

## Lay Ministries Data Project Report Commentary

It is great to welcome the publication of the Lay Ministry Data Project Final Report. It provides a wealth of information about the scale and diversity of publicly recognised lay ministries across the Church of England today. It provides us with an opportunity to give thanks for all those who are contributing to the life of our worshipping and wider communities and celebrate the very many ministries in which they are involved, enabling the mission and ministry of the whole people of God.

Some of the numbers are staggering. This report found around 100,000 people engaged in lay ministries across the country, almost 90% on a voluntary basis. And we also know that there are many more who aren't counted within this report. It simply would not be possible for the church to sustain its mission and ministry without the contribution of lay ministers within their parishes, chaplaincies and other worshipping communities.

What is also striking in this report is the diversity of different roles that people are undertaking. The report has grouped the hundreds of different roles into over 40 different areas ranging from Administrators to Worship Leaders. It is wonderful to see the range of gifts being used in different forms of service, including the new and evolving. To quote the newly published *Kingdom Calling*, 'in order to be the sign, instrument and foretaste of the kingdom in this age, the church needs all the gifts that Christ has given to its members, expressed in the diversity of its many ministries woven together under the direction of the Holy Spirit.'

This report provides us with a much broader picture and more complete picture than we have previously had and the insights it provides are fascinating and challenging. Huge thanks are due to colleagues in the Research & Statistics Team who have been working on this complex project for the past two years and also to all those people within dioceses, cathedrals and more widely who provided the information for it.

While this report has significantly improved our insight into lay ministries, there is much we still don't know. This is particularly about the two thirds of lay ministry roles taking place within worshipping communities that are not Licensed or part of a diocesan Authorised or Commissioned Lay Ministry. We hope that this research can be picked up on 2021 to enable us to understand more and celebrate the contribution and dedication of even more people alongside other steps that enable us to understand and celebrate those involved in lay ministry.

This report is published in the same month as *A Vision for Lay Ministries* (GS Misc 1265) which seeks to inspire the whole church to reflection and action around lay ministries. The insight this data provides is incredibly valuable as we work towards a church where all ministries thrive.

Carrie Myers

Lay Ministries Officer