially in regard to the church's expectations regarding how priestly ministry should be enacted;
 - Space for GMH clergy self-expression without these contributions being exoticised, tokenised or presumed to take particular forms;
 - Opportunities to participate in the wider life of the church in ways they choose but that are not assumed;
 - Long-term strategies for improving the belonging of GMH people which do not rely on tokenism;
 - The recognition and welcome of the broad contributions from GMH clergy which are not focused on their ethnic identity or limited to the matter of race;
 - Transparent recruitment and disciplinary processes which ensure clergy have the right of appeal;
 - Pathways to leadership which are equitable for clergy of all ethnicities.

Relationships

- Family and friends are key supporters but can also bear the burden of clergy wellbeing issues which are often not adequately addressed by the church;
- Mentors and informal networks of GMH clergy are crucial for clergy wellbeing though more mentors are needed;
- Relationships with training incumbents are one of the most essential in terms of wellbeing enabling positive growth and development or exclusion and bullying of curates;
- Clergy can find embrace and welcome within congregations and among peers including in white majority contexts;
- Racial abuse and hostility can be a one-off or regular experience for clergy in congregations and communities which lack in ethnic diversity as well as those in more ethnically diverse cities;



- Listening, solidarity or empathy especially in a time of trauma, are crucial markers of the quality of love GMH clergy receive from their white peers and senior white clergy.
- What contributes to good relationships?
 - Time and resources to visit family and friends in countries of origin, and to connect with one's ethnic group in the UK;
 - Culturally appropriate, independent and fully funded therapeutic and spiritual support for GMH clergy for the duration of their time in the church, so family and friends are not overburdened with the care needs of their clergy friends/family;
 - Appropriate racial safeguarding policies for GMH clergy who are vulnerable in additional ways to their white counterparts due to the prevalence of racism and prejudice in wider society and the church;
 - Demonstrated solidarity with GMH clergy who experience racist abuse or discrimination;
 - Cultivating healthy relationships with clergy colleagues, congregation and community members and senior clergy;
 - Access to informal networks of GMH clergy at various stages of ministry and mentors, and the advocacy support they can offer. Consultation to explore what resource and support might be offered, should there be an appetite, for existing networks (e.g. AMEN, The Tea House etc);
 - Culturally aware training incumbents and bishops who are committed to anti-racism and aware of the dynamics of race and power playing out in the church and wider society.

Mental and physical

- The mental and physical impact of ministry – especially discrimination and race-based traumatic stress in the Church of England – is tangible for many GMH clergypersons and is evidenced in physical and mental illness, early retirement and sick leave;
- GMH clergy wellbeing cannot be reduced to a matter of personal discipline as the systemic factors so deeply impact their thriving;
- Clergy do their best to develop healthy rhythms of rest and exercise amidst the heavy workloads they face, as well as the additional emotional, mental and physical labour of being GMH in the church.
- Mental and physical wellbeing depends on all of those who support, train and work alongside GMH clergy as well as the clergy themselves. It depends upon:
 - Adequate weekly rest and an evaluation of the harm that a 6-day working week does to clergy in the short, medium and long-term;
 - Anonymised processes for reporting, investigating and addressing bullying, verbal assaults, intimidation and mistreatment by clergy colleagues and diocesan staff;



- Training incumbents who are supportive, kind and committed to the training of their GMH curates without discrimination;
- Culturally competent therapeutic support, spiritual accompaniment, counselling and trauma care which is independent of the church structures, especially in cases of racial assault;
- Adequate rhythms of rest and leisure, supported by structures which ensure clergy can rest;
- The ability to identify ill-health and the trust or confidence to communicate one's needs to others without fear;
- The modelling of healthy rhythms by training incumbents and senior clergy, and the monitoring of overwork by GMH curates and incumbents.

Financial and material

- The socio-economic situation of GMH clergy varies with some being very comfortable due to previous careers and others struggling as first-generation migrants without much material support;
- Financial issues which do occur, are interlinked with the problems of discrimination and racial inequity in the church for many;
- GMH clergy find themselves being constantly rejected when applying for roles they are qualified for, and recognise anecdotally how often they are encouraged into unpaid roles in the church, or sent to parishes with limited resources;
- The expectation of additional unpaid labour also has a huge material impact especially as GMH tend to be asked and expected to take on racial justice consultancy and education on a voluntary basis with no change in their wider responsibilities;
- The cost of sustaining wellbeing, especially in terms of accessing the culturally appropriate resources and support which the church lacks, becomes an additional barrier for GMH clergy seeking to address their own needs.
- GMH wellbeing in relation to finances and material resources depends overall upon many factors which lie beyond the control of the clergy themselves, and can be enhanced with the following:
 - Recognition of the particular financial and material needs a GMH clergy person may have which are shaped by cultural differences – even if they cannot always be met;
 - Fully funded, independent therapeutic support, counselling and specialist spiritual accompaniment for all GMH clergy in every diocese;
 - Ending discrimination and racism in recruitment;
 - Recognising the many forms of labour GMH clergy undertake and compensating them accordingly whether financially, with time back, or in other ways;
 - Monitoring ethnicity gaps at a diocesan level, between stipendiary and self-supporting roles; ordained versus Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM) roles, priest-in-charge versus assistant



ministry posts; full time versus part time roles; and among larger and better resourced parishes versus smaller and less resourced parishes;

- Transparency regarding standards of financial provision, funding, and support.

Covenantal recommendations

- **Clergy wellbeing research:** greater emphasis to the matters of race and racism, culture, authenticity in participation and trust and confidence as psychological wellbeing;
- **Training incumbent selection (Bishops):** care in selecting training incumbents who love all people and are equipped to train and pastorally care for GMH clergy in particular, by demonstrating an adequate understanding of race, power and racism in the church and British society and a commitment to standing in solidarity with them when needed;
- **Curacies (Training incumbents):** attentiveness to the dynamics of race and power in the TI-curate relationship and adequate safeguarding of the GMH curate, as well as TIs understanding the dynamics of race in their context which potential curates may want to be aware of;
- **Church support for GMH clergy networks and racial justice advocates:** the church must conduct a national consultation on how to recognise, remunerate and support the labour of those individuals who are ‘plugging the gap’ in wellbeing support for GMH clergy and championing racial justice in an unofficial capacity;
- **Accountability, reporting and ‘racial safeguarding’:** researching ‘racial safeguarding’ as a framework for naming and addressing racial assaults suffered by GMH clergy. Anti-racism training for clergy and congregations to identify and eradicate racism could be partnered with an independent system for reporting racial abuse, bullying and mistreatment by any person at any level of the church;
- **Wellbeing support:** the church must provide full funding for independent, culturally sensitive therapeutic and spiritual support for all GMH ordinands and clergy as a basic standard of care. Where necessary the church must also financially support the training of those called to this ministry for the sake of clergy and the church, and the provision of culturally inclusive group retreats;
- **Further research:** whiteness, colonialism and race in the Church of England, including exploration of the lack of British born GMH clergy; monitoring ethnicity gaps and racial inequity in stipendiary versus self-supporting, lay versus ordained, part time versus full time, and incumbent versus assistant roles at a diocesan level; further exploration of the distinct needs and experiences of particular groups especially those whose lives are marked by intersecting forms of marginalisation such as South Asian and Latina women; the impact of theological training on GMH ordinand wellbeing; and critical examination of how whiteness continues to define Anglican spiritualities and ministry to the exclusion of GMH people and their cultures.



Introduction

Background

This report is the result of a research project on the wellbeing of Global Majority Heritage (GMH) clergy in the Church of England. It was commissioned by the Church of England's Ministry Development Team and funded by Clergy Support Trust. The analysis and views are those of the author and research team. The research and this report address two of the principal stated concerns of the Church of England: clergy wellbeing and the matters of racial justice.

The Living Ministry project asks the overarching question: 'what enables ordained ministers to flourish in ministry?'. 'Flourishing in ministry' is understood to consist of two interrelated aspects: wellbeing (flourishing of the person) and ministerial outcomes (flourishing of ministry).¹ The Living Ministry wellbeing map is a practical resource which highlights five core factors of wellbeing which need to be attended to: including financial and material, relationships, mental and physical, participation and spiritual and vocational.² However, assessing the experiences of minority groups requires a particular lens as their perspectives and voices are easily lost within large studies such as this. According to the most recent data in 2020 there are around 20,000 ordained clergy in the Church of England and 4.1% identify as GMH.³ Bearing in mind that 25.9% of those surveyed did not declare their ethnic background, this equates to around 607 GMH clergy. In 2020 when there were 570 ordinations, 8.9% of those who stated their ethnicity, identified as GMH⁴ which equates to around 37 people. However, there is a lack of comparative data which enables us to understand the particular experiences and trajectories of GMH clergy once they are ordained.

It is also the case that many GMH clergy are reluctant to participate in research which is led and held by the church's own structures because of their experiences of mistreatment and trauma within the church, and the reality of systemic racism. While we recognise the definition of institutional racism which the Archbishop's Anti-Racism Taskforce adopted in *Lament to Action*⁵ (borrowed from William Macpherson's

¹ Liz Graveling (2018), *Negotiating Wellbeing: Experiences of Ordinands and Clergy in the Church of England*, National Ministry Team, p.1. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/Living%20Ministry%20Qualitative%20Panel%20Study%20Wave%201%20Report.pdf>.

² *Ibid.* p.4.

³ Church of England Research and Statistics (2021), *Ministry Statistics 2020*, p.21. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/Ministry%20Statistics%202020%20report%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁴ *Ibid.* p.21.

⁵ The Archbishop's Anti-Racism Taskforce (2021), *From Lament to Action*, The Church of England, 2021, p.11.



report on institutional racism in the London Metropolitan Police)⁶ we consider the institutional racism of the Church of England, as we have heard it, to have additional elements. Rather than simply being defined as a ‘collective failure to provide appropriate professional service’ to those of global majority heritage, institutional racism amounts to a failure to welcome, value, serve and minister alongside those from global majority backgrounds. Not only is there the presence of ‘unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping’ but deliberate attempts to marginalise and exclude clergy from GMH backgrounds. Where some individuals may not actively take part in the harm done to GMH clergy, a refusal to recognise or respond appropriately to the harm caused, makes them complicit. This project presented an opportunity for GMH clergy to speak about their wellbeing – including what undermines or enhances it – to a research team who have the expertise and experience which enabled them to understand their stories as well as a commitment to improving their wellbeing in real and tangible ways.

The problems of racial justice within the Church of England have been explored consistently over a matter of decades, with the most recent report, *From Lament to Action*⁷ examining the 25 reports and 161 recommendations produced over a 35-year period. In many cases, reports addressed the matters of racism and discrimination which were recognised as negatively impacting the relationships, finances and participation of GMH clergy. However, though we might imagine from the many reports and recommendations on racial justice that the wellbeing of GMH clergy might be at stake, there has not yet been a project conducted to examine what is taking place. This research project seeks to fill this gap.

As a research team we approached this project with an awareness that race or racial justice would likely be raised as a factor in discussing GMH wellbeing, but we did not presuppose this. We explored wellbeing generally, using the Living Ministry wellbeing map, before later asking whether there were any particularities in their experience which they viewed as being linked to racial, cultural or ethnic differences. However, in practice we rarely needed to ask this directly, as these issues were always raised by participants without our prompting. We, as well as the participants, also approached this project with an awareness that clergy wellbeing is under threat across the board regardless of race, especially for other marginalised groups. There was never, therefore, a sense that only GMH clergy were being victimised, with many consistently highlighting similar though different challenges for working class clergy, women, clergy with disabilities and LGBTQ+ clergy. The need for intersectional awareness is therefore important for clergy who are GMH and also share in other marginalised identities.

⁶ Sir William Macpherson of Cluny (1999), *The Stephen Lawrence Enquiry*, p.9.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf accessed 13 July 2022.

⁷ The Archbishop’s Anti-Racism Taskforce (2021), *op. cit.*, pp.30-36.

This research was undertaken during 2022 as the UK sought to return to a certain kind of normality, described by politicians as ‘living with covid-19.’ We chose to undertake the project remotely, as GMH groups continued to be most at risk of contracting and dying from the virus. But it is also worth mentioning that the GMH communities most affected by poverty have also been left reeling by the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis which is beginning to materialise as this report is being written and is sure to exacerbate this. We expect that the urgency of this report is increasing as the weeks pass by.

The research team was led by Dr Selina Stone and included Rev Dr Carlton Turner and Ms Tamanda Walker.⁸ Each of us has a longstanding commitment to the care and wellbeing of GMH communities and/or clergy and recognised the unique opportunity this project provided. It has been our privilege to listen to the stories of the participants, and to articulate the findings for this report.

Terminology

The term UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) has been accepted by many within the Church of England as a collective term to speak of those who belong to minority ethnic groups in the UK. The use of Global Majority Heritage (GMH) is recognised as challenging the language of ‘minoritisation’, which can disempower so called ‘minority ethnic groups’ by recognising that globally they are the majority when compared to white Europeans. We recognise that the use of single terms is always contested due to the limitations of language to fully convey the meaning they hope to represent. The most significant risk is, of course, that the use of singular terms suggests that the complexities of all minority ethnic groups can be spoken of in monolithic terms. We use ‘global majority heritage’ throughout this report with the awareness that the issues faced by clergy from different ethnic and cultural groups overlap but also have significant differences. We recognise that the different experiences of GMH groups can reflect differences in GMH experiences in wider society, as well as within the Church of England. We have also chosen to use of GMH for the most part when taking direct quotes from interviews as opposed to naming a specific ethnic group or heritage. This enables us to protect the identity of participants who might be identifiable were we to refer to specific ethnic groups or countries, though in places we use broader terms such as ‘African’ or ‘Asian’ to uphold the integrity of the contribution.

⁸ Dr Stone is now postdoctoral research associate at Durham University; Rev Dr Turner is lecturer and tutor at the Queen’s Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education; and Ms Walker is a PhD candidate, consultant on race, wellbeing and faith-based organisations, and Qualitative Research Fellow at Black Thrive Global. All three acted independently of their institutions in conducting this work as freelance consultants.



Objectives and methodology

The objectives of the project were to understand:

- the state of wellbeing for GMH clergy from different ethnic groups, at different stages of ministry and in various contexts;
- the factors which undermine clergy wellbeing;
- what contributes to the flourishing of GMH clergy both as ministers and in ministry;
- the extent to which race and racism, ethnic or cultural differences and prejudices, impact upon GMH clergy wellbeing, as they serve in ministry in the church and wider community;
- how the church (its structures and leaders), congregations and clergy themselves might better enhance the wellbeing of GMH clergy now and in the future.

Our focus was on ordained clergy, though we recognise that issues relating to the wellbeing for GMH people, are also raised before ordination. Participants tended to comment on wellbeing issues during theological training before they were ordained, and some even spoke about negative changes in their sense of wellbeing during the discernment process before they were sent for training. Yet we recognise these as areas for further research that we did not want to conflate with the particular wellbeing issues of ordained people.

In order to explore these themes, we conducted a combination of one-to-one interviews and focus groups with 18 GMH clergy. We listened to clergy from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds including East Asian, African, South and Southeast Asian, African Caribbean, as well as including one person of ‘other’ (non-British) white heritage whose role includes the support of GMH clergy. We were attentive to the points of (dis)connection between the stories of clergy born and raised in the UK as well as those who were born and/or raised abroad in former British colonies. We sought to give equal voice to all ethnic groups although this was a challenge because of the tiny proportions of clergy with heritage in certain parts of the world like Latin America or Southeast Asia. Our participants represented those at various stages in their ministry from curates to those with many years of parish experience; those at a range of levels of the church hierarchy; and those serving within parishes and in the wider church and its institutions. We spoke to clergy with experience of serving in large ethnically and socio-economically diverse cities, semi-rural towns, rural villages, white working-class communities, and affluent areas of the country.

We were also attentive to speaking to clergy from a range of traditions, though the majority were located at the more Catholic end of the church. This is a matter which we will reflect on in greater detail in the section below on spiritual and vocational wellbeing, as it raised a question for us of whether there are some variations in both the participation and the state of GMH clergy wellbeing in different parts of the church. Despite approaching and engaging with an equal number of men and women, we were only able to undertake interviews with 12 men and 6 women. It is important to stress that this significantly lower



participation rate amongst women reflects a structural barrier: while many told us that they were keen/enthusiastic to participate, women – particularly from Latina and Asian backgrounds – told us of their challenges navigating the demands of ministry and family life and how this made participating even in a shorter interview next to impossible. This itself was an important finding of the research and highlighted how the wellbeing of women from GMH backgrounds is constrained relative to their male counterparts, and ironically how attempts to advocate for their own wellbeing as part of our research could not come to fruition.

In our proposal we had planned to interview 10-15 members of the clergy and 5-10 GMH people whose professional roles within or beyond the church focused on care for UKME clergy including spiritual directors, chaplains, church staff, mentors. We expected some overlap in the case of clergy who also had roles in caring for others. However, from the early stages of the research it became clear that this was a false binary: the overwhelming majority of people caring for GMH clergy wellbeing are themselves ordained clergy. Whether officially through joint roles in the parish and the diocese or unofficially through support groups and advocacy, GMH clergy are those who primarily take on responsibility for their own wellbeing and those of their peers. We will explore this in more detail (the section on relationships below) but suffice to say at this point that speaking to individuals who were ordained and also had a wider role – whether official or unofficial – in the care of their peers, allowed us to hear personal stories and to get a broader sense of the trends in the wellbeing for GMH clergy. Through focus groups with members of the Anglican Minority Ethnic Network (AMEN), The Tea House (network for East Asian Clergy) and the UKME Ordinands and Curates network, we were able to hear dialogue between people from the same or different ethnic groups, as they reflected and drew out deeper insights from one another.

Interviews and focus groups were semi-structured to allow us as the researchers to attend to the specific concerns of the research project while ensuring there was room for the participants to shape and direct the conversation in ways which we did not anticipate but which may be crucial for the project. We made every effort to ensure participants deeply considered whether their participation would have undue negative effects on their emotional and mental wellbeing. These conversations required a distinctive level of vulnerability and the potential for re-traumatization for participants and so we actively encouraged participants to find a space to process difficult issues or emotions which might have come up, with a mentor, spiritual director or friend, after the interview was complete. Some asked for prayer before or after the interviews, and we were able to offer this due to our shared Christian faith. Interviews were subsequently transcribed, anonymised and analysed by the three members of the research team who shared and discussed their findings in preparation for the writing of this report. We have sought in every possible way to remove any details which would make any of our participants identifiable, although anonymity cannot be guaranteed as some of their experiences may already have been shared with those who may read this report. Participants have been informed of all of these issues and consented to being involved.



The Research Process

Racial trauma, wellbeing and participation

As a research team we were aware that though this research was important, many GMH clergy were fatigued by the constant flow of research and reports which did not result in real tangible change in their lives or in the life of the church. We expected to encounter some reluctance on the part of those we approached for interviews and focus groups. However, responses were overwhelmingly positive from those who did respond. Some of those who agreed to take part hoped it might be a ‘cathartic’ experience in which they might be heard and believed, while others expressed a desire to take any action which might create a better future for themselves and others.

In spite of this enthusiasm, it was also clear that wellbeing issues were negatively impacting upon GMH clergy to the extent that their participation in this research was delayed or made impossible. One person we hoped to approach for an interview was away on sick leave and was unavailable, another person went on sick leave within weeks of their interview. One participant postponed their interview after experiencing racial abuse in their parish, and another did not take part because they did not feel well enough within themselves to talk about these matters. We want to recognise this as a core finding of this research process, even before we get to the data collected through interviews. Our conclusion is that it is likely that GMH clergy are being missed across the board, in the broader research conducted by the Church of England, as a disproportionate number of them are simply in survival mode. This means that they do not have the time or emotional bandwidth available to take part in research projects and studies, even those when they recognise the importance of the research for addressing the very situations that are negatively impacting their lives and ministries.

The research team, wellbeing and intersubjectivity

In terms of our positionality in relation to this project, Dr Stone is a non-Anglican lay person of Jamaican heritage born and raised in Birmingham, Rev Dr Turner is a Bahamian Anglican priest who has served in the UK for the last twelve years and Ms Walker is a non-Anglican lay person of mixed Motswana and English heritage. Dr Stone and Rev Dr Turner interviewed the participants and conducted the focus groups, and Dr Stone conducted the main analysis with input from Rev Dr Turner and Ms Walker. Due to our proximity to the matters at hand, it is also worth adding that as a research team we also needed to draw on the support of therapists, spiritual directors and each other to process the racially traumatising aspects of this research and its findings. On a couple of occasions participants asked us as the interviewers, about our resources for self-care while we were undertaking the project. While we were keen not to confuse the roles for clergy who are used to having the role of the carer, the informal nature of the interviews meant it was appropriate for them to turn the tables slightly in this way, and this enabled us to build common ground with those we were meeting for the first time. The participants recognised us as sharing some common ground with them as we



were also from GMH backgrounds and work for or closely with the Church of England. By extension, this meant we also needed care as part of this project.

Despite the personal emotional, mental and spiritual cost for us as a research team, we recognise that the project was strengthened by our intersubjective experience, which made it easier for participants to make disclosures on sensitive topics around wellbeing especially when related to race, ethnicity or culture. While we were not seeking to focus on clergy experiences of race and racism, these themes emerged quickly in every interview without our prompting. Our shared experience of belonging to GMH groups helped to provide a safe space for such conversations to be had. As the members of the research team share African diasporan identities, it is possible that participants from Asian and Latin American participants may have had a different experience to their African and African Caribbean counterparts. We cannot know what may or may not have emerged had the research team comprised of solely Asian members for example, or a more ethnically mixed team. However, the composition of research teams is something to be borne in mind for future research in this area, as a more mixed team may have enhanced the sense of safety and trust for all participants to an even greater extent.

Report structure

The report comprises three core sections. In the first section we will explain some of the important narratives and overarching frameworks for understanding GMH clergy wellbeing. Using the Living Ministry wellbeing map as a basis, we will present our findings on how the wellbeing of GMH clergy might be better understood, but also which elements of clergy wellbeing have been highlighted through conversations with GMH clergy which have not been raised in the wider study. Special attention will be given to the importance of trust as a psychological component of clergy wellbeing, and also the particular ethnic and generational differences between and within GMH groups. In the second part, we will give our attention to the core categories explored in the wider Living Ministry study including financial and material, relationships (and emotional), mental and physical, participation and spiritual and vocational. We will end in the third and final section with ‘covenantal recommendations’ which recognise the importance of peer support and self-care for GMH clergy and focus on how the church at every level might act in solidarity with GMH clergy to ensure their flourishing.



Part 1: Framing GMH Clergy Wellbeing

GMH clergy wellbeing: before ordination

The focus of this research is on the wellbeing of GMH clergy but, as has been seen in the wider Living Ministry study, the question of ordinand wellbeing is also crucial and is deserving of brief mention here, and greater attention in future. Suffice to say at this stage that though we focused questions and discussions on wellbeing since ordination, the reflections we heard often included references to life before ordination particularly during theological training. It was common for people in answering questions about their wellbeing as clergy to refer to patterns, experiences or problems which started before ordination. The Living Ministry reports highlight issues regarding ordinands' wellbeing during theological training such as the financial impact, moving away from relational networks, the emotional impact of uprooting the family, lack of relationships with the wider church, stresses for context-based ordinands etc.⁹ These will of course impact upon GMH people during training; however, participants shared additional burdens to their wellbeing, rooted in the problems of racism or discrimination due to cultural and/or ethnic differences.

In some instances, a person's mental, emotional and physical ill-health started during initial ministerial education phase 1 (IME 1) because of the stress of training in what they described as a culturally and racially hostile environment:

I did two years at [a college], that was one of the most awful experiences of my life...I left...because of racism that I experienced...That affected me so deeply I couldn't go past [the college] without having panic attacks for years.

In this case, the trauma of racism has impacted this person physically, mentally, psychologically and emotionally for years to come and been compounded by similar experiences in curacy and incumbency. In this particular case, the participant shared experiences which happened a decade ago, and so the situation may have improved in this particular place. However, testimonies from those who have trained more recently confirmed that racism continues to undermine the wellbeing of GMH ordinands up to the present time even after their time of training.

For some clergy, the problems of wellbeing in IME 1 were not rooted in the racism they experienced on an interpersonal level with staff or peers as in the case above. Several people highlighted the significant mental, spiritual and financial impact of being offered a theological education that was western and white-centred and viewed global perspectives as being of secondary status. As one person explained:

⁹ Graveling (2018), *op. cit.*, p.14, 25, 84.



I wanted to read theology that was relevant to people like me.... The first thing is, I couldn't afford the books because they don't have them in the library.... I had an additional burden just to be able to study what's relevant to me because the curriculum doesn't cover it.... I had to convince my lecturers that I could write an MA dissertation or an essay on [global] approaches. I have to justify it, as if going against the predominantly white focus or white syllabus is wrong. So that definitely impacts your wellbeing.

The issues of participation and the challenges of relationships with peers, also begin for some during IME 1. This can occur when the global perspectives brought by GMH ordinands are not always welcome by fellow ordinands, who assume that their cultural norms are anti-Christian because they are not European:

In my theological college they were not only not interested, but they were also actually against hearing it, actually against it. And it's, like, you can't offer anything at all because you come from a different culture, a different place...So, as an example when I was at theological college I presented something that involved actually showing [a cultural symbol]...Oh, my goodness gracious me, I could feel that some of my fellow ordinands were going to get up and walk out of the chapel, because as far as they were concerned that I brought in something that was evil. I brought in something that affronts them because it was anti-Christ. They did not consider to even ask me about it.

The issues of theological education have been highlighted in previous reports and most recently in Lament to Action which recommended further development of theological training to ensure global perspectives are given due attention.¹⁰ However, it is also clear that the problems in IME 1 go beyond curriculum to include staff training and the training of white ordinands in anti-racism and global spiritualities. This was therefore a clear area in which further research is needed. These matters have been up to this point considered a racial justice issue – which is right – however, from this research, we consider the rectifying of these imbalances to be central to the wellbeing of GMH ordinands and clergy now and on the way to a more just future for the church.

Differences within and between GMH groups

Participants conveyed a sense of there being shared experiences across different GMH groups which negatively impacted upon wellbeing. The impact of being 'othered' led to additional mental, emotional, physical and spiritual labour for clergy of UKME/GM heritage in contrast to their white peers as we will see in detail throughout this report. These shared experiences, though often discussed in negative terms, enable clergy across GMH groups to acknowledge each other's struggles and to offer support to one

¹⁰ The Archbishop's Anti-Racism Taskforce (2021), *op. cit.*, pp. 30-36.



another. One spoke of this in terms of ‘kinship with people, irrespective of their global majority background’ or ‘kinship based on the notion that we understood what it was like to be on the margins and the fringes and to be misunderstood.’ We will deal with the theme of networks in the section on relationships and also in the final section on responses, in which we highlight the positive impact of such groups. Yet we should also bear in mind from this point that GMH groups bond across ethnic divides due in part to their shared experiences of racial othering and, at times, racial trauma. Research has demonstrated the traumatic impact of racism on the psychological wellbeing of GMH people in white majority societies and contexts,¹¹ and the form of kinship we see among GMH clergy, may for some of them, be developed out of what Robert T. Carter would call ‘race-based traumatic stress’¹².

However, there was also a perception among clergy that some forms of trauma were particularly felt among certain groups. Twice for example, Asian clergy explained that they believed their black colleagues had more or distinct (with the implication of worse) challenges to overcome, which negatively impacted on the wellbeing of black clergy in particular ways. One spoke of the different kind of stereotypes which prevent black male participation and relationships for example, whereas the stereotypes impacting Asian males lead to underestimation of their contribution rather than their exclusion. Another Asian participant explained it in this way:

I have a much easier time of it, I think, than my black peers. So, you know, I can tell the difference when I walk into a room in my church, and then my black friend, who’s visiting, walks in. I can see the aversion. Both me and my friend know how to work a room and yet we get very different responses.... I think the C of E, despite all of its flaws, is more conducive for [Asians] to flourish than necessarily, I’ll be honest, my black friends.

In terms of our own observations in the course of this research we would only confirm that we did not have an overall impression that all African or African Caribbeans had worse states of wellbeing than those of Asian or other GMH backgrounds. However, we did notice some variations in the type of challenges reported by different groups which are deserving of further investigation. For example, while people from all groups spoke about marginalisation, discrimination and systemic issues impacting wellbeing, African and African

¹¹ Robert T. Carter and Alex L. Pieterse (2020), *Measuring the Effects of Racism: Guidelines for the Assessment and Treatment of Race-Based Traumatic Stress Injury*, New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press.

¹² ‘The events that may produce race-based traumatic stress reaction(s) occur in many different forms, as have been previously discussed and described throughout the article. Racial encounters may be direct or subtle and ambiguous. They can occur on an interpersonal level (microaggressions, verbal assaults, use of symbols or coded language), and can be the effect of structural or systemic acts. Racism may occur on an institutional level, as an application of racial stereotypes or as encounters and assault(s), and it may occur through cultural racism.’ Robert T. Carter (2007), ‘Racism and Psychological and Emotional Injury: Recognizing and Assessing Race-Based Traumatic Stress,’ *Counseling Psychologist* 35: 88.



Caribbeans spoke of explicit cases of bullying or verbal attacks by individuals, whereas Asian participants spoke of more understated prejudices or patronising behaviours. Equally, reports of positive experiences of ordained ministry were shared by clergy from across the range of ethnic groups represented. The qualitative nature of this research means we cannot draw conclusions about trends in the various GMH groups represented among clergy in the Church of England. However, we consider this to be an area for further research.

Across the board there were positive responses to the increase in networks for particular groups, such as The Tea House. There was the recognition that it is positive for groups to acknowledge their unique needs and to pass learning on to those who are starting on their journey as ordinands and curates. Such groups are understood to, as one person expressed, ‘resist the tendency to homogenise’. It is also likely that clergy of mixed ethnic heritage might also have particular experiences of identity and wellbeing in terms of belonging and participation, though we did not actively explore this theme and none of the participants raised it. The concern for homogeneity under ‘BAME’, ‘UKME’ or ‘GMH’ seemed particularly acute for those groups who are ‘minorities among minorities’ in the church. This phrasing was used by an East Asian clergy person speaking of the need to ensure the concerns and contributions of East Asian clergy – who comprise 0.2% of clergy in the Church of England according to the most recent data – are not missed.¹³

The term ‘minority among minorities’ was also used by a black British clergy person to describe the predominance of African and African Caribbean clergy in senior positions who are not born and raised in the UK, and may struggle to understand and where necessary represent the perspectives and needs of British born African and African Caribbean clergy. The statistics on ethnic diversity do not record the differences between GMH clergy born and raised in Britain versus those raised abroad but several people considered it to be significant that, to the best of their knowledge, none of the GMH bishops were born and raised in Britain. There may be indications here for the specific issues of the British context for GMH wellbeing more broadly, but also for how the church might better nurture and develop young GMH leaders in its own context as well as welcoming those developed as leaders globally.

Anecdotally, the impact of being born and raised in the UK versus migrating to the UK as a young person or adult, was also perceived to have an impact on GMH clergy wellbeing. However, perceptions varied in this regard. On the one hand, some considered GMH clergy born abroad to have more mental and psychological resilience than those born and raised in Britain, since the former are used to navigating the challenges of becoming part of British society:

UKME clergy who are born somewhere else often [have] another layer of expectation and work ethic which comes from somewhere else. You often jump through a whole lot of hoops to be here, so you

¹³ Church of England Research and Statistics (2021), *op. cit.*, p.21.



probably throw us, and we will try to land on four feet because that's what we've been doing for the last 20-odd years, [in] that journey of transition. Whereas UK born people often are expected to do the same, but they can't do that because that's not what they are. They are British in every aspect, whereas we have that added layer of filtration, or whatever we can call it.

Yet others suggested that, on the contrary, it was second and third generation GMH clergy who had developed the necessary tools for navigating the challenges of life in British society and its institutions, including the Church of England. As one participant explained:

some black British people have the concept of, from beginning, they've always had that racism, maybe in school, or in class or somewhere. Most Africans will say to you, 'I became black when I moved to Europe' ... Sometimes that puts a lot of stress on us because we don't have the tools to manage such situations, especially in church settings, because we expect that church should be welcoming, and nice, and lovely, lifting up holy hands, but sometimes that is where we get the more difficult things....

Due to a history of experiencing racism and discrimination in Britain, for them and their parents, some second generation GMH clergy were particularly alert to the dynamics of racism in the church. Racist or prejudicial comments or instances of discrimination could be missed by those unfamiliar with racism in Britain but were recognised by those who had experienced sometimes subtle forms of exclusion during their whole lives. Some of the questions about identity, belonging and wellbeing weighed heavily on second generation participants, impacting upon spiritual and vocational, mental and emotional wellbeing in particular. On reflecting on the racial trauma associated with ministry in the church as well as life in wider society, one participant spoke of having 'a certain lack of tolerance' for racism in comparison with some first generation GMH clergy because of what he had seen his mother experience:

I'm the generation that sat there and heard my mum, who was a nurse, on the phone to her other [GMH] friend, who was a nurse, talking about the stuff that had happened on the ward. Those are the conversations I grew up hearing... As a black working-class Brit...I've seen my mum have to assimilate; I can't do it.

We will deal with the matter of assimilation in detail in the section on participation but suffice to say at this point, that the variations in generation and exposure to life in Britain all have an impact on the wellbeing of GMH clergy even if perceptions of this are not consistent. It may well be the case that even individual clergy may vary in their capacity to endure experiences of marginalisation and racism. Resilience may well be worn away over time not only over the course of generations, but even within the course of one person's life or ministry. It will be crucial then for those concerned with the wellbeing of GMH clergy, as well as those considering the matters of diversity and inclusion to take these matters seriously as they seek to address GMH clergy experiences.



Rethinking the framework: on clergy wellbeing, race and the church

We began our interviews by reflecting on this Living Ministry wellbeing framework and asking to what extent this resonated with how clergy of UKME/GM heritage would describe their wellbeing. The insights from their responses led us to conclude that the current framework should be revised to consider further elements of wellbeing and the particular nuances which GMH people identified due to the general absence of those elements in their lives. We recognise that immediate adaptation of this resource would undermine the longitudinal study which is significantly underway, but would suggest these essential changes for future research and resources on clergy wellbeing.

While we did not assume that race, ethnicity and culture would be a key factor impacting wellbeing, participants raised these issues early in the interviews in the majority of cases, without the prompting of the interviewer. Many spoke of racism within the church as one of, if not the core determinant(s) of their wellbeing, as one participant expressed:

I think racism is a very key factor in the wellbeing of minority ethnic clergy...because I'm in touch with a lot of clergy, that has given me a lot of experience and information...I think racism, which manifests in a number of different ways, is a major difference in the way minority ethnic people experience wellbeing.

We will of course, spend ample time reflecting on GMH clergy experiences of wellbeing and what impact race may have on its various aspects. But from the outset it is worth outlining a few ways in which this connection can be conceived. GMH people in Britain face the realities of racism, discrimination and prejudice in interpersonal interactions as well as in the life of institutions and systems which presume white Englishness as normative. Certain GMH communities – specifically African, African Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Gypsy/Travellers – are impacted by disproportionate levels of poverty which creates a cycle of lower educational attainment, unemployment, and housing and health issues. Race undermines GMH clergy wellbeing specifically in three broad ways:

- the institutional racism of the church which centres the lives and needs of white – particularly male and middle class – priests and people and requires assimilation on the part of those from GMH backgrounds;
- experiences of race-based traumatic stress due to everyday racism¹⁴ and microaggressions in the course of ministry in the parish or the church, among peers or those in the wider community;

¹⁴ Everyday racism: 'connects structural forces of racism with routine situations in everyday life. It links ideological dimensions of racism with daily attitudes and interprets the reproduction of racism in terms of the experience of it in everyday life.' Philomena Essed (1991), *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory*, Sage Publications, p.2.

- the lack of provision by the church of culturally appropriate resources to support their wellbeing.

Participants recognised that clergy across the board were struggling to maintain their wellbeing especially after the pandemic but described the additional burdens they face due to the prevalence of racial inequity in the church and the country and the ongoing discussions and debates which have been inescapable. In the wake of the murder of George Floyd and while attempting to survive the pandemic, GMH clergy have been asked and expected to undertake additional labour. Those requiring this emotional, mental and spiritual labour, do not always consider the toll this is taking even when the work is seen by GMH clergy as necessary. While white clergy have been able to opt in to this labour, it has been expected of all GMH clergy and this has left some clergy feeling instrumentalised because of their ethnicity, and also has impacted on all aspects of their health. This is one recent example of how race, ethnicity and culture shapes wellbeing, and recognising this is the first important overarching finding of this project. This is true for white clergy – even though this fact is often unrecognised or unnamed – as well as for GMH clergy. This would suggest that though some might consider the matters of racial justice and clergy wellbeing to be distinct, they are intertwined in the experience of GMH clergy. GMH clergy wellbeing depends entirely upon the church, clergy at all levels, its staff, partners and congregations, doing all that is necessary to address racism in all of its forms in the church and wider society.

Adapting the current wellbeing categories

For a minority of people we spoke to, the wellbeing map did resonate with them in that it encompassed all of the aspects of wellbeing that they would consider important. Yet in reflecting on the framework, the majority of participants suggested some adaptation which would better align the wellbeing map with the experiences of all clergy.

The first notable reflection for the GMH clergy we spoke to, was the absence of any attentiveness to race, or any mention of culture and ethnicity in the current framework of wellbeing. Definitions of race, ethnicity and culture continue to be debated, and space does not permit us to give thorough explanations of these terms. For the sake of this project, we understand race to be a socially constructed hierarchy rooted in white supremacy and imposed upon global populations; ethnicity to be a socially constructed identity which depends upon real or imagined notions of shared history and culture; and culture to include the norms and customs developed among those who have a notion of shared identity. The lack of naming these aspects of personhood and thus of wellbeing betrays the colourblind approach which underpins current discussions of wellbeing in the church. This approach amounts to a form of racism, since it is not neutral as can be presumed, but treats whiteness as normative and allows racism to function undetected.



Some participants believed that there needed to be an entirely different section for ethnic and cultural wellbeing within the framework, which would enable white and GMH clergy to reflect on how race, ethnicity and culture might be shaping their experiences of wellbeing. We would recommend this for future work and resources on the basis of the testimonies we have heard. At this stage, I would simply highlight a few important nuances with regard to culture. In the first instance, some wanted to recognise that the understanding of the various aspects of the framework are culturally conditioned, and so what people understand by 'spirituality' or 'relationships' can differ substantially depending on one's background. This applied particularly to expectations regarding the notion of family dependents, as various participants highlighted:

I come from a culture, and others do as well, where your family connections are perhaps a lot thicker than your stereotypically independently minded Western kind of stereotype. So, they weren't considering things in my clergy wellbeing, in my living conditions, about having a room because we look after our elderly parents...

For many GMH clergy as exemplified above, 'family and dependents' does not simply include a partner, spouse or children but parents and extended family. Family members, dependents and core supportive relationships can often be abroad rather than in the UK. When these cultural distinctions go unrecognised, the wellbeing of GMH clergy is undermined, as they are treated as white clergy when in reality they are dealing with vastly different needs. Relational wellbeing in the case of this participant will therefore require more in terms of time to travel, and the financial resources to enable them to see and support their family. Country of origin and cultural expectations therefore deeply impact on the factors which make up wellbeing for clergy.

The second point on culture, was the importance of cultural belonging and expression as a marker of wellbeing as opposed to assimilation in order to participate and develop relationships within the church. We will explore this in depth in the section on participation, but this was one of the most commonly raised points in our research. Participants explained it the following ways:

I do think there is a vector that's interesting, which is about cultural expression. I think this does go beyond ethnicity and covers things like nationality, social economic status, and northerners and southerners and that kind of thing.

I know that how I speak and the calibre of English in conversation and in writing that I have used in my vocation, it seems to have helped my rural very white parishes to find me acceptable. And it is at a cost because psychologically I had sacrificed my ability and use of [indigenous] languages so that they wouldn't corrupt how I may hear and speak. And I'm constantly translating my understanding and meaning from my cultural perspective and my language perspective into what may be the context of the place and people whom I've been called to serve.



Culture was understood to relate not only to the matter of race and ethnicity we see above, but also the matter of class or region which would also impact upon some white clergy. But the importance of cultural expression for wellbeing is clear from these statements, and especially the harm done by perpetually holding back one's own cultural norms or the additional labour required to make oneself 'acceptable.' Several participants spoke about the desire for their whole selves – including their cultural norms, expressions and traditions – to be welcomed among their peers, within their parishes and by the church institution. We would therefore want to adapt the theme of participation to 'participation and culture'. By this we mean, that clergy wellbeing is impacted by the extent to which clergy are given room to integrate their ethnic identity, cultural norms, Christian faith (including theology and spirituality) and their ministry in the Church of England.

The third reflection on the framework, was that participants wanted to name emotional wellbeing as another factor which was missing from the current framework in a similar way to ethnicity or cultural factors. Though emotional wellbeing is indicated indirectly in various other sections, it was brought to the fore as a specific element of wellbeing which was often linked very closely to relationships. Participants spoke of the need for informal networks to sustain clergy 'spiritually and emotionally', or of the emotional, psychological and spiritual cost of 'the denial of who [GMH clergy] are' in terms of their ethnic and cultural identity. In reflecting on the importance of emotion, we heard:

Although it might filter through other areas, it would be emotional I would have as a separate category perhaps...I do think sometimes you might be doing okay financially but emotionally you're not there for different reasons. You might have a relationship, a good relationship, a helpful relationship, but you're still not doing well emotionally for different reasons.

I had a really bad curacy. Really awful. So, this is really what has contributed to a notable difference in my wellbeing before and since ordained ministry...I was just really badly matched with a training incumbent...it was really spiritually, emotionally sapping. And it nearly drove me out of ministry.

In light of this we will in the later sections speak of 'relationships and emotional wellbeing'. By naming the importance of emotion, we seek to be mindful not only of the mental health issues of anxiety or stress, but the feelings of sadness, excitement, disappointment or joy, which clergy may feel, and which affect their sense of wellbeing, and even vocation.

A missing component?: trust and confidence as psychological wellbeing

In discussing wellbeing, trust – or in many cases, a lack of a sense of trust – emerged as an important factor which impacted the wellbeing of GMH clergy and also prevented them seeking support from the church. These findings are consistent with the longitudinal study where clergy spoke of the stress created when they feel they cannot trust senior clergy and decision makers, lamented a lack of trust in them by the church, or

described a lack of trust as preventing them from seeking help.¹⁵ While some participants spoke of having friendships and healthy, positive relationships with white peers, senior clergy and decision makers, others felt unsafe and unable to trust those they served alongside. We consider the psychological component of wellbeing to be important for future work in this area, and that it should be named more explicitly rather than simply implied for example, in the context of ‘relationships.’ Psychological wellbeing is said to comprise six core components:

‘Positive evaluations of oneself and one's past life (Self-Acceptance), a sense of continued growth and development as a person (Personal Growth), the belief that one's life is purposeful and meaningful (Purpose in Life), the possession of quality relations with others (Positive Relations with Others), the capacity to manage effectively one's life and surrounding world (Environmental Mastery), and a sense of self-determination (Autonomy).’¹⁶

Since elements of wellbeing overlap due to the integrated nature of human life, we can see that aspects of psychological wellbeing are already addressed through the existing elements. Purpose in life, aspects of personal growth and positive relations with others are clearly included in the sections on vocation, participation and relationships. However, it is ‘self-acceptance’, ‘environmental mastery’ and ‘autonomy’ which are deserving of our attention. Psychological wellbeing is not only important for GMH clergy but for the wellbeing of clergy across the board, and many clergy regardless of race will be impacted by challenges to psychological wellbeing in various ways. For our participants though, one spoke about their personal growth being prevented and even reversed since joining the church, and by extension their lack of self-confidence has left them unrecognisable to themselves:

the self-confidence I had then I've never regained. I was [in a senior secular role] for nine years. I know I must have been okay because they approached me about being head of department...The reason I turned it down was because I was exploring ordination at the time. I started training...it just stripped me of who I was. I don't think I've recovered the sense of who I am since I've come into the church. There is a deep-seated insecurity that I have prayed that God will remove, that it will go, because I know I'm a shadow of my former self.

Various people in different ways described a lack of trust in the structures of the church, their peers, more senior clergy and those making decisions which impact upon their lives, due to experiences or instances of betrayal, mistreatment and discrimination. A lack of trust will of course impact on many white clergy for different reasons, and participants noted that there is a general sense of fear and a lack of trust for clergy in

¹⁵ Graveling (2021), *op. cit.*, p.34, 43, 71.

¹⁶ Carol D. Ryff and Corey Lee M. Keyes (1995), ‘The Structure of Psychological Well-Being Revisited’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69 (4): 719–27.

relation to the wider institution. For GMH clergy, the overall sense of mistrust was located in a sense that the church is not a safe place for GMH clergy to be themselves and to build genuine relationships, as one person expressed:

I am not convinced that there is that genuine room and freedom that it is actually safe to just really be myself and entrust myself. And even developing relationships. As I am saying it, it feels quite strange to be working with a church as clergy and realising that that is actually my experience.

Coupled with this, is a sense that the leaders of the church do not take seriously the voices and concerns of those who are GMH, and that individuals directly or indirectly uphold racism and discrimination. This then creates a vicious circle in which those who are desperately in need of support for their wellbeing do not feel able to ask for help, since those offering it may well be responsible, directly or indirectly, for their health or wellbeing concerns:

Going to somebody for support involves making yourself vulnerable, you know? When you don't trust a particular group, you're unlikely to go and make yourself vulnerable to them.

I don't know any minority ethnic person in our deanery who thinks of our chapter as a place to get support. So, I can imagine that a lot of white clergy probably would go to deanery chapter for support, but our experience hasn't been that this is a supportive place.

But some also expressed fear about how reaching out for help will be interpreted, particularly in terms of a lack of resilience:

asking for psychological support for example, is a big no, no. I have seen it multiple times. Some of them really scary and sad stories...[In] most dioceses 12 days of counselling [is] offered as a standard thing, which you don't even need much paperwork. But still, people are scared to access it...there's this sense that as clergy, or as an ordinand training for ordination, you are expected to provide evidence that you are a resilient person...

In contrast there is a noticeable difference in the wellbeing of those who felt they could trust their peers, bishops or staff in their diocese.

Despite this crisis of trust in the church, participants also retained a level of trust in God and faith that change may come. In this sense, theology can play a significant role in enabling clergy to endure difficulties and can bolster their mental and psychological wellbeing. This hope they understand to be important for them as Christian leaders, as opposed to despair:

I think that if people can be reassured that an initiative is a genuine effort to do something about the situation, they will likely take part in it. There's always a feeling that things can change and that's why we are Christians, you know?



But it should also be noted that theology which encourages clergy to remain in places of harm should be treated with caution. Theologies of hope can and do expose GMH clergy to further harm at the hands of others, and can be weaponised by others to encourage GMH clergy to remain in places where they face racial abuse or trauma. Theological reflection and attentiveness to these nuances must therefore be considered paramount to any work on vocational discernment, wellbeing, ministry and race in the Church of England. Overall, we would suggest that psychological elements of trust be recognised as a core element of clergy wellbeing across the board, as this is particularly evident in the case of GMH clergy.



Part 2: Exploring the Wellbeing Categories

Spiritual and vocational wellbeing

Spirituality was proven to be one of the primary sources of wellbeing for GMH clergy and so might be considered the strongest element of wellbeing for those we spoke to. GMH clergy along with their white counterparts are sustained through the good and challenging times by a deep sense of God’s loving presence and God’s calling to ordained ministry. For GMH clergy, this calling often feels tested in greater ways because of the experiences they have personally experienced or heard about from their GMH peers. Access to spiritual direction/accompaniment and the support of senior clergy is essential for this aspect of wellbeing, and where it is absent, clergy can experience a significant level of stress, doubt and pain. However, it is the determination to serve God and God’s people, which encourages them to carry on despite the challenges they may face.

A spiritual life that sustains

Many of our participants spoke of the central importance of their prayer lives and relationship with God as the basis for their wellbeing. Whether speaking of needing to ‘draw on deep spiritual wells’, ‘keep coming back to Jesus’ or depending on a ‘rock-solid faith’, participants recognised that their wellbeing depended on God. As with many members of the clergy, prayer whether individually or corporately is a joy for GMH clergy. Some participants described a rich prayer life in which they have regular time to devote to prayer or reading the Bible alone, are members of prayer groups with friends within and outside of the church and join in worship with others.

Serving others by aiding them in the development of their own spiritual lives is also core to the wellbeing of clergy who are called to this ministry, as one person said, ‘prayer and worship is what we do.’ Some spoke of taking retreats on occasion – though not as often as they would like – and expressed deep gratitude for spiritual directors or companions who enable them to deepen their spiritual lives and attend to their wellbeing in a holistic manner. For some GMH clergy, the lack of spiritual directors/companions from GMH backgrounds meant that they had to choose between spiritual support from those who often lack cultural competency and having no support at all. The development and provision of culturally competent spiritual direction and accompaniment must therefore be an area of focus for the church going forward.

Prayer is one of the primary ways that GMH process and address the challenges they may face which might undermine their wellbeing. This prayer can take place alone, with family, friends, fellow colleagues or with spiritual directors/companions and mentors. One person described:

sometimes if I feel down, stressed I have to think about it, I have to think about it and pray. I just stay in my office and meditate, I tell my wife ‘Don’t disturb me, I just want to pray, I just want to



meditate.’ Sometimes I invite [my family] as well to come and let us pray because this is just an evil doing and we will fight them, and we will pray.

Another participant spoke about the specific support of a bishop who came to a parish where they were experiencing great difficulty being undermined and lied about by people in their parish. As someone from a Pentecostal background, they understood the events taking place to be a matter of spiritual warfare which thus had to be dealt with in a spiritual manner. Upon contacting the diocesan deliverance team, the bishop was contacted and came to the aid and support of this priest by holding a communion service, after which the congregation as well as the priest recognised that ‘it was a different place’. This priest believed that their vocation in that place was to be a provocateur and enable this freedom to come to this community. Spirituality is therefore not simply a source of wellbeing for GMH clergy themselves, but for their ministry to those they serve.

In listening to the reflections on spiritual wellbeing and culture, we identified an interesting variation in the contributions of GMH clergy from different Anglican traditions which deserves mention. However, it was clear in one focus group which comprised people from different Christian traditions but from ethnic groups within the same global region, that there was a greater sense of spiritual wellbeing among those who found themselves among the Anglo-Catholic tradition due to a greater compatibility with indigenous spiritual beliefs:

Most of the leading missional texts are actually written by Catholics...But if, like myself, you’re coming from more of an Evangelical charismatic background, you’ve had to suppress that. I don’t even feel like I can theologically reflect safely. I can’t talk to my colleagues about it, and so I have to keep it bottled up. So, it leads to sometimes this split, this feeling of a split personality...when I start speaking honestly about my spirituality and wanting to bring it into my liturgy as I lead, and I do it sensitively with social intelligence and so forth. I still fear, and sometimes it happens, that a colleague will just go, ‘Oh, that was heresy, wasn’t it?’

we have this whole ancestor thing. So, like, I think, in my Evangelical days this was like a problem, but in my Anglo-Catholic mode I have no qualms about, like, the incense I have with my ancestors over there. So, I’m fine, but I suspect that if you come from a more, sort of, conservative Evangelical mode that the whole ancestors thing might be tense...

There is clearly no set rule in this regard, and as our participants were predominantly from the Catholic end of the church as opposed to the Evangelical, we cannot make a conclusive statement without conducting further research in this area. However, this does raise an important question about belonging within the church and how spiritual wellbeing may vary between traditions because of the assumptions highlighted above about global spiritualities being anti-Christian when they are simply not European. An ability to critically reflect on the difference between what might be anti-Christian versus simply not European, seems

crucial to ensuring GMH are not being asked to shun cultural traditions which are core to their spiritual wellbeing and to the wellbeing of the diverse communities and congregations being served by the church.

Serving God's people well

The clergy we spoke to take their calling and vocation as priests very seriously and were determined to serve God and God's people faithfully, in whatever circumstances they found themselves. Yet GMH clergy often spoke of being offered jobs in parishes which their white counterparts would or did not want due to limited resources or congregants. Others mentioned a trend in GMH candidates being encouraged towards assistant or self-supporting ministry during the discernment process and then when considering curacy options. We will deal in depth with the ramifications of such trends in the section on financial and material wellbeing. But suffice to say at this stage, that despite this sense among some participants that they were unfairly treated, they were determined to give their best to their ministry:

when I started here...there was only 20 people coming here...they wanted to close this church...I came here, I introduced myself around the community, I opened the church, because [the previous vicar] opened the church only Sunday for one hour only. I told them no, a church is open every day, come in. Then I spoke to the school...I spoke to the parents, I spoke to the people around, I invited them... I went out, I brought the church outside, because we have a big garden...before the pandemic our congregation was 70 to 80 people every Sunday.

One participant spoke about taking a role in a parish which unbeknownst to them, had a very strong presence of the far-right nationalist group, the British National Party (BNP). The local people were concerned about this, including a local politician who inquired as to why the church would put this GMH woman in such a context. Yet this priest felt a calling to remain there:

I felt, when I was walking the streets of the parish, it was a subversive act. It was almost as if God was using me to counter the culture and build another narrative. When I visited the church to have the interview, I went in and it's like the presence of God just consumed me. I knew that God was calling me to this place.

In this case, the accumulation of the challenges of ministry led to them leaving parish ministry due to ill health. However, even after this, this priest did not have any regrets about remaining to serve this community but saw their role as pivotal in changing the tides in terms of inclusion and community building in that congregation.

Several participants spoke about thriving in white majority contexts where they may be the first clergy person of GMH to have been in that particular parish. One person spoke about the importance of creating space for people to be open and honest in non-malicious ways, about their uncertainties regarding what it would be like to have a priest who was neither white nor male as that is what they had been used to. In this



case, hosting an ‘open house’ enabled a breaking down of barriers between the new GMH priest and the mainly white congregation. This experience was recalled positively overall by this particular priest, but it also put them at great risk in terms of the microaggressions or racism they could have and may well have encountered, even though details were not shared. Others spoke of their experiences in predominantly white settings as being generally good with some challenges, but overall enjoying the opportunity. For some, the opportunity involved being able to challenge stereotypes:

I know that there was an exotic element to me being there. But it also came with its share of difficulties and challenges, with often implicit, and occasionally explicit, expressions of racism. But it was a good opportunity to embody a physical challenge to the assumptions that people had of what it meant to be an Anglican and an Anglican Minister, and an Anglican Minister in a rural English church.

GMH clergy often focus on the good in people and in terms of opportunities even when they experience racial abuse. This may well be a coping mechanism which enables them to serve or may be considered a spiritual practice of hopefulness in terms of what their endurance may produce – as we have seen mentioned already. In this case, this person focussed on the opportunity to educate people and challenge prejudices. But even having to consciously process racism, in the midst of vocation, takes a mental toll on some, though there are variations in how people cope with being the first or the only GMH clergy person in a context. Many simply want not to be treated ‘in a token way’ but instead to be valued for what they bring as a whole person.

The question of vocation and vocational wellbeing is therefore complicated by the matter of ethnic and cultural differences because the context in which one serves can be a place of trauma for GMH clergy. However, participants were conscious of the fact that going to such places which might prove traumatic was necessary in order to ensure they had a range of experiences which would help their future ministry. Curates in particular spoke about the need to be deployable as one of the core motivations for taking roles in settings which may prove to be extremely challenging, for fear that they would be side-lined when future opportunities arose:

So originally my diocese were trying to put me in the city centre, it’s my background, so it seemed like that they weren’t putting my training needs first. They wanted someone young, diverse, who’s British-born, so I don’t struggle to engage with your young, white middle-class...So again, I had to push against another agenda. And I said, ‘I want to go somewhere white’ because, in the future, I don’t want to be disqualified when people say, ‘What do you know about typical English ministry, you’ve only done city centre, church plant stuff.’

I served [my] curacy in a rural [southern] parish, and that was intentional, in many ways...I was seeking something that was quite different from any experience that I had had of Britain up to then.

Because my thinking was, 'If God has called me to minister to the Church of England and if I am deployable anywhere, then I might as well try rural Britain.'

In other cases, clergy felt they had been coerced into accepting roles in contexts which were not right for their training and flourishing, with one reporting actions which could be considered spiritually abusive:

I was almost coerced into accepting it. Because it was not what I had asked for. It was not even anywhere close where I thought I would be able to thrive. And yet, I was really given this. And when I eventually found out more and expressed concerns about it, I was told, 'Take it or leave it. Don't take it. We're really going to release you and that's up to you.'¹⁷ And then I was really spiritually manipulated as well. Talk about spiritual abuse, by saying, 'Well, God is sending you here. So, take that.' ...And then things went really wrong, and I tried to be a whistle-blower...And in the end, I just had to do curacy full term, but in the end, I don't think there was ownership. There was a recognition that things had gone wrong, and things are not really put in place. But to be honest, not much done about it.

The key determinant of wellbeing in the light of these stories is the matter of agency – the extent to which GMH clergy feel that they are heard, and that they have the capacity to impact the decisions that affect them, their ministry and their families. As seen in this last quotation, spirituality and theology complicate this matter of agency and can be manipulated in ways which undermine a person's sense of agency. Theological and ministry training therefore has an important role to play in sustaining the wellbeing of GMH clergy, by enabling them to reflect on how power is being used for or against them in different settings. Understanding spiritual abuse in particular would, we imagine, both help people to avoid such behaviours, but also enable people to recognise and name the harm being done to them.

Vocation for GMH clergy is deeply affected by the reality of not belonging to the majority ethnic group in the country, as well as in the church. Yet there was also some regret about this for some participants who felt that simply by nature of belonging to a GMH group, they were handed another vocation in addition to being a priest in which they were expected to be unofficial racial justice officers and representatives of their race on committees or working groups within the church. This expectation has significant ramifications for clergy in terms of wellbeing, especially with regard to workload and finances. Clergy are often expected to take on these responsibilities in addition to their priestly role in the parish, without any additional remuneration being offered or any time being released from other commitments. It also comes with additional mental,

¹⁷ Ordinands can be 'released' from their sending diocese when there is no suitable post for them, and this is common in dioceses with more ordinands than available curacies. However, being released does lead to some level of precarity as there is no guarantee of a curacy being found outside of their sending diocese.



emotional and relational pressures as people question why they are being invited to particular conversations or roles, and what is being indirectly asked of them. One participant explained it this way:

because of where the church is at, in terms of inclusivity and diversity, I find that any clergy who's UKME has to take on board how they are made, their ethnicity, is part of their vocation, whether they like it or not, whether they accept it or deny it. Now, if you deny it, you just try and say, 'My [UKME heritage] has nothing to do with it.' Well, you can try your best, but the problem is people will make it something about your vocation. So, you don't really have a choice...I feel like I have two jobs. I feel like I'm doing parochial ministry and I feel like I'm doing national ministry. Now people might turn and say, 'Well clearly you want to do the national ministry, so you are burning yourself out.' But I don't think that's necessarily fair because I'm called as a priest as God made me, which includes the colour of my skin and my culture, and all that priestly kind of stuff. So, the Church of England, in my opinion, hasn't got metrics or created diagrams that take that into account. In other words, I feel like UKME [clergy] have to do more. Whereas if I was white I could possibly just focus on parochial ministry... But the same is for other minorities, be it sexuality or whatnot as well, and disability.

It seems important therefore, that GMH clergy have the space to process how they integrate their ethnicity, culture and vocation, rather than this being assumed by others, especially those more senior. While the urgency regarding representation might be felt by clergy of all races, the expectation that every clergy person of GMH backgrounds sees themselves as representatives or desires to take on the additional labour of addressing inclusion and diversity is incorrect. Those who do choose this, must be mindful of their overall wellbeing in the midst of this work, and those who call them into these roles must bear in mind the emotional, mental, vocational and financial needs which come along with this work, and make provision for them.

A contested calling

We have spoken thus far about the spiritual lives and vocational lives of GMH priests and in this final section we will explore how GMH wellbeing is affected by challenges to their vocation which come from within the church. In addition to the common challenges faced by all clergy, GMH clergy face multiple challenges when they seek to fulfil their calling in ways which are true to who they are and relevant for the diversity of the people in Britain. For some, these conflicts lead to their departure from particular ministry settings, where their wellbeing has been significantly undermined.

The vocational challenge for GMH clergy tends to lie in the images that people have of priests as white British (and male), and of priestly ministry as defined by white (specifically middle-upper class) English cultural norms. This means that there is an internal mental, spiritual and emotional struggle for GMH clergy themselves as they occupy this role and ask questions about what it means not only to be a priest but to



bring their ethnic and cultural identity to bear on how they embody and enact their role and calling. For some, they accepted the expectation that being a priest in the Church of England demanded that they conform to the ways white English priests undertake the role including letting go of any spiritual heritage which is not Anglican nor white English:

I know two people who have come in from the Pentecostal to the Anglican church who are minority ethnic, but I think when they come, they come with an expectation that they probably would have to make changes. I encourage them to make those changes, but I see it as part of them embracing what it means to be an Anglican. Now, it's quite possible, then, that that puts some kind of constraint on their spiritual life.... learning to be Anglican, for somebody who has come into it from a Pentecostal church, might be about using the liturgy, and allowing that to be what guides what happens, resisting the temptation to freelance.

The tendency to 'freelance' or 'go off-script' could be considered a trait of African or black spirituality overall, not just black pentecostalism. So resisting this desire to go beyond the written words of the liturgy, may in some ways equate to a resisting of black cultural heritage or to put it more directly, anti-blackness. The mental, psychological and spiritual impact of this resistance to oneself, is sure to impact on wellbeing, even for those who see this as necessary for their ministry. This would also be the same for those from working class communities for whom the middle-upper class cultural norms of some quarters of the church are unfamiliar. But the point here, is that for this priest, learning to be an Anglican priest is expected to involve spiritual-cultural constraint for those who are not from a white British or Anglican background. This constraint, though accepted by some, at least to some extent, does have an impact on wellbeing which depends on some level of self-expression and cultural belonging. As increasing numbers of people from Pentecostal backgrounds join the Church of England, assumptions which elevate white English cultural and spiritual norms need to be increasingly challenged for the sake of the church and who she seeks to serve.

This restraint is not only felt in terms of leading worship while suppressing one's global spiritual roots, but also in the sense of what ministry looks like. Participants spoke about the cultural differences in how ministry is undertaken, especially mission and evangelism. One asked: 'The way we do our mission and evangelism is different, and where are these resources that I can lay hands upon in order to do my ministry in its fullness?' Another spoke of being reprimanded and even facing punitive measures for engaging in forms of evangelism which the church did not approve of despite the fact that people outside of the church found it inspiring and engaged positively with them:

when they talk about fresh expressions or mission, you've got to have a box. You're authorised to do fresh expression because you've got the box, and someone says, 'Okay, we're doing fresh expression.' You can talk about a mission, or you do a mission...But if you go out and you stand at the bus stop and you say, you know, how's your day today, you know, and you talk about Jesus



because that's the way I am, 'Oh goodness you shouldn't do it.' So, the mental [impact] was terrible because I had to keep asking God are you sure you've called me, you know, to proclaim the gospel and to spread the good news and to say, you know, what your word is all about and their churches believe in it, because my senior colleagues have told me that if I keep doing that I'm going to be sanctioned.

For this participant who has developed their sense of calling to mission and evangelism, the actions of senior colleagues who did sanction them stifled their capacity to fulfil their vocation in ways which are true to their cultural background. Though they name this as a challenge for their mental wellbeing, it has clearly also had spiritual and vocational impact as they question their calling on the basis of the church's response.

The matter of professionalism and appropriate forms of ministry and mission is also culturally bound and can therefore also weigh heavily on those from GMH backgrounds.

I think there's, maybe, a sense in which being a public representative minister in the Church of England is associated with being professional in some way. For me, that has a very white British lens on it in the way we think about it in the Church of England. I feel that, in a certain way, ordinands and curates are being prepared or directed into that kind of professional role, which may not leave space for the non-European, perhaps, elements of our culture or our heritage. Certainly, for me at least, it can make me feel like I almost unconsciously feel drawn to trying to express myself in a more white British kind of way and trying to fit in with that professional culture. I think I subconsciously, as well, almost don't really dwell on and bring out those elements of [my] culture which I experienced growing up...It feels deeply buried at times when I'm trying to function in that role as preparing to become an ordained minister.

This requirement for professionalism which is culturally bound to white British identity is illustrated in the range of people who spoke about vestments and clericals as a visual representation of the assimilation that is required. This will not be relevant for those who belong to low church traditions for the most part as there can be less of an emphasis on the wearing of clerical clothing. Yet for many participants, the implicit expectation that they must shun their cultural preferences in their clothing, exemplified the church's requirements regarding the suppression of global cultures in order that they assimilate:

Clothing can be such a big part of how we express ourselves and our personal identity, but I found it quite strange, actually, just fitting into now wearing clericals most days...For something which used to be such a big thing of how I express my identity, it has just disappeared...I think of a lot of ethnic minority cultures around the world, where clothing and the way you dress can feel like such a big and important part of how you express yourself.



companies like Collared or Lottie’s experiment with female clerical wear and they go, ‘You don’t have to wear a shirt, you can wear a bib stock, you can wear a stretchy top, you can wear this, you can wear that,’ ... I, kind of, think, ‘Actually, but they’re all white, Western clothing.’ What would happen if you actually translated it? Would congregations accept South Asian clerical wear, for example?

Therefore, finding ways to resist the demand to assimilate has proven to be an important aspect of self-expression and self-acceptance for clergy, through which they are able to be true to themselves and their heritage while serving as priests:

what I do is I wear these yellow African patterned trousers, and I wear my black clerical shirt. Through the week, normally, I wear a bib and put on my patterned shirt. That’s what I do most days. Some of my stoles are African materials... Sometimes they say to me that I’m so dressed up. I say to them, ‘In my culture, if you are going for something important, you dress up...’

However, despite some priests navigating the challenges of ministry and thriving nonetheless, for some, the demand to conform and endure racial assaults and the general stress of ministry forces them out of the parish or the church as a whole. For GMH clergy, leaving ministry can be linked to how they are treated in the parish, the hostility of colleagues and the impact all of this has on wellbeing on a holistic level. The majority of people had a sense that their wellbeing would be similar whether they were in a parish, in a diocesan role or in a theological college or other institution related to the church. Therefore, the reasons for moving or leaving would be the same. But others did express that moving out of parish ministry into theological education or chaplaincy could offer some relief from the mistreatment they might face at the hands of parishioners or colleagues:

People make the decision to move ministry areas because of the length of time that they had to deal with maybe congregations who don’t accept them, or colleagues who are always operating towards them with a degree of suspicion. One relief from all that is to go into some sort of chaplaincy work, whether it be in a school or prison or something like that, where it is more autonomous. For those that stay, either they are counting down to retirement, which I always feel is a sad thing, and therefore the job of doing what they are called to do goes.

For others, the decision to leave or move is driven not only by the stress on their wellbeing, but by theological convictions regarding the need to fulfil one’s calling in a place where one can flourish. In this case, theology can enhance wellbeing by reminding clergy of the importance of their dignity and agency, and passion for justice:

I always talk about being. Are we being what God has called us to be? And that means flourishing in who we are created to be. And, if anything constrains that, that denial of who we are to be will



inevitably impact us emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. And so, it wasn't a hard decision to leave it because there was something about an obligation to the next generation. So, we never left because of our health. We left because it was the right thing to do. But those that I know that have left because of their health, mental health, their sexual relationships, it has been a decision that has been galvanised and compounded by the stuff that they had to put up with, which has been horrendous.

What enables spiritual and vocational flourishing?

In summary, spiritual and vocational wellbeing then depends upon a range of factors for GMH clergy:

- Personal rhythms of prayer, retreat, Bible study and spiritual direction which are culturally relevant;
- Opportunities to express spirituality, theology and ministry in ways which are not bound by white European perspectives, cultures and norms for the benefit of all people;
- A sense of purpose and growth for oneself and one's ministry in the particular context where they are serving;
- Spaces for open and kind conversation about difference where desired, without the expectation that diversity and inclusion work must be part of the priest's role;
- Sensitivity to the needs of GMH clergy and their families when discerning contexts for ministry.

Authentic participation

Participation is defined as 'the extent to which ordinands and clergy feel and are able to participate in the life of the wider church'¹⁸; however, as explained above, participation comes with additional complications for GMH clergy for whom institutional life can feel foreign. In order for GMH clergy to participate in the life of the wider church, the overwhelming majority spoke of needing to conform in certain ways in order to be welcomed. To summarise, as one participant stated: 'you might be allowed to participate but you are told how to participate.' This does not, as we will see, often involve a literal conversation or one specific moment of being told to conform – although this can happen – but often manifests as an unspoken, but deeply felt social pressure.

This pressure means people who belong to GMH groups are required to do the mental, emotional and psychological labour of making oneself culturally and socially acceptable to the church as a white-dominated space. This additional labour undermines the wellbeing of GMH people even though on the surface their participation might be viewed as a purely positive reality. To put it differently, the cost of participation for GMH clergy is coterminous with adverse wellbeing. In light of this, we would like to speak

¹⁸ Graveling (2018), *op. cit.* p.83.



of ‘authentic participation’ to clarify that authentic self-expression is core to healthy participation which enhances wellbeing.

Speaking of authentic participation does not equate to the caricaturing of GMH clergy by others, as participants mentioned can occur:

Sometimes it becomes like a drama. You’re expected to act. Some people want you to bring that ‘African [style]’, jumping around, screaming during worship. They’re excited about that. If you’re not doing it, it’s like, ‘this diversity is not diverse enough for us,’ so we find that sometimes we are taken as props.

they said, ‘If you were black and you came from a gospel church background, we can understand you behaving like that, but you’re not even from that culture, so you’ve got no right to be like that.’

This caricaturing and performative dimension of tokenistic rather than authentic participation occurs when dominant groups seek to determine what authenticity is for the GMH clergy person, and only leads to further emotional, mental and spiritual strain. GMH clergy must have the space to discern and explore their identity as they participate in the life of the church and find ways to articulate their sense of self as they work alongside their peers.

Participation, race and racial justice ministry

For some GMH clergy, participation in the life of the diocese is a joy which they feel called to in addition to their parochial ministry.

In terms of my chapter colleagues, I feel very welcomed, very supported. I’m on bishop’s staff so that’s really helpful.... I didn’t go for jobs that were packed, busy, super-busy parishes where they needed a whole team and there was one person there. I really read through carefully all the job profiles that I was looking at. I needed something that was meaty enough to keep me engaged and I felt I could offer something at a parish level, and I could grow and learn in terms of my ministry at the parish level, but I also wanted enough space to do things more strategically in terms of the diocese...I feel relatively in control of my diary, although I am super-busy and there’re a lot of meetings.

While for others, life in the wider diocese can be brutal, in contrast to the positive experiences of their parish context:

In the wider diocese [I am] not really being seen or heard or listened to, even when I do insist on using my voice, pretty much every interaction takes so much energy, and it just drains me. While I am doing everything that a curate is expected to do, I also have to find this extra reserve to draw upon to constantly deal with that sense of not actually truly being invited to or being expected to participate as others do.



The theme of tokenism was at the forefront of many conversations on the theme of participation especially since the murder of George Floyd in 2020 which provoked many conversations on race, diversity and inclusion at every level of the church. Many lamented the fact not only that it is assumed that inclusion and diversity are core to their vocation because they are GMH as we have already discussed, but that they feel tokenised and suspect that they are only asked to participate in the life of the church to add diversity on a visual level:

People want to make us tokens. They want to pull us out, use us for their websites, their diocesan magazines, their whatever, but that is where our ministry ends... there is a token way in which we are approached. So, I keep getting invitations to join this or that body and my response is always, 'No, because I don't want to simply be the token face that you are going to use to justify a particular narrative' ...I often feel more like a token. And a tolerated one at best, rather than a welcome and included one. It drains energy physically, emotionally and in many ways.

Others spoke candidly about being called upon to participate in discussions about race and inclusion when they have clear gifts and skills in other areas. As someone explained: 'it's not that I don't care about the issue, but I spend more of my time thinking about theology than about race, but church-wise I have to spend a lot of time doing race stuff.' Tokenism was described by almost all of our participants, who felt that they can often be reduced in the minds of colleagues or senior staff and clergy to being nothing more than their ethnicity. They are then expected to perform as representatives of their ethnic group, whether or not they want or choose to be. Again, it is the matter of agency which seems to be the deciding factor in how GMH clergy experience life in the church.

However, when GMH clergy are able to participate as their full selves and choose for themselves to do work in the area of inclusion and diversity, this can be rewarding. Clergy were emotionally, mentally and spiritually boosted by the sense that they can create positive changes in the church in the area of race and inclusion, but also in the many other ways that changes are needed for those who have similar experiences. Representation was therefore spoken of positively in this regard and, by contrast, lack of representation could undermine a sense of wellbeing, trust and peace of mind:

I don't necessarily have the inspiration of other people I can look to for ideas and examples of how I can follow. That can sometimes, I think, be a mental stumbling block for us...

The negative impact of a lack of representation was even more acute for certain GMH groups such as East Asians who have no example of a senior clergy person or staff member in the church. While some spoke about GMH clergy being examples for each other regardless of the particular ethnic background, it seems that it does make a difference for clergy to see someone who is like them participating at the highest levels, as opposed to someone who is simply not white, though that can also be encouraging.

Experiences of discrimination

Clergy spoke across the board about reservations about participating in the wider life of the church because of their past experiences or experiences of others which have been discriminatory. When they do attempt to get more involved, some reported that they are repeatedly rejected despite their qualifications and best efforts. The intentional encouragement of others then becomes paramount to the participation of GMH clergy:

We know there is racism, we believe, ‘Okay, we’re going to work hard, we will do everything, we will prepare for these things, we will write brilliant applications, prepare for the interviews,’ and then eventually you don’t get it. It happens over and over and over.... we know that women won’t put [themselves] forward to a job if they don’t meet at least 70% or 80% of the [requirements]. Whereas normally men will. It kind of applies to UKME as well...after getting burned so many times people stop applying for jobs because it’s difficult. There is a limit to endurance and patience. Then...somebody will come and tell you, ‘Why don’t you look at this job?’ Which is massively helpful.

The challenges of dealing with unfair systems of recruitment will of course affect many within the church, but the constant rejection faced by some experienced and qualified GMH clergy leads to the conclusion that racism and discrimination is a factor in their inability to progress into different roles. Discrimination and racism are not only perceived at the level of application and interview for the specific role desired, but in the whole process of professional development. In other words, the cumulative effect of smaller decisions or discriminations which seem insignificant early on in the ministry of an ordained person, can then negatively impact opportunities later on:

If you were, simply, to look at the number of big churches led by [GMH] people, there aren’t many within our church, and especially big churches with the majority of white congregation...what happens is that because we end up in usually struggling parishes, then we are overlooked when it comes to appointment as Area Deans, because Area Deans tend to come from those churches that tend to do well as well, again, a bias that we have in our church. And because we aren’t in those leadership pipelines, therefore when it comes to applying to roles such as archdeacon and so on, a few of us have got the experience of leading other clergy, and leading others. And so that door is shut for us. [The] same principle could be argued for cathedrals as well...

When mistakes are made, there is also an impression that GMH clergy face harsher criticism and are given harsher punishments than their white counterparts. This would require further investigation but if true, this would impact not only on participation for GMH clergy but mental and physical health, financial and material security and all other forms of wellbeing.

Participation is of course not solely down to the perspectives of GMH clergy but depends upon the way senior white clergy see them. For some, their experiences in this regard have been positive, as senior clergy



have recognised their gifts and capacities, ensuring they have the necessary training and development opportunities which will allow them to take a greater role in the life of the church beyond their parish:

I was in leadership training, it was [in my diocese] and then now they are giving me supervision, somebody already will come to us [for] a placement...I have four ordinands in my church. They ask me already [to join] in the leadership in our area, in the deanery, in the diocese. That's why I'm happy that they know me already and they respect me, and I think they think that I can manage now to supervise.

But others struggle in contexts where senior leaders are limited in terms of their imagination regarding GMH clergy. This in turn then leads to a limitation in how GMH are developed as leaders or allowed to participate. This is one of the primary ways in which participation is undermined – not by a lack of confidence on the part of GMH clergy themselves – but by more senior people in the church and other gatekeepers failing to recognise their skills and expertise even when the evidence of their abilities is clear. One participant told the story of being on a panel where an African woman was being denied a priest-in-charge role on the basis that she did not come across as a leader, despite her many years of senior leadership experience in her secular role. There is a sense that there are more barriers for GMH people to overcome to participate because of the imaginations of others. For other people, assumptions about what an Anglican priest looks like leads to moments of unfair treatment and prejudice even when participating in the life of ministry within the church:

I had this interesting experience quite recently when somebody called security on me. I was in the cathedral. I wasn't wearing a dog collar, but they clearly assumed that I broke in. So, they called security on me. I had police turning up at the office door and I had to prove who I was.

These humiliations described in various ways by GMH clergy had a wearying impact on clergy especially those who have been involved in the church for many years. These kinds of experiences, whether constant rejection when applying for jobs one is qualified for, or racist treatment of those who have the power to exclude and assume they do not belong, deeply impact on the wellbeing of clergy on all levels. Participation in the wider life of the church can therefore come at a great cost to wellbeing that should not be underestimated.

Overperformance and finding one's place

The primary way that many clergy choose to respond to these challenges is by overworking, as they feel they must constantly prove themselves to belong and to be good enough, in an environment which will assume they do not belong or are unqualified. Countless interviewees spoke about feeling they spend more time on tasks and going above and beyond in their work and ministry just to be considered equal to their white counterparts. This has significant ramifications for wellbeing on all levels from the physical and



mental to the emotional and relational, and even the spiritual and vocational. This is especially true for curates as one explained:

I feel like I have to participate and overperform...I'm just proving that I can do this stuff, and I feel like I have to overcompensate. The truth of the matter is, I have done: I preach more than my incumbent, I speak more to my incumbent, I do more occasional offices than my incumbent. And if you ask, pretty much anyone, churchwardens or the leaders, standard wise, they're basically like, 'This is of a higher standard.' So, I feel like...I have to do better, I have to prepare more.... I don't think it's right; I shouldn't be doing it but it's hard for me not to because it's a coping mechanism. I feel the need to justify my existence and my place in the church.

This tendency to overperform as a manner of safeguarding one's ministry in the present and future, was a common reality for the clergy we spoke to. However, the impact of that is that the culture of overwork which faces all clergy who function on a 6-day working week, is exacerbated for those from GMH backgrounds. This means even less time for physical exercise, time with family and friends or rest. It also means an increase in stress and anxiety, which impacts on emotional, mental and physical health. There is also the potential for relational pressures, as one person explained that their overcompensation in ministry leads to higher quality in terms of sermons for example, which is then viewed negatively by some who are then intimidated and view them as a threat. This paints a picture of a minefield for some GMH clergy who are caught in a dynamic in which they cannot win.

The clergy (dog) collar is a significant marker of vocation which carries additional importance for those of GMH heritage who are not expected to inhabit certain roles or spaces, even now. The same could be said for women, those from sexual minorities, working class clergy, those with visible disabilities and those with regional accents. As one participant explained: 'I do wear my clergy collar a lot, because I don't feel that people would respect me, or listen to me, or be as warm to me if I didn't have it.' Though we have mentioned the cultural factors involving vestments for GMH clergy, it is worth mentioning in this section, that the clergy collar plays an important role for GMH clergy not only in the community but in the church when participation is expected by some but not others. Clergy spoke of the need for them to wear their clergy collars even in cathedrals, where it is assumed that they as people of GM heritage, do not belong:

I didn't wear my dog collar that day, I wanted to go incognito...I got underneath the place to pick up these oils. This woman comes rushing to the front and she shouts over my shoulder, 'If you're not ordained, you need to produce a letter from your vicar.' I went, 'Who are you talking to?' She didn't even speak to me, she refused to speak to me. [Someone] said to her, 'He is ordained.' She said, 'Oh well, you know, he's not wearing his dog collar' ...She just confirmed that, in her mind, I am out of place. I don't fit.



Though the woman had responsibility for ensuring lay people had the necessary paperwork, it was for this person, the tone of her interaction and her refusal to address him directly as a person, which was problematic. For this to have occurred in a cathedral in a large and diverse city exacerbated the sense that even when participating in certain spaces as is required for him as a priest, it will often be assumed that he does not belong there and so he must be extra vigilant about wearing his collar. Living under the assumption of not-belonging is what appears to wear on the minds and hearts of GMH clergy and makes participation difficult and even prevents people from wanting to participate.

What enables authentic participation?

Wellbeing in participation therefore depends overwhelmingly on authenticity, but authentic participation can only occur when the following things are in place:

- The church's commitment to challenging the dominance of white (specifically middle-class) English culture in the church and especially in regard to the church's expectations regarding how priestly ministry should be enacted;
- Space for GMH clergy self-expression without these contributions being exoticised, tokenised or presumed to take particular forms;
- Opportunities to participate in the wider life of the church in ways they choose but that are not assumed;
- Long-term strategies for improving the belonging of GMH people which do not rely on tokenism;
- The recognition and welcome of the broad contributions from GMH clergy which are not focused on their ethnic identity or limited to the matter of race;
- Transparent recruitment and disciplinary processes which ensure clergy have the right of appeal;
- Pathways to leadership which are equitable for clergy of all ethnicities.

Relationships and emotional wellbeing

As with all in the Church of England, strong and healthy relationships are core to the wellbeing of GMH clergy. These include relationships with family and friends, informal peer networks, colleagues or senior clergy and those in their congregations. We have seen in the previous sections an indication that relationships can be crucial with spiritual directors and prayer groups, or when people are discerning where to serve or how to serve. Here we will focus on the dynamics at play within relationships which can enhance or undermine wellbeing for GMH clergy.

Family and friends

Relationships with family and friends sustain the wellbeing of GMH clergy and this is shared with their white counterparts. Friendships with those which preceded their life in the church can be especially beneficial:

‘Relationships with my family and close friends, particularly those who I knew before, before discerning and before beginning curacy, are particularly important. I find that is where I get most of my nurture and support and deep understanding from.’ Yet the support from family and friends can be even more pronounced for GMH clergy because of the challenges they face. For clergy who struggle to find a place among their peers or to be their authentic selves, relationships with their friends and family become the only spaces in which they can find total acceptance, safety or relief. In some cases, incumbents recognise this and support opportunities for GMH clergy to spend time with their friends and family who share their ethnic background. As one person shared:

[My training incumbent was] like, ‘Go. When you get there, you can also see your friends around London and whatever.’ I am sure that this person is thinking beyond me being a curate but also thinking of, ‘You are existing in a place that is 93% white, and you are the only [GMH] person in that church. We also need to have a mind that we want you to go and connect with friends who are not close by.’

Yet for others – especially those who may be in rural parishes without a wider community to be a part of – difficulties can be especially challenging or acute. This goes beyond family and friends, and relates to a need for connection with one’s wider ethnic community in which food, language and culture are prioritised and celebrated:

one of the things that I worry the most about is the fact that my daughter will not grow up with anybody else speaking [our indigenous language] except me and will not grow up with anyone who looks like her except me...lots of rural vicarages are just not equipped for [GMH] cooking...I don’t assume that the church would pay for me to have a gas hob, right, but, like, it is a kind of oddity about rural ministry in this kind of way...

As stated in relation to previous points, it should not be assumed that a clergy person of GMH heritage will necessarily want to particularly seek out this kind of connection with people of their own ethnic groups. However, it should be expected that this may be the case for those in particularly white contexts, and awareness of this by an incumbent or bishop for example, may help to create the opportunity for a person to express that need and to have them met in ways which sustain their wellbeing.

This challenge is especially exacerbated for those GMH clergy born and raised abroad since many or most of their family and close friends are not in the UK. Nurturing and seeking support from such relationships has additional complications including financial implications which are often not recognised with the result that some clergy find themselves isolated from those people and places which are best equipped to sustain their wellbeing relationally, emotionally and psychologically:



[my spouse] always comments that when I am in [my home country] I laugh much more than when I am here. You kind of think, 'I miss hearing people laugh out loud.' That crazy laugh, and dancing, and just spending an afternoon with friends with no plans other than just enjoying each other's company.

For clergy with family, cultural heritage, friendships and histories in other places, wellbeing depends upon having the time and resources to be there with some regularity. Yet for clergy working in parish ministry this can often be very difficult or impossible due to time or financial restraints, though this might be more within reach for those working elsewhere in the church and its institutions. This may be another factor to consider in the determining of what GMH clergy need to thrive, which may differ from their white counterparts.

Notwithstanding the importance of these relationships, it is also worth noting the ways that a heightened dependence on friends and family can create undue pressure on those relationships, which take on a therapeutic or counselling element. Relationships with friends and family can be a space to share the burden of difficult circumstances or emotions, and this is good for the wellbeing of the clergy person but can be a challenge for family and friends:

In most cases, whenever I've spoken to people, it's often the case that the family member knows about what they're going through and [is] helping to support them...which also means that the family bears the burden as a whole.

...allowing myself to recognise what I am angry about and why, and then what I can do with that, has been something that has been protective for my mental health. Sometimes it concerns those who love and know me and know me as a quiet, gentle person, but I have tried to explain that actually I need to allow that anger to come through.

As a result of these pressures, discernment about next steps and ministry is a relational question which involves the wellbeing of family, friends and supporters since they will also be impacted in more ways than families and friends of white clergy. For some, it is the recognition of the extent of this negative impact on the family, which has been the deciding factor for some in moving from a particular ministry context or leaving ministry altogether.

Mentors and GMH clergy networks

The Church of England has recognised the need for mentoring as a way of supporting the development of clergy across the board and this is especially the case for clergy of GMH backgrounds. Mentoring relationships are therefore crucial to the sustaining of clergy wellbeing especially when we consider the spiritual and vocational element, but also the mental and psychological, as people have the sense of being supported, heard and cared for. Many clergy spoke of the immense difference it makes to have more experienced clergy of all ethnicities, to support them in their ministry by offering advice and advocating for

them. Some clergy had positive experiences of white mentors who were able to empathise with the particular experiences of GMH clergy and support them in caring ways. Others hoped for a mentor of the same ethnic group or at least mentor who comes from a GMH group:

we have very few UMKE GMH clergy persons or mentors...that mentor role is so important, but I think that it's really hard to find those mentor roles, because people are so isolated.... the Church of England is always saying, 'Make sure you have a mentor.' Well, I found it really difficult to find a mentor who gets me...the Church of England is trying to set up a mentorship directory, and that'll be great moving forward. But for the likes of myself, it was too little too late.

For those who desire a mentor from a GMH background, this was rooted in concerns about the dynamics of being mentored by someone who may themselves have racist views or may not believe racism was present in the church and would therefore gaslight them when they spoke about racism. The unique challenge for GMH clergy in relation to mentoring is finding a person who is culturally aware and conscious of the problems of race and power in the church, so they can holistically support a GMH clergy person. Any mentoring directory being produced by the church must therefore ensure that there are adequate indications of who those mentors are who have the skills and experiences to mentor GMH clergy.

Mentoring tends to take place informally in networks which GMH clergy organise themselves where clergy are able to meet together to process their experiences with those more experienced and share strategies and tools for surviving and thriving in ministry. These spaces are able to offer significant peer support especially for clergy dealing with challenging circumstances. As one person put it: 'we would go and ask our training incumbent about ministry questions relating to our parishes, or actually, as a vocational question, we might go and speak to our DDO (Diocesan Director of Ordinands)...But if there's a cultural thing, who do we know to go to? I think having that sort of link and that connection is helpful.' We spoke to three networks where GMH ordinands build these links and connections: Anglican Minority Ethnic Network (AMEN), UK Ordinands and Curates, and The Tea House.¹⁹ All three of these groups are run voluntarily by clergy in addition to their usual roles, and so the very task of organising such groups can involve significant mental and emotional energy. However, these groups are the primary places where GMH people find support for their wellbeing among those who have a deep understanding of their experiences and ministry:

one obvious thing that has helped as a sort of support has been, you know, groups like the one that we have, the Anglican Minority Ethnic Network and other groups like that...networking events

¹⁹ AMEN and UK Ordinands and Curates serve clergy for all GMH backgrounds all around the country. The Tea House is a new group organised by East Asian clergy who seek to support each other and boost vocations as 'a minority group among minorities.' East Asian clergy continue to be involved in wider networks such as AMEN and UK Ordinands and Curates, playing a role in the wider cause of supporting UKME/ GMH clergy.



where people can come and meet each other and talk...I've had occasions where somebody who's struggling, either they themselves contact us and somebody directed it to me and I'll speak to the person or somebody who knows them will contact us about them and we'll support them.

These networks are especially important for clergy in more isolated locations:

As a UKME clergy, finding a space where you can join people – in the past it used to be physically, but now it's mainly virtually – in a safe space, the place where you can express your concerns, your insecurities, your battles, and feel supported and understood. It's really important and reassuring as well. Being in [my region] you don't always see many people [who] reflect your identity. So, being able to see that and hear those different voices is very important. And that gives you a sense of feeling relaxed, feeling that you can be totally yourself. It has an impact on your mental health, your psychological wellbeing, because you don't necessarily have to explain.

These independent spaces were lauded across the board as the best space for GMH clergy to find relational, emotional, and vocational support. Yet the responses to their existence varied. Some considered their existence to be an indictment on the church, which had left a gap in caring for the wellbeing of GMH that had to be filled by the clergy themselves. Others were concerned that they may be pushed into such networks by others on the assumption that this is what they would need to thrive. Still others believed these groups should always be independent of the church, for fear that being drawn into the church's structures or accepting the church's finances might result in them being co-opted so that the interests of the church as a white institution would override the focus on serving GMH clergy. In our estimation, we recognised that these groups are crucial since racism continues to undermine the life of the church and the flourishing of many GMH people within it. However, their existence should not set at ease white individuals and leaders in the church who are failing to fulfil their pastoral roles towards GMH clergy. The weight of pastoral responsibility for GMH clergy should be carried by those who have been designated – and must be sufficiently trained – to fulfil this role by the church including bishops, training incumbents, archdeacons and diocesan staff. It should not be the case that GMH clergy even during their curacies are forced to take on this additional unrecognised and unremunerated labour due to the failure of those who are responsible for it. This itself, has a detrimental impact on wellbeing for the GMH clergy who undertake this work, even while it enhances the wellbeing of their peers. It is important therefore, for further attention to be given to how the church might support the function of these informal networks, particularly the individuals who take on the additional administrative and pastoral labour of leading them.

Training incumbents and bishops

Relationships with training incumbents and bishops emerged repeatedly as a core factor in the wellbeing of curates. The dynamic of power between the curate and their training incumbent or bishop is of course similar for all curates whether white British or GMH. However, the situation can be complicated for GMH



curates, due to the cultural nuances involved in Anglican ministry and the explicit and implicit forms of racism which can be manifested in the assumptions and behaviours of some clergy. Whether positively or negatively, senior clergy's pastoral skills, cultural awareness and commitment to the development of all curates regardless of race all played a significant role on the wellbeing of GMH curates.

For some GMH clergy, relationships with training incumbents and clergy colleagues within their parish context prove to be everything they hoped for. Such relationships are categorised by clergy feeling joyful about their ministry, hopeful about possibilities and excited at the prospect of working alongside their colleagues:

there was what I would call a real uplift, especially at the start of my curacy, because it was just such a joy and surprise to enter a curacy context where I thought, 'Wow – that collaborative teamwork that I hear so much about...this is what it feels like, and it feels great.' That has been ongoing actually.

Others spoke of diocesan CMEAC events or occasional gathering where they could gather together with other GMH clergy to build relationships with senior colleagues including bishops. The notable benefit was the opportunity for bishops to demonstrate care and appreciation for their ministry, although these events did not always lead to sustained avenues of support specifically for GMH clergy which some felt was needed. One participant spoke of being 'like brothers' with the bishop in his area who has a particularly relational and pastoral approach and enjoys spending time with congregations and priests in their parishes. Another spoke of having a good enough relationship with their bishops to say what they need to help their wellbeing, stating the importance of being able to articulate what one needs, especially when those needs may not be obvious to a white leader in the church. In explaining what enabled such a positive relationship between a clergy person from a GMH background and their white training incumbent, one participant explained:

she had had curates before and all of them had really positive experiences, and I think what helped was that she wasn't an anxious presence, and she was enabling others to flourish in their gifting. And so, for me it was a place where I did not feel held back but instead released and I think she welcomed who I was, not assuming that I was a blank slate on which she had to apply her blueprint. I think she worked with who I was at the time with all the gifts that I had and some of the experience that I was bringing and inviting them to help shift the direction of the church. I think, for me, it felt like a place in which I wasn't micromanaged and a place where I was released, really, and able to flourish as a minister. And partly, I think, she was comfortable in her own skin, and she had had an experience of life in, I think it was in [a country in Africa] and she had done some critical work about white presence in black spaces. And therefore, it was quite easy to be able to address some of those issues...being one of the first women ordained in the Church of England, she had experienced some of what it meant to be a pioneer in a space.



Many of these aspects of positive relationships would apply across the board including the sensitivity about whiteness and race, as this is also something white curates would need to learn. Yet for this GMH curate, the experience and cultural sensitivity of their training incumbent, as well as their broader training philosophy enabled this curate to thrive. We cannot assume that every woman or every person who spends time abroad will therefore be equipped to be a training incumbent for a clergy person of GMH heritage, but it seems that greater attention must be given to the cultural and pastoral skill set of training incumbents who will be responsible for GMH curates.

These are encouraging signs of positive relationships with incumbents and bishops, but for others, these relationships are marked by stress, anxiety, mistreatment and neglect. GMH clergy spoke with great understanding about their need for ongoing training as curates and went into curacies with openness to learn and grow. However, this openness renders them vulnerable as they do not know how their training incumbent will see and treat them, and it is this tension which makes curacy particularly challenging for GMH clergy. Some noted that in some contexts they experienced being micromanaged, criticised and side-lined rather than being taught:

my first curacy...was terrible, my wellbeing was upside down...My participation in the church was barely 10%..Everything I could offer was questioned, trashed, and all of those things...I struggled spiritually because I couldn't minister to the people I was ordained to minister to, because the person who I was working with felt something. But now that I've moved curacy, I'm in a better place because the participation is 100%...My relationships with the people in church and around have flourished.

I'm still not entirely sure what happened but the vicar who was the guy that was supposed to be training me ended up, behind my back, trying to manoeuvre a way to get rid of me. I only found out because one of the church wardens...looked out for me...When they heard my side of the story, he was like, 'This doesn't add up.' Anyway, long story short...him and his wife had been gathering members from the PCC and having conversations and had written to the bishop...to try to get the bishop to move me somewhere else. This was all without me knowing, I didn't know any of this was going on.

This kind of side-lining may well happen to many white curates as well due to personality clashes, or especially for women, those from working class backgrounds, those with disabilities and those who identify as LGBTQ+, but when these instances occur, GMH clergy suspect due to their wider experiences of race in the church, that race also plays a role in this situation:

our experience shows that a lot of minority ethnic people struggle in curacy, they don't always feel as if their incumbent is on their side, you know? Quite often, they see other curates being supported



and doing well and they can see that their white incumbent is not supporting them but is either setting traps for them or waiting for them to fail and so on and this happens all the time.

At times it is the case that training incumbents are ill-equipped to recognise or deal with instances of racism which curates may face and thus they do not only fail to help but make things even worse:

when I was a curate there were some ugly racist things that happened to me which my training incumbent couldn't grasp. She tried to but the way she handled it just caused me more grief and more hurt.... I learned a lot through my curacy, and I grew a lot through my curacy, but I do know that my wellbeing wasn't as robust and positive as it is now.

Relationships with training incumbents are key determinants of the wellbeing of GMH clergy as with all clergy, but the dynamics of race and power which shape the church and wider society must also be attended to in these relationships. Greater care must therefore be taken by bishops in the selection of training incumbents so that curates of all ethnic groups are formed by those who are committed to training and pastorally caring for all of God's people. Since as one person explained 'if they are not safe for UKME people, they are not safe for anyone,' TIs who prove to be unable or unwilling to sufficiently train and pastorally support GMH clergy should no longer have a role in training others until they are prepared to do so. Training incumbents need to be aware of the racism and forms of exclusion their curate may encounter in the course of their ministry – both in wider society and in the church – and be equipped to respond appropriately including speaking up as an advocate when necessary. Exploratory conversations regarding potential curacies should include particular attention to whether or not this can be expected of the TI.

'Racial safeguarding'²⁰ and relationships with peers and congregations

In a similar way to relationships with training incumbents and bishops, connections with peers and congregation members are important to the wellbeing of clergy though often in different ways. Though peers and congregations do not have positional power above curates or priests, they do wield some power around inclusion or exclusion, or around trust or suspicion. This can have a significant impact on GMH clergy who need healthy relationships with peers to enhance their wellbeing, especially after a process of discernment and training which may have been particularly stressful. Even those who arrive full of energy and enthusiasm can find navigating the impact of race and cultural differences incredibly burdensome in some ways that significantly undermine wellbeing.

Some GMH clergy spoke of having built good quality relationships with their peers over a matter of years in which they feel seen and known and their ministry is recognised. Others mentioned particularly the support they have felt from white clergy who encourage and work alongside them especially in the work of racial

²⁰ This phrase was used by one interviewee and was not devised by the research team.



justice. The support of peers in this area of ministry was noticed as being very significant for the sense of belonging and trust for GMH clergy. However, clergy also expressed experiences of feeling isolated among their peers, especially those who have strong global accents or are the only GMH person in their deanery or diocese. Overall, it was clear that due to negative experiences with white peers, many GMH clergy operate with caution when it comes to peer relationships. Therefore, spaces like deanery chapter meetings are not considered a safe space for additional reasons to those that would be true for white clergy. One participant spoke specifically about the need for ‘racial safeguarding’ in relation to clergy meetings:

There’s absolutely no sense of, what I would call, racial safeguarding, which I think is a real thing...For me, I have to safeguard myself. If you can’t demonstrate that you have my wellbeing at heart, I will either not attend your session, or I’ll attend and I’m not saying anything. Don’t expect me to talk about my [race] in a room full of white people. Would you invite a woman to go into a room full of men and ask her to talk about what it means to be a female clergy person?

Safeguarding focusses on the protection of children and adults at risk of harm due to the action or inaction of others. To be an at-risk adult, according to the latest Care Act (2014), is to need care and support; to be experiencing or to be at risk of abuse or neglect; and as a result of those needs to be unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.²¹ It is therefore understandable why clergy may consider themselves to fit into this category of being vulnerable adults. Taking a safeguarding approach to dealing with the risk of racial abuse or neglect GMH clergy may experience may be an important step in raising these matters to the level of importance they require.

Some GMH clergy described circumstances that amounted to being trapped between unsupportive peers who did not understand the challenges they were facing or indeed were the cause of them, and congregation members who were hostile to them. The person who raised the matter of ‘racial safeguarding’ spoke about this in relation to clergy meetings but also in terms of racial abuse he experienced in his parish during the course of this research. For him, it complicated the overly simplified assumptions of power, as a young white woman racially abused this older black ordained man, and in his words put him ‘in a spin for two or three days’:

She’s a 19-year-old working-class girl, very little education, etc. She knew how to hurt me, she knew how to dehumanise me, and she knew how to make me feel disempowered with one word. That is, I think, a reality that’s very difficult to come to terms with...as I might want to puff out my chest and say, ‘Sticks and stones may break my bones.’ The reality is that a three or four-year-old little white girl can hurt me. As soon as I step into that room, I am vulnerable. My melanin is on show. There’s nothing, really, I can do for my neck not to be on the block. I think that’s a really difficult thing to

²¹ Care Act 2014, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>, accessed 30 May 2022.

come to terms with because I want to think of myself as a big, strong, man but the reality is, when it comes to my melanin, it's a vulnerability that I wear all over my body.

In several cases, the reality of abuse and neglect was made clear in the disclosing of experiences of racial abuse such as this, inflicted by people in their congregations or local communities. These experiences were compounded by the failure of their peers or more senior clergy to stand in solidarity with them against racism and bigotry:

funeral directors amongst themselves decided they are not choosing certain GMH incumbents in certain parishes to do funerals because the family doesn't like it. And so, what happens is colleagues effectively colluded with that, and so nothing is challenged.... the GMH incumbent is aware of that, and they feel helpless. So, what does that do to you? You internalise it. You get really cross and angry about it. And you effectively feel helpless. Or, on the other hand, you kind of resign yourself, and yet it is another kick in your face.

The silence of senior clergy and diocesan staff constituted a second form of harm for this person, in addition to the racism experienced in the local community. By refusing to challenge racist behaviour – in this case that of the funeral directors – senior clergy and church staff become complicit in racist discrimination. On the one hand, their refusal to act communicates to those in the community as well as to the GMH clergyperson that racism is acceptable to the church, but it sends an additional signal to clergy that they are alone and cannot count on the solidarity of their colleagues if and/or when they are victimised by racism. A culture of racial safeguarding means all clergy and church staff are willing to name and address racism, and stand in solidarity with those who experience it in their ministry and/or wider lives.

Some participants named the racist or prejudicial comments that have been made towards them by older white people, but they did not speak of these incidents with any emotion or communicate any hurt as they tended to expect this due to generational differences. Others spoke of having to deal with racism in their communities too frequently, or of 'getting tired of bigots' but trying not to be affected by them. Clergy seem to make constant calculations about 'which battles to fight' in dealing with verbal assaults and so would excuse older people for example, who might not be willing to learn new ways of thinking or speaking. But it was clear from what more experienced clergy said that the accumulative effect of these experiences over years can be wearying on the soul. If GMH clergy are left alone to teach and correct the racism and prejudice in congregations and communities, then this will do irreparable harm to them and their ministries. All clergy must take responsibility for re-educating those who belong to the majority culture, to recognise and respect the dignity of all people and to oppose racism and prejudice of all kinds. GMH clergy need access to specialist resources to support them as they deal with racial trauma in the course of their ministry such as therapy and counselling. Clergy should be encouraged and given room to utilise such resources as a part of their rhythms of self-care, as opposed to waiting for a crisis or specific incident. The church must recognise

the vulnerability of GMH clergy and improve its resources for supporting those victimised by racial abuse or those seemingly less serious experiences often described as ‘racial microaggressions’.²²

It is important to note that while GMH clergy may be at risk of racial abuse in the course of their ministry, many experience love and care among those they serve in their congregations and their local community life overall. Clergy spoke of feeling loved and respected and invited into the people’s lives, so much so that they were positively surprised:

my two congregations are very, very warm, and very supportive. If I try an initiative people volunteer...If I make a faux pas, a mistake, as I’m doing communion or something, they laugh with me. So, I’ve basically got a home crowd...

Others spoke of having positive experiences overall but noted that they were aware of the racism among their congregation. One person explained it as follows:

I have had such a positive experience with my congregations. I’m looking after two...very white congregations. We’ve only got one black family at either site...they’ve really been very welcoming, very positive, very open. At the start of my ministry, there were some people who were a tad hesitant because they’d never had a black minister. They said so. I think, because of the way I was, the conversations came out and people were very open about it.

Even in cases where there is an overall positive experience as seen above, clergy often remain hypervigilant because of the likelihood that people will express prejudiced or racist views. For some clergy, they wanted the kind of openness where members of their congregation could share reservations and be open about their prejudices. Yet for others, this kind of conversation would have felt traumatising. Clergy need to have the space to process these feelings and thoughts constantly, as relationships can contribute to bad mental, emotional and psychological health, and even vocational life in the long term if not in the immediate future.

What contributes to good relationships?

- Time and resources to visit family and friends in countries of origin, and to connect with one’s ethnic group in the UK;
- Culturally appropriate, independent and fully funded therapeutic and spiritual support for UKME clergy for the duration of their time in the church, so family and friends are not overburdened with the care needs of their clergy friends/family;

²² [Microaggressions] are subtle, stunning often automatic and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘put downs’ of blacks by offender.’ Chester Pierce, Jean V. Carew, Diane Pierce-Gonzalez, and Deborah Wills (1977), ‘An Experiment in Racism: TV Commercials’, *Education and Urban Society* 10 (1): 65.



- Appropriate racial safeguarding policies for GMH clergy who are vulnerable in additional ways to their white counterparts due to the prevalence of racism and prejudice in wider society and the church;
- Demonstrated solidarity with GMH clergy who experience racist abuse or discrimination;
- Cultivating healthy relationships with clergy colleagues, congregation and community members and senior clergy;
- Access to informal networks of GMH clergy at various stages of ministry and mentors, and the advocacy support they can offer. Consultation to explore what resource and support might be offered, should there be an appetite, for existing networks (e.g. AMEN, The Tea House etc);
- Culturally aware training incumbents and bishops who are committed to anti-racism and aware of the dynamics of race and power playing out in the church and wider society.

Mental and physical wellbeing

The matter of mental and physical wellbeing is implicit to what we have discussed so far as wellbeing is holistic. The discernment of vocation and engagement in spiritual practices involves the brain and the mind, and the joys and traumas of relationships and participation are felt in the body as well as the mind. In this section we will explore those additional aspects of GMH clergy life and experience which they recognise have an impact upon their mental health and physical wellbeing.

Mental and physical impact of discrimination/race issues

As stated from the outset, while we did not presuppose that race would be a factor in GMH clergy wellbeing, every single participant spoke of mental health issues associated with their status as minority racialised clergy in the Church of England. Various participants also named physical health directly or spoke of health issues which are known to affect body as well as mind. The triggers for bad mental or physical health for GMH clergy are many and varied but many reported the stress and anxiety of working under or alongside clergy colleagues who are not on their side, but instead are guilty of unfair and unkind treatment:

they're wanting to remove them from their role as a vicar, without any sense of where they're going to go from there. What compounds it for [them], as a minority ethnic person, is I think [they're] probably one of the few minority ethnic people in the area, maybe the only one, and [they'll] be thinking, 'Well, why me?' Is it because he is minority ethnic? ...So, you've got the practical implication of that, which is a real-life implication, which can be financial, as well. On top of that, you're having to live with the feeling that the person you're working with hasn't got a good mind towards you. So, yes, all of those components, I think, have pressure on people's mental health.



GMH curates clearly understood that as part of their training they will be taught and even corrected when necessary but often we heard stories of interventions which lack transparency and clear communication. In particular, we heard several stories which exemplified the mental and physical toll of serving a curacy under an aggressively unkind and hostile incumbent. Participants often suspected some of the hostility they experienced was due to racism. Participants recalled overhearing their incumbent speaking viciously about them to others even while they served faithfully, or having incumbent seek to control and dominate them rather than have constructive development conversations. In another case, a person described how a member of their Parochial Church Council (PCC) warned them that the incumbent was attempting to gather support to have the curate removed, having never had a conversation with the curate about them moving on. Such instances leave GMH clergy free to wonder whether racism partially or fully underlies such decision-making process or the actions of those above them in the hierarchy. The toll can be physical as well as mental as one person explained when we asked about how the harm to their wellbeing manifested:

One of my first indicators is when I struggle to sleep...not sleeplessness but broken sleep and sometimes waking up for three hours in the middle of the night, that kind of stuff. That became commonplace in my first curacy. Anxiety as well, I ended up going for therapy, I'm so glad that I did. I needed space and structure to process what I was going through. It wasn't possible for me, in that situation, to work out what the actual effect was on my mental health. I think the reality is that it traumatised me...I found it so hard to come to terms with what was going on. It didn't add up: 'This doesn't make sense, this is supposed to be the church, you're supposed to be looking out for me, we're supposed to be honest.' All these kinds of things.

In other cases, the result of dealing with the stress and anxiety of the church's processes and the specific behaviour of individuals has caused people to be recommended sick leave by the doctors. Others reported exacerbated high blood pressure due to the stress, hospitalisation and early retirement. In the word of one participant: 'I know of two UKME priests who are on sick leave because of the way that they have been treated...If I think back over the years there have been quite a few. I know of people that have left the ministry as well because they have just found it intolerable.'

Even in cases where there is not an active situation which might be considered stressful in terms of an incident of racial abuse or an experience of an unfair disciplinary procedure, GMH clergy wellbeing can be undermined by the heavy workload associated with ordained ministry as well as what we have discussed previously, as the accumulative impact of non-belonging and othering, and a lack of safety in the church. One person described the impact using the title of the popular book 'the body keeps the score' which deals with the impact of trauma on the body as well as the mind²³:

²³ Bessel van der Kolk (2014), *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, Penguin Books.



I had two episodes in hospital. And at the time I hadn't tied the two together, but I now realise that, actually, it is just the traumatic and the weathering of the body that means that what my mind cannot contain my body absorbs in a way that becomes toxic to my own health. And again, poor social life, poor recreational life. A poor attention to, and a slavish dedication to work, and so I became really ill. And it is not even that the first time was enough to stop me, but I think what it had done, the second time, it reminded me that actually I cannot continue to live like that.

In this explanation of physical health being so undermined, there is a recognition of both the trauma and weathering caused by external factors, and the need for personal boundaries and disciplines. Both of these aspects of wellbeing will therefore be taken seriously in the recommendations we consider in response to these findings. But it is important that we recognise that personal discipline and attention cannot fill the gap in wellbeing support which is created by unhealthy organisational culture. Rest and boundaries depend upon trust; trust that taking a break is viewed positively, and evidence that one does not need to work 'twice as hard' if one is a person of GM heritage to be valued and treated with respect. Clergy we spoke to are driven, hardworking, highly intelligent and disciplined – many coming from senior roles in secular careers and yet some had or are experiencing severe levels of poor mental and physical health due to their work for the first time. The particularity of ordained ministry must therefore be taken seriously. Since we have spoken at length about the relationships, culture and structures of the church in regard to wellbeing, we will focus in this second section on the opportunities and challenges to developing rhythms which sustain wellbeing.

Developing healthy rhythms

As with all clergy, our participants recognised the importance of healthy patterns for wellbeing especially physical and mental health. The underlying challenge to this is the six-day working rhythm which does not allow much time for rest, leisure, life admin and spending time cultivating those crucial relationships which sustain wellbeing. This is even more important due to the nature of the priestly vocation which is especially heavy in emotional, spiritual and psychological requirements as one person explained:

I do think that one thing the church needs to think about is our six-day working week because it really isn't countercultural. I just wonder how we can improve that...I feel I can manage my diary and give myself downtime spaces when I can, if I can...but if people just had that extra day to rest, to be with themselves, their families, that would be really helpful I think because just one day is not enough really...being in such a pastoral and caring and giving profession or vocation.

For this participant, moving from their highly pressurised secular career into priestly ministry has been an improvement in terms of their ability to exert their own agency in managing their time and workload.

However, as in their experience work always goes beyond the hours or days contracted or assigned, a six-day working week leaves little room as a buffer. If this is true for clergy across the board, then the need for reviewing this working pattern must be even more profound for GMH clergy. We have already noted the additional emotional, mental, cultural and practical labour being undertaken by many GMH clergy simply in order for them to be part of the church. As one person expressed:

I feel like I don't necessarily have the time to heal from one trauma before the next one comes along, and the time and space to process. There's no expectation, there're no structures, because [GMH] mental health is completely ignored and dismissed.

Having space to process those emotions, tensions and stresses on a weekly basis seems paramount but impossible with only one day off. Nevertheless, clergy do their best to look after their physical and mental health within these limitations. Strategies included taking walks, going to the gym or joining local sports teams. Others spoke of the importance of getting away from the parish and the vicarage or benefitting from counselling and therapy from those who are culturally competent and aware of the issues of race, identity and power which impact the lives of GMH people overall including clergy. Some clergy are able to locate resources to care for their wellbeing despite the lack of provision by the church, but this is a crucial area for improvement.

Finding good rhythms can be especially difficult for new curates or those first-time incumbents who are adjusting to new roles and responsibilities. Curacies can be an especially anxiety-filled time as curates' lives are so deeply impacted upon by training incumbents who may add to their mental health challenges or prevent them having room to care adequately for their physical wellbeing for example, due to the high level of demands:

I developed an unhealthy pattern of life and work, where I was working too much and virtually no recreation at all. Until at some point I found a local football team, and so I would join them. But there, again, church patterns were such that I would appear one week and disappear for about six weeks and reappear. And so even that wasn't great.

Settling into a new setting is of course a challenge for all clergy, but as we have already seen, GMH clergy can tend to overwork in order to prove themselves to peers and senior colleagues. This need to prove themselves can have a racial dynamic, as some seek the respect of their white clergy peers or those in the congregation, by working hard to undermine the racist prejudices some may hold about people from their ethnic group or GMH people as a whole. This is especially the case for those who are the first GMH person in that context. This pressure can feel especially acute at the start of a new role as they hope to make a good impression and might also be faced with implicit and explicit forms of discrimination and racism. Others want to gain approval from the white institution in order to make it easier for those from their ethnic group who are coming behind them. GMH clergy need to be able to process these motivations and pressures in a



therapeutic space, as part of their healthy rhythms of care. The church must also recognise the harm that racism and prejudice within the church and wider society is doing to GMH clergy on a psychological level. The support of white senior colleagues and peers is crucial in eradicating these experiences within the church. Bishops and training incumbents in particular must recognise the need to stand in solidarity with those who experience racism, and to ensure clergy have adequate rest and time to recover from and process any difficulties which may arise due to racial trauma.

Some of the challenges around establishing good rhythms to support wellbeing are considered to be rooted in cultural norms for those who have recently arrived in the UK but also those who are second and third generation. The first point was the high expectations of work due to experiences of migration and life in Britain. Many members of GMH communities in Britain have had to juggle multiple jobs or working long hours for low pay as they set up and maintain life here. This creates for some, a culture of overly high expectation in terms of one's working life, as one participant explained:

I worked with UKME clergy who seemed to expect a lot of themselves in terms of work hours and level of achievement. Again, it's not a written expectation, but there seems to be an assumption there... Bearing in mind, some of the non-clergy, UKME members of society are doing two jobs and combining a few things. That does create a culture that's there. I can feel it in some of my colleagues.

This plays out as a different person explained, in how one considers sickness within one's culture. We might assume that all people have the same view on when one will say one is too sick to go to work but this will vary culturally as well as being subjective. Some will be exceptionally ill according to some measures, and still be reluctant to take sick leave. Explaining the expectations regarding sickness and sick leave, as well as assuring people that taking leave will not be perceived negatively is therefore crucial.

The second cultural challenge was adjusting to the change in lifestyle. For GMH clergy who have grown up abroad or are used to life in the so-called 'global south', rhythms of wellbeing can be more intrinsic to life than in the UK. Whereas one's mental or physical health might be more naturally taken care of in the course of one's normal life in a country in Africa or Latin America for example, it can require some adjustment to find good rhythms to sustain one's physical and mental in Britain due to the differences in social and cultural life and natural environment:

They were talking about what they do in their spare time. It was interesting to see bishops in the UK were happy to say, 'I cycle. I walk. I swim.' And most non-UK bishops would talk about visiting a group in the rural context and doing ministry effectively. In [the global south] the moment for exercising, and walking, and doing physical activities, as well as creating space for mental wellbeing is a quite integral part of the wider life. It's not categorised and protected as such. While in this country, if you don't create that space and protect it, it can easily be overwhelmed by all the other tasks.



It therefore requires some specific attention for clergy of GMH heritage to take care of physical and mental wellbeing and to interrogate some of their cultural norms and habits which might negatively impact them in this area. In this case, exploring with British-born or more experienced GMH clergy, as well as white British clergy might be helpful to better understand the strategies people use in the British cultural context.

What enables good mental and physical health for GMH clergy?

Mental and physical wellbeing depends on all of those who support, train and work alongside GMH clergy as well as the clergy themselves. It depends upon:

- Adequate weekly rest and an evaluation of the harm that a six-day working week does to all clergy in the short, medium and long-term;
- Anonymised processes for reporting, investigating and addressing bullying, verbal assaults, intimidation and mistreatment by clergy colleagues and diocesan staff;
- Training incumbents who are supportive, kind and committed to the training of their GMH curates without discrimination;
- Culturally competent therapeutic support, spiritual accompaniment, counselling and trauma care which is independent of the church structures, especially in cases of racial assault;
- Adequate rhythms of rest and leisure, supported by structures which ensure clergy can rest;
- The ability to identify ill-health and the trust or confidence to communicate one's needs to others without fear;
- The modelling of healthy rhythms by training incumbents and senior clergy, and the monitoring of overwork by GMH curates and incumbents.

Financial and material wellbeing

The final category for us to explore is the financial and material factors of GMH clergy wellbeing. These interviews were undertaken before the cost-of-living crisis began, and so while it is not mentioned in this section, we can safely assume that the financial and material pressures we outline here will be exacerbated for some in the coming months. The Wave 1 qualitative Living Ministry report, *Negotiating Wellbeing*, has explained that:

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.²⁴

Our participants reflected on many of these factors while discussing financial and material resources and wellbeing, demonstrating a level of consistency for clergy across ethnic differences. However, the factors of race, ethnicity and culture which shape the broader lives and experiences of GMH clergy in the church were highlighted as impacting on the financial and material resources they have access to and by extension their wellbeing. We have touched on some of these matters already, for example in discussing the issue of family composition which for GMH clergy can include parents as dependants or extended family abroad. These cultural differences can lead to greater material need; for example, sending money abroad, or housing elderly parents or other relatives beyond those included in the western ideal of the nuclear family. We have also touched on the importance of relationships with family abroad and the mental and psychological benefit for GMH clergy of being in their country or continent of birth or ethnic origin. Such experiences depend on a certain level of financial resource that is unavailable to most clergy. Finally, we have seen the crucial role informal networks play in sustaining the wellbeing of GMH clergy. The cultivating of these networks often demands financial resources even for the simplest of train journeys or meals, which can be too much to spare for clergy living on an extremely tight budget. The same can be said for gym memberships or other physical exercise which, though essential for wellbeing, can be overlooked in the face of other needs especially for clergy with families. Therapy, though desperately needed by many GMH clergy, is often way too expensive for them to afford, and so they are effectively priced out of the care they need. We heard from some participants about diocesan financial support for therapy, and also funding set aside by Clergy Support Trust on the request of the AMEN network, suggesting that in some cases those financial barriers are being attended to.

However, it is essential that financial support is addressed structurally and offered across the board rather than being sought by individuals, especially since our research in secular contexts demonstrates that too often racially minoritised individuals wait until issues are acute before seeking therapeutic support, and often fear that requests for support will have them viewed as not professionally competent to carry out their duties. Additionally, for many minority racialised people, the process of seeking support in itself can be draining and contribute to a further deterioration in wellbeing at the time when support is most needed. For example, one participant spoke about the additional layers of scrutiny they face when seeking financial assistance when compared to a white colleague they are close to.

²⁴ Graveling (2018), *op. cit.*, p.23.

Discriminations and additional labour

While GMH clergy recognised that their white peers are impacted by many similar financial pressures, many of them gave examples which showed that the wider issues of discrimination, racial trauma and the lack of culturally competent support can add an additional layer of pressure for GMH clergy already under strain. Clergy spoke at length about experiences of discrimination which have financial and material consequences. In many cases, these were experiences whereby they were denied roles because people assumed they would not want to go to a particular setting or were concerned about having a vicar from a GMH background:

I have known people apply for jobs and have gone through several application processes, not just for the one job but for several jobs, not got a job, and effectively become unemployed because the power to grant them access to that parish, to that incumbency post, has been denied them. Not because of their competence or capability. It is because, 'Oh, we have never had a black vicar here. We have never had an Asian vicar here.' Or 'We are not sure they are going to understand them.' It is as blatant as that sometimes.

While racial discrimination is of course a matter of deep concern in and of itself, the consequences of this kind of logic lead to GMH facing higher levels of financial vulnerability since they cannot secure jobs which would be open to their white counterparts, and thus face a higher risk of unemployment.

We have spoken already about the additional vocational expectations that can often fall to GMH clergy, though without additional remuneration, especially in the area of racial justice and advocacy. This of course leads to a disproportionality in the relationship between the hours clergy work, and the financial compensation they receive. But it can also be the case that clergy desire to minister to their own underserved GMH ethnic group when language and culture is a significant barrier for other GMH or white clergy, as well as the wider local community they are called to. However, this dual responsibility can be in some ways taken advantage of, so that in some instances, clergy effectively end up leading more than one church, but are only paid for one role:

I was in [a diocese] as associate vicar at the same time as the [GMH] chaplaincy...I was just only paid an allowance in the chaplaincy but I was not paid in the parish...For eight years I have been doing it and that's why in that area I was really struggling, physically, mentally, my goodness, it's a sacrifice....It's like you are doing voluntary [work]...there are a lot of [GMH] priests there that they are only used but not paid very well. That's why I'm glad that I'm now on the level that I'm paid full time but I'm working with the two churches. Now as the full-time priest here I'm still struggling financially because look at how much is the salary of a priest in the Diocese. It's not enough to buy the electric and the gas of the vicarage and of course you need to buy food, you need to buy clothes, you need things. I'm [in a] better [situation] than others...people like us we are struggling.



It is the language of being ‘used’ which is most striking here, in that the lack of adequate financial compensation is understood to be deliberate and to communicate something about the priest’s value in the eyes of the church. Leading two congregations on a part time allowance for eight years and then being the sole earner in their household due to the health issues of their spouse has been a significant strain on this priest. It is the love of God and people which causes this priest to continue, as well as a desire to prove themselves to those who question their ministry. However, the sustainability of this priest’s ministry depends upon the protection of their wellbeing, which includes their financial and material needs, though they continue to be overlooked. This testimony again raises the aforementioned questions of theologies of sacrifice that support oppressive conditions, while also highlighting the possibility of an ethnicity pay gap, which needs some attention in the church in relation to its clergy as well as wider staff. In terms of clergy, which is our focus, this would mean gathering data on the various roles, hours and stipends of clergy in the church to ensure parity between clergy of different ethnic groups within the same diocese. Monitoring where GMH clergy are receiving less remuneration but have more ministerial responsibility than white colleagues is crucial to ending the structural forms of racism playing out in the church.

The participants we spoke to who had been part of the church for longer periods confirmed the idea expressed here, that there are trends of discrimination which do impact upon GMH clergy and result in additional financial strain. In a similar way to this person who is aware of many GMH priests who are ‘used but not paid well’, others spoke anecdotally of GMH clergy being more often sent to poorer parishes or pushed into self-supporting ministry where they are not paid at all:

The post that I was eventually appointed at was being advertised for the second time because no one had applied, and the reason no one had applied initially was that it was a church that was declining with limited financial resources, limited capacity in terms of additional staff...many of us end up with those type of parishes...and we work really hard. And most of us turn them round.

Minority ethnic people tend to quite often be shepherded into roles where they wouldn’t get paid, either lay roles, LLM (licensed lay ministry) or if you’re going to be a priest then non-stipendiary roles...which means there are more financial pressures on you.

The latest Church of England statistics report that 4.1% of stipendiary clergy who stated their ethnicity identified as GMH,²⁵ though there is no corresponding data for self-supporting ministers. But this seems to be a crucial area for monitoring as another aspect of an ethnicity pay gap. This is not the place to conduct a thorough critique of the normalising of unpaid labour by Africans and African Caribbeans by a church which has profited from the enslavement of Africans historically – but this must be done in future work. Suffice to say at this stage, that if the church truly seeks to repent from and repair the damage of its colonial history,

²⁵ Church of England Research and Statistics (2021) *op. cit.*



then these basic issues around pay and roles must be monitored vigilantly. It is these decisions and trends which have an overall impact on financial and material wellbeing for GMH clergy, but also attest to the ongoing colonial nature of the church's relationship with GMH people and black people in particular.

Financial agency and independence

It was also clear that we cannot oversimplify the financial situation of GMH clergy by assuming they are all from poorer backgrounds or are struggling financially. A minority of participants explained that assumptions are often made that they are working class and in need of financial help when they are middle class and comfortable. Some GMH clergy come to church ministry after having previous well-paid careers which have allowed them to accumulate savings or have enabled them to get on the property ladder:

my spouse and I, we're quite privileged...we can choose to home educate our children, my [spouse] doesn't have to work. We're in our 40s, but I think about...ordinands, who are 20, maybe early 20s, and they haven't got either savings behind them, or they haven't even got their foot on the property ladder. And this goes across not just UKME but, I guess, all clergy, there's a concern about later on in life being able to afford a home and all that stuff. I guess, from my point of view, personally, because I have financial backing, support, and resources, I haven't spent too much time thinking about my financial wellbeing, to be honest.

For some GMH clergy, a level of financial independence enhances wellbeing since they do not have to worry about how they will afford to live now or in the future. This suggests that existing church and pay structures do not make a lifetime of service to the church possible or tenable for many GMH clergy who are also working class. For those that feel called to serve God within the church, it appears to make sense to come into church ministry after successful careers elsewhere. This amounts to a loss of working class and GMH clergy and barriers of access within the leadership pipeline.

The importance of having options and a level of independence emerged as core to the matter of wellbeing for GMH clergy especially in this area of material resources. Some spoke positively about their experiences in terms of the church's provision of adequate housing and dioceses which are responsive to their needs in terms of fixing any housing issues quickly. Yet there was a sense among some participants that the absence of the kind of resources and agency described above can increase anxiety as clergy can feel 'trapped' due to being totally dependent on the church for housing and financial resources. This can be true for many clergy of course, but the anxiety is exacerbated for those GMH clergy who find the church to be a hostile place. Part of what wellbeing depends upon for those who have additional mental, psychological and vocational pressures in the church, is the sense that they have options, including the option to leave or to secure their financial future in ways which are separate from the church's structures and systems.

For those clergy who do not enjoy the benefits of financial independence or privilege, accessing financial support can be fraught with challenges – both internal and external. Participants spoke about their



reticence in asking for financial support from their diocese or trusts because they experience additional layers of scrutiny, or higher rates of rejection when compared to their white counterparts. But even when GMH clergy do seek support, the mechanisms can be unclear:

a lot of these things are not written, it's only when you see a colleague [and ask] 'Oh, how did he get this?' [and they say] 'I just spoke to this person, the housing officer and so on,' [and I say] 'Okay, I didn't realise I was entitled to that.' Because it's not like you know intuitively. A lot of these expectations are built through social networks, and unless you belong to those social networks, it's easy to not be aware of what is available in terms of support, in terms of what is expected that's normal, standard, comfortable facilities...if you don't know what we can ask for, you will never ask for it.

It seems important therefore that the resources that are available are communicated more clearly to clergy within their diocese but also centrally. If access to financial support depends on relationships – which we have seen are complex and often unsafe for GMH clergy – then the very process of accessing support for wellbeing puts their wellbeing at greater risk. Clearly, informal GMH clergy networks may have a specific role here as a hub to share resources and practical advice. Yet, dioceses must also be aware of the need for more targeted communication.

What ensures a positive financial and material life for UKME clergy?

GMH clergy wellbeing in relation to finances and material resources depends overall upon many factors which lie beyond the control of the clergy themselves, and can be enhanced with the following:

- Recognition of the particular financial and material needs a GMH clergy person may have which are shaped by cultural differences;
- Fully funded, independent therapeutic support, counselling and specialist spiritual accompaniment for all GMH clergy in every diocese;
- Ending discrimination and racism in recruitment;
- Recognising the many forms of labour GMH clergy undertake and compensating them accordingly whether financially, with time back, or in other ways;
- Monitoring ethnicity gaps at a diocesan level, between stipendiary and self-supporting roles; ordained versus Licensed Lay Ministry (LLM) roles, priest-in-charge versus assistant posts; full time versus part time roles; and among larger and better resourced parishes versus smaller and less resourced parishes;
- Transparency and clear communication regarding standards of financial provision, funding, and support.



Part 3: Covenantal Commitments (Recommendations)

The Church of England has sought to move toward the language of ‘covenant’ in its work on clergy wellbeing and so we will continue in this vein, to explore ‘binding agreements made in love and grace’²⁶, with attention to the needs of GMH clergy.

The Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing marks a shift towards a preventative approach (rather than focusing on cure); mutual responsibility between ministers, local churches and the national church; coordinated responses throughout the ministry life of clergy; culture change which has health and wellbeing at the core of the church’s life and activities; and achievability to ensure pragmatic solutions are devised at every level.²⁷ We recognise overall that these shifts are essential in terms of what we have heard from GMH clergy. However, we would clarify that GMH clergy are already doing all they can in terms of peer support and self-care as informal networks are the primary source of clergy support. We will therefore focus these covenantal recommendations on what local churches, dioceses and the national church may act upon, to join in solidarity with GMH clergy.

Clergy wellbeing research

The findings from this research project on GMH clergy wellbeing make a particular contribution to how clergy wellbeing might be understood by highlighting certain nuances and additional features. Though the frameworks of the longitudinal study cannot be adapted now as the project is underway, we would hope that future work on clergy wellbeing would give greater emphasis to the matters of race and racism, culture, authenticity in participation and trust and confidence as psychological wellbeing.

Training incumbent selection (Bishops)

Greater care must be taken by bishops in the selection of training incumbents so that curates of all ethnic groups are formed by those who are committed to training and pastorally caring for all of God’s people. Since as one person explained ‘if they are not safe for UKME people, they are not safe for anyone,’ TIs who prove to be unable or unwilling to sufficiently train and pastorally support GMH clergy should no longer have a role in training others until they are prepared to do so. Training incumbents need to be aware of the racism and forms of exclusion their curate may encounter in the course of their ministry – both in wider

²⁶ Church of England General Synod (May 2017), *Clergy Wellbeing*, GS 2072, p.9.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/GS%202072%20Clergy%20Wellbeing.pdf>.

²⁷ Church of England General Synod (May 2019), *A Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing: Executive Summary*, GS 2133, p.1. <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/GS%202133%20A%20Covenant%20for%20Clergy%20Care%20and%20Wellbeing.pdf>.



society and in the church – and be equipped to respond appropriately, including speaking up as an advocate when necessary. Exploratory conversations regarding potential curacies should include particular attention to whether or not this can be expected of the TI.

Curacies (Training incumbents)

Since relationships with Training Incumbents emerged so frequently as impacting GMH clergy wellbeing, there is a clear need for specific recommendations for this area. The dynamics of race and power need to be recognised in the TI-curate relationship, particularly that a white TI may relate to their GMH curate on the basis of racist, prejudicial or discriminatory assumptions unless they are actively resisting those temptations. TIs need to monitor the nature and tone of feedback given to GMH curates in comparison to white ones, as well as the frequency and types of opportunities being entrusted to both. Training incumbents need to be aware of the racism and discrimination their curate may encounter in the course of their curacy and ministry and be equipped to respond appropriately including speaking up as an advocate when necessary. Conversations about potential curacies must include an awareness of these matters, to enable GMH clergy to make an informed choice as they look for a curacy.

Church support for GMH clergy networks and racial justice advocates

There is a range of opinion on the extent to which the church should be involved in the informal networks of GMH clergy, which are the primary site of clergy support for the majority of clergy we spoke to. We would advise the church to conduct a national consultation on how to best support these groups and the individuals who lead them. This might involve recognising their role in GMH clergy support as part of their ministry and thus removing other responsibilities; financial support for training or resources which support clergy; or other actions. Similarly, for clergy who are called upon at a diocesan level, we would advise bishops to be mindful of the need to recognise anti-racism, equity or inclusion work as additional responsibility and labour which needs to be taken into account when determining parish or diocesan roles. A diocese which has a policy of requiring additional unrecognised labour on the part of GMH clergy for the sake of meeting diversity quotas or doing anti-racism work when compared to their white counterparts, but with no additional remuneration or time, is functioning in a structurally racist manner and this must be rectified as a matter of urgency.

Accountability, reporting and ‘racial safeguarding’

We recognise the vulnerability of GMH clergy who face racial trauma at the hands of those who should be teaching them or leading them, as well as those in their congregations or communities. The language of ‘racial safeguarding’ shared by one participant seems to be a crucial way of naming the problems outlined



and this should be explored through further research. We imagine that a safeguarding approach to dealing with racial abuse might make it easier to develop a process for reporting and accountability which is currently absent.

While many dioceses already undertake ‘unconscious bias’ training (which has been widely critiqued within the wider Diversity, Equity and Inclusion sector) or ‘anti-racism’ training, the issue of accountability remains unaddressed. Clergy must know where to go to report racially motivated attacks in their parish or community, or discrimination against them by a colleague, senior clergy person or in a recruitment process. White clergy need to be equipped to recognise racist attacks, hate speech, and microaggressions, in order to address these behaviours in themselves, and in the congregations and communities where they serve. A zero-tolerance approach is required regarding bullying, intimidation and negligence of GMH clergy due to race or cultural or ethnic differences. An independent reporting system may help protect those victimised in these ways from further harm. This is important not only for those who experience racial violence and discrimination to be heard, but for the church to begin to practically address racism in its structures and among those who serve within it.

Wellbeing support

The majority of participants expressed a need for therapeutic support and spiritual direction/accompaniment by those from GMH backgrounds, or those trained to understand the dynamics of power, race, racial trauma and global theological perspectives. The lack of access to this ministry severely undermines the wellbeing of GMH clergy and exacerbates the lack of belonging clergy already feel. The church must provide full funding for independent, culturally sensitive therapeutic and spiritual support for GMH ordinands and clergy. This should be offered across the board and ordinands and clergy should be encouraged to make use of these resources as part of their rhythms of care throughout the duration of their training and ministry. Where necessary, the church must take responsibility for financially supporting the training of GMH counsellors and spiritual directors who can support clergy and their families. This should be understood as one aspect of reparations vis-à-vis the harm done to so many GMH clergy in the course of their ministry.

This support is also needed in terms of retreats which were raised several times as being unhelpful for people who are not white. Retreats can often centre European spiritualities or theology and assume colour-blindness in discussions of spiritual wellbeing. Taking steps to address the deficit in GMH spiritual directors/accompaniers would address this need for the benefit of all clergy and the Christian church. But there may also be the need to support group events which allow GMH clergy to take group retreats which are tailor-made for them, by focusing on global perspectives on spirituality and theology.



Further research

There were several areas which emerged in our research which in our estimation require further critical exploration. While research on GMH experience is complicated by the fact that many people do not report on their ethnicity, finding ways to gather and analyse data on particular trends will help expose the specific challenges to wellbeing, help the church to understand important nuances regarding GMH clergy experience and by extension, enable leaders at all levels to respond in informed and effective ways. We recommend further work in the following areas:

Whiteness, colonialism and race in the Church of England

Understanding the church's historic relationship to GMH communities and leaders will help to frame some of the ongoing issues we have raised in this report regarding wellbeing and racial justice. The patterns of exploitation and exclusion we have highlighted could be considered to be contemporary evolutions of the colonial relationships the church has long established with global majority populations, and this deserves further attention. This would require naming where and how white power is upheld within and by the church, to the detriment of pastoral care, Christian leadership and ministry and the church's witness. Analysing the anxiety, concern and reluctance of some to name and address race and racism in the church – what is sometimes referred to as 'whiteness' or 'white fragility' – will be essential to overcoming the barriers and opportunities for culture change in this area.

Monitoring ethnicity gaps and racial inequity

While a significant number of people do not report on their ethnicity when completing surveys for the church, we would encourage the church to continue to seek to gather this data as this is essential for identifying trends in discrimination and ethnicity gaps. This will require the church to make it safer for people to disclose their ethnicity data by clearly communicating what it will be used for, who will have access and how they would remain anonymous. Having heard countless people speak about tendencies to encourage GMH people into self-supporting or licensed lay ministry, or part time or assistant ministry posts, we consider it important to examine these anecdotal claims through quantitative research and analysis. Paying attention to ethnicity gaps within dioceses in terms of roles, hours and stipends would also be included as essential here. This gathering of data would then enable more nuanced attention to the questions of participation and financial and material wellbeing.

Distinct needs and experiences

Though we have spoken overall in this report about GMH experiences, we have also noted certain distinctions which deserve further exploration. With the increasing numbers of African and African Caribbean Pentecostals coming into the church, and the certain increase in East Asian Christians, the needs and experiences of specific groups also need to be explored. It also seems crucial that we find ways to understand the experiences of GMH women clergy who were unable to take part in this project as they



hoped to. The discoveries made during this project also highlighted that across the board, research on wellbeing needs to attend to the particularities of clergy lives not only regarding ethnicity and race, but at the intersections of sexuality and gender, class, disability and even marital status.

GMH ordinand wellbeing

As stated towards the start of this report, the matters of wellbeing begin for many during theological training and even before, as they discern their calling to ordained ministry. These issues were raised by many participants though there was not space to explore them in detail. Research into the impact of the discernment process – including the new model of pre-training assessment – should be undertaken with attention to the specific needs of global majority candidates. Theological training and formation should also be examined through the lens of wellbeing as specifically the spiritual impact of a training and formational programme which centres white European perspectives and voices. This research should also seek to understand the importance of training in global spiritualities and theology for white ordinands who are enriched by these perspectives and better equipped by them, for ministry in a diverse world.

Whiteness and Anglican spiritualities and ministry

The challenge of imagining Anglican ministry and spirituality beyond the dominance of whiteness was highlighted as a challenge by several participants. We consider this to be another important area of research. The dominance of whiteness should be exposed and opposed in the Church of England's theology, spirituality and ministry models in order to embrace the rich contribution of global perspectives and practices. This includes exploring the variations between traditions, and the particular challenges or opportunities which may be presented for GMH clergy who find themselves in different corners of the church.



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Acknowledgements

I would like to end with thanks to all those who shared their stories with us and entrusted us to represent their perspectives in this report, we have endeavoured to do justice to you and your experiences. We also acknowledge all those who wanted to participate, but were unable due to their own ongoing trauma, the stresses of their current lives and the demands of ministry. Our hope is that you will see yourself represented here, and that you will feel seen.

Secondly, thanks to Carlton Turner and Tamanda Walker who were consultants for this project and companions on the journey. Carlton in particular for undertaking some of the interviews and contributing your insights, and Tamanda for your detailed editing and analytical support.

Thirdly, I would like to thank all those who worked behind the scenes to make this project possible. Thank you to Clergy Support Trust who funded this research project, Liz Graveling and the Ministry Development Team, and the Advisory Group of global majority leaders who supported and encouraged us.



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