

Living Ministry Research: Project Summary

Background

The work of the Ministry Council, on Renewing Discipleship and Ministry, aims at increasing the number, range and quality of ordinands, along with effective resource allocation in ministerial education. This is in the context of recent changes to initial ministerial education (IME), including the introduction of the mixed-mode pathway in addition to the residential and non-residential pathways, and diocesan requirements for, among other things:

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

The Ministry Division 'Vocational Pathways' research programme has provided a snapshot of some experiences and understandings of both phases of current ministerial education.¹ However, what this education leads to in terms of ministry has not yet been investigated. The aim of the Living Ministry research is to provide ongoing, consistent information to inform diocesan officers, TEI staff, Ministry Division and other stakeholders regarding decisions about: candidates for ordained ministry, training pathways, continuing development and deployment, and policy relating to the work of the Ministry Council.

Research question

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

- Wellbeing (personal and professional flourishing), and
- Ministerial outcomes (effectiveness).

Objectives

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

Methods

- Analyse existing records of all active priests by ministerial education, types of ministry, destinations and growth.
- Track a large sample of ministers through their training and ordained ministry by means of a repeated panel survey over an initial ten-year period;
- Use qualitative methods with a smaller sample over the same period to explore in depth dynamics, processes and relationships;
- Carry out focused qualitative studies on particular topics or with other stakeholders in order to capture different perspectives.

¹ Graveling, L. (2016), *Vocational Pathways: Perspectives from Initial Ministerial Education Phase 1*, Ministry Division. http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/UserFiles/File/RME/Perspectives_from_IME_1.pdf

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

http://www.ministrydevelopment.org.uk/UserFiles/File/RME/IME_perspectives_from_curacy.pdf