

ABSTRACT

APOSTOLIC PRIESTS: RELEASING THE LAY PLANTERS

by

Gareth J. Robinson

The Church of England has committed to planting thousands of new worshipping communities with many led by lay leaders. This raises questions such as “How might these lay planters be identified and trained to do this? What role can local clergy play in supporting the development of lay church planters?” This study considers the current processes, obstacles, and best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England and offers the term “apostolic priest” as a helpful lens. An apostolic priest is a person who uses their ordained position in the Church of England to identify and train lay leaders for planting new worshipping communities. This paper argues that those ordained priest should be functioning as elders and overseers in the church, raising up and releasing the laity to fulfil the apostolic and priestly ministry of the Church, seeking to draw lessons from the Anglo-Saxon Minsters and Methodist movement. Insights from Archbishop Stephen Cottrell, Bishop Steven Croft, Cardinal Avery Dulles, Alan Hirsch, and others are used to consider how those ordained priest might serve the Church in this apostolic way.

The study gathered qualitative data from thirty-three people in three groups: Doers (lay leaders who have planted a church), Donors (apostolic priests who have sent out a church plant), and Directors (those within the institution supporting church planting). Bishop Richard Chartres, whose use of the term “apostolic priest” sparked this study, was also interviewed.

The research reveals five major findings: (1) Apostolic priests are crucial for lay led church planting; (2) Apostolic priests identify leaders by discerning character and gifting through relationship; (3) Identifying and training lay leaders for church planting is an intertwined process; (4) Apostolic priests are the bridge between the institution and the lay planter; and (5) The Church of England can encourage lay planters through on-the-job training, finances and authorization, and offer training to clergy to help more become apostolic priests.

APOSTOLIC PRIESTS:
RELEASING THE LAY PLANTERS

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by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter 1 provides the framework for considering best practices for clergy to function in an apostolic way in order to identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England. The researcher provides a rationale for the project supported by personal experience. Key terminology for the project is defined. Themes for and significant contributors to the literature review are identified as well as contextual factors of the ministry setting. Included in Chapter 1 are the purpose statement, research questions for the project, and research and participant descriptions as well as methods for data collection and analysis. The researcher concludes with a preview of the entire project by chapter.

Personal Introduction

In March 2011, my wife Lizzy and I were licensed as lay ministers by the Bishop of Stockport to plant a church in a deprived outer estate under a Bishop's Mission Order. We had been involved in leading missional communities in the early 2000s as part of St. Thomas' Crookes, Sheffield, and then continued to see people come to faith when we moved to minister in the USA between 2005–2010. I had been employed as a worship pastor, but this new sense of call was to plant and lead a church, not just the worship of a church. Over the next six years, we would work on this estate, incarnating the gospel whilst I went through the ordination training process of selection, training, and curacy.

In 2016, we handed on that church and planted a “Resource Church” in Salford, central Manchester, UK. The aim was to plant into other churches to revitalize them and thus be a resource to the Diocese. We brought in our team, established a new name, Saint Philips Chapel Street, along with a new worship service in a Charismatic Evangelical style, a new website, social media presence, and evangelistic intent. After seven years, our church had over three hundred people, and we have planted our first revitalization into another Anglican Church within the Diocese of Manchester.

On this journey of planting a resource church, I have been privileged to spend time with others on the same journey; on one of those occasions, we were invited to spend an afternoon with the then Bishop of London, Richard Chartres. There in his house just next to St Paul’s Cathedral, he spoke about his predecessor who was Bishop of London when John and Charles Wesley were ministering. He explained that he did not want to make the same mistakes and sought to welcome the move of the Holy Spirit in the mission and ministry that city center resource churches were bringing. He used a phrase which has stuck in my mind ever since; that of “apostolic priests.”

At the start of 2020, I was invited to speak to the PCC (Parochial Church Council) of a neighboring parish to share a potential vision for how we might together develop the mission and ministry of their church alongside our own, but this raised certain questions as Covid hit, and several of our team here had their placements come to an end. /

Around the same time, conversations began with Bishop Ric Thorpe and John McGinley about raising up, training, and releasing significant numbers of lay church planters, what is now called “Myriad.” The questions kept coming: how might clergy identify and train lay leaders who would be able to plant a church?

Then someone in our church who works with vulnerable people spoke to Lizzy and me about some people who were coming to faith due to her work across the other side of the city. She wanted to run an Alpha course, which we encouraged. They met in a Christian-run coffee shop, and after Alpha finished, wanted to continue to meet to grow in their new-found faith.

This, then, became the focus of my thinking and study: how might clergy identify lay leaders with the capacity and gifting to plant a church? What does it mean to be an apostolic priest? How might our church continue to be a resource to the diocese by raising up and sending out not only clergy to plant, but also lay leaders? We planted as lay leaders in 2011, how might we encourage others with a similar sense of vision and call? How can we identify and train lay leaders to plant churches and engage in effective mission to post-Christian, neo-liberal young people and young adults who live and work in the city center of Manchester?

Statement of the Problem

Described above are the opportunities to plant from Saint Philips Chapel Street (SPCS) and some of the lay people wanting to step into leadership, all with a desire to see more people come to faith, which demands more leaders and pastors to help disciple them. This is happening in the context of declining clergy numbers and Manchester Diocese joining parish ministries together with others in response to this and encouraging lay leadership. A similar story is occurring in other dioceses too, thereby demanding more lay leadership within the Church of England. This is also partly a positive response to the Church initiative “Setting God’s People Free” which encourages laity to use their gifts “for the good of God’s Kingdom” (Archbishop’s Council).

However, clergy are not trained to identify and train lay leaders for church planting. Opportunities exist to plant but not enough clergy to do so. Old churches exist that need revitalizing as well as new opportunities: housing developments which have no historic church presence; immigrant communities in city centers; social housing neighborhoods with almost no church attendance or impact. The stated aim of the Gregory Centre for Church Multiplication's strategy named "Myriad" is "to support the planting of 10,000 new, predominantly lay-led, Church of England churches in the next ten years resulting in 1 million new disciples of Jesus Christ" ('Myriad') This statement is a powerful vision, but the question remains what gifts and skills are needed for an apostolic priest to identify, train up, and deploy lay leaders to plant into an additional or new site?

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this study was to identify best practices for identifying and training (developing) lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.

Research Questions

Research Question #1

What processes are currently being practiced for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting?

Research Question #2

What obstacles do church and lay leaders identify related to identifying and training lay leaders for church planting?

Research Question #3

What are best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England?

Rationale for the Project

The good news, according to Jesus, is that “the kingdom of God has come near” (*New International Version*, Mark 1.15). After his resurrection, he then sent out his disciples on the Great Commission: “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28.19–20). He had identified and raised up eleven apostles and perhaps around one hundred other disciples who took on this commission, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and within a few centuries the church was the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Since the Great Commission, the Church through worship, discipleship, and mission has taken on this task of celebrating and sharing the gospel with the world around us. Ebbs and flows of the impact of the church over the centuries have occurred with different mission and reforming movements calling the church back to its roots, its radical vision of lives laid down in service to the Lord Jesus Christ. These movements would include heroes of the faith such as the Desert Fathers, Augustine and his mission to England, St Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther, Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians, the Wesley brothers and the Methodist movement, and the Salvation Army along with many others.

Now, in the increasingly post-Christian, neo-liberal West, church attendance has been in decline. In Manchester Diocese, over one hundred churches have been identified as being less than one generation away from extinction due to the age of the worshipers and the number of people in the congregations. In 2019, just 25,500 people came to worship in an Anglican Church in the area covered by Diocese of Manchester with a population of over 2.2 million (*Transforming Manchester Diocese Mission Communities Guidance*).

The good news of Jesus is the same for people in the twenty-first century as it was in the first. This project was to study how clergy might empower lay leaders in the Church of England in our current cultural context by identifying, training, and releasing them to share the good news of God's kingdom, baptizing and teaching them, and thus planting new churches.

Definition of Key Terms

Lay Leader

A lay leader here is defined as someone who is not currently ordained as a deacon, priest, or bishop within the Church of England. Various categories of lay leadership exists within the Church of England, but essentially "lay" may mean licensed, authorized, or simply those who are empowered to lead by their clergy. The term "leader" in this study applies to the person who is taking the lead in the process of pioneering this new church plant.

Church

Another term to clarify for this study is "church": what is it that is being planted? For the purposes of this study, a broad outlook on the definition of "church" is taken. In 2013, the

Diocese of London launched “Capital Vision” to “set a goal of creating or renewing 100 new worshipping communities” (‘87 New Worshipping Communities’). Rather than defining too carefully what is meant by “church” planting, the study will use this wider definition of “new worshipping community.”

Planting

Similarly, “planting” will take a broad meaning, covering many aspects of pioneering something new. Planting might mean starting a new church from scratch or helping to reinvigorate or revitalize a dwindling church so planting describes the process of establishing a new worshipping community that was not there before.

Delimitations

The focus of this study was limited to the Church of England. Churches which had experience in developing lay church planters were of most interest. Churches with older congregations which are struggling or declining were not consulted. Apostolic priests already developing lay planters were identified and consulted to determine current processes, obstacles, and best practices. The research drew on expertise from various demographic and geographic contexts.

Whilst issues of missiology and ecclesiology are important around the question of lay leadership within the Church of England which seeks to honor the scriptural and historical pattern of threefold ordination of deacon, presbyter, and bishop, this project did not seek to address in depth the underlying theology of this. The encouragement of lay leadership is occurring through all of the Church of England, and the challenges will continue to be debated. However, those conversations are beyond the scope of this study.

Review of Relevant Literature

To inform this discussion, the concept of mission within scripture is considered, and the New Testament narrative of apostolic priestly leadership will be important. The words of Jesus' Great Commission will be considered. Paul wrote to Titus with clear instruction on what to look for in leaders of new plants. When in Ephesus, Paul was able to preach and deploy leaders to the point where Luke, the writer of Acts, could conclude that "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19.10).

Examples from church history of mission and church planting will also be utilized. Whilst the UK is a post-Christian society, it is still likely that lessons from the earliest missions into pre-Christian England reaching the unchurched that can be used. John Wesley worked alongside lay preachers and raised up many small group leaders to help others follow his method of discipleship.

Works that inform the ministry of church planting itself will be vital to help shape what these lay leaders are being trained to do. These writers, thinkers, and practitioners have worked hard to consider what skills are valuable to church planters and those seeking to develop them as well as offering insight into some of the more fundamental questions surrounding church planting. These include the kind of churches that get planted, the way that churches then relate to one another, the concept of a movement and apostolic ministry, etc. Leadership development theories will also provide insights into how an apostolic priest might identify and train lay people to become competent in leading and planting. These texts will help to identify the type of person and the skills they may require allowing them to effectively plant a church.

For lay leaders to plant churches that reach people who have been raised in a post-Christian, neo-liberal society, reviewing the literature surrounding culture as we come to the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century will be important as we seek to discover what lessons can be learned about those who are not engaging with church, whether unchurched or dechurched. Paul was insightful in identifying that “Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Cor. 1.22–23). The literature review aims to discover what ideological constructs are in the minds of those in our culture, and how might we preach Christ crucified in a way that might “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10.5).

Research Methodology

Data for this project primarily came from people within three categories: Doers, lay leaders who are leading (or have led) a church plant; Donors, apostolic priests who have sent out a church plant; and Directors, those within the institution supporting church planting. Each of these three categories of people have insight to share about the role of an apostolic priest in developing lay leaders to plant churches. Research data was collected by using online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with people from all three groups. Doers helped clarify what training they would have found useful before they planted, and what lessons they have learned along the way. The Donors were those already functioning as apostolic priests in that they had worked with a lay leader by identifying, training, and releasing them into planting. Directors serve within the institution helping to support lay led church planting and offered a third perspective on current process, obstacles, and best practices in identifying and training lay leaders for

church planting. The development of lay leaders for church planting is being addressed at a national level, too, so a document analysis of the Myriad training offered to clergy was also used.

This project researched how apostolic priests are currently identifying and training lay leaders for church planting, the obstacles faced in attempting this, and sought to establish best practices. To do this, lay leaders, clergy, and those working to support this on a structural level were sent questionnaires and some semi-structured interviews were carried out alongside a document analysis of clergy training in this area. These inquiries were to develop a broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities. Adding this information to the principles discovered in the literature review led to the conclusions about best practices going forward.

Type of Research

This project was a pre-intervention study to help determine best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting. For this, mixed methods were employed. Semi-structured interviews, online questionnaires, and document analysis were the primary tools used.

Participants

This research was with people from three different categories, with distinct terminology for each category, that of Doer, Donor, and Director:

- (1) Doers: lay leaders who are leading (or have led) a church plant;
- (2) Donors: apostolic priests who have sent out a church plant; and
- (3) Directors: those within the institution supporting church planting.

Doers were lay leaders of church plants with experience of being identified, trained, and sent out to plant a church. Donors were clergy who had played a key role in identifying, training, and sending out lay leaders for church planting. Directors were those working within the institution either at a national or diocesan level to support apostolic priests as lay leaders are identified and trained for church planting. Finally, the retired Bishop Chartres, who sparked this study by the use of the term “apostolic priest” was interviewed.

Instrumentation

Mixed methods were used in this study with a small amount of quantitative data collected around demographic and ministry contexts along with three types of qualitative data collection tools. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected by online questionnaires sent via email, and qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews held on Zoom and through a document analysis.

To determine current processes, obstacles, and best practices for apostolic priests to identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England, an online questionnaire was sent out via email to the participants. Three respondents from each group were randomly selected and invited to a semi-structured interview on Zoom. A semi-structured interview with Bishop Chartres was also completed. Finally, a document analysis was carried out using the training course used by Myriad to help clergy identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.

Data Collection

The first steps were to identify the most appropriate people to survey and interview from the different groupings explained above: Doers (lay planters), Donors

(apostolic priests), and Directors (those supporting from within the institution). The work of identifying and inviting into the study took around six weeks working with the national Myriad team. Doers, Donors, and Directors were asked if they would be willing to complete an online questionnaire. During this time, the questionnaire was also designed, determining pertinent questions to ask the respondents. Consent forms and questionnaires were sent out via email with a request for them to be completed online within a one-week deadline. The semi-structured interviews occurred over a period of two weeks with three individuals from each group and Bishop Chartres and were held on Zoom.

The data from these questionnaires and interviews, along with the Myriad training documents, were analyzed over a three-month period. The questions in the questionnaires and interviews were designed to discover what is currently happening in the Church of England to identify and train lay leaders for church planting as well as to discover what obstacles people face and common principles that may determine best practices going forwards.

Data Analysis

The research was qualitative in nature to try to fully understand the issues in developing lay leaders for church planting. An online questionnaire was chosen to reach a larger number of people giving shorter answers to questions, and semi-structured interviews allowed deeper conversations around the challenges and best practices within the Church of England. The document analysis gave an additional perspective on how clergy are being actively encouraged and trained to identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.

The responses to the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were then analyzed. First, all questionnaire responses were analyzed together to determine the primary themes in response to each question. Then, these themes were used to analyze the responses from each individual group. The same themes were utilized in analyzing the interview responses and document analysis. Artificial intelligence was used to help analyze the interview data. This method of analysis was used to provide insight into the processes that are currently being practiced, the obstacles that church and lay leaders identify, and best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.

Generalizability

The qualitative research in this study focused on current processes, obstacles, and best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting within the Church of England. The literature review considered historical examples to analyze how developing lay leaders for church planting occurred in the past. Due to the range of research in different geographic and demographic contexts and the breadth of history taken into account, a good level of confidence exists that this project is applicable to any situation where a desire to develop lay leaders is present with a particular focus on church planting within the Church of England.

As this study was primarily focused on the data from the qualitative research, it was relatively small so broad authoritative generalizations may not be valid; however, it covers a breadth of contexts and offers helpful insights for any clergy wishing to identify and train lay leaders. Lay leaders are utilized in every church, and whilst this research sought to determine best practice for identifying and training lay leaders for church

planting within the Church of England, helpful lessons to be learned by any ordained minister in how to identify and train lay leaders — whether for church planting or not — are included.

Project Overview

This project outlines best practices for identifying and training (developing) lay leaders for church planting within the Church of England. Chapter 2 discusses biblical insights to apostolic leadership and church planting. Chapter 2 goes on to consider examples from church history of mission and church planting alongside the most influential writers and practitioners regarding current church planting literature, leadership development theories, and the current Western culture into which churches will be planted. Chapter 3 outlines the various ways the researcher will investigate his research questions. Chapter 4 analyzes the findings that emerge from the qualitative methods used: online questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Chapter 5 outlines the study's major findings with implications for each discovery now and in the future.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter 2 will consider the biblical foundations for apostolic priests developing lay leaders for church planting. The theme of mission and commission, being sent (the root word of apostolic), runs throughout the Christian Scriptures with God's people functioning in a priestly role. Analysis of Jesus' Great Commission raises questions of who he was commissioning and what he was commissioning them to do. Consideration is given to what the New Testament means for someone to function in an apostolic and priestly way.

These themes are developed in the theological foundations section where the term "apostolic priest" is discussed in light of its prior usage before looking at both how the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches continue to wrestle with the challenges this concept presents for these institutional structures. Examining the role of the apostolic includes briefly reviewing literature around adaptive leadership and change management.

Following this, two case-studies of historic mission in England are reviewed: first, the development of Anglo-Saxon Minsters; second, the work of the Wesley brothers in the development of the Methodist movement within the Church of England. To help consider the content of the training lay leaders may need to be given, consideration is given to the current cultural context in England, inviting conversation around what contextualization might look like in the twenty-first century. Publications from the Church of England since the 2004 *Mission-shaped Church* are discussed before considering how this literature review informs the design of the research that follows.

Biblical Foundations

The role of God's people to play an apostolic and priestly role in the world is rooted in the Old Testament and expounded in the New. Humanity is made in God's image, commissioned to "rule" over the created order (Gen. 1.26, 28). This commission is the "consequence of the divine image" (Kidner 56); humans "display God's image in that they will rule" (Steinmann 57). Wright says, "ruling and serving creation is humanity's first mission on earth, and God never repealed the mandate" (60). Kline claims the devil's intention in Genesis 3 was "to prevent man's attainment of permanent work dominion as vicegerent of God," thus annulling humanity's commission (120). Yet in response, Yahweh commissions Abraham to "go... to the land I will show you" (Gen. 12.1). Brueggemann argues that here "the speech of this God is at the same time imperative and promise, summons and assurance," themes that will be reflected in Jesus' own commissioning to his disciples (117). Wright agrees: "God's command and promise to Abraham can legitimately, therefore, be called the first Great Commission" (42). If "the missional thrust of Genesis 12:1-3 is also ecclesiological," then Abraham can be seen as a prototypical apostolic leader responding to God's commission and call, creating community around this covenantal promise (94).

The priestly role of God's whole people is noted in Exodus 19.6, where Yahweh commands Moses to say to Israel, "you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Abraham shows that to be apostolic is to respond to God's call and empower others to do the same; Moses shows that to be priestly is to "represent the living God to the world, and to bring the world to acknowledge the living God. This fits exactly with the way the New Testament also presents our responsibility as Christians" (Wright 175).

Whilst one tribe was called to serve in the priesthood, they were meant to serve as a model for all: “Israel as a ‘kingdom of priests’ is Israel committed to the extension throughout the world of the ministry of Yahweh’s presence” (Durham 263). A commission to all of God’s people to be apostolic and priestly exists.

Within the New Testament, Jesus is “whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest” (Heb. 3.1), who “called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles” (Luke 6.13). Jesus came “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19.10), and used Isaiah 61 to express the “purposes for which God has sent him” (Adeyemo 1239). He commissions his followers to do the same: apostolic, priestly leadership was offered to, and expected from, his disciples. Matthew’s Great Commission is a primary text for understanding apostolic leadership and church planting. Hagner claims that the Great Commission is “the hallmark of the Gospel of Matthew” (881), and each gospel has its own version of this commissioning (881–82).

Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matt. 28.18–20).

Jesus commissions his disciples to continue his apostolic and priestly call to extend his kingdom. In considering the Great Commission, the key questions for this study revolve around two areas: *who* was Jesus commissioning and *what* was he commissioning them to do?

The Great Commission: Who and What?

“The eleven” who gathered around Jesus to hear these words were give the Great Commission so the question stands “does the Great Commission apply only to them?” France argues that “here, as often, they represent the whole body of Jesus’ ‘brethren’” (418); which also seems to make sense of Peter’s interpretation of Joel 2.28 that ““I will pour out my Spirit on all people”” (Acts 2.17), and the others beyond the eleven who had a personal sense of this commission — notably Saul the Pharisee (Acts 26.17–18). Most commentators agree with France that Jesus’ commission led to Christianity becoming a missionary movement where all who became disciples of Jesus perceived this commissioning as relevant to them; the Great Commission was not just for the eleven but for those who consider themselves disciples of Jesus (e.g. Adeyemo 1196; Hagner 883; Keener 720).

Some will have an apostolic role, just as the eleven (and others) did through the story of Acts and beyond: initiating, envisioning, overseeing outreach and mission and the communities that arise from this work. Yet if Jesus’ commission is to *all* his followers, then focusing on the role of lay leadership in church planting is vital for this study. If Jesus, by commissioning his eleven apostles, was commissioning *all* his disciples, then it must be concluded that his instructions apply to all who call themselves Christians. To be a disciple of Jesus is to do what he has commissioned his disciples to do; no distinction exists in the Great Commission between lay and ordained.

The second key question considers what Jesus was commissioning his followers to do. France argues that “baptizing and teaching (v20) are participles dependent on the

main verb, make disciples; they further specify what is involved in discipleship” (420).

This is supported by Hagner, who claims

the commission proper consists syntactically of the main verb *matheteusate*, “make disciples,” with three parallel subordinate participles: *poreuthentes*, “going,” *baptizontes*, “baptizing,” and *didaskontes*, “teaching.” The participles when linked with the imperative verb themselves take on imperatival force and function as imperatives (882).

These participles — going, baptizing, teaching — can, or even should, be understood as imperatives, instructions to all disciples of Jesus. Thus, being a disciple and making disciples means putting into practice three things according to Matthew’s gospel: go, baptize, and teach.

“**Go**”. The first participle, “going,” suggests movement, action, and taking initiative. As Hagner puts it, “it is implied that the disciples are to go into all the world” (886). The outworking of this commission in the New Testament seems to suggest that making disciples of all nations can mean two things. The first is that *the nations come to them*, which happens in Acts 2. Many who became disciples at Pentecost would then have left Jerusalem, and “having gone,” taken the news of Jesus back to their home towns. This model seems to have influenced Paul in Ephesus, where he “had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19.9–10). Paul’s extraordinary claim comes from teaching those who came to him. Teaching others and empowering them to go out on mission seems a valid response to Jesus’ commission.

The second way to “go” is for *the disciples to go to the nations*. This “going” occurs in at least two ways in the New Testament: by persecution and prophecy. After Stephen was martyred, “a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria” (Acts 8.1). Luke then tells us that because of this, “those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went” (v.4). Philip, who “was not far behind Stephen in leadership ability and initiative among ‘the seven’” (Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* 132), was forced by the persecution into Samaria, but as a result, “there was great joy in that city” (v.8) because of his ministry. Later, a prophetic prompt causes Philip to leave Samaria, where he encounters the Ethiopian official, who Philip teaches, baptizes, and who then takes the gospel with him to the court of the Queen of Ethiopia (vv.26–29). Philip “appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea” (v.30). This story is important to note, as Philip, although a deacon, was not one of the twelve apostles (Acts 6.5). However, he preached, healed, delivered, and baptized people in the name of Jesus.

Jesus’s commission to “go” can be expressed in two ways: through baptizing and teaching those who come to hear and by going to those who will listen. Persecution and prophecy can inform when the time might be to stay and when to go. Jesus expects an active response of some sort that whilst his disciples — lay or ordained — are going about their business, they are taking the Great Commission seriously and looking for opportunities to teach and baptize as they go.

“Baptize”. To be baptized is to be initiated into the ways of Jesus. Writing on Matthew, Joe Kapolyo writes that “baptism is the initiatory step, to be taken at the beginnings of discipleship” (1196). When people respond positively to the message of Jesus, the disciples are to “dip them in the sacrament of faith” (Jerome and Scheck 327). Keener agrees: “wherever God leads particular disciples to carry out this commission (‘going’), the text is clear on the other ways one makes disciples. First of all, one baptizes them under the rulership of Christ. Baptism was an act of initiation and conversion, and this text suggests that disciples initiate others into the faith” (1074). Baptism is the initiation into the faith. Hagner points out that “in contrast to John’s baptism, this baptism brings a person into an existence that is fundamentally determined by, i.e., ruled by, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (888). In the Great Commission, Jesus repurposes John’s baptism; Hauerwas argues that “baptism is the necessary presupposition for the very existence of the church,” showing that baptism is not just initiation into the faith, but also into a community (160).

This is developed in the book of Acts and the Epistles. At the start of Matthew, John the Baptist prophesied that Jesus would “baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt. 3.11). Dunn writes that throughout Acts “the metaphor of baptism associated with the Spirit emphasizes not just the idea of immersion in Spirit (rather than water) but the inauguration of a decisive new stage in the purpose and mission of God” (*The Acts of the Apostles* 36). For Luke, this community of baptized people, the church, is missional. David Goodhew notes that “baptism is at the heart of the theology of church growth... if the church is to grow, especially in the west, baptism will need to be practiced

energetically in the future” (238). Baptism in the New Testament is initiation into faith, community, and mission through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit’s fire.

Gordon and Stephen Kuhrt note that in Acts “the relationship of the gift of the Spirit and incorporation into the church in this process of initiation is, however, not always clear” (42). Luke telling various stories of new believers being baptized in water and the Holy Spirit does not offer clear procedures for this initiation. They point out that this lack of clarity continues in the rest of the New Testament: “even [in the epistles] baptism doesn’t receive systematic treatment, with no actual instruction about who should be baptized, the manner in which it should be administered and so on” (43). What is clear is that Jesus commanded his disciples to baptize people and expected this to be related in some way to the missionary empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Baptism confirms upon a person a new identity as a disciple of Jesus filled with the Spirit into a community of other Spirit-filled missional disciples, which then involves that person in going, baptizing, and teaching in response to the Great Commission.

Perhaps most challenging for this study is that the command to baptize seems to be something for all disciples to do. If Jesus’s Great Commission is for all disciples, lay leaders would be correct to conclude that Jesus himself has commissioned them to baptize new believers. In Acts 8 discussed above, as a deacon Philip baptized the Ethiopian official when he responded to the gospel. Paul discusses who baptized new believers in Corinth, pointing out that unnamed others did this, without identifying who the baptizers were (1 Cor. 1.14–17). Without any clear instruction on who can and cannot baptize in the New Testament, lay people could understandably interpret scripture as commissioning them to do so. However, Article of Religion 25 notes that baptism is one

of the two sacraments of the Church of England, and the ordinal makes clear that “[priests] are to baptize new disciples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (‘Common Worship Ordination Services’). However, Steve Addison writes that “church planters accept their authority to baptize new believers” so a clear tension exists between what church planters believe they should do and what ecclesiastical laws say they can do (97). The Great Commission suggests that they have authority to baptize; the Canons of the Church of England say they cannot. If the Church of England wants to support lay led church planters, then the issue of who can baptize is a question that must be clearly answered, and the role of the sacraments will be considered further in theological foundations below.

Baptism is, however, only the start of making disciples. Hagner argues that “the emphasis in the commission [is] more on the arduous task of nurturing into the experience of discipleship [through] ‘teaching them to keep all that I have commanded’ in v20a” (887). Baptism is the first step into the community; further steps are determined by the teaching of Jesus.

“Teach” Once a person is baptized, Jesus’s commission is to help the new believers who have been baptized learn what it means to follow him. Hagner writes that “to be made a disciple in Matthew means above all to follow after righteousness as articulated in the teaching of Jesus” (887). France agrees: “to ‘make disciples’ is not complete unless it leads them to a life of observing Jesus’ commandments” (421). Keener suggests that an interpretive role exists for those who would teach, as “the community still requires specific articulation of the older commandments in light of the kingdom” (720). For Matthew, this teaching was all that preceded the final verses which make up

the Great Commission. The life and ministry of Jesus become the pathway along which new believers are disciplined. Learning to live in line with Jesus' teachings is to become "a people set apart, different from all other people by what they are and are becoming" (Durham 263). For the purposes of this study, the question must be asked: who does this teaching?

Hagner points out that "it is the particular responsibility of the church to hand on that teaching and to see to it that new disciples make it their way of life," but the question is how does the church hand on that teaching, and who does it (888)? The ordinal cited above suggests that teaching is not just a task for the priesthood of all believers, but the role of the priest to teach and, therefore, "walk with them in the way of Christ, nurturing them in the faith" ('Common Worship Ordination Services'). However, if as above, the eleven in the Great Commission are representative of all who follow Jesus, then apparently his commission relates to each member of the church, not just a select few. France says that this commission is for the apostles to "take over his role of teaching, which is the necessary application of his 'authority'" (421). Subsequent developments in the church created the threefold offices of deacon, presbyter, and bishop, and this seems to be a way of ordering this "authority" (Croft 38). Keener argues that "mature disciples must also build the new disciples into stronger discipleship by teaching them Jesus' message," so this role is for the more mature, not just the ordained, to teach new believers (720).

In the Great Commission in Matthew's gospel, Jesus "commissions his disciples and in effect the church of every period of history. They are to go everywhere with the message of good news in the name and authority of Jesus... to go, make disciples of all

nations, baptize, and teach” (Hagner 889). The going, baptizing, and teaching appears to relate to all Christians without delineating between lay and ordained. More work perhaps needs to be done to consider more fully how to empower lay leaders in the Church of England to obey Jesus’ commission to go, baptize, and teach.

Apostolic Priests: A Biblical Perspective

The wider story of scripture as discussed above suggests that God created all humanity to partake in his mission, and Jesus commissioned his followers to go, baptize, and teach, regardless of whether they are ordained or not. God’s people are his priestly people and are commissioned, or sent, to do this priestly work. This sentness is contained within the role and title of apostle.

The Greek noun *αποστολοζ* is defined as “a delegate; specially, an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ (with miraculous powers): apostle, messenger, he that is sent” (Wilson). Acts 1 identifies what the very early church understood to be an apostle: to have been with Jesus throughout his ministry, to have personally witnessed the resurrection, and to have been personally chosen as one of the twelve (vv.21–22; cf Adeyemo 1327). Their ministry was marked by teaching accompanied by signs and wonders and leading the fledgling church (Acts 2.42–43). These twelve were the decision makers who stayed in Jerusalem despite persecution (Acts 8.1), and after James was martyred, “no more would be appointed... for death could not rob him of his apostleship” (Adeyemo 1328). However, by the time of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas were acknowledged as apostles (Acts 14.14). Later, when Paul is writing his letter to the Romans, the understanding of apostleship seems to have developed further to include women (Acts. 16.7) although

Ephesians 4.11 suggests that not everyone in the church is an apostle. To be apostolic in the early church was to be sent by God to initiate new communities and raise up others into leadership of those communities. Being apostolic also includes teaching in a hall where people visited to listen and learn as an effective strategy to reach an entire region by raising up and releasing others.

The Jewish concept of priesthood is developed in the New Testament by Paul, Peter, and John. Paul considered his apostolic calling to having received “the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God” (Rom. 15.16) and as Wright claims “evangelism is a priestly task” (176). Dunn notes that Paul uses the word “minister” to mean “almost certainly... the more specific cultic sense (‘priest’)” (*Romans 9–16*, 859). Paul goes on to explain that his “priestly duty” is to proclaim the gospel “so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15.16b). For Paul, the Levitical priesthood has been transformed from cultic sacrificial activity to missionary work, the sacrifice no longer the blood of sheep or birds but the drawing in of those previously outside God’s kingdom. Paul was neither one of the twelve apostles nor a Levitical priest, but it could be argued that he saw himself as an apostolic priest: capturing a vision of what God might want to do and empowering and releasing others into this vision where they might play their part in the apostolic, priestly mission of God.

Peter famously writes to the church that “you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood” (1 Pet. 2.5). Stefan Paas argues that here Peter is referencing “Old Testament Israel: the desert period and the exile in Babylon. Both moments are characterized by mobility and mission” (174). The priestly people are apostolic, sent by God: “as a holy kingdom of priests, the Church represents

God before humanity and humanity before God” (178). This communal sense of God’s people functioning as priests of God is reflected in John’s Revelation (Rev. 1.6; 5.10; 20.6), building on God’s word to his people at Mt. Sinai: “God’s people have always been a ‘royal priesthood’ with certain people called from within the community to shape and to form its life” (Cocksworth and Brown 7). The New Testament, therefore, develops Old Testament concepts of the priestly role of God’s people whilst recognizing Jesus himself as “high priest in the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 5.10). The whole people of God are a priesthood with a High Priest, and the implications of the priestly role of the church community and of individuals within it come into focus with Paul’s instructions to Titus.

Paul’s Instructions to Titus

In Paul’s letter to Titus, he explains that “the reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town” (Tit. 1.5). The term “elder” is a translation of the word “*presbyterous*” (Ackerman 400), otherwise translated as “priest” (Croft 101). Paul tasks Titus with a “two-part mission in Crete: (1) continuing evangelism and (2) finding local people to guide new converts” (398). These new churches needed a “*presbyterous*,” an elder “on the model of a good steward in the household of God” (Collins 319). A priest has a role of stewardship, but Paul’s “twelve qualifications... emphasize personal integrity more than personality” (Ackermann 400). Their character seems more important than their role, in that their “function is only suggested in the letter” (A. B. Spencer 13). In fact, Paul says “just a word about the function of the ‘elder’... He is to be an ‘overseer’ (*ton epispokon*)” (Collins 322). This word “*episcopos* [is] most usually translated bishop” (Croft 38). Titus is to appoint people of good character, to function as priests stewarding the faith

communities, and as bishops overseeing these new faith communities to encourage continued worship, discipleship, and evangelism.

These biblical foundations show that scripture encourages all of God's people to play a priestly role, having been sent by God into the world in response to being saved, baptized, and commissioned. Some individuals are then identified as a person of good character and take on the role of an elder/overseer (priest/bishop), responsible for continuing the mission and ministry of the church. This discussion is continued in the next section, looking at key theological themes which relate to apostolic priests identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.

Theological Foundations

The theological concept of *missio Dei* further illuminates what being an apostolic priest means by identifying and training lay leaders for church planting within the Church of England. *Missio Dei* has influenced conversations around ecclesiology; as David Bosch argues "it is not the church which 'undertakes' mission; it is the *missio Dei* which constitutes the church" (519). Stuart Murray claims that "if church planting is set within the context of *missio Dei*, our overriding concern will be to listen to what God is saying to us about the kind of church needed to participate in his mission" (121). Alan Hirsch summarized this thinking by arguing that our Christology should determine our missiology which would then determine our ecclesiology (143). I wrote that the *missio Dei* "is God on mission" (Robinson 45); a mission which, when fruitful, forms a church which then continues the mission. Tim Dearborn perhaps described the *missio Dei* most succinctly by arguing "it is not the church of God that has a mission in the world, but the

God of mission who has a church in the world” (2). The *missio Dei* describes the church as a priestly people with an apostolic focus.

Chartres used the term “apostolic priest” when speaking to ordained church planters, and this term does not appear to be widely used in theological study. Those ordained in the Armenian Apostolic Church are generally called “apostolic priests,” but this relates more to the name of their denomination than the role of being apostolic (Hamed-Troyansky 258). St. Germanus, the “Gallo-Roman provincial official and later bishop of Auxerre (418–448)” is described as an “apostolic priest,” but with no explanation of what this means (qtd. in Feldt 151). This is true for other references primarily from Catholic sources: the term is used in the 1746 “Liturgical Prayers in Honor of Saint Vincent de Paul” (Rybolt and John 32); in 1951 in “The intellectual apostolate of the priest” (Fenn 117); in Laurence Forristal’s 1954 “A Challenge to Ireland” (Forristal 86–88); and in the 1971 paper “Apostolic Ministry And Apostolic Prayer” (Quinn 486), although this reference is purely to Jesus, not those ordained priests. None of these writings have any clear definition of “apostolic priest.” Perhaps the term “apostolic priest” can be best defined by considering each term separately and then drawing them together for what being an apostolic priest might mean. As clergy in the Church of England are ordained priests, this section begins with the concept of priesthood before attending to the role of the apostolic.

Priesthood: Theological Perspectives

Particularly since the time of the Reformation, the Church has considered what being a priesthood of all believers means, a phrase which “became a pillar for the Protestant church and continues to possess powerful resources for the church” (Anizor

and Voss 12). Murray points out “church planting frequently raises questions about the meaning and legitimacy of ordination, and the division of church members into *clergy* and *laity*” (219). Stephen Croft desires “a recovery of the theology of the whole Church as the people of God and of the ministry of the laity alongside that of the clergy. Baptism and not ordination is seen as the foundation for the ministry of the whole people of God” (11). This view has also been underlined in the Roman Catholic church, where “the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world,” which is effected through baptism (Quinn). This concept of baptism being a form of ordination for all believers into a priestly people is important to keep in mind when considering lay planting. Voss claims that “the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers... can be defined as the believer’s sharing in the Son’s royal priesthood through faith and baptism, and thus in the *missio Dei* through ‘Worship,’ ‘Work,’ and ‘Witness’” (16). For Voss, baptism functions as ordination into this priestly people and “is the public commissioning to a share in the *missio Dei*” (137). All followers of Jesus have a priestly role to worship, work, and witness in partnership with the Holy Spirit — lay as well as ordained.

Within the Church of England, an added complexity exists due to the ordination of “priests.” Voss notes that in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, this term “refer[s] to those members of the royal priesthood who have been commissioned to the office of *episkopos* or *presbyteros*” (19), but that in the Protestant Church this terminology creates “difficulties” (19). Stephen Cottrell claims “the historic threefold pattern of ministry — bishop, priest and deacon — [is] inherited from its beginnings in

the New Testament and in the first centuries of its life” (10–11). He notes that the term priest is “only used to describe Jesus” in the New Testament (20), but that an ordained priest in the Church of England is “someone who by their oversight and leadership in the Church serves the priesthood of the whole people of God” (20). No discussion exists of church planting in Cottrell’s work, focusing primarily on the parish (21), but for Cottrell, an ordained priest serves the church through offering oversight and leadership, empowering the church in their commission.

This ministry of oversight is crucial and suggests that empowering others in ministry and mission is perhaps the essence of developing lay church planters as they play their part in the priesthood of all believers. As Voss points out, “the role of church officers within the royal priesthood... takes place within the larger category of the royal priesthood’s ministry” (139). Perhaps the best description of the role of “priests” within the Church remains Newbigin’s: “the priestly people needs a ministering priesthood to sustain and nourish it” (246), to which might be added “and establish new communities of priestly people.”

Of course, a key role reserved for Anglican priests is leading the sacraments. In the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, Article 19 states that “The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same” (‘Articles of Religion’). This lies at the heart of the ecclesiological challenges and discussions around the priesthood of all believers in the Church of England. The questions that should be asked are “Could a lay person baptize someone even if it is not an emergency (‘Emergency Baptism’)? Can the church be the

church without a priest celebrating the Lord's supper?" Moynagh recognizes that this "can be a thorny question" (374) and offers five different solutions: (1) An "outside" minister can symbolize the wider church...; (2) Communion might be celebrated jointly with the "parent" church; (3) "Agape suppers"; (4) "Extended Communion"; and (5) local priests (375). He also notes that the Methodist Church allows for lay people in certain circumstances to be authorized to lead communion. Studies during and after the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrate that within the Church of England a wide variety of views exist on this ('Coronavirus, Church and You'). Lay presidency seems acceptable to many laity, as only "35% agreed that the priest needs to be physically present for the bread and wine to be consecrated" (Eccles 10). However, the study into attitudes of people using their own bread and wine for communion at home during an online communion service shows "the majority of Anglo-Catholic clergy do not agree that this practice is acceptable (82%). The majority of Evangelical laity do agree that the practice is acceptable (62%)" (Francis and Village 98). Lay people leading communion would be much harder to accept for someone from an Anglo-Catholic perspective.

This discussion is not limited to the Church of England. The Roman Catholic Church has, since Vatican II, "continued to affirm... that "the Eucharist makes the Church" and that the Eucharist imparts to the Church an innate missionary impulse" (Browne 31). Cardinal Avery Dulles notes that the moment the word "priest" or "clergy" is used, it can create an unhelpful separation "a member of the clerical caste, set off against the laity by ordination" (152). If clergy are to release and share ministry with the laity, it seems hugely unhelpful to be "set off against" one another. He goes further, arguing that "the New Testament, at least, does not impose the three-tier hierarchical

system (bishop, presbyter, deacon) today familiar to us. Theologians are coming to admit, in increasing numbers, that these hierarchical distinctions are of human institution, alterable by the will of men” (155). For Christians “where the freedom of the Church is seriously infringed... the laity do what they can to take the place of priests” (POPE PAUL VI 10). Whilst both the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches continue to wrestle with these issues, the current reality is that within the Church of England only someone ordained as priest or bishop can baptize or preside at communion, and so any plans for lay planting must be able to fit within this.

Priests within the Church of England, then, are church officers whose primary call is “to preach and to pray” (Croft 98), receiving authority from their bishop to nourish and develop the worship, work and witness of the priestly people of God (Cottrell 21). Croft goes on to argue that all priests should also consider how the task of oversight, traditionally located in the bishop, might inform their own ministry:

[*episcopus* is] the ministry of oversight and leadership as it relates to and is part of the ministry of every ordained person. The missionary needs of the Church in the present generation call for the restoring of this third dimension to the whole of the ordained, especially those charged with the task of the care and oversight of one or more local churches as vicars, rectors or as priest in charge (142).

An ordained priest functions in an oversight role, preaching, praying, presiding at the sacraments, and developing the laity to fulfil the mission of God. Questions remain about whether lay people could or even should be able to lead the sacraments; the writers noted above seem to be arguing for a more functional than ontological understanding of the priestly role, and if the role of the priest is to empower the people in their priestly

work, then perhaps room exists for some movement for those sensing a call into non-ordained leadership. For now, the way forward for lay planting appears to be for Anglican priests to function in an oversight role — and that oversight is to be apostolic in nature.

Apostolic: Theological Perspectives

The Nicene Creed reminds us that Christians are part of “one holy catholic and apostolic Church,” and both the Protestant and Catholic church offer insight into what it means for the church to be not only priestly but apostolic. In 1965, Pope Paul VI promulgated *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, “The Apostolate of the Laity,” written “to intensify the apostolic activity of the people of God” (1). The paper declared that “the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ” who “exercise the apostolate in fact by their activity directed to the evangelization and sanctification of men and to the penetrating and perfecting of the temporal order through the spirit of the Gospel” (2). The apostolic work for lay people in the world is to “announce Christ, explain and spread His teaching in accordance with one’s status and ability, and faithfully profess it” (9–10). Lay people are out in the world in their work and witness, and this is their apostolic role, to see the kingdom of God come where they find themselves in most of their time, not just at church. To be an apostolic priest, to empower this apostolic witness, is the work of the church leader.

Alan Hirsch sees apostolic leadership as functional, arguing that the apostolic leader is called to “the extension of Christianity. As such, he or she calls the church to its essential calling and helps guide it into its destiny as a missionary people with a

transformative message for the world” (152). He identifies the primary functions of apostolic ministry as threefold:

- (1) To embed mDNA (“missional DNA” 76) through pioneering new ground for the gospel and church;
- (2) To guard mDNA through the application and integration of apostolic theology;
- (3) To create the environment in which the other ministries emerge (154–5).

In Hirsch’s view, both the leaders of the church, which is planting and the lay church planter, must demonstrate this apostolic leadership. If being priestly is to offer oversight to wider ministry, then to be an apostolic priest means to offer oversight which creates the context for others to lead new mission and ministries. A symbiotic relationship exists between apostolic priests, the churches under their leadership, and lay planters who must also function in an apostolic way.

Tod Bolsinger wrote *Canoeing the Mountains* as “a guidebook for learning to lead in a world we weren’t prepared for” (13) — a book for apostolic leaders. He notes that “the church’s very nature is apostolic... the church is the embodiment of the work of the original twelve disciples who became the first apostles, ‘sent’ to the world, and equipping and being equipped for the sending” (38). He then applies this to leadership, which “in a post-Christendom world... is multi-dimensional: apostolic, relational and adaptive” (37). He argues that apostolic leadership “is a skill that can be taught” (22), and that just-in-time training using reflective practice is more useful in developing the skills of “adaptive leadership” (41, 98). Hirsch agrees: “in the historical expressions of Apostolic Genius, leadership and theological development are built-in tasks of grassroots movements

themselves” (216). If apostolic leadership can be taught, and is a task of multiplying movements, this raises questions such as how to train priests to be apostolic, and how apostolic priests might develop lay planters. “Just-in-case” training has its place, but Mark Sayers argues, reflecting on the way Jesus trained his disciples, “this three-year preparation consisted of Jesus modeling the kingdom way of life, of teaching them the good news of God, of sending them out to learn on the job” (166). Apostolic priests need to offer a similar experience to develop lay church planters where they observe, receive teaching, have a go, and reflect together on what happened.

Apostolic leadership is needed to support and release lay planting, but it must also be noted that these lay planters, serving within the Church of England, are not just planting *into* a culture, but *from* an institution. Adaptive leadership is needed here too. John Kotter writes to help organizations through change, noting that in our culture “the speed of change continues to increase” (vii), highlighting that leadership is “the engine that drives change” (xii). Leadership “transforms old” systems (vii), which means that to release lay planting needs not only the support of apostolic priests, but of apostolic bishops, too: those who are willing to lead change within the institution who seek to “lead change competently” (ix). Leading in a changing context is, then, apostolic, and if lay planting within the Church of England is to flourish, it needs apostolic priests and bishops to oversee, empower, and release these missionaries all across the country, like movements seen in the past.

Historical Perspectives

Church history provides a huge variety of possible case studies for this paper; two are chosen here. Considering all of church history in this study would be impossible, so

clear reasoning was considered when choosing the two examples below. Both have fascinated the author for years in terms of their model of ministry and the potential insights they offer to missional strategies and structures in the twenty-first century; they each contain the concept of apostolic priests and lay ministry. The first case study is the development of minsters in Anglo-Saxon Britain, which grew out of mission to a pre-Christian society and Celtic mission and expressions of the Christian faith offer alluring prospects to mission in a post-Christian society. This movement was led by missionary monks and clerics which empowered and released lay ministry. The second case study looks at John Wesley and the Methodist revival in the eighteenth century. Lay leadership was a significant part of this movement and offers clear examples of both the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and the challenges, of lay planting within the Church of England.

Anglo-Saxon Minsters

The early monastic period in England offers some tantalizing but hazy suggestions as to how this missional church functioned in pre-Christian Britain. Few contemporary records survive to the point that Stöber concludes “little is known for sure about the internal workings of the early monastic communities in the British Isles” (3). However, the record of Bede does offer some insight to both apostolic and lay ministry. Bede described how “the priests and clerks went into the village on no other account than to preach, baptize, visit the sick, and, in few words, to take care of souls” (202). These clerks may well have been lay for there were “clerks not received into holy orders” (50). Was the preaching and baptizing performed only by the priests whilst the clerks assisted, or were lay clerks involved in the preaching and baptizing? Perhaps Bede assumed that

this would be obvious, but how this occurred remains uncertain for modern readers. Bede also, however, “emphasized that the term pastor could be applied not only to bishops, priests, deacons and monasteries, but to any of the faithful who exercised a right custody in his home, however humble” (N. Spencer 80). A lay leader, at the very least, could perform pastoral ministry in their own household, although once again which aspects of ministry they could exercise is ambiguous; for example, could a lay head of the household lead communion? The record is tantalizing but unclear.

Despite this, lay people — including women — could be leaders of a minster, or what Foot describes as “mission units” (*Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600–900* 77): “Wynflaed, the grandmother of King Edgar [was] an apparent lay abbess of the community” (Halpin 23), and “Hilda of Whitby had both priests and bishops under her authority” (Finney 59). Finney claims that in these monastic communities, “the great majority would have been lay” (66). In his view, “‘minsters’ were semi-monastic mother churches with a strong evangelistic emphasis on planting churches and Christian communities in the surrounding areas... and from a minster a wide area could be ministered to by [a bishop's] clergy and lay team” (113–4). How responsibilities were shared between lay and ordained, though, remains vague. Despite this, he sees a clear tie between then and now, “both the Irish monks and the typical modern church-planting team are mainly lay activities,” but he makes little effort to compare and contrast the two (68). Whilst it may be true that lay people had a significant role then and also do now, it is unclear how lay ministry was defined in Anglo Saxon times: did lay leaders take vows within the monastic orders? What expectations were put on them; what were they allowed to do, and what were their limitations? There are, perhaps, too few contemporary

records from the time to allow such a clear connection and conclusion between lay ministry then and now.

Farmer highlights the complexities of the language barriers and possible presumptions made by Bede, because lay people could also be called “monks” (The Age of Bede 15). However, Foot notes that

a number of those living in religious communities were in clerical orders, but there is no evidence that pastoral work was restricted to priests and deacons.

Although ordained priests were essential for administering the mass and other sacraments, the writings of Bede indicate that he at least recognized the equal role of instituted teachers and preachers, members of minster communities, in pastoral ministry (‘Parochial Ministry in Early Anglo-Saxon England’ 48).

Bede “recommended that [bishops] should ‘appoint several assistants... by ordaining priests and instituting teachers, who may devote themselves to preaching the word of God in the various villages’” (49), which leads her to conclude that “it seems inherently unlikely that there was no recognized role outside the minsters for religious who were not ordained” (50). This conclusion seems to counter her earlier point that pastoral work was limited to clergy, and here Foot disagrees with Finney’s claim that planting is primarily a lay activity, but why she comes to this conclusion is not clear. By distinguishing between priests who were ordained and the instituting of teachers, the record suggests that the teachers themselves were lay. Within Bede’s record, lay people were teaching, ministering, and performing missional and pastoral activities.

This ministry had apostolic oversight, although more focused around the missionary bishop than apostolic priest. Finney argues that “the Celtic bishop was the

prime evangelist” (55), and as such the “minsters... were essentially missionary churches” (Spencer 94); “the earliest cathedrals were all established for a specifically missionary purpose” (Foot, ‘Parochial Ministry’ 44). These bases for ministry which offered apostolic oversight sent out groups on mission, including lay people as part of “the *peregrinati*... [which] often travelled in groups. Where they stopped they evangelized... if their mission to the area bore fruit they would settle and a new monastery would be born” (Finney 57). Apostolic priesthood was affected by clergy within these teams or by bishops who oversaw the mission and ministry; Foot describes how this *peregrinati*, a “group of priests or other religious, living in communities, would travel out from their houses into the surrounding *parochiae* to administer the sacraments and preach to the laity” (43).

This period offers the earliest record of church planting in “the Church of the English” (‘Bede’s Ecclesiastical History’ 51), which gives some insight into apostolic and lay ministry. Lay people could be leaders of a minster; they could be commissioned to teach in local villages; they could be part of mission teams; perhaps they may even have been involved in planting. However, due to the poor historical records and distance of time, it has to be acknowledged that whilst this period offers tantalizing suggestions, this period cannot offer as much as was hoped as a model for how the Church of England can support and develop lay church planters.

The Methodist Movement and Religious Societies

Much more recently another movement of mission and ministry involving apostolic priesthood and lay leadership was the Methodist revival in the eighteenth century. Records are much better, and much consideration was given as to how lay

people could be released to plant and preach. However, the creation of Methodism as its own denomination shows that this was not an easy tension, but it did have a huge impact. Snyder posits that “the Wesleyan Revival witnessed perhaps the most thorough-going transformation of a society by the gospel in history” (172). John Wesley created a means by which he could offer apostolic oversight in his role as a priest, and release lay leaders to plant new congregations as a part of the Church of England.

John Wesley’s father Samuel became “a corresponding member” of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) soon after it was founded in 1698 and “attempted to set up a small religious society in Epworth.” In time, John also became a corresponding member of SPCK (Heitzenrater 21, 27). SPCK and other societies were a continuation of the Pietist movement which had started in the Lutheran Church in Germany. Heitzenrater describes how the Pietist founder Philipp Jacob Spener “outlined six ‘desires of piety’ for the church”: (1) the study of scripture; (2) active involvement and concern of laity; (3) evangelical zeal; (4) practical focus on Christian living; (5) preaching for salvation; and (6) train ministers in moral and spiritual qualities (19–20). “Spener’s plan for renewal was effected through small groups known a *collegia pietatis* — ‘colleges of piety’ ... small groups of lay persons, gathered together in homes for bible study and prayer” (20), to which “the English counterparts to the *collegia* were the religious societies” (21).

Four ways exist in which these early societies bear strong similarities to current lay-led planting of new worshiping communities. The societies were: (1) Part of the Church of England; (2) Lay-led, but accountable to clergy; (3) Functioned outside of church buildings; and (4) Aided church growth.

Part of the Church of England. Religious societies in England “were begun in London, about the year 1678 by a few serious young Men of the Communion of the Church of England, who... agreed to meet together frequently for Religious Conference, and by Prayer and Psalmody to edifie [*sic*] one another...” (Chamberlayne, qtd. in Wickham Legg 291). Heitzenrater notes that “within twenty years, this form of religious organization had established itself within the structure of the Church of England as a viable expression of Christian piety and social concern” (21). Henderson writes that “the tacit message conveyed by [religious societies] was, ‘We are loyal Anglicans and not in competition or opposition to the Church of England.’” (85). Methodist societies

existed within the structure of the Church of England parish system and thus were under the supervision of the parish priest. They were, however, independent of the parish for all matters except the sacraments for which the individual society member was still dependent upon the Anglican Church. In addition there were other restrictions such as an injunction against meeting on Sunday so as to not compete with the parish worship services” (Lyddon 12).

To remain within the Church of England was not always easy, however. Watson argues that “Wesley spent considerable time and effort in trying to keep the Methodist societies within the Church of England” (22). Using the concept also inherited from the Pietist movement in Germany, “the principle he followed was that of *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* (little churches in the big church)” (22). This allowed Wesley’s societies and classes to have their own identity as Methodist groups, who remained still a part of the Church of England. Striking similarities exist between this and current lay led pioneering and planting initiatives that seek to innovate in order to reach those who would not

normally come to a church building and yet to remain connected to, and accountable to, the established church.

Lay Led, but Accountable to Clergy. This connection and accountability was also seen in religious societies: “there was a certain number of Young Men, who were desirous to make such a Society... They applied to a Minister in London to take upon him the Inspection and Care of them” (Kidder; qtd. in Wickham Legg 292). This action, however, does not mean they were *led* by clergy. “The lay assistants, then, were the spiritual executives of the society” (88). Spiritual leadership in a religious society was offered by lay assistants, but “these societies and their reforming zeal were generally secured to the Established Church by means of rules that stipulated that each local group be under the guidance of ‘a pious and learned divine of the Church’” (Heitzenrater 21).

John Wesley took this structure of societies to aid his growing Methodist movement. People were coming to faith in response to his and others’ preaching, and those converts were invited to join a local society, sub-divided into small groups called classes. In 1747, he explained that “a society is no other than ‘*a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to perceive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation*’” (J and C Wesley 4). These larger lay-led groups were then subdivided “into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in every class; one of whom is styled *the leader*” (4). This leader was to offer pastoral prayer and challenge to the others and was also to “meet the minister and the stewards of the society once a week” (4). This structure

for meeting with the minister and stewards helped with both the connection and accountability to the appointed clergy.

The lay leaders of these *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* “were responsible for convening the classes, for directing the weekly meetings, and for guiding the members in their walk with Christ” (Watson 28). Initially there did not seem to be a clear path of selection or training for these lay leaders; rather, as Davies points out, Wesley himself “appointed the stewards, the band-leaders, and the class-leaders, and he replaced them by others if he judged it right to do so” (15). Lay preachers developed alongside these other local leaders, and in time there was an observable “‘ladder’ of leadership: sick-visitor to steward to class-leader to band-leader to local preacher to traveling preacher to assistant in charge of a circuit. The qualification for every level was faithful commitment and service at a lower level” (Henderson 153). Whilst there may not have been a clear training pathway, Hall argues that “Wesley used at least five methods to train leaders as lay ministers... 1. the annual conference; 2. the rules; 3. a combination of demonstration, delegation, and supervision; 4. through doing, [they] were trained to serve and lead; 5. small instructional groups” (133–34). Lyddon similarly argues that “the class meeting... trained individuals for leadership” (61). Demonstrating trustworthiness in the small things presented opportunities to take on more responsibilities.

Tensions existed about how far lay leadership should go, with some wanting more — in the initial Fetter Lane Society; some Moravians “claimed that there was no Christian priesthood as such, and that they could administer the Sacrament as well as anyone.” Charles Wesley “did all he could to oppose” this, and when the group “declared

themselves no longer members of the Church of England.” Charles sought their expulsion from the society (Heitzenrater 115). These tensions played out later in the USA: in 1784

Wesley proceeded to ordain Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey for the work in America. Wesley was deeply concerned about the provision of the sacraments for the American Methodists. His dilemma was further compounded by his inbred opposition to lay administration of the sacraments. He resolved the problem by ordaining preachers (Lyddon 62).

As Snyder suggests, Wesley’s “theology was a mixture of high-church traditionalism, believer’s church pietism, and evangelistic pragmatism,” and the push to ordain preachers was perhaps his outworking of apostolic priesthood (177).

Beyond Church Buildings. The societies functioned outside of church buildings. “After the accession of James II, ‘instead of meeting at a Friend's House... they adourn'd to some Publick-House or other where they could have a Room to themselves’” (Woodward, qtd. in Legg 293). Societies met in pubs or anywhere they could rent a room — whilst they were a part of the Church of England, they did not use the church building as a center for their activity. Their pursuit of piety caused them to meet regularly but separately to worship in the Parish Church.

Aided Church Growth. The societies aided church growth. The societies “‘have been so instrumental in promoting the daily Service among Churches... as well as other excellent Designs conformable to the Practice of the Primitive Days’” (Nelson, qtd. in Legg 297). The societies met midweek away from the church buildings, but their pursuit of piety both in life and social outreach meant that others not only joined the societies but came to Sunday worship along with them.

The Methodist movement offers fascinating insight into the means by which John Wesley functioned as an apostolic priest to identify and train lay leaders for planting new worshiping communities that remained part of the Church of England. However, our culture is now post-Christian, so what effective mission and outreach looks like in the current cultural context needs to be determined.

Understanding our Current Cultural Context

This section considers what training lay leaders might need to understand the current culture of the postmodern, post-Christian neo-liberal Western society. For them to be able to contextualize the gospel in the twenty-first century, apostolic priests must appreciate and be able to train potential lay planters in effective ways to go, baptize, and teach those who do not know about Jesus. For the Church of England to function as a priestly people with an apostolic focus, to be swept up into the *missio Dei*, it must effectively incarnate the gospel into our current cultural context. Hannah Steele, researching the theology of the emerging church movement, notes that there are different “approaches being offered about how the church could and should relate to postmodern culture,” whilst James K.A. Smith comments that mission in the postmodern, multi-cultural society in the West means mission is into a context where “your ‘secular’ neighbors aren’t looking for ‘answers.’” These are some of “the unique challenges we face in a twenty-first century society where we will encounter various religious worldviews” (Moon and Simon 4).

Mark Sayers, a church planter and missional thinker in Australia, observes the changes he has seen as a church planter in Australia over the last thirty years and argues that Western culture is not just postmodern, but post-Christian: “post-Christianity is not

pre-Christianity; rather post-Christianity attempts to move beyond Christianity, whilst simultaneously feasting upon its fruit” (15–16). Smith agrees through his analysis of “philosopher Charles Taylor, whose book *A Secular Age* is just the resource you didn’t know you needed” in understanding the current cultural context. Smith seeks to answer the question why so many people in our post-Christian culture are not “bothered by questions of the divine.” These people “inhabit... an ‘immanent frame’” as “devotees of ‘exclusive humanism’ — a way of being-in-the-world that offers significance without transcendence.” He argues that, according to Taylor, “ours is a ‘secular’ age not because of any index of religious participation (or lack thereof), but because of... contested meaning” (12). Smith wonders that apostolic priests and lay planters within the Church of England must, “what does it look like to bear witness in a secular age?” Living between “doubt *and* longing, faith *and* questioning” is what defines Western unbelievers’ “secular” reality (14). These are the questions and challenges the post-Christian secular context raises for effective mission.

Smith explains Taylor’s three versions of secularization, suggesting that the West is the third type, which he titles “secular₃.” This third type of secularization creates a context where “religious belief or belief in God is understood to be one option among others, and thus contestable (and contested)” (21–22). Therefore, “conversion is a response to secularity, not an escape from it” (23). Taylor suggests that some who live within this secular₃ culture have a “closed take” on life, dismissing anything beyond the immanent, but Taylor sees hints of transcendence within our culture in both time (129) and death (131). Smith then suggests that “Christianity (the ‘open’ take) can provide a better way to account for” secular people’s feeling of unease and restlessness (129). He

does not explain why Christianity might be better than any other explanation of the unease and restlessness of the secular³ culture, but it will be crucial for those being trained as apostolic priests or lay planters to see this as an effective missional strategy. Perhaps this view explains the effectiveness of courses, such as *Alpha*, in allowing people to voice their unease and consider the Christian faith as a way to replace the secular³ restlessness. Additional evidence for interest in the transcendent might also be observed in continued popularity of horror movies, ghosts, tarot card reading, psychics, and magic within secularization³. Smith sees the glimmer of the transcendent in Taylor's arguments as a way to shatter the immanent frame, creating a space of questioning and even hope. Lay planters would do well to ask how creating a safe place to think through questions and how they might offer hope could inform their involvement in the *missio Dei*, creating opportunities for people to encounter the transcendent.

Authors and missiologists Jay Moon and Bud Simon together have “over thirty-five years of combined missionary experience in various cultures, we have engaged different worldviews with the gospel and trained others to do so” (6). They offer “intercultural evangelism” as a way of identifying the transcendent desire within different people. They consider “how to discern various worldviews and how to continue God conversations that are relevant to each of these worldviews” (4). This process resonates with Taylor/Smith's desire to identify Jesus within the immanent frame as the best way to explain the transcendent. Moon and Simon write “*Intercultural evangelism* is ‘the process of putting Christ at the center of someone's worldview in order to initiate them into Christian discipleship through culturally relevant starting points.’” (10). They suggest

three primary worldviews exist of “guilt/justice, shame/honor, and fear/power. Recent research identified an emerging worldview of indifference/belonging with purpose” (11). They argue that people in the post-Christian West are less likely to experience guilt so forgiveness feels foreign (35, 52). They cite John Stott’s observations around “postmoderns’ ... yearning” (Edwards and Stott, qtd in Moon and Simon 100) and suggest that “a helpful starting point for the gospel among those who are indifferent to faith is that Jesus offers community, significance, and transcendence as they are invited to belong in a community of faith with purpose” (100). Apostolic priests who have oversight of lay planters must help them recognize and learn how to share the good news of Jesus in these different worldviews.

The current cultural context for the Church of England is post-Christian, “secular,” where people with different worldviews live together, meaning the gospel is communicated confidently in multiple ways. Not all are looking for the transcendent, but many live with meaninglessness and unease. Apostolic priests and lay planters will do well to appreciate and understand what effective mission and evangelism looks like in this multi-cultural, post-Christian culture: being trained in this will be vital to help people journey into faith in Jesus beyond the immanent frame.

Current Publications

Along with the biblical, theological, and historical perspectives, several key documents and publications exist from recent years in the Church of England which inform the conversation about lay leadership and church planting. *Mission-Shaped Church* was published twenty years ago in 2004. Though not the first publication about church planting in the Church of England, it made the case that church planting as a

“‘supplementary strategy’... is no longer adequate” (xi). This publication brought the concept of “Fresh Expressions” into the mainstream, a phrase “which suggest something new or enlivened is happening, but also suggests connection to history and the developing story of God’s work in the Church” (34). *Mission-Shaped Church* discussed much of the theology and ecclesiology considered above and offered recommendations to encourage its consideration in diocesan strategies, ecumenical work, leadership and training, and resources (145–48). Looking back, these recommendations seem to focus primarily on structural responses rather than missional strategies. Little was written, though much was implied, about how clergy might encourage Fresh Expressions within their contexts; other than in the stories told of those who had encouraged new forms of church, there is no attempt to explain what an “apostolic priest” might be or how they might function.

Lay planters are acknowledged but not considered in depth (e.g. 72), although consideration is given to how a Fresh Expression and its leader might be truly considered “Anglican” (*Mission-Shaped Church* 99–102). The report recognizes that change was needed for this; one of the recommendations within the leadership and training section encourages the development of “procedures that provisionally acknowledge the work and gifting of existing and future lay leaders in church plants and other expressions of church” (147). The report also acknowledged and encouraged the use of just-in-time training rather than just-in-case: “a pattern should develop that provides training as part of a process of discernment-for-authorization, rather than training subsequent to discernment, or the removal of existing leaders for training elsewhere” (147). The writers identified, however, the sacramental challenges that planting brings to lay planters within

the Church of England: “the Eucharist lies at the heart of Christian life. It is the act of worship (including the ministry of the Word) in which the central core of the biblical gospel is retold and re-enacted. New expressions of church... if they are to endure, must celebrate the Eucharist” (101).

In 2013, the Church Growth Research Project published various findings, including a paper about church planting and another about Fresh Expressions. In the report about church planting, section 7.7 discusses “Lay and Local Leadership,” noting the importance of church leaders to have “the ability... to identify and support lay leaders” (Dadswell and Ross 51), and the report concludes that “more could be done to foster lay and local leadership” (52). The Fresh Expressions paper noted the significant contribution of lay people leading these new forms of church, that “the average is just over half” (Lings 60). In the paper, Lings also coined the term “lay-lay leaders”: “people without formal licensing and quite possibly without designated training to lead” (60), who made up “the single largest group” leading Fresh Expressions (61). The paper noted that supporters of Fresh Expressions were arguing that “the mission task facing the Church of England will require many lay leaders and this is evidence that it is already occurring” (61). These two reports show the impact that *Mission-Shaped Church* was having on the Church of England and how some lay planters were establishing new missional churches, although both papers note the lack of clarity around training these planters, and little appears to be said about the qualities of the clergy under whom these leaders are developed and released.

More recently, in 2017, the report *Setting God’s People Free* (Archbishop’s Council) was presented to General Synod. Its call was to “to empower, liberate and

disciple the 98% of the Church of England who are not ordained”, acknowledging that this would demand “a shift in culture” (1). Using language and theology similar to the *Apostolate of the Laity*, Newbiggin and others cited above, it notes that “as a ‘royal priesthood’ we are summoned — clergy and laity alike — through baptism to a common vocation of divine blessing that originates in Jesus Christ” (1). This shared calling is described as “baptismal mutuality” (2) and that “in order to strengthen lay leadership we must focus on the formation of disciples” (8). Clergy are encouraged to consider how this mutuality works itself out “in both its ‘gathered’ and ‘sent’ manifestations” (15), although “some [clergy] say they haven’t been properly trained to release lay talent either in ‘gathered’ and ‘sent’ contexts and lack the gifts required to identify and support leaders” (17). This lack of training underlines the vital importance of understanding apostolic priesthood so that clergy can be encouraged in this apostolic, releasing role. The report itself recommends “far-reaching changes in the way clergy are selected, trained and supported in order that the skills to call and develop lay leaders are formed from the beginning” (22), although the paper itself only considered what might be helpful for the lay leader’s training to help them “become more confident, effective and fruitful in their area of calling and vocation”:

- support for discovering lay vocation and gifting;
- opportunities and the encouragement to step into these areas;
- fit-for-purpose, easy to access, contextual training;
- connections to others to learn from and share with;
- a framework for local accountability and learning;
- and appropriate affirmation (18).

Whilst the paper highlighted the significant role that lay people play in the life and mission of the church as it is gathered and sent and whilst it identified how to help train lay leaders, the paper did not consider how best to train clergy to enable this baptismal mutuality.

In 2018, the House of Bishops published *Church Planting and the Mission of the Church* (House of Bishops). This publication states “church planting is one among a variety of ways by which the Church of England seeks to share in the apostolic mission by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and drawing people into the adventure of discipleship” (1). The paper argues that “sending, planting or leading a new church plant or other fresh expression of church, or oversight of such an initiative, should be considered a normal form of priestly ministry” (3). The bishops identify the role of the apostolic in this mission, but the report does not state that clergy must lead these plants; this omission left the door open to allow, or even affirm, lay-led church planting: “imaginative thinking about new possibilities for church planting should continue” (2). Little is said about how this might happen, but the House of Bishops committing themselves to supporting church planting in this way was a seminal moment.

In 2019, Martin Seeley wrote a paper for Ministry Council as “a vision for ministry in the Church of England which has emerged from a conversation between the Ministry Council, the House and College of Bishops and the Archbishops’ Council” (1). Whilst this paper was not primarily about church planting, Seeley noted that “in the Church of England, some are called to particular ministries, ordained and lay, to represent and enable the ministry of the whole church” (1). Clearly this was written in the spirit of *Setting God’s People Free* rather than seeking to champion lay led planting, but he wrote

that “signs of renewal are seen where ministry enables the Church to be outward facing and where it is relational, missional, collaborative, adaptive and diverse” (1). This ministry is the kind of ministry that an apostolic priest can help to foster, and the five values he describes are taken on in the 2020 paper, *A Vision for Lay Ministries*. Here,

‘lay ministries’ is used to describe those roles which are publicly recognised [*sic*] as representative and enabling roles within the Church of England, though not necessarily within the place and space of the gathered church. Lay ministers are those who have been called to these particular ministries and commissioned for specific responsibilities (Gooder et al. 2).

They argue that “enabling all the saints in mission and evangelism will require more emphasis on supporting people to try new things, bringing with it an element of risk” (4), and demands “mutuality, not hierarchy” in the way clergy and lay leaders relate to one another (7). They note that “lay ministries within the Church of England might broadly be divided into three categories: Authorised, Locally Recognised [*sic*] and Licensed” (2).

According to the Church of England website, “these categories naturally overlap, and not every form of ministry will fit naturally into just one...They are intentionally broad and may not always be the way your diocese does things” (‘Exploring Lay Ministry’). On the Diocese of Manchester website, seven different web pages exist for lay ministry: “Development and Training; Vocations; Foundations for Ministry; Authorised [*sic*] Lay Ministry; Eucharistic Assistants; General Lay Courses; Readers” (*Vocations - Diocese of Manchester*). The institution clearly wants to encourage lay involvement and even lay leadership. On the “General Lay Courses” page, Manchester

Diocese explains “our vision to see all lay people empowered, enable and equipped; not just those seeking authorisation [*sic*] or licensing” (*General Lay Courses - Diocese of Manchester*). Notably, however, no category exists for a lay planter.

The importance of clergy support for lay planting comes through strongly in the most recently published document from 2022, *Listening to the Voice of the Lay Planters* (McGinley). This paper draws conclusions from “interviews with 20 lay people, who had planted a new church community within the Church of England” (4), confirming that “there are already many lay people planting and leading churches” (4), creating “ten insights, that we drew from listening to the Lay Planters” (5). The first two insights demonstrate the key relationship between an apostolic priest and lay planter: “1. The importance of enabling people to discern and validate the call to plant a church was demonstrated in every story; 2. The roles of the champion/mentor/coach were critical in walking alongside the Lay Planter and providing support, guidance and accountability” (5). This champion was, more often than not, the clergy raising up, encouraging and releasing the lay planter into mission.

Two of the recommendations of the report also shows the importance of clergy learning to function as apostolic priests in this way: “8. Develop the oversight ministry of ordained leaders; 10. Develop the role of the parish churches as planting churches” (9). McGinley concludes that “the partnership between priest and Lay Planter, and parish church and new church community, is central and vital to the church’s ‘mixed ecology’ vision” (10), which suggests that clergy need to be trained more effectively in how to go about nurturing this partnership. Clergy seem to hold the key to unlocking lay ministry and mission, including planting: “ministry opportunities from ordained leaders... was one

of the single most influential factors in shaping the calling of the Lay Planter” (19). The report also notes the challenges that lay-led church planting poses to the use of the sacraments; whilst an apostolic priest can encourage, develop, train, and release lay planters, a tension still remains in the ecclesiology of lay-led church plants within the Church of England: “how the sacraments can be integrated within a church led by a lay person was raised a number of times and is a complex one” (25).

In the last twenty years, considerable development has taken place in the Church of England, bringing church planting and lay leadership into what is now called the mixed ecology. Published documents show that lay leadership is not only desired but necessary, although not all lay leadership is authorized or officially recognized. Lay leaders appreciate just-in-time training to help them in their planting, but ultimately, within our ecclesiastical structure, clergy who function in an apostolic role are vital to the identifying and training of lay leaders for church planting.

Research Design Literature

The research for this project was intended to discover how clergy might help raise up and release lay leaders to plant churches. Various tools would be needed to discover the current processes, obstacles, and best practices to achieving this. Tim Sensing argues that qualitative data “produces culturally specific and contextually rich data critical for the design, evaluation, and ongoing health of institutions like churches” (58) which seemed most appropriate for this study. Regarding the sample size for qualitative data, he suggests that “quality is more important than quantity” (85). He explains “open-ended and informal questions are used in qualitative interviews and questionnaires” so these were intentionally used in this research project rather closed or quantitative questions

(86). Seeking practical answers to a problem is described by Wayne Booth as “applied research” (59) and that effective questions are developed by “determining *exactly* what you want to know” (82). Each question on the questionnaire and in the semi-structured interviews were written considering the three research questions using this framework and goal and fitted within one of Sensing’s fourteen categories (86–88).

The work of Braun and Clarke helped to determine how the data analysis would occur once the questionnaires had been submitted and the semi-structured interviews completed. Their six phases of reflexive thematic analysis informed how the data from the questionnaires could be developed into broad themes (35–36), which would then inform how the data from the semi-structured interviews and Myriad training document could be effectively analyzed. They identify the complex, nuanced, contextual data as “thick,” offering an “analytic narrative” (140). This thick, rich data led to the recognition that what may seem obvious now has research data to back it up: apostolic priests are vital for lay-led church planters to be identified and trained in the Church of England.

Summary of Literature

The literature review demonstrates the complexities and challenges faced by apostolic priests seeking to identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England. Scripture clearly indicates that God’s commission to Abraham sets him up as an apostolic prototype and that through Moses God called out a priestly people whose story forms the Old Testament. This apostolic priestly ministry continues through Jesus, who then commissions his disciples to go, teach, and baptize and this instruction seems to relate to all who follow him. The New Testament writers develop this apostolic theme of being sent for the church, who are the priesthood of all believers. Paul instructs

Titus to identify people who can oversee the new churches in the role of an elder, terms which later become separated into two different categories of ministry: “priest” and “bishop.”

Little precedent exists for the use or definition of the term “apostolic priest;” Chartres did not coin the term, but whilst it had been used occasionally in some Catholic writings, it is not a common phrase with a clear meaning. Within both the Anglican and Catholic tradition, there is a recognition that the threefold ordination to deacon, priest, and bishop brings with it some complications that can, unwittingly, disempower the laity. The sacraments are a key aspect of worship in the church, and each tradition must wrestle with how this might be outworked if lay leaders plant churches. Priests minister through praying, preaching, and presiding, and an apostolic priest encourages the church through their oversight in developing the laity to engage fully in the church’s apostolic nature and commission. An apostolic priest is an adaptive leader and seeks to develop that in others, too, using reflective practice and just-in-time training following the example of Jesus and his disciples.

Two historical examples were considered in how lay leaders might be involved in planting new churches to share the good news with people outside the church. The Anglo-Saxon Minsters were planted into a pre-Christian society and offer a tantalizing but hazy picture due to the lack of sources. Lay leaders — both men and women — were abbots of Minsters and joined in with outreach and mission, but drawing any strong conclusions from this period is not possible. The Methodist movement offers much to be considered as lay leaders were absolutely vital to its mission. Wesley identified and trained lay leaders to lead groups and religious societies which had all the markings of a

new worshipping community. These societies were part of the Church of England, lay-led but accountable to clergy; they functioned outside of church buildings and aided church growth. However, not even John Wesley could square the circle of lay ministers presiding at Holy Communion which led to him ordaining those ministering in the New World himself.

If lay leaders are to be identified and trained to plant churches, then they must be able to contextualize the good news of Jesus into our culture. Being trained to understand secularization and the “immanent frame” and learning lessons from intercultural missiologists will help lay leaders plant churches that reach those who are yearning for something beyond the here-and-now.

Publications in the Church of England from the time of *Mission-shaped Church* show that a desire and willingness exists within the institution to identify and train lay leaders for church planting. Fresh Expressions have been a significant development, often led by “lay-lay” leaders who are not authorized in any official way but are overseen by clergy functioning in an apostolic way similar to the model Wesley used. Two more recent papers — *Setting God’s People Free* and *Church Planting and the Mission of the Church* — show that church planting and a mixed ecology is now recognized as a significant part of the mission of the Church of England. The Myriad project has sought to encourage lay-led church planting and researched the experience of lay planters.

This chapter has shown that over the last fifty years within both the Catholic and Protestant traditions, much has been written and considered about how to increase lay involvement in the mission and ministry of the church. The Church of England has recently set a goal of planting thousands of new churches. For this to happen, the need for

lay planters is going to be huge. This need will demand clergy to be retrained to learn the lessons from scripture and history about what it means to be an apostolic priest in order to identify, develop, train, release, and support these missionary lay planters. Understanding what being an apostolic priest means within the Church of England, learning lessons from St. Peter and St. Paul, from the Minster Churches of Anglo-Saxon England, and from the Methodist revival in the eighteenth century gives hope that this movement of lay leadership could be the very revitalization that is needed within this institution for the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter describes the research methodology utilized in this project. The reasons for and purpose of the project are briefly reviewed along with the research questions for which the instrumentation used to research them is outlined. An explanation of the ministry contexts of those being researched is offered along with clear specifications for the kind of person being approached for this study and the ethical considerations given to how their data was handled securely. The instrumentation is discussed before outlining how the data was collected and analyzed.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this study was to identify best practices for identifying and training (developing) lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England. The number of lay people starting Fresh Expressions and planting churches has increased over the last twenty years, and, given the newly stated desire to plant thousands of new churches over the next ten years, many more will be needed. The Myriad program has been designed to support the development of lay planters nationally, but little work has been done to help support clergy in identifying and training these people. The research was to help “Dreamers” who want to plant by learning from the “Doers” (those who have planted), the “Donors” (leaders of churches which had sent out church plants), and “Directors” (those working within the Anglican structures to support church planting). Clergy who have developed lay planters are “Donors” who fit within the category defined above of “apostolic priests,” and the aim of this project was to define this more clearly by

understanding more fully what those clergy have done to help achieve this goal, working in partnership with their diocese and the lay planters themselves. By researching this, the project can serve clergy who want to support this movement of lay planting by learning how they can identify and train lay planters.

Research Questions

In order to determine the most effective ways in which lay planters were identified and trained in the Church of England and to help clergy become more apostolic in their priesthood, the research process used three key questions.

Research Question #1. What processes are currently being practiced for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting?

This question was answered by sending out online questionnaires by email to three different groups of people: Doers, lay planters themselves; Donors, clergy who had developed lay planters; and Directors, those within the structures of the Church of England who are playing a supportive role (e.g. Diocesan Head of Lay Development; Myriad team). This process was to get the broadest view possible around lay-led church planting, and the questionnaire was qualitative in nature. Questions 1–6 addressed consent and background information; questions 7–12 considered the qualities, gifts, and skills inherent and learned in those involved in developing lay planting; and questions 12–15 focused on the training of lay-led planters. Other than initial background questions being quantitative, all research questions were qualitative.

A second research tool was used to understand in greater depth the issues facing lay-led church planters. This tool was semi-structured interviews which helped to go deeper into research questions two and three using qualitative questions. The interviews

were held on Zoom and both audio and video were recorded to allow for full transcripts and field observations with each call lasting one hour. Nine respondents — three from each group — were interviewed using six questions. Question 1 provided background information, and questions 2–3 related to current practices and understanding around identifying potential lay planters and the role of the apostolic priest.

Document analysis was used as a third research tool, taking into account the training being offered by the national Myriad team to clergy wishing to oversee and develop lay church planting in their own context. Given that the *raison d'être* of Myriad is to help identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England, including this aspect within the research was important.

Research Question #2. What obstacles do church and lay leaders identify related to identifying and training lay leaders for church planting?

The same three tools were used to answer this research question. Questions 16–17 on the questionnaire addressed these challenges and obstacles, and questions 4–5 in the interviews considered the support needed and the obstacles faced. The Myriad training document was analyzed for any information on the obstacles they had identified.

Research Question #3. What are best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England?

The final question on the questionnaire and the final interview question were specifically about best practices in identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England. Again, all questions here were qualitative in nature. The document analysis was used to offer any further insight which had not been included in helping to answer the previous two research questions.

Ministry Context

The ministry context of this study was lay-led church planting within the Church of England. England is undergoing significant change as a country as noted by the most recent census data. The data shows that “for the first time... less than half of the population (46.2%, 27.5 million people) described themselves as ‘Christian’” (*Religion, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics*). Manchester Diocese is, in common with many parts of the Church of England, in a state of decline. As noted in Chapter 1, Greater Manchester has a population of more than 2.2 million people, but average worship attendance in 2019 was 25,500 in the Church of England. Of these churches, due to the age of worshipers and the size of congregations, over one hundred churches are just a generation away from extinction.

However, Church of England “resource churches” seem to be bucking this trend of decline. In the most recent statistics, resource churches are shown to be growing. Where the median size of a resource church grew from two hundred and eight people in 2015 to two hundred and seventy five in 2023, the median size of other churches declined from forty to twenty-nine in the same period (James). The researcher planted a “resource church” in Manchester Diocese in 2016 with the stated task of planting other churches to be a resource to the diocese. Since that time, the church has grown to about three hundred and fifty people with sixty of those under eighteen, and the majority under forty. The parish is in Salford, next to Manchester city center, and is in the top 11 percent most deprived in the country (*ArcGIS - Church of England Parish Map*), but significant redevelopment is occurring locally, with new homes being targeted mainly at wealthy young adults. Due to this location, the church is diverse both socio-economically and

ethnically, with rich and poor worshipping together alongside others from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

This mix of people means that a wide variety of expectations exist about how ministry happens and who does it. For some — particularly Anglicans from an African background or the historic deprived local community — the role of the clergy is elevated. For Christians raised in the Evangelical-Charismatic tradition, ordination is considered less important. For those coming to faith within our church, their primary relationship for discipleship and pastoral care is from a lay Connect Group leader rather than an ordained minister.

In 2021, the church sent out a curate with a small team and a financial investment to revitalize a new parish. The intention is to repeat this regularly, but clearly planting out clergy-led teams every few years is far from enough to engage in effective mission in this city or have a significant impact on the noted decline in church attendance. Conversations have occurred with lay leaders in the church who would like to plant and with the diocese about how to enable this to happen.

Much consideration was given to the question of whether to study the global Anglican Communion where lay-led church planting is more common, but it was concluded not to do this for three reasons. The first was the sheer scale of differences across the global communion: lay-led church planting in Tanzania may look completely different to Canada or Australia; the question of how to specify where to research and why meant the focus would be too broad. The second reason was that the Church of England has a specific history and polity; lessons learned from Uganda, for example, may not be transferable into England with its established nature, the parish system, and

historic presence in each part of the country. The third reason was that, given the different dioceses within the Church of England itself, the scope of the research was wide enough without opening it up to other countries. Seeing how other countries engage in and support lay-led church planting would have been of great interest, but the conclusion was to keep the focus on the Church of England.

Participants

With the significant goal of seeing thousands of new church plants in the next ten years across the Church of England, clergy-led plants will not be able to meet that target. Meeting the target will require lay leaders to be identified and trained to become “Doers” to plant new churches with the aim of reaching Millennials and Gen Zs and apostolic priests as “Donors” to oversee their development and ministry. Leaders within this project were either Donors, clergy who have overseen the development and release of lay-led church planting; Doers, lay planters themselves; or Directors, those within diocesan or national support roles for lay ministry and planting. Not all dioceses within the Church of England were represented, but the aim was to have representation from both northern and southern provinces with a mix of ages, genders, and ethnicities from a variety of theological backgrounds.

Criteria for Selection

The criteria for selecting participants in this study was focused on helping answer the research questions and satisfying the purpose statement. Three groups of people were invited to be participants:

- (1) Doers: lay planters, those people who had led a church plant as a lay person from a church led by an apostolic priest;

- (2) Donors: clergy functioning as “apostolic priests” who had overseen the development of a lay-led church plant within their contexts; and
- (3) Directors: those within the Church of England who are not doing “on the ground” ministry as defined in the previous two categories but who have an identified role in supporting the development of lay ministry and planting. This included archdeacons, those supporting lay planting nationally, and those in diocesan roles.

All of the participants needed to be working within the Church of England, with experience in supporting lay-led church plants, and with the intention of researching those which had been effective in reaching Millennials and Gen Zs. These three groups, functioning in different roles helping to support lay-led church planting in the Church of England, meant that the research would remain focused on offering answers to the purpose statement. The clergy in group 1 would function in some way as an apostolic priest, identifying and developing a lay church planter and able to offer insight into all three research questions. The lay planters in group 2 may have less experience of the processes of identifying and training being applied to them, but having this data was important when considering best practice to listen to those who have received, or are receiving, the training and development. Finally, those in group 3 have, in different ways, responsibility and authority to affirm, release, and support lay church planters. These people represent the wider institution from which church planting occurs, and they offer insight into the processes and practices around supporting lay-led church planting within the Church of England.

To guard against bias in the selection process, a request was made to the Myriad team to help identify people from these three groups. The Myriad team supports dioceses in developing lay-led church plants, have already researched twenty lay planters to hear their perspectives, and are currently helping to establish training hubs around the country to support lay-led church planting. Due to their wider networks, they were asked if they might identify some people from the above three categories from across the Church of England. The request was for twenty people from within each category from which twelve would be chosen totaled thirty-six people asked to complete the questionnaire. This process allowed for the likelihood of some not being able to complete the questionnaire in time, or for any other reason, with the hope of receiving at least ten replies.

The desire was to create a random sampling, but the importance of hearing the views of people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and ministry contexts was acknowledged, so positive discrimination was used to allow these perspectives to come through. For example, if only one non-white participant was in the list or only one from a rural background, they would be prioritized above others. A desire was also present to interview Bishop Chartres, who first introduced the term “apostolic priest” to the researcher. This interview helped understand his use of the term, and he gave permission for his interview to be used via email (Chartres).

The Myriad team contacted people asking if they would be willing to help, which resulted in contact details for twenty-six people in total: eleven lay planters, ten diocesan mission enablers, and five clergy. Ros Hoare, the Myriad Relationship Manager who was assisting me in developing the contact list, emailed to note that despite my desire to focus

on lay planters who are effectively reaching Millennials or Gen Zs (people under thirty-five), “most of our contacts are leading multigenerational/intergenerational worshipping communities and aren't specifically reaching out to this this age demographic.” She noted that “so far, we haven't really come across many examples of this within the Church of England.” This meant that the research net had to be widened beyond this particular focus. With only five clergy responding, I also had to pursue some of my own contacts. This brought the number of clergy to twelve, and the total number of participants invited to complete the questionnaire to thirty-three.

The thirty-three people were then contacted by email with the questionnaire, which included questions at the start to affirm their consent in the project, to give some background information, and to ask if they would be willing to give a semi-structured interview with the researcher. Participants were told that not everyone would be selected for the interview, but that if they were willing, to indicate it on the questionnaire. From each group who were willing to be contacted for interview, three people were then chosen to be contacted for the semi-structured interviews. Most were willing to be interviewed, so interviewees were selected based on the criteria as above: if there was only one person from a particular ethnic or ministry background, they were chosen; then, all others were put into a hat and drawn randomly. Only one participant was from a non-white background, but they declined to be interviewed.

Description of Participants

The participants, as described above, were all serving within the Church of England in lay-led church planting: lay planters (Doers); as clergy overseeing the development of lay-led planting (Donors); or those within the institution working to support lay-led planting

(Directors). The desire was to have a mix of gender, ethnicities, and ministry contexts within the sample groups, and the Director's group had a mixture of lay and ordained. Some, but not all, participants were educated to a degree level or above, and whilst some had been Christians for years, others were fairly new to the faith. All participants were over the age of eighteen; no upper age limit existed for those involved, but all were of working age.

Ethical Considerations

Google Forms were used to collect information — both informed consent and for the questionnaires themselves. The decision to use Google Forms was twofold: first, it reduces how much a participant is required to communicate — instead of completing a form and then having to save it, attach it to an email, and send it back, completing the Form does this automatically. Second, it was chosen as Google Drive is “protected by world-class security” — by using Google Forms; each response was automatically behind a secure passworded firewall on Google Drive, and only those with access to the password could see the information (*How Drive Protects Your Privacy & Keeps You in Control - Google Drive Help*). For this reason, Google Drive was also used to store any audio and video files. Google Drive required a password to access the files, and as the files themselves were stored in the Cloud, they were available to me on my MacBook Air laptop (secured by a password or Touch ID); my iPhone (secured by a passcode or Face ID); and my iPad (protected by a passcode or Touch ID). A transcriber was used to type up the conversations from the semi-structured interviews, who signed a confidentiality agreement and used Microsoft Word to create the transcriptions saved in the Google Drive where the questionnaire data was also stored. His laptop was similarly secured by a

password, and his access to the Google Drive folder was removed after he had completed the transcriptions.

Each participant was contacted by email with a link to the informed consent form through which they confirmed their willingness to help. Only after giving their consent were they taken to the questionnaire itself. The consent form also included their willingness to be involved in a semi-structured interview. In terms of confidentiality, participants were only identified in this work using a code system to preserve their anonymity. Each group will have a number (Doers = 1; Donors = 2; Directors = 3) and each participant given a letter, so the code is eg. Doer 1A; Donor 2G. The data from the questionnaires and interviews were stored electronically as above and only the collective results of the research, rather than the raw data itself, will ever be shared. The raw data itself will be permanently deleted within a year of the submission of this research.

Instrumentation

Three researcher-designed tools were used for data collection in this research, all with the gathering of qualitative data in mind. The first was the online questionnaire, the second a semi-structured online interview with some of those who had completed the questionnaire, and the final instrument was the document analysis.

Questions were developed with the intention of specifically answering the purpose statement as “the more you plan by determining *exactly* what you want to know, the more efficiently you will get what you need” (Booth et al. 82). The questionnaire used “open-ended and informal questions” (Sensing 86) from the following categories of Sensing’s questions: Grand Tour, Descriptive, Hypothetical, Ideal Position, Opinion, and Background or Demographic Questions (87–88). However, given that the semi-structured

interviews would allow for more in-depth consideration, answers to the open-ended questions on the questionnaires were limited to five hundred characters per question.

The questionnaire had some initial quantitative questions about background and context, whilst the majority of the questions were qualitative. The questionnaire was designed to get a broad-brush view of what is currently happening to help identify and train lay planters within the Church of England. The questionnaire included a demographic section to gather information about the age range, gender, and education level of the respondent. Along with the results of the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were used to determine the best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England. Finally, document analysis was used to consider the training developed by the Myriad team to shed some insight into one particular pathway by which clergy are trained to help identify and train lay planters.

Expert Review

The researcher-designed assessment tools were sent to three experts to request their input and to help hone the instruments. These people were Dr Gavin Wakefield, the dissertation coach; Dr Ellen Marmon, the Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program and Professor of Christian Discipleship at Asbury Seminary; and Dr Christian Selvaratnam, Dean of Church Planting at St. Hild College, UK. The expert reviewers were sent the questionnaire and the interview questions. They were asked to help determine whether the questions were clear and necessary and to provide suggestions for any clarifications that could help. They were also asked to recommend any questions they thought might have been missed in order to make the tools sharper and more effective. Their

suggestions helped to make the questions more specific and relevant to the research questions.

The questionnaire was also sent to three lay volunteers; two from the researcher's home church and another friend in leadership with the same rubrics as sent to the expert reviewers to ensure that it made sense to those who did not have doctoral level education. This process was because almost all of the lay leaders invited to respond to the questionnaire were deemed unlikely to have this level of education, so the questions needed to work from both the expert's point of view as well as some lay leaders.

Dr Wakefield helped to hone the research process by dropping the idea of Focus Groups and to focus more on the semi-structured interviews. He helped tease out some of the possible confusions and nuances from the language used in the questions on the questionnaire. For example, the word "qualities" in Q7 is now being used in a specific way by Ministry Division in their assessment criteria for clergy training. Knowing this enabled the researcher to identify potential responses that were using the word "qualities" in this way. Only one of the lay volunteers responded before the questionnaires were sent out, but the conclusion was that the tools were as effective as they could be.

Reliability and Validity of Project Design

The research itself was based on grounded theory, which Sensing argues "is meant to 'build theory rather than test theory'" (207). Grounded theory "is a design of inquiry from sociology in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants" (Creswell 14). This also meant that, as the research continued, the questions in the semi-structured interviews were adapted in line with Creswell's argument that "the research questions [will] evolve

and change during the study in a manner consistent with the assumptions of an emerging design” (141).

Questionnaires were used to get a broad-brush perspective from lay and ordained church leaders as well as those within the Church of England working to support and release lay planters using qualitative questions where answers were limited to five hundred characters to encourage focus and conciseness. The semi-structured interviews also used qualitative questions to identify some of the challenges that lay planters and clergy seeking to function as apostolic priests experience within the Church of England as well as attempting to determine best practices for identifying and training lay planters within the Church of England. The interviews allowed the developing working theory to be tested whilst also being adapted by the responses of the participants.

Data Collection

The research was designed to make use of a small amount of quantitative data regarding background and context but was primarily focused on information gleaned from qualitative data. Sensing describes qualitative research as “grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of lived experience” (57). The research fits Wayne Booth’s definition of “applied” (59), and the study was pre-intervention in nature. Questions for the questionnaire and interviews were developed in line with the purpose statement and research questions, and an online questionnaire was created by the researcher. Participants were contacted by email and asked to complete the online questionnaire and were asked whether they would be happy to be interviewed by Zoom. Interviewees were selected, contacted, and their interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The questionnaire, interviews, and document analysis were to help create “triangulation,” which Sensing describes as “multiple data-collection technologies designed to measure a single concept or construct” (72). The triangulation was from the “outsider, insider, and researcher” perspective (75), where the outsider was considered to be those who work within the wider structures of the Church of England to support lay planting (including the document analysis); the insiders were the lay planters and clergy; whilst the interviewer was the researcher.

Relevant participants were identified by the researcher and the Myriad team; the aim was to identify twenty people involved in reaching Millennials and Gen Zs in each of the three categories of: (1) Doer (lay planter); (2) Donor (apostolic priest who has identified and trained lay planters); and (3) Directors (those involved in supporting lay planting within the wider structures of the Church of England). From this group, eleven Doers, twelve Donors, and ten Directors were contacted by email with a link to the online questionnaire. Three days after the email was sent, a reminder email was also sent, noting the date by which the questionnaire would no longer be available online (the researcher gave seven days as a framework for response).

Interviewees were selected to offer a wide perspective from within the Church of England. The demographic information in the participant’s questionnaires was assessed, with the aim of selecting a variety of respondents to interview. Whilst only three interviewees existed per category, the quantitative data from the questionnaires allowed selection for interview based on ministry context. (Only one respondent was from an ethnic background and declined to be interviewed). Emails were sent to the potential interviewees and a mutually convenient time was agreed for the interviews to occur over

Zoom. Sensing describes semi-structured interviews as where “specified themes, issues, and questions with predetermined sequence are described in the protocol, but you are free to pursue matters as situations dictate” (107). The context of each interviewee was unique, and the interview needed to capture both this and their interpretation from their perspective of the issues around developing lay planting in the Church of England.

The third instrument utilized in this research was a document analysis of the training offered to clergy by the Myriad team. This document was requested via an email to the Myriad team and was received as PowerPoint slides.

Data Analysis

The questionnaires provided written material, whilst the interviews were transcribed by an assistant to create a written record. Notes were made during the interviews and whilst analyzing the documents to compare the different themes within the various datasets. The questionnaires were analyzed following the first five of Braun and Clarke’s “six phases of reflexive thematic analysis: 1. Familiarizing yourself with the dataset; 2. Coding; 3. Generating initial themes; 4. Developing and reviewing themes; 5. Refining, defining and naming themes; 6. Writing up” (35–36). The themes identified using all the questionnaires were then refined, and then the responses from the three groups were placed within these themes. This process was done using a spreadsheet which allowed quotes to be placed in the specific themes to which they related. This spreadsheet allowed a comparison of the most important themes for each question, although any statistical analysis of these themes must be treated with some caution: the number of quotes for each theme is not a reflection of how many *respondents* answered in that way, but how many *responses* were made about that theme. This organization

means that if one respondent was particularly passionate about, say, mentoring, and mentioned this multiple times in response to a question, this would sway the data analysis.

Braun and Clarke explain that “thicker individual data items (such as an in-depth interview) will often contain rich, complex, nuanced and detailed data” (27). This “thickness” is described as “broadly understood as referring to analysis — and specifically an analytic narrative — that is richly contextualised [*sic*] and interpretative” (140). To begin the work of discovering this thick analytic narrative, the AI software ChatGPT was utilized. AI helped the process of placing the data from interview transcripts into the themes identified from the questionnaires, which the researcher then reviewed and edited. Various attempts were made to find the best command for this, the most fruitful being “without using the same quote in different categories, summarize, using quotes from the text, split the following text into these categories.” The same command was used for each interview question, and the researcher then reviewed how ChatGPT had placed the data and corrected it where necessary. The resulting data was placed in spreadsheets relating to Doers, Donors, and Directors to enable data analysis of the interviews in the same way as the questionnaires.

A similar process was used in the document analysis for the Myriad training slides, which was utilized to discern the themes which the Myriad team have developed to help apostolic priests. Themes can be judged by two separate principles, distinguishing between “Internal Homogeneity (the extent to which the data that belong in a certain category hold together); [and] External Heterogeneity (the extent to which differences among categories are distinct and clear” (Miller-McLemore and Myers qtd. in Sensing

197–98). The document itself was the presentation slides used to train clergy seeking to develop lay-led church plants. This insight meant that the information gleaned from the documents contained little detail or description, being primarily headings and bullet points which would be unpacked more during the training sessions. The available data from the slides was taken and compared to the themes identified in the questionnaires and interviews. Finally, the analysis was synthesized to help answer the purpose statement to help identify best practices for identifying and training (developing) lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The Church of England has a stated aim to plant thousands of churches and lay led church plants are key to achieving this goal. The data collected for this qualitative research analyzed the current processes, obstacles, and best practice for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England in order to discover what it might look like for clergy to function as apostolic priests and encourage more lay led church plants. This Chapter presents the data and evidence collected from this research.

The participants in the research are described and their demographics discussed. The evidence from the questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis are then presented in relation to each of the three research questions. The data is presented primarily in the form of quotes drawn from the questionnaires or from the interview transcripts to provide the thickness expected from qualitative research. Each quote is cited to offer clarity about whether it was a lay church planter, apostolic priest, or institutional supporter speaking using the coding as described in Chapter 3. Each aspect of the evidence is also coded according to the research question and key themes to aid referencing. The Chapter concludes with the five major findings created by the evidence.

Participants

Those invited to be a part of the research were serving in the Church of England as lay church planters (“Doers”), clergy who had sent out these Doers (“Donors”), and those involved at a structural level within the diocese to support lay-led church planting

(“Directors”). Thirty-three questionnaires were sent out, and twenty-six people responded: ten Doers, ten Donors, and six Directors. The demographics of the questionnaire respondents is shown in figure 4.1 below. Sixteen were male and ten were female; most respondents were between the ages of forty and fifty-nine; most had been Christians for over twenty-five years; and a wide range of educational backgrounds was represented with the majority trained to the level of an undergraduate degree. Of the twenty-six respondents, thirteen identified themselves as “Charismatic,” and the other thirteen as “Evangelical.” Despite this small pool of theological backgrounds, a spread of geographic contexts existed with three rural, four city center, five inner city, seven suburban, and seven outer estates ministry areas represented.

Respondent Demographics

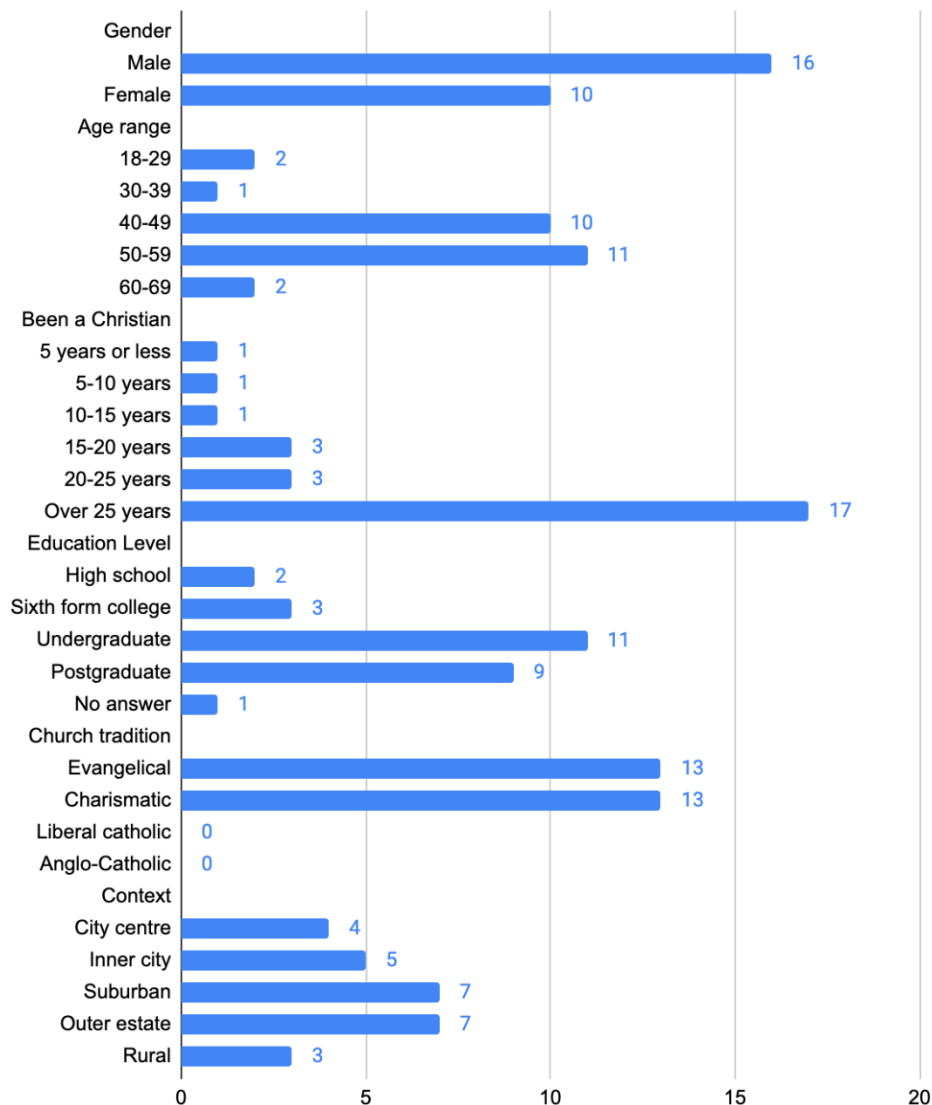


Figure 4.1. Demographics of questionnaire respondents (N=26).

Three people from each of the three groups were selected for interview as described in Chapter 3 above, and these nine were interviewed on Zoom; the demographics of this group is shown below in figure 4.2. Five were male and four were female; the interviewees had a slightly older profile in general than the wider group

completing the questionnaires. Again, most had been Christians for more than twenty-five years, and the majority of interviewees held postgraduate degrees. A similar balance existed between those who identified as Charismatic and Evangelical, and as with the questionnaires, a broad spread of ministry contexts was represented.

Interviewee Demographics

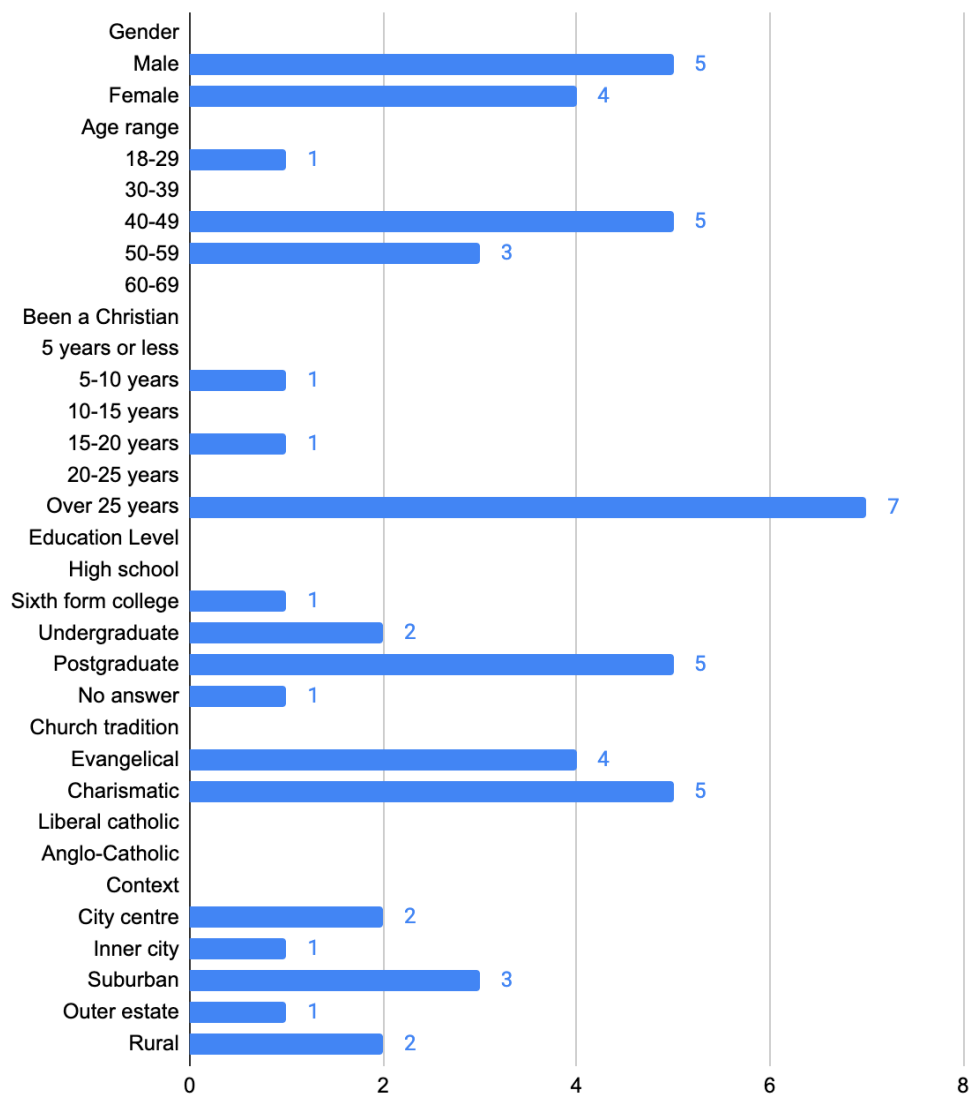


Figure 4.2. Demographics of interviewees (N=9).

Research Questions

The study was guided by three research questions set out below:

Research Question 1: What processes are currently being practiced for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting?

Research Question 2: What obstacles do church and lay leaders identify related to identifying and training lay leaders for church planting?

Research Question 3: What are best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England?

Research Question #1: Description of Evidence

Current processes being practiced for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.

The first research question related to current practices in the Church of England for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting. The data showed three themes: (1) Lay church planters are identified by six key traits; (2) Apostolic priests are key in identifying lay church planters; and (3) Training occurs in various ways. As mentioned in Chapter 3: Data Analysis, the way the data was compiled means that when percentages are shown, they usually relate to the number of comments made. Where the data relates to the percentage of respondents — rather than responses — this is made clear in the text.

Lay planters (Doers) are identified by six key traits

A wide range of responses can be grouped into six key traits that help to identify lay leaders for church planting: (1) A sense of call; (2) Evangelistic initiators/Apostolic;

(3) Teachable and resilient; (4) Positive and pioneering; (5) Faith-filled and prayerful; and (6) Team and community builders. Doers perceived a sense of call from God and had some experience of being evangelistic initiators. This trait was otherwise described as “apostolic” (Doers 1J and 1K; Donors 2B, 2E, 2H and 2I; Director 3B and 3G), which was as important as being a person of good, trusted character — someone who was teachable and resilient, positive and pioneering, and faith-filled and prayerful. An effective lay church planter is able to build teams and connections with the wider community. These qualities are affirmed by the Myriad Oversight Pathway, used in the document analysis; all but one of the characteristics listed in the for “identifying missional lay leaders” (slide 36) and “qualities of missional lay leaders” (slide 37) are within these six traits. The only one not included is “unintended” (slide 36), although it is unclear what this means in the document.

Sense of call. Lay church planters described a clear sense of calling to this work. They were asked why they thought they had been identified as a lay leader for church planting, so their answers revealed their perception of what was seen in them by others. This sense of call was described by one Doer as coming from their “passion for Jesus” (1B), another explained that they “knew God was calling me” (1G). Doer 1I said in their interview they thought they had been identified from “definitely a calling and definitely something on their hearts for spreading the word of Jesus.” One Doer spoke about having a “vision from God” (1A) and Doer 1K described how that sense of call grew over time, becoming a “more specific calling in the last five years running up to church planting.”

This sense of call was much more important for the Doer in identifying themselves as a lay church planter than either the Donors or Directors. In the

questionnaires, 40 percent of Doer's responses mentioned this sense of call, much less than for Donors (14 percent) or Directors (18 percent), and a similar disparity was noted in the interviews (Doers 26 percent; Donors 6 percent; Directors 16 percent).

A few Donors and Directors did mention this sense of calling, with one Donor writing that they identify a potential lay planter if he or she "expresses a sense of call or vision" (2A). Another shared that when a lay person sought to plant "as a job [they] usually fail" (2G). One Director spoke about how a lay person with a sense of call would likely have a "vision for the area/people" (3I). This sense of call came out of the layperson's relationship with Jesus. The document analysis confirmed this in slide 37, "Qualities of missional lay leaders" by describing a "sense of calling".

Evangelistic initiators/Apostolic. This sense of call is coupled with a desire for others to know Jesus and come to faith in him. One Doer explained how they "knew I needed to help to show people how much they are loved" (1G). In their interview, they talked about "genuinely have an urgency for people to know God." As noted above, two Doers used the term "apostolic" in their questionnaire responses (1J and 1K) with Doer 1K defining this further as the "ability to initiate and shape new things into being." This was echoed in the responses from the Donors, one saying "I want someone who's a self-starter" (2I), a term also used by Director 3G: "they need to be self-starters." Donor 2I also explained the importance of a potential lay planter being evangelistic by asking in their interview "if you can't lead people to faith, then I don't know how you lead a church plant." Donor 2L identified this kind of evangelistic initiator as a person who is "always bringing people to church, inviting people, and talking about their neighbors and friends who don't know Jesus yet."

Director 3G spoke about how a potential lay planter might have a “holy discontent with the current status quo” and function as “apostolic shepherds.” The Myriad Oversight Pathway used similar terms in slide 36 “Identifying missional lay leaders” (Jones and Ineson), describing “Holy Discontent” and looking for “Yearners.” The Myriad Oversight Pathway also speaks of “missional” people with a “contagious faith” (slide 37). Director 3G also argues that a potential lay planter “needs to have a degree of visionary and imagination,” and 3J said that “evangelists will be reaching people and then working out, ‘what do I need to do now?’”

Teachable and resilient. The following three sub-categories (*Teachable and resilient*; *Positive and pioneering*; and *Faith-filled and prayerful*) came from the questionnaire responses to the question “what personal qualities do lay church planters need?” as demonstrated in table 4.1 below. Those functioning as apostolic priests consider issues around character as very significant; almost twice as many comments were made by Donors than by Doers or Directors in response to this question.

Table 4.1 Questionnaire responses re personal qualities needed by lay church planters

	Doers	Donors	Directors
<i>N (number of responses) =</i>	44	81	37
Teachable and resilient	32%	35%	30%
Positive and pioneering	23%	21%	16%
Faith-filled and prayerful	20%	19%	19%

Doers spoke about being “brave” (1A), “real” (1G), and “honest, committed and willing to learn” (1B). “Perseverance” (1C) and “risk tolerance” (1J) were also noted by Doers as important characteristics in being identified as lay planters. Four separate

Donors mentioned “teachability” (2F, 2H and 2L) or the need for a lay planter to be “teachable” (2D) alongside characteristics of resilience such as “commitment” (2A, 2F and 2H), “patience” (2G), “determination” (2G, 2I), “emotional toughness” (2L), and one noted “generosity and grace” (2G). Director 3A mentioned that a lay planter would need “emotional, mental and spiritual resilience.” Two mentioned that resilience was an issue of character, one describing “good character” (3I) and another “stable character” (3J). Another facet of this trait was described by three Donors and another Director simply as “humility” (2B, 2D, 2F, and 3J). The document analysis encouraged looking for “teachable” people who were “trustworthy” and “resilient” (37); they will also “take responsibility” (36).

Positive and pioneering. Alongside being teachable and resilient, potential lay church planters are positive and pioneering; the Myriad document uses the terms “resourceful” and someone who has “capacity” (37). An expectation exists that they may already be making the most of opportunities; as Director 3J put it, “pioneers will just self-identify and they’ll be knocking at your door.” One Doer suggested being positive and pioneering were “similar traits you would expect to see in an entrepreneur” (1H), a word also used in the document analysis in “Identifying missional lay leaders” (slide 36), including being “positive” (1A), having “vision/imagination” (1C), and being able to “hold structures lightly / be ready to adjust and move” (1H). One Doer and another Donor both suggested that having a “sense of humour [*sic*]” (1C, 2A) was important for lay planters. Donors 2A and 2B noted “friendliness” and “optimism” as important, just as being “self-motivated” (2I), such that Donors are looking for “positive, can-do people” (2E).

This positivity works itself out in being agile and flexible; one Doer said, “the biggest thing we've learned is about, like flexibility and just agility” (1K). They went on to say how “you're going to just have to roll with it and sort of have a crack, give what you can with the capacity you've got, accept that some things won't work, flex, adapt, have another go.” Directors described this as “enthusiasm” (3B) and “imagination to do things differently” (3J), noting the need for lay planters to be “innovative” (3I).

Faith-filled and prayerful. Thirty percent of Doers mentioned the importance of prayer in being identified as lay church planters. Others wrote about being “Jesus centred [*sic*]” (1B), “passionate about Jesus” (1D), and having an “openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit” (1K). Similarly, four out of ten Donors mentioned “prayer” or “prayerfulness” as a quality they looked for in identifying potential lay planters (2B, 2C, 2D, and 2G). “Godliness” (2B), “faith in Christ,” and “trust in the power of God” (2G) was important along with a “security in who they are and their calling” (2H). Directors suggested looking for someone who has a “clear and established faith in Jesus” (3J); another mentioned a “solid, deep and passionate faith in Christ” (3H). Along with someone who has “good theology” (3H), they also identified looking for someone who has a “robust and disciplined pray [*sic*] life” (3A). Being a “prayerful” person with “a clear faith” came across in the document analysis (slide 37).

Donors identify these characteristics in potential lay planters by “how they interacted with and served other[s]” (2D); another mentioned their “character track record” (2F). Donor 2D also wanted to clarify whether the potential planter was “wanting upfront ministry or willing to serve?” This aspect may be shown in their home life;

Donor 2G suggesting that “family life is also important,” and also mentioned the “qualities of elders in 1 Tim 3”.

Team and community builders. When asked about what gifts they thought were inherent in lay planters, alongside being apostolic and evangelistic (as above), being a community builder and a team builder were clearly noted as important. Some crossover existed between these two categories; for example, being “relational” (Doer 1B) and able to “connect well with others” (1G) could fit into both. Others were clearer: for Doers, being a team builder includes the “ability to encourage and lead others” (1H), “identify potential gifts in others to lead” (1G), and “encourage others (by delegating)” (1C). Donors described a team builder as having “inter-personal gifts - gatherers of others, to whom others gather” (2A) and someone who “values and enjoys teams” (2L). Donor 2L said that “if you can't gather a team, then that's not really going to go anywhere.” Director 3I described the “ability to gather people/team;” another mentioned “stickiness - a person others want to be around” (3J). The document analysis also suggested looking for “a ‘sticky’ person” (37).

Being a “community builder” (36) means someone who will “love and nurture community” as Director 3G noted, who also said they are people whose “door is always open”; the Myriad training uses the word “loving” (slide 37). Doer 1G said in interview that a community builder was someone who had a “real depth of understanding of that community, the people that are in it, and a genuine love.” This was echoed in a questionnaire response by Doer 1I, who talked about the need for “understanding the people/place” where they were planting. Donors described the need for the gift of “hospitality” (2D), and three mentioned being a “pastor” (2C, 2E, 2H, and 2I) with one

defining what they meant: “not in the sense of tea and hugs but more in the sense of disciple making cultivating people's faith” (21). Director 3G described how a lay planter needs to “build community and operate out of connected community.”

Apostolic Priests are key in identifying Lay Church Planters

The Myriad training is written for those “looking at good practice in oversight ministry” (slide 2) which appears to be synonymous with the language of “episcopal priests” (7). These clergy function as a “champion” for “lay leaders establishing new worshipping communities” (33). The data shows that the clergy on the ground are able to build relationships with these potential lay planters, who can discern their character and gifts and so the role of the apostolic priest is fundamental to identifying lay church planters.

In interview, Bishop Chartres described that being an apostolic priest is also a “calling” and includes a “sense of being sent.” Apostolic priesthood was different to “sedentarized priesthood” which is a “worthy notion of serving a settled community,” although its “highly structured” nature means it is “greedy in time demands to ‘run the machine.’” Instead, he claimed apostolic priests are “called” like Abraham, Samuel, and Mary. According to Chartres, apostolic priests are

called to serve our time, to build the church. But this means not just issuing invitations to our meetings, we must follow the Holy Spirit... on this journey and [be] transformed by the journey, but only if it's a journey in faith and apostolicity.

This “journey” tied together the calling and commission, and he noted that “to some extent we all have to have that sense of being sent... but there are some people who have particular gifts in that direction.”

The data showed five characteristics of clergy who identify and train lay church planters. They are: (1) Releasing; (2) Discerning; (3) Encouraging; (4) Vision casting; and (5) Secure.

Releasing. Doers noted that clergy wishing to support lay-led church planting were those who had a “desire to see every person reach their full Godly potential” (1B) and that “there is a need for Clergy to fully release lay leaders” (1D). Doers thought this releasing comes from a place of “generosity” (1J), “trust” (1F, 1G, 1J), and “humility” (1J) demonstrated through a “commitment to pray and walk alongside the planter” (1K). Donors also mentioned “humility” (30 percent of respondents) and “trust” (one out of ten respondents) with one describing having to be “willing to bear the pain of losing good leaders to new things” (2H). This Donor explained it further as “empowering others and giving away for the sake of the Kingdom of God.” In an interview, Donor 2L said that “church leaders who are going to have multiple lay congregations, fresh expressions, church plants under them, are acting in that oversight role.”

Doer suggested that a releasing overseer gives “permission to fail” (1B); two Directors agreed, saying they need to be “fine with failure or experimentation” (3G) and “sharing responsibility for failure” (3A). Director 3B said an apostolic priest would have a “strong belief in the priesthood of all believers” who “[go] around setting the priests free.” Clergy like this are “looking for people who might actually be ready to lead into

the next opportunity for the church and its growth” (3J), and they have an “appetite for intuitive risk and trust in relationships” (3G).

The document analysis suggested similar themes in slide 14, “distinctive responsibilities of ordained oversight ministry,” which is “equipping the people of God for the mission and ministry of God” by “supporting, resourcing and overseeing leaders.” Director 3J said in an interview that apostolic priests function in an “episcopal oversight role, that they're seeing themselves as not the deliverer of that development and that new church, but they're seeking to raise somebody up and develop them and oversee them.”

Discerning. One questionnaire response to “what gifts need to be inherent in clergy wishing to support lay-led church planting?” said simply “discernment” (1C). Doer 1G said they should be “very discerning in choosing the correct lay lead” with Doer 1K describing this as “pastoral wisdom.” Along with an “openness to seeing church done very differently” (1K), Doer 1G wanted clergy to “show full support with potential opposition, be very strong if they feel an idea, plan is the right or wrong thing to do making sure they pray and seek the will of God in every situation.” In an interview, the same Doer acknowledged this attribute in her Donor, “she's very good at being discerning and seeing obviously who would lead in certain capacities.” The Myriad training suggests oversight clergy invest their time in “identifying, discerning and developing leaders” along with “delegating and clarifying responsibilities” (slide 14).

Donor 2I described how apostolic priests need the “ability to think outside of the current parameters [*sic*] of ministry” and use “evaluation skills to properly look at short and long term sustainability and suitability of the planter.” Donor 2B described it as

“delegation/developing leaders.” Directors also considered discernment as essential with one describing the process of “seeing the Lord work amongst the people and work in people, transform people, grow people” (3H). One said it was “listening to the intimacy of God” (3G), and Director 3J wrote that apostolic priests need discernment “to see what is going on in a person.”

Encouraging. Donors use encouragement as they identify and train lay leaders for church planting, which is kept in tension with being releasing; as Doer 1B said, clergy need “wisdom to not leave the person isolated.” Thirty percent of Doers specifically mentioned encouragement in their questionnaires, but in the interviews encouragement was the most significant factor (27 percent of responses with 18 percent the next most common response). One Doer mentioned “prophetic encouragement” (1K); in their interview, they described their Donor “who looked and said you know what there's something in you and there's something in the life that you're leading and the connections you're building.” In questionnaire responses, Donors also considered encouragement the most important role (35 percent). Donor 2L described it as “an ability to journey with,” and another mentioned the commitment of “giving time to those who are to be mentored in planting” (2I). The balance between releasing and relationship was key for Donors too. In interviews, Donor 2I said “what I want to know is, what is your vision for your life?” whilst Donor 2L commented “I think the apprenticeship model is important there.”

Directors referenced encouragement less but still saw the importance of being “encouraging and affirming” (3I) and “empathetic, [offering] pastoral care for the lay planter” (3J). Director 3G said in their interview that a priest who functions in this way is “one who goes around setting the priests free... calling out that priesthood that's within”

whilst noting that “this could take years.” The document analysis did not specifically mention encouragement but did note that the role of oversight clergy is “supporting, resourcing and overseeing leaders.” The document also describes having “adaptive capacity” which includes being someone who can “lead a learning process” and “ask good questions” (slide 35).

Vision casting. In questionnaires, this was not mentioned by Doers at all, but in interviews one noted that “if vicars aren't careful, then they develop lay leaders in order to service and sustain the ministries that their churches are leading, rather than to unleash the potential of every layperson in their church to do mission and ministry where they are” (1K). To be an apostolic priest is to have a vision for lay planting, as Donor 2H put it “vision casting to help the Donor church catch a vision for multiplying.” Director 3G wrote about clergy having “innate long term vision” who create “simple frameworks that enable lay-leaders to thrive.” Apostolic priests “recognize the fullness of Jesus's vision for the Church” (3G) and “have a future-oriented mindset, looking for opportunities for the church to find new people, to reach new people, to expand its reach” (3J). The Myriad documents did not mention having, or sharing, vision, although arguably this is implied in “equipping the people of God for the mission and ministry of God” (35).

Secure. To function as a releasing overseer who uses discernment, offers encouragement, and casts vision for lay-led church planting means clergy must be secure in themselves and their ministry. Doer 1G wrote they must “listen to the lay person, and trust that they have got to know the community.” Another Doer described how their Donor is “very at peace within himself” (1I). Donor 2H wrote they need “inner security that it is ok to raise people up who are better than you at things” or as Director 3J said

“there's emotional security in the person willing to back others and handle whatever might come if things don't go exactly right.” They “have the ability to manage the risk of raising up somebody new who isn't yet a finished and formed leader” (3J). This Director also said, “the emotional experience of the apostolic priest includes the capacity for handling risk and complexity of starting the new.”

Personal security is matched by a requirement of being secure about their ministry which may be impacted by raising up and releasing lay planters. Donor 2H wrote they need “faith to believe that you will be ok after sending people out — ministry and also finances.” The document analysis suggested oversight ministry demands “relational congruence” which includes “integrity”, “maturity” and “emotional health” (slide 20).

Training occurs in various ways

Lay leaders who plant churches have made use of a variety of training opportunities or have made the most of their previous experience with transferable skills to help them plant. The question on the questionnaire was written in two different ways to acknowledge that the lay church planters had been beneficiaries of the training, whilst the apostolic priests or those in the institution would have been delivering the training or helping the Doer access training. The questionnaire asked “(a) How have you trained lay church planters (what was involved in the training)? OR (b) What was included in your training to be a lay church planter?” and a wide range of responses was received.

Notably, most Doers spoke about the value of learning through experience. Table 4.2 below shows the differing number of responses mentioning each type of training with the largest response for each group highlighted in bold. Where Doers considered experience

to be utmost in their training, Donors believed clergy supervision to be most important, whereas Directors were more biased towards training courses.

Table 4.2. Questionnaire responses re training pathways for lay church planters

	Doers	Donors	Directors
<i>N (number of responses) =</i>	22	24	20
Just-in-time	18%	0%	30%
Group support	5%	13%	10%
Clergy supervision	18%	50%	25%
Training courses	14%	38%	35%
Experience	45%	0%	0%

The document analysis had little to add to the question of current practices in training lay planters other than noting the “four things most help people to excel in a role: 1. Select the right person; 2. Set clear expectations; 3. Motivate appropriately; 4. Care holistically” (slide 39).

Experience. Most questionnaire responses by Doers pointed to experience rather than specific training; Forty percent of Doers reported they had “no training” when they planted. Doer 1D wrote “when we planted... there was no training available;” another noted that “I had no training, however after I started the church plant I attended the CCX church plant course” (1J). Doer 1H mentioned the importance of “experience. The best training I have had has come from actually doing — being able to make mistakes and learn from them.” As noted in the table above, prior experience was not mentioned specifically by any Donor or Director.

Mentoring/Supervision. When Donors commented on current training practices, most mentioned mentoring or supervision as significant. Comments were made such as “I meet them every few months to review, encourage, advise, oversee and support” (2H) and using “one to one mentoring sitting down talking about vision, options, timescales etc. Periodic regular review times” (2I). Others also talked about “one to ones” (2G), “regular supervision” (2C), and “regular meetings [that] help identify and navigate change management challenges” (2E). For Donor 2A, training has “largely been in one-to-one supervision sessions.” Doers also noted the value of mentoring/supervisory relationships, one commenting “my ordained lead also who is there to give advice and guidance” (1G) whilst another pointed to “regular check ins with my incumbent” (1B). Directors were less specific about who might offer this with two mentioning “mentors” (3I, 3J) without clarifying whether that was their Donor or someone else. Director 3I used “one 2 ones termly.”

Formal training. Directors mentioned a variety of formal training, mentioning both “in person gatherings” and “online training” (3J). Director 3G had written their own course, entailing “5 sessions on the bible, the context, mission, leadership and prayer.” Director 3H used “one-off workshops looking at Evangelism, Mission plans, or how to discern where the Lord is already working in a community and how to join in with that.” Director 3A noted the importance of making training “accessible. BAs, MAs and PhDs are not the only way to learn and grow.” Only 30 percent of Doers mentioned formal training courses. Donors expressed the variety of training courses that can be used to train lay planters from the “Mission Shaped Ministry course” (2C) to an “emotionally healthy discipleship courses” as well as “courses from Mental Health First-Aid to Spiritual

Direction” (2C). Some Donors had written their own course with Donor 2L “doing a pre training course which is all about building confidence in God, call and self and well as a good bible and team tool kit.” Donor 2D summarized in this way

I train leaders through in person and online training because of the challenge in finding an approach that suits everyone but recognises [*sic*] the need for deep training. The training draws off the early Church catechumenate which trained disciples for 3 years by demolishing worldly ways of living and thinking and rebuilding Jesus-centred ways of living and thinking. Modules include: creed, sermon on the mount, Bible overview, rule of life. Ecclesiology is also a vital aspect of this training.

Just-in-time/On-the-job. Whilst formal training is the “how,” respondents were clear about the “when” of delivering the training. A consensus seemed to exist that training is best delivered when the lay leader is not removed from their context but trained “on the job” (1A, 1C, 1I) or using “‘just in time’ programs” (3A). Whilst Donors did not specifically mention this type of training, a clear crossover exists between this and Mentoring/Supervision which this group considered highly important. Director 3G described “apprenticeship training and planting together centred [*sic*] around their context and their relationships;” another wrote about “twice annual retreats, twice annual local hubs with peers, monthly zoom learning community with guest speakers: The FX journey” (3I). Two other Directors also mentioned learning communities (3B, 3J). Doer 1B explained how “I take my team to 3 times annual meet ups.”

Leading others can be learned. In answer to the question “what skills can be learned by a lay church planter?” all three groups identified *leading* as the most significant skill. Doers described learning “how to lead people” (1B) and “how to manage peoples [*sic*] expectations” as well as “listening / knowing how to cultivate relationships both with others personally but also cultivating relationships between others” (1H) whilst Doer 1K noted simply “team development.”

Donor 2A wrote about how to “lead self and others healthily,” “recruit and lead a core team,” “plan for succession,” and “handle conflict.” Donor 2C wrote “developing values, vision and strategy.” Donor 2H described training lay planters in “leadership skills such as building teams, handling conflict and communicating vision.” These themes resonated with responses from the Directors, with two-thirds (four out of six) mentioning leadership/leading specifically (3B, 3G, 3I), whilst Director 3H mentioned leadership skills or techniques — “teaching, planning mission activities.” One mentioned training lay planters in “team building, empowerment” (3B) and another “listening, how to ask transformative questions, facilitating discussions/small groups” (3I) whilst Director 3G described “ways of teaching, sharing scripture, praying in groups, leading or nurturing a gathering.”

Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

Obstacles related to identifying and training lay leaders for church planting

After using “Grand Tour” questions in the questionnaire and interviews, other more focused questions were used, for example descriptive and opinion questions, which helped explore the obstacles in identifying and training lay leaders for church planting. The data showed that these obstacles suggested three themes, the first notably being that

lay church planters said that they *experienced few obstacles* in being identified and trained for church planting. The second obstacle could be summarized as *identifying leaders*; and the third as *institutional resistance*.

The Myriad Oversight Pathway training used for the document analysis had very little content relating to obstacles in identifying and training lay leaders for church planting. Slide 21 noted that clergy would have to “address systemic issues” and “calmly confront the unknown,” and apostolic priests would need “courage to press on through resistance” (Slide 23). Slide 41 listed “common mistakes” which may align with data from the questionnaires and interviews, but as they are simply headings, which obstacles to which they immediately relate is unclear (e.g. “confusing hats!”). Given this, the data for this Research Question has been purely drawn together from the questionnaires and interviews.

Lay church planters experience few obstacles

The questionnaire had two questions about obstacles: one regarded obstacles in identifying lay leaders for church planting, and the second related to training lay planters. The interview had one question relating to the obstacles in both identifying and training lay church planters. In the questionnaire, the Doers encountered fewer obstacles (eighteen total comments) than the Donors (thirty-six comments) and Directors (twenty-four). The three Doers who were interviewed did note a wider range of obstacles but still less than Donors and Directors (twenty-three comments compared to twenty-eight for both Doers and Donors). The data showed: (1) The majority of Doers experienced *no or few obstacles*; (2) Some experienced a *lack of confidence* as a lay church planter; and (3) Lay church planters encounter the *perceptions of others* as an obstacle.

No or few obstacles. Forty percent of the Doers claimed to experience no obstacles in being identified as a lay planter with one writing “none in particular” (1K) and another explaining “I did not really have any obstacles in being identified as a church planter” (1G). However, when asked about training, five out of the eight who answered this question said they had no obstacles. In fact, two noted their positive experience of being trained with one writing that “I did not have any obstacles when being trained, I have enjoyed the process” (1G) and the other saying “ongoing training and support in [my diocese] is intentional and great” (1J).

Donors 2C said they encountered “no real obstacles to be honest as we planted based on provision of resources” whilst 2D wrote that “I didn't encounter too many obstacles. The training went well — I found that the Diocese provided training and support that complemented my local level training.” No Directors said that they experienced “no” obstacles in identifying or training lay planters.

Lack of Confidence of Lay Church Planters. One obstacle to identifying and training lay leaders for church planting was the confidence of the lay leader themselves. Doer 1B described this as “confidence. Imposter syndrome was a big one, accepting that Jesus wants to use me has been a process.” In the interview with Doer 1I, they spoke about how “I wasn't well-equipped enough with theology.” Donor 2L noted in their questionnaire a “lack of confidence from would be lay planters” as an obstacle and also spoke about “confidence” in their interview although no other Donor mentioned it. Director 3H commented that “no one told me that they might be a layperson that wants to plant a congregation” whilst 3J noted that “they've almost never seen anyone else do it

before.” This may be linked to the questionnaire comment from Director 3A that “the pool of people who have developed the necessary gifts and gained the relevant knowledge and experience is tiny.” Director 3J wrote that “the lack of culture and experience of lay leadership or new church communities means people dont [*sic*] think they are allowed to do this.”

However, confidence seems a vital component of pioneering something new according to Doer 1A, who in interview said

you're going to have opposition from all angles, whether it's a congregation, whether it's the church, you're going to have opposition and I feel like you've got to have someone who's strong enough to see their point of view, but also stand your ground when you feel as though, if you've prayed to God and you feel like this is the right avenue for you to go down, then I feel like you have to sort of stick with it and stand your ground.

Preconceptions of others. The same Doer 1A said, “another obstacle is just knowing how to connect with your people, your community. And sort of changing their mindset of what church is or what they think it should be or was.” Twenty percent of questionnaire responses and 41 percent of interview comments from Doers about obstacles related to these preconceptions of others with Doer 1A writing about “people trying to have preconceived ideas of what your church plant will look like.” Donor 2A wrote about the obstacle of “hostility of some church members towards the rise of someone they know into a leadership position” and 2H wrote about “meeting expectations of others.” Donor 2I noted that preconceptions impacted the lack of “clarity

on what church planting actually is as opposed to [*sic*] planting missional communities.” Doer II also spoke about those being reached, that “they do feel nervous that it's not run by vicar.”

Director 3J spoke about the obstacle of planting something lay-led into an already established church: “because ministries from the resource church, [it] doesn't help. It's like you go back a minus five the moment they, because it means ‘Here they come with their guitars and drums’ and take over.” They also commented in their questionnaire noting the preconceived ideas about what a leader is within the Church of England, writing that an obstacle is “the type of person which the church thinks can lead”. Preconceptions exist which come from people in the Donor church, from those being reached, and from those already in church where the mission is taking place.

Identifying leaders

Identifying leaders was a key obstacle noted by all groups. An unwillingness existed on the part of lay people to plant or receive training and there seems to be only a small pool of able and willing people, but even these have limited time to receive training and to plant. For Donors, identifying leaders was the largest group of comments in the questionnaires with 45 percent of responses mentioning this obstacle.

Unwillingness. Doers noted a sense of unwillingness to take a step into the unknown (perhaps related to preconceptions above) or going through training as well as clergy being unwilling to release lay planters. Doer 1K mentioned the attraction of staying within what is known rather than pioneering something new, saying in the interview “why would you want to disrupt all of that when you've already found a nice little kind of niche, a nice little, found a nice church to be part of?” One Donor mentioned in the

questionnaire a lay planter who demonstrated the lack of “willingness to submit to training” (2B). Donor 2D mentioned the “unwillingness in some people to take up leadership positions,” and another wrote about the “lack of passionate Christians who want to plant” (2F). Director 3H also noted the unwillingness of clergy, commenting in their interview “we've got another incumbent I'm dealing with who says no to everything because she's anxious and overwhelmed and feels she's got too much work on.” This feeling may well be related to Untrained Clergy below.

Small pool. Director 3A wrote that “the pool of people who have developed the necessary gifts and gained the relevant knowledge and experience is tiny.” Director 3I wrote that a “limited numbers in their 20s–40s across the diocese” exist whilst Director 3G commented on the challenge that “identifying potential is hard around a people and resource-hungry inherited or Sunday-focused church.” Donor 2G suggested that “we want people who have qualities that most ordained people don't have” and noted that “some people lack the emotional and spiritual maturity to lead.” They put it succinctly in their interview saying, “you're looking for Premier League players in The Conference.” 1K commented in their interview that “these are people you're asking to step into something that is going to be quite stretching.” A key obstacle for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting is that such a small pool of people exist who are not only willing but able to do it.

Time. Twenty-five percent of each group pointed to the lack of time as an obstacle to training in the questionnaires. 1C wrote “none apart for lack of time!” and 1K said, “very limited capacity to participate in evening or daytime training events alongside my full time working life and family commitments — everything in the CofE seems to be

on weekdays at unhelpful times!” One Doer in an interview said, “I don't have the time necessarily to be, like, equipped.”

For Doers, one wrote that an obstacle was “busyness — finding time together,” suggesting that both Donor and Doer struggled to make time for prioritizing training. One Director described “peoples [*sic*] availability” as an obstacle whilst in an interview one Director talked about “particularly time, everyone's time.” Another, 3I, noted the challenge for lay planters who are “people working full/part time, family commitments.”

The skills required and maturity that is demanded alongside a willingness and passion from potential lay planters demands time to discern. As mentioned above and noted by Donor 2B: “if they're not in front of you or known to you, it is hard to identify them. They need to be in your church already or recommended to you so you know what you are taking on.” The time it takes to discern gifts and skills and the time planting a church demands from lay leaders is a significant obstacle for those who are not employed for the task.

Money. Finances impact how much time a lay planter can give to leading as well as having an impact on the resources available to the plant and the longer-term sustainability of what is planted. Director 3G said “I see a big problem with financing mission, and by that I mean the lay leaders that we need, young lay leaders don't have the money to be able to take lots of time to do lots of different [things].” Doer 1I spoke about their own challenges of finding time to access training and planting, saying “I need to work to earn money. Like, if I could earn money that way, like, if it was a job, I would do it, but I don't have the time to do it that way, so it was something I needed to fit around my own life.”

Doer 1H wrote that lay led plants do not need much money “if your vision for planting doesn't involve having to hire a building / have equipment and so on” but commented that “I imagine finance is the biggest obstacle for many.” Doer 1G said “we don't like to talk about money, but it is about that in terms of sort of sustaining the churches and keeping them going.” Donor 2I pointed out the lack of clarity and structural support, asking “can they be paid or not and how does that work with parish share etc.?”

Untrained clergy. The local clergy have the primary task of identifying leaders as Director 3I noted the obstacle of “incumbents not identifying potential in people” whilst Director 3H explained in their interview that “at the moment, the start and the finish point is a local vicar, who can... choke something... we need to work on the hearts and the training of the local vicar; they're open and able to hold that.” Director 3B noted simply that an obstacle is “clergy not identifying or signposting leaders.”

Director 3J spoke about how churchmanship might impact the expectations of clergy and their approach to lay planting, suggesting “a solution-focus rather than a defensive, ‘let's try to reject this because of the threat that it poses.’” They explained further,

Evangelical Charismatics are not probably going to be that bothered about how the sacraments are administered within a lay-led church community. But Anglo-Catholics are really concerned about that. And so if they start to be solution-focused, then they begin to address those obstacles. And they find ways of expressing their tradition in a way that is the most helpful and fruitful for that new development of a new worshipping community.

This lack of training of clergy to identify and train lay leaders for church planting means that clergy do not have the tools or even perhaps the vision to see how it might work. This shortfall could be described as a passive obstacle. The third significant obstacle describes a more active obstacle, that of institutional resistance.

Institutional Resistance

In the questionnaires, a range of responses were given which related to the obstacle of institutional resistance (40 percent of Doer's responses, 15 percent Donors, and 44 percent Directors). In interviews, only 23 percent of responses regarding obstacles from Doers referred to institutional resistance, but 54 percent of Donor and 36 percent of Director responses related to this topic. Director 3J wrote that an obstacle to identifying lay leaders for church planting is "institutional anxiety and control," and a number linked it to Untrained Clergy above. This institutional resistance was mentioned by respondents in the following categories: the focus towards ordination, the instability of lay led plants due to clergy succession, the lack of formal pathways and authorization, questions and confusion around ecclesiology, a leaning towards maintenance rather than mission within the Church of England, and a general resistance to change.

Focus towards ordination. Doer 1F wrote that "the main challenge was in being given sufficient recognition and encouragement to take a lead without the direct involvement of a clergy person" although not clear whether this obstacle was from the sending church, the institution, or the people being reached. Donors also noted the institutional lean towards ordination rather than lay leadership of church plants. For example, 2G commented that "generally the CofE raises up its best and brightest for ordination." One Director wrote about "moving away from a clergy-led mindset" (3B).

Donor 2I pointed out that a reluctance exists towards pursuing ordination for the lay planter as they may get moved on to another parish: “let's say, for example, you ordain them, certainly in our diocese, that would then cause us an issue because our deaneries have a specific clergy allocation with them.” This links with Money above as they went on to ask “if we've got a layperson and we don't ordain them, then how do we work out finance?” Donor 2L noted resistance can exist in the institution which tends to understand leadership primarily as holy orders, saying that “pushing people through ordination is just a hurdle, and it's the wrong thing to do.”

Instability due to succession. Doers did not mention this obstacle, but Donor 2I asked “where's the security? What happens if I move on but we've planted something in my patch that's lay led? Does the next person axe it?” Director 3J also noted this challenge, pointing out that lay led planting has failed “because the new incumbent said, ‘oh, no, we're not doing that anymore’, or couldn't cope with it, or just felt threatened by them and fell out with them.”

No formal pathway or authorization. Doers did not mention this obstacle either, but two Donors in particular considered the lack of formal pathway or authorization of a particular challenge for lay led church planting, and one Director commented in their interview “I think lay leaders in the Church of England do a sort of AWA thing Authorised [*sic*] Worship Assistant” (3G). Donor 2I said “there should be like a national accreditation sort of thing for a lay planter” and that “if The Church of England really actually want full-blown church plants, then we need to celebrate them.” Donor 2L said “I think theological training is an obstacle. We feel that we have to push people through theological training rather than train them as we go,” linking this to Focus towards

ordination. They went on to suggest “if we could ordain what the Lord is already doing, then I think it's okay to do that.” Donor 2I said, “structures which validate clergy do not seem to celerbrate [*sic*] lay people in the same way.”

Ecclesiological Clarity. Donor 2I wrote that the “church of england [*sic*] is very unclear what lay church planting is” and went on to say in their interview that “there's obvious obstacles as well, like sacraments and stuff. But in our diocese, they're willing to say ‘you can do agape suppers’ it’s weird!” Director 3G said, “the other obstacles would just be the framework of the Church of England.” Director 3J noted “we've got the structural issues and so, we've got, ‘What is a church? Who can lead a church?’” They repeated the connection between the local oversight clergy and the viability of lay led planting, meaning this too is linked to Untrained clergy. An obstacle is “the priests and their understanding of all of this in terms of whether it's appropriate and legitimate.”

Maintenance not Mission. New church plants led by lay people can meet resistance through institutional resistance as the institution is more focused on maintenance than mission. Doer 1I spoke about how a lay led plant “can face challenges when the inherited church locally feels threatened by something new.” Donor 2A underlined this by writing that the “CofE continues to value clergy in maintenance model over lay planters.” Another noted that the institutional challenges can distract from mission by noting that “if you've got a lay church planter who's having to talk to diocesan safeguarding the whole time, it's exhausting” (2G). These comments suggest that the institutionalization of the church naturally resists change as noted by the final obstacle.

Resistance to change. One Doer wondered whether a potential obstacle to planting a lay-led church was “being black female?” (1F). Another wrote that “there was

a lot of control from the sending church clergy” (1D) so one obstacle lay planters face is when an oversight minister is not releasing enough, resisting the change the lay planter is suggesting. One reason for this might be a concern about risk and failure; Director 3H said that “those are the two extremes, because when you see, the extreme of someone saying yes to everything is that when accidents happen and the person in the parish next door falls into the barricades up.” When something goes wrong in a lay led plant, it can cause resistance to anything else in the future, creating obstacles for other opportunities.

Research Question #3: Description of Evidence

Best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England

The data shows that best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England falls into three clear categories: (1) identifying leaders; (2) offering support from the institution; and (3) the key role clergy play in offering oversight as apostolic priests. The first two themes within these best practices relate directly to the obstacles identified in the second research question; the third theme underlines the role of oversight clergy as expressed in response to the first research question about current practices.

The document analysis of the Myriad Oversight Pathway training has been taken into consideration for the first two research questions regarding current practices and obstacles to lay led church planting. Much of what the training offers might also be considered as discussing best practices, but to avoid repetition of this data, only aspects that have not been included above are mentioned in the data below.

Table 4.3 below shows the distribution of responses from each group across both questionnaires and interviews. This highlights the most significant aspect of best practices: the most important work in every group except the Directors in interview is identifying leaders.

Table 4.3. Responses re best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England

	Questionnaires			Interviews		
	Doer	Donor	Director	Doer	Donor	Director
<i>N (number of responses) =</i>	15	40	23	29	40	34
Identify leaders	60%	38%	35%	28%	25%	15%
Institutional support	0%	23%	35%	24%	20%	24%
Free to fail	0%	8%	4%	10%	13%	12%
Formal training	7%	18%	9%	14%	8%	24%
Mentor/support	33%	5%	13%	10%	20%	18%
Expectations	0%	10%	0%	14%	15%	9%

Identify leaders

Just as the discussion around identifying leaders was seen as a key obstacle above, all groups in questionnaires and interviews noted this as a very significant part of best practice as shown in table 4.3 above. This response was the most common response for all groups in both questionnaires and interviews apart from in interviews with Directors. A differentiation existed between the “what” and the “how” of best practices in identifying potential lay planters. For example, Director 3G wrote “God will build his

church and identify leaders” without describing how this might happen. Other respondents did give more detail about this, noted below.

Many significant crossovers exist in this data from the first research question around current processes. Potential lay church planters were identified primarily by their clergy by six key traits as noted above. Here, the responses regarding best practice for identifying potential lay planters can be summarized in four points: (1) *relationship*; (2) *gifting*; (3) *releasing*; and (4) *freedom to fail*.

Relationship. The relationship between apostolic priest and potential lay planter is vital for identifying and training them. From this relationship flows everything else — the discernment, encouragement, and support; Doer 1B describes clergy encouraging “friendship with [the] lay leader.” Doer 1G wrote, “I think one of the things for identifying a lay lead, is seeing how much someone loves and cares for the people and place they will be leading and has a passion for helping them grow and develop.” They went on to say in interview “it’s spending time with people.” Doer 1B also wrote “look for those willing to serve with a passionate spirituality. A passion for Jesus and for the people they are called to” — it is not only the potential lay planter’s relationship with clergy and others but also their relationship with God. Doer 1K wrote about the “early identification of potential in young and emerging leaders;” the use of the word “early” clearly meaning long before they are released to plant a church, they are “to be developed and mentored” (see below). Doer 1I said, “I think relationship has a huge amount to do with it... I suppose there is just something in your character that is only discovered through relationship.”

Relationships provided the key to identifying lay planters. Donor 2B mentioned “spending time getting to know people and their gifts and calling; encouraging prayer and finding their vision. Getting references from people who actually know the person.” Other Donors mentioned “attentiveness” (2C), “paying attention to the prophetic being spoken over people,” “you can only see a gifting when people actually serve” (2H); and “spot people already itching to fulfil the great commission” (2I). A clear sense exists that an apostolic priest has to build relationship to get to know a potential lay planter, looking for “humility... not people who love the mic, but who get the DNA of the Kingdom” (2H). Donor 2L summarized in their interview saying, “it has to be born out of relationship.”

Director 3H took the theme of relationship beyond just the clergy and potential lay planter to include relationship with God through prayer and relationship between the planter and the church: “lots of prayer, honest and sometimes challenging conversations around motivations, vision, understanding and relationship with local church.” Relationships take time to develop, to allow discernment. Director 3H said, “best practice is really, I think, a massive dose of discernment, and that can't be rushed” instead asking “how do we release someone that the Lord has called?” Another said, “I think the key is that we have clergy who can discern what God is doing in people” (3J). Finally, the relationship does not stop once the lay leader has planted; Donor 2I said clergy and lay planters need to be “clear as to what the role, what does the relationship look like in the long run?”

The Myriad Oversight Training mentions the importance of relationships on Slide 20, “Relational Congruence,” determining five aspects of this: (1) Integrity; (2) Maturity;

(3) Emotional health; (4) Spirituality; and (5) Authenticity. No further notes are offered to clarify what these words mean, but the document analysis also clearly values the importance of relationship between clergy and planter.

Identifying and training lay leaders for church planting does not occur in a vacuum but through relationship between the apostolic priest, potential lay planter, God (through prayer), and the wider institution (local church, diocese, and denomination) which takes time and attention to notice what God is doing and saying and discerning the appropriate gifts within people.

Gifting. Doer 1J wrote that clergy should be looking to “identify gift not level of education” in potential lay planters. Whilst the planter’s gifting is important, so are the gifts of those in the planting team too; Doer 1K noted in their interview “I always felt like I had much more in me of kind of gifts and calling... [the church plant] was more wrapped around the, the light, the lives, the connections, the giftings of the people that were in the team as much as it was around the person who was leading it.”

Donor 2H wrote that clergy should “find people who already step out,” and Donor 2I wrote “I try and spot people already itching to fulfil the great commission and people who are starting embryonic [*sic*] things. If evangelism and contact with non-Christians is not in there, it is a non starter.” The same Donor said in interview that clergy should “begin with a list of gifts that you absolutely need the person to have.”

No Directors mentioned this aspect in the questionnaires, but in their interview, Director 3G said “the priest’s there to help nurture, build, release gifts of people, grow other priests, or help people to come to an awakening of their innate priesthood, priesthood of all believers.” Clearly, the relationship mentioned above allows for the

apostolic priest to identify a potential lay planter by helping them see both their character and gifting over time. Identifying potential lay planters includes giving them a chance to lead, which is the theme of the next two aspects: *releasing* and *free to fail*.

Releasing. A lay planter is identified through observing their character and gifting in relationship over time, and part of this identifying is allowing them the chance to lead. Doer 1C suggested “giving Christians in churches looking to plant experience in leading”; another wrote that clergy should “create accessible small discipleship communities that young people can lead” (1H) giving the opportunity for potential lay planters to learn to lead. In their interview, Doer 1K asked “how might the opportunities that your church, your parish offers, not just be about servicing the needs and the ministries of the parish, but be training grounds for the suite of skills and ministry potential?” Relationship with the potential planter and identifying their gifting also means releasing lay leaders within the sending, Donor church to offer them a safe training ground and identify them more fully as a lay church planter.

Donor 2F called this the “enablement of every member ministry”, whilst Donor 2A recognizes that the lay planters must also be releasing leaders: best practice is “identifying lay planters who have capacity and skill in releasing others in lay planting”. Donor 2G talked about “giving people areas of responsibility that build towards this... grow the structures, introduce the leaders, grow them through the system.” They also said how it is “important that people are given freedom.” Directors, notably, had little to say on this aspect. Identifying lay planters means clergy giving opportunities for lay people to lead; this can function as a training ground for them as well as helping to identify their gifting, but releasing them also creates the potential for things to go wrong.

Freedom to fail. The best practices in identifying lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England includes noticing those who are willing to try and who can manage the potential for failure. Doer 1G described this attitude as “don't overthink anything just do it.” Donor 2C wrote that the best practice is to “try it and see” and “don't be afraid of ‘failure.’” Donor 2I said that “risk is something that pleases God's heart, as long as it's kind of in-line with his purposes” and that when failure happens, best practice is to “kick it around afterwards and go, why did it not?” Failure itself is not valued, but the learning that can come from failure is very valuable. Donor 2I described this as “giv[ing] them safe spaces in order to experiment,” and Donor 2L painted a picture of reflective practice, saying “let you have a go, you reflect on it... do the next, all of that stuff.” Director 3B wrote that best practice is to “start small and build,” and Director 3G recognized that “the fully organic ministry rooted in the mission of God means you've got to have some non-starters.” They suggested that things not going to plan can serve the process of discernment, recalling “when we tried to launch something in May, actually, no, God's got something else.” The same Director also wrote that identifying lay leaders for church planting demands “new courage to take risks.”

Best practice in identifying and training lay leaders for church planting starts with relationship, which overtime demonstrates the character and gifting of a potential lay planter who is offered a pathway to develop gifts in leadership before being released to try something new which may or may not be fruitful. This process demands courage from both the lay planter and the apostolic priest due to the challenges presented by institutional resistance (see above), which relates to the next aspect of best practice, that

of offering institutional support to lay leaders planting churches in the Church of England.

Institutional support

Where *institutional resistance* was a primary theme regarding obstacles to identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England, here the institution can also offer significant support. Four main ways of institutional support were mentioned in questionnaire and interview responses: (1) *training pathway*; (2) *mentoring*; (3) *authorization*; and (4) *finances*. Notably, no lay planters mentioned institutional support in their responses on the questionnaire regarding best practices; in contrast, Directors considered this the most important aspect of best practice in identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.

Training pathway. As noted above, training currently occurs in various ways, but training is clearly a need. Doer 1B said, “we've had to learn everything from scratch pretty much, you know, like sort of what policies or risk assessments... even things like finances, your accounts, keeping up-to-date... Safeguarding as well, safeguarding's a big thing.” One way in which the institution can support lay led church planting is in providing or signposting a training pathway. Responses suggest that best practices are a combination of those identified in current processes and that formal training is best delivered on-the-job. Donor 2A wrote about “bringing training as close to the ground as possible” whilst Doer 1I described this process in their interview: “I think modelling and practicing entwined, like [my Donor] modelling it and then me having a chance to practice and then modelling and then practicing was really useful, like, almost like on the

job training.” Director 3J noted that “it has to be training that, as we've said before, fits into lifestyle and goes alongside everything else they're doing.”

Donor 2L described the training pathway that they had designed to deliver this kind of on-the-job training: “we're talking like proper apprenticeships. You work with somebody and learn how they do it... And yes, we are going to pull them into kind of classroom for 5 hours a week, but they're going to be doing 15 hours a week doing their apprenticeship, y'know, with an experienced practitioner.” This combination of classroom input and having a go seems to be the essence of best practice in training.

Donor 2A wrote, “for training, best is on the job — giving it a go; then linking up to a friendly incumbent who can encourage, coach and pray for them; putting them in a peer group to accelerate their learning and encourage giving to others; some classroom learning on a broad curriculum over time; and encouraging some homework.” This “homework” relates to turning theory to practice which results in some action; Director 3B wrote that training needs to be a “joined up process (we have too many training programmes [*sic*] that don't lead to a next thing).” So a training pathway needs to offer some input, a chance to put the theory into practice, and reflect upon the results.

The institution can support this training by locally creating a pathway or signposting towards national programs. Donor 2E wrote, “Diocese training supports and complements local level training with Diocesan and national level input.” Six out of nine (66.7 percent) of all interviewees mentioned Myriad, suggesting that the pattern of training they have developed meets many of the criteria set out above. Whatever this pathway looks like, a significant aspect of this training is to have a mentor who can offer a space for reflection, learning, and coaching.

Mentoring. The lay church planters considered mentoring more significant as a best practice than the oversight clergy or those working in the institution: in questionnaires, 33 percent of Doer's responses related to mentoring; only 5 percent of Donors and 13 percent of Director's responses related to mentoring. However, some of the responses which related to Training Pathway above contain aspects of apprenticeship and mentoring from all three groups. Lay planters who wrote about mentoring specifically described "regular check ins, mentoring, discipleship huddles with other senior leaders" (1B), "being encouraged and mentored carefully" (1I), and Doer 1K wrote about "structured mentoring [and]... some intensive coaching input from someone external who has real experience of this type of ministry." Doer 1I wrote about "being encouraged and mentored carefully" and in their interview spoke about how "the modelling, practicing, modelling, practicing cycle was helpful." Donor 2I described how this might happen by "meet[ing] with them probably monthly and kick some ideas around what worked, what didn't work" whilst Donor 2B wrote about accessing other clergy for mentoring, "linking up to a friendly incumbent who can encourage, coach and pray for them." Director 3B wrote that "individual coaching" is part of best practice whereas Director 3I considered "giving people the help and encouragement they need which might include a formal training course, but most of the time is about personal input." Affirming the link between mentoring and Relationship above, Director 3G spoke in their interview about "following the Holy Spirit, discerning what God's doing, joining in, apprenticeship, relational ministry." Supportive mentors who can bring the best out of lay planters are considered by all groups to be part of best practice in identifying and

training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England. How these lay planters fit within the structural framework is the focus of the next aspect of best practice.

Authorization. Whilst lay leaders are being identified and trained for church planting in the Church of England, currently no official way of recognizing or authorizing this ministry exists; best practice would be to attend to this problem, to affirm, approve, and celebrate lay led church plants. Director 3B said in their interview “I would also want us to tackle the scary question of forming the structures to be able to run with this in the future.” Doer 1K spoke about “one of the symptoms of senior leadership in the Anglican church not taking lay ministry seriously is that, I felt for 20 years, never felt like I had any commission or invitation to be part of the leadership stream.” Director 3H wrote about the “tensions emerging between those who are lay planting and those who go through the very thorough and detailed discernment process for LLM training.” Director 3J said “there should be a way that the church community is recognized as a church community” whilst seeking to avoid the “clash with authorized lay ministry.” Some Donors agreed with one saying “there should be like a national accreditation sort of thing for a lay planter” (2I), and Director 2D wrote that best practice for lay planting demands “requiring the wider church to recognise [*sic*], identity and confirm lay leaders and not just rely on, say, the clergy alone.” Donor 2A wrote that “not requiring the planter to jump through hoops for authorisation [*sic*]” is best. Director 3B wrote that best practice is to “remove as many barriers as possible” whilst another suggested “flexibility with BMOs, relational networks and new wineskins and new courage to take risks” (3G).

This desire for authorization and/or recognition should offer “freedom within a framework” that avoids a lay planter “get[ting] bogged down in ecclesiastical ‘process’”

(Donor 2C). Donor 2I pointed out, “if it's in your parish, you can just go ahead and get on with it,” but complications arise beyond this geographical boundary. Lay planting into another parish means holding a “resistance to the idea that leadership equals ordination” and impacts not only the way lay planters are trained and commissioned but also when (2F). Director 3J said, “I think being recognized or licensed or commissioned is significant, but we're suggesting that it happens at the right point, rather than at a fixed point in the process.” Two respondents (2I, 3J) described the use of a “commissioning” rather than “authorizing” or other formal ways of recognizing lay church planters with Director 3J noting the important role played by the oversight minister; it is “the ordained leader to discern that, to communicate that into the institutional structures and say, ‘I think this is the moment for these guys to be commissioned.’” Donor 2G noted the complexity of this, however, with the institution needing to “simultaneously create structures and build leaders within a visible and understandable structure.” This structure needs, as Doer 1K said, “commitment from vicars, senior leaders, bishops ultimately, particularly with some experience under their belt of missional outreach type stuff.” Questions remain about how lay planters exist within the structural framework of the Church of England, which links to the obstacle of Ecclesiological Clarity above. Whilst commissioning lay planters may help, it does not give them official authorization to minister. Where authorization is one form of institutional support, another kind of support lay planters need is financial.

Finances. Best practice is to clarify how training and releasing lay led church plants is financed. Donor 2I considered the challenges of how finances relate to the institution and to lay led church planting where Parish share is paid from the Parish

Church to the Diocese to go towards both clergy and centralized costs. In their interview, this Donor reflected “if I lay planted... and we dropped share by 25 grand to pay for it... if I can allow the new church to grow and eventually pay share, hopefully that kind of all balances out.” Donor 2C wrote that best practice means that bishops “put your diocesan money where your mouth is.” Donor 2L wrote that lay planting “needs to come form [sic] the bottom up but recourses [sic] need to be released from the center.” Director 3I suggested “offering grants for 8/16 hours a week to pay lay people.” One way the institution can support lay planting is by considering how to release finances to invest in these new ventures.

Local Clergy function as Apostolic Priests

Responses to the question about best practices underlined the importance of the role of local clergy functioning as apostolic priests to identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England. The data for best practice shows significant overlap between this and the responses to current processes in Apostolic Priests are key in identifying Lay Church Planters above. Donor 2E wrote that it is “local church leaders [who] identify suitable lay planters.” Six themes exist that arise from the data for best practice. An Apostolic Priest is (1) *releasing*; (2) *encouraging*; (3) *discerning*; offers (4) *vision*; (5) *direction*; and (6) *spiritual formation*. Finally, *clergy should be trained* in what it means to identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.

Releasing. Apostolic priests are intentional about giving away responsibility to lay planters. Director 3H said, “I’m going to give [lay planters] responsibility and I’m going to be intentional about it.” Being intentional about releasing lay leaders offers

“great training grounds for giving people the crucial experience they need to go to the next level” (Donor 2G). Donor 2I spoke about “when it goes wrong, it's become too much about me and I've controlled it too much and it's part of my identity.” Apostolic priests release some responsibility to lay leaders to create a training ground that can also help identify potential lay planters. This statement means not controlling lay leaders but allowing them to try things in a safe space.

Apostolic priests release lay planters but sustain relationship; best practice is to clarify the relationship between Doer and Donor in the short and longer term. Donor 2I suggested both parties need to be “clear as to what the role [is], what does the relationship look like in the long run?” Donor 2I looked at it from the other perspective, “the nightmare would be that I put somebody in post and then I essentially had to proxy vicar forever.” Director 3G pointed out that “someone's going to be running something miles away in the name of something you're leading” so the apostolic priest needs to trust the lay leader and create clarity about the role and relationship when lay planters are released.

Apostolic priests need to be released by the institution as well; Donor 2A wrote that best practice is for Directors to “let local clergy lead by empowering them.” Releasing means apostolic priests giving lay leaders opportunity to learn and grow, relinquishing control and trying something new, clarifying and sustaining relationship, and growing trust between Doer, Donor, and Directors. Releasing does not mean letting go of relationship or accountability but sustaining a relationship where the lay planter finds a source of encouragement.

Encouraging. Doer 1K said, “I think there is a need to be quite creative about encouraging and enabling lay people to spend the bulk of their time prayerfully engaging with the communities that they are part of.” As above in Releasing, lay planters are looking to their apostolic priest not just for relationship but also encouragement. Donor 2A wrote that best practice is to “make sure no lay planter is forgotten — value them more highly than clergy.” Encouragement is needed both in the identifying and the training of lay leaders for church planting. Donor 2L described this process as “building an onramp, of building confidence and some knowledge” which comes from both releasing and encouraging. The same Donor compared the process to an apprenticeship: “you work with somebody and learn how they do it... with an experienced practitioner.” Apostolic priests are the experienced practitioners who can offer encouragement to the lay planter as they grow and develop in their leadership. They can also be encouraged by others doing similar things; Donor 2A wrote about the value of a “peer group to accelerate their learning and encourage giving to others.”

Director 3J suggests that a connection exists between encouraging lay planters and discerning their calling, saying “to have somebody who, with their ordained position, then interprets it and says, ‘oh, do you realize this is quite often what God begins to do when he's calling people to do this?’” Whilst apostolic priests need to be releasing and encouraging, they also need to be discerning.

Discerning. Doer 1K said that “there is so much potential in almost every layperson” and that “part of [clergy’s] role is to identify and raise up those who will carry mission forward in your patch.” An apostolic priest uses discernment to identify those who have the calling, character, and gifting to become lay church planters. Donor 2F

suggested asking the question “Who are people gathering around and responding to?” whilst Donor 2I wrote that discerning those who might be a lay planter is “seeing people with Jesus' eyes.” Discernment can take time; Director 3B spoke about the importance of “prayer, patience and discerning the prophetic and building in scaffolding.” Director 3J agreed, saying “there's a sense of ‘this is going to happen at different speeds and paces for each person.’” An apostolic priest is invested in “pastoring, discipling, recognize, and by that I also mean recognizing the call of God on the people in their congregation” (Director 3H). Discernment is also needed for when to release, when to encourage, and when to engage them with formal training, as Director 3J said: “all of those personal factors around those individuals that we have to discern that with them, so do we release them into training at that point?” Apostolic priests release lay leaders within their church in order to identify and train potential lay planters; they encourage lay planters as they gain some experience in leading and use this time to prayerfully and prophetically discern whether the lay leader has the character, calling, and gifts to become a lay planter. This sense of call to plant will come from the wider vision shared by the apostolic priest.

Vision and direction. Apostolic priests provide vision for lay led church planting and offer direction for those wanting to plant. As Donor 2G wrote, “people are not going to volunteer to do something that they haven't thought about.” The role of story came through the data as important to this sense of vision; Director 3I wrote about “lots of publicising [*sic*], telling the stories,” and Director 3B spoke about “sharing as many stories as possible to remove excuse-mentality. Identify those who are leaning in to the vision of planting.” Sharing vision and stories of lay led planting helps to identify potential lay planters. Another way of envisioning lay leaders is for potential planters to

see what others are doing; Donor 2I thinks “taster days is the start which allows clergy to send lots of people to see what it means to plant.” As well as sharing stories to envision potential lay planters, conversations can also create a vision and direction for lay leaders to try planting something new. Donor 2I also said, “you're helping to have those conversations of who are we reaching and who are we not reaching.” An apostolic priest looks at a situation with vision and expectation as Director 3H said: “you've got a church leader who's ordained, who is intentional, who's like, ‘I'm not going to babysit twelve villages and just have a rota and hope for the best, but I'm going to have an expectation that people will come to faith in each one of these villages.”

Apostolic priests create the context which allows for the possibility of lay planting through sharing stories and giving exposure to other lay planters; they paint a picture of what could happen if lay leaders did plant which creates vision, and they offer direction for how that vision may be accomplished. In other words, apostolic priests spend “intentional strategic and training time spent by senior leaders with potential leaders” (Donor 2F). This vision and direction is what creates the context for releasing, encouraging, and discerning lay leaders for planting, all of which offers a process of spiritual formation for the potential lay planter.

Spiritual formation. Apostolic priests offer spiritual formation in their relationship with those they are identifying and training for lay church planting. This process begins with modelling a lifestyle and practices to those being raised up into leadership, as Donor 2I said, “am I leading a life that others would want to copy?” What lay planters see in their apostolic priest is formed into their own leadership and ministry. Donor 2G related this back to Paul’s description of how to identify a leader in Scripture,

writing that “it's a qualification for an elder. [Lay planters] need to have a firm grasp of the deep truths of the faith.” Apostolic priests identify and train lay leaders for planting not just through their skills and gifts but also their character. Humility is a necessity for this process of spiritual formation; Donor 2L wrote that “they don't have to be the perfect person, as long as they realize they're not the perfect person.” The best practice for apostolic priests to identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England includes noting their spiritual maturity and investing in their spiritual formation before releasing them into leadership.

Clergy should be trained. For more clergy to function as apostolic priests means training them to function in this way. This aspect could have been mentioned in Institutional Support above but seemed to fit more accurately within this section describing the importance of apostolic priests in identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England. Director 3J noted that clergy “are the gatekeepers” in all of this, but the institution can support it through envisioning and training clergy. The Church of England needs to “establish training for clergy in identifying [potential lay planters], discerning calling, casting vision, taking risks” (3J). The data from this study shows that some clergy are already doing this, but Director 3I wrote that the institution needs to “envision vicars, vision days to help people dream/ think out of the box.” Clergy are the ones who identify lay leaders for planting; they are usually the primary connection point between lay planters and the institution, and much more lay-led planting could happen in the Church of England if clergy were envisioned and trained to function as apostolic priests.

Summary of Major Findings

The research conducted for this study was to find data that would help discover how apostolic priests in the Church of England function in identifying and training lay leaders for church planting. Responses to the questionnaire, interviews, and doing a document analysis provided this data to reveal current processes, primary obstacles, and best practices in identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England. There are five major findings from this data set:

- (1) Apostolic priests are crucial for lay led church planting. Lay church planters would not exist without clergy who identify potential and create opportunities for training. If the lay leader then plants, the apostolic priest is the primarily relational support for them as they plant, providing oversight and offering sacramental ministry as well as functioning as a bridge to the institution (point 4 below).
- (2) Apostolic Priests Identify Leaders by Discerning Character and Gifting through Relationship. A pathway seems to exist of noticing potential and offering leadership opportunities for the lay leader to learn to lead. The apostolic priest observes both character and gifting displayed in these opportunities and uses their relationship with the potential lay planter to help them reflect and grow. This action creates a pathway of both discernment for the clergy and training for the lay leader, suggesting the connection between apostolic priests identifying and training lay leaders for church planting.

- (3) Identifying and training lay leaders for church planting is an intertwined process. The pathway of identifying laid out above (notice potential, give leadership opportunity, observe character and gifting, reflect together) means that giving some initial training and coaching to a potential lay planter is part of identifying them. Identifying and training are, therefore, linked in practice (i.e. character is revealed by how a potential planter responds to challenge or difficulty; gifting is revealed by leading in a particular area).
- (4) Apostolic priests are the bridge between the institution and the lay planter. Lay planters relate to the institution primarily through their clergy who provides apostolic covering to their mission work. Without official authorization, the lay planter is dependent on their apostolic priest for their work. Few Doers mentioned obstacles because their primary connection is with the oversight clergy. This bridge also creates an inherent instability in lay led church plants, as when a change of oversight clergy occurs, the new priest may not want to continue supporting the lay led church plant.
- (5) The institution can encourage lay planters through on-the-job training, finances, and authorization and offers training to clergy to help better become apostolic priests. Most of the skills needed to identify and train lay leaders can be learned by clergy: identify potential, give opportunity to lead and learn through reflective practice, and offer more opportunities if the character and gifting of the lay leader is sufficient. The institution can support lay planting through relevant and timely training which does not remove the planter from their context, adding fuel to the fire of the encouragement from their apostolic priest. The Church of England could also

encourage lay led church planters through authorizing their ministry and considering how to help finance their work.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter 4 presented the emerging themes from the data collected from the questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis to explore best practices for apostolic priests to identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England. In Chapter 5, these major findings are considered alongside the biblical, theological, and historical evidence presented in Chapter 2 to offer a synthesis of the whole research project. Each of the five major findings are discussed in turn before considering the implications for ministry given the evidence provided. The limitations of this study are discussed followed by some reflection on some of the unexpected observations which arose as part of the study. A key aspect of this Chapter is to offer some recommendations, reflecting on how both individuals and the institution might respond to the evidence presented here and where further study might be beneficial. Finally, some personal reflections are offered to draw this project to a close.

Major Findings

Major Finding #1. Apostolic Priests are Crucial for Lay-Led Church Planting

An apostolic priest is someone who helps God's people see themselves as part of the response to the Great Commission, that Jesus' words are relevant to them. The biblical foundations showed that being apostolic means recognizing the "sentness" of God's people, a priesthood, whose priestly duty is to share the good news of Jesus. Apostolic priests not only do this as part of their ordained role in the church but look to encourage others who are apostolic whether ordained or lay. Croft, Cottrell, other

Anglicans, and even some in the Roman Catholic church argue that an apostolic priest sees baptism as a form of ordination into the priesthood of all believers and offers the kind of oversight that Paul told Titus was so vital to the continued witness, worship, and work of the local church. The New Testament also shows that women can function as apostolic priests as well as men. Cottrell argues that the role of clergy is to function in an oversight role (20), but the discussion around priests leading the sacraments during the Covid-19 pandemic shows that different parts of the church think very differently about lay presidency (Francis and Village 98). Agreement exists, however, that the role of a priest is to empower God's people in their priestly work, and an apostolic priest uses their oversight role to encourage the priestly work of mission.

Relating to the historical review, the apostolic priest leads their church in a way that is similar to the Anglo-Saxon Minsters: empowering lay and ordained to worship together and pursue new mission activities to reach those beyond the church. Whilst much exists that is not completely clear due to the limited sources, but it is clear that not every Minster was clergy-led. The Anglo-Saxons empowered women leaders to oversee the Minster communities, and both clergy and laity worked together in the missional activities with apostolic priests leading the way.

John Wesley is, perhaps, the best example of an apostolic priest within the history of the Church of England. Apostolic priests create opportunities for people to learn to lead just as Wesley's different size groups did in the Methodist revival. Wesley functioned as an apostolic priest by spotting potential in someone, giving

them the opportunity to lead something small, which may lead to taking responsibility for something bigger in time. By establishing religious societies which were led by lay people but were accountable to clergy, Wesley found a way of releasing lay leaders into the mission of God and leading communities of believers whilst seeking to revitalize the local church. Four distinctives of Wesley's religious societies exist: (1) they were part of the Church of England; (2) lay-led, but accountable to clergy; (3) they functioned outside of church buildings; and (4) they aided church growth. Remarkable similarities between these societies and the current discussion around lay led church planting exist.

Apostolic priests are both apostolic and presbyters or priests (themes developed in the literature review: they are ordained within the Church of England as priests) and are those who function as elders within their church community, praying, preaching, and presiding at the sacraments. As noted above, to be a presbyter also means to offer oversight — *episcopo* — which means being apostolic. This oversight means helping the people they oversee to understand themselves as part of the apostolic church. Hirsch described this as helping the church utilize its missional DNA (76), and as the Methodist story shows, apostolic priests see opportunities, encourages others to take responsibility in their own discipleship and, in time, other people's discipleship too through identifying potential, encouraging people to have a go at leadership, staying in relationship with them along the way, and using reflective practice to help them develop.

Apostolic priests think imaginatively about new possibilities for church planting, as the House of Bishops' paper recommended, by sharing vision with those they lead of what might be possible. As the Myriad report demonstrated, for a lay person to step into planting, they must sense a calling from God: apostolic priests share the vision of what

might be which creates the context for a potential lay planter to catch the vision and hear the call of God on their lives. The Myriad report also concluded that clergy functioning as apostolic priests are vital to the mixed ecology of the Church of England.

The research data confirmed these factors. Apostolic priests share vision from which a potential lay planter discerns a call from God to try to start something new. Apostolic priests play the key role in identifying leaders, being the most important aspect of this whole research according to both current processes and best practice. The data shows that an apostolic priest must be secure enough in their own selves and ministry to be able to release others into leadership and offer continued vision and direction through a sustained relationship with the lay planter. Without a priest functioning in an apostolic way, there will be no lay planting and no mixed ecology in the Church of England; lay church planters would not exist in the Church of England without clergy who identify someone who has the potential and create opportunities for training them.

Major Finding #2. Apostolic Priests Identify Leaders by Discerning Character and Gifting through Relationship

The focus of this major finding is how the lay leader is identified. In Matthew 28 Jesus commissioned all his disciples to go, baptize, and teach; however, Paul told Titus to look for character before function when looking for people to take responsibility for leading others (Tit 1.6). The research data suggested confidence that “leading” was a skill that could be learned, but the most important thing for an apostolic priest to identify is a person of good character, something that can only be determined in time through

relationship. Jesus' commission was to go and make disciples, and as France argues, discipleship is demonstrated through following Jesus' commandments (421). Just like Jesus with his own disciples or Paul with those he raised up into leadership, a discipleship relationship is what allows an apostolic priest to determine whether someone is truly seeking to follow the teachings of Jesus. If they are, then they too are encouraged to go. Hirsch's work suggests that apostles look for other apostles, so an apostolic priest will be on the lookout for people in their church who are also apostolic (154); Bolsinger makes the point that this happens through relationship (37).

Foot showed that the Anglo-Saxon Minsters recognized the role of lay teachers and preachers ('Parochial Ministry in Early Anglo-Saxon England' 48), and Bede wrote about Bishops appointing people for these and other pastoral activities (49). Whilst no evidence exists in the sources for how people were given leadership responsibilities in this era, it can be inferred that this was done in community and that Bishops and Abbots/Abbesses sought out people of good character to whom they could entrust a share of their ministry.

John Wesley offers an interesting study in that he was so stretched by the number of people coming to faith that he needed to appoint leaders that at times he did not really know. Yet he considered the appointment of leaders so important that he took it upon himself to appoint class leaders although he did not always have significant relationship with them to determine whether they were suitable. This decision meant that at times he would have to stand them down from their role if they proved unsuitable; he released leadership to lay people and stayed in close enough relationship to determine whether they could be trusted to lead over the long term. Others who did prove themselves in the

small things could climb the Methodist ladder of leadership, taking on more and more responsibility and developing more and more trust with Wesley himself.

The research data shows that apostolic priests should be looking for people who are gifted as evangelistic initiators. Discerning their character continues through observing whether they are teachable and resilient, positive and pioneering, faith-filled and prayerful, and are able to build team and community connections — the lay planters are people of character and relationship. However, available time is a challenge to this relationship being formed and sustained. For those relationships that are managed well, they offer the context for significant spiritual formation for the lay planter. Lay planters are identified through relationship with their apostolic priest who discerns their character and gifting.

Major Finding #3. Identifying and Training Lay Leaders for Planting is an Intertwined Process

The training and identifying of lay planters are intertwined: one does not happen without the other. Best practice shows that an apostolic priest does not simply identify potential in a lay leader and let them get on with it but uses their relationship with the lay person to encourage and help them as they learn to lead. The ongoing relationship between apostolic priest and lay planter is only effective in identifying and training them when the time is used as a discernment process. As the biblical foundations show and Sayers underlines (166), Jesus commissioned his disciples to go, baptize, and teach others but only after three years of living alongside and ministering with them. Jesus identified and trained his disciples as a process over time. Croft (38) pointed out that the apostle Paul was writing to Titus to encourage him to continue to evangelize and to find others

who can guide those coming to faith by baptizing and teaching. These overseers were to be people of good character, which, as in the second major finding, is determined through relationship over time as more responsibility is released and trust is demonstrated.

Hirsch argues that someone with apostolic gifting will encourage other ministries to emerge (154); the apostolic environment encourages others to consider their own priestly role and to try new things too. This is what the Anglo-Saxon mission was seeking to do: establish new communities of faith in a non-Christian land by establishing centers of worship and mission which would plant new worshiping communities where people responded to the invitation to follow Jesus. As argued in the second major finding above, even though little documentary evidence exists of how new leaders were identified and trained in this period, there are intimations that it was an intertwined process over time which allowed character and gifting to be determined, encouraged, and honed.

The above was certainly the case for the Methodist movement. Clear guidelines were given to the band or class leaders, and clear accountability structures were provided for the burgeoning religious societies. Those who had been identified as potential leaders were given clear boundaries and guidance on what was expected of them and how they should lead. Their willingness to serve and to work within those guidelines gave some insight into their character, and the fruit of their work gave insight into the level of their gifting. As Hall argues, Wesley had at least five different means by which lay leaders were trained (133), but this was not before they started taking responsibility; it was whilst they were starting to lead.

The research shows an apostolic priest will notice potential in someone and offer them an opportunity to lead something. They will observe the gifting and character of the

lay person as they lead and will reflect together to help them grow and develop. If they discern further leadership potential, they will repeat this process and at times formal training will become part of this development. This process appears to be the pattern of Jesus with his disciples, of Paul with his followers like Titus, and of how apostolic leaders function. This having a go and reflecting together is perhaps how to respond to the call in *Mission-shaped Church* to experience training as discernment (147). The Myriad report showed that lay planters considered having a mentor, coach, or champion as vital in their planting journey (McGinley 5).

Data from the questionnaires and interviews show that Doers considered experience as the most vital part of their training. Donors considered clergy supervision the most important whilst Directors thought it was formal training. It is tempting to smile and note that each group considered the thing they are involved and invested in as the most important but hearing the lay planters here is worthwhile: they found that learning by doing was most helpful — they learn by giving something a go. This finding can be supported by supervising clergy who can help reflect and by training courses that can help educate, but what lay planters need most are opportunities to learn and grow. This finding means an apostolic priest must function as an encouraging, discerning presence who offers freedom to fail and helps them reflect on all that has happened and creates a bridge between the lay planter and the institution, being the next major finding.

Major Finding #4. Apostolic Priests are the Bridge Between the Institution and Lay Planter

Strikingly, the majority of lay planters claimed to have experienced few, or no, obstacles in their planting or their training. The apostolic priests, however, noted many

obstacles as did those working within the institution to support lay-led church planting. Obstacles do exist, but the apostolic priests bridge between the institution and the lay planter so that the lay leader does not notice the challenges. Recently I spoke to a lay church planter in our context about a meeting I had to go to “so that you don’t have to.” In this way, the lay planter can get on with the work of mission and ministry whilst the apostolic priest provides the oversight and connection to the institution and can work to resolve any obstacles. The Bible calls this kind of oversight *episcopo*, and Croft (142) and Cottrell (20) pointed out that this is part of the role of clergy. Lay planters are planting not just into a new context but from an institution, which means there must be some discernible link; that link is the apostolic priest. The historical review shows that in the earliest days of mission to England, the bishops led what Foot calls “mission units” (*Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600–900* 77) and created the link between the Minsters and new worshipping communities through their teams. Wesley’s societies were part of the Church of England, not separate to them. The teams were there to serve the growth and health of the local church, and each Society was lay led but accountable to clergy. Even in the Methodist revival, clergy functioned as a bridge between the lay leaders and the institution.

The questionnaires and interviews also showed the bridge functions as helping the lay planter access training and support being offered by the institution — the apostolic priest, through relationship with both, can discover training opportunities or grants available and help the lay planter access them. They do not have to do all the training themselves, but they can function as a bridge to the training. In the significant area of

safeguarding, the oversight clergy play a substantial role both in helping them access training and preventing safeguarding issues from becoming too overwhelming.

Regarding the sacraments, apostolic priests provide a vital bridge between the lay planter and institution. Wesley resisted lay presidency and 250 years later the situation remains the same: within the Church of England, only an ordained priest can baptize or preside at Holy Communion. The biblical review suggested that, at least in the case of baptism, this is not a very scriptural position to hold; any lay leader might justifiably ask why they are not permitted to fulfil the Great Commission by baptizing someone. This argument could be extended to Holy Communion; surely Jesus said to the Twelve (and, by implication, all disciples) to do this to remember him. Both in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, voices exist that point out that the threefold hierarchy of deacon, presbyter, and bishop are human constructs rather than biblical reality; Paul's words to Titus certainly suggest an elder/priest does the work of an overseer/bishop. This hierarchy is a complex area filled with significant historical precedents beyond the scope of this study. Interestingly, very little data from the questionnaires and interviews related to how the sacraments are celebrated in lay led churches. In my own experience as a lay church planter, it was honoring the link between our church plant and the Donor church, so that when the clergy came to lead us in communion, it was a joy to have them join us rather than a stranger entering the room. This occurrence underlines the vital bridge an apostolic priest can play in lay led planting, particularly relating to the sacraments. Clergy offering oversight to lay church planters function as a bridge between the lay leader and the institution.

Major Finding #5. The Institution can Encourage Lay Planting through On-The-Job Training, Finances and Authorization, and Train Clergy to Develop More Apostolic Priests

The final major finding is the significant positive role the institution can play in encouraging lay church planting. Three primary areas exist to which this relates: (1) training which supports what the lay planter is doing; (2) providing financial support and authorization for the lay planter; and (3) training for clergy in what it means to be an apostolic priest.

Training for lay planters is not always a formal training course, but the institution can offer encouragement and input to help lay planters. However, not all lay planters have been willing to engage in formal training. They are reluctant, or refuse, and perhaps here it is again the role of the apostolic priest as the bridge to help the planter see the value of the training being offered. The clergy have to believe in the value of the training, too; making people do a course simply to say that it has been completed is of little value, whereas training that helps to understand the mission and ministry in context is of great significance. The Myriad training is seeking to offer such a training pathway. As noted above in Major Finding #3, Hall argues that John Wesley had five methods by which leaders were trained which were resourced by the wider organization (133): (1) the annual conference was a place of connection and training where values could be reasserted; (2) the rules had been written by Wesley to clarify expectations; (3) demonstration, delegation, and supervision is equivalent to being given a mentor or coach; (4) doing is learning by experience; and (5) the small instructional groups are perhaps similar to reflective practice groups. The Church of England is seeking to offer

this kind of training through the Myriad project, but it does, of course, demand that each diocese is committed to resourcing lay planters in this way.

The biblical, literature, and historical reviews showed that Jesus trained his disciples “on the job” or “just in time” rather than “just in case;” another priority for the Myriad training. To remove a lay planter from their context over the medium- to long-term simply in order to train them is profoundly unhelpful and to train them in things they might need to learn — rather than what they do need to know — is a waste of their time. Time, as noted above, is limited for lay planters and so they want answers to questions they are facing rather than what they might face. Time can be released by money — through paying for the relevant training, paying for the time the lay planter needs to take away from their job to attend the training, or even to pay the lay planter for some of their time as leaders so that they are not trying to fit leading a church plant around a full-time job. The Anglo-Saxon Minsters provided food and lodging for lay and ordained members of the orders and created something of an economy for those living close by. Research into the Methodist movement offers little in terms of how the mission and ministry was financed, but as indicated by the research data, the offer of relevant training and financial support are two key ways the institution can invest into lay led church planting.

The institution can encourage lay planting by considering how best to commission or authorize lay planters. As noted in the literature review, multiple vague definitions exist for lay leaders within the Church of England, some of which differ from one diocese to another. No authorized roles exist for any lay leader planting a church. Anglo-Saxon Minsters had different defined roles for people, even if it remains unclear what these roles might have allowed. The Methodists knew what it meant for someone to be a band

or class leader or leader of a Society. Authorization creates clarity on how someone can function within an institution although if a lay leader is formally authorized a need also exists for clarity around how they relate to their apostolic priest and the wider institution. *Mission-shaped Church* demanded recognition for lay planters twenty years ago (147), and whilst some are currently being “commissioned,” commissioned is not quite the same as being authorized. However, given the variety and intended breadth of authorized roles, what clarity authorization might bring is not entirely clear; one thing is clear, it would still not allow a lay leader to lead any sacramental ministry. The historical review reflected on John Wesley’s own challenges with the status of lay leaders within Methodism, which ended up taking his priestly oversight to the point of ordaining people so that they could preside. The institution may be able to help by offering some clarity to this by determining what authorization a lay planter could have and what they then can and cannot do.

The final way the Church of England can encourage lay planting is by training clergy to be oversight ministers and to think and function in apostolic ways. The literature review noted that clergy have not been trained to function as apostolic priests with Bishop Chartres suggesting that clergy have been trained in sedentarized, rather than apostolic, ministry. The research noted, in the discussion around obstacles, that clergy have not been trained to identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England and that best practices would make this part of clergy training. Arguably, this is the primary reason we do not see more lay led church planting — clergy have not been trained to identify and train potential lay planters and so it does not happen. Where it does happen, it is because the clergy in the parish are apostolic by nature rather than by

nurture. One way the Church of England can encourage more lay led church planting is by training the clergy in what it means to be an apostolic priest: someone who is releasing, discerning, encouraging, envisioning, and secure enough to encourage others into leading a new worshipping community for those people who are currently outside the church.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

This research was conducted to help understand how clergy in the Church of England might identify and train lay leaders for church planting. The first implication is to emphasize the importance of clergy in identifying and training lay planters and to consider how clergy can be trained to maximize the potential of the laity in the Church of England. The House of Bishops have committed themselves to supporting church planting, including thousands of new plants, many of which will have to be lay led. This work will be impossible unless the clergy are given the tools and training to think and function as apostolic priests; lay leaders for church planting, as this study has shown, do not simply appear but are developed over time and through relationship with an apostolic priest. This finding has significant implications for Initial Ministerial Education; if clergy can be trained in how to develop lay leaders (not just for church planting but in all areas of ministry) before they take responsibility as an ordained minister, then this would have a huge impact. Another consideration would be how to train the current clergy, many of whom are already overwhelmed by the demands and pressures of the ministry and may not feel they have time to invest in this kind of leadership development. This is not a quick fix, and potential exists for failure and damage to reputation and relationships as

the primary research showed, but long term it would release more people into ministry as the clergy take more of an oversight role.

The second implication is to affirm the process which Myriad is using to train and encourage lay planters. Their determination to provide just-in-time, or on-the-job, training seems absolutely in line with the needs and availability of lay planters. Myriad is not the only training solution, but the desire to connect lay planters to other peers doing a similar thing, help train at the point of need rather than just-in-case, and provide a mentor/coach to the planter resonates strongly with the best practice. Some respondents had been involved in Myriad training which may have influenced the responses, and time will tell if the learning community process is valuable in the long term.

The third implication is then for me, as someone who is seeking to be an apostolic priest, to utilize the wisdom from the research and best practices and thereby see more lay led plants occur. This implication will mean continuing to create a visionary environment in church where everyone can see that they are included in the Great Commission. From there, some will sense a call to step out and try something new which will lead to me focusing more time investing in them and giving them leadership opportunities. This process will offer opportunities to discern with them if they have the character and gifting to take on more responsibility, which may in time lead to them beginning a church plant. The relationship will be sustained as they plant, not least to help with sacramental ministry, but also to keep them connected to the wider institution. Seeing lay led plants flourish will take an investment of time from me, investing in the lay planter and relating on their behalf to the diocese.

Limitations of the Study

As the demographics of the respondents made clear, this study was limited to Charismatic and Evangelical Christians (one interviewee was working in an Anglo-Catholic context but for some reason did not identify this in the questionnaire response). The first limitation of this study is that it only considers lay led church planting in Charismatic or Evangelical contexts. Having had insight from other parts of the church would have been very helpful; one suspects whether the obstacles for an Anglo-Catholic might have included more discussion around the sacraments.

Another obvious limitation was that all but one respondent was white British. It is unclear why this is so; perhaps clergy or lay leaders from an ethnic background are less likely to engage with Myriad from whom the majority of connections were made. Seeing if the answers from different ethnic contexts would have significantly changed, or agreed with, the data presented here would be informative.

Using the connections from Myriad was a simple way of connecting with Doers, Donors, and Directors, although it is possible, as noted above, that their experience of Myriad may have influenced their answers to the questions. Myriad is focused on training and developing lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England using just-in-time training practices of a peer group learning community. It is possible that the reason just-in-time training, coaching/mentoring, etc. were such significant aspects of the data was simply because many people had engaged in some way with Myriad.

Due to only five clergy responding to Myriad's original email asking for involvement, I had to include some of my own contacts. These people know me and, whilst I do not believe they were trying to give me what they thought I wanted, it is

possible that we know each other because we share similar values and expectations of ministry, which could have shaped the outcome of the research.

Another limitation of the study was that this offered a snapshot in time of people currently involved in lay planting. Given that Fresh Expressions has been around for twenty years, other research might include longitudinal studies over several years to consider how lay led church plants continue over time. From my own conversations, some lay planters have ended up burning out due to the pressures of planting alongside regular jobs and family life. The questions remain whether there is a limited timespan for lay leaders planting churches and what support might be offered to sustain their ministry?

ChatGPT was not quite the gifted helper I hoped AI would be. After inputting the data and having it sorted, there were many occasions when I had to move data from one place to another as it was clearly quite wrong. Every tool has its limitations, but having spoken with other researchers, it may have been better to use an AI plug-in for Zoom which both transcribed the interview and offered summary points immediately afterwards. Leaving such a long gap between the interviews and analyzing the transcriptions meant extra work for me, refreshing myself with the data rather than having it fresh in my mind.

Despite these limitations, I would not have changed the tools I used for this research, which was intentionally qualitative in nature. I wanted the tools to reflect the different contexts and people involved and relate this to the training that is already being offered to some clergy through Myriad. I also believe there is much within this research that relates to identifying and training laity for any leadership responsibility within the church, not just planting.

Unexpected Observations

I was amazed and somewhat sad to note that the Myriad team could not identify one lay-led church plant which was intentionally and effectively reaching young adults — Millennials and Gen Zs. The Myriad team and I knew of just one example, but their leader had recently been ordained. The apostolic priest overseeing the plant (who was in fact a bishop) was included in the research but not the lay planter as they were no longer laity. However, only one example of lay-led church planting effectively reaching those under the age of thirty was motivating in wondering what else could be done for this generation which statistics suggest are hungry for meaning and open to conversations about faith.

Surprisingly, few lay planters had experienced obstacles; perhaps this is related to their positive, pioneering mindset and the effectiveness of their oversight minister protecting them from institutional challenges. The difficulties they had faced were more often practical than political: how to manage time, access training, effectively reach their local communities, etc. Overall, their determination and positive outlook allowed them to build teams and pursue mission.

The research did not highlight the challenges of how lay led plants beyond parish boundaries sit within the Church of England structure. Asking questions around current processes, obstacles, and best practice did not raise the topic of Bishop's Mission Orders or other means that might be used to recognize and release new planting initiatives beyond the current cure of souls within the priest's own parish.

Recommendations

These recommendations relate to the major findings of this study followed by some recommendations arising from the limitations of this study and the unexpected observations.

- (1) *Envision and support clergy to be apostolic.* If apostolic priests are crucial for lay led church planting, then the first recommendation must be to envision clergy for this. Not all clergy will be naturally apostolic, but if the Church of England is to embrace a mixed ecology and “set God’s people free,” then clergy must have a vision for this and an understanding of how to prioritize this in their ministry. This support must become much more embedded in each diocese, so that lay led planting is not just something a few naturally apostolic clergy encourage but becomes a normal part of ordained ministry. This means local clergy, as well as bishops, archdeacons, area deans, and other diocesan staff, are understanding, supporting, and celebrating lay led church planting. This recommendation impacts clergy training, considered below.
- (2) *Define the character traits of a lay planter.* Second, if apostolic priests identify leaders by discerning character and gifting through relationship, determining what the characteristics clergy are looking for becomes important. Creating a list of character traits would be helpful; I suggested in *Stones and Ripples* that five key characteristics of pioneers and planters exist: (1) praying; (2) envisioning; (3) growing; (4) acting, and (5) learning (9). Further research could consider if these are correct or if others should be added to the list.

- (3) *Give opportunities to lay leaders.* If character is discerned through seeing how people respond to opportunities, another recommendation would be to consider what opportunities would best in determining the gifting for lay planting. One would ask what responsibilities might clergy first offer someone on the journey towards lay planting? Developing a pathway tool for clergy to use with lay planters would be helpful for this based on the data from this study: (1) Notice potential; (2) Offer leadership opportunity; (3) Observe gifting and character; (4) Reflect together; (5) Discern leadership potential; and (6) Repeat the process for those displaying both character and gifting by offering more opportunity.
- (4) *Develop leadership pathways.* The data shows that identifying and training lay leaders for church planting is an intertwined process. Recommendations from this major finding are linked to creating a leadership development pathway as mentioned above. This tool would encourage reflective practice through creating opportunities for peer learning, mentoring, coaching, etc. — something that looks like the Myriad process but before they begin to consider planting as an expression of their leadership.
- (5) *Research how clergy can function as an effective link to the institution.* To support apostolic priests as the bridge between the institution and the lay planter, more research would be useful to specify the primary links clergy can make for lay planters. To develop lay led church planting, clergy will have to invest time both in the potential lay planter themselves as they journey along the training pathway noted above, but also time in relating to the institution. This process will be more straightforward for those in dioceses with specific diocesan roles to support lay

planting, so another recommendation is for dioceses to appoint champions within their diocese to support lay led church planting, giving the apostolic priest a primary point of connection.

- (6) *Run Myriad in each diocese.* The final major finding was that the institution can encourage lay planters through on-the-job training, finances, and authorization and offer training to clergy to help more become apostolic priests. Myriad is seeking to offer this training so one recommendation would be that each diocese identifies and supports the running of a Myriad hub.
- (7) *Create a pioneer investment fund in each diocese.* For finances, not every church has the finances to pay for the time lay planters put into being trained, planting, and leading these church plants. Each diocese could create a pioneering investment fund to support lay led planting alongside the Myriad training.
- (8) *Clarify authorization of lay planters.* Clarifying how lay church planters sit within the institution seems of critical importance, and this recommendation is that work is done on this and a clearly defined authorized role is offered as a national standard that each diocese adopts locally.
- (9) *Train clergy to be apostolic.* Clergy experience training in two ways: Initial Ministerial Education and Continuing Ministerial Development. Linking back to the recommendation in response to the first major finding, clergy must be envisioned, empowered, and equipped to function as apostolic priests to identify and train lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England. This training would include rethinking their initial training and how current clergy might be trained to raise up and release lay leaders for church planting. Additionally, the data from this research

is recommended to be used to further develop and hone the training being offer by Myriad to oversight ministers.

(10) *Reconsider ordinand selection.* This study suggests the selection process for ordination should be reviewed. Currently, many ordinands are selected in the hope that they will become fruitful in ministry, but the data in this study suggests a better way would be to ordain people based on fruitfulness rather than aspiration. Instead of hoping that someone might be effective in ministry and investing time and money in their training, a better way to choose who goes forward to ordination is to consider the fruitfulness of their lay ministry. Clergy using the leadership pathway from this research identify and train lay leaders through reflective practice and determine their leadership capacity and competency. Apostolic priests can encourage vocations within the Church of England through offering proven leaders.

(11) *Ordain proven lay planters.* This is the natural follow-on from the previous recommendation. The challenge of celebrating the sacraments in lay led church plants is, as described, not easily resolved. The 2013 report shows that “lay-lay” leaders have been leading new worshipping communities for at least a decade. They have been trained by experience and through the support of an apostolic priest, and, if this was recognized as “official” training, they could be ordained within the Church of England, the challenges of authorization and the sacraments would be easily resolved, and would make good on the call from *Mission-shaped Church* to reconsider the training pathway for church planters. The question remains of whether this pathway could be recognized and lead to ordination, so that the lay leader is able

to lead the sacraments in the community they have established through grace, faith, and hard work?

(12)*Research Anglican lay led planting beyond England.* Further study would be helpful to consider how lay planting is supported beyond England. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some African bishops will only ordain people once they have planted two or more churches. Questions to be explored include: What might the Church of England learn from this? Are there unique challenges in being the established church with our history of parish boundaries, and are there ways these might be overcome?

(13)*Research lay led planting in other theological traditions.* As noted above, research into how lay led church planting might work within an Anglo-Catholic or Liberal context would be helpful given that this was limited to Evangelicals and Charismatics.

(14)*Research long-term lay leadership.* Also noted above is the idea of researching long-term lay leadership. The questions that need to be asked are as follows: Is there a time limit on how long lay leaders can lead? What causes lay led church plants to endure through the years with multiple leaders, and without ordained leadership? What causes lay leaders to step down from leading, and what causes lay led churches to survive or die? What support might be offered to them to sustain their leadership of the churches they have planted? What does succession look like in lay-led church plants? What are best practices in supporting lay planters when clergy move on? These are key questions if the mixed ecology is to last beyond a generation of enthusiastic lay planters.

(15) Identify current diocesan approaches. Finally, this study clearly indicated that differences exist in attitudes to lay led church planting between dioceses; researching and mapping the current approach being taken in different dioceses, their different levels of effectiveness, and to considering what might be done to create a national strategy and openness to lay led church planting would be helpful.

Postscript

As I was sharing the major findings from this study with my wife, she asked “isn’t that obvious?” In some ways it is. Apostolic priests are crucial for lay led church planting in the Church of England. As happened with us before we planted a lay-led church in 2011, the Vicar who supported us in planting identified us as leaders by discerning character and gifting through relationship. We are experiencing in our current context that identifying and training lay leaders for church planting is an intertwined process, and as clergy, I function as the bridge between the institution and the lay planter. These findings do seem obvious, being that the institution can encourage lay planters through on-the-job training, finances and authorization, and offer training to clergy to help more become apostolic priests. Given this study, research data is now available to back up what might seem obvious.

The obstacles identified in this research also show that these themes are not obvious to all, and some institutional resistance still exists. Clergy are not trained to outwork their priestly role in apostolic ways. Different churchmanship raises different questions for how lay leaders might genuinely “lead” a church. Local Bishops are the gatekeepers; a few months after one of the Directors was interviewed, they shared their frustration that their new Diocesan Bishop has no desire or strategy to invest in church

planting. This also means that describing a “national” picture is almost impossible.

Despite this, the Fresh Expressions movement has inspired thousands of lay leaders and new worshiping communities, and Myriad is championing lay-led church planting. The Myriad team is working hard to facilitate training for these lay pioneers, and I hope this study can become a helpful conversation partner in how clergy might be trained more effectively to function as apostolic priests.

I am deeply grateful for the time I have been able to spend studying scripture and significant publications about this topic. The Anglo-Saxon Minsters and the Methodist revival continue to inspire me, and it was a joy to read the completed questionnaires and interview the participants, all of whom are inspiring too. My prayer as this study comes to an end is that the Lord would pour out his Spirit afresh on the church in England as he did in the time of Wesley and raise up many leaders, both lay and ordained, to work together in drawing people to faith and establishing new worshiping communities in response to the Great Commission of Jesus.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A. Questionnaire

Background.

These questions consider your own background and current ministry context

1. Name
2. Age range
 - 18-29
 - 30-39
 - 40-49
 - 50-59
 - 60-69
 - 69+
3. How long have you been a Christian?
 - 5 years or less
 - Between 5-10 years
 - Between 10-15 years
 - Between 15-20 years
 - Between 20-25 years
 - Longer than 25 years
4. What is your ethnic background?
 - Asian or Asian British
 - Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
 - Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
 - White
 - Other ethnic group
5. To what level were you educated?
 - Postgraduate degree
 - Undergraduate degree
 - Sixth form college
 - High school

6. What best describes your church tradition?
- Evangelical
 - Charismatic
 - Liberal catholic
 - Anglo-Catholic
7. Are you a lay planter, a church leader developing lay planters, or working within the Church of England to support lay planting?
- Lay planter
 - Ordained church leader developing lay planters
 - Working within the Church of England to support lay planting
8. For church leaders/lay planters, which closest describes the context are you leading/planting into?
- City centre
 - Inner city
 - Suburban
 - Outer estate
 - Rural

Qualities.

These questions consider the qualities, gifts and skills required in lay planters and ordained leaders seeking to develop lay planters.

Please note, each response is limited to 500 characters

9. What qualities does it take to be a lay church planter?
10. What helped you identify (or be identified as) a potential lay church planter?
11. What gifts need to be inherent in a lay church planter?
12. What skills can be learned by a lay church planter?
13. What gifts need to be inherent in clergy wishing to support lay-led church planting?
14. What skills can be learned by clergy wishing to support lay-led church planting?

Training.

These questions consider training lay planters.

15. How did you train (or receive training) for lay-led church planting?
16. How effective was the training for lay-led church planting?
17. What help or support do you wish you had offered/received to help lay-led church planting?

Challenges.

These questions consider the challenges and obstacles facing lay planters and clergy seeking to support lay planting.

18. What obstacles did you face in identifying (or being identified as) lay leaders for church planting?

19. What obstacles did you face in training (or being trained as) lay leaders for church planting?

Best practice.

This question looks into your thoughts on the best practice for identifying and training (developing) lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.

20. What would you consider best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England?

Appendix B. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Consent

Have you signed the online consent form?

Context.

1. What is your involvement in lay-led church planting?

Lay planters.

2. What have you learned about identifying those who might be lay planters?

Apostolic priests.

3. Bishop Richard Chartres used the term 'apostolic priest' to describe clergy who could develop other church planters. How would you define an apostolic priest?

Wider support.

4. What support do you think is needed from the Church of England to support lay planting?

Obstacles.

5. What obstacles can you identify related to identifying and training lay leaders for church planting?

Best practice.

6. What would you consider to be best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix C. Email Requests to Participants

1. Email to Myriad Contacts re Questionnaire

Hi xx

Ros Hoare has passed me your contact details after you kindly agreed to be involved in my doctoral research project about developing lay-led church planters within the Church of England - thank you!

Below is a link to the online questionnaire; this will explain the research, check that you consent, and ask whether you would be happy to be interviewed via Zoom.

The written responses are limited to 500 characters which I hope will help keep things focused and not take up too much of your time; my intention is that the questionnaire should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete.

I would be grateful if you were able to complete the questionnaire by the end of next Sunday 11th June 2023. I know you're busy so I'll send a reminder in a few days' time which I hope will help rather than hassle.

Thanks again so much for helping with this research. My hope is that your responses can help identify principles and good practice for other clergy to use in encouraging other lay planters within the Church of England.

If you need any clarification or have any additional questions or thoughts, please contact me on gareth.robinson@asburyseminary.edu or 07*****0.

The questionnaire is at <https://forms.gle/Km11UdMT8oa5FrdY6>

Many thanks,

Gareth Robinson

2. Email to non-Myriad Contacts re Questionnaire

Hi xx

I'm wondering if you could take 30 minutes to help me in my doctoral research project about developing lay-led church planters within the Church of England?

Below is a link to an online questionnaire which will explain the research, check that you consent, and ask whether you would be happy to be interviewed via Zoom.

My intention is that the questionnaire should take no longer than half an hour to complete.

The written responses are limited to 500 characters to keep things focused and not take up too much of your time.

If you are willing and able, I'd be grateful if you could complete the questionnaire by the end of Sunday 11th June 2023. I'll send a reminder in a few day's time.

Thanks again so much for considering helping with this research. My hope is that your responses can help identify principles and good practice for other clergy to use in encouraging other lay planters within the Church of England.

If you need any clarification or have any additional questions or thoughts, please contact me on gareth.robinson@asburyseminary.edu or 07*****0.

The questionnaire is at <https://forms.gle/Km11UdMT8oa5FrdY6>

Many thanks,

Gareth Robinson

3. Questionnaire Reminder Email

Hi xx

I hope this finds you well. I'm just following up my message on Sunday requesting your help in my doctoral studies.

I hope this is received as a friendly reminder rather than an annoyance, and apologies if not!

As mentioned, I'd be so grateful if you were able to complete the questionnaire by the end of this Sunday 11th June 2023. It shouldn't take more than 30 minutes of your time to complete.

If you need more time, please do get back to me.

Thanks again so much for being willing to help with this research.

For ease, the questionnaire link is <https://forms.gle/Km11UdMT8oa5FrdY6>

Many thanks,

Gareth Robinson

4. Second Questionnaire Reminder Email

Hi xx

My apologies for a second reminder email, but if you get a moment in the next day or two I'd be so grateful if you could complete the questionnaire to help with my doctoral research on lay-led church plants.

The questionnaire link is <https://forms.gle/Km11UdMT8oa5FrdY6>

Thank you so much!

Gareth Robinson

5. Email Requesting Interview

Hi xx,

Thank you so much for completing the questionnaire for my doctoral research into lay-led church planting in the CofE, and for saying 'yes' to being interviewed via Zoom.

Having gone through a thorough selection process approved by the Asbury Seminary ethics committee, I would like to take you up on that interview.

If at all possible I would be grateful if this could be done within the next two weeks, before Friday 23rd June.

If this timeline is not going to work for you, please let me know and we can either work something out or I will pursue another respondent.

You can book a time slot convenient to you via <https://doodle.com/bp/garethrobinson2/dmin-interview>

(Please note, when I have tested this, it has told me that an error has occurred and to go back to the main page. This error message is actually an error!)

Once you have selected an hour time slot, you should receive a confirmation email with a Zoom link (assuming the tech all works as it's meant to!).

The ethics committee have also asked that before the interview you give your consent, please do this via <https://forms.gle/q4qxQW7XyGpkATNt8> (it looks almost identical to the one you completed for the questionnaire).

Again, any questions please do reply using this email address, or call 07*****0.

Thank you so much,

Grace & peace, Gareth

6. Email to Participants not Selected for Interview

Hi xx,

Thank you so much for completing the questionnaire for my doctoral research into lay-led church planting in the CofE, and for saying 'yes' to being interviewed via Zoom.

Having gone through a thorough selection process approved by the Asbury Seminary ethics committee, I thought I would let you know that other people have been selected for interview, but I wanted to thank you for being willing.

It's possible that I may be back in touch to ask for an interview if one of those selected is unable to help - but if not, thanks so much for your time on the questionnaire.

I meant to say in my original email, if you would like to see a copy of my dissertation once it is completed, I'd be more than happy to send it to you - just let me know and I'll send a pdf once it's all over (hopefully around this time next year).

Thank you again so much, praying God's blessing on your continued ministry,

Grace & peace, Gareth

7. Email to Reserve Interview Participants

Hi xx,

Thank you so much for completing the questionnaire for my doctoral research into lay-led church planting in the CofE, and for saying 'yes' to being interviewed via Zoom.

Having gone through a thorough selection process approved by the Asbury Seminary ethics committee, I thought I would let you know that other people have been selected for interview, but I wanted to thank you for being willing.

However, I wondered if you might be willing to be in reserve, in case someone is unable to help? If you're happy with this, I may be in touch in the next few days asking for an hour of your time before next Friday 23rd June.

I meant to say in my original email, if you would like to see a copy of my dissertation once it is completed, I'd be more than happy to send it to you - just let me know and I'll send a pdf once it's all over (hopefully around this time next year).

Thank you again so much, praying God's blessing on your continued ministry,

Grace & peace, Gareth

Appendix D. Informed Consent Form (Questionnaire)

Releasing Lay Planters Questionnaire: Best practices for identifying and training (developing) lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.

This questionnaire is part of Gareth Robinson's doctoral research to consider best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting.

Consent Form

Please read the text below carefully which explains this research and offers you the opportunity to consent to your involvement.

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Gareth Robinson, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are serving within the Church of England in effective mission to Millennials and Gen Zs in one of three groups: lay planters (doers); as clergy overseeing the development of lay-led planting (donors); or those within the institution working to support lay-led planting (directors).

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire about your experience of developing lay-led church planting within the Church of England, which should take no more than an hour of your time. You will also be asked if you might be willing to be interviewed via Zoom for an hour to go slightly deeper into the topic. No payment is being offered for your help.

Those you inform, for example your family, will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

Data from the questionnaire will be securely kept in a Google Drive folder which can only be accessed by the research team (the researcher, a transcriber, and those from Asbury overseeing the project). Data will be permanently deleted within one year of the dissertation being submitted by permanently erasing the Google Drive folder.

The risks of partaking in this study are small; it is possible that, due to your answers, some people may be able to identify you. The benefits of this study will be in helping identify how best to train clergy to identify and train lay leaders in church planting, and considering best practices across the Church of England to encourage other effective lay-led church plants to reach Millennials and Gen Zs.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Gareth Robinson who can be reached at gareth.robinson@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Gareth Robinson at gareth.robinson@asburyseminary.edu

Clicking 'I consent' means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, click 'I do not consent', or do not submit an answer at all.

Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not consent, or even if you change your mind later.

You agree that you have been told about this study, why it is being done, and what to do.

- I consent
- I do not consent

Two Additional Preparatory Questions

The researcher (Gareth Robinson) is planning to interview a number of respondents. This would be online for one hour. (If more people than needed are happy to be interviewed, your time may not be required.) Would you be willing to be contacted for this purpose?

- Yes
- No

Are you aged 18 or over?

- Yes
- No

Appendix E. Informed Consent Form (Interview)

Releasing Lay Planters Interview: Best practices for identifying and training (developing) lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England,

This interview is part of Gareth Robinson's doctoral research to consider best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting.

Consent Form

Please read the text below carefully which explains this part of the research and offers you the opportunity to consent to your involvement.

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Gareth Robinson, a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are serving within the Church of England in effective mission to Millennials and Gen Zs in one of three groups: lay planters (doers); as clergy overseeing the development of lay-led planting (donors); or those within the institution working to support lay-led planting (directors).

If you agree to be interviewed, you will be asked to be interviewed via Zoom for an hour to go slightly deeper into the topic. No payment is being offered for your help.

Those you inform, for example your family, will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name.

Data from the interview will be securely kept in a Google Drive folder which can only be accessed by the research team (the researcher, a transcriber, and those from Asbury overseeing the project). Data will be permanently deleted within one year of the dissertation being submitted by permanently erasing the Google Drive folder.

The risks of partaking in this study are small; it is possible that, due to your answers, some people may be able to identify you. The benefits of this study will be in helping identify how best to train clergy to identify and train lay leaders in church planting, and considering best practices across the Church of England to encourage other effective lay-led church plants to reach Millennials and Gen Zs.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Gareth Robinson who can be reached at gareth.robinson@asburyseminary.edu. You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Gareth Robinson at gareth.robinson@asburyseminary.edu

Clicking 'I consent' means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, click 'I do not consent', or do not submit an answer at all.

Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not consent, or even if you change your mind later.

You agree that you have been told about this study, why it is being done, and what to do.

- I consent
- I do not consent

Are you aged 18 or over?

- Yes
- No

Your name _____

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Colloquium Slides

Apostolic Priests

Releasing the Lay Planters



Gareth Robinson Asbury Colloquium Presentation May 2024

Missional Motives

Lay Planters in the CofE

- Local context: how to function as an effective resource church
- National context: thousands of church plants planned, many lay led
- Bishop Chartres' term "Apostolic Priest"



Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to identify best practices for identifying and training (developing) lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England.



Research Questions

1. What processes are currently being practiced for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting?
2. What obstacles do church and lay leaders identify related to identifying and training lay leaders for church planting?
3. What are best practices for identifying and training lay leaders for church planting in the Church of England?



Biblical Foundations

- Great Commission
- Apostle
- Priest
- Paul's instructions to Titus



Theological Foundations

- Missio Dei
- Apostolic priest
- Priesthood
- Apostolic



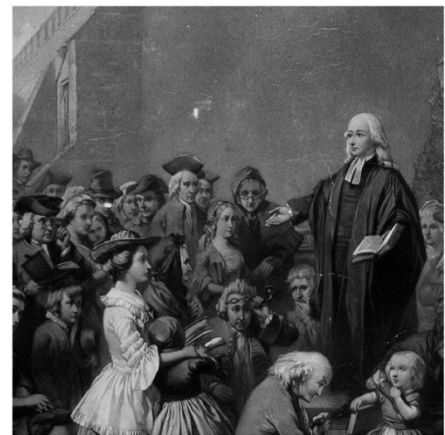
Historical Perspective Anglo-Saxon Minsters

- Mission to pre-Christian context
- “Priests and clerks” - Bede
- Lay Abbots/Abbesses
- Minsters as “mission units”
- *Peregrinati*: lay & ordained



Historical Perspective Methodist Movement

- Religious Societies
1. Part of the Church of England
 2. Lay-led but accountable
 3. Functioned outside church buildings
 4. Aided church growth
- “*Ecclesiolae in ecclesia*”
 - Ladder of leadership



Current Context

Postmodern, post-Christian neo-liberal Western society

- Church decline
- Contextualized gospel
- Charles Taylor/James K. A. Smith, Mark Sayers, Moon & Simon



Recent Publications

- 2004 Mission-shaped Church
- 2013 Church Growth Research Project (“lay-lay leaders”)
- 2018 Church Planting and the Mission of the Church
- 2022 Listening to the Voice of the Lay Planters



Research Methodology

Participants

- Doers: lay planters
- Donors: “apostolic priests”
- Directors: institutional supporters
- Bishop Chartres



Instrumentation

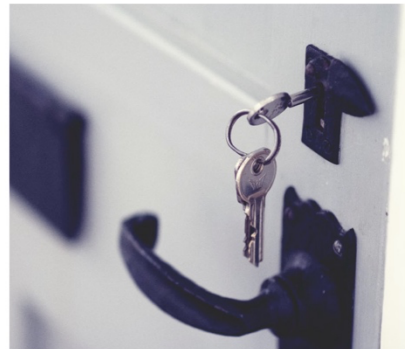
- Primarily qualitative
- 26 online questionnaires (33 requests)
- 10 hour-long online semi-structured interviews
- Document analysis (“*Myriad Oversight Pathway*” PowerPoint)



Major Finding 1

Apostolic priests are crucial for lay led church planting

- Share vision & create culture
- Identify leaders
- Offer “*episcopate*” - continuing oversight
- Secure



Major Finding 2

Apostolic Priests Identify Leaders by Discerning Character and Gifting through Relationship

- Notice character
- Observe gifting:
 - Teachable & resilient
 - Positive & pioneering
 - Faith-filled & prayerful
- Build team & community connections



Major Finding 3

Identifying and training lay leaders for church planting is an intertwined process

1. Notice character & potential
 2. Offer opportunity to lead
 3. Observe gifting
 4. Reflect together
- Repeat
 - MSC *“training as discernment”*



Major Finding 4

Apostolic priests are the bridge between the institution and the lay planter

- Doers experience few obstacles
- Help access training, finances
- Safeguarding
- Sacraments



Major Finding 5

The institution can encourage lay planters through on-the-job training, finances and authorization, and offer training to clergy to help more become apostolic priests

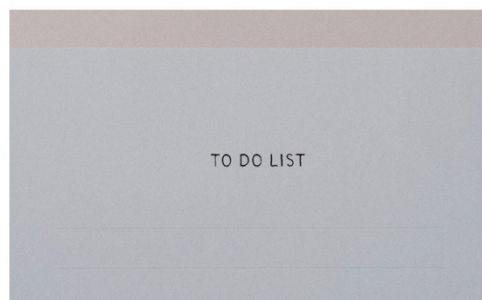
- Train lay planters
- Finances
- Authorization
- Train Clergy



Recommendations

15 in total. Highlights:

- Envision & support clergy to be apostolic
- Define character traits
- Develop leadership pathways
- Diocesan investment fund
- Ordain proven lay planters



Next Steps

- Share vision & create culture
- Invest in discipling relationship with potential lay planters
- Establish Myriad hub here & across New Wine network



Reflections & Thanks

